



Historic spot...

This picturesque old house now living out its old age on a bluff above Sycamore Grove went from mansion to oblivion and now returns as a home for the aged.

Sycamore Grove mansion

This old house is full of memories

By Jean Douglas Robson

High on a bluff overlooking Sycamore Grove stands a house built in 1885 by a Mr. McLellan, whose first name is lost in antiquity.

This old house has seen better days and nights as well. Nights when music and laughter come floating out on

the balmy spring air, you can almost see the handsome carriages come sweeping around the encircling drive to deliver the ladies clad in long flowing gowns, bedecked in furs and jewels, on the arms of distinguished looking gentlemen in full dress.

In the early days it was a

one-story place surrounded by groves of fruit trees and cultivated fields, reaching from North Figueroa to the Arroyo Seco which is now the Pasadena Freeway, once part of a great Spanish land grant.

The property passed into the hands of a Mrs. Anderson and her son, Robert, who was a prominent attorney. They, in turn, sold it to a millionaire by the name of Axelson, who owned a machine works in Huntington Park, in 1913.

Mr. Axelson saw great possibilities in the place and started out to remodel it for a honeymoon for his new bride.

Presto! a mansion

He set about the task with great gusto, like a man inspired. He had drastic changes made. In fact, when he was done, the house was no longer a house but a mansion. Actually, he had had the entire structure torn from its roots and raised over 12 feet above the ground. Then he had an entire floor built under it, including a large living-room with French windows opening on the rose garden and a huge fireplace.

He must have been a very large man because the great oak mantel stands nearly five feet high. And no man would willingly be dwarfed by his own mantel. Poor fellow, he probably looked forward to standing beside a roaring fire one arm resting on the mantel, his legs crossed, surrounded by his friends, doubtless smoking an old Meerschaum pipe and expounding his particular philosophy whatever it was.

There was downstairs, also, a large dining-room, a spacious kitchen, a library and two bedrooms and foyer.

Unhappily Mr. Axelson and his lovely young bride spent not a single night in the remodeled home. The young lady didn't like the house with all the work and planning that had gone into it. The Axelsons moved to Hollywood.

Since that time there have been a number of owners. For a while it was a religious girl's school. At another period it served as a fraternity house for students of Occidental College.

Never "Haunted"

During the depression for several years it was deserted. However, unlike some old houses it was never thought to be haunted despite the fact that one man committed suicide in one of the downstairs bedrooms.

Today the old McLellan place is the Highland View Guest Home. The owners are Mr. and Mrs. H. Lorne Smith, who are at present vacationing in Canada.

Mrs. Agnes Ogg, a braw, buxom woman from Scotland, who is a real mother to the 10 little old ladies who live here, is assisted by Jenny Duncan, another Scottish lass from Aberdeen, and Helen Buck, a New Englander from Vermont.

Anonymous artist

A short time ago the old house was immortalized in one way. An art instructor who held classes in art at the Sycamore Grove Park painted a picture of the old McLellan mansion. However, before any of the household had a chance to see it, the teacher discontinued his classes and no longer appeared at the park.

If by chance, that art instructor whose name is not known to the little old ladies reads this article, I have a message for him. Mrs. Ogg extends an invitation to him for five o'clock tea, so that he can unveil the picture of their beloved home. The number to call is CLinton 6-3637.