



LOS ANGELES CONSERVANCY NEWS



Jan/Feb 2014 • Volume 36 Number 1



Johnnie's Coffee Shop and Restaurant was recently designated as a Historic-Cultural Monument by the City of Los Angeles. Photo by Stephen Russo.

Barry Building Project Withdrawn

by Marcello Vavala

The proposed development project in Brentwood known as Green Hollow Square has been withdrawn by owner Charles T. Munger and is no longer under consideration by the City of Los Angeles.

The project called for the demolition of the Barry Building (Milton Caughey, 1951) at 11975 San Vicente Boulevard, as well as the removal of part of the adjacent Coral Tree Median. Both the building and the median are designated local landmarks, known in the City of Los Angeles as Historic-Cultural Monuments (HCMs). Demolishing an HCM is exceedingly rare and a bad precedent for the City's landmark program.

Since the project was first announced in 2007, the Conservancy and the Friends of the Barry Building coalition have been working to press for a preservation alternative.

Munger sought to raze the Barry Building, a distinctive and highly intact International Style building arranged around a central courtyard, to make way for part of the Green Hollow Square project.

The project would have contained over 73,000 square feet of retail, restaurant, and office space in three new, two-story buildings on San Vicente Boulevard in the heart of Brentwood. The Barry Building would have been replaced with one of the new buildings—even though the Barry Building's scale, massing, and arrangement of retail spaces is remarkably similar to what was proposed.

Please see BARRY BUILDING on page 4

Hidden in Plain Sight: Our Everyday Heritage

by Adrian Scott Fine

In preservation, it can be easy to gravitate toward the icons and places that are the obvious standouts, thinking that only "great" places are worthy of preservation. While we may focus on the icons to ensure their preservation, we cannot arbitrarily pick and choose or ignore an entire group of buildings and places. It is often the places that we know and experience the most in our everyday lives that we take for granted. Not all of them merit preservation, but some do, and it is important not to dismiss them outright as unworthy of recognition.

For example, the 1950s or '60s corner bank or supermarket is often considered too ubiquitous or familiar, thought by many to be anything but a candidate for historic landmark designation. While not every supermarket will rise to the level of being historic, some do.

We need to take a step back and think about these lesser-known landmarks before it is too late. How have they played a role in shaping our culture? How do they reflect influences such as the car and the newfound freedom it brought to Southern Californians? Do these places help define a period of unprecedented growth and design influences that are now significant? And most importantly, what do these everyday places mean to us, then and now?

On one end of the spectrum, we have the Googie-style Johnnie's Coffee Shop and Restaurant at Wilshire Boulevard and Fairfax Avenue. Johnnie's became a Historic-Cultural Monument (HCM) in November 2013, in an effort led by the Conservancy and its Modern Committee. The nomination was prepared by Alan Hess, the preeminent authority on Googie architecture.

Designed by architects Louis Armet and Eldon Davis, the restaurant was built in 1956 as Romeo's Times Square, later became Ram's, and then became Johnnie's in 1966. The business operated continuously until 2000. Since then, the building has been closed and used only

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Los Angeles Conservancy

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The Los Angeles Conservancy is a nonprofit membership organization that works through education and advocacy to recognize, preserve, and revitalize the historic architectural and cultural resources of Los Angeles County.

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Preservation Award Applications Due January 31

Each year, the Conservancy honors outstanding achievement in historic preservation in Los Angeles County with our Preservation Awards. If you know of a preservation project that deserves special recognition, we encourage you to apply for our 2014 awards.

An independent jury of experts in architecture, historic preservation, and community development will select award recipients. We encourage submissions from across Los Angeles County that illustrate the value and power of preservation.

Projects honored in the past have varied widely, from sensitive restoration, rehabilitation, and adaptive reuse projects, to groundbreaking advocacy and education efforts undertaken by individuals or groups. Eligible projects must be located in Los Angeles County and must have been completed by December 31, 2013.

Applications must be received **no later than Friday, January 31, 2014**. You can download the application from laconservancy.org/awards or request one by contacting our office at (213) 623-2489 or info@laconservancy.org. We will announce the recipients in March.

Also mark your calendar for **Thursday, May 8**, when we will present the awards at our 33rd Annual Preservation Awards Luncheon. With around 600 guests, the luncheon is a great chance to network while learning the compelling and inspiring stories of the award recipients. We hope to see you there!



The Japanese House at The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens, a 2013 Preservation Award recipient. Photo courtesy Kelly Sutherlin McLeod Architecture, Inc.



Compton City Manager G. Harold Duffey accepts an award for Compton City Hall from Conservancy President Stephanie Kingsnorth, 2013. Photo by Gary Leonard.

Mitch Bassion Leaves Conservancy Staff

Mitch Bassion, director of development for over two years, left the Conservancy at the end of 2013. He had the opportunity to move back to his native East Coast, accepting the position of director of development with the Washington Performing Arts Society in Washington, D.C.

Mitch's accomplishments with the Conservancy will continue to benefit our organization in coming years. His work to secure major grant funding helped transform the Conservancy, including funding for our new website, logo, and graphic identity system. Mitch also oversaw three of the most successful fall benefits in recent Conservancy history.

We will miss Mitch, but we wish him well in his new position with the Washington Performing Arts Society. The search for his successor is under way.

Preservation Issues

by Adrian Scott Fine, Manuel Huerta, and Marcello Vavala

For more information about these and other preservation issues, please visit laconservancy.org/important-issues.

Postwar Bank Threatened

Developer Townscape Partners has proposed redeveloping the southwest corner of Sunset and Crescent Heights Boulevards with a 249-unit apartment development and over 110,000 square feet of commercial retail and restaurant uses. Two buildings are proposed, ranging from two to sixteen stories.

Known as 8150 Sunset, the project threatens the former Lytton Center and current Chase Bank, a 1960 Modern bank building distinguished by its zigzag folded-plate roof. Designed by architect Kurt W. Meyer of the firm Hagman & Meyer, Lytton Center is a significant example of postwar-era bank design in Los Angeles and is one of the earliest that remain. The 8150 Sunset project would demolish Lytton Center and replace it with a two-story commercial building of similar size planned for the same location.

In October 2013, the Conservancy submitted comments on the Notice of Preparation (NOP) for an environmental impact report (EIR), noting that the draft EIR should evaluate preservation alternatives that retain Lytton Center. We are asking for the bank building

to be retained and adapted for commercial retail use. Incorporated into the full project, this distinctive building can continue to serve as an important anchor of the community.

Building Reuse Study Released

A new study, *Learning from Los Angeles*, was released in October 2013 as part of the newly formed Partnership for Building Reuse between the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the Urban Land Institute. With Los Angeles serving as the pilot city for the effort, the project brought together community groups, real estate developers, and civic leaders around the common goal of making it easier to reuse and retrofit existing buildings using a market-driven approach.

The Preservation Green Lab of the National Trust conducted research on building demolition and construction trends across the city, creating maps showing citywide building demolition and development trends.

Los Angeles was selected for this pilot in large part due to its highly successful Adaptive Reuse Ordinance (ARO), adopted in 1999. This carefully targeted approach removed regulatory barriers, provided incentives, and helped make it possible to repurpose more than sixty historic buildings over the past fourteen years as new apartments,



Plummer Park's Great Hall/Long Hall. Photo by Joel H. Mark, West Hollywood Preservation Alliance.

lofts, and hotels. The Conservancy served as a key partner in this effort and on the study's Advisory Committee. To learn more about the report, visit the National Trust for Historic Preservation's blog (preservationnation.org) and search for "Learning from Los Angeles."

Great Hall/Long Hall at Plummer Park

On December 2, the West Hollywood City Council voted 3-2 to proceed with plans to demolish Plummer Park's Great Hall/Long Hall and remodel Fiesta Hall. The 1938 Spanish Colonial Revival structure, built through a partnership between the County of Los Angeles and the Works Progress Administration, is slated for demolition as part of the City's \$41 million proposal to redesign and renovate Plummer Park.

In 2012, the loss of anticipated funding following the dissolution of state redevelopment agencies put a hold on the proposed project. Local advocacy groups Protect Plummer Park and the West Hollywood Preservation Alliance have strongly advocated for reuse of the historic buildings. In 2013, they successfully nominated Great Hall/Long Hall for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

The December 2 vote was a surprise to the Conservancy and the community, and we are working closely with community leaders to help press for a preservation alternative.



Formerly the Lytton Center, this Modern bank building with a zigzag folded-plate roof is threatened with redevelopment. Photo by Adrian Scott Fine/L.A. Conservancy.

BARRY BUILDING continued from page 1

The final environmental impact report (EIR) for the Green Hollow Square project was released in January 2012. Both the Los Angeles Cultural Heritage Commission and former Councilmember Bill Rosendahl submitted comment letters reaffirming their strong support of the preservation alternative in the EIR that would have retained and adaptively reused the Barry Building as part of the proposed project. Through this latest review process, the retention and incorporation of the Barry Building into the larger development was identified as the environmentally superior alternative.

There had been no action on the project since May 2012. An October 31, 2013 letter to the City of Los Angeles from Munger's representative made a formal request to withdraw the project's zoning entitlement application, effectively ending the project.

The building's preservation effort has benefited greatly from a highly successful grassroots campaign that included the building's designation as a local landmark (HCM #887). Diane Caughey, daughter of the architect, prepared the landmark nomination, which secured protection for the building when approved in 2007.

Thank you to everyone who came out in support of preservation for the Barry Building and the Coral Tree Median, including Councilmember Mike Bonin and former Councilmember Bill Rosendahl. The Conservancy, the coalition, and the many supporters of the Barry Building will continue to monitor the situation and any future plans for the site.



Barry Building courtyard. Photo by Adrian Scott Fine/L.A. Conservancy.

Feedback from a Successful Tour of Downtown Los Angeles' Arts District

by Sarah Weber

Thanks to everyone who came to our recent tour of the Arts District on November 10, 2013. Nearly 900 tickets were sold, and it was a thrill to see so many of you enjoying all that the neighborhood has to offer. We want to share a few comments from tour goers about what they learned as they explored the architecture and the ever-changing history of this unique neighborhood.

"It was so nice to go down there and spend (no joke) about seven hours there walking all over the place and touring every site and really getting a sense of what that neighborhood was about and what is there and what is coming... A two-hour walking tour is great, but a seven-hour opening up of an entire neighborhood is really special." –H. Sabin

"Change is always happening, from vineyards, to industry and railroad spurs to neglect, then artists' lofts, and now that the area is becoming an interesting place for people to live and work, a lot of new modern development. Here's hoping that enough of the old remains and blends in with the new." –L. Kabaker

"I learned that there are many brilliant people who have vision. I loved the way the people used curves to construct their buildings so that they could get delivery to their back door!" –J. A. Gill

"I learned that the City of Los Angeles did not honor its commitment re: the Pickle Factory Building... Many more feet were torn down and the end wall was not replaced. I am glad to be a member of the Conservancy and support the fight against destroying historical buildings." –V. Thorland

"I learned about the 'walkability' of this district, which continues to transform. While I knew that a number of buildings had been converted to live/work lofts, I did not realize the number of shops, art galleries, and restaurants that had opened in this area of Los Angeles. I was glad to see that many historic buildings are being converted to new usages. I will return to explore in the future! I loved the historic buildings, restaurants, and the kind people who opened up their neighborhood." –C. Lind

"I didn't even know where the Arts District was. I loved hearing about the history, the neat 'A' signs, and seeing so many beautiful buildings and lofts. Too bad the City modified the building near the bridge so poorly. It's a disgrace! Thanks to L.A. Conservancy, losses like that won't happen again." –C. Duggan

Another big thank you goes out to Presenting Sponsor Linear City Development LLC; to Supporting Sponsors Gilmore Associates, L.A. City Councilmember José Huizar, and MATT Construction; to the supporters, residents, and businesses of the Arts District who welcomed us; and to the 117 volunteers who worked the tour. We couldn't have done it without you!



Tour goers in front of Pickle Works Building. Photo by Adrian Scott Fine/L.A. Conservancy.



Volunteer Jessica O'Malley guides tour goers in the Toy Factory Lofts. Photo by Larry Underhill.

Thank You, 2013 Walking Tour Docents!

The Conservancy's enthusiastic and dedicated Walking Tour Docent Corps helped us reach record numbers last year, taking over 9,000 people on tours as part of the Downtown Walking Tour program.

Alice Allen	Mike Henderson	Dennis Ritchey
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John Ghini *	Kay Pegram *	Jan Westman
Michael Goldstein	John Pesetski	Mary Alice Wollam
Larry Goodfried	Vivian Pine	Eric Yesayan
Kelly Hardick	Paul Polocek	

* gave more than 20 tours in 2012

** gave more than 30 tours in 2012

Congratulations to Our 2013 Docent Class

The 2013 docent class trained on the Historic Downtown and Modern Skyline tours. Encompassing extensive classroom work, independent study, and training out in the field, the training takes approximately four months to complete. The next class will take place in spring 2014. For information on applying, visit laconservancy.org/walking-tour-docents.



The docent training class of 2013 (left to right): Les Rorick, Carolyn Coughlin-Grimm, Andrew Odom, Annie Laskey (Conservancy program manager), Anne Kelly, Jessica O'Malley, Katie Frank, Jenny Goodwin. Not pictured: Erica Gutiérrez and Jojo Mannanal. Photo by L.A. Conservancy staff.

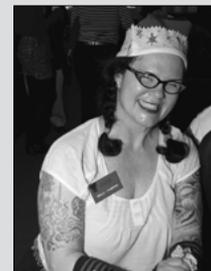
VOLUNTEER PROFILE: NICOLE THOMPSON

by Bruce Scottow

"I got bit by the Conservancy bug in a big way."

- Nicole Thompson

All it took was one season volunteering at our Last Remaining Seats (LRS) film series, and Nicole was hooked! Always a huge



fan of film classics, old silents, and pre-code movies, Nicole found volunteering at LRS to be a great way to experience those films the way they should be seen.

More than a decade later, Nicole still volunteers as an LRS usher. Ushering can have its challenges, including facing a near-stampede of eager, incoming movie-goers. But it also gives Nicole the chance to chat with like-minded movie fans, and to share in a unique form of entertainment.

She has expanded her Conservancy volunteerism far beyond the theatre aisles. You may have seen Nicole as a walking tour docent (the Biltmore Hotel is her specialty), hosting at a benefit fundraiser, or docenting for a spring or fall tour. She also helped prepare our new website for launch by prepping photos and entering profiles for more than a hundred buildings. She even produced an issue of this newsletter when we were short-staffed.

A native Angeleno, Nicole has always held an interest in local history and architecture. She cites keen interests in music, especially punk rock, rock n' roll, and live bands; gardening (preferably in the shade!); vintage automobiles; and collecting tattoos—both in pictures and on person!

HIDDEN continued from page 1

periodically for filming.

It is not a stretch to say that Johnie's is one of the most beloved buildings in Los Angeles. While the number of Facebook "likes" may not count as scientific analysis, everything we've posted about Johnie's on Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram has received an extraordinary response—clearly, Johnie's resonates with people.

One might ask why so many people care about a coffee shop that last served a cup of joe more than a decade ago. Is it because it is so visible and stands out from the crowd with its exaggerated butterfly-shaped roofline and bright neon signage? Or is it just because the architecture was designed to be fun? There are likely many reasons why people love this building, from personal memories to what it represents about Los Angeles and the evolution and growth of the city's famed Miracle Mile corridor.

People might champion Johnie's a little more now than ever because it is one of a dwindling number of Googie coffee shops still standing. Some other standouts in the Los Angeles area are Pann's in Ladera Heights, Norms on La Cienega Boulevard, and Bob's Big Boy in Burbank. For many of these places, the stark reality is that location and real estate values reign supreme. Enormous development pressures on these underdog buildings and survivors increasingly place them at risk for irreversible alterations or demolition.

On the other end of the spectrum lies a gem hidden in plain sight. In Highland Park, a postwar supermarket on Figueroa Street near Avenue 45 recently sparked a heated debate about layers of history in a historic neighborhood, as well as the value of preserving a relatively simple building type that some describe as a "box store with a giant parking crater out front."

Originally opened as a Shoppers Market in 1960, the grocery operated as a Lucky's Market from 1965 to 1999, and later as an Albertson's before its current use by Superior Grocers. This market is the type of building many of us grew up with, where we shopped with our families once a week or more. Yet like many elements of our everyday lives, we often go into auto-pilot and stop seeing what



The owner of this supermarket plans to destroy the Googie façade and give it a Craftsman-like makeover. Photo by Cindy Olnick/L.A. Conservancy.

makes something unique and special.

The Superior Grocers building came about at a time when the supermarket, as a relatively new idea, was experiencing massive changes. Architect Ronald Cleveland designed the building in the Googie style, as it was intended to stand out and draw in passing motorists.

The market's roof form is a dominant feature, forming both the zigzag ceiling of the interior and projecting beyond the glass walls to create a lozenge-shaped roofline that functions as an entrance canopy. When illuminated at night, the canopy and interior ceiling appear to float above the glass walls along the entrance, giving the market a transparent quality.

Is this mid-century supermarket worth keeping? The Conservancy thinks so, as only a handful of such buildings remain in the city that haven't been altered beyond recognition or demolished. A few intact examples include the Vicente Foods in Brentwood, a Ralphs Market in Studio City, and Hannam Market World in Koreatown.

In November 2013—while Johnie's was on the path to designation—an HCM nomination for Superior Grocers sponsored by the Highland Park Heritage Trust failed to win support from City Councilmember Gil Cedillo, in whose district the building is located. The City's Planning and Land Use Management (PLUM) Committee voted down the

building's designation, effectively paving the way for its alteration. While there is much more to this story, essentially the owner is free to remodel the building as proposed—giving it a Craftsman-like makeover and destroying the original Googie façade.

Stories like that of Superior Grocers (and Lytton Center, discussed on page 3) illustrate an immense challenge for preservationists to protect important examples of buildings that many consider too vernacular or "every day." Despite our best efforts, we lost the former 1965 Columbia Savings Building at Wilshire and La Brea in 2010, largely because key decision makers "just didn't get it." Yet we "won" when the owner of the 1949 Casa de Cadillac decided earlier this year to rehabilitate rather than remodel the iconic showroom in Sherman Oaks.

The good news is that under-the-radar places are increasingly being recognized as important and worthy of preservation. Perhaps no better example of this is the first drive-thru Wienerschnitzel in Wilmington, built in 1961 and recently designated as an HCM by the Los Angeles City Council.

With continued effort, more of our everyday heritage will survive for future generations.

SEPTEMBER 26 / NOVEMBER 26 MEMBERSHIP REPORT

The Los Angeles Conservancy would like to acknowledge the generous contributions of our new Supporting members, and the new and renewing members of our Sustaining, Benefactor, and Cornerstone groups.

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With fewer newsletters going through the post office, **the Conservancy has saved more than \$5,000** in postage and printing costs in the past year. Imagine the cost savings if even more members received the electronic version!

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Walking tours begin at 10 a.m. except where noted. Tours are \$5 for Conservancy members and children twelve and under; \$10 for the general public. Walk-ins are accepted on most tours. Pre-payment is required on Angelino Heights, Biltmore Hotel, and Broadway.

For details and reservations, visit laconservancy.org. Questions? Call the Conservancy office at (213) 623-2489.

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Art Deco

Every Saturday

Biltmore Hotel

Every Sunday, 2 p.m.

Broadway: Historic Theatre & Commercial District

Every Saturday

Historic Downtown

Every Saturday

BI-WEEKLY AND MONTHLY TOURS

Angelino Heights

First Saturday

Downtown Renaissance: Spring & Main

Second and Fourth Saturdays

Modern Skyline

First and Third Saturdays, 2 p.m.

Union Station

Third Saturday

Youth, family, and group tours by arrangement; call (213) 623-2489 for information.



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28th St. Apts. (Eric Staudenmaier Photography)

**2014 PRESERVATION AWARDS
APPLICATION DEADLINE**
Friday, January 31

If you know of a preservation project that deserves special recognition, we encourage you to apply for the Conservancy's Preservation Awards. Details on page 2.



Photo by Annie Laskey/L.A. Conservancy

WALKING TOURS
Weekly, bi-weekly, and monthly

Explore the gems of downtown on one of our walking tours! Tickets are only \$5 for Conservancy members. Details on this page and online at laconservancy.org.

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CONSERVANCY
E-NEWS**
DECEMBER 2013

**Gift Memberships
for the Holidays**

Still looking for the perfect holiday gift? Give a membership to the Conservancy! They start at only \$40 for a full year of benefits. It's truly the gift that keeps giving.

**Johnie's Designated as
Landmark**

Great news! On November 27, the Los Angeles Conservancy announced the local landmark nomination of this building.

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