

**Inventory to a Special Collection at Claremont Heritage
Palmer Canyon Deeds Collection
2014.002T**

Descriptive Summary

- Title:** Palmer Canyon Deeds Collection
- Dates:** 1922 – 1934
- Collection Number:** 2014.002T
- Creator/Collector:** Ted Garner (collector)
- Extent:** 1.04 linear feet (3 boxes); containing administrative materials, real estate agreements, deeds, receipts, correspondence, housing documentation, tract maps, housing covenants, and ledgers.
- Repository:** Claremont Heritage Special Collections and Archives
Claremont, California 91711
- Language of Material:** English
- Access:** The collection is open for research use.
- Publication Rights:** Permission to publish, quote, or reproduce must be secured from the repository and the copyright holder (if applicable).
- Preferred Citation:** Palmer Canyon Deeds Collection. Claremont Heritage
- Abstract:** The Palmer Canyon Deeds Collection includes original documents, agreements, correspondence, receipts, and other administrative materials related to the sale of Palmer Canyon properties between land investor C.S. Phillips and new parcel owners. The land once owned by the Palmer Family was sold to the Los Angeles capitalist in 1921, who in turn subdivided the property, selling lots to investors.

Biography/Administrative History:

Early pioneer and land developer, Henry Austin Palmer has been called the City Father of Claremont and was instrumental in the founding of the city. Coming to Pomona from northern California in 1882, Palmer left behind years of community service in Berkeley to try his hand at land development in the area. Palmer and his nephew, Frank Palmer, quickly ingrained themselves in the community, helping to re-organize the Pomona Land and Water Company, where Henry served as its second president, and also founded the Pomona Bank in 1883. When the Santa Fe

Railroad extended its route from San Bernardino to Los Angeles, it was Palmer who convinced the railroad company to lay track in northern Pomona based on the argument that following this route would allow the Santa Fe to help establish several new towns. Santa Fe followed this suggestion and the town of Claremont was one of many new townsites founded because of the railroad expansion. The townsite of Claremont was laid out on 365 acres of former Rancho San Jose land purchased by the Pacific Land Improvement Company from the Pomona Land and Water Company. Additionally, the townsite sat on 65 acres of Palmer's own land. Palmer helped oversee the land sale between the two companies and is also attributed with giving Claremont its name.

In addition to his land holdings and civic duties in Pomona, Palmer also had several personal interests in the surrounding area. Henry Palmer and his family lived in a house known as "El Alisal", former site of the Alvarado Family Ranch and current site of Claremont's Memorial Park. Palmer also held personal investments in land in the foothill areas including Piedmont Mesa (near the Webb Schools today and where Pomona College was to originally move from Pomona), the current Padua Hills area (where he planted olive trees), and Palmer Canyon (named for his daughter, Elizabeth Day Palmer).

Palmer Canyon has always been a coveted place, first for the local Native American tribes who lived off the bountiful wild game in the vicinity and utilized the constant water supply from Palmer Canyon Creek. As a literary connection, Palmer Canyon is thought to serve as the basis of the location in Helen Hunt Jackson's *Ramona* (1884), where the protagonists, Ramona and Alessandro elope to "amidst chaparral and under the gnarled oaks and giant sycamores." Palmer Canyon attracted many early pioneers for its water supply and saw settlers build living quarters in the canyon. As facilities for digging wells were obtained to supply water to the valley below, many of the early settlers moved back down from the hills, however a few remained in Palmer Canyon. John Hughes first filed water rights on the creek, followed by Henry Palmer, the Priester Family, and Mrs. Mary Stoner.

By the 1920s, Palmer Canyon became a popular weekend destination for the growing population of Claremonters. The canyon was a favorite spot for botanists, where 94 different kinds of wild flowers were gathered in one afternoon by a botanizing party and was popular hiking destination for its views of the valley below. In 1921, real estate developer Frank Wheeler helped close a deal that opened Palmer Canyon up to great improvement. Property owner, Elizabeth D. Palmer, sold her 360 acres of land to C.S. Phillips, a Los Angeles capitalist, who in turn subdivided and sold lots in the canyon to investors and property developers. By the 1950s, Palmer Canyon became a unique residential neighborhood in contrast to the popular tract home models of the time. A single paved road ran through the center of the neighborhood that was about a mile in length with the houses sitting on unincorporated land in Los Angeles County.

In 2003, the Grand Prix fire passed through Palmer Canyon destroying a vast majority of the homes. The destruction was devastating, leaving only 4 of the 47 homes that once lined the canyon. The Palmer Canyon Homeowners Association attempted to regain the building rights for its former residents, yet could not do so unless infrastructure like flood control, modern streets, and septic updates were included. As the cost was too great for the Palmer Canyon Association to meet for rebuild, it was decided to sell the land.

Scope and Content of Collection:

The Palmer Canyon Deeds collection collects items related to the sale of real estate of Palmer Canyon property between C.S. Phillips and parcel buyers. The Palmer Family had previously owned the canyon property, but having moved out of the area and into Los Angeles, decided to sell off the land. Elizabeth Day Palmer, daughter of Henry Austin Palmer and then owner of the property, sold the 360 acres of land to Los Angeles-based capitalist, C.S. Phillips, who in turn subdivided the land. Broken up by tract and parcel numbers, these documents identify original owners of the subdivided land and provide documentation of their property ownership. While the documentation included for each specific property is different, in general the collection includes real estate purchase agreements between Phillips and the buyers, partial reconveyance agreements, quitclaim deeds, correspondence between parties, and financial receipts. These items provide information about the original owners of the Palmer Canyon properties and how they were developed and/or changed hands prior to property construction. In addition to individual parcel information, the collection also includes Palmer Canyon tract maps, property notes, a financial ledger documenting payments of property owners, and an insurance agreement between Palmer Canyon and Padua Hills, Incorporated. These documents provide insight into the transition of the Palmer Canyon property from its individual ownership by the Palmer Family to the residential development, which would emerge in the coming decades.

Indexing Terms: Acquisition of property
Claremont, California
Palmer Canyon
Phillips, C.S.
Property
Real estate development
Western Americana -- 1900 - 1999

Container Listing: See attached Container List.