



PASADENA
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2020 Pasadena Showcase House of Design House History

The 56th Pasadena Showcase House of Design will be held at the Locke House, a 1937 Federal-country estate designed by “Hollywood society’s architect,” Gerard R. Colcord. It was patterned after country homes constructed for affluent families on the east coast. The house is nestled among mature oaks and sits on expansive, park-like grounds in the historic Santa Anita Oaks neighborhood of Arcadia. The house is virtually unchanged from its original design and features refined Federal detailing throughout the trim, windows, fireplaces and hardware. It includes classical design elements such as painted brick, wood shingles, elongated windows, and a front door crowned by a Georgian-style broken pediment. The two-story home is approximately 6,700 square-feet and is still on its original two-acre parcel. It cost \$30,000 to build, a very large amount of money for a new house during the Great Depression. A pool, barbecue room, bath and dressing room structure as well as a brick-floored screened porch at the rear of the house were added later. Locke House was featured in the 1998 Academy Award winning film, *Gods and Monsters*. The house was also featured prominently in *Architectural Digest Magazine* in 1939.

The Owners

The house was built for Edmund Locke, Jr. who shared the house with his wife Elizabeth and their three young children. Mr. Locke had purchased five lots on both sides of Rancho Road from the Home for Women in 1936 on which he would build their house. Born on March 14, 1903 in Los Angeles, he was the son of Edmund Locke, Sr., a newspaper publisher and Elizabeth (Carr) Locke. By 1920 he and his family were living in Beverly Hills where his mother was a founder of the Beverly Hills Women’s Club. Mr. Locke attended Harvard and in 1926 married Elizabeth Brown, the daughter of a developer of gold mines and oil wells. It is thought that Mr. and Mrs. Locke lived largely on money they inherited from both sides of the family.

The Locke family sold their home in 1943 to Carl and Thelma Baker. Mr. Baker was in the investment field. Other owners included Peter Young, the manager of a retail liquor business and Willard and Mary Jo Voit. Mr. Voit was associated with the Voit Rubber Company of Los Angeles.

Sometime before 1950, the Lockes moved to Hawaii. Mr. Locke died June 10, 1975 at the age of 72 and Mrs. Locke outlived her husband by a few years, passing away on May 1, 1978.

The Style of the House

Locke House is based upon Federal-style country homes built in the eastern United States between 1776 and 1820. Named after America's first political party, Federal-style design was derived from Greek and Roman architecture to embody the ideals of Greek democracy and the Roman Republic.

Federal-style details were often much more delicate and refined and were more modest in size compared to more imposing two-story Georgian-style country houses. Homewood, a Baltimore house built in 1800 for Charles Carroll, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, might have been the inspiration for Locke House. Decorative detail and other prominent features of Homewood appear throughout Locke House such as the brick veneer on the walls of the main center block, elongated windows at the first level and small dormers with circular head windows on the second floor. Elements of Locke House that depart from tradition include turning the two end wings at right angles to the main section of the house, utilizing wood shingles on the walls of the two end wings and crowning the front door with a Georgian-style broken pediment.

The house has six bedrooms and five bathrooms. On the first floor are an entry hall, a living room, a dining room, a library, a kitchen with a butler's pantry, a breakfast room, a laundry room, a guest suite, servant's quarters and a screened porch. The second floor features a play room, a sewing room and four-bedroom suites.

The Architect

Gerard Rae Colcord, referred to as "Hollywood's society architect" was born into a wealthy family in St. Louis, Missouri on November 1, 1900. His father was the proprietor of the Colcord-Wright Machinery and Supply Company, a dealer in metal-working machines. His mother was an artist. After graduating from the Culver Military Academy in Indiana, Mr. Colcord moved with his family to Beverly Hills and enrolled in the University of Southern California's School of Architecture. In 1923 he traveled to Europe, touring England, Italy and France, participating in a one-year apprenticeship program at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts at Fontainebleau. It was here that he learned the skill of blending various architectural features from different historical eras in a unified design. Returning to Southern California, he apprenticed with well-known architects Asa Hudson and John C. Austin. He received his State Certificate in 1930, whereupon he established his own office in Beverly Hills.

In the early 1930's Mr. Colcord married the first of his three wives, Jeanne Marie Dumas. They were prominent on the Southern California social scene and belonged to the Bel-Air Bay club. By the end of the 1940's Mr. Colcord had become a "brand name." His signature "farmhouse" residences, sometimes called "country colonials" became very popular with well-to-do business people and celebrities such as actors Alan Ladd and Debbie Reynolds. Many other celebrities have also lived in homes designed by Mr. Colcord including Reese Witherspoon and Ryan Phillippe, Bob Newhart and Dean Martin. A Brentwood home that Mr. Colcord built in 1951 was owned for nearly thirty years by actor, Harrison Ford. He purchased it in 1983 and hired Mr. Colcord to put an addition on the home but due to Mr. Colcord's passing, the addition was completed by his assistant Liza Kent.

While Mr. Colcord primarily worked for clients in Beverly Hills and the Westside of Los Angeles, he designed at least six houses in the San Gabriel Valley including Locke House. His fame also spread beyond California with clients in Georgia, Texas and Florida. His interiors were even used as inspirations for set designs for television programs, *I Love Lucy*, *Leave It To Beaver*, and *Father Knows Best*.

Mr. Colcord designed nearly four hundred homes and completed about one hundred residential remodels. He died in Encino on February 19, 1984 at the age of 83. He had no children but was survived by his third wife, Virginia Alice Singer.