



The Grapevine

Published by the San Marino Historical Society Fall 2024

JUST IN TIME FOR HALLOWEEN

SINISTER SAN MARINO

by

Joe Walker

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Welcome to our fall edition of The Grapevine. This is the last edition of 2024 so I hope it brings you as much joy as it brings me to publish. With our next speaker topic on true crime, it seemed timely to feature **San Marino's Gambling House**, which is certain to thrill the true crime enthusiasts. Many years ago, we came across a letter sent to the Historical Society from a former resident, who inquired about a memory from growing up in San Marino. He was searching for confirmation that his memory was correct and asked if we knew about this so-called "Mystery House". After some digging, we did come across these articles. Our next speaker is **true crime historian Joe Walker**, who will have lots of other stories to share with us on **October 28th**. We hope to see you all again in the lovely restored San Marino Community Center (formerly the San Marino Woman's Club).

Now as we move forward into fall, we have more events to announce. In addition to our speaker events, we are organizing member-only tours of local historic places with our first stop being a docent-led tour of the **Michael White Adobe on the morning of November 9th**. If you are a 2024 member and did not receive your invitation by email, please contact us and we can add you to the list.

We are also excited to announce the beginning of our **Centennial Home** project, so be on the lookout for more information coming in 2025.

Thank you to all our members for their continued support. If you would like to become a member, we encourage you to visit our very historical website and follow the links to join. We would love to have you.

Christa Lakon

2024 Board President



Joe Walker is a Crime Analyst with the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, where he has worked since 1986. He is a "True Crime Historian" and focuses on obscure and lesser known crimes and the locations where they took place. His presentation is called "**Sinister San Marino-Locations That Even General Patton Would Avoid**", where he shows interesting, scary, and even somewhat humorous places and tells stories about San Marino and its rarely discussed history. Walker also is offering guided tours of the locations featured in his presentation with details to follow.

Monday, October 28, 2024

San Marino Community Center

1800 Huntington Dr.

7:00-8:00 pm

Doors open at 6:30 pm

Public is welcome, Admission is free

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2024**

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Update From the Archives

We have purchased a new laptop to assist our volunteers in the ongoing inventory intake. It will also play our recently digitized collection of oral histories and recorded speaker events. If you visit the archives, we can set you up to listen or watch any of these in our collection. The speaker event recordings were recently transferred from VHS and DVD to the digitized format, thanks to a generous grant from San Marino Rotary.

We have a new plaque in the office called the San Marino Historical Society Honor Roll. Recognized for service are 38 members of the community who contributed to the first 50 years of our Historical Society.

Bugs: We don't like them in the archives and they are not good for the safe preservation of archival material. To ensure the records are kept pest-free, we place small traps around the records and then monitor them for activity. We are watching for roaches, spiders, and silverfish just to name a few. So far, our efforts, along with the city's assistance, have been successful.

Are you interested in volunteering in the archives? We invite you to come by and look around. I'm sure we can find a project for you. We are a group of curious people who cherish maintaining the historical records of the city, and the stories and the people who lived here.

The archives are located in the Thurnher House at Lacy Park. We are open on Tuesdays from 10:00 am - 3:00 pm and for docent-led tours on the 1st and 3rd Sunday from 12-3 pm.

About *The Grapevine*

The Grapevine is published three times a year. Our next issue, The winter 2025 edition, will be mailed to all addresses in the San Marino Unified School District and our members from outside the city. The spring and fall 2025 editions will be mailed to 2025 members.

Do you know about San Marino's Gambling House? In 1910, Pasadena granted a building permit for a two-story, 15-room house at 1090 Old Mill Road. This home would later draw law enforcement from both San Marino and Pasadena because this house would be built in what would become partially San Marino and partially Pasadena. The front door was in San Marino, but the rest of the house sat in Pasadena. For years, law enforcement had a difficult time controlling the illegal activities going on at this house. Was it under the jurisdiction of Pasadena or was it for the San Marino police? After several decades of raids and then being left to decay, the house was finally razed in 1952.

FEBRUARY 8, 1929 SAN MARINO TRIBUNE

"Raid San Marino Monte Carlo Capturing Fifteen Occupants"

1090 OLD MILL ROAD IS SWOOPED DOWN ON BY DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S MEN. RICH WOMEN ARE RELEASED

Shortly before midnight last Sunday, investigators from the District Attorney's office under the direction of Capt. Clyde Plummer entered the premises at 1090 Old Mill road on the boundary line of Pasadena and San Marino, and surprised a party of wealthy ladies and gentlemen, confiscated dice tables and roulette wheels and other paraphernalia, and arrested 15 of the male occupants of the place.

Roy Hulbert, the alleged proprietor of the place, was charged with possession of the apparatus and also with keeping a gambling place. There were 15 men in all taken and these were on bail today. They included the names of Samuel Brasford of 123 Foothill Road, Arcadia; and Michael Bernard, Samuel A. Jones, William A. Adams and Henry Miller, who gave their addresses as 1090 Old Mill Road. Expensively gowned women who were lolling around the gambling tables were released after giving their names to Captain Plummer.

Break Up Games

Gambling equipment, consisting of roulette wheels, dice and card tables valued at \$5,000, was confiscated. A bundle of I.O.U.'s and other records were in the deputies' possession today.

Notorious as an alleged gambling den, the residence has been raided several times before, the last time approximately four years ago. Voices issuing from beneath the house on a prior raid led officers to believe that the grounds were honeycombed by passageways.

When the alarm was sounded in last night's raid, lights in many of the rooms switched off. The establishment is said to be equipped with an alarm system, which did not work the night of the raid until the raiders were at the doors. Attempts were made to destroy records.

The Pasadena-San Marino boundary line runs through the house. One corner of it is in San Marino. The residence is in a sparsely settled section of the city and stands 150 feet back from the street.

"Mysterious House In Oak Knoll Raided"

Pasadena Police Uncover Roulette Layout in the Suspected Mansion

Detective Sergeant Merrill D. Roberts, accompanied by Detective Howard D. Mallonee, of Pasadena Police force, descended upon the much talked of house at 1090 Old Mill Road, Pasadena, on suspicion that it harbored gambling devices, and after finding the electrical devices that opened sliding panels admitting them to a large windowless apartment. They pushed another button which revealed a storage room in which they found three cased roulette wheels.

Charles Evans, in charge of the building was arrested charged with operating a place containing gambling devices, and he posted \$250 bail to secure his release.

The three roulette wheels were held at the police station as evidence, their alleged value being approximately \$2,500.

The place was recently remodeled and re-furnished at a cost of no less than \$35,000, with the alleged intent on the part of its owners for use as a gambling resort, but the surveillance of the police has been so strict that this purpose is said to have miscarried.

The detectives obviously knew where the buttons to gain access to the concealed apartments were located, would not operate in the first instance, but they brought along a city electrician who supplied the missing fuses.

With the fuses replaced, the panels, more than four inches thick, slid as desired and admittance was gained into the great windowless room, where according to Detective Roberts, by the time the doors were battered down and ingress effected, its occupants would have skedaddled through an almost invisible door in the side of the building to the lot where autos of visitors are parked.

The house in question lies entirely within the corporate limit of Pasadena, Chief of Police Charles H. Kelley stated, after a special survey was made to settle the question often raised as to whether the building was in Pasadena or San Marino.

“Old Mill Road House Sold: Will Be Razed For New Home Sites”

For more than 30 years this imposing structure has stood on a site which is partly in San Marino and partly in Pasadena. The stories told about it are numerous and in many cases fictitious. True, it has a history, and that history is of no credit to this city or Pasadena. Stories told about the building and what went on within were always of the hush-hush nature. For a long time it was the chief subject among gossipers, but was never discussed in the better San Marino circles. This gossip was of a most intriguing nature. In later years it fascinated not only older residents but newcomers and the younger generation as well. Today it is referred to as the “Mystery House” or the “Ghost Place” and nearly every youngster between the ages of 12 and 16 has forced his way into the building to explore its scores of rooms, its secret panels and windowless game room.

October 28, 2024 Monday 7 pm, San Marino Historical Society Presentation, Joe Walker presents “Sinister San Marino”, San Marino Community Center, 1800 Huntington Drive, San Marino

November 3, 2024 Sunday 12-3 pm, Thurnher House, docent-led tours with John Morris and John Ryan

November 9, 2024 Saturday 9-10 am, Michael White Adobe members’ tour with docents from Friends of the Michael White Adobe

November 17, 2024 Sunday 12-3 pm, Thurnher House, docent-led tours with John Morris and John Ryan

December 1, 2024 Sunday 12-3 pm, Thurnher House, docent-led tours with John Morris and John Ryan

December 15, 2024 Sunday 12-3 pm, Thurnher House, docent-led tours with John Morris and John Ryan

January 5, 2025 Sunday 12-3 pm, Thurnher House, docent-led tours with John Morris and John Ryan

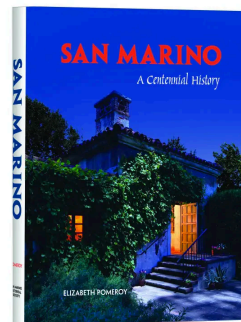
January 19, 2025 Sunday 12-3 pm, Thurnher House, docent-led tours with John Morris and John Ryan

February 28, 2025 Monday 7 pm, San Marino Historical Society Presentation, Erin Chase, Associate Curator of Architecture and Photography at The Huntington.

CENTENNIAL HOMES

To celebrate the city’s 100 year-old homes, we are proud to announce that starting in 2025 we will begin a Centennial Homes project. Many of the architecturally significant homes built in the 1920’s are or will be turning 100 years old. How do you get your home recognized, you ask? Send us an email with your address, the year your home was built, and a current photo (include a historical photo if you have one). If you need information about your house, please visit us in the archives and we may have some information about your house in our files. A festive yard sign acknowledging the homes 100-year milestone will be awarded to the Centennial Home recipients.

Send your emails to info@sanmarinohistoricalandsociety.org with a photo, year built, and address. We will confirm your entry.



Order San Marino Centennial Book Now

\$55 per copy + \$4.95 tax = \$59.95
Add \$7.50 if you wish the book to be mailed to you for a total of \$67.45.

Order on-line via PayPal at www.sanmarinohistoricalandsociety.org or by stopping by the Thurnher House on the first and third Sunday from 12-3 or on Tuesdays from 10-3.

Books are also currently available for sale at The Huntington Store and at Vroman’s.