



# *The John B. McBratney House*

505 N. Alta Vista Avenue, Monrovia, CA 91016

After the Great War of 1918, the local newspaper featured an article on the expansion of McBratney's, "The Irish Linen Store," into their third storefront on Myrtle Avenue. In July of that same year, the Monrovia Daily News informed readers that four elegant homes were planned for the exclusive Chateau Park subdivision (the area we now know as Gold Hill). The contract for the first home had just been awarded to the R.D. Davidson Company of Pasadena. The new home, designed in the popular Spanish Colonial Revival style by architect Luther L. Fentress, was being built for Mr. & Mrs. A.C. Elkington of Berkeley. Mr. Elkington was the President of the Philadelphia Quartz Company, and his wife, the former Anna Willits, was a Monrovia girl, a member of a pioneer family and a 1910 graduate of Monrovia High School. \$18,000 was the contract price for the Elkington's new home.

Brothers, William & John McBratney, arrived in Monrovia in 1906, two homesick lads who had chosen Monrovia as their destination for their trans-continental train ride at the suggestion of a fellow passenger. W.J. McBratney sized up his new community and decided there was a niche he could fill, going door-to-door, making fine Irish linens available to Monrovia housewives. John joined his brother in business, and in 1909 they opened a small shop at 604-1/2 S. Myrtle Avenue. In the fall of 1912, the McBratney's moved up the street to a larger location at 423 S. Myrtle. William died later that same year,

leaving John as the sole owner of the business. John returned to Ireland in 1918 at the end of the war and married Elsie Shorten in 1919. They returned to Monrovia that same year and had four children - Sheila, William, Kathleen and John, Jr.

In 1929, John & Elsie bought the Elkington house to raise their young family. John died unexpectedly in 1938 after a brief illness. His death came as a shock to the community in which he had been a leader for twenty-five years. Mrs. McBratney carried on the operation of the store assisted by her sister-in-law, Elizabeth McBratney. In time, the younger members of the family became active in the operation of the store. Elsie died in 1953, and the family home was sold several years later to Dr. Bruce Roesler. The Hadfield family owned the property next and stayed there for twenty-five years. They sold the house to its current owners in 1997.

McBratney's, a long-time Monrovia landmark, passed out of family ownership in 1969 and closed down several years later. Now only the fine house on Gold Hill serves as a reminder of a remarkable Monrovia family.

