



Sierra Madre Historical Preservation Society

December 2015 Newsletter

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Mount Lowe Railway: Circular Bridge

By Mike Manning



Photo courtesy of Mike Manning

Circular Bridge is arguably the greatest feat of railroad engineering along the Mount Lowe Railway. It belies the brilliance of its designing engineer David J. MacPherson. Circular Bridge with all its magnanimous structure had the simple duty of elevating the trolley car 12 feet in elevation by means of a switchback that would maintain a 4% maximum grade along 500 feet of track through a 340 degree turn. A 12 foot switchback doesn't mean much to foot traffic, but in railroading, it requires a massive amount of materials.

Circular Bridge is one of 135 bridges and trestles along the railway, and one of five that had names, they being, in order of travel: Las Flores Bridge, MacPherson Trestle, High Bridge, Circular Bridge and Horseshoe Curve, a miniature circular bridge not requiring nearly the amount of construction. What makes Circular Bridge fascinating is that it was built out in open air, there being no immediate ground for footing. Rock pilings were stacked with concrete down the embankment and high trestle structures were posted upward in the same circular fashion to hold up the road bed. Of course the complete structure, as was typical for the time, was wooden, like a grand roller coaster.

When the Pacific Electric Railway had taken over in 1902, sometime afterward the rock pilings were replaced with adjacent concrete footings which today can be seen by the discerning eyes of hikers looking over the edge of the trail at that switchback. The bridge was eventually painted white and a gravel ballasting was laid alongside the rails to prevent footfalls through the openings in the ties.

Over its existence Circular Bridge has been probably the most photographed feature along the Mount Lowe Railway.

President's Message

Fall is here (although it doesn't quite feel like it yet!) and we are off and running within the SMHPS organization. Our first fall event was our October Historic Cemetery Tour. We had 12 docents portraying important people from Sierra Madre's past who spoke to those on the tour about their contributions to our community. Mrs. Carter greeted each guest, and also spoke about the history of our cemetery. Refreshments were served and all 150 participants had a great time!

We look forward to meeting a few more of the residents of our Pioneer Cemetery next year. Hope to see you there!

Sunday, November 8, brought us back up to the Pack Station at Chantry Flat. All enjoyed a demonstration of how they pack the donkeys, good food, and good music. This has become an annual activity that we help to promote. It is very special for Sierra Madre to have one of the two remaining Pack Stations in the U.S. that is still in operation. If you missed this one, check out their website and take a trip up to Chantry Flat for a well-worthwhile visit.

December 17 is our annual SMHPS Member's Holiday Party. We are looking forward to having desserts with all our members. It is a nice way to meet those of you that are new to our organization, share ideas with the landmark homeowners, and learn what issues are important to you, and how we can help. Our guest speaker will be Mike Manning who will show slides and share stories about the building of the Mount Lowe Railway. Mike is a great speaker and I know you will learn a lot from his presentation.

We have continued our maintenance and upkeep on Lizzie's Trail Inn and the Richardson House. The trees have been trimmed and the shrubs cut back, and we are working on a better drainage system behind the Richardson House. SMHPS members Joe Catalano and Rod Spears are working with the city's maintenance crew to create a safe route for water to flow out from behind the museums without causing damage to the buildings.

I look forward to working with you this coming year in the area of education by facilitating our school museum tours, continuing to build our Teen Docent Program, and creating a stronger Adult Docent Program. Norma will need help in setting up new museum exhibits and categorizing those items we have into a new computer program. Lastly, our quest to reach out to our neighboring historical societies will continue. I have met this year with board members from Claremont, Glendora, Temple City, Monrovia and LaVerne. We will be hosting the La Verne Historical Society at Lizzie's Trail Inn in January and hope to also set up a meeting with El Monte's Historical Society.

We can always use volunteers to help out in so many areas. Please feel free to contact either Maggie Ellis or myself if you would like to help out in any way.



Sincerely,
Leslie Ziff
President, SMHPS

Membership Report

We are delighted to welcome new members Joe & Jacquie Pergola, David & Laura Sandiford and Felipe & Adrienne Martinez.

If you're wondering if you're supposed to be renewing your membership... don't worry! Our membership year ends June 30th, and we'll be sending out renewal reminders before that time.

Maggie Ellis, *Membership Chair*
MaggieEllis04@msn.com

Sierra Madre in 1906

From *A Dictionary of Sierra Madre and a Guide, Philosopher and Friend for Tourists, Travelers and Investors*, edited by J.G. Blumer, 1906.

Back in 1906 Sierra Madre was heavily agricultural. Here are two entries relating to the growing - and stealing! - of oranges in our town:

Oranges, Cost Of The cost of growing oranges, per packed box, including 6 per cent. interest on land, valued at \$1000 per acre, is variously estimated by large growers at 87 1/2 cents to \$1 per box.

Orange Stealing The foregoing information as to the cost of growing oranges is given because a great many visitors to the neighborhood of orange and other fruit ranches, and these visitors are by no means all tourists or "tenderfeet," imagine or act as if they imagined, that oranges, like

California poppies, spring up and grow without care or cost to the grower, and that anyone, or everyone, has the privilege of stepping into an orchard and helping themselves.

The "lady" who unblushingly fills her network shopping bag with oranges, the "gentleman" who audaciously crowds them into his dress suit case, the family party, with their two-horse team, who greedily load up the bottom of their carriage with the yellow fruit, and the more modest and shame-faced peddler, who operates after dark, are hereby informed that taking oranges, lemons, grapes, or any other fruit, without permission, is stealing.

Holiday Party: The History of the Mount Lowe Railway

By Leslie Ziff

Professor Thaddeus Sobieski Constantine Lowe was a very interesting and talented individual. Born in 1832, in Jefferson, New Hampshire he was always intrigued by the motion of clouds and the wind currents that propelled them. He built gas-filled balloons that were used to help him study the atmospheric winds. Ballooning proved to be profitable for Lowe, allowing him to make enough money to finish his formal education. His dream of a transcontinental flight was postponed when the Civil War broke out. President Lincoln asked him to help establish the Union Army Balloon Corps.

By 1888 Professor Lowe moved to California looking to purchase land. He established Citizens Bank of California. He set up several ice-making companies in the area. In 1890 he built a beautiful mansion in Pasadena on south Orange Grove, which was known as Pasadena's "Millionaire Row" He became well known in the area and soon met David MacPherson. With David's encouragement they set out to build a scenic railway to the top of Mount Wilson.

Members and their guests only – but you can join at the door!

When: Thursday, December 17
Time: 7:15 p.m.
Where: Hart Park House in Memorial Park
Cost: \$5 per person

Hope to see you there!



Want to learn more? Well let me tell you how you can. On the evening of Thursday, December 17 the Sierra Madre Historical Preservation Society will be hosting our annual Holiday Dessert Program. Our speaker for that evening will be Mike Manning, who wrote the book *Man, Mountain and Monument - A Pictorial Account of the Mount Lowe Railway from Construction to Memorial*. Admission is only \$5.

Mike is a native of Altadena, an Altadena historian and a Mount Lowe Railway aficionado. Mike will bring some wonderful slides of the building of this great railway and have great stories to share. We are very excited to have him as our guest speaker and hope you will mark your calendar so you can join us for this special event.



Mike Manning, author
(photo courtesy of the author)

Sierra Madre Playhouse Talk and Backstage Tour

By Maggie Ellis

It was a baking 105 degrees during the day September 9th, and it didn't cool down much by evening. Still, our stalwart members and other interested folks came out to enjoy a fascinating talk about the history of the Playhouse building given by past President and current Operations Manager Ward Calaway. Did you know the Playhouse's building's first incarnation was as a furniture store? We were all astonished to discover that. And there were more surprising stories to follow.

After the talk, everyone went on a tour of the backstage area. The phenomenally successful *Always...Patsy Cline* was still running at the time, so the set was up and backstage everything was at the ready for the next show. The evening was topped off by cookies and wine served in the lobby, where several floor fans were pumping away, keeping things cool enough for everyone to stay for a long time and chat. It was a delightful evening!

2015-2016 Board of Directors

Visit our museums!



www.smhps.org
SMHPS@outlook.com



Officers:

President	Leslie Ziff
Vice President	Norma Bachwansky
Secretary	vacant
Treasurer	Amy Putnam

Committee Chairs:

Archives Co-Chairs	Joan and Rod Spears
Membership/Website	Maggie Ellis
Museums Curator	Norma Bachwansky
Oral History	Louise Neiby
Programs	vacant
Publicity	vacant
Ways & Means	Christel Chang

Directors at Large:

Delna Abernathy
Joe Catalano
Teresa Chaure
Pat Karamitros
Matt Malley
Maurice Orme

Non-Board Members:

Library Board of Trustees Liaison	vacant
Newsletter Design	Diane Sands

Calendar of Upcoming Events

2015

December 17 Holiday Party at Hart Park House - Mount Lowe talk by Mike Manning

2016

January 15 Board Meeting at Hart Park House, 7:15 pm

January 23 La Verne Historical Society visits Lizzie's Trail Inn, 11:00am to 1:00pm

February 18 Board Meeting at Hart Park House, 7:15 pm

February TBA Authors Forum

March 17 Board Meeting at Hart Park House, 7:15 pm

March TBA Wistaria Festival (one-day booth)

April 21 Board Meeting at Hart Park House, 7:15 pm

April TBA Home Tour

May 19 Board Meeting at Hart Park House, 7:15 pm

May 28 Mt. Wilson Trail Race (booth)

May TBA Art Fair (two-day booth)

June 16 Board Meeting at Hart Park House, 7:15 pm

June TBA Sierra Madre Community Garage Sale (booth/antiques)

June 25 Lizzie's Chicken & Ravioli Dinner

July 4 Participate in Fourth of July Parade

Up at the Museums

By Norma Bachwansky

In preparation for the promised El Nino storms, our oak trees have been trimmed and sprayed for the dreaded Shot Hole Borer. There is more light and air under the trees, and with the spray they should continue to thrive and grace the grounds around the buildings. In addition, Joe Catalano and Rod Spears, along with the city's public works crew, have been grading and cleaning the area behind Richardson House and Lizzie's to manage the expected run-off of water from the hillside. With these improvements we hope to handle whatever weather may come our way.

The garden is receiving some much-needed clean up and replanting by our volunteers after a long, hot summer. They will be installing a few drought-tolerant Mediterranean plants for color. It's a pleasant place to be on these mild fall days. If you'd like to spend a bit of time in the garden, join our cheerful volunteers. Contact Norma at 626-355-7991.

Charles Fleming, author of the L. A. Times column "Walking L.A." met at the museum with about 115 of his readers to walk the canyon before returning to tour the museums and tack shed.

Mr. Fleming states that he is completely enchanted with our mountains and unique museums. He sent a photographer the following Saturday to take pictures of the museums and our "old timers". He wrote an article about the museums and Sierra Madre that appeared in the paper. Subsequently, we have had a steady stream of visitors who have come to see us after reading the article.

The Sierra Madre Playhouse chose our museums to be part of a series of events held to bring attention to their holiday production "A Christmas Memory", inspired by Truman Capote's short story. In it, young Buddy and his cousin Sook have an adventure securing the whisky they need to finish their annual fruitcake production. The event, called "Prohibitively Delicious" is to be held on Saturday, November 21 from 10:30 to 11:30, complete with a fruitcake tasting (and other holiday treats) while our docents tell about Lizzie's still and the goings on up there during prohibition. Visitors can meet some of the cast and listen to a song from the play and will also receive a certificate for a discount on tickets for the production.

"A Foothill Village" - a Great \$5 Gift!



Originally published in 1997, and republished last year, this beautiful little book is a synopsis of historical events in Sierra Madre, written by Jan Reed. and illustrated with her wonderful line drawings.

This booklet can also be used as a coloring book for children.

This book was featured at the Authors' Event last year and quickly sold out, so get yours soon!

Available at our Holiday Party December 17.

Want one but can't make the party? Call Louise Neiby at 355-1291.

Historic Cemetery Tour a Great Success!

By Leslie Ziff

Our first Fall event for the Sierra Madre Historical Preservation Society was our October Historic Cemetery Tour. We had 12 docents portraying important people from Sierra Madre's past (Nathaniel Carter, Elise Blumer Hart, Frances Hawks, Mary Dyer Tumilty, John Hart and Jim Heasley just to name a few) who spoke to those on the tour about their contributions to our town.

Mrs. Annetta Carter greeted each guest at the gate, and also spoke about the history of our cemetery. Refreshments were served and all 160 participants had a great time!

We look forward to meeting a few more of the residents of our Pioneer Cemetery next year. Hope to see you there!



Above: Glenn Putnam as Emile Deutsch (courtesy Amy Putnam)



Left: Barry Ziff as John Jacob Hart (courtesy Amy Putnam)



Left: Judy Webb-Martin as Frances Hawks (courtesy Maggie Ellis)



Right: Nancy Walsh as Eleanor Tucker (courtesy Amy Putnam)



Above: Dane Lenton as Nathaniel Carter (courtesy Amy Putnam)



Right: Delna and Brian Abernathy as John and Elsie Blumer (courtesy Maggie Ellis)



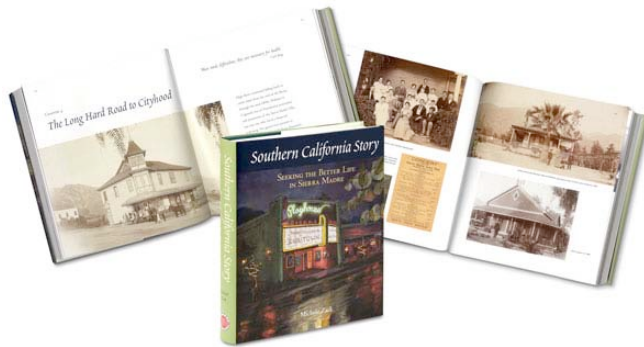
HOLIDAY SPECIAL



The award-winning history of Sierra Madre, ***Southern California Story; Seeking the Better Life in Sierra Madre***, by Michele Zack is now available for **the special holiday price of**

Only \$35

This handsome 384-page history of Sierra Madre and the forces that shaped it **makes the perfect gift!**



"Magnificently illustrated with photographs, maps, and works of art, this book will please all who love Southern California and its environment. Michele Zack, local historian, fills her history of Sierra Madre with fascinating information while also showing how it relates it to larger historical developments."

-Daniel Walker Howe, 2008 Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848*

Available for purchase at
 Arnold's Frontier Hardware
 Lizzie's Trail Inn
 (Saturdays 10:00-noon)
 Podley Properties
 Savor the Flavor
 Sierra Madre Public Library

REMEMBER TO MARK YOUR CALENDARS

for the

SMHPS Annual Holiday Dessert Party & Mount Lowe Railway Talk

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Mike is a native of Altadena, an Altadena Historian, and a Mount Lowe Railway aficionado. Mike will bring some wonderful slides of the building of this great railway and have great stories to share. We are very excited to have him as our guest speaker and hope you will mark your calendar so you can join us for this special event.

Members and their guests only – but you can join at the door!

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Time: 7:15 pm

Where: Hart Park House in Memorial Park

Cost: \$5 per person



Sierra Madre Historical Preservation Society
P.O. Box 202, Sierra Madre, CA 91025-0202
(626) 836-6709
www.smhps.org



HAPPY HOLIDAYS
From SMHPS!



Visit our museums
at Lizzie's Trail Inn
and Richardson House



Maurice Orme says "Stop by Lizzie's Trail Inn every Saturday from 10am to Noon and visit with us!"

Lizzie's Trail Inn and Richardson House - the perfect places to meet and speak with those (young and old) involved with the history of our town.

SIERRA MADRE HISTORICAL PRESERVATION SOCIETY
P.O. Box 202, Sierra Madre, CA 91025-0202
Membership / Donation Form

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____ E-mail _____

Membership Level

- ___ \$20 Individual
- ___ \$25 Family
- ___ \$5 Student
- ___ \$30 Contributing
- ___ \$60 Patron
- ___ \$100 Supporting
- ___ \$500 Lifetime

Specific Donations

- \$ _____ Sierra Madre Historical Archives
- \$ _____ Oral History Program
- \$ _____ Museums
- \$ _____ Richardson House
- \$ _____ Lizzie's Trail Inn

Total Enclosed: \$ _____

Please make check payable to SMHPS.

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

Yes, I would like to be a volunteer for the SMHPS. _____