

Hike #40

10/10

Wednesday, September 19 - 9:30 am

TIME TO OR Easiest approach is to take the 4th Street off-ramp from westbound Santa Monica freeway, then head north about 15 blocks to the end of 4th Street, which is at Adelaide Drive. Park on 4th turn right and park on Adelaide.

EAST SANTA TO Alternate approach is Pacific Coast Highway to Entrada Drive, on Entrada and up the hill. Entrada becomes 7th Street in Santa Monica. Turn right (towards ocean) on San Vicente (traffic light) then right again on 4th Street. From there it's a short block to Adelaide.

Rustic Canyon — a Picturesque Stroll Amid Homes of the Artsy

By ROBERT JOHN PIERSON

In Rustic Canyon, a tree-filled arroyo near Will Rogers State Beach, autumn and early winter can be enjoyed in all their Southern California character.

Deciduous trees stand in sharp contrast to brilliantly hued flowers that bloom throughout the Southland.

Since the 1820s, the secluded canyon has hosted grazing sheep, campers, saloons, bohemian retreats and idiosyncratic houses. It has attracted writers, artists, actors and even a distinguished group of refugees from Nazi Germany, including Thomas Mann and Bertolt Brecht.

Other renowned residents have included writer Christopher Isherwood, photographer Edward Weston, fashion photographers Peter Stackpool and Herbert Matter, sculptors Holger and Helen Jackson and Merrill Gage, and architects Thornton Abell and Charles Eames.

The canyon has long been a place of creativity and social tolerance. In his book "A Single Man," Isherwood describes this community's character:

"More probably the name was chosen for its picturesqueness by the pioneer escapists from dingy downtown Los Angeles and stuffy-snobbish Pasadena who came here

in the early twenties. . . . Their utopian dream was of a sub-tropical English village with Montmartre manners: a Good Little Place where you could paint a bit, write a bit, and drink lots. . . . They were tacky and cheerful and defiantly bohemian, tirelessly inquisitive about each other's doings, and boundlessly tolerant."

A Haven for Artists

The area, with thick foliage and countrified homes, continues to be a haven for artists, writers and other creative folk.

Today, one can take a self-guided walk along its narrow lanes, down hidden stair paths in the leafy shadows of ancient sycamores, oaks and alders.

Allow three hours for this stroll.

To reach Rustic Canyon, take I-10 (the Santa Monica Freeway) west; exit west on 4th Street. Follow 4th Street about 15 blocks to Adelaide Drive and park nearby. Because the three-mile walk includes several steep stairways in the hilly terrain, wear comfortable shoes. You may want to begin early in the morning, stopping for breakfast on the way.

Begin the walk at the stair path that
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Walking in dappled sunlight, a pedestrian enjoys the scenic view of Rustic Canyon.

RUSTIC: Picturesque Arroyo, Colorful History

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leads from Adelaide Drive at 4th Street into Santa Monica Canyon.

Walk down the stair path, cross Ocean Avenue, and turn left onto Entrada Drive. Immediately you are surrounded by towering trees, including dappled eucalyptuses, twisting sycamores and prickly palms.

Walk to 278 Entrada Drive, a pink post-modern residence with angular walls and lush landscaping. Walk up the pedestrian path to the left of the house, shaded by avocado trees, banana plants and orange pittosporum, which leads to a nearly hidden stairway.

At the top of the path, turn right and walk along Mabery Road. A diverse collection of residences line this quiet lane, including the Sten-Frenke House at 126 Mabery Road, a classic rendition of Streamline Moderne architecture designed by Richard Neutra in 1934.

Panoramic Views

Turn right on Ocean Way, first noting its panoramic views of Santa Monica Bay and Will Rogers State Beach below.

The Bradbury House, designed by local architect John Byers in 1922, stands at 102 Ocean Way, epitomizing the Spanish Colonial Revival style with its whitewashed abode walls, decorative wrought-iron balconies and gate, red-tiled roof, and blue-tiled entrance.

A French Norman manor stands across the street at 105 Ocean Way, while a classic chalet-style Craftsman cottage peers down from 150 Ocean Way.

At Entrada Drive, turn left. A hodgepodge of bikini shops, bars, services and cafes appears in the commercial district as you walk toward Pacific Coast Highway.

Marix, a Tex-Mex restaurant housed in a Japanese-style structure, attracts a trendy Westside crowd, and Patrick's Roadhouse, a local landmark cafe, can provide breakfast or lunch along the way.

Turn right on Pacific Coast Highway, and walk past the French restaurant, Les Anges, and turn right on West Channel Road. At 112 stands a landmark bar, the SS Friendship; the salvaged bow of a ship, storm-wrecked in 1938, anchors the bar to the sidewalk.

Continue walking up West Channel Road to Channel Lane and cross West Channel Road to East Rustic Road, walking into Rustic Canyon.

The log-faced cabin on the corner of East Rustic Road and the ancient sycamores ahead remind you of a mountain village. For centuries these gnarled trees have shaded the canyon floor. Local Indians considered these trees as the abode of sacred spirits.

When the area was subdivided in 1913, the developers carefully built the roads and houses around the sycamores, preserving their charm for the neighborhood.

Walk up East Rustic Road, enjoying the diverse trees and gardens. Along the way you'll pass a delightfully restored Craftsman cottage at 454 and a lush garden of ferns surrounding a coast redwood tree at 532.

East Rustic Road ends at a rough timbered bridge spanning Rustic Creek. From this location, observe the century-old eucalyptus trees that tower above the babbling brook.

Follow the broken concrete sidewalk between the driveways at 544 and 550 E. Rustic Road. (Curbside numbers say 544 and 546.) This public right-of-way leads mysteriously to another hidden stair path bordered by live oaks.

As you climb the stair path, note the house to the right. This Streamline Moderne house, nautical in feeling with its railings and spiral staircase, was designed by Thornton Abell in 1937.

At the top of the stairs, turn left and follow Lower Mesa Road past the manorial Spanish Colonial Revival residence at 510.

Turn left on Latimer Road. You are now in Middle Rustic Canyon, which widens, forming several terraced levels between the hillsides and Rustic Creek.

Many of these trees were planted before the turn of the century as part of the nation's first experimental forestry station.

Attracted to Varied Terrain

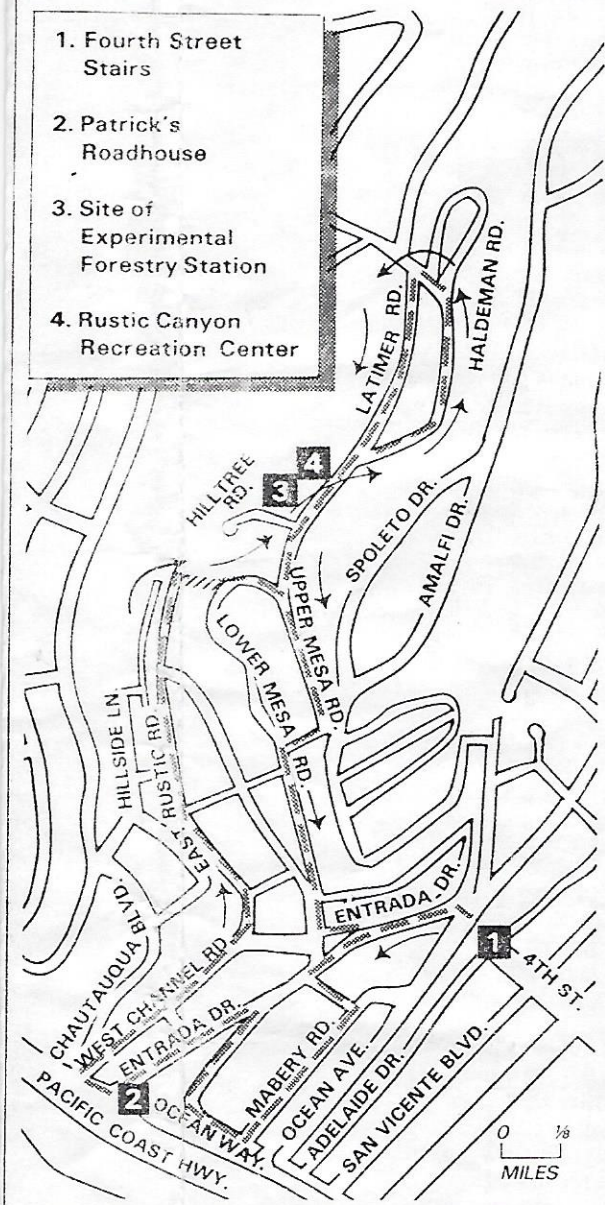
Abbot Kinney—tobacco magnate, amateur horticulturist, connoisseur of the arts, advocate for the rights of the abused Mission Indians—had moved to Santa Monica in the 1880s as a real estate investor. He became convinced that the varied terrain of Rustic Canyon was ideal as the site of the experimental forestry station. Kinney persuaded the canyon's owners to donate six acres in 1887.

For 36 years, hundreds of species of trees from around the world were planted to test their usefulness and adaptability to the geography and climatic conditions of coastal California.

As you walk up Latimer Road, note how many of the rambling houses are well-placed between the enormous eucalyptus trees. The Kaplan House at 514, designed by Michael Leventhal in 1973, seems to reinterpret the Craftsman Movement with its embellished use of clinker brick, weathered wood, redwood burls and stained glass.

SANTA MONICA CANYON AND RUSTIC CANYON WALK

1. Fourth Street Stairs
2. Patrick's Roadhouse
3. Site of Experimental Forestry Station
4. Rustic Canyon Recreation Center



TRACY CROWE/ Los Angeles Times

At Hilltree Road and Latimer Road stands a state historical marker for the Experimental Forestry Station, set amid a grove of eucalyptus and exotic palms.

The Rustic Canyon Recreation Center is at 601

Latimer Road in an intriguing Spanish Colonial Revival complex, which was originally the clubhouse for the Uplifters Club. In 1914 a splinter group of the Los Angeles Athletic Club organized to form an alternative, outlandish, irreverent club known as the Uplifters, dedicated to "uplift art, promote good fellowship and build closer acquaintance among the members."

These several acres near the forestry station were purchased for a private clubhouse. By 1923, tennis courts, pool, stables, bridle paths, polo field and outdoor amphitheater had been added.

Soon additional acreage was bought to create a settlement of weekend hideaways and rustic retreats. Harry Marston Haldeman, grandfather of H. R. Haldeman, and L. Frank Baum, author of the Oz books, led the club in the art of "high jinx," which satirized high society of the '20s and '30s in songs, plays and revelry. Members included Will Rogers, Busby Berkeley, Leo Carrillo, Harold Lloyd, Ferde Grofe and Darryl Zanuck.

After World War II, the Uplifters gradually sold off land until 1953, when an anonymous philanthropist bought the remaining property and donated it to the City of Los Angeles as a public park and recreation center.

Multitude of Activities

Today, the park offers a multitude of activities from fitness programs to art classes. Explore its rooms and courtyards.

Continue on Latimer Road and turn right on Haldeman Road. On the hillsides hidden in dense foliage are many of the original retreats, now private homes, built by the Uplifters.

Among the more remarkable houses are three log cabins at 36, 37 and 38 Haldeman Road. Banker Marco Hellman obtained these cabins from the set of the 1923 silent film "The Courtship of Miles Standish." Constructed with whole logs, each cabin was dismantled on location near Lake Arrowhead and rebuilt here on Hellman's lots. Pasadena architect Arthur Heineman refashioned the sets as residences.

Walk on Haldeman Road and veer to the left, walking downhill to Latimer Road, and turn left, following it past the recreation center to Upper Mesa Road, then turn left, walking uphill. Vistas of Rustic Canyon and the ocean open to the right.

At 407 Upper Mesa Road, a new residence designed by architect Robert A. Jackson also models the International Style, but with textured concrete walls. Walk down the steep stairway to the right of the house and survey the storied bulk of the hillside residence.

At Lower Mesa Road, turn left and follow the narrow lane to Entrada Drive. Cross the drive, turn left, and return up the 4th Street stairs.