

What's in a 100-year-old PV scrapbook?

By Monique Sugimoto and Dennis Plotrowski

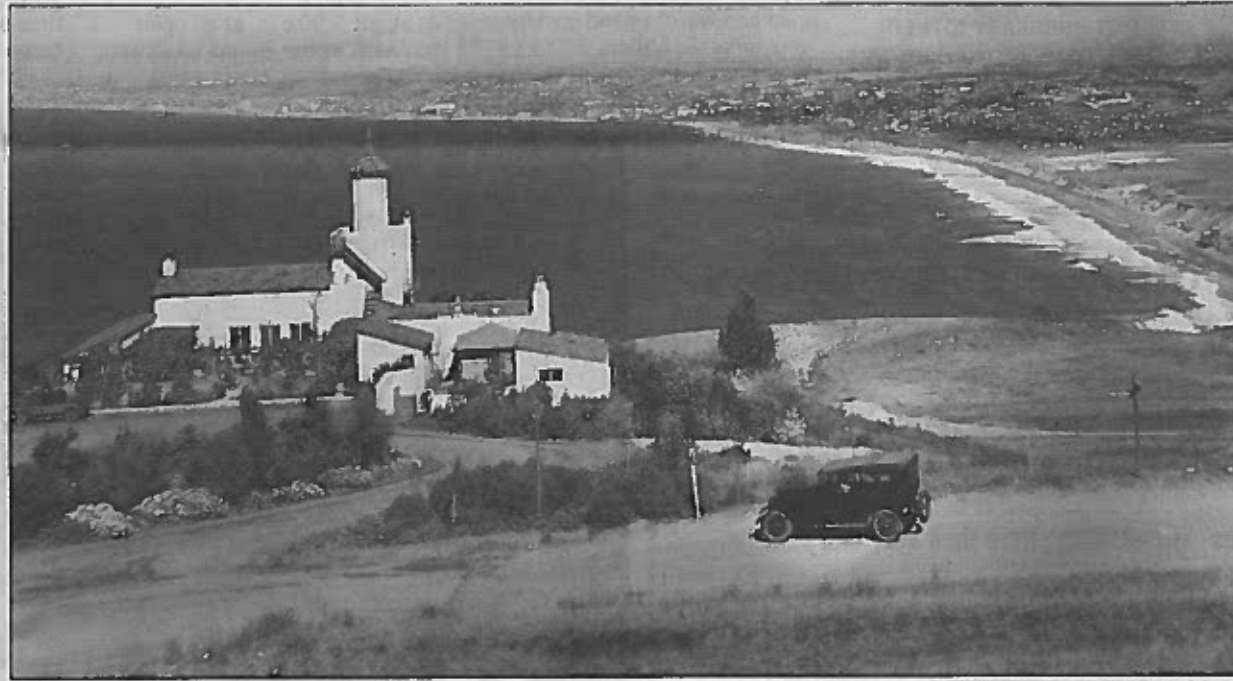
Articles and images we want to save or share today are likely posted, pinned or tweeted on Facebook, Pinterest or some other social media. Before the digital age, however, material we wanted to remember or share was often clipped and glued into scrapbooks.

Scrapbooks are a storehouse of history, full of people, places and events just waiting to be discovered. They often contain the only shred of evidence of some past memory.

The oldest scrapbooks held in the Palos Verdes Library District's Local History Center were created by the Palos Verdes Project, the initial developer of the Peninsula in the early 1920s. The Project clipped articles, advertisements, photographs and anything related to Palos Verdes from over 130 California publications.

These scrapbooks not only document the early development of the Peninsula but also give us a glimpse of life, plans, and some of the sensational headlines of the day.

For example, clippings from January to September 1926 capture a plan proposed by Frank A. Vanderlip, the president of the San Pedro Chamber of Commerce, to build the "Palos Verdes Bowl," an outdoor musical amphitheater to rival Pasadena's Hollywood Bowl.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF PALOS VERDES LIBRARY DISTRICT ARCHIVES

Above: La Venta Inn and environs in November 1926. Below: L.A. Herald newspaper clipping from 1926 tells the story of Aimee Semple McPherson's visit to the Peninsula. Front page photo: McPherson and her mother, Minnie Kennedy.



Mrs. J.J. Carter, known as the "Mother of the Hollywood Bowl," along with

the San Pedro Realty Board and the Woman's Club of San Pedro investi-

gated the idea. Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., the landscape architect who laid out the original plans for the Peninsula, was invited to see the proposed sites.

Two canyon locations on Western Avenue were selected. With ample parking and easy access from San Pedro, Long Beach and other parts of Los Angeles, the protected canyons overlooking the ocean were thought to be a perfect location for a 200,000-seat facility.

The Palos Verdes Bowl (also referred to as the San Pedro Bowl and the Vanderlip Bowl) was one of Vanderlip's plans for "civic betterments" in the port area. The San Pedro Pilot reported it was the

"first step in making San Pedro the center of culture in California."

Clippings for the Palos Verdes Bowl disappear after September 1926 when Vanderlip, its champion, returned to New York for health reasons.

Starting in June of 1926, clippings also tell the story of Aimee Semple McPherson, the most renowned woman evangelical minister of that time. Founder of the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel and builder of the Angelus Temple in Los Angeles, McPherson riveted the public's attention when she mysteriously disappeared from a beach in Venice.

Theories of McPherson's

disappearance ranged from drowning to simply a "daring publicity stunt."

When McPherson suddenly reappeared in Arizona a month after her disappearance, she had a tale of kidnapping and daring escape from a shack in the middle of the Mexican desert.

McPherson's story created such excitement that she was met at the train station upon her return to Los Angeles by a crowd of over 30,000. The crowd, the Times reported, was one that "neither presidents nor movie stars had ever elicited."

Why would the Palos Verdes Project clip the McPherson story? It was the mention of La Venta Inn that memorialized McPherson in the pages of Peninsula history.

A few days after her return, McPherson retreated to the solitude of La Venta Inn to recover from her ordeal and escape the throngs of people wanting to see her.

With her family by her side, McPherson spent three days recuperating at the inn, spending time walking along the beach below.

Unlike the fleeting nature of digital media that can disappear in an instant, these physical scrapbooks, fragile themselves, can last for decades preserving our unique local history.

Monique Sugimoto and Dennis Plotrowski are adult services librarians with the Palos Verdes Library District.