

Book Review by David Lightfoot, MD

*Arequipa Sanatorium: Life in California's Lung Resort for Women*

Author: Lynn Downey

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This is the story of the Arequipa Sanatorium, a unique tuberculosis hospital that was specifically designed to treat working class women from the Bay Area. It existed in Marin County from 1911 until 1957. The site is now the Northern California Girl Scout Council's Marin Day Camp at Arequipa, offering a progressive girl leadership program, swimming, archery, leather craft, cooking and other activities for girls age five until sixth grade. My wife Marsha stayed overnight in the former Sanatorium building, then known as the Brown House, as brownie. The building was demolished in 1984.

By the dawn of the 19th century, tuberculosis, or consumption, had killed one in seven of all people who had ever lived. By the end of the nineteenth century, TB, "Captain of the Men of Death" (John Bunyan) was the second leading cause of death in the United States. Tuberculosis (TB) is still one of the world's leading causes of mortality, with 10.4 million people newly diagnosed and 1.6 million deaths in 2017. But this book is much more than a history of a TB Sanatorium.

Downey's interest in Arequipa was sparked by the realization that her paternal grandmother, Lois Boney Downey, was a patient there. After interviewing her about her 14-month stay, Downey came across an incredible trove of records of the institution that had been saved and placed in a shed by ranger Happy Stanton. Years of research and interviews with staff and patients followed.

Downey goes back well before the establishment of Arequipa. Using the story of her grandmother to weave together the many strands of the story of Arequipa and its people, we artfully move from present to the past and back to the present. The rise of the Progressive Movement's empowerment of women in medicine and philanthropy is one theme developed. The founder of Arequipa, Philip King Brown, came from an unusual family. His mother, Charlotte Blake Brown, began medical school at Woman's Medical College of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia in 1872 with three children under five years of age. She helped establish the Pacific Dispensary for Women and Children in San Francisco, and later the first training school for nurses west of the Rockies. Her brother, Charles Blake, Jr., and daughter, Adelaide Brown, were also physicians in San Francisco. Philip King Brown married Helen Hillyer, foster daughter of Phoebe Hearst, and women played a large role, not just in funding Arequipa, but as members of the Board of Trustees and management.

Another theme highlighted in the book is the complex web of social philanthropic connections that supported the establishment and maintenance of this private institution. The relationships among San Francisco elites, including Jewish leaders, is fascinatingly chronicled. The Sanatorium is on land donated by Henry Bothin (the largest individual commercial landowner in San Francisco at the turn of the 20th century), Mary and Luther Holton (mining & electric power), Jeanette Jordan (Boston & San Francisco real estate), Elizabeth Ashe (Asheville, NC family, Nurse and founder of the Telegraph Hill Neighborhood House and Hill Farm), Phoebe Apperson Hearst (mining), Blanche Wormser S&W Fine Foods), Mary Raymond (B.F. Goodrich family), Isabel Kittle Dibblee (investment banking), Harriet Kittle (Kittle & Co.,

Merchant), Jacob and Sigmund Stern and Levi Strauss (Levi Strauss & Co.) were some of the social elite who supported Arequipa.

The American history of the rest cure, with exposure to fresh air, abundance of quality food, freedom from stress is well journaled. The patient viewpoint of their treatment is covered with engaging stories of their experience. Patients of all races, including African American, Chinese, Japanese, and Hispanic, were admitted to Arequipa. There was no segregation or differentiation of treatment by race or ethnicity, although the doctors and Board were all white. The story of Rose, a Chinese American of 13 when first admitted, and who stayed 5 years as a patient before becoming a staff member and trained laboratory worker, is typical of the interesting stories told.

The society connections of the founder led to an exciting part of the Arequipa story, the pottery and tile made there. Artists Frederick Hurton Rhead, Albert L. Solon, and Fred Wilde led the works that were established along with basket weaving and other forms of occupational therapy that were established, not just to occupy the patients' time, but give them a saleable skill so as to improve their life after discharge. This pottery and tile are still very valuable and collectible.

The treatments the patients received undergo is well covered. The use of the x-ray and fluoroscopy, monitoring of weight and temperature, the importance of moving slowly to not irritate the lungs (the "TB glide"), the importance of a positive mental attitude, despite being separated from family, children and friends were everyday routine. Less commonly used was pneumothorax. Patients needing more serious treatments, such as thoracotomy were taken to hospital in San Francisco for the procedure and returned afterwards.

Finally, the story of what happened to the former sanatorium, the people who supported it, the people who worked there, and many of the patients of Arequipa is covered with personal detail seldom found in medical histories.

I heartily recommend *Arequipa Sanatorium*.

Lynn Downey is a fifth generation Sonoma City resident. She was the first in-house archivist and historian for the Levi Strauss Company in 1989 and is now an historical and archival consultant. She is the author of six books, including *Levi Strauss: The Man Who Gave Blue Jeans to the World*, and *A Short History of Sonoma*. <http://lynndowney.com/>