

What does an old grocery store have in common with trees from Australia, a railroad, a failed experiment, and a lady architect from National City?

Eucalyptus Trees

Australian Gum trees, also known as eucalyptus trees, were imported from Australia to America more than 150 years ago. These exotic trees were valued for their fast growth, drought tolerance, interesting foliage. They could transform a barren, shrub-filled region to forested glen with a few short years.

Santa Fe Railroad's Failed Experiment

From 1906 to 1914 the Santa Fe Railway planted 3.5 million eucalyptus trees on 3,000 acres of land in the area that we now know as Rancho Santa Fe. They were hoping to use these fast-growing trees for railroad ties used in laying railroad tracks. Alas, the experiment failed, mostly because even though these trees grew at an amazing rate, they wouldn't be strong enough to hold up train tracks until the trees were closer to 75 years. Since that portion of San Diego county is known as the Avocado Belt, a developer came up with the brilliant idea of developing a community surrounded by "Gentlemen's Farmer" estates, where farmers could grow orange and avocado trees. That's how Rancho Santa Fe came to be.

Lilian Jeanette Rice

Lilian Rice was born June 12, 1889 in National City, California. She received her architecture degree from UC Berkeley in 1910 and was the tenth woman in California to get an architectural license. She worked in the firm of Requa and Jackson, where she was lead architect for the new community of Rancho Santa Fe, designing predominantly in the Spanish Colonial Revival style, contributing to that style's predominance in Southern California.

Lilian Rice was considered an early organic architect, always focused on finding harmony between a structure and its natural surroundings. Starting her own firm in 1928, she would design over 60 buildings over her short, 16-year career, winning several prestigious awards for her intelligent design and artistry in architecture.



"With the thought early implanted in my mind that true beauty lies in simplicity rather than ornateness, I found real joy at Rancho Santa Fe. Every environment there calls for simplicity and beauty — the gorgeous natural landscapes, the gently broken topography, the nearby mountains. No one with a sense of fitness, it seems to me, could violate these natural factors by creating anything that lacked simplicity in line and form and color." Lilian Jeannette Rice

Joers Ketchum Store

Lillian Rice designed just two two-story buildings in the village, one of them being the Joers Ketchum Store, built in 1927. There was a market and soda fountain on the first floor and an apartment on the second floor. Over the years, many different businesses set up shop in this building, but it still reflects Lilian Rice's unique ability to achieve architectural integrity for a multi-purpose building through the use of projecting windows, setbacks, graceful balconies, patterned brickwork, and decorative wrought iron.

