# **THE EPISCOPAL HOME**

# 1923 – 1998

Prepared by The Rev. Canon George Cummings in celebration of the 75" Anniversary of The Episcopal Home Communities

**FORWARD**

As part of its observance of the Seventy Fifth Anniversary of The Episcopal Home, a "Concert on the Green" was held on the grounds of The Kensington on Sunday, August 23, 1998. Guests included all of the residents and their families, donors and supporters of The Home, and staff department heads. Members of the Halcyon Club, the Board of Directors and the Board of Managers, together with their spouses, served the dinner. Two hundred and forty persons were expected. Over three hundred attended.

During the dinner The Rev. Canon George W. Cummings, Executive Director of The Episcopal Home, gave a talk about the history of The Home. His remarks were well received. In response to the requests of some of those attending Mr. Cummings enlarged upon his words for this pamphlet. Although not a complete history of The Home, the caring concern of all who have made The Home possible and contributed to its reputation for a loving ministry to the elderly shines through the people mentioned.

*G. W. Cummings*

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History is more than a review of what happened in the past. The real question we seek to answer is how the past planned for its future. What were the circumstances of the past that led individuals to the decisions that would make something happen? How did they plan for the future within the context of their world and the opportunities it presented?

In the case of the Episcopal Home, the vision of a lively lady known as Deaconess Miller changed the future for all who have come to live here. In the years following the First World War, Deaconess Miller was involved in serving the Diocese of Los Angeles wherever she saw need. For many years she was involved in bringing help and support to the Palomar Indians on their reservation north of San Diego. In the course of her work for the Church, she became aware of the desperate situation of many widows of the clergy of the Diocese.

At that time the Church made no provision to care for the clergy and their wives in their retirement. It was not until about 1918 that the General Convention of the Church authorized the establishment of the Church Pension Fund. This decision led to providing some security for the future retirement of those actively serving in the ministry of the Episcopal Church. lt did little for those already in retirement.

Deaconess Miller knew of a number of clergy widows who were living in near destitute conditions. The plight of the widows led her to discuss the matter with Bishop Horsefall Johnson, asking his endorsement of the idea of building a retirement facility to serve the diocese and especially the clergy widows. Bishop Johnson became enthusiastic about her proposal and gave not only his endorsement but his active support in raising funds for the project as well. Deaconess Miller visited throughout the Diocese speaking on behalf of her vision. She took with her a coin holder in which dimes could be inserted in a slot to be delivered when the card was filled. Needless to say, she was very successful. One can imagine trying to say no to such a determined lady.

In the course of the fund raising, a wealthy family in Santa Monica contributed property in that city for the construction of a retirement facility. Santa Monica at that time seemed to be rather far removed from the center of Los Angeles, where the diocesan headquarters were located, so the property was sold.

The proceeds of sale were used to purchase land at the present location of The Kensington on Marengo A venue in Alhambra. Although it was on the edge of the metropolitan area of Los Angeles, Alhambra was relatively undeveloped. There was a streetcar line running down Marengo. The land was planted in orange groves.

Deaconess Miller's vision was soon a reality. In 1923 the first building was opened with twenty-three people in residence. That building still stands. It is comprised of the two-story section of Johnson Hall, named in honor of Bishop Johnson.

Bishop Johnson served as chairman of the Board of Directors. He took an active part in the administration of the retirement facility. He encouraged many wealthy parishioners to become involved in the operation of The Home. In the era between the First and Second World Wars women did not seek employment as they do now. The husband was the bread winner and the wife took care of the home and the children. Wealthy matrons often occupied themselves in charity organizations, particularly those with a religious affiliation.

In the early years two Boards held oversight of The Home as they do today. The trustees of the Board of Directors, chaired by the bishop, were men whose wives actively supported the operation of The Home. The latter became the Board of Managers. The Board of Directors met four times a year and looked to the finances of The Home authorizing the Board of Managers to spend up to $5,000 for necessary operating funds. The Board of Managers met monthly and literally ran the facility.

The Board of Managers hired the staff and interviewed prospective residents. They actively worked at The Home. Some of the dowagers of Los Angeles society, like Mrs. Holt and Mrs. Farwell, would come to the facility in their chauffeur driven cars. They would change their clothes to clean the floors and wash the windows. They would canvas the local markets for day-old bread and vegetables and would often spend an afternoon canning food for future use.

In 1926, Mr. Gordon Perkins, who was early known as "Mr. Anonymous", provided funds for the building of the chapel. The chapel was named St. Simons and St. Jude's in memory of Bishop Kip, who was the first Bishop of California. The name was chosen because he died on the Feast Day of St. Simon and St. Jude. The chapel is as it was originally built except for the addition that extended the building some twenty feet towards the street. The extension was necessary to accommodate the larger number of residents made possible by the enlarging of Johnson Hall with the two wings on either side of the living room. At the time of that enlargement office spaces and a new kitchen were built on the west end of the building.

Towards the end of the 1930's, increased interest in The Home prompted the two boards to plan to build another building to house residents. About that time there was a women's club in La Crescenta called the Halcyon Club. Its major endeavor was the operation of a home for elderly ladies in need of accommodations. The facility was also located in La Crescenta. "Early in 1940 the Club was notified that the property was being re-zoned, and its home would have to be closed" which led to the sale of the property'. Many of the club members were Episcopalians and were aware of The Home's intention to build more living accommodations. The Halcyon club provided the funds to build one of the wings of what is now Halcyon/Stevens Hall. The adjunct name was chosen to honor Bishop Stevens, who had succeeded Bishop Johnson to lead the Diocese of Los Angeles. The Halcyon Club has continued in existence through the bequest of one its members by the name of Mrs. Wills. Her will provided that the Halcyon Club should receive part of the income from her considerable estate. The members of the club are all persons who have a vital interest in The Home. Over the years, they have supported many projects of specific benefit to our residents. The electric doors, the patio furniture, the tents used for special events and the handicapped van are just a few of the added amenities they have recently helped to provide to The Home.

During the episcopacies of Bishops Johnson, Stevens, and Bloy, who was their successor, The Episcopal Home, along with other institutions founded as part of the outreach of the Episcopal community, constituted the program of the Diocese. These institutions included the Hospital of the Good Samaritan, The Church Home for Children (now Hillsides), the Neighborhood Youth Association and the Seamen's Church Institute. Unlike our situation today, these institutions received budgetary support from the Diocese. Each year the institutions would make a verbal report to the Convention describing their work to encourage the continued support of their ministries, not only through the budget, but also through the interest of individual Episcopalians.

One such benefactor was a woman who would come to The Home once a month. She was something of a mystery woman because she would never mention her name. She visited with some of the residents. When it came time for her chauffeur to drive her home she would stop at the desk to leave $100 to buy gifts for the residents who would be celebrating their birthdays in the following month. In those days, $100 was a lot of money and the birthday residents were able to use the gift in many ways, especially to buy clothing.

The next resident halls to be built were the Pinney units. They were the outcome of a joke and the interest of the birthday lady. In the 1950's The Home received a bequest of about $350,000 from the mystery dowager. Her name as Mrs. McMannus. She left the money for the construction of a new hall to be named in memory of her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Pinney. Mrs. McMannus' husband was the comic strip writer of the series called "Maggie and Jiggs", which had a wide circulation in newspapers throughout the country. During the planning and construction stages of the first Pinney unit the money was invested in the stock market through the Diocesan Investment Trust. The market was increasing at a rapid rate and when the Hall was completed there was more money left than at the beginning which led to the building of Pinney II and Pinney III.

The Home was expanding by leaps and bounds. The health needs of the residents were taxing the small "hospital" built on the grounds in 1927 in memory of Isaac Millbank. This building was remodeled and enlarged in 1953. It became the Bishop Gooden Infirmary.

Bishop Gooden, as the Suffragan Bishop of the Diocese, took a special interest in The Home. He was regular in his attendance at the meetings of both the Board of Directors and the Board of Managers. His support and interest continued throughout his episcopacy and into his retirement years as well. In the mid 1970's he attended a meeting at which the proposal to install fire sprinklers was under discussion.

There were no regulations at that time requiring retirement facilities to have fire sprinklers and some Bishop Gooden needed only to remark that if the installation would improve the safety of residents it should be done. That ended the matter. The sprinklers were installed.

Following the Second World War, a young physician from Arizona came to live and set up practice in the Pasadena area. He was the son-in-law of Bishop Mitchell of Arizona. His name was Dr. Hoagland, after whom the clinic in the Health Center is named. Dr. Haogland offered his services free of charge to the residents of The Home. He also enlisted the services of other physicians when specialists were needed for their care. His dedication made The Home known to many of the personnel at the Huntington Hospital and led to the involvement of both the Hospital Administrator, Mr. Gordon Gilbert, and the Hospital Controller, Mr. Ranney Adams. The latter still serves as a member of both the Board of Managers and the Board of Directors. Mr. Gilbert's years of service have been recognized by the Gilbert Administration Center.

It was also about the time of Dr. Hoagland's association that the operation of the Home took a different tack. Fr. Reasoner accepted the call to become the first Chaplain of The Home. His new position involved him in overseeing the day-to-day operation of the community under the oversight guidance of the Board of Managers. He continued in that capacity until the Pinney Units were completed about 1955.

In 1955 the two boards recognized the need for an administrator with experience in facilities such as The Home had grown to be. Mr. John Willingham was chosen to take the position. He served for seventeen years in that capacity until his retirement. During his administration the other residential halls, Miller, Farwell/Babcock, and Plumb/Davis were completed.

It was also during his time that the nursing capacity of The Home was increased with the construction of Holt Hall and Kiplinger Hall. The names were chosen in recognition of Deaconess Miller and members of the Board of Managers who had given outstanding service to The Home. Mr. Willingham also oversaw the planning and construction of the Health Center which was completed at the time of his retirement in 1972.

Funds for construction of these facilities were made available by the effect of California legislation passed in the l 950's which provided Old Age Security for elderly persons with a minimum income. Up until that time The Home relied upon various sources of revenue. Individual residents turned over all of their assets and income upon admission to The Home with an initial Accommodation Fee of $1,000. The fee was often provided by the church where the resident was a member. As has already been mentioned, the Episcopal Diocese provided some support through its program and budget adopted by Convention. A major source of revenue was the donations and bequests made by individual members of the diocese for support of The Home.

The revenue received was used not only to provide for the costs involved in caring for the residents of The Home. An appreciable portion of the funds was also set aside as a reserve to cover the future costs involved in caring for the residents for the remainder of their lives. The reserve amounted to a sizable investment and with the inauguration of the Old Age Security program a large portion of the reserve funds were no longer needed for that purpose and could be used to enlarge the facility. The Board of Directors wrestled with the question of whether The Home should have the residents apply for the benefits to which many became entitled as residents of California. There was considerable difference of opinion about what kind of control of The Home might result through governmental interference. The advantage offered to reach out to more elderly people prevailed and it was decided to have the residents apply for the OAS benefits. Two or three directors were so opposed to the idea that they resigned in protest.

The Federal Government was empowered to develop the national health program for the elderly entitled Medicare and Medicaid in 1965. These programs added to the California OAS program which freed additional development funds from The Home's reserve account. A few years later the OAS program was superseded by the Federal Supplementary Security Income program. All of these programs, including Social Security itself, were soon granted annual increases to account for the change in. cost of living. These programs were very beneficial to the residents by giving them a sense of independence in contributing to their own welfare. Participation in them greatly increased the supervision and reporting requirements of The Home's administration leading to the need to increase staff and space.

In 1972 the Rev. George W. Cummings, the Rector of the Church of Our Saviour in San Gabriel, who had come to know The Home through his service on the Board of Managers since the mid 1960's, accepted the Board of Director's invitation to take the position vacated by Mr. Willingham' s retirement.

The Gilbert Administration Center was completed in 1974. It was designed in such a way as to preserve the two redwood trees that had graced the front lawn entrance to the facility off of Marengo Ave. Two years later a dramatic change in the admission arrangements was adopted by the Board of Directors.

New residents were no longer required to turn over all of their assets to The Home. Applicants were in a better financial situation than previously. In some instances, their assets were large enough to make the cost of entrance a severe hardship. Many had family heirlooms that should properly remain with their heirs.

Under the revised arrangement, admission agreements were based on the payment of an initial accommodations fee and a monthly care fee. For those applicants without funds or family to assist them, these fees were adjusted to meet their financial resources.

The Home continued to benefit from interested parties particularly in the way of bequests. The attorney for The Home was Mr. Ken Carey. He had been associated with The Home for about forty years. A native of Los Angeles born at the turn of the century, Mr. Carey was the attorney for many of the wealthy families of Los Angeles society. In helping his clients with their estate planning he would often be asked to recommend a charitable institution to which they might leave a bequest. Mr. Carey would recommend the Episcopal Home. Hardly a year would pass without The Home receiving one or two substantial bequests through Mr. Carey' efforts. It should be noted that one of the major benefactors of The Home was Mrs. Holt, who was the leading light of the Board of Managers for many years. She made many gifts to The Home during her lifetime and solicited many more from friends. Her husband was the department store executive. Mr. Holt died before Mrs. Holt and the bulk of his estate was left to Mrs. Holt, who died some six months later. Her entire estate, now including Mr. Holt's, was to be given to The Home after the death of designated friends and relatives amongst whom the income from her estate was distributed during their lifetime. The last beneficiary died in the early 90's. The Home received seven million dollars from Mrs. Holt's estate.

The Home continued to prosper financially and became well known for the care it provided regardless of the financial situation of applicants. In this atmosphere of financial support and wise husbandry of The Home's finances on the part of the Board of Managers and the Board of Directors, The Home accrued a considerable endowment. In the mid 1970's the Board of Directors became aware of its responsibility to use the funds for the purposes for which it was given and for which the donors enjoyed a tax advantage. The Board moved to develop a new facility which began operation in 1983. It is The Canterbury, our sister facility in Rancho Palos Verdes.

At the same time, it became apparent that the Alhambra facility, with its small rooms and shared bathrooms, needed to be remodeled to meet the expectations of new residents. Fortunately, the Alhambra facility was built when air conditioning was not as prevalent as it is today. To mitigate the effect of the summer temperatures, the design of the buildings included four-foot overhangs to provide as much shade as possible. With a little ingenuity the rooms were expanded to the outside of the overhang adding four feet to the inside. The closet arrangement and the space occupied by the shared bathrooms were reworked to provide each unit with a private bath. The remodeling process took six or seven years to complete, as the wing of each hall had to be evacuated to allow the work to be done. At the same time, air conditioning was added to all of the residential units.

The earthquake in 1987 did little damage to the Alhambra facility other than a few cracks in the walls and jangled nerves. The single-story wood frame construction of the independent living units is one of the safest types to withstand earthquakes. The two-story Health Center was built to earthquake standards which means that it is really three separate buildings of reinforced concrete. The rest of Alhambra did not fare as well.

Two Alhambra fire stations suffered so much damage that they had to be torn down. The City faced a problem of relocating the personnel and equipment for what was to be eighteen months. The Home's property on Valley Blvd. was not fully developed at the time. When the City asked The Home if it would lease the property until new stations could be built, they were surprised to get a no answer and were even more surprised when they were told why. The Home recognized that all its residents are citizens of Alhambra who greatly benefit from the services of the Fire Department. The Home paid no taxes for the land. The City was told that they couldn't lease it but could use it free of charge until new buildings were constructed for the stations.

The eighteen-month estimate was off by five and half years. It wasn't until 1994 that the department moved into their new quarters and use of the land was returned to The Home. By this time, The Home had acquired the one last piece of property to give it complete ownership of the city block on which it stands. A major landscaping project was begun. The various parking areas spread throughout the campus were removed. The areas were planted with grass and trees to take advantage of the garden setting The Home enjoys. The Valley Blvd property was turned into the parking area that serves the whole campus with a well-defined entrance off Marengo Ave. A restful garden was developed adjacent to the driveway entrance in memory of Patrick Lejeune by his family and friends. Fencing of the entire campus with wrought iron fencing and electrically operated gates was completed to secure the property. Alice Minkler, a long time resident of The Home and daughter of Bishop Gooden, together with her family, provided funds for the bell and bell tower on the lawn in front of the chapel in memory of her husband, William A. Minkler.

During seven years of the Fire Department's use of the Valley Blvd. property, The Home built the McElhinny club house, which was made possible by a bequest in the trust created by that family. The building is designed to expand the activity opportunities available to the residents. At the same time a major redecorating program was undertaken for the independent living units. Extensive work was done to the ceilings of the common areas to hide the fire sprinklers. Decorative molding was put in the resident rooms, the hallways and common areas. New carpeting, drapes and lighting were installed. The campus took on a new ambiance. The redecorating and remodeling is on-going with the Gilbert Administration Center in its final stages.

Over the years since The Home came into being, there have been dramatic changes in its physical appearance, its operation, its scope, and the number of people it serves. The residents have changed even more dramatically. The official title of The Episcopal Home in its Article of Incorporation is "The Home for the Aged of the Protestant Episcopal Church of the Diocese of Los Angeles". To speak of our residents as 'aged' doesn't make sense. Today we find many people living active, fruitful lives in their eighties and nineties. The two boards have come to recognize that our official title leaves something to be desired. They recognized the importance of how we refer to ourselves when they chose to call the facility in Rancho Palos Verdes "The Canterbury". Even before that they had taken steps to provide a simpler reference for the Alhambra Facility. Arrangements were made to assume the fictitious name of "The Episcopal Home". With the completion of the second facility "The Episcopal Home Alhambra" was added as a fictitious name. But awareness of the changes taking place since 1983 not only in the Alhambra facility but in the residents living there the Boards began to wrestle with the idea of an entirely new name.

The Boards did not approach this task lightly. For a year and a half they considered what name to choose. In the course of their deliberations, someone mentioned a conversation between two ladies living at the facility. They were talking about a series of incidents in which, within a period of two· weeks, a number of women had fallen and suffered broken hips.

One lady said to the other, "I think we should call this "The House of Fallen Women". The boards thereupon quickly came to the name of "The Kensington", which has been well received over the past two and a half years.

A unique opportunity presented itself in 1997 to obtain property in Orange County to build a third facility. The property was the last available in the area with an incredible view of the whole valley. The Home was able to use the option held by St. Mary's and All Angeles Episcopal grade school at a considerable reduction in the going price at the time.

Discussion of the Board of Directors made it aware of its continuing responsibility to minister to the elderly. It was felt that the success of this venture would secure The Home's financial condition to enable it to be able to serve the needs of elderly people often with insufficient funds to meet their needs. The third facility will be called "The Covington". The feasibility of the project has been verified by various marketing and financial studies. Completion of The Covington is scheduled for early 2002.

The present is a time without any dimension. It is the point where the past and the future meet – the point in which we "live and move and have our being". The present is always coming and going at the same time What we do in the present determines the future. We are fortunate to have such a rich heritage to guide us.