

HISTORIC ARCHITECT LILIAN JENETTE RICE



San Diego's regional architecture has been graced by the time, talent and energies of some very unique architects. From Spanish Colonial to Mid Century Modern, San Diego's architectural landscape is diverse. One of those historic architects to make an indelible mark on the region is Lilian Jenette Rice.

Born in National City in 1888, Ms. Rice was raised in a home environment that was heavily inspired by interior design and building. These early influences may have incited her to go to the University of California at Berkeley, where in 1910, she graduated with a degree from the School of Architecture.

Upon returning to San Diego she was hired to work part time in the office of Hazel Wood Waterman, and taught mechanical drawing at San Diego High School and San Diego State Teacher's College. In 1922 she was hired by the architects Richard Requa and Herbert Jackson. They were commissioned to develop the planned community of Rancho Santa Fe. While there is some controversy about Rice's involvement in the development, documentation in the San Diego Historical Society Research Library supports that she was the Project Architect for the community, under the supervision of Requa and Jackson.

Rice would make a name for herself after 1928 when she ended her business relationship with Requa and began to take on more of her own individual projects. It is at this time that she established her own architectural office in Rancho Santa Fe. By doing so, she received numerous commissions for more than 30 residences in La Jolla, Rancho Santa Fe, Escondido, and Los Angeles. Many of these homes feature Mexican, Spanish and Mediterranean styles that fit well with the California environment.

However, Rice did not focus entirely on Mexican or Spanish design, nor did she only design residential properties. In 1931, Rice was commissioned to design the new ZLAC Rowing Clubhouse in Pacific Beach. Rice's selection as architect for the new clubhouse was not by accident. She was an active member of Crew IV and President of the Club from 1915 – 1916. To design the clubhouse, she combined Arts and Crafts with the 'Monterey board and batten' style that was requested by the members of the Club. Rice's mix of architectural styles in the ZLAC Rowing Club would earn her an award from the American Institute of Architects in 1933.

Source: San Diego Historical Society

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Photo Credits: Lilian Jenette Rice, c. 1909. #12440 San Diego Historical Society; Sketch of Residences of D.M. Richards, Lot 7, Block 27 Rancho Santa Fe. #2611-50 San Diego Historical Society.

About: The Rancho Santa Fe Historical Society is a 501c (3) non-profit educational and cultural institution with extensive archives and an ever-growing historical collection. The Historical Society connects the past to the future, so that all generations understand and appreciate the richness of Rancho Santa Fe's history. The Rancho Santa Fe Historical Society is located at the corner of Via de Santa Fe & 6036 La Flecha Avenue, in La Flecha House, the first electrical home designed by Lilian Rice.

Mission Statement: To collect, preserve, research and interpret the documents, photographs and artifacts that connect us and Rancho Santa Fe to its past. To maintain and preserve Rancho Santa Fe's first historic residence, The La Flecha House.



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