



PASADENA  
SHOWCASE  
H O U S E  
*for the Arts*

## 2019 Pasadena Showcase House of Design House History

The Boddy House, (“Hospitality House”), at 1418 Descanso Drive in La Canada Flintridge was built for Elias Manchester Boddy, a newspaper publisher. It was completed in 1939 and at the time cost \$50,350 to build, a large amount for a new house during the last years of the Great Depression. Mr. Boddy shared the home with his wife, Berenice, their two teen-aged sons, and three live-in servants; a cook and a married butler and maid. The 12,000 square-foot-mansion was built by Architect James E. Dolena of Beverly Hills in the “Hollywood Regency” style. The style was especially favored by entertainment celebrities, hence its name. The home was the site of many lavish parties and receptions thanks to Mr. Boddy’s social and business connections. It was also the site of the 2007 Pasadena Showcase House of Design.

### **The Original Owner:**

In 1936, Elias Manchester Boddy purchased a 165-acre, oak-covered ranch in La Canada which he named Rancho del Descanso, (“Ranch of Rest”). He turned it into a floral paradise and build a home for himself and his family.

The newspaper publisher had a rags-to-riches story. He was one of five brothers born in a log cabin in 1881 in Lake Tapps, Washington and the son of a potato farmer. He attended Washington State College and the University of Montana and also served in the U.S. Army during World War I. He received a disabling injury in France in 1918 and was considered 100 percent disabled by the U.S. government.

Mr. Boddy moved to Southern California and held several positions in the publishing industry. By 1926, he was the principal owner and editor of the *Los Angeles Illustrated Daily News*. He wrote daily rousing editorials for the *Daily News*, leading to his reputation as a “white knight” for social reform. Mr. Boddy conducted most of his business from the library of the home and even broadcast his radio show from there. He was also involved in many Southern California organizations, the author of several books and even ran, although unsuccessfully, for the U.S. Senate in 1950.

Mr. Boddy’s creation of a Camellia Forest on the grounds of Descanso with 50,000 plants turned the estate into a floral paradise. He also used the site to propagate roses and new varieties of flowers. The flowers were well-received at the cut-flower markets of Los Angeles and across the country.

In 1957 the Descanso Gardens Guild was established to work with the County to preserve the Boddy Estate as a public garden. The non-profit Guild has taken on the total management of the gardens and of the Boddy House, now referred to as the Hospitality House.

Remembered as a “powerhouse publisher” Mr. Boddy died at the age of 75 in 1967.

### **The Style of the House:**

Actually a subtype of Colonial Revival, the “Hollywood Regency” was especially favored by entertainment celebrities in the 1930’s and 1940’. Its interiors and exteriors were somewhat Georgian, mixed with a rather sleek modernism, often bordering on Art Moderne. Unlike more traditional Colonial Revival houses, Hollywood Regency houses are often L-shaped with second stories made to look much smaller than the first stories. They also often have wall dormers, hexagonal or octagonal recessed bulls-eye windows, tall oversized double-front doors (known as Pullman Doors), mansard roofs and chimneys with unusual venting and whimsical caps.

### **The Architect:**

The Boddy House was designed by Architect, James Edward Dolena, known as “Jim” to his family and friends. He was an accomplished designer who would become known as the “architect of the stars.”

Born in St. Petersburg, Russia on May 17, 1888, he came to the United States alone at the age of seventeen with just a high school education but the ability to speak English, French and German. After presenting sample plans to the Chicago Art Institute, he was taken on as a scholarship student. He also earned money moonlighting in the offices of local architects. Following graduation from the Institute, Dolena gained experience working on government buildings.

In 1923 he came to Los Angeles to help artist, H. Valentine Fanshaw install a mural in a public building. After working for several architectural firms, he set up a private practice in 1929. His office was on Wilshire Boulevard in Beverly Hills. At the height of his fame and productivity he had five architects working for him. He was known as a good salesman who could convince clients that good taste and style were more important than flashiness. Dolena is said to have designed more than eight hundred mansions around the world, four hundred of them in Southern California. Dolena homes had a reputation for uncompromising quality, using the latest technology available. He died in 1978 at the age of 90.