

Artifact Information Sheets  
for the 1906 Fenyes Mansion

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for the Pasadena Museum of History

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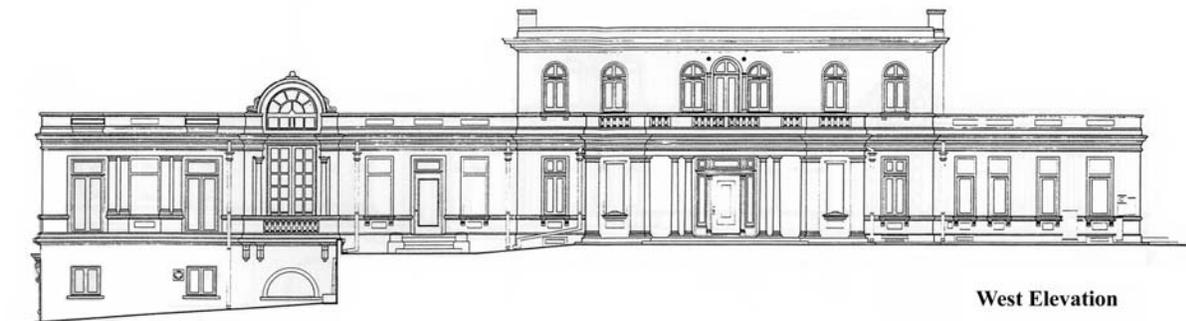
## Beaux Arts Architecture and the Fenyes Mansion

The 1906 Fenyes Mansion at the Pasadena Museum of History is on the National Register of Historic Places and is a Pasadena Cultural Heritage Landmark. One of the few remaining grand homes built on Orange Grove Boulevard's famous "Millionaire's Row," it survives as a marvelous example of turn-of-the-century Beaux Arts architecture.



**Beaux Arts** describes the entire 1885-1920 period of elaborate, eclectic styles advocated by Americans who studied at the Ecole de Beaux-Arts in France, the era's premier school of architecture. It is based on Classical style, embellished with lavish decorative detailing, and is typical of the many styles inspired by study at the Ecole. More than any other style, Beaux Arts expressed the taste and values of America's industrial barons at the turn-of-the-century. In those pre-income tax days, great fortunes were proudly and publicly displayed in ornate and expensive houses.

Another signature of the Ecole des Beaux Arts was formal planning of the spatial relationships between buildings. This produced the "City Beautiful" movement, which was prevalent at the turn-of-the-century and which influenced Pasadena's monumental planning of its city centers. On a domestic scale, this interest in formal design expressed itself in planned suburbs with extensive parks and boulevards lined with landmark houses.



West Elevation

Beaux Arts has many of the same details found in other styles inspired by the Classical Renaissance, but it encourages "exuberance" for surface ornamentation. The basic identifying features include wall surfaces with decorative garlands, floral patterns or shields; symmetrical facades with quoins, pilasters, or columns usually paired with Ionic and Corinthian capitals; walls of masonry (or plaster in California)—usually smooth and light-colored; and a first-story often rusticated with exaggerated stonework joints. Entry porches with roofs supported by classical columns are common as are roof-line balustrades and balustraded window balconies.

The Fenyes Mansion was designed in 1906 by the distinguished Los Angeles architect **Robert D. Farquhar** (1872-1967). Farquhar's work usually shows a strong predilection for the Beaux-Arts manner with careful organization and discernible use of the period styles. The Fenyes Mansion is no exception. The general idea is an Italian villa with rounded windows and balustrades, but there is also more than a hint of the Classical Revival around the front door and a decidedly French feeling to the whole. The facade is in the wedding cake Mediterranean style with latticed windows, ornate balconies and a tile roof as well as a broad stairway climbing to a curved portico.



In 1911, a two-story concrete addition, designed by **Sylvanus Marston** (1883-1946), was built on the north side of the house to provide a study and laboratory on the ground floor and a solarium and studio/gallery on the second.

Tours of the Fenyes Mansion are available on Wednesday-Sunday at 1:30 PM and 3:00 PM.

## 1925 Doll House at the Pasadena Museum of History's Fenyes Mansion



The magnificent doll house in the nursery of the Fenyes Mansion was donated to the Pasadena Museum of History in 1978 by the original owner, Virginia Lee Whitehouse.

In 1925 in Evanston, Illinois, a six-year-old girl, wide-eyed with excitement, rushed to see what Santa Claus had left for her. Her name was Virginia Lee, and she still remembers her joy that morning at discovering the doll house. Her parents said that it was from Santa Claus. Virginia Lee continued to believe that even though she had seen two men delivering the doll house on Christmas Eve. They had carried it through her bedroom to get to the playroom!

Virginia Lee never gave up interest in her doll house even as a teenager. When she graduated from high school in 1938, the doll house was stored in the basement and Virginia went to California for her graduation trip. It was in California that she met her future husband. In spite of the college plans her parents had for her at Duke University, she married Jim Whitehouse. Actually, they eloped in 1942 before he left for paratrooper training at Fort Benning, Georgia.



In 1951, the doll house was shipped from Illinois to her California home. It was stored in the attic until Virginia decided she wanted it for her children. It had been so important in her life, so she placed it in the den as an exhibit for all their friends to see. After Jim died in 1978, Virginia Lee moved to San Luis Obispo. It was then that she decided to donate the doll house to the Pasadena Museum of History. All the contents of the doll house were purchased at Marshall Fields in Chicago, Illinois. Her mother later told her of the love she had for dolls growing up and how exciting it was to shop for the doll house for her daughter.

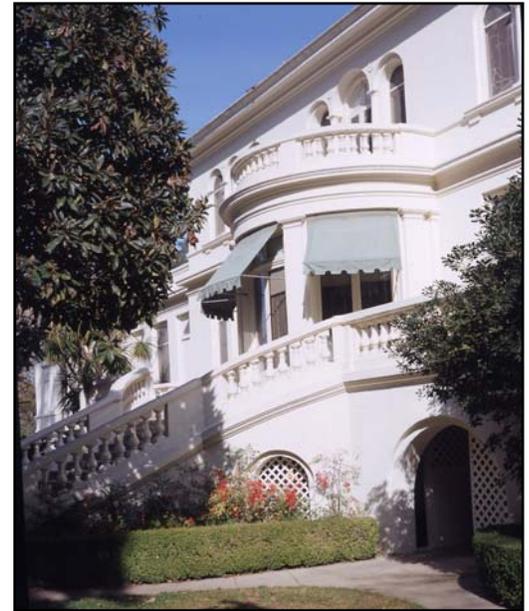


The craftsmanship and attention to detail is remarkable. A shaving table in the bathroom has, in addition to the mirror and basin, a miniature shaving brush. The doors of the cabinets, stove and ice box all open. The cabinets reveal silver place settings, plates, glasses and napkins. A miniature block of ice is properly placed in the ice box. Each room in the doll house has electric outlets and a working light fixture.

An example of the extraordinary detail included in all the miniatures is the kitchen stove with removable burners for cleaning! The radio in the living room is actually a music box that, after a short wind up, will play music. There is a laundry room with an ironing board that folds up, a tiny iron and a laundry basket. Laundry is sent down to the basket from a laundry chute that begins in the second floor bathroom! A family of dolls is placed in various rooms. There is the mother, father, sister, brother, baby, cook and maid. For their motoring pleasure, after rolling up the garage door, you will find a 1925 Ford Model T car parked and ready to go.



Fenyes Mansion Tours: Wednesday-Sunday 1:30 PM and 3:00 PM



In 1924, fifty years after the Indiana I Colony settled along the Arroyo Seco, the Pasadena Historical Society was established. Their original mission to collect, preserve and exhibit materials documenting the founding and growth of the city resulted in the establishment of one of Pasadena's most unique treasures. The only museum and research library devoted solely to the preservation and education of Pasadena's rich history and culture, the Pasadena Museum of History as it is now known, continues to pursue the dream of these early founders.

Housed in the new 12,000 square foot Pasadena History Center building, the Museum's Research Library and Archives holds a collection of over 1,000,000 historic photographs, artifacts, rare books, manuscripts, maps, architectural records, costumes, paintings and other artifacts. This is the largest and most comprehensive collection relating to the history of the city of Pasadena. Collection highlights include the Tournament of Roses photo and memorabilia collection; Pasadena Black History collection; A.C. Vroman photo collection; Pasadena Star-News photo archives and bound newspaper volumes; Pasadena Playhouse collection; J. Alien Hawkins photo collection; Sylvanus Marston architectural collections and the "Grand Hotel era" photo and memorabilia collections.

Listed on the National Register of Historical Places, the Museum's Fenyes Mansion leads one back into the cultured lifestyle that once dominated Pasadena's "Millionaires' Row" at the turn of the century. Designed and built in 1905 by noted architect Robert D. Farquhar for Eva and Dr. Adalbert Fenyes, its elegant Beaux Arts style, interior and furnishings remain in their original state, displaying a grand style much like that of an Italian villa. In 1911, a two-story addition, designed by renowned Pasadena architect Sylvanus Marston, was added. Mrs. Fenyes' magnificent studio and gallery became a gathering place for prominent artists, writers, musicians and scientists with Eva Fenyes, herself a noted California "Plein air" painter, hosting musicals, theatrical productions, and Friday "at homes." Throughout the house hangs the family's impressive collection of paintings by southern California impressionist artists—Carl Oscar Borg, Benjamin Brown, William Keith, Granville Redmond, Charles Walter Stetson and others—all friends and colleagues of Mrs. Fenyes and frequent visitors to her home.

The Museum's Education Division provides special programs for adults and children including docent guided tours of the Fenyes Mansion, exhibits on local history, educational lectures and seminars, and visits to historical sites. In a cooperative venture with the Pasadena Unified School District (PUSD), the Museum provides special tours for local school children through its unique "junior docent" program. High achieving 7th and 8th graders are trained to lead tours of local elementary school children. As a major expansion of the museum's relationship with the local schools, a unique new program is being developed for all third grade students in the PUSD. "Hands on History: A Community Heritage Program for Children" will provide special curriculum and a unique "hands on" museum experience for over 3,000 local children.

In addition to the "Pasadena Concours d'Elegance," the Museum provides such annual events as its December "An Edwardian Christmas" when the 1905 Fenyes Mansion is decorated in an elegant Edwardian theme, and in June "Pasadena's Birthday Celebration."

The Pasadena Museum of History holds a unique place in the cultural life of Pasadena, providing a wonderful opportunity to discover the fascinating and colorful past and present of one of southern California's oldest cities.



## Van Briggle Pottery Collection at the Fenyes Mansion - Pasadena Museum of History



Among the Fenyes Mansion's eclectic collection of Victorian and Edwardian decorative arts is a rare group of Van Briggle pottery. The 18 pieces represent a variety of Van Briggle's early works – bowls, pots and vases in his trademark shades of blues, greens and roses – all signed and dated between 1903 and 1911. Several of the larger vases reflect the Art Nouveau style with its distinctive colors, flowing classical figure designs and a profusion of floral patterns.

Van Briggle, influenced by the Arts and Crafts movement (1880-1920), designed pottery deeply inspired by nature, drawn from the human mind and creative spirit, and often in simple forms with quiet floral motifs and an understated elegance of a soft matte glaze. His pottery is famous for its two colors: Turquoise Ming (a luminous blue) and Persian Rose (a shadowy rouge), a color that pays homage to the Murrhine vases of Persia. Van Briggle pottery has received more Academy Awards than any other American pottery, and his work remains paramount in American ceramics today. Original pieces, which sell for thousands of dollars, are still on exhibit in museums such as the Louvre of Paris, the South Kensington Museum of London, the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Smithsonian Institution of Washington, D.C. The Pasadena Museum of History is fortunate to have rare samples of his work in its Fenyes Mansion.

Born to Eugene and Martha Van Briggle on March 21, 1869 in Felicity, Ohio, Artus Van Briggle was of Dutch-Holland extraction, tracing his ancestry back to those celebrated artists of the Flemish School of Painting of the 16th and 17th centuries: Pieter and Jan Van Brueghel. His parents recognized quite early that their son was an artist.



Despite ill health, Van Briggle went to Cincinnati at the age of 17 to study under Carl Langenbeck of the Aron Pottery and later to work under Mrs. Bellamy Storer of the Rookwood Pottery. He went to Paris in 1893 and studied at the Julian Art Academy under the two great masters of drawing and painting, Jean Paul Laurens and Benjamin Constant. He also studied at the Beaux Arts, where he met Annie Lawrence Gregory in 1894. They became engaged in 1895.

While in Paris, he constantly visited the Sevres Factory Museum as well as the Louvre where he saw the 14th Century Ming Dynasty Chinese pottery that influenced his whole career as a potter. Determined to discover the lost art of this remarkable glaze, he studied and experimented over a period of years until, to the astonishment of artists and art critics all over the world, he reproduced the "matte" finish or "dead" glaze of Imperial China that had been lost for over 400 years! When he exhibited his work at the Paris Exposition in 1900, and later at the Paris Salon of 1903 and 1904, he received unqualified praise.

He returned to Cincinnati in 1896 and perfected his discovery of the lost Chinese glazes at the Rookwood Pottery and his own studio. He moved to Colorado Springs, Colorado, in 1899. By the summer of 1901, the kiln built for him was ready for firing. On August 19, 1901, guests at the reception wrote their names in the wet clay of unfinished vases, and these were fired as souvenirs. In 1902, after their marriage, Artus and Anne set up the Van Briggle Pottery. (The double-A logo above is their pottery hallmark and the trademark of their company.) By Christmas of that year, the first commercial pottery was fired. Artus Van Briggle died from Tuberculosis on July 4, 1905 and is buried at the Evergreen Cemetery in Colorado Spring, Colorado.

Leonora Curtin, the only daughter of Dr. and Mrs. Fenyes, lived in Colorado Springs, Colorado, from 1903-1911, during the critical development phase of Artus and Anne Van Briggle's new company. The Fenyes Mansion pieces are signed and dated from that period.

Fenyes Mansion Tours:  
Wednesday-Sunday,  
1:30 PM and 3:00 PM



## 1908 Victor Victrola at the Fenyes Mansion - Pasadena Museum of History

The magnificent Studio and Gallery in the 1906 Fenyes Mansion was a gathering place for prominent artists, writers, musicians and scientists from the height of the Edwardian period until the death of Mrs. Fenyes in 1930. It was the setting for receptions, musical and theatrical presentations, social teas and the famous Friday afternoon “at homes,” a West Coast version of the salon. An avid music lover, it is not surprising that Mrs. Fenyes would have a “modern” Victrola in the Studio, where its music could entertain her many guests.



The Victor Talking Machine Company was founded by Eldridge Johnson in 1901 and quickly became a popular American manufacturer of phonographs. In 1906, Victor invented the internal horn phonograph known as the Victrola. The Victor Victrola in the Mansion is an upright floor model built in 1908. This “super-deluxe” model featured ornate carving and a unique V-shaped mahogany veneer on the front doors, which hid the awkward and unsightly gramophone inside, and elevated the Victrola into a fine piece of furniture for the parlor. Its new domed lid design allowed the turntable to sit nearly flush with the top of the cabinet. The horn folded down into the cabinet below the turntable behind two L-shaped doors that opened and closed to help control the volume. Too expensive for the general buying public, this model sold for \$300 and was discontinued in 1909 to make way for less expensive models.

Based on the Berliner flat disc design, the turntable was spun by rotating a round shank handle on the right side of the cabinet, which activated a spring-powered motor. The needle sent vibrations from the record into a thin mica diaphragm in the sound box above the needle. These vibrations were converted into sound waves that moved up the tone arm and down into the internal horn. The horn then sent the sound out into the room. A round speed-control dial was used to adjust the turntable speed and an external “bullet brake” was used to stop the turntable.

What types of music might the Fenyes’ and their guests listened to on the Victrola? American popular music available a century ago on records included Broadway show tunes, Ragtime, Sousa Band marches, and vocal numbers that ranged from sentimental ballads to comic songs. Music that was popular for social dancing – the waltz, polka and two-step – and standards from earlier generations such as Stephen Foster songs and Civil War numbers were also popular as well as male quartet arrangements. The upper and middle classes patronized only “serious” music, usually works by European composers. We know that Mrs. Fenyes was a remarkable woman, clearly ahead of her time, so we can safely assume that she entertained her guests with an eclectic mix of popular and classical music.



- ❖ For a fascinating history of the race to develop the mechanical reproduction of sound by inventors such as Emil Berliner, Thomas Edison, and Alexander Graham Bell, see [www.hebrewhistory.org/factpapers/berliner27-I.html](http://www.hebrewhistory.org/factpapers/berliner27-I.html).
- ❖ To learn more about the history of recorded sound and to hear some vintage recordings, see the Edison-Menlo Park web site: [www.edisonnj.org/menlopark/birthplace/](http://www.edisonnj.org/menlopark/birthplace/).
- ❖ Information about the Victrola can be found at The Victor Victrola web site: [www.victor-victrola.com](http://www.victor-victrola.com).

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# *Fenyés Mansion Wedding Facilities*



Front View of Fenyés Mansion



Rear View of Fenyés Mansion



Back Stairs and Garden



Back Stairs Ceremony



Front Porch



Front Lawn Ceremony



Back Lawn Reception



Tented Reception Area



Back Lawn Reception



Foyer Inside the Mansion