



Spanish Revival on Highland Avenue

CONTRIBUTED BY MIKE FARRELLY, MONTCLAIR TOWN HISTORIAN, PHOTOGRAPHY BY ANDREW WANDER

THIS MONTH'S featured home is a beautiful Spanish Revival house on Highland Ave. complete with smooth stucco walls, low pitched tile roofs, wrought iron balconies and a recessed multi-arch entranceway. It feels like the kind of Spanish Colonial building that one would find in Mexico, Arizona or Southern California. It was built about 1924 for James R. and Alma (Coons) Munoz. James grew up in Missouri but he was a world traveler and entrepreneur just like

his father. Alma grew up in Montclair. James, Signono Munoz (his father), his mother, Nannie Munoz, his brother and his sister all settled down in Montclair around 1906. James married Alma in 1919. Alma's brother, Cyril, married James' sister, Isabel. James and Alma lived in a few places before they built this house. The parents, Signono and Nannie Munoz, lived at 12 Crestmont for a few years; then bought Kip's Castle, the Montclair and Verona landmark in 1926 for \$35,000. Geographically they were only a short distance from James and Alma, but the steepness of the hill made it almost impossible to walk back and forth between the houses. James and his brother Robert inherited Kip's Castle. James and Alma continued to live on Highland Ave. Robert lived in the "castle" with his wife, Jimmy (Morris) Munoz. Jimmy grew up in Montclair. She was always called Jimmy and her name didn't seem to be a nickname or substitution for anything. James and Robert's aunt, Edith, later lived in the castle.

Most of the houses that we have covered in this feature have had many owners. Typically, people only live in them for a few years; twenty/twenty-five at the most, with the possible exception of the Hall family, who lived in a home featured a couple of months ago on Llewellyn for more than 50 years.

James and Alma lived in this house on Highland Ave. for 55 years. Ironically, this house has a connection to another Montclair landmark. It was built on the site of Samuel and Anna Crump's Victorian masterpiece with tall spires that could be seen for miles. Samuel Crump started the label printing company that gave rise to the name Label Street. The Crump mansion, known as Buena Vista, was very familiar to locals during the late 19th century. It started to fall into disrepair after the last occupants, the Card family, passed away. It was torn down in the early 1920s, which allowed the Munoz family to build this wonderful home.

We mentioned that James Munoz was an entrepreneur like his dad. His dad, Signono, was born in Chile, but his stepfather was American, so Signono ended up in the United States. He explored for oil. He went out West where he drilled for oil on part of the Navajo Nation in northwestern New Mexico. He came to own the New Mexico Central Railroad and a gold mine. He started a boiler manufacturing company. He started a financial service to promote oil exploration. In a similar way, James took advantage of the opportunities that came his way. James began his career as a purser aboard steamships that traversed international waters,

especially the Pacific Ocean. He worked his way up to being the CEO of the Cosmopolitan Shipping Company. He became president of the Petroleum Finance Co. of New York and a director of the Southwind Exploration Company. He took over as president of his father's Santa Fe Corporation which was an umbrella company for many of the Munoz family interests.

James became a director of the Bank of Montclair. Alma stayed home and raised their three daughters: Agnes, Consuelo and Nancy. After the daughters left home Alma started her own interior decorating firm, Interiors Limited, which operated in and around Montclair for many years.

The Munoz family owned the house on Highland Ave. until Alma passed away in 1979. At that time, John and Karolyn Lord bought it from the Munoz estate. The Lords came to Montclair from England by way of Lexington MA. John was born in England and was a graduate of Oxford University. Karolyn was born in the US. She graduated from Smith College but moved to England. They both worked in the television industry, which brought them to the United States. He produced documentaries for the National Broadcasting Company. She was a field rep for NBC. John became a professor of Broadcast Journalism at Boston University and was also the VP of a production company called Air Time International. Karolyn had two kids from a previous marriage. Her daughter was living in China as an interpreter. Her son worked for the BBC, often with David Frost. In recent years the house has had a number of owners. ■

If you'd like to see more images of Montclair homes, they are featured in the book, *Stately Homes of Montclair*, which can be found at Montclair Booksellers, several local libraries and the *Stately Homes of Montclair* Facebook page.



Montclair Homes Sold January 2021

Property Address	Sale Price	Beds	Baths
9 Tuers Pl	\$710,000	3	3
329 Orange Rd	\$792,000	9	4
16 Stonehenge Rd	\$850,000	4	4
341 N Fullerton Ave	\$940,000	5	3
651 Grove St	\$1,100,000	5	6
7 Christopher Ct	\$1,190,000	5	5
7 Elizabeth Rd	\$1,200,000	4	5
86 Porter Pl	\$1,230,000	7	5
25 Erwin Park Rd	\$1,270,000	6	4
105 Up. Mountain Ave	\$1,300,000	8	6
166 Midland Ave	\$1,350,000	6	5
262 S Mountain Ave	\$1,470,000	4	6
48 Porter Pl	\$1,790,000	6	6

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