



The Echo

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Where the Past is Present

Summer 2025

AHS CELEBRATES JUNETEENTH

Story By Jon Hainer, Photos by Deb Halberstadt

A standing room only audience celebrated Juneteenth festivities in Altadena on June 19, 2025, at the Altadena Historical Society's Fourth Annual Luncheon and Scholarship Awards ceremony at Loma Alta Park with keynote remarks made by Rep. Judy Chu (CA-28).



Ellen Garrison Clark Scholarship Winners

Four Ellen Garrison Clark Scholarships were awarded to John Muir High School seniors Jameel Franco, Deja'Nae Smith, Christian Holland-Delany and Taylor Williams.

In her remarks, Chu stated, "It is so wonderful to be here, especially since I was able to cast my vote to make Juneteenth a Federal Holiday [in 2021]." She went on to say that "today is about preserving our history as well as commemorating it." The celebration included the presentation of colors by Boy Scout Troop 40 led by Julius Campbell, and an audience-participation rendition of *Lift Every Voice and Sing*, led by Aretha Scruggs. The song is a poem written by James Weldon and set to music by his brother J. Rosamond Johnson. Often referred to as the Black

National Anthem, it was first performed in 1900 and has become a powerful symbol of the African American experience, resilience and hope for equality. The program also featured a poetry reading by Dr. Kathleen M. Lesko and an Observational Photography exhibit by Alfred Haymond.

Juneteenth marks the official end to slavery in the United States when federal troops arrived in Galveston, TX, the final location of resistance by the defeated Confederacy. On June 19, 1865, news of the Emancipation Proclamation of President Lincoln, issued more than two years prior, was finally disseminated to the quarter-million enslaved people in the state.

Ellen Garrison Clark was an African-American anti-slavery activist, teacher, and civil rights proponent. She spent her final years in the Altadena and Pasadena area and was buried in Mountain View Cemetery in 1892. The first Juneteenth celebration sponsored by the Altadena Historical Society included adding a tombstone to her grave on June 19, 2021, two days after Congress passed the legislation making Juneteenth an official federal holiday. The Historical Society's handout reminded attendees of Ms. Clark's injunction, "We must lift as we climb."

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U.S. Representative Judy Chu (seated in blue jacket) surrounded by Juneteenth attendees

Various Altadena Historical Society presentations and a short speech by Caltech sophomore, Noah Howell, were included. AHS President Veronica Jones offered closing remarks, reminiscing about playing in Loma Alta Park as a child, then bringing her children and finally grandchildren to play there. Off-stage, she provided her summary: “Diversity is good; we are all in this together.”

Dr. Helena Johnson, Southern California Area President at National Council of Negro Women, who was attending her first Altadena Juneteenth meeting said, “We are celebrating not only Juneteenth but the survival of Altadena.”

First-time attendee Mary Landau, an Altadena resident for 49 years, lost her home in the Eaton Fire in January. She said, “I have always wanted to attend a Juneteenth celebration; to me, it is an important day in American history.” As for the future, Landau lamented, “I keep having trouble thinking about it.”

Another first-time attendee, voice artist Sheldon Wright, grew up in Altadena, where his parents lived from 1963 to 2017. He and his sister attended Loma Alta Elementary School, Eliot Junior High School (now Eliot Arts Magnet Academy), and John Muir High School. Loma Alta and Eliot suffered considerable damage in the Eaton Fire and are currently inoperable. Wright also lived in Altadena in his own home for ten years. He visited the structures where he had once lived; all had been destroyed in the firestorm.

“Altadena writ large will take on some form that borrows from what was, but there is going to be a whole lot of new.” He said he has also been captivated (“it was so surreal”) by a phenomenon he saw developing. “People began taking photos of their (now destroyed) homes out of their phones just like you would share pictures of your children or grandchildren.”

The event was sponsored by the LA County Board of Supervisors, the Altadena Library District, LA County Parks & Recreation, Pasadena Federal Credit Union, the Altadena Rotary Club and the Altadena community. The Ellen Garrison Clark Scholarship sponsors included Mountain View Mortuary & Cemetery, Good Neighbor Bar, American Association of Blacks in Energy, and the Altadena Historical Society.

This was the fourth luncheon and the fifth consecutive observation of Juneteenth by the Altadena Historical Society.



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Veronica Jones

Never Daunted

Dear Members and Friends of the Altadena Historical Society,

Welcome to the first Echo newsletter of 2025! As we all know, this year had been challenging for our community due to the devastating Eaton Fire. The fire did not spare our offices, causing ash and soot damage, but thankfully, we were able to regain full access just recently.

Despite these difficulties, our Society has continued to move forward and make progress. We had a very successful Juneteenth program, and we are looking forward to our first quarterly event this fall. In addition, we are excited to announce the upcoming reprint of "Altadena Between Wilderness and City," written by Michele Zack. So, stay tuned for more updates and the opportunity for pre-sale purchase.

As part of our ongoing efforts to document the Eaton Fire's impact on our community, we continue to collect oral histories from those affected by the fire. If you or someone you know would like to share your story and have it archived at the Historical Society for future generations and future research purposes, please contact our offices to schedule an interview.

In these trying times, our commitment to preserving Altadena's history remains unwavering. We look forward to expanding our reach within the community to gather and protect any historical artifacts that have survived the fire. As we approach our 90th anniversary, let us come together to celebrate our shared heritage and look forward to our upcoming speaker series.



Judy Chu (left) and Veronica Jones (right)

Thank you for your continued support, and we look forward to seeing you at our upcoming events.

Best regards,

VERONICA JONES

President

Altadena Historical Society



DR. CLARENCE BENJAMIN JONES, DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR., AND ALTADENA, CALIFORNIA

Story by Jon Hainer and Veronica Jones

Dr. Clarence B. Jones, for 18 months a resident of Altadena, was a major figure in the civil rights movement albeit somewhat behind the scenes. He is



Dr. Clarence Jones,

Photo courtesy of the University
of San Francisco (circa 2010)

best known as one of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s most important advisors, lawyers, friends, and confidants. Dr. Jones co-wrote the "I Have a Dream" speech with Dr. King, smuggled the "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" out of the prison for him and arranged for its distribution, publication, and was insightful enough to

arrange copyright protection for certain key King speeches or articles. He was the most effective fundraiser for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and bailed more demonstrators out of jail than you can shake a nightstick at.

On one occasion so many teenagers had been arrested with Dr. King in Birmingham, the leaders there despaired of raising sufficient bail funds to get the kids out from under Bull Connor, the infamous Commissioner of Public Safety. Dr. Jones went to New York and at the invitation of Nelson Rockefeller went to the Chase Manhattan bank on Saturday morning. There the vault was opened and a valise with \$100,000 in cash was taken from the vault and handed to Dr. Jones. This was just one of the several occasions on which the Rockefellers provided important support to the civil rights movement not exactly secretly, but without much publicity.

Dr. Jones had many accomplishments in his life outside of his involvement with MLK including being the first black man to become an allied member of the New York Stock Exchange (1967), being one of the outside negotiators at the Attica prison riot (1971), being a successful investment banker, and later in life an educator. Last



Dr. Jones received the Medal of Freedom from President Joe Biden on May 3, 2024

Photo courtesy of the White House

year at age 93, he was awarded the Medal of Freedom by President Biden. Until his retirement in 2021, he was a visiting professor at Stanford University, and the founding director emeritus of the Institute for Nonviolence and Social Justice at the University of San Francisco, as well as the principal of the Dr. Clarence B. Jones Institute for Social Advocacy. All of this is in the public record and reasonably well-known.

What is almost unknown is that Dr. Jones and Dr. King met each other for the first time in Altadena in early 1960. Dr. Jones was kind enough to spend an hour with us reminiscing about his time in Altadena sixty-odd years ago, how he got here, why he left, and some of the things he learned and did along the way.

Clarence Benjamin Jones was born in the Philadelphia area to a domestic servant couple – his mother was the cook and maid; his father was the chauffeur and gardener. He hardly lived with

his parents as a child. He remembers that by the age of 6 he had lived with three different families who were family or friends of his parents. For first grade he was sent to a Catholic boarding school for “colored and Indian orphans and foster children,” and stayed there through middle school seeing his parents for only 2 or 3 weeks during each summer. Dr. Jones relayed that throughout his life, people have expressed sympathy for his difficult early life; he is not so sure that sympathy is appropriate. “I was raised by white Irish Catholic nuns,” he said, “who inculcated me with the values that led me later to be valedictorian in my high school and to earn a full scholarship to Columbia University. Every day the nuns told me that they loved me, that Jesus loved me, that I was beautiful, that I should be all that I could be.” In his book **What Would Martin Say?** (2009), Dr. Jones wrote “Wallowing in victimhood is a guarantee you won’t pursue excellence . . . pursue excellence and the rest will take care of itself.”

During high school, Dr. Jones lived at home with his parents in New Jersey and attended Palmyra High. In addition to his studies, he was active in sports and played clarinet in the band and orchestra well enough to get schooled at Julliard in the two summers before college. College at Columbia was challenging, and Dr. Jones again credited the Irish nuns for sufficiently preparing him to be able to thrive in that environment. Following college, Dr. Jones was drafted into the army (which is a whole story unto itself) and then ended up going to Boston University (BU) Law School. There he entered the Nathan Burkan Memorial Copyright Competition which earned him not only an award (special mention), but a job offer in Hollywood at Review Productions on the Universal Studios lot. By then he had married Anne Norton, daughter of W.W. Norton, a publisher, and found himself shopping for a home within reasonable driving distance from his work.

The Jones’s started looking for a home in Altadena since their good friends Charles and Fran White lived in nearby Pasadena (the artist had not yet moved to Altadena). Altadena in 1959 was overwhelmingly white; certainly, Dr. Jones was not aware of any African Americans living here at that time. Indeed, it would be another ten years before the Supreme Court outlawed (race) restrictive covenants in deeds that were a feature of the title to many homes in Altadena. His wife Anne found them a home at 2751 Highview Avenue (it was destroyed by the Eaton Fire in January 2025) not far from the Zane Grey house on Mariposa. Anne, who was white, simply went around with local realtors saying that her husband’s work commitments prevented him from being present. Since they would be paying cash for their home, no one was disturbed that a gentleman working at Universal Studios would be moving in. Dr. Jones related his impressions of walking into his new house for the first time and being delighted at its features including a room with a retractable roof around a growing tree. The room provided a striking view of the San Gabriel Mountains and the stars at night.

After they moved in, the Jones's were approached by the realtor who had sold them the house and tried to undo the sale explaining that black people were simply not allowed in Altadena. Anne and Clarence ignored this person and showed him the door. Their neighbors were surprisingly low key about the integration of their neighborhood. Dr. Jones particularly remembered being struck by the number of people who worked at JPL or Cal Tech and wondered if that was the reason for the friendly reception. That is not to say there was no reaction. Dr. Jones recalled clearly the first time that he mowed the lawn at his new house. The neighbor from across the street quickly came over and explained that Clarence should hire a gardener to do that work. Dr. Jones said he enjoyed mowing his lawn and would continue to do so. His neighbor asked if, in that case, he would mind dressing appropriately for the task. Dr. Jones realized his shorts resulted in a "public display" of his very black legs and the neighbor simply found this shocking. Today, at least, we can laugh on hearing that story.

At work too, Dr. Jones was the lone black person. He recalled having Bobby Darin and Sandy Dennis walk into his office at Universal. Mr. Darin, in a joking and friendly fashion, asked Dr. Jones, "how did they let you in here? They don't even permit black janitors in this joint." The answer was that BU Professor Donald Shapiro who taught Dr. Jones about copyright law (resulting in an award-winning paper) was good friends with Leslie Sharlow who was the general counsel for Review Productions. Although we did not discuss this in our interview, we later learned that later in 1960 Mr. Sharlow died from a heart attack and Dr. Jones was fired the next day, but by then he was already working with Dr. King. So, we can confirm that there were challenges aplenty in that era.

When Martin Luther King flew to Los Angeles in early 1960 pursuant to an invitation from the World Affairs Council, he was under indictment for perjury in Alabama in connection with his filing of a supposedly fraudulent tax return. MLK's lawyers in New York had identified Jones as a lawyer they thought might be better employed in the civil rights movement than entertainment law. Dr. King asked to meet Dr. Jones who offered his home as the venue. On a Friday night, MLK was ushered into the Jones's home and shown the room with a living tree and a retractable roof the better to see the San Gabriel Mountains and the Milky Way, the lemon trees, flowers, and plants that were Ann's avocation. "Nice house," said Dr. King. Dr. Jones wondered if MLK had noticed the almost new 1959 Chevy Impala convertible that was kept proudly on display in the driveway. Dr. Jones described in his typical self-deprecating fashion that as he listened to Dr. King he thought to himself "why would I want to go east and subject myself to the South? My wife is pregnant with our second child, I am barely a year out of law school, I love my house and my car, my job is perfect for me; why would I want to go with this slick minister?" Despite King's supplications, Jones turned him down flat.

Afterwards, Ann Jones demanded of her husband, "how could you possibly turn that man down? He has been on the cover of Time magazine and is asking for YOU." Jones's caustic reply was "he's just some preacher who got caught with his hand in the cookie jar." The next morning, Dr. King's secretary secured the promise of Dr. Jones to go hear MLK preach on Sunday in Baldwin Hills. And on the next day, Dr. Jones duly presented himself at the church to find that a seat was saved for him. "I had never heard anyone preach like that man," Dr. Jones recalled. "And then Dr. King started talking about how black professionals were not heeding the call of the civil rights movement where their help was badly needed. 'In fact, there is one young man right here in this congregation, a lawyer, with a tree growing out of his modern house and a convertible in his driveway who did not respond to the call.'" Dr. Jones talked about how he was convinced that everyone in the congregation knew he was being called out (although he was never named) and slunk further and further into his pew as MLK really poured it on in detail



Dr. Jones with President Obama in the Oval Office with the bust of Dr. King in the foreground.

Photo courtesy of White House Photographer, Pete Souza

and in length. At the end of the service, Dr. Jones got in the long line to greet and thank Dr. King and pondered what he should say when they met again. When the time came just a few minutes later, Dr. Jones said, “Dr. King, when do you need me in Birmingham?”



Martin Luther King Jr. at Friendship Baptist Church
in Pasadena, February 1960

Photo – Pasadena Museum of History

Dr. Jones would spend the bulk of 1960 on leave from Review Productions crisscrossing the country doing work for Dr. King before finally deciding that the family had to move back east, that living in Altadena was just impractical. Given the era particularly, Dr. Jones assessed the people of Altadena as being warm and friendly with only a few exceptions. “Our time in Altadena was transformational,” Dr. Jones fondly recalled, “it was our first house, and we were happy. I will never forget the beauty of the San Gabriels.”

The authors feel compelled to say here that we will never forget our conversation with Dr. Clarence B. Jones and getting to hear an insider’s perspective on a crucial time in our history with characters who now seem larger than life. Dr. Jones once wrote that “everything that discourages conversation retards progress.” We feel very lucky to have progressed with Dr. Jones. And we are very happy that Altadena was the spot where Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Dr. Clarence Benjamin Jones met and forged a partnership of enduring value.



THE WILLIAM D. DAVIES BUILDING

By Cynthia Pearson

The William D. Davies Memorial Building served as a home of recreation, theater, and social life in Altadena for 90 years. Part of the spectacular Farnsworth Park, the Davies Building, with its rustic charm and inviting presence, stood proud in the northeast corner of the park and was, from its start, a gift to the community and a monument “to human betterment.”

Designed by Los Angeles architect Charles H. Kyson, the substantial building featured stone, shingle, and iron characteristic of the “rustic” style popular with park buildings of the time, and associated with the arts and crafts, Craftsman, and similar styles found throughout Altadena. The building was two stories tall, with the lower story being constructed primarily of stone and the upper being covered in wood shingles. Anchored by a massive stone and concrete chimney in the center of the building and accompanied by a tall stone chimney to the west, the structure made use of the terrain, creating a dominant presence when viewed from the south. It also made



Original by Keni Arts (used with permission of the artist)

use of local resources; it was reported that “[t]he heavy stones that form its base and massive fireplaces were hauled by mule teams from the nearby arroyo.” Inside, the rustic style continued, with stone, wood, and iron composing the interior finishes. The large auditorium on the main floor featured a immense stone fireplace at the south wall and a raised stage on its east end. Hardwood floors, a ceiling with open rusticated beams, and large wrought-iron chandeliers brought a rustic grandeur to the auditorium. On the lower floor, an assembly room, dressing rooms, and

other rooms, including a caretaker's room, provided space for groups to gather and for performers to prepare, as well as, in later years, for the Parks and Recreation Department employees to maintain offices.

The design was done while architect Kyson was apparently contracted with the Los Angeles County Forestry Department, and its style echoes structures built in the Angeles National Forest and USDA Forest Service buildings throughout the west. The rustic style, as an architectural movement, was intended to be “wholly integrated with the landscape and responsive to the environment.” In using local materials (such as stone from the arroyo) and those that blended in with the park surroundings – and the nearly adjacent foothills – the Davies Building created a space for public and community endeavors in harmony with its natural setting.

The idea for a recreation center at Farnsworth Park (then called Altadena Park) came at least in part from the Women's Circle of Altadena and was championed by community members such as Mrs. Walter D. Thurber, Mrs. C.W. Baker, and William D. Davies. As the Women's Circle envisioned ways to benefit their town and its people during the Great Depression, the organization and community members raised nearly \$50,000 in private funds toward supporting workers in Altadena involved in the construction of the community building and other projects.



Original by Keni Arts (used with permission of the artist)

To complete the construction of the Altadena Recreation Building, federal funds via the Civil Works Administration (CWA) (later replaced by the Works Progress Administration) and the State Emergency Relief Agency (SERA) were secured. A later estimate put the building costs at \$40,000 with additional private funds supplementing the public funds. The partnership between the private community groups and the federal and state funding provided jobs to unemployed Altadenans while constructing a center that would serve Altadena for generations.

The project was designed to create a hub for social activities in Altadena – and to drive out less wholesome competitors. Community support for the new recreation center ran parallel (at least politically) with community opposition to initiatives to permit dance halls or dancing at establishments that sold alcohol.

William D. Davies, urged the County Welfare Commission in early 1934 to deny a permit to a business at Lincoln Avenue and Figueroa Drive. He said that the then-under construction Altadena Community Recreation building would “provide our community with adequate free recreational opportunities and facilities in an environment that is pure and wholesome, of far greater value and desirability and of more lasting benefit to the largest number of the inhabitants of our community, than all the liquor places combined.” Prohibition, which banned liquor sales nationally, ended only on December 5, 1933.

Though the concern about wholesomeness may now sound quaint and rooted in the social and moral values of the day, the recreation center immediately fulfilled its purpose of serving as a center of Altadena's social and recreational life. A well-attended dedication ceremony on October 28, 1934, launched the new building into a place of welcoming and importance for many social clubs, civic meetings, educational events, dances, and other entertainment activities.

In 1943, the Altadena Recreation Building was renamed the William D. Davies Memorial Building. A ceremony was held on August 31, 1943, just weeks after Mr. Davies's death. Mr. Davies was recognized for his efforts to realize the construction of the Altadena Community Building and Farnsworth Park, as well as in establishing (and leading) the Board of Control for the building. He had been honored earlier in the year by the Altadena Citizens

Association for his importance to Altadena. Apart from his work toward the recreation center and Farnsworth Park, he was very active with the Altadena Library and was involved in the construction of the library building on Lake Avenue designed by architect Frederick Marsh. He was also extremely involved in fire prevention efforts in Altadena. Understanding Altadena's relationship to the windy foothill conditions that can allow fires to flourish, Mr. Davies worked hard to create fire districts and was responsible for bringing the first fire station to Altadena.

From its early days, the building was managed and operated by a local building control board made up of representatives of 20 or more community organizations. The local board leased the facility for \$1 per year and directed its use and operations. In the mid-1950s, concerns over private management of public property made their way to the County Board of Supervisors. Director of the Department of Parks and Recreation Norman S. Johnson stated in a letter to the county in 1957 that "the department [Parks and Recreation] has, in effect, been excluded from the use of the facilities to the degree that no long-range programming of dancing, drama, or many other cultural activities has been possible because of the absence of enclosed facilities." While the control board denied this – and the County representatives did acknowledge that the board, then under the leadership of Mrs. Jean Allard Jeancon, had been a "cooperative" partner – tensions between the County and the control board remained. After the County Board's initial round of analysis, the local control board was allowed to maintain its lease and command of the building.

However, community opposition grew, with a new Altadena Recreation Council formed to support County control of the building, specifically focusing on what it saw as a deficient emphasis on youth programming. The issue of control was ultimately resolved when the lease between the control board and the County was deemed illegal in 1958. Following a period of transition, the county took control on August 14, 1959. As the tables turned, the County had to lease the furnishings of the building from the control board, which had, in its early years, raised nearly \$5,000 to furnish the building.

Over its history, the Davies Building hosted myriad social and community clubs, from girl scout troops to senior citizens' organizations. (A 1960s event was "Fun After 50," aimed at "older" residents of Altadena.) It hosted author talks, fashion shows, dances, and costume balls, and a long-running annual lapidary show. It also served as a venue for community meetings, one example being in the 1960s, when the Marx brothers, who then owned the Cobb Estate, made plans to sell the property to develop a new cemetery. Over 200 Altadenans showed up to voice their opposition, and, indeed, the plan never went forward.

Theatre Americana was known for presenting original plays and championing new work by emerging and established playwrights, and it brought performances to the auditorium of the Davies Building four times a year spanning more than 50 years. The plays ranged in tone and subject matter and for a time were accompanied by post-performance entertainment. One play – 1956's "Lily of Tombstone" or "The Triumph of virtue," a western melodrama – was followed by a "customary attendant olio," featuring can-can dancers (including two students from John Muir High School), "Floradora girls (derivative of a Broadway hit in 1900 and 1930 movie each named Floradora), a magician, old-time singers and barroom warblers." It was joked that "between acts hawkers will sell peanuts, pacify crying babies, or, if requested, probably go out and give some oats to your horse."



Original by Kenji Arts (used with permission of the artist)

Despite changes in control over the Davies Building, Theatre Americana continued its residency at the Davies Building for decades, as a sponsorship by the parks department allowed it to use the building free of charge. However, the partnership wasn't always smooth; the Theater periodically looked for a different home. In the 1970s, it cited the lack of bus line access to the Davies Building, along with poor lighting, as a reason to change venues. (It was at the time looking to buy the former Altadena Public Library building.) However, it continued to present its plays at the Davies Building well into the 1990s, when it was finally forced to leave its home of 60 years because of costs; cuts to the budget of the Parks and Recreation Department effectively ended the partnership and the theater company's ability to remain in its longtime home. Despite the unhappy ending to the intertwined story of Theatre Americana and the Davies Building, the company's legacy of decades of original theater brought prominence and cultural stability to the Davies Building, and, by extension, all of Altadena.

Budget cuts to the Parks and Recreation Department strained the building and its occupants over the years. In the early 1990s, the need for repairs to the Davies Building was cited as an example of the County's bureaucracy standing in the way of a better Altadena; Town Council member Jan Rodriguez lamented in 1994 that "there is a wonderful old historical building . . . that needs rehabilitation . . . and volunteers have offered to paint it. But the county said no because its liability insurance wouldn't cover the volunteers if they got injured. Just think of the rental income they could make if the building was repaired."

Luckily, there were many people who recognized the value of the Davies Building. In 1997, it was added, along with Farnsworth Park, to the National Register of Historic Places. In its later years, it continued to serve Altadena as a hub for meeting and performing. The Davies Building was destroyed by the Eaton Fire in January 2025, with its surviving chimneys serving as monuments to destruction. With its adjacent amphitheater (completed in 1938) remaining somewhat intact, perhaps a rebuilt Altadena recreation center will bring a new place to gather.



SAVING THE TILES

By Cynthia Pearson



The Eaton Fire did not leave much in the wake of the homes that it ravaged; house after house was burned into rubble with most materials and mementos reduced to ash. One relic, however, often remained standing tall: the chimney. And those chimneys – and hearths, and archways, and similar survivors – often featured treasure: original tiles by Ernest A. Batchelder and other master craftsmen. Several preservationists and concerned community members recognized the value of these tiles for their place in décor and architectural history, and as symbols of hope. In the weeks and months following the fire, **Save the Tiles** helped Altadena homeowners gather the last remaining tokens of their homes to honor their importance as objects and to be conserved so that they can be used in new homes, bridging Altadena's past and future.

In the construction boom in Altadena in the first decades of the twentieth century, architects and builders often included thoughtful and striking décor elements, with many new homes boasting tile installations from such luminaries as Ernest A. Batchelder (1875-1957). He was a designer and artist renowned for his tilemaking. From his home in Pasadena and later from his Los Angeles studio, he began creating art tiles that were installed in homes and businesses throughout the country in the 1910s and 1920s. They are considered an important part of the Arts and Crafts movement. Batchelder was active

in a period of great growth in Southern California, and he contributed his signature tiles to many a fireplace or hearth. Other designers and collectives, such as Claycraft, another standard bearer of California tile design, also produced beautiful tiles that graced homes in Altadena. A century after their installation, the kiln-forged tiles of Altadena survived the wind-driven flames where nearly everything else was destroyed in the affected homes.

Eric Garland and Stanley Zucker, co-founders of Save the Tiles, quickly understood that there was an opportunity to salvage the tiles that remained – but the opportunity was time-sensitive. As crews from the Army Corps of



Engineers began their massive clean-up effort to remove all remnants of the nearly-6,000 burned homes, the time window to identify, remove, and preserve the tiles from fallen homes was short. A team of masons, conservators, historians, architects, community members, and preservation group representatives worked to canvass neighborhoods, reach out to homeowners, and carefully disassemble tile work while keeping it for potential use in a rebuilt house.

Six months on, the efforts of Save the Tiles are reflected in the numbers. The organization rescued 190 historic fireplace art tile installations – 815 boxes of tiles, approximately 21,000 individual tiles, and approximately ten tons of tiles.

The Army Corps lot-clearing is substantively complete, having cleared thousands of lots with the unfortunate side-effect of ending any further chance to save additional tiles. However, the work of Save the Tiles is not in the least done as it enters its next phase.



Founder Stanley Zucker writes:

We are six months since Save the Tiles did their initial canvassing of the Altadena burn zone. The all-volunteer group had a small army of dedicated folks spread out through the burned areas in search of orphaned fireplaces with historic art tiles by Batchelder, Claycraft and others.

They found 206 from just that initial search. As word spread about the Save the Tiles mission, additional homeowners with these tiles reached out to the group to ask them to rescue their tiles – in almost all cases, these were the only items to survive the fires.

Six months later, Save the Tiles has completed rescues of 190 fireplace installations for their owners – all done at no cost to them. In some cases, they were not able to contact the property owners to get their permissions. Sadly, they estimate that 20-30 were lost first to looters and later, to the Army Corps bulldozers.

The group hopes to soon commence the next phase of their mission – to clean, repair and conserve the approximately 21,000 individual tiles they have rescued. The ultimate goal is to return to their owners a complete set of tiles that they will then install into a rebuilt home in Altadena. This work will also be done entirely by volunteers under the direction and supervision of a professional art conservation company.



All this work is done at no cost to the homeowners. Save the Tiles relies on contributions from the public and grants to pay for the hard costs needed.

The group is working with local community groups to help spread the word – Altadena Historical Society (fiscal sponsorship), Pasadena Heritage, Altadena Heritage, LA Conservancy, Pasadena Museum of History, and others. [end quote]

For now, Save the Tiles is acting as a guardian of these historic tiles. As rebuilding commences, the tiles may find their way back to the homes of Altadenans, linking our past and our future in a small but unmistakably significant way.



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was founded to gather, preserve and make available
information about the people, places and events
that have shaped Altadena's past.*

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