

# Roots in the Past

BY ANNE Z. COOKE



**E. J. "Lucky"** Baldwin's Queen Anne Cottage, coyly Victorian with its white cupola and gingerbread trim, peeked beckon-

ingly through the trees on the spring day that we drove to the Los Angeles State and County Arboretum.

The sky was unusually blue for Arcadia, tucked as it is at the foot of the San Gabriel Mountains. Around the 127-acre arboretum, just west of Santa Anita Race Track, spring flowers and fruit trees bloomed all shades of pink, blue and yellow.

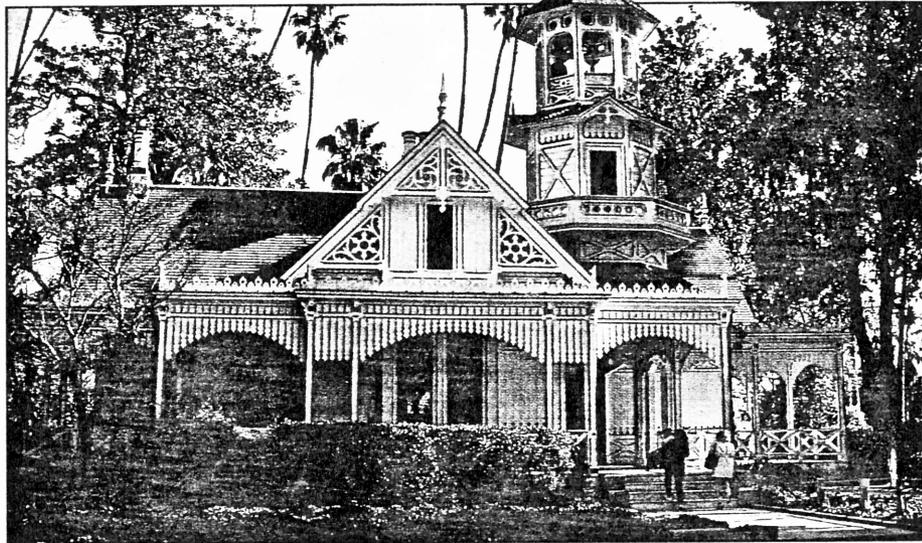
On the lagoon, ducklings paddled behind their mother, keeping a sharp lookout for airborne snacks. We disappointed them by snapping photos, then heading around the lake.

According to the arboretum's historian, Sandy Snider, who'd like to set the record straight, the cottage, Historic Landmark 367, "was built by Baldwin in 1885, not 1881, despite the wording on the plaque. And it wasn't built for his third wife, either, as most guidebooks say."

Instead, explains Snider, Baldwin needed a guesthouse for the friends and celebrities who flocked to see Rancho Santa Anita, then considered the quintessential Southern California spread.

The house's sophistication, worlds removed from the rancho's first simple adobe across the lake (the 1839 Hugo Reid Adobe), in many ways symbolizes the end of the days of the Californios (people of Spanish or Mexican heritage whose place of birth or residence was California before 1846) and the beginning of Los Angeles, the modern city.

In 1875, Baldwin, a self-made



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**Baldwin's Queen Anne Cottage** served as a guesthouse for celebrities in the late 1880s.

tycoon flush with real estate and silver mining profits, bought 8,000 of the 13,319 acres in the original Rancho Santa Anita granted to Hugo Reid in 1845.

Baldwin loved trees with a collector's single-minded passion. Once in possession of the property, he set to work planting, then nurturing numerous varieties, some of which still grow within the arboretum grounds. Because farming, cattle ranching and horse breeding also intrigued him, the rancho soon became the area's premier agricultural showplace and a tourist attraction as renowned as Disneyland would later be.

Carey McWilliams, a historian and a *WESTWAYS* columnist from 1933 to 1939, wrote that during 1885 Rancho Santa Anita fulfilled the promise of endless bounty by producing a total of 104,000 pounds of butter, 43,856 boxes of oranges and lemons, 384,460 gallons of wine, 54,946 gallons of brandy, as well as 174,750 sacks of grain.

As tales of palm trees and orange groves, endless sun, rich soil and available home sites spread eastward, a land boom exploded. Reaching its height in 1887 and '88, the sudden growth pushed the city's population from 6,000 to 50,000 residents.

By 1890, the boom had gone bust, and land values plummeted, but Los Angeles was forever changed. Paved streets, cement sidewalks and public transportation signaled the end of the ranchos.

Visitors to the arboretum can walk around the cottage's porch and view the furnished rooms through regularly washed windows. The arboretum, at 301 North Baldwin Avenue, is open daily from 9 A.M. to 5 P.M. Admission is \$3 for adults, \$1.50 for seniors and students, and 75 cents for children 5 to 12. 

*Travel writer ANNE Z. COOKE has a strong interest in California history and spends her weekends exploring the state's back roads with her husband, photographer Steve Haggerty.*