

HISTORIC HIGHLANDS
LANDMARK DISTRICT
EST. 2008



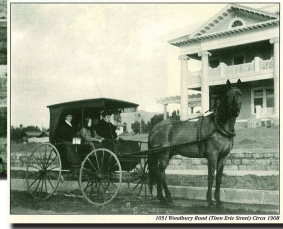
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1051 Woodbury, built 1903 - 1908
 Ezra Seymour Gosney, original owner
 "Lawyer, banker, stock raiser & citrus grower"
 Founder of Polytechnic Elementary School in Pasadena



The first homes in what is now known as the Historic Highlands were built before the 20th century, and the neighborhood grew rapidly during the first World War and the economic boom of the 1920's. What began as orange groves was an early 20th century suburb by the time of Historic Highlands' incorporation into the City of Pasadena in 1925. In a few short decades, it had transformed from a remote country outpost to a bustling and varied neighborhood.

What is known today as the Historic Highlands encompasses the estates and land holdings of two prominent Pasadena pioneers: Ezra Dane, an orchardist who settled here in 1883; and David J. Macpherson, a former Santa Fe Railroad engineer who designed the famed Mount Lowe Railway.

EZRA DANE

Ezra Dane crossed the plains from Massachusetts sometime between 1849 and

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malaria in the early 1880's, Dane moved his family to Pasadena in 1883 where he purchased 160 acres in the San Pasqual Rancho area, then known as “the place where every tree is pleasant to the sight and good for food.” He planted orchards.



In 1885, Dane and his wife Lois built their ranch home, located at 1460 Michigan Ave., from the first lumber brought to Pasadena by steam locomotive. From the house known for many years as “Sunnyridge on the Highlands,” Dane oversaw orchard and livestock operations on his land, which then stretched north from Washington to Woodbury Road and east from Holliston to a point midway between what are now Mar Vista and Catalina Avenues.

He grew peaches, apricots, prunes and citrus, and raised some livestock – including about a hundred hogs – on Elizabeth Street. A driveway from Washington to his home was lined with a double row of palm trees still visible in the backyards of homes between Michigan and Chester.

As Pasadena grew north and east, homes were being built all around the ranch, so the Danes began selling their land one parcel at a time. In 1912, they subdivided the land immediately adjacent to the ranch house, creating building lots on Holliston, Chester, Michigan, Mar Vista, Denver (now Howard) and Rio Grande. The lots were sold to members of Pasadena's prosperous

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Ezra and Lois Dane lived in the home until their deaths in the early 1920's. Their daughter Alice and later her grandson and his family lived in the home afterwards.

DAVID MACPHERSON

In 1885 David MacPherson arrived in Pasadena to serve as the chief engineer and superintendent of the Mount Lowe Railroad construction program. He had begun his career with the Santa Fe line in Texas and then moved on to build steam railroads in Mexico before coming to Pasadena.

The Mt. Lowe Railroad was an electric railway that stretched from Lake Avenue and Calaveras (located in Altadena) to the crest of the San Gabriel Mountains. Described as “the railway to the stars,” the Mt. Lowe Railroad operated from 1893 until 1938. It was the only scenic mountain, electric traction railroad ever built in the United States.

In 1896, MacPherson bought the land then known as the Pasadena Highlands



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MacPherson then owned much of the land bordered by New York Drive on the north and Washington Blvd. on the south in what is now the western part of the neighborhood.

After spending several years laying out the property known today as the Historic Highlands, he sold lots arranged on streets whose names reflected his love of the rails: New York, Erie, Atchison, Topeka, Santa Fe, Denver and Rio Grande. (The names Catalina and Mar Vista reflect the great view of the ocean that was possible at that time. In a Pasadena Star article in 1908, the new development is described as "...a picture of stately dwellings and magnificent grounds." MacPherson's advertisements promoted the development as: "Large villa tracts. Building restrictions, \$4,000. If you want the finest, see this." Another 1913 brochure boasts "Free from dampness and fogs, with refreshing mountain air, it will always be a chosen spot for ideal hygienic conditions." MacPherson himself lived at 1075 Topeka at the time, later moving to 1120 Atchison until his death in 1927.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE HISTORY AND STORIES SURROUNDING OUR NEIGHBORHOOD AND THE HOMES OF THE HISTORIC HIGHLANDS PLEASE SEE OUR COLLECTION OF PAST HOME TOUR BROCHURES.

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PO Box 4061, Pasadena, CA 91104

info@historichighlands.org

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