



Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

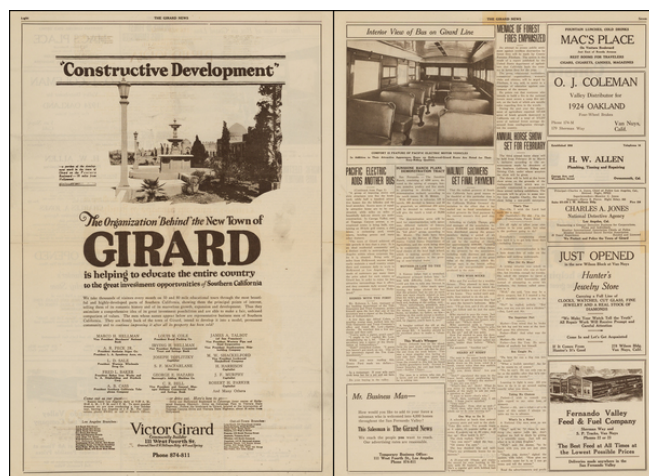
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"Constructive Development" The Organization "Behind" the New Town of Girard . . .

Stock#: 43131
Map Maker: Girard News
Date: 1924
Place: n.p.
Color: Uncolored
Condition: VG
Size: 24 x 18 inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

Rare edition of the Girard News newspaper, a 2 sheet promotional broadsheet, promoting the newly minted town of Girard, located on Ventura Boulevard, "18 miles from Hollywood" in what would become Woodland Hills, California.

The map promotes Victor Girard Kleinberger's vision of the town which would become Woodland Hills. As described by Steven Treffers

Equal parts visionary and scoundrel, the not-so-modest land developer saw big potential and even bigger profits in the agricultural fields of the southwestern San Fernando Valley. In 1922, Girard set out to create his namesake and transform a cow pasture into a Moorish-themed country getaway with nothing more than a promise and other people's money.

In 1922, Victor Girard Kleinberger organized the Boulevard Land Company bought 2,886 acres from a syndicate owned by Harry Chandler. The land was located at the southwestern corner of the San Fernando Valley, at the intersection of Topanga Canyon and Ventura Boulevards, which had already become something of an established destination for day tripping sightseers. Girard envisioned the development as a "small hillside country estates," and created 6,828 lots out of 2,886 acres during a time when the typical Valley lot was no less than 80 acres.



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The onsite promotion was very elaborate. Girard planted more than 120,000 sycamores, eucalyptus, fir pine, and pepper trees and constructed a town center at the corner of Topanga Canyon and Ventura Boulevards, erecting buildings and towers in a Moorish style because he "desired to give the old Mission style of architecture a rest." The buildings straddled Topanga Canyon and extended along the south side of Ventura Boulevard, although many of the buildings were false storefronts.

In 1923, newspaper ads and pamphlets were aggressively distributed in train depots and hotels throughout the region. The promotional material boldly claimed "Every Southern California town has been a successful town. There have been no exceptions ... Mark this prediction: History will repeat itself in Girard." In addition to the ads, Girard was also a pioneer in some of his selling techniques, offering a free lunch to encourage prospective purchasers to take a sightseeing tour that included a stop in the new town.

Sales tactics were also unscrupulous. Treffers noted that salesman sold the same prime lots up to 15 times, before buyers later learned that the deed there were given shuffled them off to less desirable locations.

Girard's development boomed. He created the Girard News, which he used to promote the town's unprecedented growth. The Girard Pick and Spur Club and Girard Country Club were created, which included a golf course. Girard and other Valley developers also successfully lobbied for construction of a scenic highway that followed the crests of the Santa Monica Mountains, which would become Mulholland Drive. While the promotion was wildly successful, the infrastructure financing was done entirely with borrowed money, using California Law to allow for liens on the individual lots of the development for financing.

After the crash of 1929 and the coming of the Great Depression, Girard became a massive bust. The Boulevard Land Company failed, with nearly 50% of the land still unsold, and infrastructure financing that provided crushing debt on the community. By 1932, only 75 families remained in Girard, and the town would not see life again until the real estate boom following the end of WWII.

The community of Girard was eventually incorporated into Los Angeles, and in 1945 it became known as Woodland Hills.



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Detailed Condition:

Two page broadsheet advertisement. Minor staining at upper fold on verso.