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Riverside  
Historical Society

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## Forward

Welcome to the 15<sup>th</sup> edition of the Journal of the Riverside Historical Society. Through this journal, it is the hope of the Society to bring to the public the latest in research/writing about the history of Riverside. I believe we've continued this tradition with the articles contained herein, and I think you'll agree.

Laura Klure and Joan Hall bring to us some further research into the fascinating history of Benedict Castle, a long-remembered landmark in the City. Laura has interviewed people affiliated with the early history of the Castle, and has been given access to some personal family albums and scrapbooks which shed some new light on the story behind the Spanish-Moorish building in Riverside's Canyon Crest area.

Next, Glenn Wenzel tells us some of the fascinating things that "may have been" on Mt. Rubidoux. As you're probably aware, Glenn has written the definitive history of Mt. Rubidoux, and in his research on the many plaques, tablets, and other treasures that are on the hill, came across a number of other ideas that never quite made it to fruition. "What Might Have Been" tells the stories behind some of those treasures, and leaves us wondering how Mt. Rubidoux, and even Riverside in general, would have been different if any or all of the other things had materialized.

Kim Jarrell Johnson delights us with her research into the people behind a series of letters that she purchased by chance on Ebay. These letters, dated from the summer of 1881, discuss some aspects of life in Riverside at that time.

Finally, Bill Wilkman writes about Evans Street in Casa Blanca. This was the commercial/industrial portion of the small townlet of Casa Blanca, and Bill's research into it shows how it developed in the early years of Riverside.

I hope you enjoy this latest incarnation of the journal, and will look forward to many others.

Steve Lech  
Editor

## About the Authors

**Joan Herrick Hall** has authored and co-authored several local history books and articles, including *Adobes, Bungalows, and Mansions of Riverside*, *Through the Doors of the Mission Inn (Volumes 1 and 2)*, and most recently *Riverside's Invisible Past*. Mrs. Hall has also been chair of the Riverside Cultural Heritage Board, the Riverside Municipal Museum Board, and president of the Riverside Historical Society.

**Kim Jarrell Johnson** is a life-long resident of the Jurupa area. She has written two books on the history of the Jurupa area: *Jurupa* and *Rubidoux*. She coauthored *Riverside's Mission Inn* with Steve Lech. She writes a regular weekly history column for the *Riverside County Record* newspaper. She has been a docent at the historic Mission Inn Hotel for 22 years.

**Laura Klure** has written over 800 articles on a variety of subjects, mostly concerning history and travel. Her books include *Let's Be Doers* (a history of Riverside's YWCA), and *California Electric Power Company 1904-1964: A Powerful Corporate Family*.

**Glenn Wenzel** has served as pastor of St. Paul Lutheran Church in Riverside since 1988. His research has concentrated on Mount Rubidoux beginning when he was asked to give a Mount Rubidoux history lecture to the Mission Inn Docents. This led to an ever growing collection of postcards and other Mount Rubidoux ephemera. In 2010 he published the book *Anecdotes on Mount Rubidoux and Frank A. Miller, Her Promoter*.

**Bill Wilkman** is the owner of Wilkman Historical Services, specializing in the research and evaluation of individual historic properties in and around the City of Riverside. Bill was an urban planner with the City of Riverside for 22 years, then served 2 years as the City's Acting Historic Preservation Specialist, and 5 years as the supervisor for the Historic Preservation Section.

# Benedict Castle Revisited

*by Joan H. Hall and Laura L. Klure*

Riverside's Benedict Castle is located at 5445 Chicago Avenue. This same location was formerly identified as the end of Benedict Avenue, 1850 Benedict Ave.<sup>1</sup> The primary entrance to the castle is now off of Chicago Avenue. The massive castle, built in a Spanish-Moorish design, sits on a knoll with a fine view. Approaching from Benedict Avenue in earlier years, visitors crossed an attractive balustrade bridge spanning a deep ravine, and they would see medieval-style battlements, a domed bell tower, Spanish balconies, Moorish doorways, and tile roofs. Behind a high wall with wrought-iron gates is a replica of Court of the Lions from the Alhambra Castle in Granada Spain. But the beautiful garden is incomplete, as the lion fountain was never added.<sup>2</sup>

As is the case with many buildings that have been around for a fairly long time, the history of Riverside's Benedict Castle can be divided into periods of various usages, involving different people. Past articles about the castle have covered its changes with varying degrees of completeness, and here we will attempt to fill in some of the gaps and correct some misconceptions. Unfortunately, in some instances it was not feasible to discover or verify everything.

The first phase in the castle's existence was, of course, its building and ownership by Charles W. Benedict. The Benedict period at the castle included a brief partnership with A. M. Green, as well as involving the latter two of Benedict's four wives. The Benedict phase, from bare land to sale, lasted from 1919 to 1949. We will look again at the Benedict period, relying heavily on research by the late Esther Klotz, updated by others.

The second phase was the ownership by Riverside real estate investors, T. M. Perrin and Francis L. McDowell. This ownership was comparatively short, from 1949 to late in 1952 (escrow closed in February, 1953). However, this period has not been covered thoroughly or accurately, and will therefore be given fresh attention here.

The third phase, the ownership by the Catholic Servite Order, extended from 1953 to 1970. The Servite Seminary period was carefully

documented in an article by R. Bruce Harley, printed in the *Journal of the Riverside Historical Society*, No. 4, 2000. That volume of the RHS *Journal* is now out of print, and it has been made available on the society's website, [www.riversidehistoricalsociety.org](http://www.riversidehistoricalsociety.org). Beyond a few comments, we will not re-visit the Servite ownership period.

The fourth and longest stage in Benedict Castle's history is its ownership by Teen Challenge, from 1970 to the present. They use the buildings as a residential facility for adult men. However, Teen Challenge has rented out portions of the castle for numerous weddings and many other community events, and therefore Riversiders are now more familiar with its beauty than at any earlier time. We will leave it to future historians to examine this period in detail.

### **I. The Beginnings with Benedict**

Although Charles W. Benedict spent over ten years, from 1921 to 1931, building his castle, he told his wife that it was a romantic dream of 30 years. Benedict was born in 1865 in New York City, the son of wealthy banker and industrialist James H. Benedict, who founded Union Carbide and Carbon Company. James Benedict moved his family to Riverside in 1878, seeking a mild climate for his wife who was ill with hay fever. That year they built an elaborate adobe house named Casa Grande on Magnolia Avenue. Charles lived there as a young boy for only four years, but he never forgot Riverside.<sup>3</sup>

After an early education in New York City, Charles Benedict chose not to go to college, but to spend four years traveling in Europe. He fell in love with the castles in Spain, especially the Alhambra. Returning to New York, he became a successful businessman, owning property in Florida and California. In Boston, he founded the Brookmire<sup>4</sup> Investment Service, which, with his family inheritance, made him wealthy. Before returning to California, he was married twice. By his second marriage, his only child, a daughter named Isabel, was born. When the castle was under construction, she lived in Santa Barbara as Mrs. Charles M. Marvin.<sup>5</sup>

In May 1919, Benedict and his Santa Barbara friend A. M. Green, bought 100 acres of land in Tequesquite Heights from the Riverside

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Orange Company Ltd.<sup>6</sup> While living as an unmarried guest at the Mission Inn,<sup>7</sup> Benedict met a young widow named Carlotta, who played the cello for Inn guests. They were married in 1921. Soon after, Benedict began construction of the castle with plans drawn by local engineer-designer Henry L. A. Jekel. He apparently first built a small ranch house on the property.<sup>8</sup> According to local historian Tom Patterson, the ranch house was on property near Howe Street.<sup>9</sup>

Mrs. Henry Jekel recalled that the first part of the castle was finished in 1924 and included a Moorish entrance, library, dining area, master bedroom, baths, and maid's quarters. Adobe bricks were used for at least some of the walls, and the floors were often tiled. As work progressed, Benedict frequently changed Jekel's plans.

Apparently, the castle was not sufficient to create a life of pleasure for Benedict's third wife, Carlotta. She sued him for divorce in 1925, charging moral turpitude. She asked for a monthly income of \$1,000 and \$10,000 for her lawyers, Miguel Estudillo and Kenneth Schwinn. The trial was closed to the public.<sup>10</sup> The judge awarded the divorce, but Carlotta lost regarding her request for funds. The news shook the town with rumors, but Benedict managed to keep it out of the newspapers. He was now sole owner of the castle, having bought out his friend A. M. Green in June, 1924.<sup>11</sup>

Soon after his divorce, Benedict met Louise Caton Potter at Riverside's well-known social center, the Mission Inn. She was the daughter of Lorenzo T. Potter, a Chicago doctor, and conducted a travel service for wealthy New England schoolgirls. Louise was the niece of the late artist Frederic Remington, and also of Richard Butler, one of the founders of the Metropolitan Museum in New York.<sup>12</sup> She was therefore somewhat acquainted with the world of art, and she probably appreciated the beauty of the castle. Louise became Benedict's fourth wife when they married on October 23, 1926, in Brookline, Massachusetts; she was 40 and he was 60. After a world tour, they returned to Riverside with many art treasures to add to the furnishings of their castle.<sup>13</sup>

In 1929, again using designs by Henry Jekel, the Cresmer Manufacturing Company contracted for the castle's second addition, building a 90-foot tower and 19 additional rooms. These included an



*Benedict Castle entrance. Tower with doorway into the main hall of the castle.  
Photo from Perrin Family scrapbook, probably taken in 1940s,  
before vines covered some details on the towers.*



*Benedict Castle interior, main hall. Looking toward the main entrance, which is the opposite direction from the view shown by Klotz & Hall in Adobes, Bungalows, and Mansions of Riverside California.*

*Photo from Perrin scrapbook, about 1945 or slightly later, furniture owned by Benedict family.*

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entrance hall with green marble columns and a double staircase of tile and wrought-iron railings. The 80-by-20 foot banquet hall featured a massive fireplace faced in green marble, and across the tall ceiling were decorative thick beams. One of Benedict's favorite rooms was the round breakfast room with a painted ceiling depicting a sky with clouds.<sup>14</sup> Alvan Kettering said he tiled all 11 bathrooms (apparently one for each bedroom) and that George Elfers made the wrought-iron pieces, designed by Jekel, in his Riverside Forge Shop. It is believed that the castle cost about \$300,000 to construct. When completed it was named Castillo Isabella, after Benedict's mother.<sup>15</sup> Most Riversiders, however, called it Benedict Castle.

From 1931, when the castle was basically completed, until Benedict's death in 1938, it was a showplace and the scene of many elaborate parties.<sup>16</sup> H. Carlyle Burthe,<sup>17</sup> Benedict's stepson by his second marriage, was an artist who did many of the castle's wall decorations, including the sky in the breakfast room. He lived in Hollywood and brought many movie star friends to the castle. Wine was served illegally during Prohibition. A secret cupboard wall in the breakfast room opened to reveal stairs to a secret wine cellar.

According to the 1930 Census, the Benedicts had two servants living at the castle, Barbara Babington and Mah Waugh. In addition, Louise's mother, Kate M. Potter, was apparently staying there also.<sup>18</sup> Ship records indicate that Charles and Louise took a trip to Hawaii in April-May, 1937, which was apparently one of their last big travels together.<sup>19</sup>

On March 12, 1938, Charles Benedict died suddenly at his home of a heart attack, after being ill only a few days. Private services were held at the castle. His relatives included his wife, daughter, two stepsons,<sup>20</sup> and a brother, Elliott Benedict of New York. His estate included the castle, property in Florida, Santa Barbara, New York City, and various other investments. Funds from a family trust ceased with his death.

His widow, Louise Benedict, continued to live at the castle with only one caretaker until 1949. She did not entertain any large groups of people during this time. She ultimately sold the castle and 14 acres of land at an auction. She also auctioned off all, or at least most, of the furnishings, and took just some smaller items with her to her new home. None of the original Benedict furnishings remained in the castle, except for things

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that were permanently attached to the walls.<sup>21</sup> Louise moved to La Jolla, California, and she continued to correspond with the new owners of the castle. She died in San Diego County in 1973.<sup>22</sup>

### II. The Perrin and McDowell Period

Benedict Castle and its furnishings were sold by Louise Benedict at an auction held on April 28 and 29, 1949. Retired Riverside jeweler Tolbert “Tom” M. Perrin<sup>23</sup> and his investment partner Francis L. McDowell bought the castle for \$52,000. They split the purchase price evenly, according to Perrin’s daughter, Thelma L. “Tracee” Perrin Davidson. Tom Perrin told the local newspaper (*Riverside Press*, April 30, 1949) that they made the purchase “on the spur of the moment.” They viewed the castle as an investment, and they intended to resell it fairly soon (which they did in 1952-53). They did not plan to develop it for any particular use.<sup>24</sup>

Francis Lenow McDowell, born in Tennessee in 1893, had an insurance business in Riverside when he and Perrin bought the property. In about 1950, McDowell sold his business to Marcus Meairs, and he retired to Corona Del Mar. After that time, Perrin and his family were much more involved in the castle than McDowell was. McDowell died in Corona Del Mar in April, 1954.

Events at the Castle: The Benedict family had entertained some notable guests at the castle. However, an article about the 1949 sale indicated that, for most Riversiders, before the well-attended auction was held to sell the castle and furnishings, the castle’s interior “had been much of a mystery.”<sup>25</sup> That mystery was to be erased further during the involvement by the Perrin family, when a variety of community events were held there.

McDowell held at least one party at the castle, probably in May of 1949 (by invitation only). Perrin made the property available to various groups, for which he charged quite reasonable rental fees or in some instances donated the use of the castle. The organizations using the castle had to bring their own furniture, if any tables or chairs were needed for their events.<sup>26</sup>



*Lions Club party at Benedict Castle, 1949.*

*L-R: Marcus Meairs, Stewart Adler, Dr. Ray Swain, castle owner Tom Perrin, and Paul Palmer.*

Perrin's daughter, Thelma, held a party there for her Poly High friends. Festivities for the 25<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary of Aron M. Hansen and his wife included more than 200 guests in 1951.

The Thursday Nighters Dance Club came back to the castle a second time, to celebrate New Year's Eve on December 31, 1951. They danced to welcome in the New Year of 1952, as they had done the year before. This was apparently the last large party that the Perrins arranged at Benedict Castle.<sup>27</sup> In the hope that it would sell soon, Perrin stopped scheduling events at the castle. A full year would pass before escrow closed.

A Man's Castle: The castle had truly been "home" to Benedict, but to Tom Perrin it was more of a responsibility, something he valued and cared for. The insurance policy Perrin and McDowell obtained to cover the property required that someone live on the premises. Perrin's family

Tom Perrin was a member of the Riverside Lions Club, and he arranged for the club to meet at the castle at the end of May, 1949. Other groups using castle facilities included: the "Sixties" (a Masonic group?), an organ concert for Allied Arts Planning Association, the Thursday Nitters dance group, Zeta Phi Sorority, Olive Branch group from Calvary Presbyterian Church, Warren-Anderson Company (Christmas party), Junior Chamber of Commerce, DeMolay, and a Postal Service employees' welcome for a new Postmaster. Additionally,

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did not live far from the castle in Riverside, whereas McDowell and his wife had moved to the beach.

Perrin was married to Marian Lucille Pratt, and they had two daughters and a son. The older children, Alice June Perrin Barber and Lowell Perrin, had already left home before Perrin became involved with the castle. Perrin ate meals at home with his wife and youngest child, Thelma, and then he would return to the castle to spend the night. Thelma on occasion stayed overnight at the castle with a friend, which would give a couple of teen-aged girls the special treat of sleeping in a castle. For such overnighters, the girls would use sleeping bags, which they rolled out on a raised platform intended for a 4-poster bed.

Tom Perrin spent considerable time working at the castle, arranging for various maintenance needs, making repairs, and cleaning after events. Perrin did not hire any regular caretakers, but instead performed the needed



*Exterior view of Benedict Castle, landscape on the north side.  
From Perrin scrapbook.*

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work himself, or hired outside businesses for specific tasks. Perrin received mail there, addressed to 1850 Benedict Avenue, Riverside, California.

Perrin's vigilance, however, was insufficient to totally discourage the curious and stop vandalism. The unusual, beautiful castle has attracted onlookers throughout its existence. In April-May of 1952 Perrin recorded about six incidents of teenage boys or young men trying to break into the castle. Various items were stolen from the property or damaged during these break-ins, and some of the vandals were caught and forced to pay some restitution to Perrin.<sup>28</sup>

The original ranch house still existed on the property, and during at least part of the Perrin years the small house was rented to John Green who owned an art supply store. Although this little house had been used as a caretaker's residence in the Benedict years, Green was just a renter, and he did not work at the castle. The ranch house was demolished in 1962-63, according to a City of Riverside permit.<sup>29</sup>

After he sold the charming castle, Perrin continued to be interested in it for the rest of his life. Tom Perrin died in 1978.

Furnishings: After Louise Benedict auctioned off the original furnishings, during the Perrin years there were very few or no items in most rooms. Perrin bought a few furnishings or moved them to the castle from his home, including a bed, a couch, and at least one chair. These minimal furnishings were for his own comfort, not for public events.

When the castle property was sold to the Servites, the sale included "kitchen equipment, draperies, and \$25,000 Kilgen organ."<sup>30</sup> The Kilgen organ was purchased by Benedict in 1930, but its price was not publicized at that time.<sup>31</sup> A 1954 Westways article and a Teen Challenge brochure valued the organ at \$40,000, whereas in 2000 Harley reported the organ was worth only \$5,000. The lowest figure is probably closer to a realistic current value, reflecting a general decline in the value of this particular type of organ, as well as its age, and the fact that it has been somewhat modified.<sup>32</sup>

Plants on the property: Benedict had landscaped parts of the property with some unusual plants, including a tree with flowers similar to those of the Bird of Paradise plant. This tree was apparently *Strelitzia augusta*, a native of Africa. There were only a few such trees in the United States in

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the 1950s, according to an article from the *LA Times* that Louise Benedict sent to Perrin. The Bird of Paradise tree was located in a cluster of banana trees, near the garage that served the castle. The castle did not really have a lawn during the Perrin years, and the landscaping has been increased during the later ownerships.

In the early years there were a number of citrus trees on the castle grounds, and the citrus grove was leased to local grower Robert G. Lamberson, at least until the end of 1951.

Movies filmed at the castle: It is difficult to know for certain which locations were actually used in films, because the listings in movie credits are often very incomplete. Apparently the earliest movie shot at the castle was “Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein,” released in June, 1948.<sup>33</sup> A comedy-horror film, it was produced during widow Louise Benedict’s ownership of the castle. Klotz mentions a movie titled “The Cross and the Sword,” but it is not certain whether that was the correct title or when it might have been filmed.

The International Movie Data Base (imdb.com) records that the 1965 movie “Two On A Guillotine” included scenes shot at Benedict Castle. That filming would have been during the Servite ownership, and if they approved such use, it probably reflects the order’s desire for funds to recoup some of their high maintenance costs.

A newspaper article listed a “Dracula” movie as having been filmed there, but since several movies have that name as all or part of the title, the filming date is uncertain.<sup>34</sup> The original 1931 “Dracula” movie, starring Bela Lugosi, did have some scenes filmed in California, at Universal Studios and at Vasquez Rocks. However, neither the castle nor any other Riverside locations are listed for that film.<sup>35</sup>

A Teen Challenge brochure lists “The Hunchback of Notre Dame” as having been filmed at the castle. There have been about 14 film/TV adaptations of Victor Hugo’s novel, with approximately 9 of those filmed since the castle was built. The brochure also lists “Bride of Frankenstein” as using the castle location, but it is uncertain whether this was the 1935 version or a later re-make.<sup>36</sup>

Sale to the Servite Order: McDowell & Perrin advertised the property for sale in 1952, and they also re-contacted people who had expressed interest in 1949.

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An advertisement in the *Desert Sun*, dated April 10, 1952, described the property as being a “14½-acre estate with superior institutional possibilities—contains 19 rooms, pipe organ, elevator, 11 bed rooms, hundreds of trees, palms, fruits, and shrubs. This property may be had for a fraction of its original cost.”

### III. The Servite Seminary Years

The Catholic Servite Order eventually purchased the castle from McDowell & Perrin, with escrow closing in February, 1953. Sources generally agree that the Servites paid \$85,000 for the castle. When the Servites bought the castle, Klotz reported that they also purchased 20 additional acres. After Benedict’s ownership, most articles mentioning the land indicate that approximately 14 acres went with the castle. A later Teen Challenge brochure indicates they owned 23 acres. The Riverside County Assessor-County Clerk-Recorder’s records show that Teen Challenge owns three parcels, but the acreage of each parcel is not noted on publicly accessible records.<sup>37</sup>

The Servites soon built a 40-room dormitory, a swimming pool, and tennis courts. They also enlarged the brick patio, providing additional space for special gatherings. Other Servite additions to the complex included an additional residential building constructed in 1963. They used the main hall for celebrating Mass. The castle was then named “Our Lady of Riverside Seminary.”<sup>38</sup>

In April 1970, the Servites announced that they wished to close the seminary and sell the castle. A group of people headed by Carol Arrison tried to induce the City of Riverside to buy it for an art center. In June 1970, the City’s Cultural Heritage Board, hoping to protect the castle, declared it Riverside City Landmark Number 13.<sup>39</sup>

### IV. Teen Challenge Takes the Reins

In October 1970, Teen Challenge, an Assembly of God entity, made an offer to buy the castle for \$350,000. Escrow closed in April of 1971. Teen Challenge, in spite of the name, uses the castle buildings

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as a residential Christian life training school for adult men. The Irvine Company Foundation donated \$25,000 toward the purchase.<sup>40</sup>

For almost four decades, Teen Challenge has cared for the castle, and their programs have helped many hundreds of men. The residents also have participated in maintaining the complex and its beautifully landscaped grounds.

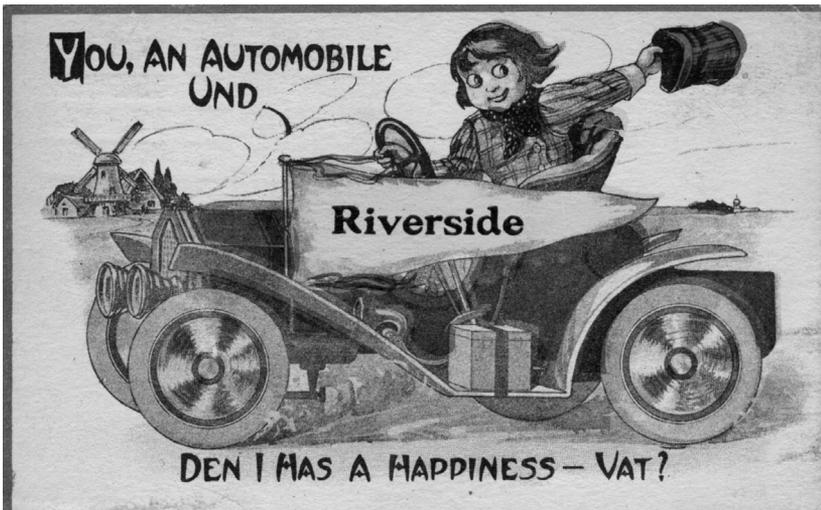
In order to help their financial resources, Teen Challenge has rented certain sections of the castle for a large number of organizational meetings and special occasions. This also provided job training and experience for the men, since the residents cooked food, served meals, and cleared tables for numerous events.

Many Riverside brides probably never dreamed that they would be married in a medieval-Spanish style castle, with an outdoor reception held in a secluded patio graced with tall, lighted palm trees.<sup>41</sup> Tom Perrin's granddaughter, the Riverside artist Marian Davidson Semic, was among those who had the pleasure of being married there.

In a city with many notable old buildings, Benedict Castle is a unique treasure, worthy of attention by those who love history.

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### Postcards from Riverside



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### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> In some City of Riverside documents, the address was listed as 1805 Benedict Avenue, from the City's Planning Department Building Permits online, <http://aquarius.riversideca.gov/permits>.
- <sup>2</sup> Information here and in the section about the Benedict ownership is largely reprinted from Klotz, Esther and Joan H. Hall, *Adobes, Bungalows, and Mansions of Riverside, California Revisited*, Highgrove Press, Riverside, CA, 2005, ISBN # 0-9631618-6-5. Contact Joan Hall, P. O. Box 52888, Riverside, CA 92517.
- <sup>3</sup> Riverside Press, August 3, 1878. This entire section reprinted and updated from research by Klotz, in *Adobes, Bungalows...Revisited*, 2005.
- <sup>4</sup> Brookmire is the correct spelling, not as in some other sources.
- <sup>5</sup> Klotz interviewed the 4th Mrs. Charles Benedict, his widow, Louise, in November 1966. Isabel and Charles Marvin also lived on Park Ave. in New York, NY, according to 1930 Census, on Ancestry.com. Isabel died in 1960, California Death Index, Ancestry.com.
- <sup>6</sup> Riverside County Assessor-County Clerk-Recorder records, per Klotz.
- <sup>7</sup> Charles W. Benedict is listed as a guest at the Mission Inn in the 1920 Census, on Ancestry.com.
- <sup>8</sup> Some information about the ranch house was later erroneously attributed to the castle, including the cost to build, which was reportedly \$1,400 for the ranch house, definitely NOT for the castle. Unfortunately, this error has spread widely online. Caution is urged regarding the article in the *Press-Enterprise*, February 27, 2010, by Nita Hiltner.
- <sup>9</sup> Patterson, Tom. *Landmarks of Riverside and the Stories Behind Them*. Press-Enterprise Co., Riverside CA, 1964, p. 183-184. This "cottage" may have been demolished in 1963, per City of Riverside Building Permits online.
- <sup>10</sup> Klotz's account differs from that of Tom Patterson, in *Landmarks of Riverside....* Patterson says, "in court there was standing room only." Both agree it was not covered in the local newspaper.
- <sup>11</sup> Riverside County Assessor-Clerk-Recorder records.
- <sup>12</sup> Marriage was noted in *Riverside Press*, Oct. 29, 1926, researched by Hall. Benedict's daughter Isabel, Mrs. Charles M. Marvin, gave them a wedding dinner in New York. Louise's father's name from Louise Potter's passport application, 1920, on Ancestry.com.
- <sup>13</sup> From Klotz interview with Louise Benedict. He returned from this trip via New York, and Louise via Boston, in June 1927, with records from the ship

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S.S. President Adams indicating they had been to Naples, Italy, per Ancestry.com.

<sup>14</sup> Klotz noted this in Jekel's architectural drawings. Still visible during tours in 2009, by Klure; and mentioned on the Teen Challenge website [www.benedictcastle.com](http://www.benedictcastle.com).

<sup>15</sup> His daughter was also named Isabel, but evidently the castle's name was just honoring his mother, Isabella. His mother's name is given as Isabella on the 1870 and the 1880 Census, then as Isabel in the 1910 Census, on Ancestry.  
<sup>16</sup> Apparently the guest list was more restrictive at these events than during later uses, since Benedict invited wealthy celebrities.

<sup>17</sup> His name is given as Henry Carlisle Burthe in New Orleans, Louisiana Birth Records Index, on Ancestry.com.

<sup>18</sup> The Census taker apparently mis-heard the name Kate M. Potter, and recorded it as if the first name was "Patter" and the last name "Kateon." Other Census records from 1910 and 1920 confirm that Louise's mother was Kate M. Potter, and she was divorced from Louise' father, Lorenzo T. Potter, before 1910, per Ancestry.com.

<sup>19</sup> Census data and ship manifest records on Ancestry.com.

<sup>20</sup> By his second wife, Zoe M. Papin Burthe Benedict. They were Delord Francois Burthe and Henry Carlisle Burthe, New Orleans Louisiana Birth Records Index, on Ancestry.com.

<sup>21</sup> Interview by Klure with Tracee Davidson, 6/9/2010.

<sup>22</sup> From interviews by Klure with Tracee Davidson, and from Klotz. Social Security Death Index, on Ancestry.com.

<sup>23</sup> Perrin is the correct spelling, no "e" on the end.

<sup>24</sup> Much of the information in this section is from the Perrin Family scrapbook, and from interviews by Klure with Thelma "Tracee" Perrin Davidson, in 2010. Perrin's older children are no longer living.

<sup>25</sup> Article in *Riverside Press*, April 30, 1949, "Two Riversiders Buy Castle And Invite Suggestions for its Use," from Perrin Family scrapbook.

<sup>26</sup> Interview with Thelma Davidson, 6/9/2010.

<sup>27</sup> Perrin Family scrapbook.

<sup>28</sup> Documents in the Perrin Family scrapbook.

<sup>29</sup> Address 1805 (1850) Benedict, demolition of cottage, 600 sq. ft., 4-15-62 or 4/5/63 (unclear), during the Our Lady of Riverside Seminary ownership, from City of Riverside, Building Permits online.

<sup>30</sup> From sales brochure in Perrin scrapbook, 1952. Kilgen is the correct spelling; the company was George Kilgen & Sons, per American Theater Organ Society website, [atos.org](http://atos.org).

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- <sup>31</sup> “Pipe Organ for Benedict Home,” *Riverside Press*, Feb. 19, 1930. This article notes other organs made by Kilgen, which were much larger and more expensive.
- <sup>32</sup> Burns, Bob. “Riverside’s Dream Castle,” *Westways*, May, 1954, from Perrin scrapbook. Harley, R. Bruce, *Riverside Historical Society Journal*, No. 4, February 2000, p.12. Teen Challenge brochure, 2001. Current info from *Encyclopedia of the American Theater Organ*; and Steuart Goodwin & Company, Pipe Organ Builders, 294 S. D. St., San Bernardino, CA.
- <sup>33</sup> [imdb.com](http://imdb.com); and [en.wikipedia.org](http://en.wikipedia.org). Neither database lists the castle as a location.
- <sup>34</sup> Hiltner, Nita. *Press-Enterprise*, Feb. 27, 2010.
- <sup>35</sup> [imdb.com](http://imdb.com)
- <sup>36</sup> “Benedict Castle Spanish-Moorish and Mission Revival found in Riverside,” brochure by Teen Challenge of Southern California, 2001. Listings in [en.wikipedia.org](http://en.wikipedia.org) and [imdb](http://imdb.com).
- <sup>37</sup> Teen Challenge of Southern California, Benedict Castle brochure, 2001. Property records at Riverside County Assessor-County Clerk-Recorder’s facility, 2724 Gateway Dr., Riverside 92507, checked by Klure, July 2010.
- <sup>38</sup> From Klotz, in *Adobes, Bungalows ... Revisited*. For a more detailed treatment of the Servite period, see R. Bruce Harley, “Benedict Castle: Riverside’s ‘Castle in Spain,’” *Journal of the Riverside Historical Society*, No. 4, February 2000, p. 9-16. Online at [www.riversidehistoricalsociety.org](http://www.riversidehistoricalsociety.org). See also City of Riverside Planning Dept. Building Permits online.
- <sup>39</sup> City of Riverside Planning Dept., Historic Resources. *The Press*, July 27, 1970.
- <sup>40</sup> Klotz and Harley differ somewhat in their accounts of the Teen Challenge purchase and ownership period. The Irvine Company is still listed as a recent donor to Teen Challenge, on an Orange County Teen Challenge website.
- <sup>41</sup> Adapted from Klotz, in *Adobes, Bungalows...Revisited*.

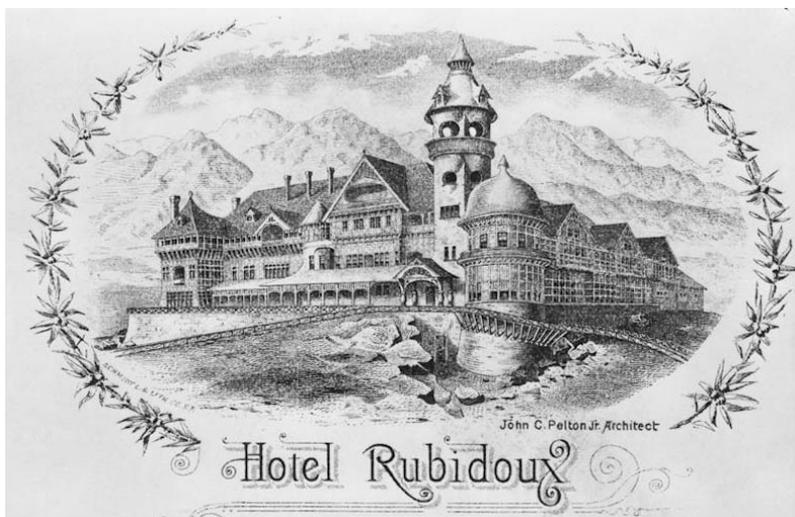
# What Might Have Been . . .

*by Glenn Wenzel*

Picturesque Mount Rubidoux has many memorials, tablets and even structures erected on it. The Cross and the Peace Tower are readily seen from the city below the mount. On a trip up the mountain a hiker is able to find the tablets, some of the flag sites and other reminders of days long gone. Most of these date from the era when the mountain was owned and controlled by Frank A. Miller, the proprietor of the historic Mission Inn.

Yet many people are not aware of “What Might Have Been!” There are a number of projects that were contemplated and even plans drawn, but never erected. We will briefly examine a few of these.

The first of these actually was partially constructed. In 1887, a group of Riversiders under the leadership of Emil Rosenthal banded together to build a tourist hotel at the foot of Mount Rubidoux above Pepper St. (now Redwood) between Ninth and Tenth. Other prominent men involved were Albert White (friend of Frank Miller and first guest at the Glenwood Hotel), Dr. Joseph Jarvis, John G. North (son of Riverside founder John W. North), O. T. Dyer, Luther Holt, Dr. C. J. Gill and Samuel C. Evans. Elaborate plans were drawn by architect John C. Pelton for “The Hotel Picturesque of Southern California.”<sup>1</sup> The paper of the day described the edifice in this way: “The exterior will present a combination of the English, Gothic and Swiss styles of architecture and with a touch now and then of Old Holland timber work, presents a very beautiful and uniform appearance from its foundation of granite, placed there by nature to the topmost pinnacle added by the art and skill of man.”<sup>2</sup> The grand hotel was begun, but the financial collapse of the period and then the mighty December winds “pushed down the framework of a new hotel under construction near the base of Mount Rubidoux.”<sup>3</sup> Thus ended the first attempt at building on Mount Rubidoux. If this hotel had been built, it is very likely Frank Miller might never have been involved with Mount Rubidoux and the mountain as we know it today might be very different.



*Drawing of the Proposed Hotel Rubidoux by John C. Pelton.  
Used by permission of Special Collections & Archives,  
University of California Riverside Libraries, Riverside CA.*

Frank Miller did become involved with Mount Rubidoux and its development in December of 1905 with the formation of the Huntington Park Association. Soon came the road, the cross, tablets, the Easter services and other changes. Other ideas, though, never came to fruition.

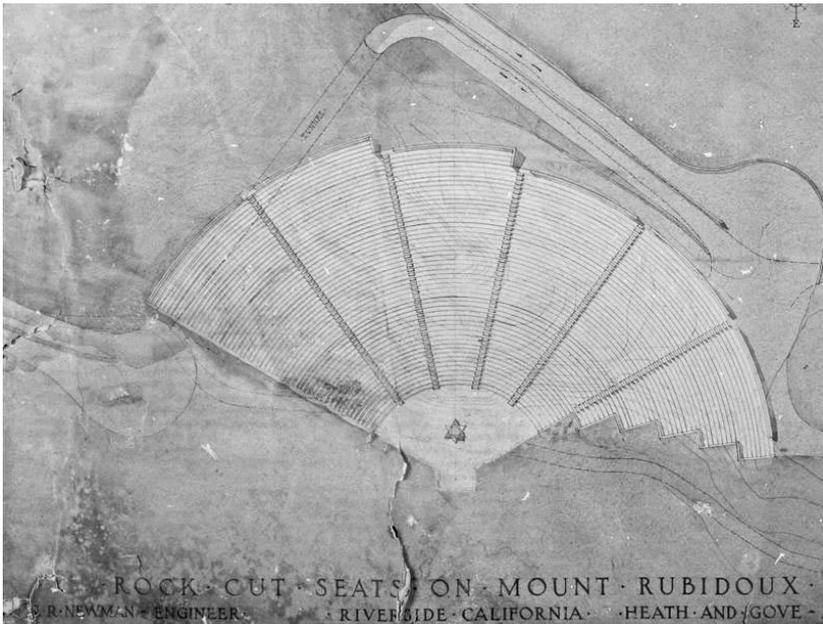
In April 1915, Miller approached the Chamber of Commerce with the idea of building a Greek Theater on the summit of Mount Rubidoux for the Easter services and other events.<sup>4</sup> The idea seemed to have simmered for a time. In March 1917, Frederick Heath, a stadium architect from Tacoma, Washington, stayed at the Mission Inn and visited the top of Mount Rubidoux. He was impressed with the mount and volunteered to prepare plans for the improvement of the summit. Riverside *Enterprise* editor J. R. Gabbert reported that Heath proposed “blasting away the awkward rock mound that rests in the center of the level space below the stadium seats north of the cross. This rock thrown to the east, will make possible a great irregular bowl, with the central point at its eastern extremity for the services platform. With this change, the thousands on Easter morning would all be facing the rising sun.”<sup>5</sup>

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A year later in March 1918, Heath returned to Riverside with plans. His proposal called for a theater seating 10,000 people. The road coming up the mountain would enter a tunnel under the theater which would connect to entrances to the seats above. In the center of the level area would be an altar of granite. The cost was estimated at between \$35,000 and \$40,000. The drawings were displayed in the window of the Rouse & Company store where they drew a great deal of attention. However, because of the war at that time no other action was taken.<sup>6</sup> A copy of these plans are presently in the collection of the Mission Inn Museum/Foundation.

Following the war, Frank Miller, with the help of Herbert Hoover, obtained a Belgian crucifix that had been damaged by German artillery. Miller's intentions were to build a memorial on Mount Rubidoux to honor the heroes who died during the recent war. The crucifix arrived and plans were drawn by William Sharp. Sharp designed most of the



*Drawing for Proposed Greek Theater by Frederick Heath  
From the collection of the Mission Inn Foundation and Museum, Riverside, CA*



*Photo of Belgium Cross hanging on Sixth Street Wall of Mission Inn - Used by permission of Special Collections & Archives, University of California Riverside Libraries, Riverside CA.*

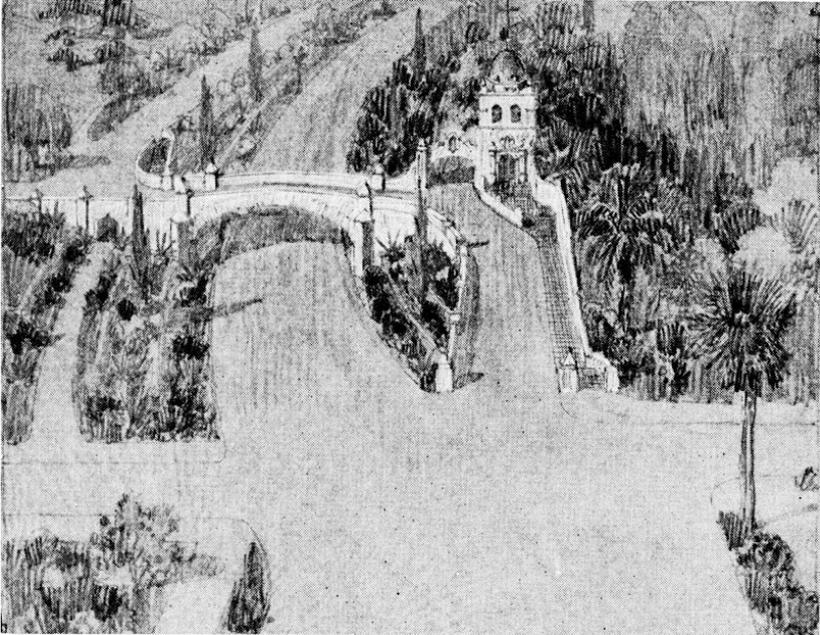
tablets on Mount Rubidoux and drew much of the artwork used in Mission Inn publications. These plans by Sharp, entitled "Entrance to Roadway of the Holy Cross of Belgium" are also in the collection of the Mission Inn Museum/Foundation. Late in his life, Miller wrote a letter to Marian Huntington, the daughter of Henry Huntington, expressing his regret that this cross was never erected on the Mount:

Another thing that is very near to my heart is the placing on the mountain of what, to my mind, is one of the rarest things that we possess, and would be the greatest blessing to the community. It is a cross from a cathedral in Belgium, seventeen feet high and about eight feet across, with a bronze figure of Christ from which one shoulder has been shot away. It was a gift from Cardinal Mercier and Albert, King of the

Belgians, obtained for me through the efforts of Herbert Hoover. I want to place it in a grotto on the mountain, not far from the Father Serra Cross, as a memorial to the soldiers of the World War. Bishop Conaty officiated at the ceremony in connection with the unveiling of the Father Serra Cross, and your father was present and had with him the Governor of California.<sup>7</sup>

Miller died before this memorial could be built. In 1951 the cross was repaired and placed on the outside wall of the Mission Inn overlooking Sixth Street. Later in 1956 the Miller family presented the cross to the Hoover Library at Stanford.

Late in 1930 plans were made to widen and improve the highway leading into Riverside from the west. Again, Frank Miller was at the



*Drawing of Proposed Bridge and Tower by Peter N. Weber  
Courtesy of Peter J. Weber.*

forefront of these efforts. The old bridge over Seventh Street leading to Huntington Drive and Mount Rubidoux needed to be replaced because of the road improvements. Plans were developed by the office of G. Stanley Wilson showing a bridge similar to what was built only with a Memorial Tower rising sixty feet on northern side of the bridge. The plans for this bridge with the tower were drawn by Peter Weber, an architect in Wilson's office.<sup>8</sup> Weber is also the builder of the Weber House on University Avenue which is now the home of the Old Riverside Foundation. Unfortunately the tower was left out of the final construction work.

Approximately a month after Frank Miller died in June of 1935, H. W. Hammond, a member of the utility board, together with DeWitt Hutchings and Newell Parker, approached the city council with plans to install a public address system on Mount Rubidoux in honor of Miller. The system would be tied in to the Mission Inn in order to utilize the

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pipe organ in the Music Room. There was also to be a tie-in with the Civic Memorial Auditorium and Fairmount Park. The total cost was estimated at \$4561.05. The matter was first referred to the city attorney, Eugene Best, for his opinion on the legality of the expenditure for equipment placed on private property. Best responded that it would be proper as long as the installation was for the general welfare of the public and that safeguards be set to insure that the city retained title to the equipment. In August, the council referred the matter to the Finance Committee of the Council and the City Attorney for more investigation and a report.<sup>9</sup> Esther Klotz wrote in her book on the Mission Inn that a small structure for the equipment was designed by G. Stanley Wilson.<sup>10</sup> According to the minutes of the Riverside City Council through the end of 1935, there is not any more reference to this project.

What Might Have Been! These five projects might have been erected on Mount Rubidoux, but for whatever reason were never completed. They would have made interesting additions to the famous mountain just west of downtown Riverside.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Riverside Daily *Press*, October 15, 1887.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Hall, Joan, *A Citrus Legacy*, page 46.

<sup>4</sup> Riverside Daily *Press*, April 8, 1915.

<sup>5</sup> Riverside *Enterprise*, March 10, 1917.

<sup>6</sup> Riverside *Enterprise*, March 30, 1918.

<sup>7</sup> Letter from Miller to Marian Huntington dated March 20, 1934 in collection of Riverside Metropolitan Museum.

<sup>8</sup> Information and sketch provided by Peter N. Weber, son of Peter J. Weber.

<sup>9</sup> Riverside Daily *Press*, July 16, 1935; July 23, 1935; July 30, 1935 and Council Minutes from July, 16, 1935; July 23, 1935; July 30, 1935 and August 6, 1935.

<sup>10</sup> Klotz, Esther. *The Mission Inn; Its History and Artifacts*, page 93.

## Ebay Purchase Brings Old Letters Back to Riverside

*by Kim Jarrell Johnson*

A chance search on EBay a few years ago turned up three letters dating from the early 1880s written by a young woman named Linnie, who lived in Riverside. They were sent to a young man named Tracy Abbott who at the time was living in Colton. The letter below was dated and postmarked July 19<sup>th</sup>, 1881. Two last names in the letter were not legible and the spelling, grammar, capitalization (or lack thereof) have been preserved as much as possible:

Dear Trace-

I went to the picnic yesterday and got home just alive and that is all. I rode over with Mr. Battles' folks. Just after I had gone Anna and Myron called for me to go with them but they couldn't find me anywhere, so I rode home with them. There was a long procession, when our team was just going out of sight back of spring brook mountain the last team was down by Joe ?? block and the first one was half way through spring brook. They had three swings put up and I swung once with Anna once with Priestly and once alone. And Tom ?? asked me to swing and I told him I didn't care I was afraid it would make me sick if I swung any more. I come home with the headache, and I felt seasick I suppose I swung too much. Mother had the sick headache yesterday. But not very bad. She is better this morning. Mrs. Cooledge is worse. The Dr. says now that she had got a fever. She is talking of going to Santa Monica as soon as she is able to be moved. Mr. Cooledge stayed at home yesterday to help take care of her, and Dave Wilder drove the meat wagon. So you may know she is pretty sick. I saw Fernando Ball yesterday. And I asked him if he knew Eugene

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Day. And he said he did. Then he said the Riverside girls must have made lots of mashes on the Los Angeles fellows when they were down here. For he said he had heard a number of the girls here mention Los Angeles fellows names. And I made him believe that I was acquainted with Eugene Day until I got ready to come home then I told him differently. Mother says now she has got me to writing she shant have to write as much this week. She says she can't think of all the good advise she would like to give you but says you must imagine it all. If I tell all the news today I shant have anything to write about tomorrow. So I will stop right here. Write to me if you can get time.

Yours with love,  
Linnie J.

Who are the people and what are the events that Linnie is referring to in her letter? With the help of old newspapers, community directories, and online genealogy sites, a surprising amount of information was found.

Linnie first mentions getting a ride to a picnic with “Mr. Battles’ folks.” She is most likely referring to Daniel Battles, who came to Riverside from Maine in 1873. He was seeking a better climate due to ill health. Apparently the Riverside climate agreed with him because he lived in Riverside until his death in 1895. Like many at that time, he purchased property and began raising, among other things, an orange grove. His 10-acre ranch was located at Brockton and Bandini.

The picnic she rode with the Battles to was mentioned in the July 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1881 *Press and Horticulturalist*. The paper mentioned, “The temperance people assembled at the picnic west of Riverside last Monday, took steps to organize a temperance political party.” The picnic was referred to in two other places in that edition of the paper. It was noted that the Glenwood Cottages flew the American Flag on the 18<sup>th</sup> in honor of the Good Templar picnic that day. The paper also said, “The Good Templar celebration last Monday was an enjoyable affair, San Bernardino Lodge arrived in good time in Riverside in force. A long procession was formed preceded by the Riverside band . . . and proceeded to the grove across the river . . . Riverside lacks sadly a good grove in which to hold such gatherings.”

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In the letter, Linnie mentions the procession to the picnic going around “spring brook mountain” and crossing “spring brook.” Spring Brook is a small stream that goes through today’s Fairmount Park. No peak in Riverside today carries the name of Spring Brook Mountain. However, clues such as the picnic being held west of town and the procession crossing Spring Brook hints that the mountain Linnie is referring to is perhaps today’s Little Mount Rubidoux.

Not much was found concerning the “Cooledge” family. Linnie spelled Coolidge with an “e” in the middle, but it was most likely spelled in the conventional fashion with an “i.” The 1880 Federal census has one Coolidge family in Riverside. It is Francis Coolidge, 44, his wife Sophia, 31, and their three children, ages 9, 7, and 5. Linnie mentions Mr. Coolidge having to take a day off to stay home with his ill wife. The 1900 Federal census indicates that Mr. Coolidge was a widower by that point.

When Mr. Coolidge stayed home with his wife, Linnie mentioned that Dave Wilder had to drive the meat wagon. The 1889 community directory listed D. O. Wilder as the proprietor of D. O. Wilder and Bro. Meat Market, located on Main between 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Streets. It seems that Mr. Coolidge worked for Dave Wilder and when he stayed home Wilder had to fill in for his employee.

The easiest person to identify in Linnie’s letter is the young man she mentions named Priestly. That is without a doubt Priestly Hall. He came to Riverside from New York as a young man of 14 with his parents John and Dorthea Hall. They were medical doctors but once they reached Riverside they soon gave up medical practice and began a citrus nursery with their son. Priestly later bought land adjacent to Riverside, which he called Hall’s Addition. He also built the large home on Ivy known as Rockledge.

Most importantly, who were Linnie and Tracy? Linnie was Linnie H. Jones. She was born in May 1865 and her parents were Silas B. and Maria E. Jones. Linnie came to Riverside with her family when she was eight years old in 1873, three years after Riverside was founded. This makes the Jones family one of the earliest to settle in Riverside. On the 1880 Federal census, Silas was listed as horticulturalist, Maria as a dressmaker, and Linnie was listed as “at home” and, almost as an afterthought, as a “music teacher.” She had not attended school within the last year.

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Tracy Abbott was born in 1858 and came to California around the horn when he was two years old. He grew up in San Francisco and later moved to Riverside.

Linnie and Tracy married in Riverside in 1885. They were 20 and 26 respectively. They had two children. Bessie was born in October 1886 and William was born in February 1888. According to the 1900 Federal census they were living at that time on a farm that they owned in Los Angeles and Tracy's occupation was listed as a "horticulturalist."

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### Description of Riverside

from *Our Italy* by Charles Dudley Warner,  
Harper & Brothers, 1892, pp. 123-124.

The city of Riverside occupies an area of some five miles by three, and claims to have 6000 inhabitants; the centre is a substantial town with fine school and other public buildings, but the region is one succession of orange groves and vineyards, of comfortable houses and broad avenues. One avenue through which we drove is 125 feet wide and 12 miles long, planted in three rows with palms, magnolias, the *Grevillea robusta* (Australian fern), the pepper, and the eucalyptus, and lined all the way by splendid orange groves, in the midst of which are houses and grounds with semitropical attractions. Nothing could be lovelier than such a scene of fruits and flowers, with the background of purple hills and snowy peaks. The mountain views are superb. Frost is a rare visitor. Not in fifteen years has there been enough to affect the orange. There is little rain after March, but there are fogs and dew-falls, and the ocean breeze is felt daily. The grape grown for raisins is the muscat, and this has had no "sickness." Vigilance and a quarantine have also kept from the orange the scale which has been so annoying in some other localities. The orange, when cared for, is a generous bearer; some trees produce twenty boxes each, and there are areas of twenty acres in good bearing which have brought to the owner as much as \$10,000 a year.

# Casa Blanca's Evans Street

*by Bill Wilkman*

Anyone traveling along Riverside's Evans Street between Madison and Grace Streets would find it hard to believe that this was once, in many respects, Casa Blanca's commercial-industrial core. Today, this street frontage is flanked by a mixture of residences, vacant lots, a convenience store, and a bar. In addition to these retail businesses, a metal fabrication shop is located in a modern tilt-up concrete building where a packing house was once situated. A convenience store and irrigation supply business are situated at the intersection of Evans and Madison Streets, but these businesses are addressed on Madison Street and are not counted as Evans Street corridor businesses for the purpose of this report. The commercial remnants facing Evans Street offer very little evidence of the commercial and industrial businesses that once fronted this corridor. This article examines the interesting history of Casa Blanca's development and Evans Street's rise and fall as a center of commerce.

Riverside's Casa Blanca community is roughly centered on Madison Street between Indiana and Victoria Avenues. While its population is mixed, the predominant component is of Hispanic origin. Its history is a rich and varied one, many facets of which are no longer evident in the built environment. Evans Street is a prime example of a corridor with a vibrant history that is barely perceptible today.

The Casa Blanca community has its origins in the efforts of William T. Sayward to create a colony that would compete with John North's Riverside Colony. To accomplish this, in 1874 Sayward purchased a portion of the Hartshorn Tract, consisting of 8,478.42 acres of former government land owned by land speculator Benjamin Hartshorn. To acquire sufficient capital to fund the subdivision and irrigation of the land, Sayward sold a half-interest to Samuel Cary Evans. Using their combined resources, Evans and Sayward developed plans for a colony to be named the New England Colony (Lech 2004: 178).

Adjoining Evans' and Sayward's proposed New England Colony to the west was another speculative colony, the Santa Ana Colony, spearheaded

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by Lester Robinson, a high ranking official with the San Jacinto Tin Company. Robinson purchased land from the Tin Company when its efforts to extract tin from area mines proved less than successful. The Tin Company's lands were formerly part of Rancho El Sobrante de San Jacinto (ibid: 178-179).

The two adjacent colonies had a common problem. Neither could afford to build a canal to bring the irrigation needed to attract purchasers. Separately, they would have to build two canals, but as a combined venture only one canal would be needed. Consequently, Evans, Sayward, and Robinson joined their efforts into one project. That, however, did not entirely solve the problem. To bring water to their lands, they determined it would be necessary to build a canal through the Riverside Colony. North and other Colony investors refused to allow such a canal to be built through their land. This problem was solved when Charles Felton, a major investor in the Riverside Colony, was convinced to sell his share of the Riverside Colony venture to the Santa Ana/New England Colonies. In 1875, the business deal was consummated giving the Sayward partnership a position of power in the Riverside Colony. Once this deed was done, all three colonies came under the control of the Riverside Land & Irrigating Company (RL&I), with Sayward serving as its president. The creation of the RL&I put some 15,000 acres under the control of the RL&I and effectively removed North from any position of power (Ibid: 179-180).

While the elimination of John North from his dream venture might be seen as a negative, his loss was in many respects the area's gain, as it opened up a vast amount of irrigated land for Riverside's major cash crop, citrus. It was therefore a key to the economic success experienced by Riverside well into the twentieth century. Some of the most profitable groves were those in the Arlington Heights area, situated on RL&I lands south of today's Casa Blanca. These groves and others in the area created a significant demand for laborers to pick the fruits and process them in packing houses for shipment.

To meet the demand for workers, camps were created at strategic locations where laborers, including migrants from Mexico, Japan, Korea, Italy, and China, were provided food and a place to sleep. Among the camps were those named Osborne, Windsor, and Balmoral, reflecting the

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strong English component of Riverside's citrus industry. Another notable camp was the Martinez camp in the Arlington Heights area, housing Mexican and Japanese workers (Patterson, *Riverside Press Enterprise*, March 21, 1982: B2).

To these worker camps, Evans' son, Samuel Cary Evans Jr. added another opportunity for housing workers. On February 23, 1889, he recorded a subdivision map called "The Village of Casa Blanca," consisting of a little over 19 acres divided into 74 lots. The subdivision was created on the southerly portion of Lot 8 Block 65 of RL&I lands. Surveyors were G. O. Newman and C. C. Miller (Map of the Village of Casa Blanca in the City of Riverside, Recorded February 23, 1889). In creating the Casa Blanca subdivision, Evans achieved two objectives. From a personal business standpoint, he created a source of income from town lot sales. And, from an area economic and social standpoint, he provided a place where workers could own homes close to the products that needed picking and processing.

The location of the Village subdivision was logical. First, it was centered in a thriving area of citrus farms. Second, it was located where Casa Blanca train station had recently been completed. The Casa Blanca station was one of four stations in Riverside on the Riverside, Santa Ana and Los Angeles Railroad. Originally, stations were only planned in downtown Riverside and in the Village of Arlington (another Evans-Sayward creation). The distance between these stations proved too great, however, and two additional stations were added. One was Pachappa, just north of today's Arlington Avenue, and the other was Casa Blanca, situated west of Madison Street between the railroad tracks and Railroad Avenue. Plans for the Casa Blanca station were announced in the *Riverside Press and Horticulturalist* in 1885: ". . . the name of Casa Blanca is proposed for the new station. . . When that is built, there will come packing houses and canneries and stores." (*Riverside Press & Horticulturalist*, November 21, 1885: 4).

Evans' map did not include any reference to a commercial or industrial district. He did, however, locate larger parcels with frontage on Railroad Avenue, east and west of the Casa Blanca Station, suggesting that industry would locate there. Interestingly, almost all of the packing houses were built south of the tracks, where residential sized lots fronted the north side of Evans Street.



*Casa Blanca Station*

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It made more sense for industry to locate south of the tracks rather than to the north in the area of larger parcels. Most of the workers were expected to come from the village situated south of the tracks. If industry had located north of the tracks there would have been times when workers would have been blocked from the shortest path from their homes to their places of employment by trains waiting to load and unload goods and passengers at the Casa Blanca station. Situated south of the tracks, employees could come and go without such interference.

The April 1, 1891 edition of the *Riverside Enterprise* described five packing houses operating in Casa Blanca, including those of W. R. Strong & Co, Cook & Langley, Earl Fruit Company, Thacker Brothers, and the Thomas Bakewell Company. Quoting from the paper, "F. A. Howell, the general manager of W. R. Strong & Co's establishment in Casa Blanca informs us that his house shipped fifty carloads from Casa Blanca alone thus far this season. W. J. Toromeyer, manager for the Earl Fruit Company, has a large force employed getting out an unusually fine lot of oranges. The Wells Fargo Express Company established an agency there last week and A. H. Prince, the accommodating agent, informs us that business is opening up in good shape." (Casa Blanca Notes, *Riverside Enterprise*, April 1, 1891: 3). The 1908 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map clearly shows the density of packing houses in the Evans Street corridor.

In oral history sessions conducted in 2001 for the Casa Blanca historic properties survey, longtime elderly Casa Blanca residents talked of whole families employed in agricultural pursuits, primarily related to the citrus industry. Family members worked in Evans Street corridor packing houses and picked fruit in area groves. When citrus crops were not ripe for picking and processing, they traveled all over the region and state picking and processing other crops (2001 Casa Blanca Historic Survey Oral History Video Tapes, Riverside City Planning Department).

Properties fronting the south side of Evans Street became logical business locations, serving the needs of the workers passing through the Evans Street corridor. Businesses also congregated along Madison Street, but the Evans Street corridor became the main locale for grocery stores, cafes, and purveyors of general merchandise. Neither street frontage was solidly commercial, but rather consisted of a mix of residences, vacant lots, and commercial uses.

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It was in this economic environment that Casa Blanca grew and was solidified as a community. This community was bound together primarily by three factors: proximity to the citrus industry, isolation from downtown Riverside, and the discriminatory practices of the day. Participants in the 2001 oral histories project of the Casa Blanca historic properties survey described a close knit community primarily consisting of persons of Hispanic, Italian, and Japanese origin. The community had its own places of worship, a post office, a school, and businesses (ibid).

While the convenience of proximity to local stores and services undoubtedly kept many Casa Blanca residents close to home, discrimination also played a part for some of its residents. Oral history participants noted that barber shops outside of Casa Blanca would often refuse to serve non-Anglos. To meet the need for haircuts, Casa Blanca residents with barbering skills opened their homes on weekends as impromptu barber shops. The city's public swimming pools would not admit non-Anglos, so many Casa Blanca children used the irrigation canals as their "swimming pools." Employment outside of agriculture was often not available to Casa Blanca residents, so many worked in the fields, orchards, and packing houses in the Casa Blanca area (ibid).

The following table records the presence of commercial and industrial uses in the Evans Street corridor from the 1900s through to the present. In evaluating this table, it is important to consider that the Casa Blanca population in 1900 was much smaller than it was in later years. Four retail uses in 1930s would have represented a much higher ratio of population to retail businesses than the four retail businesses located in the Evans Street corridor in the 1990s. In any event, it is clear that there has been an overall decline in retail and industrial uses in the Evans Street corridor since the 1950s.

*(Continued next page)*

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| <b>Evans Street Businesses by Decade</b> |       |       |       |       |       |
|--|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| <b>Decade</b>                            | **    | *     | *     | *     | **    |
|  | 1900s | 1920s | 1930s | 1940s | 1950s |
| <b>Retail</b>                            | 5     | 2     | 4     | 10    | 10    |
| <b>Industrial</b>                        | 7     | 3     | 1     | 1     | 2     |
| <b>Total</b>                             | 12    | 5     | 5     | 11    | 12    |
|  |       |       |       |       |       |
| <b>Decade</b>                            | *     | *     | *     | *     | ***   |
|  | 1960s | 1970s | 1980s | 1990s | 2010  |
| <b>Retail</b>                            | 5     | 3     | 6     | 4     | 2     |
| <b>Industrial</b>                        | 2     | 2     | 1     | 1     | 1     |
| <b>Total</b>                             | 7     | 5     | 7     | 5     | 3     |

Notes:

- Businesses at the corner of Madison and Evans Streets that are not oriented toward Evans Street are not counted as Evans Street businesses.
- The number in each decade represents the highest number of businesses in a single year.
- \* Based upon City Directories
- \*\* Based upon Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps
- \*\*\* Based upon field observation

Many of what started out to be home-based, part-time businesses evolved into full-time businesses. In most cases residences were altered into dedicated stores; in other instances new, purpose built stores were constructed. The 1908 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map records the presence of five buildings designated “S,” indicating the use of the building as a “store” along the Evans Street corridor. Only one commercial enterprise, a Japanese billiard parlor, is recorded on Madison Street. This same map identifies eight packing houses along the railroad tracks in Casa Blanca, seven of which were situated between the tracks and Evans Street.

Over time, the number of packing houses in Casa Blanca greatly diminished. The 1951 Sanborn Fire Insurance map shows only one packing house in the Evans Street corridor. As Evans Street’s prominence as an employment center eroded, Madison Street tended to attract more commercial uses. But Evans Street retained its importance, at least for a while. The 1951 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map records the presence of 10 commercial uses fronting onto Evans Street.

Today there are only two retail businesses on Evans Street, consisting of a convenience store and a bar. None of the packing houses remain.

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The timing and reasons for their demise will have to be the subject of another research project. The Casa Blanca station fell into disuse and was demolished in 1967 (PCR Services Corporation 2001: 22). Today, its site is marked only by some foundation remnants and three mature palm trees. These are visible south of Railroad Avenue, between Depot and Winstrom Streets.

Without further study, one can only speculate as to the reasons for the reduction of retail businesses along the Evans Street corridor. Certainly, the gradual loss of packing houses is one reason. Populations are also more mobile today, giving people access to a much broader array of commercial enterprises. Additionally, anti-discrimination laws and changing social norms have given minorities greater access to a wide range of businesses than in the past, reducing the need to patronize shops focused on serving specific cultural or racial groups. But, Casa Blanca remains a vital and close-knit community with a strong sense of cultural identity. Many of the businesses that remain in the community focus on serving the area's predominantly Hispanic population. It remains an interesting part of Casa Blanca's history, however, that the Evans Street corridor was once Casa Blanca's "downtown."

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