Clifton’s Cafeteria Gets New Lease on Life

by Marcello Vavala and Cindy Olnick

After more than seventy years in the founding family, Clifton’s Brookdale Cafeteria in downtown Los Angeles is changing hands. The Clinton family will continue to own the building at 648 South Broadway, acting as landlord to entrepreneur Andrew Meieran, who will assume a forty-year master lease. The Conservancy welcomes the news and looks forward to working with Meieran to rejuvenate this beloved landmark.

“Dad had a legacy; he had imagination and creativity,” said Don Clinton, son of founder Clifford Clinton, during a September news conference at which he and his son Robert passed the torch to Meieran in the form of a cafeteria tray. “It thrills us to see a young man with that same verve and creativity.”

The enduring appeal of Clifton’s stems from the revolutionary approach and hard work of Clinton, his wife Nelda, and his children and grandchildren. “It’s the imagination, the spirit of invention and innovation, and the spirit of giving and kindness that have transformed this space into a fantasy and a wonderland that’s a refuge for people,” said Meieran. “I’m going to continue to work hard to preserve the property and bring it back to what it was in the thirties.”

Meieran will update the building’s infrastructure and restore historic features, keeping the unique redwood forest theme intact. He plans to remove the aluminum grille covering the exterior and return the façade to its 1935 design. Ultimately, Meieran intends to have Clifton’s designated as a Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument.

To enhance the building’s viability and fuel Broadway’s ongoing revitalization, Meieran plans to convert the second floor into a lounge and restaurant, as well as reactivate the commercial Clifton’s bakery on the top floor. His goal is to keep all sixty-five current employees while creating at least 100

Stroll with Us on Seventh Street

by Trudi Sandmeier

On Sunday, November 7 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., the Conservancy will hold another of our popular in-depth downtown tours with Strolling on 7th Street: Downtown’s Historic Thoroughfare. Seventh Street was the main shopping destination for Angelenos for half a century and is now finding new life with loft-style residential conversions, fine restaurants, and great nightlife. Park your car and stroll with us down a mile of history!

Like most of our tours, Strolling on 7th Street is self-paced. You can visit as many sites as you’d like, in any order, at your leisure. We’ll offer docent-led tours of historic sites on Seventh between Figueroa and Los Angeles Streets, as well as a list of other interesting places along the route and suggestions for nearby dining.

Tour stops currently include the Fine Arts Building (Walker & Eisen, 1926); the Roosevelt Building (now The Roosevelt; Currett & Beeleman, 1927); Brock & Co. (now Seven Grand; Dodd and Richards, 1922); Coulter Dry Goods Company & Henning Building (now The Mandel; 1917); St. Vincent’s Court; Hellman Commercial Trust & Savings Bank (now SB Spring; Schultz and Weaver, 1925); Overell’s (now Doedans’ Home Furnishings; 1906); Santee Court (Arthur W. Angel, 1911); and Broadway Plaza (now Macy’s Plaza; Charles Luckman Associates, 1973).

Special thanks to the Southern California Development Forum, L.A. City Councilmember José Huizar, and L.A. City Councilmember Jan Perry for their generous tour sponsorship.

Tickets are $25 for Conservancy members, $30 for the general public, and $10 for kids 12 and under. For details and tickets, visit laconservancy.org. See you on Seventh!
Give the Gift of Membership

If you’re looking for something unique for friends and family this holiday season, consider a Conservancy gift membership. It’s a gift that gives all year, supporting our work while informing your loved ones about fun events and key issues in Los Angeles preservation. Each holiday gift membership arrives in a festively packaged welcome kit. To purchase, simply visit laconservancy.org or call (213) 430-4201. Memberships are essential to our success and give us the strength in numbers that is critical to influencing decisions on preservation issues and public policy. In addition to making quick work of your holiday shopping, you’ll contribute directly to the Conservancy’s mission of protecting and revitalizing L.A.’s historic resources. Thank you, and happy holidays!

Adrian Scott Fine Joins Staff as Director of Advocacy

We are delighted to welcome Adrian Scott Fine as the Conservancy’s new director of advocacy. Adrian has nearly twenty years of experience in historic preservation, more than ten of them with the National Trust for Historic Preservation. He served for nine years as director of the Trust’s Northeast Field Office in Philadelphia and nearly two years as director of its Center for State and Local Policy in Washington, D.C. A native of Indiana, Adrian holds bachelor’s degrees from Ball State University in urban planning and development and environmental design, with a minor in historic preservation. He has worked with the Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana, the Indiana Alliance of Historic District Commissions, and the Planning Department of the City of Mishawaka, Indiana.

As director of advocacy, Adrian will oversee our vast range of efforts to address specific preservation issues, foster stronger preservation laws and incentives, and help individuals through technical assistance and community outreach. Please join us in welcoming Adrian to the Conservancy family.

John Chase (1953-2010)

As the previous issue went to press in August, we learned of the untimely passing of John Chase at the age of 57. Chase was a beloved figure in the local architecture and planning community. As urban designer for the City of West Hollywood, he fostered development projects that integrated historic preservation, civic amenities, and support of high-quality contemporary architecture. As a writer and editor, he produced innovative works on architecture, urbanism, planning, and preservation. Chase created new scholarship about building types that had previously been overlooked, particularly Hollywood Regency design and vernacular “dingbat” apartments. Always the provocateur, with a uniquely exuberant personal style, Chase was a regular and influential presence at hearings, panel discussions, and other events. He is sorely missed.

Corrections

Due to a production error, the September/October issue of Conservancy News omitted information from a number of photo captions. The caption accompanying the photo of our summer interns on page 2 should have included the name of intern Daniel Kramer. The top photo on page 4 was taken by Gary Leonard; the bottom-right photo was taken by Don Solosan before the screening of Strangers on a Train at the Million Dollar Theatre. The photo on page 5 of Lupe Mora and Aaron Kahlenberg with “The Onion” model was taken by Larry Underhill. On page 6, the photo of Stephen Kanner is courtesy of Kanner Architects; the photo of Joseph Musil is courtesy of Robert Musil. We apologize to these generous photographers and sources for the errors.

In addition, the May/June 2010 issue incorrectly stated the date of the Edward T. Foley Center at Loyola Marymount University as 1962. The building was completed in 1963.
Preservation Issues in the News
by Flora Chou, Karina Muñiz, and Marcello Vavala

Demolished: John Lautner’s Shusett Residence

Despite the extraordinary efforts of the John Lautner Foundation, the owners of Lautner’s Shusett residence in Beverly Hills demolished the home in September.

An internationally recognized master architect, John Lautner (1911-1994) produced some of Southern California’s most visionary examples of Modern residential design over the course of his fifty-five-year career. Completed in 1951, the Shusett residence was among Lautner’s earliest large residential commissions and one of a handful he designed in Beverly Hills. The home reflected Lautner’s exceptional skill in weaving a building into the landscape: he sited a distinctive half-circle wing around an existing pine tree. Lautner would continue to explore and refine the relationships between man and nature in such celebrated works as the Malin (Chemosphere) House (1960) in the Hollywood Hills and the Sheats-Goldstein House (1963) in Benedict Canyon.

The Conservancy worked with the Lautner Foundation to identify preservation tools that could prevent demolition of the Shusett residence. Yet with a weak historic preservation ordinance in Beverly Hills, and no ability to trigger environmental review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), few procedural or legal options existed. The Lautner Foundation had been in contact with the home’s longtime owners since May, discussing the significance of Lautner and the residence, and urging them to restore the house or consider selling it to an interested buyer. In August, the owners decided to continue with their original demolition plans, despite negative media coverage and last-minute negotiations.

Representatives of the Conservancy and the Lautner Foundation spoke at a Beverly Hills City Council meeting in late August, imploring the Council to strengthen the city’s preservation protections. The Conservancy will continue to advocate for such protections, and we stand ready to assist the City in this effort.

Latina/o Initiative

In late September, the Conservancy partnered with the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the California Community Foundation to present Los Angeles (LA) Conversación, a dialogue with local community leaders engaged in Latina/o cultural heritage. LA Conversación is one in a series of similar meetings taking place across the country.

The day-long discussion took place September 30 at the Pico House of El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historical Monument. More than fifty participants from various organizations and neighborhoods throughout Southern California explored the historic influences of Latinas and Latinos on Greater Los Angeles’ cultural and architectural landscape. This dialogue was the first step in building a strong base to recognize and preserve the incredibly rich history of Latinas and Latinos in Los Angeles, and will help guide the discussion nationwide.

The previous evening featured a tour of Mariachi Plaza in partnership with the Boyle Heights Historical Society and other groups such as the East Los Angeles Community Corporation. A social mixer followed at the Eastside Luv Wine Bar y QUeso, including a presentation on Eastside heritage by local historian Gary de la Rosa.

The event was very productive, and community members on the Eastside have already begun working together to identify important local resources. The Conservancy is proud to be part of this exciting initiative.

L.A. County Preservation Fund Grant Recipients

In September, the National Trust for Historic Preservation announced the second-round recipients of grants through its Los Angeles County Preservation Fund. The Fund awarded a total of $92,000 to fourteen organizations to aid a wide range of historic preservation projects in Greater Los Angeles. Congratulations to these very worthy recipients!

Grant funding was made possible by support from the Getty Foundation, the Ahmanson Foundation, and the Ralph M. Parsons Foundation. The Conservancy worked with the National Trust to help raise funds, identify eligible projects, provide technical assistance to applicants, and participate on the selection committee. Selection criteria included urgency of need, geographical distribution, preservation significance, and overall impact. For details and a list of the grant winners, visit preservationnation.org/lapf.
Volunteer Profile:
BRUCE SCOTTOW
by Connie Humberger

BRUCE SCOTTOW is a friendly, energetic Conservancy volunteer who, as of September, has led more than thirty walking tours this year alone! He’s also mentoring new walking tour docents, has worked at Last Remaining Seats for several years, and volunteered for the “Sixties Turn 50” tour.

A native of Long Island, Bruce holds a bachelor’s degree in sociology from Hartwick College in New York. Eager for a career in transportation (a longtime passion of his), he started in Florida as an airline bag handler and worked his way up to station manager. He worked for several airlines over the years and noticed a disturbing trend: “I kept working for airlines that ended up going out of business,” he says. “Was there a theme there?”

Bruce switched gears and became a corporate trainer, coming to Los Angeles in 1984. He spent twelve years with Princess Cruises, training employees who managed the air travel of up to 25,000 passengers a week. He developed an interest in the local Metro rail system and pondered a series of walking tours around Metro stations. Bruce was introduced to the Conservancy and our walking tours in 2007, and he has been an active walking tour docent ever since.

Bruce has also taught at local colleges, edited the cruise-related website Seven Blue Seas, and written several published pieces, including Let’s Travel China. He’s about to launch WalknRideLA.com, featuring the Metro-based walking tours he had thought of years before. Surprisingly, he still has time to enjoy gardening and fitness training. Thank you, Bruce, for giving your time so generously to the Conservancy.

Supporting Preservation Couldn’t Be Easier!

Thank you to all our members who have been participating in the Ralphs/Food-4-Less Community Contribution Program. Each time you use your Ralphs or Food-4-Less rewards card, a portion of your total purchase is donated to the Conservancy. Since the Conservancy began our partnership with Ralphs/Food-4-Less four years ago, members have contributed thousands of dollars simply by buying groceries!

Please sign up or renew today. Even if you’ve participated in the past, you’ll need to renew your registration each fall for the current term (September 1, 2010 – August 31, 2011).

Simply visit ralphs.com, sign in or register, click on “Community Contribution” under the “Services” tab at the top of the page, and select “enroll” in the “Participant” section. On the next screen, you can find the Los Angeles Conservancy by name or NPO number (80379). If you’ve previously enrolled in the program, you can also renew your registration by signing in and going to “My Account” – “Community Rewards.”

If you don’t have a Ralphs rewards card, you can get one at the customer service desk of any Ralphs.

If you participate through Food-4-Less, you don’t need to re-register your rewards card. If you have a Food-4-Less rewards card and have not registered it, you can register online at Food4Less.com. Thank you!

New Ways to Explore Wilshire, Online or on Foot

If you’ve visited the Curating the City: Wilshire Blvd. website we launched in 2005 (or if you haven’t yet), you’re in for a treat: We’ve updated the site with more than fifty new buildings. Visit curatingthecity.org now to start exploring!

The award-winning website was developed as one of many components in the far-reaching educational program made possible by a grant from the Getty Foundation. The site offers a virtual tour of over 100 places along the symbolic spine of Los Angeles. Detailed descriptions of neighborhoods, buildings, and other significant places include hundreds of historic and contemporary images. You can view a timeline of the boulevard’s development, download educational materials, read about past events, and submit your own stories, photos, and ephemera related to your favorite places along Wilshire.

We’re excited to announce the site update in time for this year’s Great Los Angeles Walk on November 20, which will traverse the entire length of Wilshire Boulevard from downtown to the ocean. The walk draws hundreds of Angelinos who spend the day exploring a single—and typically very large-area of the city on foot. Walkers hiked down Wilshire in 2006, Pico Boulevard in 2007, Sunset and Santa Monica Boulevards in 2008, and Adams and Washington Boulevards in 2009.

In honor of the Great Los Angeles Walk’s fifth annual urban hike, the event is returning to Wilshire. Best of all, it’s free! (though you’re on your own for food, drink, etc.) A host of gourmet food trucks will be on hand for lunchtime fuel, and walkers will gather for an afterparty at the end of the trail. It’s a great chance to learn more about L.A., get some exercise in before Thanksgiving, and make some new friends along the way. Each participant will receive a copy of the Conservancy’s 2005 guide to Wilshire Boulevard. Anyone who joins the Conservancy through the walk will get $10 off their first year of membership, as well as a chance to win the book Bullocks Wilshire by Margaret Leslie Davis.

For more information about the Great Los Angeles Walk, visit greatlawalk.com or email greatlawalk@mail.com. To explore the newly expanded and updated Curating the City: Wilshire Blvd. website, visit curatingthecity.org. Happy trails!
Bah Humbug!
Get in the Holiday Spirit with *Scrooge* on Broadway

Kick off the holiday season with the Conservancy’s fifth annual holiday film matinee, generously sponsored again this year by Bank of America. On **Sunday, December 5**, we’ll present a 2 p.m. screening of the musical *Scrooge* (1970), starring Albert Finney and Alec Guinness. This delightful version of *A Christmas Carol* is full of song, dance, and holiday cheer (not to mention ghosts, Tiny Tim, and Victorian London). See this film in all its colorful, big-screen splendor at the magnificent Million Dollar Theatre at 307 South Broadway in downtown Los Angeles.

Part of the Broadway Historic Theatre District, the Million Dollar Theatre was built in 1918 for theatre impresario Sid Grauman. The ornate Spanish Baroque interior was designed by William Woollett and originally seated 2,300 people. The building housing the theatre was designed by Albert C. Martin, with ornate terra-cotta sculptures by Jo Mora.

Tickets for *Scrooge* are $10 for adults and $5 for children 12 and under. Make an afternoon of it with holiday shopping and dining. At nearby Clifton’s Brookdale Cafeteria (see cover story), you’ll receive a ten-percent discount by showing your film ticket! For details and tickets, visit laconservancy.org.

Members Only: Help Pick a Film for the 25th Annual Last Remaining Seats!

While *Last Remaining Seats* is always a special occasion, next year’s series marks a true milestone: it’s the twenty-fifth! We have much in store to celebrate a quarter-century of classic films in historic theatres, starting with a very special opportunity exclusively for Conservancy members.

We will add an extra show to the 2011 series, for a total of seven shows over six weeks. The featured film for this special screening will be chosen by YOU, our members!

Our volunteer Last Remaining Seats Subcommittee has already voted to narrow down their favorite twenty-five films from the past twenty-four years of the series. Now it’s your turn to vote for the film you’d most like to see again.

You can vote any time between **November 1 and November 30** – only one vote per member. To cast your vote, visit laconservancy.org.

Don’t miss this chance to pick the “people’s choice best-of-the-series” film. Thanks for voting, and we look forward to what will be a truly unique season of Last Remaining Seats.

**Vote Now for Your Favorite Last Remaining Seats Film at laconservancy.org**

New CEQA How-To Guide

Thanks to a grant from the California Community Foundation, the Conservancy recently published *Using CEQA to Protect Your Community*, a brief guide to the California Environmental Quality Act. The booklet seeks to demystify the primary legal tool used in California to protect historic sites threatened with demolition. It outlines the environmental review process, cites examples of how people have used it to prevent demolition of historic places, and offers practical tips on how to use CEQA to empower, protect, and enhance communities.

The bilingual guide is printed in English on one side and Spanish on the other. You can download either or both versions at [laconservancy.org](http://laconservancy.org), or contact the Conservancy office for a printed copy (info@laconservancy.org, 213-623-2489).
new positions, including hiring graduates of the Midnight Mission’s restaurant training program. The cafeteria will stay open for service during the project, and the menu will be refined while maintaining the same type of comfort food for which Clifton’s is known.

A Legacy of Service

Clifton’s Brookdale is the last remaining of ten Clifton’s Cafeterias, once the region’s largest cafeteria chain. Founder Clifford E. Clinton grew up working in his father’s Clinton Cafeteria chain in San Francisco. He came to Los Angeles in 1931 to start his own business, merging his first and last names into “Clifton’s.” He opened the original Clifton’s Cafeteria (later remodeled into Pacific Seas) on Olive Street, across from the Oviatt Building.

As a boy, Clifford had lived in China with his parents during their missionary service in the Salvation Army. The region’s severe poverty and lack of food sparked his lifelong efforts to help the hungry. Clifton’s cafeteria embodied his ideals, with mottos such as “Pay What You Wish” and “Dine Free Unless Delighted.” With the nation in the throes of the Great Depression, Clinton nearly went bankrupt honoring his principle of never turning away the hungry, even if they couldn’t pay.

Yet he persevered and opened his second location, Clifton’s Brookdale, in 1935. The building at 648 South Broadway was constructed in 1904 and is now one of the oldest buildings remaining on Broadway. It was designed by Robert Brown Young, one of Los Angeles’ most prominent early architects. The building’s simplified Beaux Arts façade featured expansive display windows to showcase the wares of the original tenants, the J. B. Brown Music Company and Lyon McKinney Smith Company, purveyor of furniture and carpets.

A Boos Brothers cafeteria opened on the site in 1913, operating until Clinton purchased the lease in 1935. The building’s owner, J. E. Carr, “sought out Clifford Clinton to be a tenant in this location because he liked the way Clifford did business,” said grandson Robert Clinton.

The Urban Forest

Clifford transformed the former Boos Brothers space into a fantasy forest inspired by the Santa Cruz mountains where he’d spent childhood summers, not far from the famous Brookdale Lodge. “Dad loved the redwood trees, and he brought that theme with him,” said son Don Clinton.

Clinton retained the noted architecture firm of Plummer, Wurdeman, and Becket, who designed the iconic Pan-Pacific Auditorium that same year. They redesigned the building’s entire façade, with the lower portion evoking a rustic lodge, and turned the interior into the mountain setting that has greeted Clifton’s patrons for generations. Many original features remain, including the waterfall and meandering stream, the terraced dining sections set among mock redwood trees and stony crags, artist Einar Petersen’s mural of a redwood forest, and the Little Chapel with its recorded parable. The firm designed one of the region’s most intricate terrazzo sidewalks for the entrance on Broadway. Spanning the entire length of the building, the colorful terrazzo depicts a dozen local landmarks, destinations, and industries.

The building’s current exterior dates from 1963, when the entrance was recessed and adorned with turquoise and red mosaic glass tile. The remodel also added the expansive entrance canopy, neon blade sign, and aluminum grille.

Fortunately, Clifton’s Brookdale now has a promising future that will honor its rich past. “Historic preservation is not about pressing the pause button,” said Los Angeles City Councilmember José Huizar at the September news conference. “[It’s] about finding ways to honor the wonderful history that makes Broadway so special, and using our historic buildings and historic businesses in ways that allow them to be successful and vital into the next generation.”
**Preservation Advocacy Fund: The Perfect Year-End Contribution**

We greatly appreciate your ongoing support of the Conservancy through your annual membership. As you plan your year-end giving, we’d appreciate your consideration of an additional gift of any amount to the Conservancy’s *Preservation Advocacy Fund*.

We created this fund in 1996 in the wake of one of our most controversial, costly, and ultimately successful preservation battles: halting the demolition of the 1876 former Cathedral of St. Vibiana and preserving its landmark status. Since then, the Preservation Advocacy Fund has become a crucial resource to sustain the Conservancy’s advocacy efforts.

Your support of the Preservation Advocacy Fund will provide an extra gift, above and beyond your membership. This additional support will help us respond to issues such as the ongoing threats to historic resources posed by developers who are seeking project approvals now, in order to act quickly once the economy rebounds.

We greatly appreciate your generosity and attention to the key preservation issues that shape Los Angeles’ legacy. To contribute, please visit laconservancy.org or call (213) 430-4204. Thank you very much.
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 or call (213) 623-2489.

WEEKLY TOURS
- **Art Deco**
  
  Every Saturday (except 12/25 and 1/1)
  
- **Biltmore Hotel**
  
  Every Sunday, 2 p.m.
  
- **Broadway: Historic Theatre & Commercial District**
  
  Every Saturday (except 12/25 and 1/1)
  
- **Historic Core**
  
  Every Saturday

BI-WEEKLY AND MONTHLY TOURS
- **Angelino Heights**
  
  First Saturday (except 1/1)
  
- **Downtown Renaissance: Spring & Main**
  
  Second and Fourth Saturdays (except 12/25)
  
- **Downtown’s Modern Skyline**
  
  First and Third Saturdays (except 1/1)
  
- **Union Station**
  
  Third Saturday (special tour 12/25)

Youth, family, and group tours by arrangement; call the number above for information.

**UPCOMING EVENTS**

**“STROLLING ON 7TH STREET”**
Sunday, November 7
Downtown Los Angeles

Explore downtown L.A.’s historic Seventh Street on this one-time-only, open-house style walking tour that will examine the street’s rich history and architectural gems. See page 1 for details.

**SCROOGE**
Sunday, December 5, 2 p.m.
Million Dollar Theatre

Join the Conservancy for a special holiday screening of *Scrooge*. Make a day of it by dining at Clifton’s Cafeteria, where you will receive a ten-percent discount with your film ticket! See page 5 for details.

**NOW IS THE TIME TO ORDER THE PERFECT HOLIDAY GIFT**

Give the gift of preservation with a Conservancy membership! It’s easy, affordable, and instrumental in protecting our architectural heritage. See page 2 for details.

**CONSERVANCY WALKING TOURS**

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**MEMBERS ONLY: Help pick one of the films for the 25th season of Last Remaining Seats! See page 5 for details.**