



**Sierra Madre
Historical
Preservation Society
Newsletter
Summer 2011**

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Priscillas Courtesy of the Sierra Madre Historical Archives.

What was Victoria's secret? Was it hidden in her bustle or tucked into those petticoats? Come and explore the wondrous days of yesteryear with the Historical Society on **October 15th at 2:00 pm at Hartzell Hall** in the Sierra Madre United Methodist Church. A \$40 ticket sends you on an E-ticket ride: **"An Historic Adventure with Costumes."** Authentic period costumes will be presented in a show narrated and written by renowned show business costumer, Shon Le Blanc. The show is based on the timeline from the Society's publication *A Southern California Story: Seeking the Better Life in Sierra Madre* and will be accompanied by a slide show of historical images from the Sierra Madre Archives. A splendid tea will also be part of the afternoon's adventure featuring many culinary delights. Tickets will be available in Sept. at Arnold's Hardware, Savor the Flavor, Mary's Market and from Board members. For more information call 626 355-1389 or go to www.smhps.org. Proceeds will be used to maintain the Society's museums and the historical archives housed at the Sierra Madre Public Library.

Streetwise in Sierra Madre

You probably noticed that the City of Sierra Madre recently replaced its street signs. The replacement was implemented in order to meet federal nighttime reflectivity requirements. But did you know that City Staff consulted historical maps so that street names would be spelled, spaced, and punctuated correctly? Public Works Staff carefully consulted traffic maps and old parcel maps to get the signage correct.

Grand View Avenue historically appears as two words not just on early maps but also in early tract advertisements. An April 21, 1888 issue of the Sierra Madre Vista, one of Sierra Madre's earliest newspapers, clearly shows Grand View rather than Grandview.

Street names were generally assigned by early landowners in Sierra Madre. Many owners of Sierra Madre tracts named streets in honor of family members or former places of residence. Carter Avenue is of course named for founder Nathaniel C. Carter. Mr. Carter's middle initial C. stands for Coburn, also a street name. Sturtevant Drive is named for Wilbur M. Sturtevant, an early resident who was a mountain guide, trail builder, resort manager and stable operator. Auburn Avenue was agreed upon by adjacent landowners C.E. Cook (from Auburn, Maine) and Irving White (from Auburn, New York). Mr. S. R.

Norris named Laurel Avenue for his sister and Victoria Lane for his former Canadian home.

Many street names were given in beautiful Spanish to boost property sales: Alegria (joy) Avenue, Bonita (pretty) Avenue, Canon (canyon) Avenue, Esperanza (hope) Avenue, Hermosa (beautiful) Avenue, Mariposa (butterfly) Avenue, and Los Rocas (rocks) Drive. Other streets were named for the flora of Sierra Madre: Acacia Street, Chaparral Road, Deodar Drive, Fern Glen, Manzanita Avenue, Oak Crest Drive, Olive Avenue, Orange Drive, Toyon Road, and Yucca Trail.

Over time, several street names changed. Michillinda is formerly known as Sierra Madre Avenue. Michillinda is not a Spanish name but a name derived from Michigan, Illinois, and Indiana for its populace having relocated from those states. Central Avenue was renamed Sierra Madre Boulevard in 1936. Hotel Street became Grove Street. Before it was known as Lima, North Lima was known as Markham (to honor California Governor Henry H. Markham) and South Lima was called Prospect. The present Montecito Avenue had three names (Grandin, Dixie, and LaBelle) depending on how far east or west you were located. Orange Grove Boulevard used to be called Live Oak Avenue. Palm Avenue was renamed Mira Monte Avenue. Sierra Madre Place was shortened to Sierra Place around 1911. Wilcox Road is now known as Sierra Meadow Drive.

Who says there's no future in the past? Sierra Madre looked to historical materials find accurate street names for its new signs. Best of all, revenues from the sales of the old street signs covered the cost of replacement.

-Debbie Henderson, Associate Librarian-Archival Collection

THE FACE OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Dane Lenton, long-serving president of the Sierra Madre Historical Preservation Society, has assumed the position of President Emeritus. After many years of leading the Society, Dane is now free from taking care of the day-to-day details of the SMHPS to concentrate on what he cares most about: preserving Sierra Madre's historical resources.

I met Dane several years ago in front of City Hall following the City Council's decision to allow the Passionist Fathers to demolish their earthquake damaged retreat facility. Dane was concerned then, as he is today, that the city do everything it can to encourage the preservation of our community's architectural and historic legacy.

Dane has been a constant and consistent voice for preservation. He helped sustain the Society through the delisting of some of our historic houses, and the elimination of the Landmarks Preservation Commission. Dane was instrumental in the formation of the Society in the aftermath of that decision.

We are fortunate that Dane is willing to continue as an active voice for the preservation of our community's rich historical legacy.

Gurdon Miller, President

Happy Birthday SMHPS!

Join the SMHPS and the Chamber of Commerce celebrating the 80th Birthday of the Society. A Chamber mixer at Lizzie's Trail Inn on Sept. 8, 5:30 to 7:00 PM will feature birthday cake and the famous SMHPS lemonade. Mixer fee will be \$7 for SMHPS members attending. Call 626 798-1558 for information.

**GENERAL PLAN PROGRESS
IMPROVEMENTS TO THE HISTORIC
PRESERVATION SECTION AND
VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES**

The General Plan Steering Committee is nearing completion of its "red-lining" revisions to the 1996 General Plan. SMHPS Board member Joe Catalano is the Society's liaison to the Steering Committee and is completing this phase of the work on the Historic Preservation Section of the plan with subcommittee members John Hutt and Denise Delmar.

Most of the work to this Section so far has been to update information, given the many related changes that have taken place since 1996, and adding proposed policies for how the City's requirements and services for historic property owners can be improved and streamlined. Greg Asbury, owner of the Pinney House, has been very helpful in this process,

by providing information that has already been developed in the last couple of years by a group of historic homeowners.

Reading of the redlined version of this Section by the entire Steering Committee will probably take place at the September 6 meeting.

In related news,

Preliminary results are in from the Steering Committee's survey of residents. It's good news that respondents overwhelmingly want the present scale and character of Sierra Madre to be maintained.

Also, opportunities are coming up for SMHPS members to volunteer to help with information gathering and photography. Your knowledge will help strengthen the General Plan. Please check our website (www.smhps.org) and upcoming newsletters for updates.

Volunteers Wanted!

The Archives is actively seeking volunteers to help with collections processing and research. Do you have a few free hours during the week? Why not pitch in and do some local history work at the Library! Please contact Debbie Henderson by phone at 626.355.7186 or e-mail at dhenderson@cityofsierramadre.com, if you are interested in volunteering.



"Historical" marker at canyon covered bridge. Does anyone know the backstory behind this humorous fixture?