



HISTORICAL BRUCE HOUSE
325 S. GRAND AVE.
PASADENA

325 South Grand Avenue

The gracious and comfortable homes lining the east bank of the Arroyo Seco are built on one of the most beautiful and historic locations in Pasadena. This was part of the original Indiana Colony land, and as such was the first area to be developed in the city.

The "California Colony of Indiana" was formed in 1873 in Indianapolis, with Dr. Thomas B. Elliott as president. Mr. Daniel M. Berry was sent west to select and complete the actual purchase of the land for the settlement. In September of 1873 he visited Rancho San Pasquale, but discovered the resources of the Indiana Colony were not enough to buy the land. Thus he formed an association with several men already in Southern California, and together they called the new merger the "San Gabriel Orange Grove Association". The deed for 3,962 acres was signed in December of 1873, and in January of 1874 the pioneer colony gathered to divide the 1500 acres chosen for development.

Colonel Jabez Banbury of Marshalltown, Iowa, was allotted the 62 acres from Arroyo Drive to Fair Oaks Avenue, from Elevado Drive (now Del Mar Street) south to Waverly Drive. On this property, at approximately the present day site of the large pergola at the Wrigley Mansion/Tournament of Roses Headquarters, he began to build his new home. The house was a one-and-a-half story cottage with porches on two sides and was the first plastered home in Pasadena. The Banbury family planted an arbor of cypress trees leading to the house from Orange Grove Avenue, and although it no longer exists, it is memorialized in the name of Arbor Street.

In 1882 Colonel Banbury sold his home to I. M. Hill and moved to Altadena. Mr. Hill occupied the little house and was engaged in business and real estate interests in the Pasadena/Altadena area. During the real estate boom period of 1886, he subdivided a portion of his land west of Orange Grove Avenue, and this subdivision bears his name today. The heady days of real estate speculation were short-lived, and very little development took place on the I.M. Hill Subdivision until the 1890's.

In the late 1880's and early 1890's many large, luxurious homes were built along Grand Avenue, Orange Grove Boulevard and the connecting side streets. In 1895 young, wealthy Burt Orlando Bruce purchased the lots at 325 S. Grand Avenue and commissioned local architect Seymour Locke to design a winter home for his

widowed mother and himself. The contract for its construction was let in April of that year, with a basic total cost of \$5220.

Seymour Locke had come to California as a child in 1874 with his parents, Erie and Rachel Locke. They planted one of the earliest orange groves in the Indiana Colony and Lockehaven Street was the driveway to their home on the bluff overlooking the arroyo. Seymour married in the late 1880's and his first child was born in 1888. (The marriage of his sister Millie to Charles Watts in 1875 was the first in Pasadena, and they also had the first male child born in Pasadena.)

In 1889 Locke associated himself with Frederick Roehrig, and the firm of Roehrig and Locke built the old Green Hotel, as well as some of the largest early mansions in Pasadena. Their collaboration lasted until 1893 when Locke joined the firm of Preston and Locke. Jasper N. Preston was an important architect of Austin, Texas, when he decided in 1886 to move to the West Coast. By 1892 he was elected president of the Southern California Chapter of the A.I.A. in recognition of his prominence in the profession, and the next year Seymour Locke joined his firm to produce some of the most outstanding commercial, civic and residential structures in Los Angeles and Pasadena. (Unfortunately, most of the larger structures no longer exist, although several fine examples of Pasadena residences have survived.) In 1895 Locke left his association with Preston and became the senior partner of his own firm, Locke and Fitzhugh, and it was in this transition period that the Bruce house was designed.

The next year he practiced on his own, and in 1897 took another junior partner into the new firm of Locke and Munsell. This association lasted until shortly after the turn of the century when Locke became embroiled in a scandalous divorce suit and left Southern California. He reportedly lived for awhile in Chicago, being associated with the Chicago Opera, and later became a gentleman farmer in Virginia, married to his former wife's sister! Although he visited in Pasadena, there are no records to indicate that he ever resided here again (as did his first wife and son) or that he ever again practiced architecture.

The home at 325 S. Grand Avenue was designed by Locke in 1895. Two years previously he had designed the original core of the neighboring home at 395 S. Grand for Frank C. Bolt, who was president of the San Gabriel Valley Bank. One year later he designed the home at 485 Maylin for E. H. May, President of the First National Bank. No longer standing is the magnificent home he designed for Bishop Joseph Johnson (father of architect Reginald Johnson) in 1897 on the original Locke homestead also on Grand Avenue -- or the Pasadena Country Club designed in the same year.

The home at 325 S. Grand was a substantial, two-story, family residence in the popular East Coast shingle style. This style, although technically considered Victorian, provides a transition

from the typically ornate Queen Anne designs to the popular West Coast craftsman. The bulk of the house is covered by a gambrel roof with side-facing gables, pierced by a large round turret on the northern end (before the garage and billard room were added to extend the house). Arroyo stone foundations, porch columns and a large stone chimney (now obscured by the garage addition) give a rustic or cottage flavor to what is essentially a mansion-sized structure. After its completion the home was pictured twice in the Ladies Home Journal, first in May of 1899 in an article "The Prettiest Country Homes in America" and again in October of 1899 in an article "How They Build in California", which also featured several other homes by Seymour Locke.

In September 10, 1902, to the great surprise of the social set of California, Bruce married tennis champion Ethel Sutton at San Rafael during a tennis tournament. Their elopement received much coverage in the San Francisco newspapers, being featured on the first page of the San Francisco Examiner in a story headlined "Wealthy Pasadenan Weds Star of Tennis Courts". The story was illustrated with a picture of the bride in a tennis suit with a background of a tennis net of hearts and two cupids playing with hearts.

In the articles Bruce's occupation was given as "capitalist" and the article stated the groom "is a well-known society man and a prominent member of the Pasadena Country Club. He has resided with his mother in this area for years. He is a man of independent fortune and has always been prominent in golfing and outdoor sports". The San Francisco Chronicle described Bruce as "one of the crack golfers of Los Angeles County, a member of the Country Club of Pasadena, a gentleman of leisure with property and high social affiliations."

Ethel Sutton was from a remarkable family. Her father was Captain A. G. Sutton of the British Navy, who upon his retirement in 1890 brought his family to the United States. Ethel was 10 years old when the family came to Pasadena where Captain Sutton purchased a 10 acre ranch at the southwest corner of Hill and Mountain Streets. Captain and Mrs. Sutton had an oldest daughter and two sons before producing four daughters who became tennis stars. They were named Ethel, Violet, Florence and May. Ethel was ranked second nationally in 1913, while the youngest daughter, May, won the U. S. Outdoor women's singles (and doubles) in 1904 and Wimbledon women's singles in 1905 and 1907. May was also Queen of the Rose Parade in 1908.

In 1903 Mr. and Mrs. Bruce became the proud parents of a baby boy and continued to live on Grand Avenue with the elderly Mrs. Bruce until 1906 when they moved to Santa Monica, where they resided until their deaths in the 1950's. Although originally a topnotch golpher, Bert Bruce turned to tennis after his marriage, and the couple played professionally for many years.

In the Spring of 1906 the Bruce family sold the home in Pasadena to Charles Adams Goodyear. Mr. Goodyear was the founder and

president of the C. A. Goodyear Lumber Company of Chicago and Tomah, Wisconsin. While in Pasadena he was Vice-president of the Crown City Trust and Savings Bank and also Vice-president of the National Bank of Pasadena. During the nine year period of his ownership, Mr. Goodyear made several changes to the house. Shortly after his purchase in 1907 he ordered \$300 in general alterations to the structure. However more importantly, in 1910 he contracted with E. D. Tyler for a four-room, two-story addition to the house costing \$2000. This area is probably where the garage and kitchen, with billiard room above, are now located. (This garage, which has to be one of the earliest, if not the very first, attached garage in Pasadena, is pictured in the March 1916 issue of the Ladies Home Journal in an article "Keeping the Car in the House").

Mr. Goodyear may have also ordered new landscaping for the house as the Tournament of Roses January 1, 1911, edition of the Pasadena Daily News pictures the entire backyard of the property including many plantings which appear to be new. The fish pond is shown at the base of the western slope of the property and a circular pergola is perched on one of the upper terraces, probably where the gazebo is today. Another picture shows a thatched summer shelter in the yard as well as a bird house on a tall pole. Postcards of the magnates' homes were popular during this time, and one was made of the Goodyear home, erroneously entitled "Sunken Garden, Goodrich Residence, Pasadena, California", proving that the two names were confused even then! In 1912, Mr. Goodyear commissioned G. Lawrence Stimson to build him a new and much larger home at 1230 S. Oakland Avenue.

In the Spring of 1915 the house was transferred to the name of M. L. Williams, and transferred again the next year to Charles M. Armstrong. Mr. Williams, who resided further north on Grand Avenue, probably never occupied the home, but purchased it for an investment or for the purposes of transferring titles. In any case early in 1916 it was owned by Charles M. and Nettie Armstrong who immediately ordered renovations in the house. A permit was issued in February for \$2,200 to "rearrange the rooms, put in one additional bathroom, enlarge the dining room, change the kitchen and to transform the present kitchen to a sunroom". A permit for an additional \$1200 worth of work was added in June. Mr. Armstrong resided at 325 S. Grand Avenue for ten years before his death. His estate sold the house for \$40,000 to Vera M. Groenendyke early in 1926.

The new owner, Mrs. Groenendyke, was the widow of E. H. Groenendyke who had been the Vice-president of Union National Bank before his early and untimely death. She was also the daughter and only child of the Morehous family, who resided just a block away in a huge home on the corner of Orange Grove Boulevard and Arbor Street. Immediately after purchasing the house, Mrs. Groenendyke commissioned architect David Ogilvie to remodel the residence, spending \$10,000 on the project. Ogilvie was a native of St. Andrew's Scotland and was active in architecture in Boston and Vancouver, B.C. before coming to

Pasadena where he practiced for over 40 years. Three years later Mrs. Groenendyke spent another \$3800 in enlarging three bedrooms and installing a new bathroom, probably those along the western side of the house. During this construction she sailed with her teen-age son and other neighbors from along Grand Avenue to Hawaii. After several months the Groenendykes left Honolulu and continued a trip around the world. They returned, no doubt, to find the renovations complete. Mrs. Groenendyke lived at 325 S. Grand Avenue for 27 years until her death in 1953. The essential outward appearance of the house today dates from Mrs. Groenendyke's ownership, and the Dutch Colonial appearance of the home today is undoubtedly due to David Ogilvie's work in the late 1920's.

The home was left to E. H. Groenendyke Jr., her only child, in the settlement of her estate. After probate, the house and land were sold in 1954 to a neighbor, Mrs. Kate B. Ricketts, who lived across Arbor Street on the southwest corner of the intersection. Neighborhood history recounts Mrs. Ricketts' love of quiet and dislike of noisy children. She purchased not only this home (fearing its ownership by a family with many children) but also another neighborhood mansion. These extra homes remained vacant until her death and were given as gift in her will to the California Institute of Technology. When the properties were sold by Caltech, the proceeds were used to construct a building on the campus as a memorial to her husband, Dr. Louis D. Ricketts; who was a remown metallurgical engineer and a trustee of Caltech.

Indeed Mrs. Ricketts' projections would probably have been correct, as after her death Caltech sold the house in 1958 to the Dr. Peter Lee family which had four young children. Dr. Lee was associated with the University of Southern California School of Medicine. The Lee family reported that the house was infested with wildlife when they purchased it. A variety of animals and insects lived in the rooms and in the chimneys of the (then) seven fireplaces as well as in the basement and on the overgrown grounds. During their ownership the Lee's made few changes to the basic home -- only reroofing the house, removing fireplaces in the sunroom and tower bedroom, rearranging the kitchen by converting the old laundry room to a breakfast area and constructing a new foundation and porch off the sunroom to correct structural damage in that area from the years of neglect. Raising their children here for almost twenty years, the family sold the home when the youngest child finished highschool in 1977.

At that time the home was purchased by the David and Nancy Impastato family. Mr. Impastato is a film director and owner of a commercial film company in Studio City. No major structural changes to the main house have been made by the Impastatos; instead they have concentrated on the replication or preservation of the older constructions. Mrs. Impastato, with the help of Sam Goeku, designed the gazebo and had it constructed on an existing concrete foundation. The foundation and fountain date from a much earlier period and probably were originally

sheltered by a pergola. The gazebo was constructed in the Japanese fashion, being notched together and held by very few nails. The Impastato family have lived at 325 S. Grand Avenue for ten years and have raised their two sons here.

In only eight years the home will celebrate its 100th birthday. Although constructed in a much different era of elegance and leisure, nevertheless the house has beautifully made the transition to much faster paced modern life. Its spacious rooms and exceptional view across the arroyo are peaceful and calming to all who enter the wide doorway. The gracefully curving staircase leads to a landing with a stunning view across to the old San Rafael rancho and the mansions on its edge. Magnificent stone walls enclose the gardens which lie below. Old specimen trees surround the house (the palm tree in front being almost as old as the house itself). This historic home is indeed to be treasured.

David Olguin 1930

enclosure part of living room

specimen

Sham Ue →

arroyo drive