



# The Echo

Volume 96

Number 1

Where the Past is Present

Spring/Summer 2023

## Finding History in Family Albums

by Pam Wright

History isn't just what happened in the past. History is made every day when events large and small are recorded for future generations. And photographs bring that history to life.

We've recently had the great pleasure to talk with AHS member Kathy Kobayashi, a woman who, with her late friend Carolyn Kozo Cole, also an Altadenan, created a powerful project which fascinates us today and will continue to do so for readers in the future. This is the story of that project.

Working for the Los Angeles Public Library, Kathy and Carolyn Cole struck up a close friendship, ultimately producing

"Shades of LA," a unique and vibrant collection of family photographs subtitled "Pictures From Ethnic Family Albums."

The project began with a small request.



**Carolyn Kozo Cole and Kathy Kobayashi—authors from Altadena with photos from their book—*Shades of LA***

Researchers from the Southern California Library for Social Science and Research came to the Library looking for images of Watts, to use in a commemorative event. Carolyn (who grew up in a family of photographers) turned to the

library's photo files. But instead of family homes, cultural events and all the missing

history, she found only a photo of a Pacific Electric railway station.

Believing that history would be found in home photo albums, Carolyn formed a non-profit support group, Photo Friends of the Los Angeles Public Library. In 1990, she and Kathy began working on a project which expanded far beyond anything they'd imagined - finding family albums to highlight all the cultures and shades in local communities. Security Pacific National Bank funded the initial effort and word went out into the community.

Imagine all the details and challenges involved...publicity, personal contacts with

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# President's Letter *by Jane Brackman*

## *Supporting Local History*

Continuing our focus on the hidden histories of Altadena, Altadena Historical Society invited Erik Hillard, local outdoorsman and trail builder, to speak about the connection between El Prieto Canyon Trail and Black entrepreneur Robert Owens at our January lecture.

Tucked in between Millard Canyon and the

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Arroyo Seco, the trail is named El Prieto, Spanish meaning "the dark-skinned one," for Owens, a Texas man born into slavery in 1806, who moved to Altadena at age 47, lived in and logged the canyon, and became the wealthiest Black businessman in Los Angeles County.



**Erik Hillard, Veronica Jones and Steven McCall at El Prieto Trail**

Hillard's trail building organization, Lowelives Respectable Citizens Club, is working to increase access to El Prieto trail and encourage education by adding signage to preserve Owens' legacy. This is an exciting and important project that will enhance visitors' understanding of what happened long ago.

AHS, along with other community organizations,



is supporting this plan with the U.S. Forest Service and a design is in process. Like Pasadena's Outward Bound Adventures, we believe it is important

that young people of color learn and know that folks who look like them and came from similar roots were engaged in this forest in its very early days. We encourage our members and all Altadenans to join us in support of this project.

For more information on El Prieto, Robert Owens and the historical signage project, go to [www.http://lowelivesrcc.org](http://www.lowelivesrcc.org).

***Don't miss Paul Ayers' presentation on Cabin Culture at our April Program! See page 11.***



## Finding History... continued from page 1

community leaders to build trust, and in-depth conversations with people to convince them their photos were not only valuable, but also safe.

Back in 1990, they needed film cameras to copy the photos and volunteers were needed to interact with people who attended the “photo days,” explaining why some photos were highly valuable – not just because of the people in them, but also because what they were doing, wearing, eating, etc., told a larger story about community life.

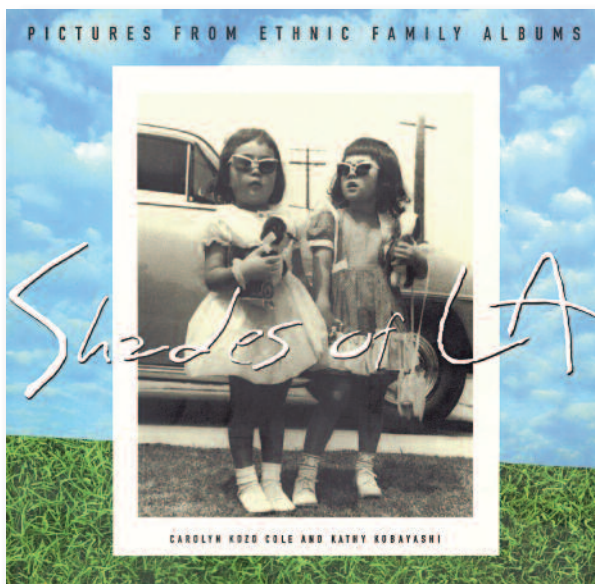
Young lovers, athletes, prom-goers, proud military members at a time when futures were uncertain, all the facets of ethnic family and community history were collected and printed in what became “Shades of LA.”

Details of family life brought universal



**Marilyn White (center standing) and her family**

connections anyone can relate to. Olympic runner Marilyn White’s mischievous little brother managed to lock himself into his toy handcuffs and then lost the key, just before the photographer arrived to take the family’s portrait.

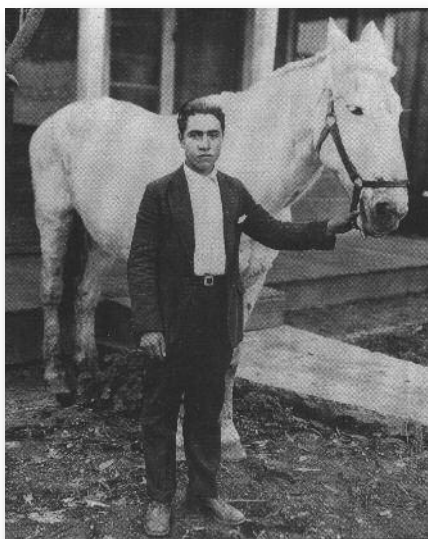


other similar projects.

Kathy has kindly donated all three “Shades” books to our (browse only) library at the Society. You’re welcome to enjoy these touching, often humorous and thought-provoking windows into the very human and diverse lives in Southern California. They remind us of our common emotions, families and histories.

Kathy and her husband, Hal Barron, met in Philadelphia, where both were involved in research on social and humanities issues. They came to Altadena in 1983, to a house very near the site of the old airport. Her friend and collaborator, Carolyn, was her neighbor.

Carolyn Cole was a highly respected Curator of the Photograph collection at the Los Angeles Public Library, and the Creator, Project Director and Heart of “Shades of LA.” She died in 2018.



**Alfredo Bedoya and his horse in the San Gabriel Valley**

# Altadena's Rich Economic Past

by Paul Rollins

Throughout the last quarter of the Nineteenth century, Altadena and Pasadena – indeed the entire San Gabriel Valley – led the state in grape and citrus fruit production. Building on the success of the Mission grape planted by early Spanish padres, the surge in Valley fruit farming did not get underway in our immediate area until the 1870s after Benjamin Eaton piped water from the



**Eaton Canyon water fall. Water used for irrigation of low-lying ranches 1870s**

canyon bearing his name to lower-lying ranches, thereby nourishing grape and citrus production up and down the dry, rocky Highland slope.

In Pasadena in 1874, early colonists planted over 100,000 grape vines, while they

peppered tracts of any size with citrus trees. Within four years, a northern California concern planted 14,000 orange trees east of Lake Avenue, creating the largest orange grove in the world.

Further east of town and slightly south of the 210 Freeway, Wilson and Shorb's Lake Vineyard ranch produced 150,000 gallons of wine and 116,000 gallons of brandy in 1875, the year L.J. Rose increased the size of his Sunnyslope vineyard to a thousand acres. Prudent Beaudry, former Los Angeles mayor, also opened the San Rafael winery just below

the present Colorado Street Bridge the same year.

Closer to Altadena and north of what is now the 210 Freeway lived Irish immigrant James Craig. In 1868, he negotiated water rights from Eaton and committed most of his 143-acre

Hermitage ranch to vineyards and fruit trees. In 1877, James F. Crank purchased Eaton's 225-acre Fair Oaks ranch, whose northern border was New York Avenue. Later that year, Crank's brother-in-law, Albert Brigden,



**Early Orchard on corner of Piedmont (Altadena Dr.) and Glen Ave.**

followed suit at The Hermitage, planting 120 acres of vines.

Englishman William Allen arrived in 1879 and purchased about 500 acres until his orchards and vines spread north from New York Avenue to the mountains and from Lake Avenue east to Eaton Canyon. In his





**Grapes grown in Altadena**

first year on Highland soil, Allen laid out his cultivatable acreage to 53,000 vines, most of which were Mission grapes. However, 2500 vines were devoted to varieties other than Mission, a trend adopted by virtually all local vintners. By the 1880s, Allen's ranch, along with grapes harvested at neighboring ranches, was an economic engine producing tons of grapes, oranges, and lemons annually for California as well as other parts of the country.

However, the Valley's halcyon days did not last. From 1884 to 1886 the "Anaheim Plague," laid waste to local vineyards. The scourge prevented grapevines from absorbing water at the roots, destroying or severely damaging most local vineyards. As a result, San Gabriel fruit farms turned to oranges and lemons for survival. Nevertheless, the damage done to their vineyards was irreversible. Most wineries never fully recovered, and the few that did, operated on borrowed time. Those remaining suffered through a national financial depression from 1893 until 1897, a

period when Mrs. William Allen, doyenne of the Sphinx ranch, stated, "nobody buys wine these days."



**Muscatel wine label**

Brief spurts of economic recovery were recorded as late as 1904 when the Allen ranch produced over 600 tons of raw grapes for processing. However, California's wine making industry had already begun to shift northward. As early as 1890, the Bay Area was producing 6.5 times more wine than distilleries in the southern part of the state. Valley viticulture never again regained market dominance.

Surely some remnants remain to remind us of our past. Most of the large fruit farms in Altadena and Pasadena were subdivided and sold as residential lots. It could be that the old gnarly vines and large fruit trees on your property are survivors of another era in Altadena history.



**San Rafael Winery - Pasadena area c. 1855**

*For a deeper look into Altadena's agricultural past, read Rollins' book, "Letters from the Sphinx," available for purchase from AHS.*

# Historic Climate Of Altadena

by Edgar McGregor

The climate of Southern California naturally does not allow for large populations to develop without advanced technologies such as canals, air conditioning, and transportation of food from across the globe. Southern California is a relatively hot and dry place compared to other parts of the planet, with a distinct rainy season in winter and a dry season in summer and autumn. Native communities were well aware of this, and water was a precious commodity that was not to be wasted.

In order for vegetation to survive here, it must either be able to go several months in a row without rain or it must huddle in deep, moist canyons where it can be shielded from the sun. While

annual average rainfall in Coastal California is higher than in other parts of the Desert Southwest, rain is naturally very heavy and sporadic, with only a handful of storms being responsible for most of the year's average precipitation. Even in winter, warm, sunny days greatly outnumber rainy ones.

The average temperature in this part of the world during the 19th century hovered around 61°F or 16°C. Winter consisted mostly of highs in the 60s and lows in the 30s and 40s. Pacific storms frequently came ashore and dumped heavy rain along the coastal slopes, bringing life to local streams like Eaton Creek and the Arroyo Seco. Warm spells were common, with highs in the 80s being possible at any time of the year.

California has a naturally variable winter climate, with some winters being warm and

dry, and others being cool and wet. Spring was mild and cloudy thanks to the proximity of the cold North Pacific Ocean nearby. Marine fog would keep humidity levels up and vegetation green until the start of the hot summer season. With the addition of water captured from mountain streams, Altadena's climate during this period encouraged early settlers to grow grapes, citrus, and other crops.



**A woman crosses stormy Lake Avenue in Altadena—  
6.49 inches of rain fell during 2 consecutive storms**

Summer consisted mostly of high temperatures in the upper 80s and low temperatures in mid-50s. These cool overnight temperatures provided overnight relief that prevented heat related illnesses in the general population. On average, there were about 13 days

per summer with a higher temperature greater than or equal to 95°F. The hottest day of summer had a temperature of about 103°F. By September, temperatures began to cool, especially at night. By October, cooler weather and occasional light rainstorms became more common. The average night would dip into the 40s, and the average day would stay in the 70s. By December, heavy Pacific rainstorms would return to Southern California.

Today, the climate of Altadena is much different. Weather conditions are hotter, more extreme, and more variable, and our average annual temperature has risen to 67.8°F. Winter, an already annoyingly variable season, has become even more variable. Both the wettest and driest winters ever recorded in Altadena have occurred in

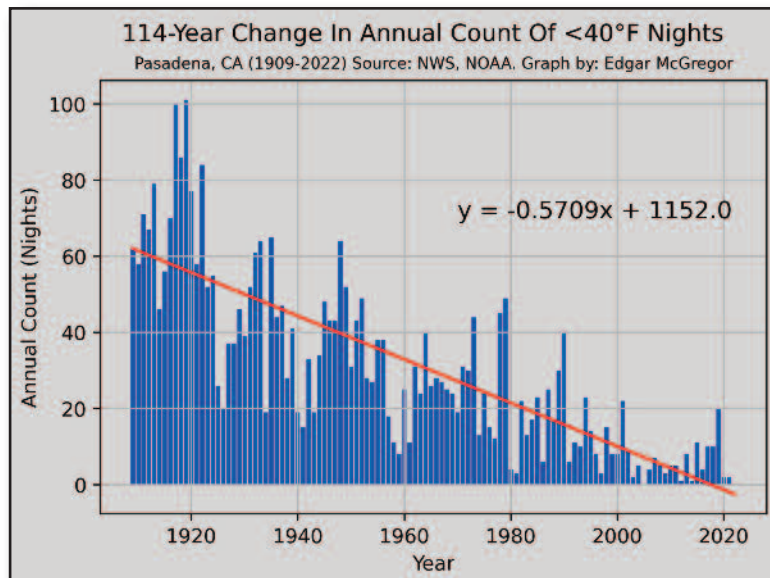


the 21st century. While warm spells in winter have not changed dramatically, there has been a complete collapse in cold weather.

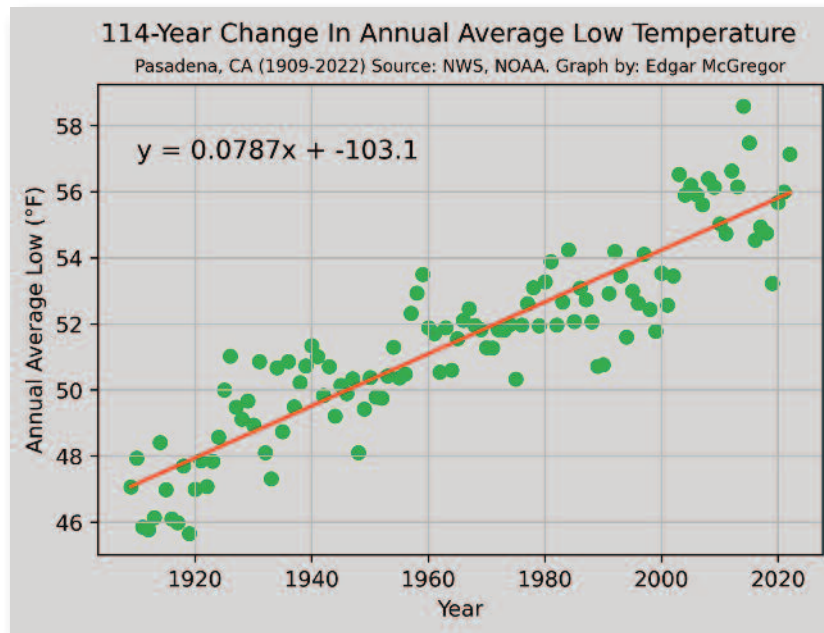
Average wintertime lows have warmed an astonishing 8.5°F over the past 115 years. The coldest night of winter is, on average, 9.6°F warmer than it used to be. Temperatures below freezing have become all but impossible, especially away from the foothills. While winter 2023 has felt like a cold one for Southern California, that is only among winters in the 21st century. We only think it is a cold one because other winters in the last decade have been stupendously hot.

Spring begins earlier and is hotter than it used to be. Temperatures exceeding 90°F frequent the month of March as much as they did in April 115 years ago. These hotter spring temperatures dry out our fuels and prime them for wildfires later in the year.

The summer season has expanded from 3 months long in the early 20th century to 5 months long today, now including the months of June and October in the group. Most if not all days from mid-July through mid-September are over 90°F, with an average of 33 days per summer over 95°F.



evaporating in only a century. In September, average low temperatures have warmed a mind-numbing 12°F from 53°F to 65°F! In terms of average lows, the coldest September of the 21st century is hotter than the hottest September of the 19th century! The frequency in which the average temperature



Only 7 summers in the past 115 years have achieved a temperature of 110°F or greater. Six of them have occurred since 1988, and three of them have occurred in the past 5 years.

Overnight lows have skyrocketed, with the overnight relief we once depended on

has increased from 5 times per century in the early 20th century to 200 times per century in the early 21st century, a 4,000% increase.

In autumn, conditions are even worse. The month of October during the 21st century is, on average, hotter than the average

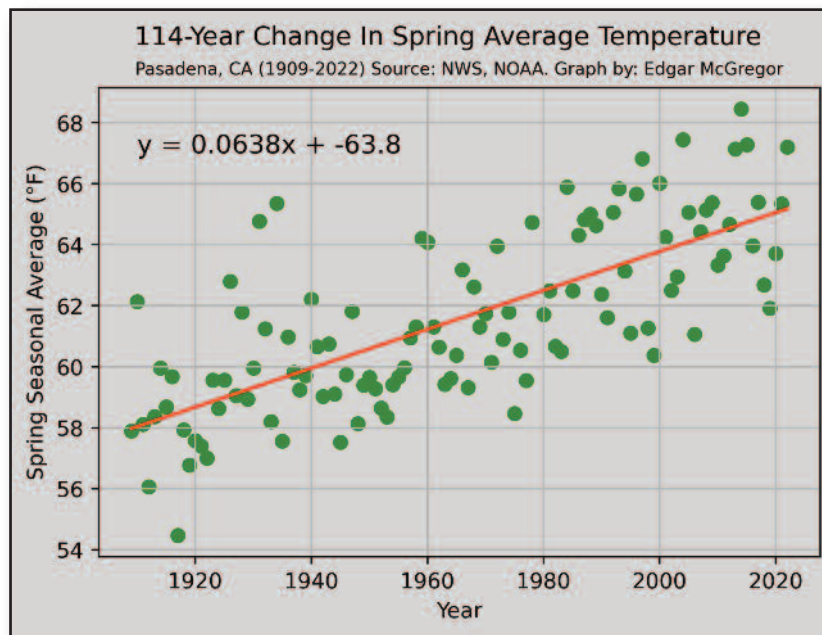
July and August in the early 20th century. In fact, October 2020 was hotter than any summer month of the first 21 years of weather record keeping from 1908 to 1928. Rainstorms are typically delayed later into the autumn season, putting local mountains at risk of more extreme wildfires.

Rainstorms are stronger, with torrential

downpours becoming about 7% more intense across the Western United States. Annual, monthly, and daily rainfall is not necessarily becoming heavier locally, but individual rain showers are. December is the lone month in which extreme heat is not increasing, thanks mainly to the introduction of so many shady trees across the new urban forest.

The suddenly more extreme climate of coastal Southern California is going unnoticed by residents who are shielded by the technologies we have developed to sustain ourselves. Winters seen as cold today would be regarded as strangely hot and wet by preceding civilizations. Summers that are seen as hot today would be seen as apocalyptic by the native Americans that once lived off these lands.

Native species struggle to survive in our local mountains as repeated droughts, wildfires, heatwaves, massive rain storms, and invasive species pummel the region. The statistics outlined in this article are all representative of past changes. Climate change is accelerating in this part of the world, and the level of heat

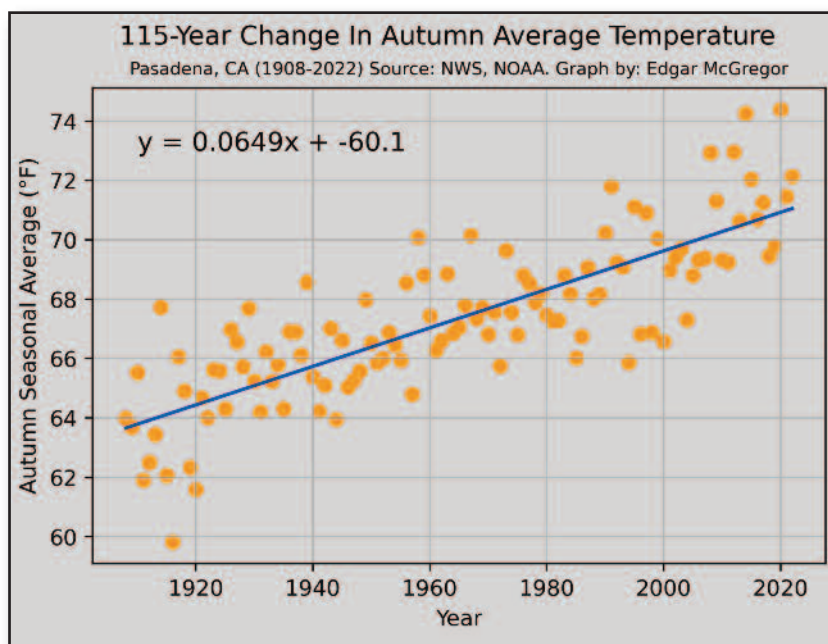


not expected to decrease, but even more variability than what is seen today will occur. The hottest heat waves of the decade will be able to achieve temperatures of about 120°F. Average summer high temperatures will

hover around 96°F, with dozens of days each summer well over 100°F. Most summer nights will remain above 70°F as humidity levels take to the sky, effectively ending the reign of Southern California's attractive climate. Some winters may struggle to see their coldest

night dip below 45°F as the nearby Pacific Ocean heats up.

The climate of Altadena has radically changed in the past 11 decades, and unless something is done to curb climate change, even more significant changes will come to fruition over the next 11 decades.



that is to come is astonishing.

By 2100, average annual temperatures in this area are expected to rise to 72.0°F - 74.0°F. The summer season will expand to 8 months, beginning in April and lasting through November.

Average precipitation is

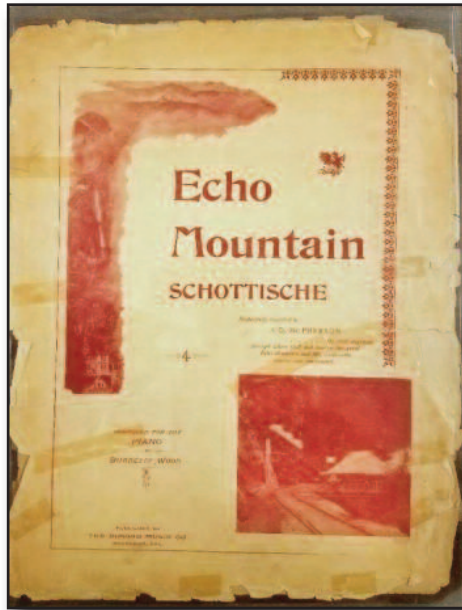


# News from the Archives

by Jean Phillips

## Research Activity

Since the end of October we've enjoyed greeting visitors on Mondays and Fridays from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., taking and responding to research requests, and helping other organizations with their programs and events. Here are some of the ways we've helped.



**The Mount Lowe Chamber Players**, professional musicians from Altadena, who present free concerts for the community, held a well-received concert Sunday, March 19, featuring music written at the time the Mount Lowe Railroad was built, and concluding with a rousing rendition of "Echo Mountain Schottische". AHS was pleased to be able to assist with information and images of the railroad.

**The Pasadena Community Foundation** requested images of life at the Scripps Home in the 1940s and 1950s. Several images from our Scripps Collection were scanned and sent to the Foundation for a publication they are producing.

**Brandon Hammerli, a teacher at Oak Knoll Montessori**, asked his middle-school class to research and write an essay on a topic of interest about Altadena. With the help of AHS archivist Deirdre Del Re, twelve students completed short research assignments on

topics including Millard Canyon, Devils Gate Dam, the Cobb Estate, and gold mining.

We provided Altadena Library with information about **Buffalo Soldier Oliver Gooding** for their Black History Month display.

**The Altadena Guild came to us for information on the homes on Rubio Street** between Maiden Lane and Holliston Avenue. They will be hosting their annual Home Tour on that block. We provided information on individual properties and early maps of the street. (We'll have a table at this event – please stop by and say hello.)

## Programs and Partnerships

**At the Mariposa Street Holiday Sip and Shop** we met many Altadenans and shared information about AHS.

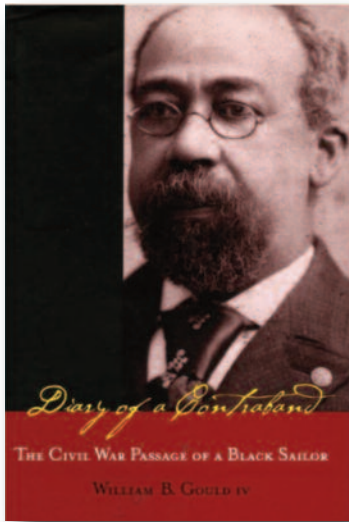
**January marked our second live program since the pandemic** – the story of early Black entrepreneur Robert Owens and El Prieto trail. See Jane Brackman's column on page 2 for more information.

Board member Veronica Jones, along with Steve McNall, gave **a video presentation on Black history** to the local chapter of Questers, a national historical association.

**In February** we partnered with the Altadena Libraries



to present author William Gould IV who, with his son, William Gould V, talked about his book, "Diary of a Contraband" in



the library's community room. The talk included a short video illustrating the first William Gould's escape from slavery and participation in the Union Navy. "Diary of a Contraband" is now available for purchase from AHS – online or at the archives.

The library also displayed our "Eyes on Altadena" exhibit in their community room during January and February.

## Upcoming Events

We're happy to announce that the graves of **Ellen Garrison Clark's husband, Harvey Clark, and her sister, Susan Garrison Johnson**, have been located near Ellen's



**Ellen Garrison Jackson Clark from a Robins House exhibit poster**

grave. The local chapter of the Questers is donating the cost of their headstones, with installation by Mountain View Cemetery. We'll be celebrating Juneteenth with a short ceremony at Mountain View. More information will follow.

## Mountain View is also partnering with AHS for our second annual Ellen Garrison Clark scholarship awards.

Two deserving Altadena teenagers, one from Pasadena Outward Bound and one from John Muir High School, will each be awarded \$1,000 for college expenses at a luncheon in their honor. Winners will be announced in June, 2023.

**The Altadena Rotary Club's pancake breakfast** takes place on April 29, from 8 to 10:30 in Grocery Outlook's parking lot. AHS

## Altadena Grocery Outlet is Proud to Host

### The Semi-Annual Pancake Breakfast

Benefits Altadena Mountain Rescue Team, Altadena Heritage, and Altadena Historical Society



**GROCERY  
OUTLET**  
bargain market



**Saturday, April 29, 2023 • 8 a.m. — 10:30 a.m.**

**Here or To-Go Tickets \$5.00**

Tickets available at Sheriff Station, El Patron Restaurant, Grocery Outlet or [altadenarotary.org](http://altadenarotary.org)  
Sheriff Station (626) 798-1131

Proceeds benefit AMRT, Heritage and Historical Society | Sponsored By -  **Rotary**  
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[altadenarotary.org](http://altadenarotary.org)

is a beneficiary of the event, so please support us by purchasing a delicious \$5 breakfast. Tickets are available at the event and at AHS during our open hours.

**Save the Date:** on Saturday, July 8th, the Altadena Community Center's tenants will be celebrating its 20th anniversary. Last year's party for the exhibit opening was a big success – this one should be even better!

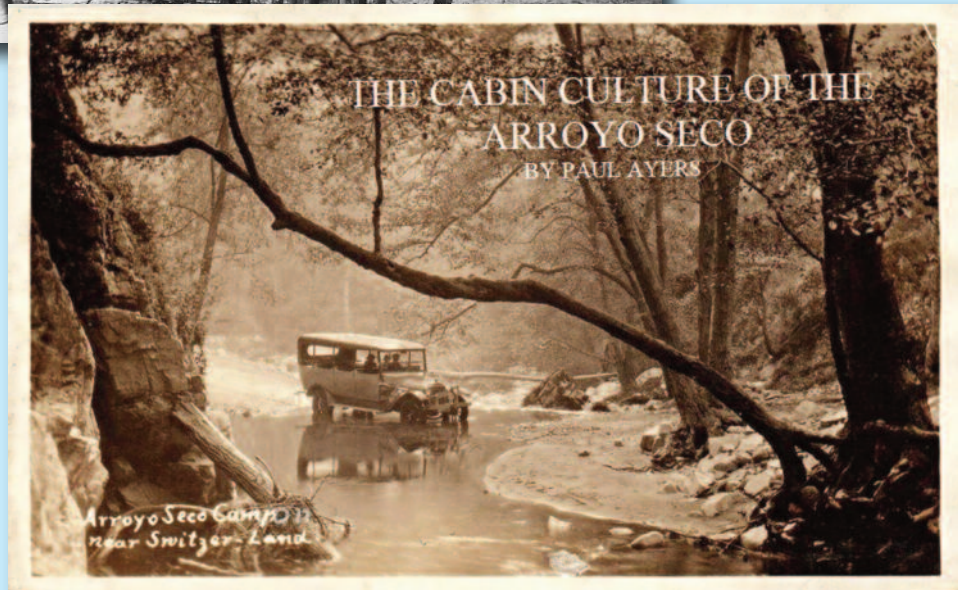
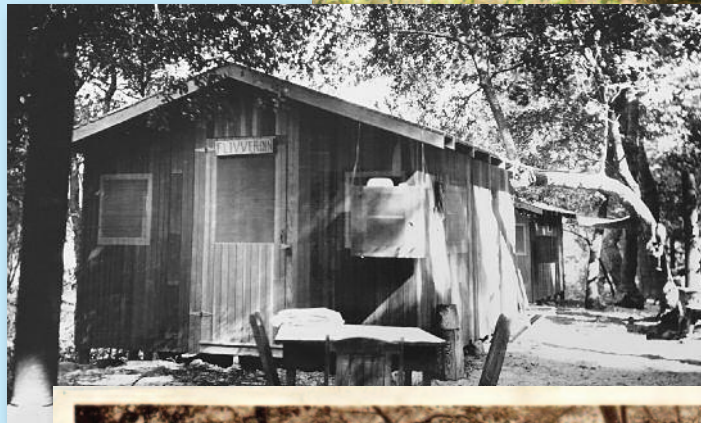
## Donations

We usually use this space to talk about additions to our collection, but we've been blessed with so many interesting donations our volunteers have been unable to process them all. Look for a long list in our next newsletter.



# ALTADENA HISTORICAL SOCIETY PRESENTS: THE CABIN CULTURE OF THE ARROYO SECO

On April 24, 2023, Historian Paul Ayers will present "The Cabin Culture of the Arroyo Seco". The show examines a lost recreational community that thrived on the upper Arroyo Seco in the first half of the Twentieth Century. Spurred on by a Forest Service program that offered cheap cabin leases and facilitated by a County Road that was the original planned route of the Angeles Crest Highway, the area became the home to three major resorts and over 150 cabins. Ayers' presentation will begin with a history supported by photos of the cabins, resorts and the Arroyo Road. This will be followed by a look at what remains today, arguably Los Angeles County's largest set of surviving ruins. The program, free to AHS members, is open to the public. Donations are gratefully accepted.



**7:30 p.m. Monday, April 24, 2023  
in the Altadena Community Center  
730 E. Altadena Drive**



Altadena Historical Society  
730 E. Altadena Drive  
Altadena, CA 91001-2351

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## The Echo

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Altadena Historical Society (AHS), a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization was founded to gather, preserve, and share information about the people, places and events that have shaped Altadena's past.

**Please join or renew today!**

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☐ \$35 Membership

☐ \$60 Premium Membership

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You can now join online: <http://www.altadenahistoricalsociety.org/join.html>