

Sierra Madre

Historical Preservation Society

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Sierra Madre Historical Preservation Society Newsletter Spring 2012

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Artist Jere Dreier painted this watercolor of Lizzie's and the Richardson House in 1939, and traded it to Elsie Orme for a Lizzie's chicken dinner.

'Sheding' Some Light on Local History

by Joe Catalano

The Richardson House, which is adjacent to Lizzie's Trail Inn, was originally located around the corner of what is now Mountain Trail Avenue. It was later moved to its present location, and was part of the Inn's operation for many years.

In studying the structure, the question arose about whether the shed at the back of the house is historic or whether it is a later addition that is historically insignificant. SMHPS Board members Gurdon Miller and Joe Catalano have been doing this research, aided (invaluably!) by Board member Maurice Orme, who grew up in the Richardson House. Maurice's mother, Elsie Orme, worked at Lizzie's and then his family, the Ormes and McElwains, ran the Inn from the time of Lizzie's death until it closed in 1948.

The great stories about life and the goings-on there are Maurice's to tell. (And he can be found at Lizzie's on most Saturday mornings.) This article focuses on what we have discovered about the house and its shed addition and on how it figures into the history of Lizzie's Trail Inn.

Lizzie's and the Richardson House function as 'interpretive museums.' An interpretive museum is a building or place in which something of historic significance happened, that is maintained 'as it was,' including both the structure and its furnishings (when possible), so that people may see and learn from it by being in the actual place. (This, of course, differs from a museum building that is built as a museum, in which artifacts are put on display.)

Lizzie's and the Richardson House are what remains of a compound that serviced the Mount Wilson Trail and its travelers for many years. Not only did folks socialize and have a good meal at Lizzie's, they also had their supplies packed to mountain camps and to Mount Wilson Hotel. Some rented burros to ride rather than hike the steep trail. The compound also included rental cabins, and a barn and stables for the pack animals, occupying a good part of the space that is now Mount Wilson Trail Park to the east of the Richardson House.

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President's Message

Representatives of the Sierra Madre Historical Preservation Society have been meeting with city officials over integrating maintenance and repair of our city-owned museum buildings into the municipal budget. This is a somewhat protracted process and comes at a time when the city is facing reductions in revenue.

In the meantime there are leaks where the roof of Lizzie's abuts a poorly executed repair made some time ago. The board agreed at our last meeting to ask the city if we could undertake the necessary repairs at our expense. The city has agreed to this and we are proceeding to prepare the necessary plans and begin work.

The project will be supervised by an historical restoration architect who serves on the board and will be monitored by our crew of volunteer docents who keep the museums open on Saturdays throughout the year.

In the course of investigating the leak we learned that the complicated facade that is contributing to the problem was not present during the historic period of the building. We are following up on this to see whether the facade can be returned to its original configuration in the course of the repairs.

This project and the planned conservation of a shed attached to the rear of the Richardson House provide an opportunity for the Society to demonstrate on a modest scale how to repair and maintain historic structures in conformance with Department of the Interior Standards. We are working with the Public Works and Development Services departments.

With rain forecast for this weekend, on Friday a city crew put a tarp on the roof at Lizzie's to protect the building and its contents from water damage.

I will report our progress in the coming weeks.

Gurdon Miller, Board President



Intern Amanda Milbourn posed beside the finding aid she published on the Online Archive of California, Dec. 2011.

From Interns to Library Leaders

Intern, Amanda Milbourn, a student in the UCLA School of Education and Information Studies, has completed an internship in the Archives. She processed recent additions to the Wandalee Thompson Collection and has facilitated our institution's participation in two digital collective resource projects: the California Digital Library and LA as Subject. She also conducted research in response to reference inquiries and in order to improve our holdings on Sierra Madre artists and architects. Her work was funded by the Southern California Library Cooperative (SCLC) and the Sierra Madre Historical Preservation Society.

DON'T BE EXPIRED. RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP TODAY!

SIERRA MADRE HISTORICAL PRESERVATION SOCIETY
P.O. Box 202 Sierra Madre, California 91025-0202

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Table with Membership and Specific Donation options including Individual, Family, Student, Junior, Contributing Member, Patron, Supporting, Lifetime, Sierra Madre Historical Archives, Oral History Project, Richardson House, and Lizzie's Trail Inn.

Please make check payable to S.M.H.P.S.

The Sierra Madre Historical Preservation Society is a 501 (c) (3) organization. Your contribution is tax deductible within the limits of the law. Thank You.

Please contact me about volunteering at

“Sheding” Some Light on Local History continued from page 1

Two events took place sometime early in the 1900s to change this. First, a road was built from Altadena to the top of Mount Wilson that allowed gasoline-powered vehicles to make the trip. Second, the City of Sierra Madre (incorporated in 1907) outlawed pack animals and stables within the city limits. The days of a “full service” facility at the trailhead were coming to a close. In 1961 the barn, stables, and other structures were removed.

The Richardson House is actually one of two very similar houses built by John Richardson, who came here to claim a land grant from the U.S. Government, in the 1860s. More research is needed to find the exact date of moving the house across Mira Monte. Photographs from the archives show it in both locations. There are two additions onto the original structure. The first contains the large back room, bathroom, and a kitchen that unfortunately has been removed. The second one is what’s referred to as “the shed,” the present back of the house.

While precise construction dates have not been established for these additions, Maurice Orme clearly recalls that the shed existed when he lived there as a child. It was used as a laundry, for tool storage, and as the beer storage room for Lizzie’s. This is the key piece of information, that the shed existed as part of the Lizzie’s Trail Inn operation, so it’s within the *period of historic significance*.

Various people lived at the Richardson House throughout its history, who worked either in the pack station operations or at Lizzie’s (like Maurice’s family). After the end of the pack station operations, Lizzie’s continued to operate as a restaurant, and importantly, as a speakeasy during Prohibition. There is evidence (but unconfirmed) of a still having been housed in the shed.

The shed is deteriorating. Our research has validated that it should be restored as a historically significant part of the Lizzie’s operation. It is important to note, that even in the Federal Register, not all historic buildings are fine architecture like Monticello. Many are indigenous, like adobes, and many are settlement era buildings, built with what was readily available. They are historically important for what went on in these places, not for the value of the architectural design. This is the case with Lizzie’s and the Richardson House, which figure importantly to the Mount Wilson Trail and the early development of Sierra Madre.

Lizzie’s has a wonderful collection of photographs, artifacts and memorabilia from the 1940s era. You’ll find much of the interior as it was in 1948. Best of all, you’ll find Maurice Orme there on Saturday mornings from 10 to noon. He’s always ready to share stories about Lizzie’s and growing up in the historic Richardson House.



Left to right: Jim Whitson, V.P., Dick Johnson, Secretary, Barry Ziff, archive volunteer and husband of board member Leslie Ziff. Taken this summer at the Chamber mixer.



The image above is Sierra Madre’s first postal cancellation (very scarce). The letter and envelope was mailed to Harrisburg, PA on March 15, 1886. Postage was 2 cents. Gift of Larry and Suzanne Haller, April 2011.

Delightful Donations!

SMHPS would like to thank all of its 2011 donors and lenders. Many historically significant materials were added to the Local History Collection as a result of their generous actions: Anonymous, Carol Alcorn Arcadia Public Library, Elizabeth Buckner, James Constantian, William Cosso, Stan and Dixie Coutant, Fran Garbaccio, Glendale Public Library, Larry and Suzanne Haller, Debbie Henderson, Heather and David Hoegee, Pam Kelly, Anna Laws, Pat Locher, Kevin Moore, S. Lorraine Moore, Steve Murphy, Sue Quinn, Mark Riebs, Faith Compton Safier and Linda Salazar Crabtree on behalf of Jeanne Otto, Sierra Madre Civic Club, Sierra Madre Search and Rescue Team, Bud Switzer on behalf of Mignon and John Grijalva, Sandy Taylor, Dian Teigler, Stephanie Vitale, Nancy Rule Wilson, Frances Ware, and Jay Whitcraft.



La Rosa Eleganta cigar box manufactured by Emile Deutsch’s Sierra Madre Cigar Factory. Gift of Frances Ware, October 2011. The donor, a descendant of Emile Deutsch, conducted extensive research to verify that this cigar box was produced by the Sierra Madre Cigar Factory. Santa Anita brand cigars, displayed in Lucky Baldwin’s Queen Anne cottage at the Arboretum, were also made by Emile Deutsch.

Sierra Madre’s “One Book One City 2012” Events

The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes, containing the first twelve short stories about the famous detective by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, will be honored during February at the Sierra Madre Public Library as the City of Sierra Madre’s One Book One City selection for 2012. All events are free and open to the public.

One Book One City annually engages the community in reading the same notable book at the same time and encourages everyone to come together to explore the literature and join in public discourse. Doyle’s tales, along with stage, screen, radio and television adaptations, have made Sherlock Holmes a permanent part of our culture, appealing to readers and audiences of all ages. Copies of The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes are available in a variety of formats—print, CD audiobook, e-book, electronic book—from the Sierra Madre Public Library.

A “Mystery Contest” drawing will kick off the month-long program on February 1. Everyone who reads the stories and is able to answer three questions will be entered in a drawing to be held at the Library on Wednesday, February 1. The winner will receive the elegant two-volume set of The New Annotated Sherlock Holmes: The Complete Short Stories, the most lavishly illustrated edition of the Holmes tales ever produced, edited by Leslie S. Klinger.

On Thursday, February 2, at 7:30 p.m., Leslie S. Klinger will present “An Evening with Sherlock Holmes, Hosted by Les Klinger.” Mr. Klinger, considered one of the world’s foremost authorities on Sherlock Holmes, is the editor of The New Annotated Sherlock Holmes, published by W. W. Norton in 2004 and 2005, winner of the Edgar Award for Best Critical/Biographical Work and nominated for every other major award in the mystery genre. Mr. Klinger, along with author Laurie R. King, also edited the recently released book A Study In Sherlock: Stories Inspired by the Holmes Canon, in which eighteen superstar modern mystery authors provide fascinating, thrilling, and original perspectives on Sherlock Holmes. This book will be available for purchase and autographing after the talk.

On Thursday, February 9, at 7:30 p.m., Sisters in Crime will present a panel discussion on “Holmes’ Influence on Detective Fiction.” The panel will include Amnon Kabatchnik, known for his books on crime drama for stage and screen; Michael Mallory, Sherlock Holmes expert and author; and Naomi Hirahara, prize-winning mystery writer. Tammy Kaehler, author of the Kate Reilly car racing mysteries, will moderate.

On Thursday, February 16, from 11:00 a.m. to 12 noon, the Sierra Madre Public Library will host a book discussion of The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes at the Library during the Library’s monthly “Third Thursday” book group.

In the evening of Thursday, February 16, at 7:30, Catherine Addé will present “Sherlock Holmes’ London: An Illustrated Talk,” an armchair tour of London in the footsteps of the world’s greatest detective. Ms. Addé is a travel industry veteran and was thrilled to live in London while working on her Master’s in Tourism Management. She is a long-time Sierra Madre resident, an active

community volunteer, and an avid reader. She serves on the Board of Trustees for the Sierra Madre Public Library.

On Saturday, February 25, at 5:00 p.m., a special screening of a classic Sherlock Holmes movie will take place at the Library. The movie will be co-hosted by the Library and the Sierra Madre Historical Society. Free popcorn and beverages will be served. This will be the final event in Sierra Madre’s One Book One City 2012 program.

One Book One City 2012 is sponsored by the Sierra Madre Civic Club, the Sierra Madre Historical Preservation Society, and the Friends of the Sierra Madre Public Library.

For more information, please contact Catriona Shafer or Sophia Duran at (626) 355-7186 or visit the Library’s website at www.cityofsierramadre.lib.ca.us. The Sierra Madre Public Library is located at 440 W. Sierra Madre Blvd., in Sierra Madre, California.



SOHA Representative, Michele Zack, Jay Whitcraft, Amy Putnam and Louise Neiby

Oral History

2011 was certainly a busy year for the SMHPS’s Oral History Committee. In addition to interviewing citizens who have contributed to the marvelous history of Sierra Madre, last April we attended the Southwest Oral History Association (SOHA) Conference in Little Tokyo. There we presented a panel discussion on the Sierra Madre Oral History Project and the importance of oral histories in researching our book, *Southern California Story: Seeking the Better Life in Sierra Madre*.

We are grateful to SOHA for being awarded a \$400 technology grant and to the Estate of Eph Konigsberg for a donation of \$3,000 which will be used to meet technology, workshop, transcription, and media migration expenses associated with the Sierra Madre Oral History Project.

This year we look forward to additional interview opportunities with contributors to Sierra Madre’s history. If you have a recommendation of someone you know whose story should be told, please let us know. Our goal is to preserve Sierra Madre’s history as a living archive. You never know, we may be calling on you.