

Los Angeles Times

3-HOUR TOUR

If the Walls Could Speak, They'd Spout History

January 03, 1995 | BENJAMIN EPSTEIN | Benjamin Epstein is a free-lance writer who contributes frequently to The Times Orange County Edition

Historic Anaheim offers tourists turrets, vintage lore and more.

11 to 11:40 a.m.: The Mother Colony House was the first house built in Anaheim and the first historic museum in Orange County. Out front of the modest residence, which dates to 1857, is a time capsule containing a recap of Anaheim's first 100 years; the capsule was buried in 1957 and (though 2057 would make infinitely more sense) will be opened in 2007. A plaque on the porch says that Madame Helena Modjeska and "Quo Vadis?" author Henryk Sienkiewicz once resided here.

The original resident, however, was George Hansen, leader of a group of German immigrants who left San Francisco to found a grape-growing colony in Southern California. Their vineyards were the largest in the state before being destroyed by disease in 1885. The colony then turned to producing Valencia oranges—otherwise, maybe we'd be living in Grape County!

The furniture inside the house was donated by colony families. The settee is horsehair, and the chandelier originally burned kerosene. The piano has had many owners since being brought "round the Horn" from Europe; one home was washed away by flood in 1884, the piano later found on a riverbank. On it now sits a stereoscope, forerunner of today's 3-D Viewmaster.

The porcelain bowl of a cherrywood pipe bears the likeness of Kaiser Wilhelm I at the age of 90. Other fascinating items include a wooden baby buggy and a hand-cranked wooden washing machine. In the kitchen are an implement for removing cardboard milk bottle caps that would surely find a following among Pog fanciers and a bottle of Dr. Hartshorn's Jaundice Bitters—empty!

There's also the wedding dress worn by Anaheim's first bride, Mrs. John Frohling, the original padlock from the local Wells Fargo office, pioneer Theodore Schmidt's shovel, the tennis racket used by settler Josephine Falfer at the turn of the century and a flower basket made from moss gathered at Anaheim Landing in the 1880s by—who else?—Mrs. Mossemann.

Mission grapes grow on an arbor behind the house. Be sure to check out the immense Moreton Bay fig tree in the front yard next door at 400 West St. The tree, brought here more than 100 years ago from Australia, may have inspired Walt Disney's Swiss Family Robinson treehouse.

11:40 to noon: The turreted, Queen Anne-style Red Cross House incorporates beveled glass, stained glass brought from Germany and curved glass in the cupola. Peter Stoffel and his wife raised 10 children in the home; their youngest, Ned, showed up at a Red Cross event several years ago at age 95. The house marked its centennial in March.

The Flo Tarlton history room contains such American Red Cross memorabilia as a letter from founder Clara Barton. A second-floor mural depicts the county's first winery. Furniture includes a red velvet fainting couch.

According to docent Be Douglas—her rather existential name is short for Bernice—if you visit the third-story cupola, you'll see "the friendly ghost of Mr. Stoffel, who looks after the house when we're not here." (It might also be the head and hand of a mannequin.) "The school kids already come in saying, 'Where's the ghost? Where's the ghost?' But if you don't warn them in advance about the friendly ghost, you scare them to death!"

Noon to 12:50: The Anaheim Museum (suggested donation, \$1.50) is housed in the Carnegie Library built in 1908; it's the last of a handful of Carnegie libraries in the county still standing. Architect John C. Austin also designed Los Angeles City Hall, Shrine Auditorium and Griffith Park Observatory.

Upstairs are changing galleries and the Anaheim Room, which focuses on local history from the Shoshone Indians to winemaking to today's malls and arenas. Downstairs are a children's hands-on gallery, a display of paintings of Anaheim landmarks (and, tacked behind a door, Valencia orange crate labels, including Caramia and Anaheim Brunette) and a book and gift shop where you can buy a framed print of the Red Cross House for \$12.

12:50 to 2: Thee White House, a Northern Italian restaurant, is in the stately three-story Truxaw-Gervais House. Built in 1909, the colonial-style home was later occupied by physician John Truxaw, who, during 40 years of local practice, delivered more than 3,500 infants spanning three generations.

Today restaurateur Bruno Serato delivers a three-course Mighty Ducks Lunch (\$10.50) comprising a Caesar salad, choice of three entrees, including sauteed calamari with pesto and crushed red peppers—the side vegetables come in a bird's-nest-like "potato basket"—and ½ oz creme brulee. A la carte items include gnocchi (potato dumplings) in Gorgonzola sauce (\$8.50) and peppered Pacific ahi in Pinot Grigio sauce (\$12.50).

The napkin on the table is folded into the shape of a tuxedo and accented with a little black paper bow tie. The structure is not only on the National Register of Historic Places, it's also included in the book "The Best Places to Kiss in Southern California."

(BEGIN TEXT OF INFOBOX / INFOGRAPHIC)

3-HOUR TOUR

1. Mother Colony House

414 N. West St.

(714) 254-1850

Tours by appointment

2. Red Cross House

418 N. West St.

(714) 778-4526

Tours by appointment

3. Anaheim Museum

241 S. Anaheim Blvd.

(714) 778-3301

Open Wednesday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.; Saturday, noon to 4 p.m.

4. Thee White House

887 S. Anaheim Blvd.

(714) 772-1381

Open Monday through Friday, 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., nightly 5:30 to 10.

PARKING / BUSES

Parking: There is street parking at the Mother Colony and Red Cross houses and free parking in lots at each location.

Buses: OCTA bus 47 runs north and south along Anaheim Boulevard with stops at Broadway and Vermont Avenue. Bus 42 runs east and west along Lincoln Avenue with stops at Anaheim Boulevard and West Street.

* Times Line(tm): 808-8463

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