

Rice

Tour ventures behind historic home facades

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ty as convenience, Rancho Santa Fe's well-planned civic center sets a gracious stage for commerce and is an early example of mixed-use development. For a time, Rice lived in an apartment above her office in Christiancy Apartments, which received an Honor Award in 1933 from the American Institute of Architects.

Attracted by the climate and Old West mystique, dozens of wealthy clients commissioned Rice to design country retreats and second houses for them at this dreamy rural outpost. Now a haven for millionaires and movie stars, investment bankers and real estate brokers, "the Ranch" has aged exceedingly well.

Attention to detail

Rice's houses are so well-suited to the local climate, sun and terrain that they remain models of livability and environmental sensitivity some 75 years later.

"People who buy Lilian Rice houses have a real love for them," said Pat Cologne, a member of the State Historical Resources Commission and trustee of Rancho Santa Fe Historical Society. "I don't think most would willingly move from a Rice house to another constructed house."

Rice oversaw a level of design and construction quality difficult to duplicate today.

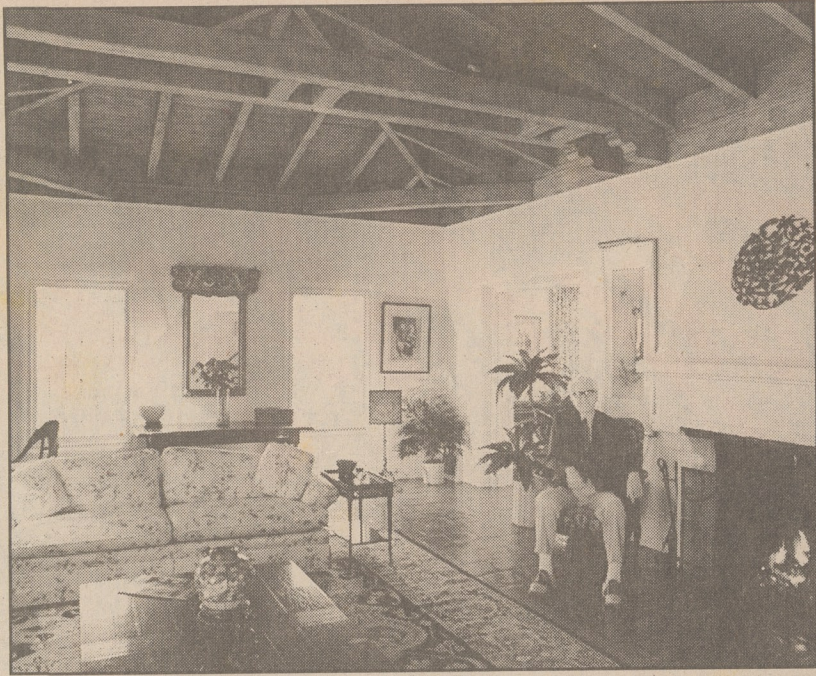
"She attended to all the details," said Lucinda Eddy, San Diego Historical Society assistant director of museums and curator who plans to expand her master's thesis on Rice into a book.

"She would spec out the wrought-iron or wood grilles, the door latches, the lanterns . . . She'd save magazine articles for reference on details she thought were appropriate. Then she'd do the drawings herself."

The attention didn't stop at Rice's drafting board.

"Old-timers tell me she practically lived here while this house was being built," said Jack Manion of the Christiancy House.

The Manions have lived in the house nearly 40 years and raised four children there. They once entertained a horse in the living room and saw owls roost in its sturdy beams, incidents Rice probably would have relished.



Union-Tribune / BARRY FITZSIMMONS

Rancho days: Jack Manion recalls entertaining a horse in his living room and seeing owls roost in the exposed ceiling beams. Rustic wood ceilings are an intricate hallmark of Rice houses.

staff photos from the 1920s and '30s in the San Diego Historical Society collection. Rice herself is shown with spirit, smiling behind the wheel of a truck or visiting clients at their new homes.

"It's tremendously inspirational for us as professionals to see there

were women pioneers in this part of the country, which was a backwater at the time," said Carlton.

"But my goal for the public is not to focus on the fact that Rice is a woman architect, but simply that this is fine architecture and urban planning worthy of attention."

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The common rooms of their house wrap around an intimate tiled patio with an outdoor fireplace and fountain that can be heard bubbling from inside. Each of these main rooms has a door — all different designs painted a bright blue Pat Manion said is Rice's original color — that opens on onto the patio.

Generous windows offer views of the sloping property in every direction, a feature Pat Manion said was helpful when her children were growing up. "I could watch everywhere," she said.

In researching Rice, Eddy discovered other owners who also tend to stay in Rice houses a long and comfortable time. Typically, she said, their main complaint revolves around cramped kitchen design.

"She was an architect. She wasn't a cook," said Jack Manion in Rice's defense. The Manions enlarged their kitchen by knocking down the wall that separated it from the original butler's pantry and added a narrow bay window.

The Clotfelters have lived in their U-shaped house for more than 20 years. Its outdoor dining room can be enclosed to form an entrance hall. Rice designed the house to look compact as you approach, but its sloped site enabled her to build three stories onto the back of the house.

The house's many windows looking out over lakes, billowing chaparral and a huge orange grove make Leith Clotfelter feel she's always taking advantage of the area's natural gifts.

Inspirational pioneer

Naturally, Women in Architecture wants to recognize Rice's achievements as an architect and planner. Proceeds from the walking tour benefit the group's scholarship fund, which recently awarded its tenth annual grant to Lori Hays, a UCSD School of Architecture student.

Early in her career, Rice worked for Hazel Wood Waterman, San Diego's first woman architect who designed the Wednesday Club building near Balboa Park and the Ackerman residence in Bankers Hill.

After Rice left Requa and Jackson to establish her own firm, Eddy said, she made a point of giving women opportunities to work at drafting and designing. At least one woman Eddy knows of became an architect.

Women are prominent in Rice's