



## EARLY CALIFORNIA HISTORY

### Field Trip Preparation

Occupying the heart of the historic Rancho Santa Anita, The Los Angeles County Arboretum & Botanic Garden is a 127acre historical museum and botanic garden located in the city of Arcadia. Home to plant collections from all over the world, including many rare and endangered species, the Arboretum also houses outdoor historical landmarks representative of the major phases of California history.

The Arboretum is also an animal sanctuary. In addition to The Arboretum's famous peafowl, visitors will see species of resident and migratory birds, aquatic creatures, as well as numerous species of small reptiles and mammals.

Field trips to The Arboretum provide a unique and exciting learning experience for your students. ***To ensure that your students have the most rewarding experience possible, your preparation before the scheduled excursion is recommended.***

#### Topics of Discussion Include:

- Use of plants by Tongva/Gabrielino native peoples.
- Culture of native Californians.
- Plant and cultural introductions by the Spanish.
- Changes in life styles during the different periods of history represented at The Arboretum.
- Changes in the means of transportation during the different periods of history represented at The Arboretum.
- Importance of the railroad in Southern California.

#### Natural Surroundings

Long before man came to the San Gabriel Valley, natural ponds fed by underground springs were the center of a rich plant and animal environment. Fish, frogs, turtles, and many more small creatures lived in the water, and birds and other animals came frequently to eat and drink. Along the pond's edge grew thick clumps of tule reeds with oak trees and berry-laden bushes nearby. When man entered this natural habitat his survival depended on a wise and careful use of the natural resources around him.

## **Tongva/Gabrielino**

The earliest known residents of what is now The Arboretum were the Native American group known as the Tongva. The village known as Aleupkigna or "the place of many waters" was located near the ponds to take advantage of the abundant water, food, and materials for clothing and shelter. As one of the most populous and powerful groups in Southern California, the Tongva were primarily hunter gatherers. Although they did not plant crops, use iron tools, and had no cattle or horses until the arrival of the Spanish, the Tongva were among the few New World peoples who regularly navigated the ocean in plank canoes.

After the establishment of the Mission San Gabriel in 1771, (following the Spanish custom to name Native American tribes after nearby missions), the Tongva people became known as Gabrielino. Resistance to the Spanish soldiers and missionaries led to conflict, enslavement, assimilation, and the near extinction of the Tongva people.

## **Rancho Period**

The San Gabriel Valley was under Spanish rule until 1821 when it became a part of Mexico. In 1834, the new Mexican government in California secularized all mission lands. The Native Peoples, who were originally to have had half of all mission land, were virtually ignored as the government granted former mission properties to private individuals. Hugo Reid, a Scotsman with Mexican citizenship, married Bartolomea de Comcrabit (also known as Victoria), a Gabrielino woman, and became the first private owner of the 13,000 acre Rancho Santa Anita. In 1840 Reid, with the help of Gabrielino labor, constructed his three-room adobe house next to the lake. Reid planted grain, orchards and vineyards, and stocked the ranch with cattle, whose hides and tallow were used in trade for foreign goods. Much of what is known about the Tongva people today is known from Hugo Reid's writing.

## **Ranches and Railroads**

Americanization and statehood ended California's rancho days and introduced a new, gold-based economy to replace the hide and tallow trade. Former land grants were broken into smaller agricultural ranches whose produce could be shipped by the railroads which were beginning to criss-cross the land. Rancho Santa Anita was sold in 1875 to Elias Jackson "Lucky" Baldwin, a wealthy American attracted by the land's natural water supply and fertile soil. Baldwin bought about 8,000 acres for \$200,000 and developed the ranch into a beautiful productive paradise planting acres of fruit trees and grape vines (for his famous wines and brandies) as well as horses and cattle. Within a few years the Baldwin Ranch gained fame both as a productive agricultural unit and as a showplace for ornamental plants from almost every continent of the world. Baldwin, who was the first mayor of Arcadia, died in 1909 at the age of 81. All that is left of the original Rancho Santa Anita is the 127-acre Arboretum, purchased by the state of California and Los Angeles County in 1947.

## **Major Tour Stops**

### **Tongva Kiys**

Tongva houses were dome shaped, made by bending and tying willow branches into shape, and then thatched with tule reeds, carrizo (cane), or grass. There was an entrance door and smoke hole in the house.

### **Hugo Reid Adobe (1840)**

This California Landmark was the first permanent structure on Rancho Santa Anita. The adobe was originally constructed with the help of Gabrielino laborers and was representative of a building style then common in Southern California. It was built of sun-dried adobe blocks made by mixing clay soil, water, and a straw binder. The roof was made of rawhide-lashed carrizo (cane) smeared with brea (tar) and the walls were white-washed. In 1958 it was reconstructed by the State of California using original methods and materials whenever possible.

### **Queen Anne Cottage (1885)**

Ranch owner E. J. "Lucky" Baldwin, spared no expense in either the construction or the furnishings of this late Victorian style house. This fanciful house was constructed probably as a honeymoon gift for his fourth wife, Lillie Bennet. The Baldwin cottage (the designation "Queen Anne" was added in later years in reference to its architectural style) was the Santa Anita Ranch guest house. Friends, relatives, and business associates of Lucky Baldwin, including stars from the Baldwin Theater in San Francisco, partook of ranch hospitality until E.J.'s death in 1909. The stained glass windows, marble fireplaces, and black walnut doors are all original features of the cottage as are the bathroom fixtures and the exterior marble walkway. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, refurnishing continues today with appropriate period pieces.

### **Coach Barn (1879)**

Designed by the same Architect as the Queen Anne Cottage, the Baldwin Coach Barn is equally ornate. The opulent barn was built to house Lucky Baldwin's carriages and carriage horses as well as those of his guests. The insect and fire-resistant redwood and cedar wall panels were specially cut in Northern California forests and transported to the ranch by ship. The barn provides generous space for horses, a hayloft with grain and hay chutes feeding directly into the stalls, as well as Coachman's quarters. Baldwin's fashionable "Tally Ho" carriage purchased at the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition in 1876 is on display in the west room. The Victorian dog house just outside the Coach Barn once sheltered Baldwin's bull mastiffs, the ranch guard dogs.

### **Santa Anita Depot (1890)**

Constructed by the Santa Fe Railroad to serve Baldwin Ranch and nearby Sierra Madre residents, the Santa Anita Depot first opened in 1890. It was moved from the path of the 210 Freeway to the Arboretum in 1968. The depot, including upstairs living quarters, has been refurnished with turn-of-the-century house wares and period railroad equipment to recreate the ambiance of the bustling station stop it once was.

### **Additional reading**

Snider, Sandra Lee. 1987. Elias Jackson "Lucky" Baldwin, California Visionary. The Stairwell Group, Los Angeles.

The Arboretum. History. <http://www.arboretum.org> The Los Angeles Almanac. Tongva. <http://www.laalmanac.com/history/hi05.htm#Tongva>

