

Rockhaven

by JOANNA LINCHORST

Between the great San Gabriel Mountains and the Verdugos lies the Crescenta Valley, an area advertised for its clean, healthful air. Well, a hundred years ago, at least. From Big Tujunga Canyon to the Arroyo Seco sanitariums sprung up along the hillsides. Most were for respiratory diseases, but a few were for mental issues.

In 1923 Agnes Richards left The Los Angeles Country hospital with her RN degree to begin a home run entirely by women for women with mild mental and nervous disorders. In Verdugo City she found a 2-story rock façade house where she could give dignified, individualized care in a home-like setting. She brought with her 6 women and a couple chickens, began a garden, and began a business that would operate for nearly 80 years. It was called Rockhaven.

Within her first year Agnes had 24 residents and began purchasing homes around the original building. In 1929 she hired the Prescott Brothers of Glendale to begin designing and building Spanish Colonial revival style dorm-like buildings. Pathways were laid carefully to lead easily to each building and also to beautiful outdoor garden areas. Her idea was not to lock these women away as was so easy to do then, but give them an opportunity at rehabilitation. Being active and outdoors were key components in her treatment.

This wonderful spot attracted the famous. One resident was Billy Burke, who played Glenda the Good Witch, and was also married to Flo Ziegfeld. Other follies girls spent days there, too. Peggy Frears came to California to be a singer, director and producer. Babe Egan had her all girl swing band, the Hollywood Red Heads. Marion Rose, the female half of the vaudeville duo



Statler & Rose was highlighted in one of the monthly newsletters. The most infamous guest, however, was Marilyn Monroe's mother, Gladys Ely.

In the 1950's a successful Agnes wanted to travel so she left her granddaughter, Patricia Traviss, in charge. Patricia came up with many field trips and on-campus events for the ladies. She had classes in nutrition and gardening and an occupational therapist came in to teach crafts. In the '60's she hired Ivan Cole, a Welsh gentleman whose

brother was half owner of Cole-Burkhart's nursery in Pasadena. He turned an overgrown jungle into a flower-filled, oak covered oasis. The property, and Ivan, won awards from Los Angeles and Glendale.



By 2001 Patty was ready to retire so she sold the business to the Ararat Company who kept the 60-80

year-old buildings operating as long as they could. Eventually they closed and moved out and the City of Glendale purchased the 3.5 acres with ideas to open it as a park and community center. But the economy took a drastic downturn and plans were shelved. The Historical Society of The Crescenta Valley would occasionally go in behind the free-stone walls to clean and do light maintenance.

Two years ago the Friends of Rockhaven was formed. We work with the city to continue caretaking and we also get to lead tours. The grounds are drying up but the old buildings are still fascinating bits of history and still contain some items left behind by former occupants. We

recently began the great undertaking of attempting to fulfill the vision of opening the grounds as a historic park.

If you would like to see this last remaining capsule of Angelino history please contact us at FriendsofRockhaven@gmail.com to arrange a tour.



HCM Designations Team is recruiting. Jonathan Silberman, Ron Rocha and Charlie Fisher seeking members who want to learn and help. HPHT Board President, Antonio Castillo and member Rebecca Schiffman are seeking likeminded individuals who are ready to tackle the HPHT archives with the help of Anne Mar, archivist librarian at Occidental.

Contact the HPHT at (323) 908-4127 or info@hpht.org and a member of the appropriate committee will follow up with you.

The Lighting and Hardware Shop at Character Projects

Highland Park will be getting a new shop and local storefront called Character Projects! The new shop is the culmination of all the work by Jonathan Silberman over the last decade related to home restoration, interior design, architectural salvage, and real estate. Jonathan is a resident of Highland Park and Vice-President of the Highland Park Heritage Trust.

The Lighting & Hardware Shop at Character Projects is a curated experience, where every piece is celebrated for its striking aesthetic elements.

Every item in the shop has been handpicked by Jonathan, and worked on with his own hands. Each piece tells a unique story - a continuing story. Many of the items were saved from ruin. For more information on Jonathan's process and design philosophy you can watch his video at: <https://vimeo.com/109300172>.

In addition to feeding a Character Projects online store, the new storefront will act as a physical showroom for the large selection of restored vintage lighting and hardware, and serve as an office and

meeting place for Jonathan's interior design and realty practices. The shop is located at 6042 Monte Vista Street, in Highland Park (across from St. Ignatius Church)

Stop in to see the shop, say hello, and buy your favorite light fixtures, hardware, and other unique items before they hit the online store. You can preview some of the items already available here at www.etsy.com/shop/CharacterProjects



Photo: Character Projects website

