

SAN MARINO: HIDDEN TRANQUILITY

This incorporated San Gabriel Valley town lies just below the foothills of the San Gabriel Mountains. At 3.8 square miles, it is much smaller than neighboring Pasadena-where residents call San Marino “the little jewel of Pasadena”-and there no “bad areas” here, according to Realtor Janice Lee of Prudential California Realty John Aaroe Division. Once the home of General George S. Patton, Sr., and Jr., San Marino is characterized by stately homes and tranquil, tree-lined streets. It is almost entirely residential, and there are no apartments.

The long, recorded history of San Marino began with the establishment of the San Gabriel Mission, where the “Old Mill”-now a tourist attraction-was the grist mill for the mission. Most of San Marino was included in an 1830 Mexican land grant to Senora Victoria Reid. Thirty-two years later, she deeded her rancho to Don Benito Wilson, who, deeded the main part of his holding to J. de Barth Shorb. The latter named his rancho after his grandfather’s plantation in Maryland, which, in turn, was named in honor of the republic of San Marino in Italy. In 1903, the Shorb rancho was purchased by Henry E. Huntington and the major and smaller ranchos in the area were incorporated as the city of San Marino in 1913. The first mayor was General George S. Patton, Sr.

WHO LIVES HERE...AND WHY?

One of San Marino’s main draws is the San Marino Unified School District, one of the highest rated in the state of California. “We are attracting lots of executives from all over the world and the U.S.,” says Lee. “The latter find the city, which is rich in Mediterranean, Colonial, and English Tudor architecture, reminiscent of the cities they left back east.” With a chuckle, Lee says that San Marino “used to be a 105 percent Republican, old-money, conservative, white community that was staunchly opposed to change.” There was even something of a “war” in the community when Starbucks came to town. “People were fearful that it would cause traffic problems,” Lee explains. Today, the community’s demographics have changed. About 35 percent of residents are of Asian ethnicity-a factor that has made the local school scores even higher, Lee adds.

THE JEWEL OF SAN MARINO

San Marino is most famous for the Huntington Library, Art Collections, & Botanical Gardens. This 207-acre estate, once the home of the Huntington family, includes galleries (once the home of the Huntington Family) that contain an extensive collection of 18th and 19th Century British and French paintings, including Gainsborough’s “Blue Boy.” The botanical gardens span 150 acres with 14,000 varieties of plants from around the world. The estate is a favorite of Hollywood

moviemakers. You have probably seen it in “Coming to America,” “MacArthur,” and “War and Remembrance.”

HOUSE PRICES

Even a small house of, say, 1,500 square feet on a small lot is fetching \$1,000,000, according to Lee. She says that larger (2,000 square feet) family homes on quieter streets are in the neighborhood of \$1,300,000. And Lee notes that the median price of a single-family luxury home is currently about \$1,750,000.