



Union-Tribune / BARRY FITZSIMMONS

Country life: Holly Manion (left), Heather Gallagher and their father Jack Manion and friends stroll outside the historic Christiarcy House that Lilian Rice designed in 1927 for indoor/outdoor living. Now for sale, the house is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

BEAUTIFUL DREAMER

By ANN JARMUSCH
Architecture Critic

Suspended in time and mood somewhere between Hollywood and Mexico, the lavishly romantic village of Rancho Santa Fe slumbers amid languid eucalyptus trees and extravagant flowers.

The charming Old-California rancho-style village slathers on irresistible beauty, myth, intrigue and functional wisdom as thick as the adobe walls, exposed wooden beams and rustic, red roof tiles of its historic buildings.

An architect's legacy lives on in Rancho Santa Fe designs



the tree-shaded 1923 hilltop Inn (originally called La Morada, a tour stop notable for the stately communal living room) down the main street, Paseo Delicias.

Rancho Santa Fe's ongoing appeal stems partly from Rice's understanding of "human scale and human touch," said Barbara Thornburgh Carlton, an architect who created the tour in 1989.

"It has to do with the dimensions of the human body and the dimensions of human community. Also, the tactile nature of Rice's designs

its historic buildings.

■ San Diego by Design Week
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Three-quarters of a century ago, Lilian Rice, one of the first women to become an architect in San Diego and California, created this cozy village, which now seems to have grown naturally out of once-barren land.

As planned communities go, Rancho Santa Fe is hard to beat. Rice (1889-1938) lovingly designed its Old World charms — hidden courtyards with tiled nooks and passageways, forged-iron latches and grilles, expressively shaped doorways and roof lines.

Rice intended for people to enjoy the village on foot at a leisurely pace, so they would notice details and textures, as well as beautiful vistas she framed with arcades, doorways and garden gates.

Next Sunday, the San Diego organization Women in Architecture will sponsor a self-guided walking tour of historic Rancho Santa Fe. Called "In Harmony with the Land: The Rancho Santa Fe Civic Center and Architecture of Lilian Rice," the tour includes three private historic houses and 14 other easily walkable sites, a few of which will be open to the public.

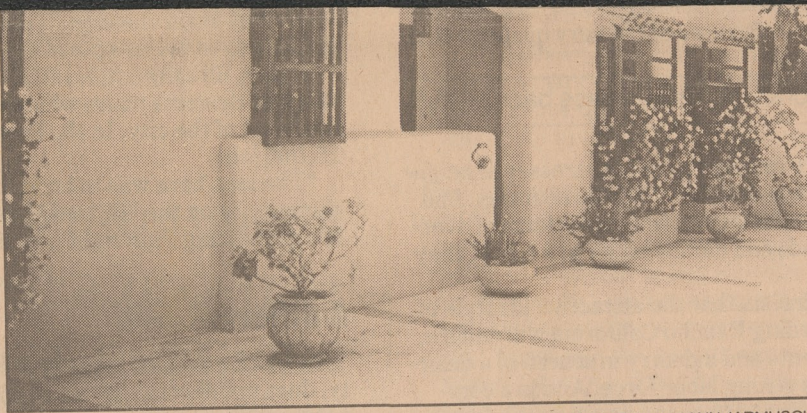
Mastery of space

Organized for San Diego By Design Week (May 20-28), the tour was first held in 1989 and features different private homes this time, all built in the 1920s. They include a low-slung, elongated cottage wedded to a woodsy site near The Inn and two grand houses on hilltops with gorgeous views of the surrounding countryside.

All reveal Rice's mastery of flowing interior spaces, window placement and protected patios — elements that embrace and celebrate indoor/outdoor living. Nestled into their sites, the houses are rich in remarkable craftsmanship and intriguing details, from tile floors and fireplaces to wall niches and quatrefoil patterns for doors and windows.

Though striving for village character, Rice rarely neglected drop-dead drama. Take, for example, living room ceilings — a Rice hallmark of grandeur that is simultaneously domestic.

In the 1925 Terwilliger House, now owned by Leith and Tom Clotfelter and part of the tour, is a



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Sunstruck: Pueblos influenced Rice when she designed this rowhouse, recently approved for the National Register of Historic Places by the State Historic Resources Commission.

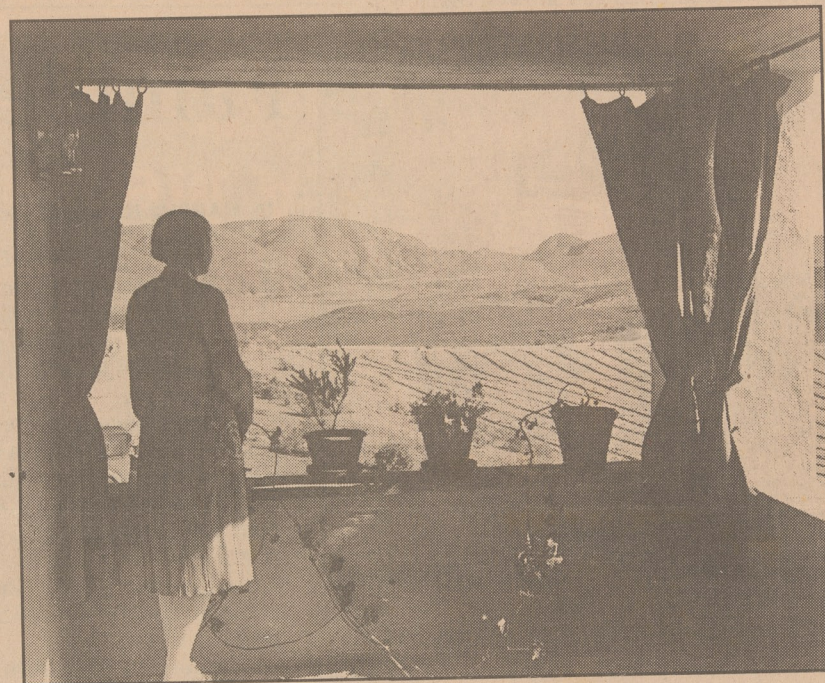


Photo / SAN DIEGO HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Vision accomplished: A circa 1926 photograph shows architect-planner Lilian Rice looking out over parched land that was to become Rancho Santa Fe.

vaulted plaster ceiling. Another tour stop, the 1927 Christy House, which owners Pat and Jack Manion have listed for sale, has a ceiling of heavy wood trusses and beams with a similar, but miniature, ceiling used in a corner sunroom off a bedroom.

All three houses on the tour are listed on local or national historic registers, as are other Rice buildings throughout Rancho Santa Fe.

The Colley-Hilton House, the most altered of the three, is a cottage built around 1925. Martha Hilton, who has lived in the house for

35 years, said a former owner may have squared off arched doorways Rice often used to connect main rooms, but the warm essence of the basic design and its relationship to a lovely rear garden and patio remain intact.

Except for the hilltop Terwilliger and Christy houses, most tour sites can be found in or near the four-block-long civic center Rice laid out as a narrow grid that ends in curves.

The street pattern — which invites strolling and lingering sociability — cascades gracefully from

conveys the impact of the human hand," Carlton continued.

Lifetime achievement

Rice, a UC Berkeley architecture graduate who battled sex discrimination to get her state architecture license, must have impressed Richard Requa, a leading San Diego architect known for adapting Spanish and Mediterranean-style architecture to Southern California. Requa helped the National City native ob-

ARCHITECTURE TOUR

"In Harmony with the Land: The Rancho Santa Fe Civic Center and Architecture of Lilian Rice" self-guided walking tour.

May 23, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., Rancho Santa Fe. Docents and an illustrated booklet with map will guide visitors. Tour registration table to be at corner of Avenida de Acacias and La Flecha. Admission is \$15 day of tour, \$10 in advance if postmarked by Tuesday. Make checks payable to Women in Architecture and mail to M. Wilkinson, 3209 Grim Ave. #4, San Diego, CA 92104. Proceeds benefit Women in Architecture's scholarship program. For more information, call 584-1675.

tain her license and hired her to work at his firm, Requa and Jackson.

In 1922, the Santa Fe Land Improvement Co., an arm of the Santa Fe Railroad, hired the firm to create a master plan for Rancho Santa Fe. Surprisingly, Requa and Jackson turned the job over to Rice, who had worked at the firm one year.

The goal was to transform a corporate nightmare — the discovery that thousands of eucalyptus trees planted for wood railroad ties would not hold a spike — into a lucrative real estate venture. Rice spent most of the rest of her life nurturing Rancho Santa Fe through a growth spurt.

She proved to be an architect attuned to regional character and environment, and adept at translating wood and adobe rancho-style architecture and Native American pueblos into an exotic yet inviting California hybrid.

Designed as much for congeniality

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