

Clyde Browne and Abbey San Encino

(16th in series)
By Charles Cooper

Clyde Browne was an artist...both in his printing work and in the great architectural love of his life, the Abbey San Encino in Highland Park.

As a printer, Browne's Abbey press was one of the pioneer exponents of fine press printing in Southern California, with his work prized among collectors to this day.

The Abbey was even more famous than the press in the days during and after its construction.

Browne began working on the building, on Arroyo Glenn Ave. across from the Highland Park playground, in 1915, and spent the next nine years in its construction.

Nobody ever quite managed to describe the architectural style of the building satisfactorily, through it has been called Spanish-Moorish, Spanish-Scottish and "eclectic," which is probably the most just term.

The building, modeled on old Spanish missions, European home and any other elements which caught Browne's fancy, was constructed with white chalk slabs from Calabasas, yellow rock from Mt. Washington, and, according to Browne, stones from "Charlemagne's tower, Westminster Abbey, San Juan Capistrano" and other famous sites.

CHAPEL

The Abbey featured a wedding chapel, dungeon, and studios which were rented by various artists of every description.

Also featured was a bell tower, which had in it the "great bell of Garvanza," which before the turn of the century called students to school at Garvanza Elementary.

Ward Ritchie, probably the most prominent of the Southern California fine printers, did some of his first work at the Abbey. Also maintaining a studio there for a time was Ritchie's close friend Lawrence Clark Powell, who would go on to become librarian of the University of California at Los Angeles, and to be one of the leading authorities on Southwestern US literature and lore.

During its heyday, the Abbey served as a meeting place for the Highland Park community, as Browne took an active role in the area. He served as president of the Highland Park Kiwanis Club, and

was a longtime activist in the Democratic Party.

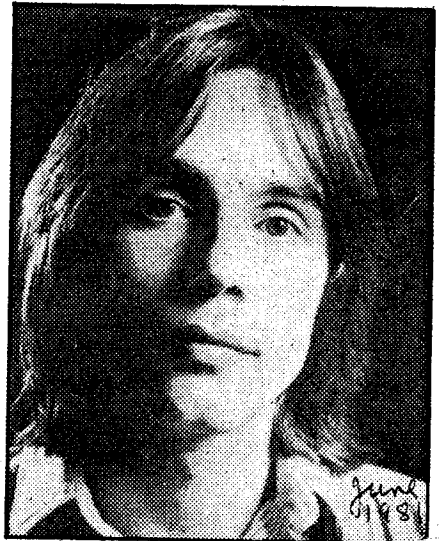
USO CENTER

After Browne's death in 1942, at the age of 66, after 36 years in Highland Park, the Abbey had one last public role to perform, as a USO Center, before returning to private use. It remains in the hands of the Browne family. It was dedicated a city cultural monument in 1972.

The artistic streak in the family continued into the coming generations. Browne's son, Jack, in addition to helping in the printing business, was a musician.

Achieving the greatest fame for the family, though, was Clyde Browne's grandson, who

followed his father's musical bent. Jackson Browne is now a million-selling record artist and songwriter, whose music is considered to be one of the most representative creators of the so-called "LA Sound."



Jackson Browne,

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