



CALIFORNIA ART CLUB NEWSLETTER

Documenting California's Traditional Arts Heritage Since 1909

DOUBLE
ISSUE

How the San Gabriel Valley Inspired California Impressionism and Lured Artists from across the Nation

PART II OF III

by Elaine Adams

AMERICA'S MIGRATION WESTWARD DURING THE early-to-mid-nineteenth century was slow to arrive to the California Territory. It took the discovery of gold at Sutter's Mill in 1848 to fuel an immigration flood to the West. However, the stampede of gold rushers was concentrated around San Francisco where the city experienced a sudden population explosion from 1,000 residents to 25,000 within a year. At the same time, Los Angeles remained a sleepy, small pueblo of only 3,500 inhabitants.

San Pascual and the Beginnings of Pasadena

In 1850 California became the thirty-first state of the union. Twenty years later, the Midwest experienced the

harshest winters on record, inspiring a conversation about moving to warmer parts of the country. A few friends, mainly teachers and farmers, gathered at the home of Indianapolis physician,

Dr. and Mrs. Thomas B. Elliott, and complained about the cold weather and their ill health, some suffering from tuberculosis. The idea of moving to Florida was discussed, but the thought of living in California had a much more romantic appeal. Adding to the allure, newspapers at the time were heralding California as the "Italy of America."

Additional inspiration to move to California was generated by the popular legends of Kentucky-born frontiersman, **William "Billie" Wolfskill (1798-1866)**. Wolfskill, who became a naturalized Mexican citizen in 1828, made his fortune in the West as a fur trapper in New Mexico. His Mexican citizenship allowed him to own land in California. During the 1840s Wolfskill acquired forty-eight acres in the area that is today Downtown Los Angeles where he planted a vineyard. His ranch expanded to include hundreds of lemon and orange trees propagated from seedlings he acquired from nearby **Mission San Gabriel**. Billie Wolfskill eventually became one of the wealthiest men in Southern California and, in fact, launched California's citrus industry by selling lemons during the California Gold Rush to miners for up to a hefty \$1 per lemon.

To those present at the Elliott's home, upon hearing these rousing tales, it would have seemed evident that financial prospects in California were ripe for citrus! They soon formed a cooperative organization with Dr. Elliott as its president, and elected the group's name to become *The California Colony of Indiana*.



Benjamin Brown (1865-1942)

Poppies and Eucalyptus

Oil on canvas 10" x 14"

Courtesy of California Art Company, LLC

The newly-formed *Colony* sent an advance team of three men, including a land surveyor, to Southern California to reconnoitre desirable acreage to purchase. This task proved to be more difficult than expected, as finding available land with good soil and water

was not easy. One of the members of the party, **Daniel M. Berry**, was so frustrated he almost quit. As he complained in a letter to Dr. Elliott, he was “tired out knocking around in canyons, cactus, nettles, jungles, dry river bottoms, etc.” Finally, on

the invitation of **Judge Benjamin S. Eaton**, who owned a 260-acre vineyard named *Fair Oaks*, the committee visited **Rancho San Pascual**, located just west of Eaton’s ranch. San Pascual was owned by **Don Benito (Benjamin) Wilson** and was described as a “choice piece of land.” After inspection, the committee determined that Rancho San Pascual (later named San Pasqual) was indeed perfect for their new Colony!

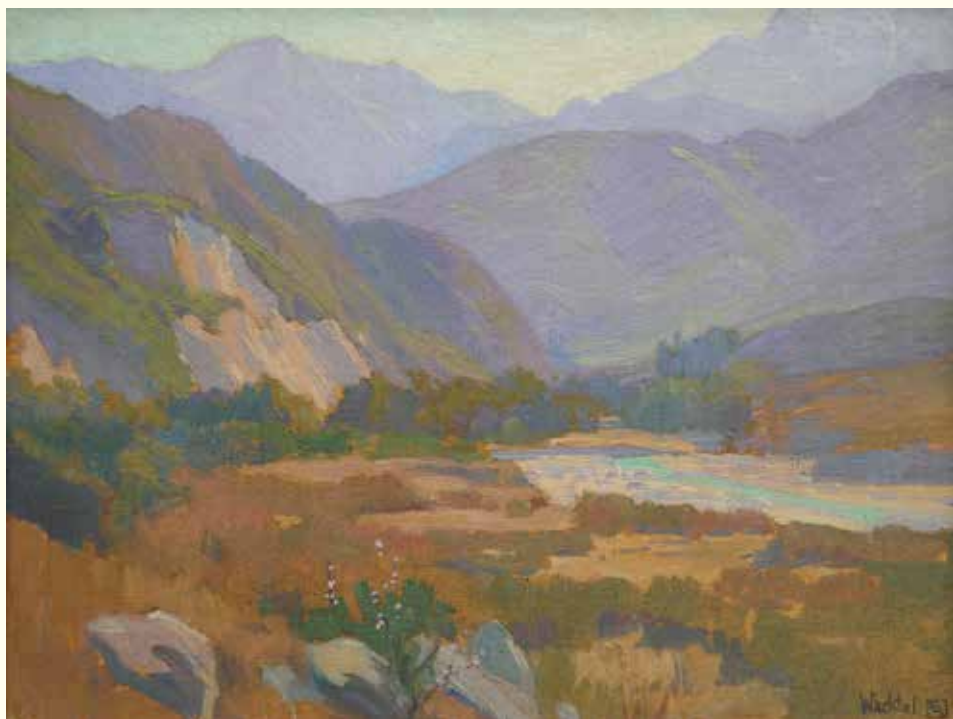
In November of 1873 the Indiana group formed an investment cooperative, which they named the **San Gabriel Orange Grove Association**, for the purpose of buying farmland in Southern California. Article II of their prospectus stated, “Any person, of good moral character, who shall be accepted by the Executive Committee, shall be eligible to membership.” The number of investors soon grew to include families from Indiana, Ohio, Iowa, Massachusetts, Missouri, Alabama, Pennsylvania, and Michigan—all eager to move to Southern California’s hospitable sunny climate.

The Association agreed to purchase 4,000 acres in the eastern part of Rancho San Pascual near the Arroyo Seco for an aggregate sum of \$25,000, with ownership restrictions of no more than 160 acres and no less than forty acres per family. The collective land was named *The California Colony of Indiana*. In January of 1874 some 100 families began to settle the area with the intention of growing citrus.

Getting There

When the **Transcontinental Railroad** was laid in 1869, travel to the west became more feasible. One no longer had to journey by wagon train that sometimes took more than a year in transit. However, complete railway connections into the Indiana Colony were not available at the time. Train travel brought passengers as far west as San Francisco, but from there, they would have to board a southbound steamer to San Pedro, and then, hire a wagon to ride rough roads through Los Angeles until they finally reached the Indiana Colony.

Receiving mail in the Indiana Colony was another challenge. Young **Morton Banbury**, son of Colonist **Col. J. Banbury**, rode on horseback to the



Elmer Wachtel (1864–1929)
Arroyo Seco
Oil on canvas 13" × 17 1/2"
Courtesy of California Art Company, LLC



John Gutzon Borglum (1867–1941)
Runnin' Out the Storm, c. 1890
Oil on canvas 60" × 108 5/8"
San Antonio Museum of Art
Gift of Mrs. Anna Borglum Carter, 77.1101
Image courtesy of San Antonio Museum of Art



Gutzon Borglum and Elizabeth Putnam Janes painting en plein air at The Old Mill in San Marino in 1887. Today, The California Art Club Gallery is housed in The Old Mill.

neighbouring town of Los Angeles to attend school, and on his way back home picked up the mail from the post office located on North Spring Street near First Street and delivered it to the Colony. This improvised mail service continued until the young lad contracted a fatal influenza. Left without a mail carrier, the Colony urged to apply for its own post office. However, the Postmaster General refused to recognize the name, "Indiana Colony." In response, a meeting was held on April 22, 1875 at the Colony schoolhouse to determine a new name for their community.

After considering a variety of proposals, including "New Granada," "Muscat" for the local grapes, and "Indianola," the Colony eventually decided to select a name from the Native American language. One of the Association members took action by writing a letter to an East Coast college friend, **Tuttle Smith**, for assistance. Smith's father, **George N. Smith**, who happened to be a missionary among the Minnesota Indians, suggested the Chippewa and Ottawa word, *Pa-sa-den-na*, meaning "Crown of the Valley." The Association voted—with seventeen electing the name of *Pasadena* and four voting against. The new name was adopted and in 1886 the City of Pasadena was incorporated.

The Blossoming of an Artist Colony, Pre-1900

With the foundation of an actual community taking root and local artists, **Guy Rose (1867–1925)**, **Elmer Wachtel (1864–1929)**, and **John Bond Francisco (1863–1931)** spreading awareness about the area's transcending beauty through their paintings, more families and future artists began finding their way to the San Gabriel Valley. In 1884 the sixteen-year-old **John Gutzon Borglum (1867–1941)**, later to become celebrated for sculpting the **Mount Rushmore National Memorial** in South Dakota, arrived with his family from Omaha, Nebraska to live in Los Angeles. Feeling out of place, the Borglum family soon returned to Nebraska, while Gutzon Borglum chose to stay on and work as an apprentice lithographer and muralist.

Also in 1884, artist **Elizabeth Janes Putnam (1848–1922)** moved to Los Angeles from Racine, Wisconsin. Nineteen years his senior, Putnam became Borglum's teacher and in 1889 they were married. The couple purchased a four-acre ranch, *El Rosario*, on Orange Grove Avenue in Sierra Madre at the foot of the San Gabriel Mountains. Soon after their marriage, Borglum spent two years in Paris where he studied at the **École des Beaux-Arts**, **Académie Julian**, and became a disciple of sculptor **Auguste Rodin (1840–1917)**.



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DOUBLE ISSUE
WINTER 2017

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Benjamin Chambers Brown (1865–1942)
The Joyous Garden, Pasadena, c. 1910
 Oil on canvas 30" × 40"
 Private Collection
 Courtesy of The Irvine Museum



Granville Redmond (1871–1935)
Annandale Wildflowers
 Oil on board 25" × 30"
 Private Collection
 Courtesy of Bonhams

Borglum was to have a strong presence in the formative years of San Gabriel Valley's arts culture.

With artists arriving in the San Gabriel Valley and environs, it wasn't long until various art clubs began to appear. The first organization for practicing artists was the **Los Angeles Art Club**, founded in 1890 by Gutzon Borglum, however, the group soon dissolved when Borglum left for Europe. The same year marked the advent of another art group, the **Sketch Club**, which was affiliated with the **Los Angeles School of Art and Design**. The Sketch Club was restructured in 1895 and became known as **The Art Association** led by Guy Rose who advocated Impressionism. In turn, a rival group of artists led by J. Bond Francisco and Borglum (who had returned from Europe) formed the **Society of Fine Arts of Southern California** that was dedicated to the promotion of Romantic-Realism.

Another Parisian-trained artist from the Académie Julian to arrive in Pasadena was **Benjamin Chambers Brown (1865–1942)**. Brown moved from Little Rock, Arkansas to Pasadena in 1896 and turned his attention from still-life and portrait painting to depicting local landscapes. He became especially known for his scenes of poppy fields. Brown's enthusiasm for painting local scenery *en plein air* won him the respect of his peers, and art critics dubbed him "Dean of Pasadena Painters" and the "Patriarch of Pasadena." In the 1916 book, *Art in California*, the first art editor for the *Los Angeles Times*, **Antony Anderson**, wrote an essay titled "Six Landscape Painters of Southern California," in which he described the inspired paintings of Benjamin Brown:

"Benjamin Chambers Brown, a prize pupil from St. Louis, was coached in all the [academic] traditions, but his twenty years in Pasadena have induced him to drop all hampering impediments of prejudice, and cling only to the things he found good... You can't live for twenty summers on the hem of the Sierra Madre's [San Gabriel Mountains] magnificent purple garment and still keep up your Parisian ideals of seeing and doing. You're bound to start new fashions of your own that are absolutely

in keeping with your environment. For here is nature at its biggest and best, bigger and better than all the ateliers put together, and more needful to art."

In 1914 Brown began making etchings with his brother, **Howell Brown**, and together they co-found the **Printmakers of Los Angeles**, later known as the **California Society of Printmakers**. (Benjamin Brown became the third president of the California Art Club, holding the office from 1915 to 1916.)

Also a former student of the Académie Julian, **Granville Redmond (1871–1935)** opened a studio in Los Angeles in 1898. He painted throughout the area, including Pasadena, Laguna Beach, Long Beach, Santa Monica, Catalina Island, and San Pedro. Later, in 1917, Redmond decided to try out for the burgeoning motion picture industry. As a deaf-mute since early childhood, he felt that his natural pantomime ability would grant him acting roles in silent movies. He auditioned for **Charlie Chaplin** who over time cast Redmond in seven of his films. The two also became good friends—with Chaplin giving Redmond space for an art studio on his movie lot.

The Arroyo Seco Inspires an Arts and Crafts Movement

In San Gabriel Valley's small town of Garvanza, located next to Pasadena on the banks of the Arroyo Seco, artist **William Lees Judson (1842–1928)** arrived in 1893 to start a new life. Originally from Manchester, England, Judson moved to Chicago where he taught at the **Art Institute of Chicago**. However, poor health forced him to seek a warmer and drier climate, and he was advised to move to the Pasadena area. There, he fell in love with the beauty of the Arroyo Seco and built his home and studio. Years later, he fought to preserve the area from a new gas plant that was built by **Professor Thaddeus Lowe** and was belching out noxious fumes.

Judson was quoted in the *Los Angeles Times* (August 1904) as saying, "The Lowe Gas Company has falsified and maligned the citizens of Garvanza. We don't want them here. The Arroyo Seco should be a public park instead of a public nuisance." Due in great part to his leadership, the gas plant was torn down, and soon after, Judson's studio



Charlie Chaplin giving direction in sign to Granville Redmond on set of "Dog's Life," First National Pictures, 1918. Image courtesy of Jean Stern.



William Lees Judson (1842–1928)

The Bridge (Arroyo Seco), c. 1895

Oil on canvas 15" × 25"

Image courtesy of Judson Studios

became the **USC College of Fine Arts**. From 1896 to 1901 he served as an art professor at the **University of Southern California**, and in 1901 he became Dean of the College of Fine Arts. He remained Dean until his death in 1928. Judson is also credited as being one of the originators of the Arts and Crafts movement, in the Arroyo Seco, and in

1909, he co-founded **The Arroyo Guild for Fellow Craftsmen**.

The aesthetic philosophy of the international Arts and Crafts movement, which was based on natural beauty, simple forms, and craftsmanship, spread to the Arroyo Seco and inspired another prominent art leader, **Ernest A. Batchelder (1875–1957)**. Batchelder arrived in Pasadena



Joe Duncan Gleason (1881–1959)
Sonia Brand, Anaheim Orange & Lemon Association
 Lithograph



Herman W. Hansen (1854–1924)
Advance Brand, The Producers Fruit Company, c. 1890s
 Crocker Lithograph, San Francisco

from Nashua, New Hampshire in 1900 to teach art and was made director of the art department at **Throop Polytechnic Institute**, the predecessor of the **California Institute of Technology (CALTECH)**. In 1909 he and his wife, **Alice Coleman**, an accomplished musician and founder of the **Coleman Chamber Music Association**, designed and built their home on South Arroyo Boulevard. In their backyard, Batchelder constructed a kiln and began the business of creating hand-crafted art tiles inspired by medieval themes and natural flora. In 1910 his business became known as the **Batchelder Tile Co.** and was located on South Broadway in Downtown Los Angeles. Joining the movement in 1905 were architect brothers, **Charles and Henry Greene**, who designed many houses as grand-scale testaments to the philosophy of the Arts and Crafts movement. Most noteworthy is the **Gamble House**.

The Business of Farming—and the Need for Artists

The original plan to make use of portions of Southern California as farmland, as stated in the California Colony of Indiana prospectus, was to irrigate and cultivate the acreage. Although some members of the Colony had been farmers in the Midwest and East Coast, Southern California's alluvial soil and semiarid climate posed agricultural challenges.

Both novice and experienced farmers had to learn how to work this unfamiliar land. Furthermore, the Colony's original idea of harvesting, packing, crating, and shipping produce to East Coast markets for commercial gains proved to be more complicated than expected.

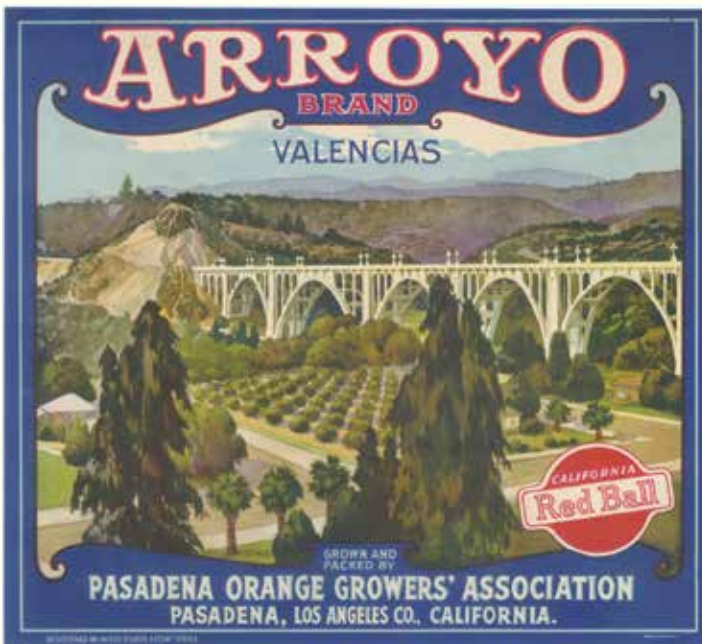
In 1881 **Joseph Wallace**, decided to address these problems and built a cannery and packing plant on his ranch land, (in the area of today's Lincoln and Orange Avenues) which he named the **Pasadena Packing Company**, also known as the **Wallace Cannery**. In the first year, the company packed 10,000 cans of fruit and by 1884 production grew to 50,000 cans per year to be sold across the country. In September of 1885 the cannery burned down, prompting Wallace to build a larger and more productive plant.

Pasadena's burgeoning citrus industry became a catalyst for other farmers in surrounding communities. Soon packing houses cropped up in neighbouring towns. With the growth of market competition, artists were hired by lithography companies in Los Angeles and San Francisco to produce tantalizing labels to be pasted on the sides of crates. The more enticing the image, the more likely wholesalers would choose that brand.

Of the hundreds of artists who

worked on designing labels and the more than 10,000 various images produced for California's citrus industry, only three artists were ever permitted to include their signatures. These were **Duncan Gleason (1881–1959)**, **James G. Swinnerton (1875–1974)**, and **Herman W. Hansen (1854–1924)**, father of artist **Armin C. Hansen (1886–1957)**. Today, original crate labels by these artists are highly sought-after by collectors.

California-born Gleason created a set of citrus labels for the **Anaheim Orange and Lemon Association** depicting beautiful, healthy maidens believed to be the same model as well as his future wife. New York-based "Jimmy" Swinnerton, arguably history's first newspaper comic strip illustrator, (creator of "Little Jimmy"), was diagnosed with tuberculosis at the age of twenty-eight and told he had only two weeks to live. **William Randolph Hearst** was concerned about his favourite cartoonist's health, and put Swinnerton on a train to San Bernardino, California for the dry desert air. Inspired by his new surroundings and renewed health, Swinnerton became a desert landscape painter and associated with the group of western artists residing on "Artists Alley" in Alhambra. He lived an additional seventy years and died at the age of ninety-eight.



Artists Unknown

Arroyo Brand (with Pasadena's Colorado Street Bridge)

Pasadena Orange Growers Association, c. 1920

Lithograph



Frank Tenney Johnson (1874–1939)

Summit Brand Orange Crate Label

Western Lithograph Company

Herman Hansen was popular for his western genre paintings and worked for the **H.S. Crocker Litho Co.** of San Francisco from the mid-1880s through the late-1890s creating scenes that would hearken back to the spirit of the Old West. His subjects were typically of cowboys and horses in action, and he was known as the “Fredric Remington of the West Coast.”

Another recognized western artist was **Frank Tenney Johnson (1874–1939)** who was hired to create iconic images of the Sierra Nevada for fruit crate labels. Johnson had gained recognition as the “Master of Moonlight” for his nocturnal scenes depicting cowboys on horseback. He created several original oil paintings and sold them with their copyrights to **Western Lithograph** for **Summit Brand Oranges** of Redlands, California. (Johnson served as the fifteenth president of the California Art Club from 1935 to 1938.)

Southern California citrus farmers banded together to limit their financial risk and to increase their bargaining power with wholesale distributors. In 1893 the **Citrus Experiment Station** was created as a cooperative for orange growers, and three years later included lemon growers. By 1905 the group had expanded to represent 5,000 citrus farmers and was renamed the **California**

Fruit Growers Exchange (now Sunkist).

The lithographic process for making crate labels was the same method that was used for fine art printmaking—and resulted in vividly colourful, strong graphic imagery. The classic romantic period, from 1887 to 1920, represented California and the west as an idyllic world in which one could start a new life. Imagery of the sunny, pristine landscape and western way of life was certainly in the minds of East Coast consumers as they enjoyed a sweet, juicy California orange—and dreamed of coming out west. Southern California’s San Gabriel Valley, resting at the foot of the San Gabriel Mountains, was soon to change, as its population expanded with maverick entrepreneurs, innovative thinkers, and many more creative artists. ☑

Part II (of III) Notes:

For Part I of “How the San Gabriel Valley Inspired California Impressionism,” please refer to the Summer-Fall 2016 issue of the California Art Club Newsletter.

***Elaine Adams** is an author and public speaker on topics relating to fine arts and aesthetics, and is Editor-in-Chief of the California Art Club Newsletter*

Research sources for this article include: Art in California, Published by R. L. Bernier, San Francisco 1916; Plein Air

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