

231 N. Primrose Avenue



Eight years after purchasing Rancho Santa Anita in 1875, Elias J. “Lucky” Baldwin decided to subdivide the eastern portion of his rancho and create the Santa Anita Tract. While William Monroe famously bought land in the new tract from Baldwin in 1884, his brother, Campbell O. Monroe, made a smaller purchase of thirty acres in 1885.

The purchase price was \$125.00 per acre! The great success of the

Monrovia Tract and the Town of Monrovia persuaded the Monroe brothers to subdivide their holdings into the Monroe Addition to the Town of Monrovia. Each brother retained a ten acre parcel in the new tract, however, as a home place.

Campbell Monroe kept his ten acre parcel intact as an orange grove for nearly twenty years, and then subdivided it as the C. O. Monroe Tract. The new subdivision was recorded with the County of Los Angeles on January 28, 1907. Among the first purchasers was Charles Anderson, who bought lots 13 through 16 in Block A. Anderson apparently bought the lots as an investment, and no substantial improvements were made for the next six years.

Isaac R. Colborn brought his family to Monrovia in 1912 from Goodland, Indiana. He was a native of Michigan, born in Gaines in April, 1860. He began his career as a dry goods merchant at the age of twenty, but later became involved in the lumber industry. He was one of the pioneers in establishing the chain lumber yard system in Indiana and Michigan, and he was very successful financially before his retirement.

Isaac Colborn married the former Estella Foe, a native of Blenheim, Ontario, Canada, where she was born on August 3, 1864. While she was a native of Canada, Estella Foe was descended from English nobility and the Eatons, who came to North America on the “Mayflower.” Estella Foe left her native country and immigrated to Kent County, Michigan, where she and Isaac Colborn were married circa 1884. They were the parents of three children, two of whom, Maude Ethel Colborn and Kenneth Leonard Colborn, lived to maturity. Maude Colborn was born July 16, 1888, and Kenneth Colborn on April 14, 1898.

The Colborn family may have come to Monrovia for Maude’s health, as many families did during the early years of the Twentieth Century. At first they lived in a rented house at 143 E. Hillcrest Blvd. Then Isaac Colborn bought Charles Anderson’s four lots in the C. O. Monroe Tract and planned the construction of a new home. For

their architect Isaac and Estella Colborn selected Frank O. Eager, a local resident. Eager was also a native of Ontario, Canada. He and his wife, Emma, arrived in Los Angeles in February of 1901, and Eager joined his brother Abraham's architectural firm. The earliest known Eager design in Monrovia was the 1903 William F. Marshall home, now demolished. Eager was a versatile architect who designed a number of Monrovia homes in different styles over the next thirty years.

The new Colborn home was an impressive Craftsman/Mediterranean structure in a gracious setting. The permit for the new house was issued April 24, 1914, and \$10,300.00 was the contract price—a very impressive sum for the period. The building contractor was J. P. Daniel, also a local resident. Among many construction projects, Daniel was responsible for the construction of the homes of Gerald Bartle and Mrs. W. W. Woolwine as well as the First Presbyterian Church, all featured in "Picturesque Monrovia", a photographic anthology published in 1929.

Maude Colborn died in her home on September 2, 1915, after a lingering illness. She was attended only by her nurse, as her parents and brother were at the family's summer home in Walloon Lake, Michigan. Maude's burial took place at the family's former home in Indiana. As a tribute to her memory, Maude's parents presented the "Faith" window to the First Presbyterian Church in Monrovia. It was created by the well-known Judson Studios.

After High School, Kenneth Colborn attended the University of California, Berkeley, the University of Southern California, Stanford University, and Princeton University. Returning to Southern California, he established his own contracting company in Pasadena, the Kenneth L. Colborn Company. He married Julia Ursula Rounds, a native of Chicago, Illinois, and they were the parents of two sons, Kenneth L. Colborn II, and Chase Childs Colborn. Kenneth L. Colborn died July 15, 1981 in Laguna Hills, California. Julia survived him by eight years, and both of their sons are now deceased as well. There are three surviving grandchildren.

Isaac R. Colborn died in his home on July 4, 1933. Services were held in the Little Church of the Flowers at Forest Lawn, Glendale, with burial in the mausoleum. After Isaac's death Estella Colborn moved to Pasadena to be closer to her son and his family, and the house stood vacant. Estella Colborn died June 26, 1943 in Pasadena after an illness of six months. Her services were also held in the Little Church of the Flowers at Forest Lawn, with interment in the mausoleum.

After Estela Colborn left Monrovia, the house was purchased by local attorney Paul F. Garber. Garber, a native of Carlisle, Pennsylvania, came to Monrovia in 1930 and established his law practice here after practicing in Bakersfield for several years. He was appointed Monrovia City Attorney in April of 1934, and served in that capacity until December of 1950. His civic activities included the Rotary Club of Monrovia and the Monrovia Tennis Club. He married the former Ethel Fay Holson, a native of New Mexico, and they were the parents of a son, Paul Eric. Paul is a graduate of the University of Southern California and the Loyola Law School. Ethel Garber was also

active in the community with the American Red Cross and the Monrovia Guild of Children's Hospital, Los Angeles.

After their son was grown and had left home, Paul and Ethel Garber sold the house and moved to a smaller home in Monrovia. Paul Garber died November 13, 1974, with interment at Live Oak Cemetery. Ethel Garber died May 29, 2001 in Orange County.

By 1958, the house was the residence of Clifford and Sylvia L. Jensen. Clifford Jensen owned a manufacturing company in El Monte. Clifford and Sylvia Jensen owned the property for about three years during which time an in-ground pool was installed. The next owners were Kenneth and Rosemary Smith. The house is shown as vacant in the 1965 Monrovia City Directory, but the following year it is listed as the residence of Bohdan E. Jelinek, a physician. Later directories list Jelinek with his wife, Dr. Pilar E. (Centeno) Jelinek. Bohdan Jelinek died May 19, 1989. His wife survived him by ten years, dying on September 10, 1999. Her last few years were spent in a convalescent facility, and the house stood empty. Bohdan and Pilar Jelinek are buried at Resurrection Cemetery in Montebello.

The current owners purchased the house in 1996, and began a sweeping program of restoration. Aluminum siding, installed on the lower portion of the exterior of the house in 1971, was removed and the shingles underneath restored. The pergola on the south east corner of the house was rebuilt. A porte-cochere was constructed over the driveway. Texture coating on the exterior of the house was either removed or the structural elements replaced. On the interior of the house, layers of paint on the quarter sawn oak woodwork were removed and the wood restored to its original finish. Decorative stenciling on the walls, hidden underneath wallpaper, was restored to its original appearance. Damage from the Sierra Madre Earthquake was fixed including restoration of the granite fireplace. The principal rooms of the house now appear as they did one hundred years ago.

The house has the distinction of being designated Historic Landmark #1 by action of the Monrovia City Council on June 4, 1996, the 155th anniversary of William Newton Monroe's birth.