



Altadena Historical Society

From our Files

People

March 28, 2010

Life on Mariposa Street circa 1900: Millionaires Road Indeed

Woodbury, McNally, Scripps and Kellogg may be better known, but it's possible that Col. G. G. Green was richer than all of them. Green was a multi millionaire when a million dollars really meant something. (A million in 1900 would be worth about 24 million today.)

No itinerant snake oil salesman hawking elixirs and potions from apple box podiums, George Gilbert Green made his fortune by expanding the patent medicine enterprise started by his father in the 1840s, and investing the profits in real estate including a major portion of future Altadena.

Most patent medicine companies published newsy almanacs to advertise their products. So popular were the medicines that by 1900 one almanac was printed for every two Americans. Green's almanacs, like most, featured detailed color graphics on the cover meant to impress with pictures of industry or manufacturing plants (above right.) Some featured idealized rural

scenes, others rosy cheeked children (middle right). Some companies (not Green's) posed pretty young women in provocative positions to underscore the calming affect of the elixir (lower right). Most patent medicines were 50% morphine and/or alcohol by volume so they were in fact, calming.

With three houses (the only house still standing is the summer home in Lake Hopatcong N. J.), private railroad cars, boats and the spoiled children that go with all that, the Greens were known for their extravagant indulgences. Below left: Daughter Edith (?) Green posing in the family's new touring car with the Altadena "ranch" in the background. (The Autocar was valued at \$2500 in 1904, what would be \$50,000 today.)

Learn more about Altadena's colorful Green family on April 25, 2010, when AHS will open the Green carriage house, 2495 Santa Rosa, Altadena, CA 91001, for tours between 10 am and 5 pm. Tickets are \$13 for members, \$16 for non-members, and \$20 at the door. Send a check to AHS, 730 E. Altadena Dr., Altadena, CA 91001. Or purchase tickets on-line. For details go to:

<http://ahscarriagehousetour.eventbrite.com/to event>

Tickets will be held at the door.

Photo (left) courtesy of Lake Hopatcong Historical Society. Almanac covers courtesy of Pasadena Museum of History. Photo (right) Library of Congress.

