Save Our Heritage Organization

POINT LOMA HOME TOUR

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POINTE LOMA COLLEGE

Point Loma College is an institution of the Church of the Nazarene. It was originally founded in 1902 as Pasadena College. In 1973 it moved onto its 90 acre Point Loma Campus overlooking the Pacific near San Diego.

Point Loma College is an accredited four-year Liberal Arts College. It has a faculty of over 100 dedicated to educational excellence and Christian values. It offers undergraduate degrees (BA and BS) in 69 different majors, including Bachelor of Science in Nursing. It also offers graduate programs, including Master of Arts in Education and Religion. In addition, it offers a variety of certificate programs. It strives to provide higher education in the Liberal Arts tradition and to prepare students for service and leadership in selected professions.

Point Loma College welcomes qualified students who desire an education in an environment of vital Christianity in the Evangelical and Wesleyan tradition.

Point Loma College is aware of the historic heritage associated with its campus and is taking appropriate measures to preserve these reminders of our past for the generations to come.
LOMALAND - Point Loma College Campus

For nearly 45 years (1897-1942) there was a "Camelot"...an actual "Utopia"...and it existed right here on Point Loma. It was called "Lomaland."

Lomaland was a community of Theosophists, people who believed in a cosmic form of meditative thought, encompassing virtually all major world religions. It was a belief that was founded and promulgated in America in 1875 by a Russian seeress, Madame Helena Petrovna Blavatski (1831-1891). In the following years Theosophy attracted a worldwide following, including many wealthy, learned, and influential men and women.

The subject of Theosophy is complex and we will not attempt to describe it in this brochure. Our interest will focus on this remarkable community called "Lomaland."

The story of Lomaland involves many people and many events, but more than anything it is the story of Katherine Tingley, a dynamic and charismatic person who became the leader of the Theosophical Society of America after Madame Blavatski's death.

Katherine Tingley was born in 1847 in the puritan atmosphere of Newbury, Massachusetts. Through her maternal grandfather she became personally acquainted with many of the important writers and thinkers in the New England area. She grew up in a period of strife and turmoil. Her father was a Captain in the Union Army and while the family lived in Alexandria, Virginia, during the Civil War she demonstrated her first interest in helping others. After one battle she was found trying to help the wounded Union soldiers. She was 14 years old at the time. In 1887 she formed the Society of Mercy to visit hospitals and prisons. To support this work she gave benefits, including dramatic recitals and spiritualistic readings (Spiritualism was a strong movement in America in the late 1800's, and is credited with giving Theosophy its start).

The squalor of the Industrial Revolution and the ravages of war appalled her. For years she dreamed of a Utopian Society where people could live in peace and comfort; seeking and enjoying the finer things in life: drama, literature, music and the arts. She tells about meeting the great frontier explorer, John C. Fremont. They talked about his life in the west and she shared with him her childhood dream of a great white utopian city overlooking the Pacific where she would bring the people of the world together to become true, noble, and champions of humanity. General Fremont is said to have listened with great interest and then stated "I know the place you are talking about, because I have been there. It is a place called "Point Loma."

Katherine Tingley had never been to Point Loma nor had she even heard of it before. Yet General Fremont's words made a great impression on her. Some years later after she joined and became head of the Theosophical Society (1896) she became determined to translate these dreams and words into action. First, she changed the name of the Theosophical Society to the "Universal Brotherhood." Next, she started making arrangements to move the world headquarters of the organization from New York City to Point Loma which at that time was nothing more than a dry uninhabited plateau covered with chaparral located about ten miles from the, then, rather obscure town of San Diego. This was a major move because it involved uprooting people, families and households from one coast to another to begin a whole new life and lifestyle. She invited members from her worldwide organization to join her.
The miracle is that within five years there was a community of 500 persons living at Lomaland. The monumental "Raja Yoga Academy" and beautiful "Temple of Peace" had been erected. Over 2000 trees had been planted, orchards and gardens planted and cultivated. In short, a viable community had been established. Noted artists and musicians arrived to take up residency as did successful businessmen such as Albert Spalding, Emil August Nereshiener and others.

In 1901 the first Greek Theatre in America was constructed in a natural amphitheatre on Lomaland. Katherine Tingley enjoyed drama, particularly Shakespeare and the Greek classics. Music, drama and pageantry played an important role in the lives of the Theosophists. Among the popular dramas presented here were: A Midsummer Night's Dream, the Tempest, the Eumenides by Aeschylus. In addition, Katherine Tingley also wrote a drama called "The Aroma of Athens." Persons who attended these performances were especially impressed by the staging, costuming and pageantry. Some speak of spectacular torchlight processions that wound up the canyon to the stage. Care was taken that the orchestra not distract attention from the dramas, by concealing the musicians behind the stage. It is said that San Diego's long time interest and support of the Old Globe Shakespeare Festival and the Starlight Theatre actually got its start here at Lomaland.

It is also said that the tradition of school bands started here at Lomaland.

The focal point of Lomaland was the Raja Yoga Academy. It was also called the "Homestead." Originally this was a sanitarium, one of the first buildings constructed at Lomaland in 1897 at Katherine Tingley's direction. This was a large three-story wood frame Victorian structure with an open courtyard and one Queen Anne tower at each corner of the building. In 1900 when the Theosophists started the big move to Point Loma, Katherine Tingley ordered the building to be remodeled. Simulated masonry replaced the shiplap siding. The Queen Anne towers were removed and three colored glass domes took their place. Finally the most spectacular touch: The open courtyard was covered by a huge aquamarine colored glass dome about 100 feet in diameter and 85 feet high. This building was used as both living quarters and as a school, which accounts for its being interchangeably called "The Homestead" or "The Academy."

At this same time, a second major building was constructed, west of the Academy. It was the "Temple of Peace," a two-tiered circular structure. Its first tier was surrounded by arcades. The second tier was encircled by oval shaped windows. This building also had a huge amethyst colored glass dome. Each of the domes on the academy and temple were crowned by a large colored glass sphere about 20 feet in diameter. These in turn were topped by a pinnacle decoration depicting a flaming heart. At night the spheres were illuminated and could be seen far out at sea.

The Spalding residence was built nearby in a similar style, except with a wood dome and amethyst glass sphere.

South of the academy, were the Lotus houses, octagonal buildings, that were used as residences for the children. Children were separated by age and sex and lived in dormitory fashion with a house parent. A large community dining hall was provided to the west. Fruit, vegetables and other foodstuffs were grown at Lomaland, making the community self-sufficient. Nearby was Katherine Tingley's residence, a two-story wood frame building designed in Greek revival style with ionic columns and simulated masonry walls.
The entrances to Lomaland were identified by large impressive archways. The Egyptian gate was located on Dupont at Catalina. The Roman gate was on Lomaland at Catalina.

For nearly 45 years this unique community continued to function. What happened to it? A variety of hardships befell Lomaland, but put together they spelled "money." World War I damaged communications and financial support between Lomaland and its worldwide lodge system. This forced Lomaland to start selling some of the Point Loma property in the twenties. Next Katherine Tingley's death in 1929 coupled with the Great Depression placed both a "leadership" and "financial" crisis on the organization. The leaders were faced with steadily increasing taxes and waterbills on the Lomaland property. Finally, with the outbreak of World War II there was fear of a Japanese invasion. These fears were not minimized by the heavy artillery practice by the army at Fort Rosecrans and the fleet offshore. The fear of the glass domes, weakened by gunfire, suddenly crashing down on the peaceful Theosophists was the deciding factor. They looked for a suitable site where they could move and found it in Covina, California. Ironically, the glass domes survived WWII. It wasn't until the Temple of Peace accidently caught fire in 1954 that a decision was made to completely demolish both the academy and the temple.

Thus, the Lomaland story came to an end. Or has it? A number of structures including the Spalding residence, the Greek Theatre and others remain to remind us of this intriguing social experiment and creative group of people.
POINT LOMA – AN INTRODUCTION

Point Loma is sometimes referred to as "The Plymouth Rock of the West Coast." In terms of landing dates, it precedes the Plymouth Rock landing by nearly 80 years, since Juan Cabrillo landed on Point Loma in 1542 (a scant 50 years after Columbus 'discovered' America) while the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock in 1620. However, in fairness it should be pointed out that no permanent settlements were established in San Diego until Father Serra and Captain Portola arrived in 1769.

Geologically, the area we call Point Loma was once an island. Over countless years the San Diego River shifting its flow to the sea alternately between San Diego Bay and Mission Bay deposited an alluvial marshy area between the mainland near Old Town and the area we now call Loma Portal. Interestingly, until comparatively recent times, Point Loma often continued to be an island cut off from the mainland by high tides or floods. Even after the turn of the century ferry boats were a common way of commuting between Roseville and downtown San Diego.

Possibly the unpredictable isolation of Point Loma by tides and floods was a factor in Captain Portola placing the Presidio on the Mission Hills site, rather than on Point Loma. The Mission Hills site also had the advantage of overlooking both San Diego and Mission Bay as well as a dependable supply of water. It should be noted, however, that a supplementary fortification, Ft. Gujjarros was established on Point Loma at the entrance to San Diego Bay in 1795.

But, Point Loma offered one advantage that the Presidio and Old Town site didn’t have...and that was a deep water anchorage. That is why much of San Diego's early history is linked with Point Loma. It is here where the early seafarers gravitated in the shelter of Point Loma from the storms at sea and to the deep water anchorages that lie close to shore.

It was here at La Playa that the New England hide merchants set up their base of operations to collect and process the leather hides from the great California Ranchos. It was here that Richard Henry Dana spent much of his time (1835-36) in his saga "Two Years Before The Mast," helping to process the hides for the leather and shoe factories in New England.

It was here that the whalers set up their shore operations to capture and process the California grey whales that at one time used San Diego Bay as a mating and calving area (like Scammons Lagoon in Baja California). It was here that fishermen from faraway China sailed their junk and set up their fish drying racks. It was here that the enterprising pioneer Louis Rose envisioned an industrial metropolis on the west coast, to rival San Francisco and Los Angeles. Roseville would be the westerly terminus of the Texas and Pacific Railway. It was here that other enterprising souls would envision and establish the beginning of a huge west coast steel plant. It was here that the Mormons would seek coal to provide fuel for their expanding community of Deseret. It was here that Katherine Tingley would establish her great white city to become a California utopia, a prototype for an ideal worldwide society.
Point Loma was all of these things; a place of promise and for many, a place of faded dreams. Yet, the reality of Point Loma today is a serene area of beautiful homes, a prime recreation area that still points its face to the bay and the sea. An area whose orientation to the sea has given impetus not only to sailing, yachting, sportsfishing, but to the defense of our nation by the presence of the Naval Training Center, the Naval Electronics Laboratory and many other Naval defense activities.
THE ALBERT & ELIZABETH SPALDING HOUSE - Point Loma Campus

by
Bruce F. Herms

On the campus of Point Loma College is one of the most intriguing homes ever built in San Diego County. Today it serves as the Administration Building for the Church of the Nazarene's Point Loma College. At the turn of the century and for a period of about 15 years (1901-15) it was the home of the well-known sporting goods manufacturer, Albert Goodwill Spalding, and his wife, Elizabeth.

Albert Spalding was born in Byron, Illinois in 1850. By the time he was 17 he had gained recognition as an amateur baseball player. He then turned professional and became famous as a pitcher playing in the National League for the Boston and Chicago baseball clubs (1871-91). Later he became president of the National Baseball League. In addition to being a capable athlete he had organizational ability and a shrewd sense of business. He was one of the first professional athletes to capitalize upon his name identification. Together with his brother and brother-in-law they established A.G. Spalding and Brothers Sporting Goods Company. Next, recognizing the need for good sporting equipment, he founded Spalding Manufacturing Company. This proved to be very successful and remains one of the leading sporting goods manufacturers in the world today.

Albert Spalding married Elizabeth Churchill Mayer in 1900. She was an important long-time associate of Katherine Tingley. A competent musician, she was Director of the Isis Conservatory of Music at Lomaland. In addition, she was in charge of the worldwide Children's Lotus Program. In this capacity she compiled the Children's "Lotus Song Book" used for many years at Theosophical lodges throughout the world. In 1901 Mr. and Mrs. Spalding moved to Lomaland. Although Albert Spalding did not become a Theosophist, he was very supportive of Katherine Tingley and the Theosophical movement.

In addition to his sports manufacturing business, he became interested in local real estate and investments. He was an important associate of George Burnham in the development of Loma Portal in 1912. One of his special delights was the development of the Point Loma Golf Club in Loma Portal. This palatial two-story club house with its surrounding 18-hole golf course was built in 1913-14, and was located on Evergreen North of Lytton.

Another one of his community projects was the development of Sunset Cliffs Gardens. Intrigued by the rugged Point Loma coastline he purchased land along the shore near Sunset Cliffs Boulevard and Hill Street. He hired a Japanese landscape designer to create a strip park that resembled an Oriental wonderland with rustic twisting railings, fairy lanterns, palm-thatched shelters, bridges that reached out to small island promontories. He even had a saltwater swimming pool excavated in the sandstone along the shore to take advantage of the incoming tides and wave action to freshen and replenish the water in the pool. Spalding dedicated his park to the city. Unfortunately, due to cost problems, the park was not maintained. Over the years, neglect and erosion have taken their toll and the park has virtually disappeared.
It is also interesting to note that Spalding was one of the first persons in San Diego to own an automobile as early as 1901. This interest in automobiles prompted an interest in roads. Albert Spalding together with John D. Spreckles and E.W. Scripps, formed the powerful three-man San Diego County Road Commission for many years and were responsible for the development of many of San Diego's early roads.

To fully appreciate the Spalding house one should understand its physical relationship to two other buildings that previously stood immediately to the south; namely, "The Homestead" and "The Temple of Peace." These two buildings were the focal point of the Point Loma community. The Homestead was the larger of the two buildings. It was a large three-story rectangular structure with a huge aquamarine glass dome (about 100 feet in diameter) over a central courtyard. Three of the four corner towers also had colored glass domes. Immediately to the west of the Homestead was the Temple of Peace. It was a large circular building built in two tiers. A circular arcade surrounded the first tier. The second tier was surrounded by a series of oval windows and was crowned by a large amethyst-colored glass dome. The domes on both the Homestead and Temple were further surmounted by glass spheres about 15 and 20 feet in diameter. These spheres were topped with ornaments representing flaming hearts. It is said that these spires were illuminated at night and could be seen for miles at sea and helped supplement the Government Lighthouse on the Point.

The Spalding house is believed to have been built in 1901, about the same time the Temple of Peace was constructed and during the time the Homestead was remodeled. Early photos show the three buildings in a harmonious cluster. At first glance the Spalding house appears to be a smaller version of the Homestead. From the air its large square roof has four rectangular projections at each corner similar to the corner towers of the Homestead. It also has a central dome, topped by a sphere and flaming candle.

The major differences are as follows:

1. The main dome or rotunda is wood, not glass.

2. The rotunda room is an octagon (about 25 feet wide) with three amethyst windows on skylights in each of the eight walls. The rotunda is about 25 feet high.

3. A close examination will show that the Spalding house is made up of a cluster of nine octagons...three rows of octagons with three octagons in each row. The center octagon forms the rotunda room. A tenth octagon on the west side of the house forms the entry porch.

4. An exterior circular staircase is located at the southwest corner.

It isn't clear what purpose the stairway served. Perhaps Mr. and Mrs. Spalding used it to get a better view of the coast or to enjoy the spectacular sunsets.

The building is actually made out of wood but simulates masonry construction in a manner employed by George Washington at Mount Vernon. Several other buildings in Lomaland also used this illusion.
The porch originally went completely around the building at which time the octagonal construction was more apparent. Half of the porch area has been enclosed to increase interior office space. Notice the tongue and groove wood ceiling on the porch. Notice also the lotus columns supporting the porch roof.

The small square-paned amethyst windows are original. However, the six-foot amethyst sphere on the roof is new and was reconstructed under the direction of Dr. Duane Little of Point Loma College. In the tradition of the past, this sphere is illuminated at night and gives a wonderful glow. It and the other spheres probably represent universal brotherhood. The candle probably represents knowledge...illuminating the darkness.

The interior of the house features embossed metal ceilings and walls. This construction can also be seen in Katherine Tingley's residence on campus.

Other striking features of the interior are the various carved wood portals designed and carved by Reginald Machell, an English painter, sculptor, artist, actor and writer. Much of the intricate art nouveau decorations in Lomaland were done by him personally or under his direction. Two of his more outstanding works include a surrealistic allegorical painting called "The Path" and a pair of 12-foot high carved wood doors that once were the main entrance to the Temple of Peace.

The carved portals have such a feeling of balance that they seem symmetrical. Further observation shows that each side is different. The extensive use of musical motifs in the carvings reflects Reginald Machell's appreciation of Mrs. Spalding's interest in music.

At age 65 Albert Spalding had a stroke in the house and passed away (1915). His widow continued to live here until her death in 1927. She died in Vancouver while returning from Europe with Katherine Tingley. Despite the Spaldings long residency within Lomaland, it is said that none of their estate ever was received by the Theosophical Society.
THE JOHN P. MILLS CLIFF MANSION - 1203 Sunset Cliffs Boulevard

by

Bill and Eleanor Bolen

This large rectangular Italian Renaissance house was built between 1926 and 1928 to be the home of John P. Mills. Mr. Mills was a partner in the Pantage, Mills, Shreve Company, developers of the Sunset Cliffs and Azure Vista tracts layed out as an exclusive luxury home subdivision. As such this house was intended to be one of the grandest homes in the subdivision. It took nearly two years to build and estimates place the cost at $125,000 to $175,000.

The architect is unknown, but certainly the influence of John P. Mills is readily evident. He required that all homes in the development be a light color with red tile roofs and cost between $5000 to $25,000 depending on their location (this is roughly equivalent to saying that all homes would have to cost more than $200,000 in present day dollars). The two-story house is a pastel rose color of double stucco construction with gently sloping red tile hipped roof and deep eaves. The leaded glass entry is flanked by columns. The original open colonnaded loggias are presently enclosed in glass to provide shelter from occasional cold ocean breezes.

The impressive Italian Renaissance facade has already attracted visitors who thought the home to be a museum (the owners plan to make it one). On St. Patrick's Day last year, one daughter hoisted an Irish flag. Not too much later, two young men from Ireland showed up on the doorstep thinking that it was the Irish embassy. They ended up staying the night.

The mansion is along the city's 72-mile scenic drive, and Greyline buses pass by all the time. One Ryan son is named "Judge" in honor of his great-grandfather, who served on the Supreme Court of Canada. As the tour buses pass by, they point out the house as "Judge Ryan's residence." One day, a couple riding on the tour bus made the connection and called on their long-lost friends.

As another memorial, the front drawing room features three large Gothic, straight-back chairs imported from England that were used by Dr. Ryan's grandfather when he served on the regional, then Supreme courts of Canada.

Immediately upon entering the house, the visitor is struck by the splendor of the 34-foot long, two-story entrance hall with its three-dimensional leaded stained glass ceiling that runs the length of the room. The ceiling is illuminated during the day by natural sunlight and at night by artificial light. The walls are covered in dark wood wainscoating.

A formal, branching "Michaelangelo" staircase at the far end of the room rises to an overhead balcony with a stained glass window of "The Eternal Nymph." The window was originally set behind an orchestra alcove overlooking the scene below. Admiral Nimitz is supposed to have moved the window's location sometime during World War II, possibly during the home's use as a convalescence hospital.

To the left of the central entrance hall is a sunken French drawing room with three arches opening to a sun-filled loggia. The ornate ceiling has the astrological birth signs of Mr. and Mrs. Mills and their two daughters. The fireplace, metered with Louis XIV motifs, is sculpted in cream, beige, and pale
pink and green cement. The floor is modest marquetry with well chosen tones of wood. The interlocking diamond pattern is repeated in the foyer and dining room. The drawing room served to lay out the body of the son of former owners Russell and Edith Wahlberg when he was killed on an aircraft carrier in World War II.

The furniture in the house represents many styles and periods. This "eclectic Beaux Arts" was preferred by the newly affluent during the 1920's in Southern California. The Ryans have carefully simulated Mills' original furnishing.

Mills was flamboyant, not to say flashy, and enjoyed astrology, numerology, and polar bear themes visible throughout the house.

Opening off the drawing room is the library, totally paneled in redwood imported from Europe. It has the feel of an English manor, with some American Victorian touches. The massive library fireplace features a playground of molded bears and squirrels, while on the mantle, Oriental temple bears hold electric candles. The bears are actually polar bears (according to the Ryans). Old pictures show that the Mills' bedroom was carpeted with polar bear skins.

A powder-room bath is off the library. All the bathrooms are tiled in bold color combinations, expressing the era of Art Nouveau. Shower doors are etched with forest scenes. Next, under the staircase, a swinging cabinet leads to a secret storage room used during Prohibition. The original tunnel to the ocean is now sealed off.

During the Depression, Mills left his mansion broke when no one paid up his contract from Mills' housing development. Mills had offered 10% down and the balance paid over five years). However, all was not lost; Mills took with him most of the household furnishings. One chinchilla rug alone was valued at $40,000. The Ryans tracked Mills down in Los Angeles in the 1970's when he was in his 90's. He still owned most of the furniture and promised to sell or bequeath it to them. Unfortunately, after Mills death the furniture could not be found and remains lost.

Among the original furniture remaining in the house is the formal dining room set in the dining room, to the right of the entry hall. On this very table, the agreement and contract to build Agua Caliente Racetrack was signed. Later, the opening of Caliente was celebrated here with an elegant party featuring an enormous cake in the shape of the Caliente arch. (Mills lost $3 million on Agua Caliente as one of the five original developers.) The dining room is paneled in smoked Italian oak. The ornamental ceiling with delicate floral motifs hand-painted on canvas and plaster moldings is Louis XIV. The Victorian Renaissance oak furniture was carved in Europe with lions everywhere, reflecting Mills' birthsign of Leo, the lion. The pillars are adorned with dominating lion heads, with surrounding egg-and-dart designs. Lions are carved in the stone fireplace, in wall sconces, and in pilasters above the fireplace.

Next to the dining room is a cheerful breakfast room with a connecting aviary, a kitchen, butler's pantry, and maids room and bath. The breakfast room walls are lined with candle wall sconces – as are all the rooms throughout the home. The walls were originally covered with canvas hand painted by Mrs. Mills.

The kitchen is in white ceramic tile imported from Europe and has a typical 1900 stove, the Lorain Oven Heat Regulator, complete with "Save Mother's tasty dinner" warming oven.
THE JOSEPH W. SEFTON JR. MANSION - 1865 Sefton Place

by

Bill and Eleanor Bolen and B. Herms

The Sefton Mansion built in 1913 is classed as "Edwardian-style." Said to be patterned after English country mansions, it has interesting Mediterranean touches including double stucco construction, a red tile roof and a formal Italian style garden. It was designed by William Sterling Hebbard, a noted early San Diego architect who was the senior partner with Irving Gill and was associated with Gill in the design of a number of notable local structures, including the Granger Music Hall and the George Marston home. Hebbard came to San Diego in 1889 and is said to have taken over the Reid Brother's San Diego Design Business in 1892. About two years later Gill arrived in San Diego and became Hebbard's partner.

Joseph Weller Sefton Jr. was born in Dayton Ohio in 1882. His father came to San Diego in 1889 where he founded and became the first president of the San Diego Trust and Savings Bank (virtually the only local pioneer family bank still in existence). The junior Sefton said he reluctantly followed in his father's footsteps as a banker only after he failed to make it as a beach bum. He played in the Rosebowl game for Stanford in 1902. He was president of the San Diego Trust and Savings from 1935 to 1960. He became chairman of the board and his adopted son, Thomas Sefton, became president on February 18, 1960. He retired in 1962 and died in March 1966 at age 84.

Joseph Sefton Jr. was also known as a naturalist and served as President of the National History Museum. In 1948 he and his son, Thomas, organized the J.W. Sefton Foundation to convert the Coast Guard Cutter "Gallatin" into an oceanographic biological research vessel called the "Orca." He also was Director of Public Relations for the 1915 Panama-California Exposition and a Director of the 1935 Exposition.

The mansion shares a magnificent hilltop site with another mansion built for Joseph Sefton's sister, Harriet Lyle Sefton. Harriet, or "Lena" as she was called in younger days, was better known as Mrs. Henry B. Clark, the Grand Dame of Point Loma. Mrs. Clark was the founder and chairman of San Diego's First Charity Ball in 1909.

The estate originally covered 35 acres. The two-story house has 18 rooms and covers 7800 square feet. Its front entry features a porte cochere and presents a somewhat conservative appearance nestled among the pines. The rear of the house presents a brighter livelier side, opening out onto a formal rose garden flanked by Italian cypress.

The front entry of the mansion opens into a reception area featuring a double grand stairway. Tom Sefton recalls sliding down these bannisters as a boy and many other pranks and delightful memories of the house. His father, Joseph Sefton Jr., married motion picture actress, Minna Gombell, in 1933 and Tom recalls many glittering events at the mansion, with over 200 persons in attendance, including movie stars such as Thelma Todd, Dolores Costello Barrymore, and James Gleason (a thin character actor who played in the Academy Award winning motion picture "Lost Weekend"...and not to be confused with Jackie Gleason). The Seftons had five servants: a chauffuer, butler, cook, and up and downstair maids. The grounds included an elaborate
Japanese garden with water powered through five ponds. Eight gardeners lived on the grounds. One large palm tree that had been planted by Tom Sefton's grandfather in 1889 was moved by horse from Sixth and Laurel Street.

Tom Sefton, who has been honored for many civic activities, chuckled good naturedly "That's why I turned out so well, because I grew up with such hardship."...He recalls, however, after his father was hospitalized in 1961 he no longer wanted to live in the mansion. The property was sold to former City Planner, Glen Rick, who subdivided the property but retained the Sefton Mansion on a five acre site.

Today the house is owned by Dr. Ortega St. John, an educator and public spirited citizen. Under his ownership the house has been the scene of many social functions including a reception for Governor Brown. The house also was a Designer's Showcase home for the San Diego Historical Society in 1976. Since then Dr. St. John commissioned Toufic Habchi of Asterite De Paris to redecorate the house. The blend of Oriental art motifs, with traditional western art objects reflects Dr. St. John's interest in bringing the eastern and western cultures together in a harmonious one world relationship. Even the medieval style tapestries depict the meeting of east and west in the market places of Europe. Also, note the stained glass portrait of the Hindu God, Krishna. Dr. St. John is currently redecorating one of his solariums to reflect the atmosphere of North Africa.
The Stose House was originally built on the east side of Rosecrans near the end of Xenophon. The house was purchased by Clem Stose and his wife Ethel and moved to its present site when the property was bought by the Navy and was being cleared for use as the Naval Training Station. The Stoses purchased the Goldsmith lot on January 14, 1920 and had moved into the relocated house by March of the same year.

Clem Stose, born in Biggs, California in 1886, came to San Diego from Los Angeles in 1910 to work at Fellows Boat Yard. In 1911 he purchased the boat yard, then located at the foot of Hawthorne Street. The name was changed to San Diego Marine Construction Company and moved to its present site at the foot of Sampson Street. Stose sold the company in 1920.

During the 1920's Stose was the owner of the Savoy Garage at 2nd and C, while still engaged in marine supply. After about 1936 his principal employer was Scripps Institute of Oceanography, for which he worked as the supervisor of marine facilities, selecting and outfitting the research vessels.

Stose was an early organizer of yachting on the West Coast as well as being one of San Diego's first accomplished racers. He served as commodore of the San Diego Yacht Club in 1922 and was involved in establishing the club at its present site. He also served as commodore of the Southern California Yachting Association and was among the founders of the Pacific Coast Yachting Association. Among his victories was winning the 1928 Transpac (California to Hawaii) race.

Ethel Stose died in 1946 and Stose sold the house to one of his daughters, Marjorie Stose Flachsenhar, the following year. Marjorie, her husband John and family lived in the house and then sold it in 1950.

Clem Stose died in 1974 at the age of 87.

The Stose House is a Craftsman bungalow with wooden siding. The one-story living room portion has a gabled roof while the remainder of the house is two-story with a hipped roof. The porch columns rest on a low red brick wall.

Interior:

Typical features found in Craftsman homes include the built-in desk and china cupboard and extensive woodwork. The woodwork, most of it now painted, is Douglas fir, as is the upstairs flooring. The downstairs flooring is oak, identified in the blueprints as "Mexican oak."

Living room: The ceiling beams are still unpainted. The original fireplace projected slightly outward in sections rather than being flatfaced and was made of brick of a different color. Bookcases have replaced the window seats on either side of the fireplace. The original entrance was through a pair of French doors.
The tops of both newel posts in the dividers between the living room and the dining room flip open to reveal a hidden storage space. The Stoses always kept the tube containing the house blueprints in one of these spaces.

Dining Room: A bookcase and drop leaf desk are part of the east divider. The plate rail and built-in china cupboard are typical features of the period. The original doors in the china cupboard contained leaded glass. A window seat was built into the east wall where the entrance to the billiard room now is.

Billiard Room: In 1940 the Stoses added a large one-story billiard room off the east side of the dining room. Here they had a billiard table (billiard, NOT pool), the model of the yacht "Vileehi," and the 1928 Transpac Trophy.

West side of first floor: The three rooms and bath on the west side of the house were constructed so that they could be used as a separate apartment, with a kitchen and front and back door. In 1921 or 1922 the back room (kitchen) served as the Loma Portal Post Office, with the back door being used as the entrance.

The postmistress was Annette Stose Nelson, Clem's sister, a widow who with her young son was living with the Stoses. From 1915-1916 through the 1920's there was no mail delivery in Loma Portal and the post office was located in the homes of different residents.
George Klein and his wife Bertha purchased Lot 10 and half of Lot 11 on August 27, 1915, and September 7, 1915 respectively. The two-story house was probably completed the following year. Deed restrictions for this property and the rest of Loma Portal required that any house built cost at least $3000 and that the plans be submitted in advance for approval to the architect of the San Diego Securities Company of Loma Portal.

The Klein family lived in the house until 1919 when they sold it to John and Carrie Burnham. John Burnham was born in England in 1867 and came to the United States in 1881. He came to San Diego in 1907 and joined his brother George in a real estate firm. This firm, which was founded by Joseph D. Wood and C.A. Scott in 1891, was purchased by John Burnham in 1911. Following the purchase the name of the firm was changed to John Burnham & Company and the business entered the insurance field. John Burnham remained president of the company until his death in 1926, after which his son Donald assumed that responsibility. The Burnham firm is now a major insurance, mortgage, real estate and property management company in San Diego. The presidency is currently held by Donald’s son Malin Burnham.

John Burnham was an enthusiastic naturalist and had gathered a large collection of birds. Burnham was involved in the development of the Natural History Museum in Balboa Park. At his Loma Portal home he grew many rare flowers and had a lathhouse at the back of the house.

Following Burnham’s death in 1926 his widow Carrie remained at 3027 Homer until about 1935. Mrs. Burnham was a prominent clubwoman, patron of the Fine Arts Society, and World War I Red Cross worker. She died in 1963 at the age of 94.

John Burnham’s brother George was also a Loma Portal resident, living at 2916 Chatsworth Boulevard in the house he had built in 1912. George Burnham had been involved in real estate since coming to San Diego in 1903. He was the vice president of the San Diego Securities Company, which owned and developed Loma Portal. He later worked as a banker and then from 1932-1936 served as U.S. Congressman.

The two-story Klein/Burnham House is an excellent example of a Craftsman bungalow, with its shingled walls and low pitched gabled roof. A porte-cochere extends over the driveway.

Interior:

Living Room: Typical Craftsman features include built-in bookcases and a handsome ceramic tile fireplace.

Dining Room: Wood paneling extends up to the plate rails. There is a large built-in buffet or china cupboard with beveled glass in the doors. The east wall of the room forms a rounded bay with windows across it.
THE ELLA STRONG DENISON VILLA

by

Mary Dell Worthington & B. Herms

Overlooking the La Playa area from a lush tropical setting is the Denison Villa. This two-story pink stucco home with its many red tile roofs is said to be an exact copy of the Villa Savonarola, near Florence, Italy. It is classed as Italian Renaissance, but also has some Romanesque touches. The replica was built in the La Playa area in 1925, under the supervision of the architectural firm of Requa and Jackson for Mrs. Charles Denison.

Mrs. Denison was born in 1855. Her father was Henry Strong, who was President of Santa Fe Railway in 1874. Her husband was Dr. Charles Denison, a pioneer Denver physician and a leading specialist in tuberculosis. Dr. Denison was a noted author of many treatises on that subject. After her husband's death, Mrs. Denison presented the University of Colorado a $90,000 auditorium and library building (1936) in memory of her husband. Her philanthropies included the Ella Strong Denison Library at Scripps College in California, the Edith Swan Memorial Library at Fairmount School in Denver, and an educational foundation to provide scholarships to deserving students.

In addition to her philanthropic activities, Mrs. Denison liked to travel. It is said that while traveling in Italy she developed a fondness for Italian architecture and became particularly intrigued by the Villa Savonarola. With its open patio-oriented design, she envisioned the villa as an ideal vacation home suited for southern California. Mrs. Denison often spent the winter months in San Diego to be near her grandchildren, who lived on Point Loma. She commissioned the well-known Point Loma architect, Richard Requa, to make exact measurements of the original villa and to prepare working drawings. She also commissioned Italian craftsmen to prepare identical columns and ceramic tiles for the patio. These were shipped to San Diego. At the same time American craftsmen were commissioned to prepare columns for the circular pergola, immediately south of the patio. Interestingly, just recently the current owner had to have the American-made columns renovated because of extensive deterioration. Meanwhile, after 57 years of weather, the Italian-made columns are still doing well, thank you.

The two most striking things about this house are the patio and the garden. You are impressed that this is a house for a person who loves the outdoors. Virtually every room on the ground level opens directly onto the patio. And what a patio! A tropical landscaped patio with red tile pavers is flanked by arcade walkways. These are supported by Romanesque double columns, and the archways are decorated by the bright yellow and blue Italian tile. The walkways under the arcades are paved with black and white Italian marble. The focal point of the patio is a niche over a small aquatic pool where a marble maiden* considers the opposite view of the patio, which adjoins the living room and dining room. Over the north entry is a fine

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*The original statue occupying this niche, was the Duck Baby in bronze and coral. It is believed to be in the ownership of Mrs. Denison's heirs.
replica of a Della Robbia ceramic plaque. The spring time brings a crown of wisteria blooms cascading over the south end of the patio and onto the circular pergola beyond.

The original garden is said to have been designed by Kate Sessions after the fashion of classical Italian gardens with stately Italian cypress in a formal setting. It is said that Mrs. Denison was not an ardent gardener, but she liked variety and arranged to have plants brought in containers and changed with the seasons. Thus, very little permanent planting occurred...and very few of the original plants remain in the garden today.

The present garden is very much the work of the present owner. While it has won many awards it is still a private garden and is NOT OPEN TO THE PUBLIC, except for special occasions as the SOHO Home Tour.

In contrast to the original formal Italian garden, the present garden is "tropical," featuring a wide array of tropical botanicals from around the world. Among the more significant are the Brentwood tree fern, the long blooming (4-5 months) Bromeliads, and the Blue Ginger from Hawaii. The Blue Ginger is so rare that it requires special permission to transport it from Hawaii. One is awed by the fine specimens of Staghorn and Elkhorn ferns; not to mention the over 120 varieties of camellias in the garden.

The tropical setting is further enhanced by a variety of pools, waterfalls, and large Languid Koi. For contrast there are a variety of bronze, marble and terracotta statues with personal names such as Marchellino, Virgo, Samantha and Felicia. Look for the bronze statue, "Frog Baby," by noted sculptress, Edith Parsons.

Mrs. Denison passed away in 1940. Many of her original furnishings and statuary are gone. But her memory is very much alive in this beautiful Italian villa.
OCTAGON HOUSE - 3636 DuPont Street

by

Maureen O'Donnell

Current Owners: Corley and Ernie Fiesen

The octagon house was one of several built about 1901 as group homes for the Lotus children at Lomaland, the site of the Theosophical Institute. All the Lotus homes were wood frame, octagonal structures, and originally each was topped with a conical, canvas covering. Later a conical, wooden roof with a skylight replaced the canvas. The houses were painted white; some were covered with vines, and they always were near flower beds.

A teacher and from six to 12 children lived in each house. The children were grouped by age, and boys and girls lived in separate houses. The interior was arranged with a central living room surrounded by sleeping cubicles. Bath and toilet facilities were in a basement.

This house was moved to DuPont Street sometime between 1931 and 1935, and the interior was altered to provide a living room, bedroom, bath and kitchen. It has had four owners. Among them were Mr. and Mrs. Frank Perkins, who lived here from about 1958 to 1978. Mrs. Perkins' father was Alfred Robinson, who started Rosecroft Begonia Gardens, also on the tour. The Perkins created the Japanese style garden in front of the house.

The amethyst glass in the skylight is original and is the same as the glass used in some of the other Lomaland buildings. The wood panelling and the brick fireplace also are original, as is the stained glass window in the bathroom just off the study (on the north side of the house). Other stained glass windows were added by the Perkinses.

In 1981 the Fiesens added a wing on the west side. In the main building they converted the bedroom and bath to a dining room, and they modernized the kitchen. The renovations were designed to be compatible with both the appearance and the overall spirit of the original structure. The double doors that open into the new entry hall were part of the octagon house. The upper half of each door contains a large pane of amethyst glass. The octagon motif has been used in a design in the tile floor of the hallway. In the section of the new wing that is at the right of the main entrance there is a small den. To the left of the entrance the hall leads to the rest of the wing, which contains a bedroom for the Fiesens' daughter as well as a large master bedroom and bath. Here, again, the octagon design appears — this time in the shape of the shower enclosure.

A small brick building in the corner of the yard behind the house was built as a garage for Mr. and Mrs. Perkins, and a later owner used it as an office. The Fiesens have added an octagonal window and converted the building to a bedroom for their two sons. The yard also has an octagonal jacuzzi and an octagonal picnic table that Mr. Fiesen designed and constructed.
THE SUNNYSIDE HOUSE - 430 Silvergate Avenue
(THE NERESHEMIER-TINGLEY HOUSE)

by
Schaelchlin, Bolen & Herms

"Sunnyside" seems a most unlikely description to call this magical looking house, half hidden by mature cypress trees and luxurious ferns. SOHO President Michael Sullivan observed: "You almost expect a delegation of munchkins to greet you at the door."

But, early photos show that the trees and ferns were not always there... and, indeed, the house was located on the east or "sunnyside" of Point Loma. The early photo also shows that the original facade facing Silvergate was built in mission revival style. The rest of the house shows characteristics of a Victorian transitional style... almost eclectic. Notice the porch with its doric columns, the wood tongue and groove ceiling, and graceful curving... almost oriental roof. The north wing of the study is a semi-octagon with an interesting canted roof. The house was built in 1903 for Emil August Nereshiener and his wife Minna. Nereshiener was one of the leaders in the Theosophical Society.

The Nereshiener house is a one and a half story redwood and stucco house with a basement. The redwood plaster walls appear to be constructed in three layers. The structure is of redwood with fir floors. The present owner is a professional man with a strong interest in history, preservation and antiques. He is also a craftsman who enjoys building and restoring furniture and homes. He has reconstructed parts of the house, uncovering sealed off doorways and covered over wallpaper.

Many pieces of furniture have added value through their association with well-known persons. For example, the red couch in the front room belonged to the sister of General Patton, of WWII fame. In contrast to her flamboyant brother, she lived quietly as a resident on Point Loma for many years. Another interesting set of furniture is a large ornate desk and table in the study with a matching secretary table in the front room. This ensemble was owned by Al Capone's brother. It was custom-made for him by his workers when he was a Chicago Union Boss. The office rug is by Nickel, an Englishman who went to China in 1930.

Other notable features include a large Persian carpet from Robert Agajeanian and a Gillow table in the front room, Blue Dalton bath fixtures imported from England, and an embossed tin ceiling in the study. The basement is a cross between an English pub and a 1930 style teenage gathering place. The rambling upstairs bedroom is used as a bunkroom and study for the boys. It also features the original second-story porch. The master bedroom was added in the 1930's. The current owner installed the fireplace and door of Phillpine mahogany. Notice the Queen Anne dresser in the nursery. Also, notice the stained glass. The stained glass in the side nursery window is the only "original" leaded glass in the house. The other stained glass pieces were installed by the current owner. He has tried to emphasize the "Sunnyside" theme by using a rising sun design in other stained glass pieces and in supplementary furnishings.
Actually over the years the Sunnyside house has been known by a variety of names, including "The Silvergate Mansion," the "Neresheimer-Tingley House," and the "Gage House" (not to be confused with the Gage Mansion, which was nearby). Although the house was owned by Katherine Tingley, leader of the Theosophical Society, there is no evidence that she ever lived here. However, other significant owners and residents included:

**Emil August Neresheimer (1846-1937):** Neresheimer was an important diamond dealer and businessman in New York City...and a key person in the Theosophical movement. It was due to his support that Katherine Tingley became the leader of the Theosophical Society of America. In turn, it was Neresheimer that Katherine Tingley entrusted with the task of establishing the worldwide headquarters of the Theosophical Society on Point Loma, purchasing the land, etc. In 1901 Neresheimer and his wife Minna came to the Homestead on Loma-land where they lived until they built this house for their personal residence in 1903. In 1904 Neresheimer had to leave Point Loma because of business problems in Colorado and was unable to return until 1918. In the meanwhile, Neresheimer sold the property to Julian K. Prough for $6000. Mr. Prough in turn deeded it to Katherine Tingley. Ten days later she exchanged some properties with Lyman Gage. Gage received and held ownership until 1909, when it was again deeded to Katherine Tingley.

**Lyman Gage (1836-1927):** Gage was born in DeRuyter, New York. In Horatio Alger fashion, he worked his way up from office boy to president of the First National Bank of Chicago in 1891. He served as Secretary of Treasury under Presidents McKinley and Teddy Roosevelt, until 1902 and was very influential at the national level. In 1906 he moved to Point Loma in the hope that the Theosophical Society could cure his son's drinking problem. He was apparently making good progress until his son's wife arrived. In the ensuing domestic turmoil the son departed for Seattle where he committed suicide. During this period Gage lived in the Sunnyside house. It is said during the time that Gage lived here that he entertained many celebrities including Helen Keller, Madame Schumann-Heink and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. In 1909 Gage married Frances Ada Ballou of San Diego. Frances was a member of the San Diego based Floradora Sextet, a popular musical group who toured the U.S. and made a number of records. In 1909 Gage built a mansion nearby between Gage Lane and San Gorgonio (which later was moved to Third Avenue downtown and later was destroyed). Gage remained active and influential in San Diego affairs until his death in 1927 in Point Loma at the age of 90.

After Lyman Gage moved from the Neresheimer-Tingley house, it was used as a dormitory for young ladies of the Theosophical Society. It was during this time that the house became officially known as the "Sunnyside House." Among the house mothers was Edith White, who was a widely known artist. Her presence may have led to the misconception that Sunnyside was also used as an art and music classroom. After Katherine Tingley's death the house was owned by the Bank of America, George and Ann Simpson (1933-43) and others. George Simpson is believed to have remodeled the front of the house.

Today the Neresheimer-Tingley/Sunnyside House is a very livable and lived-in family home. The present owners have retained much of the authenticity and charm of the original home, but have successfully incorporated contemporary conveniences adjacent to the house in a non-destructive way. Even so, with
a large and growing family, after ten years in residence, they see the need for a larger home and are facing the necessity of moving from this beautiful and historic home. It is our understanding that the proposed sale price will be $600,000. SOHO hopes that there will be other enthusiastic persons in the community interested in living in and preserving this fascinating and important piece of history.
HOSTESSES

Sharon Adams
Ethyl Berlau
Preston Berlau
Susan Briggs
Edis Boone
Helen Bouris
Suzette Burdt
Kathy Burke
Eloise Carr
Fran Carra
Deon Clarke
Don Conrad
Neva Conrad
Joan Cook
Maryann Courtney
Betty Demadura
Marylou Dyke
Thomas Dyke
Dorothy East
Ken Facer
Pam Fields
Betty Goldberg
Linda Hack
Margaret Ham
Phil Ham
Jill Harbracht
Dorothy Heib
Lynn Holtzbock
Susan Simmons Houston
Beverly Hunter

Jody Jenne
Vivian Johnson
Diana Jones
Maxine Jones
Ruth Kushner
Lucille Landgraph
Karen Ledtermann
Maria Leone
Peggy Marsh
Dorothy Muth
Lynn Oaten
Madelyn Olson
Roselle Reppo
Marty Richards
Glenda Rivet
Fred Roefe
Patrisha Rutledge
Norma Rydel
Judy Sinkovec
Catie Somers
Muriel Standeven
Sunny Tarasuck
Sid Thomas
Glen Tinkham
Rosemary Tom
Christine Van Orshoven
Lynn Walker
Linda Webb
Elizabeth Winyard

REFRESHMENTS

Ailene Cross
Alice Crittenden
Barbara Klauschie

Mary K. Miller
Mary Ann Wheeler
### BUS TOUR GUIDES

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### HOUSE DOCENTS

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