



West façade of the Lanterman house in La Cañada, with family dog. The main entrance is on the right, past the chimney. The ballroom is upstairs, under the middle gable, overlooking the central patio with its statuary fountain. Undated.
Courtesy of the Lanterman House Foundation.

THE HISTORIAN'S EYE

Although the Lanterman House in La Cañada is historically significant as the home of Frank Lanterman, a fourteen-term powerhouse in the State Assembly (1951–1979), it also provides insights into building construction and style, the tastes of the 1910s–1940s, period appliances, medical practice, restoration processes, and the lives of the individuals who lived there. Craftsman or American Arts & Crafts bungalows, even uber-bungalows like the Gamble House (Greene & Greene, 1908) in Pasadena, were usually wood-frame structures with rustic wood surfaces to meld with nature. The Lanterman house, designed by architect Arthur Haley for Dr. Roy Lanterman and constructed 1912–1915, is of reinforced concrete. Not only because of the fire danger from the native chaparral surrounding his rural La Cañada property, but also because his relief role after the 1906 San Francisco earthquake and fire had made him particularly fire-conscious, Dr. Lanterman chose fireproof construction for his new home. Reinforced concrete structures had been pioneered earlier by architects Charles F. Whittlesey, Irving Gill, and John Parkinson, along with contractors Thomas Fellows and Carl Leonardt, but the Lanterman house is a fine example of a progressive wave of experimental construction technology underway. At the same time, the indoor-outdoor layout, spreading rooflines, and rustic fireplace are good illustrations of the Craftsman aesthetic. The Lanterman family, which boasted several medical and engineering professionals, seems to have had a special interest in technology. Their kitchen included the latest appliances and innovative work-and-storage spaces. Roy and Emily Lanterman and two sons, Lloyd and Frank, lived in the house, so it is fitting that the living and billiard rooms, with their dark tones, were clearly masculine spaces. The ballroom (see cover), however, was purely feminine. Emily presided over theatrical and musical soirées and women's club meetings there. Dr. Lanterman, an obstetrician who had previously served as Los Angeles County coroner, saw patients in a downstairs office, and his paraphernalia is on display. After Roy and Emily died in the 1940s,

the two bachelor sons didn't change much. They also neglected housework and smoked heavily. Assemblyman Frank Lanterman, formerly a professional organist, returned by train from Sacramento every weekend and played a Wurlitzer in an added-on room (since removed). His brother, Lloyd, stayed home and tinkered with cars. After both of "the boys" passed away in the 1980s, the city of La Cañada-Flintridge inherited the property. During the restoration, a cleaning of the living-room walls revealed a hand-painted frieze and a stenciled ceiling underneath decades of smoke and grime. Behind the door of one light and airy bedroom, a strip of wallpaper has been left uncleaned to show visitors the before-and-after. Another room of the Lanterman House Museum is devoted to the restoration decisions and processes. Architect Haley would be proud to know that after eight decades of family life, a restoration process, and two decades of museum use the Lanterman house is as good as new.