



# Rooms with a View

Step into history  
and stay awhile at  
Arroyo Vista Inn.

IN SOUTH PASADENA, A PRIVATE ENTRANCE OFF MONTEREY ROAD CURVES UPWARD UNDER AN ARCH OF GNARLY OAKS. AT THE TOP RESTS THE HISTORIC ARROYO VISTA INN, AN ELEGANT CRAFTSMAN BED AND BREAKFAST. THE WIDE VERANDA—LIT BY SCATTERED SUNLIGHT STREAMING THROUGH HANGING OAK BRANCHES—WELCOMES GUESTS TO STEP INTO CALIFORNIA'S PAST.

Pat Wright, the owner of the newly opened B&B, has a story that fits with her home's tales. She said, "OK, I don't want to practice law anymore ... I like to entertain. I like to cook. I like to meet new people, so I think I'll do a bed and breakfast."

But in order to purchase the home for a bed and breakfast in South Pasadena, it needed historical designation. Wright began researching. The home's history unfolded.

She discovered the home was designed by prolific architect Lester Moore, who built many homes in the Los Angeles area in the Mission and Craftsman style.

The home's first owners, Ezra and Ida Moon Thompson, hired Moore to design it. Completed in 1910, the house overlooked Cawston's Ostrich Farm when the area was called

// STORY BY MICHELE MILES GARDINER



**WRIGHT AT HOME.** There's always room to cozy up in cool comfort at this delightful inn.

baked French toast served with fresh squeezed orange juice.

The second and third floors each have five guest rooms—many with balconies and views—in soothing sage, cool water, sand and other natural tones. There are 10 bathrooms, including some with spa tubs. Light pours through the Mission-style arched windows and streams down the home's original skylight.

Though there are antique pieces in the rooms, the décor is refined and unfussy.


Outside, a wall of stones brought up from the nearby arroyo begins at the bottom of the road and wraps around the house. Built into the wall is a wine cellar. Along with the hundreds of oaks there are cypress, orange, lemon, plum and apricot trees spanning two acres. Guests can sit on the veranda overlooking Pasadena while eating snacks Wright serves at 5 p.m.; they may even catch a sunset.

It's so lovely, some of the home's owners may not have wanted to leave—or so Wright has been told. College students watching the house said they heard faucets turning off and on by themselves. And before that, Wright's friend Marilyn said she sensed a woman, dressed in 1920s clothing.

Wright remembered, "The first time Marilyn told me about it, she said, 'It's a female ghost' and ... that she was very happy I had bought it, that it was a female owner.' I just thought that was great ... I was wondering if it was Ida or Emma Halm ..."

Wright hasn't had any experiences herself, but said, "It's fun to think about."

She also enjoyed learning that she and original owner, Ezra Thompson, had something in common. "He was trained as a lawyer and he didn't practice law, and I am a lawyer and I got into this so I wouldn't have to practice law," she laughed.

Maybe Wright is meant to be part of this historic home. "I think I've been preparing my whole life for this," she said. 

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Lincoln Park, according to a report prepared by building biographer Tim Gregory.

Wright also discovered a January 1916 Los Angeles Times column stating that Mrs. Thompson formed a Lincoln Park study group to discuss Charles Dickens novels; the meetings were held in the home. "She was kind of a socialite and an intellectual figure," Wright said.

Wright was also captivated by the story of a couple who bought the house from the Thompsons in 1922. According to Gregory's report, Karl and Emma Halm owned and operated a coat hanger manufacturing business. Mr. Halm died in 1923 and left an unusual will, reported in the Los Angeles Times—it "forbade his widow from ever working again" if she wanted an inheritance.

Yes, the stories were intriguing. And, most important, Wright learned that the home's

architect, Moore, was influential to California history. Sadly, only a few of his homes exist today—and the Arroyo Vista Inn is one of them. Apparently, it's the most impressive of Moore's existing structures. So the house received historical designation.

Wright purchased the timeworn house from the Burnett family, who owned it since 1945. "It had a wooden fuse box," Pat said, still in disbelief. "I completely replumbed it, rewired it—put in new heat, air conditioning and ventilation ... repainted and refurbished the wood." She also divided the third floor, which was one large dance studio, into five rooms.

Today the home is a graceful blend of California history with modern comforts.

The first floor has oak floors and Peruvian mahogany throughout, a bright living room with views of Pasadena and a dining room where Pat serves her homemade breakfasts—like her