Saving the Sixties
by Linda Dishman,
Executive Director, Los Angeles Conservancy

“That can’t be historic—I remember when it was built!”

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Perhaps you’ve heard that about a building dear to your heart; perhaps you’ve said it yourself. If so, you wouldn’t be alone.

The current initiative by the Conservancy and our Modern Committee spotlighting 1960s architecture, “The Sixties Turn 50,” has raised plenty of eyebrows. It can be difficult to accept the need to protect buildings that are younger than we are, particularly among the many preservation issues we face every day. But now, and especially here in Los Angeles, the time has come.

This year marks an important milestone in the history of Los Angeles. Against the national backdrop of the Kennedy era, the civil rights movement, the space race, and the Age of Aquarius, Los Angeles developed its freeway system.
Message from the President

"While advocating for strategic causes, we have gained a better understanding of the educational needs of our citizens and raising critical awareness of historic preservation."

By John Thomas

This will be my final message as President of Long Beach Heritage.

While serving as Vice President of Advocacy for the last 4 years and President the last two years, I have had the privilege of working with some of the finest preservationists I know. I had an incredibly rich and fulfilling experience. Working alongside the Board, committee members and our wonderful volunteers was rewarding and we accomplished many objectives of the mission of Long Beach Heritage.

Stabilizing our organization during the recent financial crisis was a leading priority. Like many other nonprofits, we have found funding our mission and growing our organization challenging. However, thanks to the hard work of our Membership Committee and your continued support, we have actually added new members.

A primary objective of LBH is education. Ensuring that our members understand our mission we provide educational and advocacy opportunities for them. Special events such as our Loft Walk and Great Homes Tour enable attendees to see the positive results of preservation in Long Beach.

Our advocacy efforts have been productive. Working with city officials and staff, we have developed the Historic Preservation Element in the City’s General Plan. We have established healthy relationships with appointed and elected officials and city staff members. There is still much work to be done in creating official appreciation for historic preservation in Long Beach. While advocating for strategic causes, we have gained a better understanding of the educational needs of our citizens and raising critical awareness of historic preservation. As I have always said, “there is plenty of job security in the preservation arena.”

Our wonderful asset, the Bembridge House, remains our shining star and a true testament of our commitment to historic preservation. The Bembridge House Committee continues to host special events and educates both children and adult visitors. Your continued support of the Bembridge House will be necessary in the coming years as it requires ongoing maintenance.

I want to especially thank our Executive Director Mary Kay Nottage. Without Mary Kay’s help, support and incredible dedication, the job of President would have been very difficult. Long Beach Heritage is very fortunate to have such a wonderful person to help us reach our goals.

Finally, I am pleased that Stan Poe will be assuming the role of President. I have worked with Stan for nearly five years and I know that he will continue our efforts responsibly. Seeking dedicated strategic partners in historic preservation is often a difficult task. Stan will reach out to members and decision makers to realize successful historic preservation strategies.

Thank you all for your support during my tenure as President. I will always cherish the time we have spent together during events, leading our advocacy efforts at City Hall and during our Board and committee meetings. This role will remain a true highlight in my life and it has left me with a great sense of personal and professional growth.

May Day 2010: More than 300 People Attend Spring Festival in Drake Park

It was 2006 and the Bembridge House was going to hold the first May Day Festival. We needed a May Pole and dancers if it was going to be an authentic event. Henrietta Bemis, a folk dancing expert, agreed to help choreograph the dance. Her friends Pauline and Ed Klak just happened to own a May Pole. This gift of time and talent five years ago is a gift that keeps on giving and is one of the major reasons that May Day at Drake Park and the Bembridge Homesite is so successful.

On May 1, 2010 over 300 people attended the event. The children’s activities, May Pole dance, health fair and tour of the Historic Bembridge Homestite highlighted the day. Hot dogs and chips were provided by the Long Beach Police Department.


Pauline and Ed Klak donated the May Pole used at the first May Day festival in 2006.
The nominating committee will present the following slate of Officers and Directors for election at Annual Meeting:

**OFFICERS (EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE)**

President .................................. Stan Poe
VP Education ............................... Mary Ellen Mitchell-Gonzalez
VP Bembridge House ....................... Charlotte Mitchell
VP Membership Development ........... Mikle Norton
VP Advocacy ............................... (open)
VP Public Awareness ....................... Melinda Roney
VP Fund Development ..................... Diane Jordan
Secretary ................................. Bobbi Burket
Treasurer ................................. Cheryl Perry

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Advisors Chair .............................. David Waller
Board Development ......................... Maureen Neeley
General Meetings/Special Activities .... Amy Peters
Membership ................................ Kate Braid
Newsletter Editor ........................... Louise Ivers
Online Services .............................. Chris Byrne
Public Relations/Facebook ............... Rachael Rifkin
Volunteer/Docent Coordinator .......... Bobbi Burket
Walking Tours ............................. Mikle Norton

**LIAISONS**

Awards Benefit ........................... Patty Moore
Awards Jury ................................. Karen Clements
Benefit Silent Auction ................. Bobbi Burket/Judy Swaaley
Great Homes Tour .......................... Mary Lou Martin
Hollywood Bowl ........................... Javier Gonzalez
Loft Walk ................................. Laura O’Connor Vervryck/
Photographer .............................. Chris Launi
Historian ................................. Christina Yanis
Redevelopment Liaison ............... (open)
Neighborhood Outreach ............... (open)
Planning Liaison .......................... Jon Glasgow
City Council Liaison ....................... Craig Arnold
Queen Mary Liaison ...................... Renee Simon
Cultural Heritage Liaison ............. Stan Poe
Cultural Arts Liaison ...................... Eve Kilger
LBNMHA Liaisons ......................... Renee Simon/Karen Clements

The 2010 Long Beach Heritage Annual Meeting will be held in the lobby of the historic Willmore Hotel on July 25 from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m.

The lobby has been restored to its former grandeur. Stan Poe will give a presentation about Long Beach’s own-your-own apartment hotels of the 1920s, a number of which are still extant in the downtown area. There will be a short business meeting and members will vote on the 2010-2011 slate of officers.

Mark the date down so you will not miss the informative program and delicious refreshments.

Admission is free to members and their guests, but YOU MUST R.S.V.P. TO OUR OFFICE if you plan to attend. Call (562) 493-7019 today.
Sixty children from Freemont Elementary School visited the Bembridge House on April 22. They were divided into four small groups as they toured the house and gardens. Each group started the tour with an architectural treasure hunt outside. They were greeted by “Mrs. Dorothy Bembridge” who invited them to join her in conversation and tea. She encouraged them to tell her about their various “world travels”. During their conversation, as she poured tea, one of the children told her he visited Paris and saw the Eiffel Tower. Then she asked what he ate in Paris and he replied “crepes”. (At this point, “Mrs. Bembridge” almost lost her cover).

Then “Mrs. Bembridge” escorted the children to another room where docents showed them the rest of the Homesite, the carriage house and the aviary. Two girls told a docent that they wanted to be hisitory teachers. While eating lunch in Admiral Kidd Park, the children were given treasure hunt prizes. Each child was extremely interested in the historic home. All the docents agreed that these were delightful children and they would be very happy to have them visit again.

What’s Up at the Bembridge Heritage Homesite

By Charlotte Mitchell

In April 2010 the Bembridge House was awarded a grant from the Long Beach Navy Memorial Heritage Association to improve the back yard. This includes laying the bricks which are from the historic Jullian Ship Supply building. We will also install water saving irrigation and plants. This project will enable us to use the area for events such as luncheons, receptions and weddings. We also have many plans for projects inside the house, but due to lack of funds and ongoing expenses we have not been able undertake them. We are very grateful for the grant and look forward to a beautiful and useful garden space.

We have been very busy this spring starting with the music program performed by a group of excellent musicians from Long Beach Poly High School. Music has always been important in the history of the Bembridge House and the students played both chamber and solo pieces. In addition, David Waller and Lawrence Liebensbaum of the Los Angeles Lawyers Orchestra played a selection by Brahms. Jill Black kept the docents busy with tours for school children, the Red Hat Society, Banning House docents and other guests. These tours were well received and the docents who led them did an outstanding job. We also had a wonderful embroidery class taught by Elena Levine. A new class will begin in the fall and we will keep you posted.

If you have not been by the house lately you are missing a treat. Elisa Trujillo and her committee have created a beautiful side garden of roses, brick pathways, arbors and colorful flowers. Come visit and take a tour.

Thank You!

We wish to acknowledge the generosity of fourteen Long Beach Heritage members who have donated money to cover the purchase of from one to ten chairs for the Bembridge House. We have now acquired thirty-one chairs.


We are still in need of funding for nineteen more chairs. Each chair costs $25.00. Please send in your donation today!!

Special Guests Visit for Tea at The Bembridge Heritage Homesite

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Musing on the Demise of the Atlantic Theater

By Maureen Neeley, Advocacy Committee

At the May 3 Redevelopment Agency meeting the RDA board voted to support demolition of the Atlantic Theater and to "salvage certain building components for potential reuse in a new North Library." North Long Beach has lost a flagship project that would have been similar to those downtown and in many of the city's other neighborhoods—a project that utilizes the best of the past for the benefit of the future.

How did we regress back to the era of discarding our architectural heritage? In the '70s and '80s wholesale demolition was seen as progress, but the 21st century seemed to be heralding a new era of re-using our historic buildings as anchors for new development. City staff and elected officials are preaching the "greenness" of adaptive reuse.

What we didn’t know is that, while the RDA board asked staff to conduct a feasibility study that would review three design proposals/renderings that would support various aspects of adaptive reuse, the board only received a summary of structural costs. The stated basis for demolition is that the structure could not be retrofitted cost effectively to "satisfy 2007 California Building Code requirements enough to assure structural performance similar to a newly constructed building." (RDA staff report recommendations, May 3, 2010)

What is not stated here is that NO building built before 2007 would satisfy these requirements. That includes 99% of all buildings in California. Not only that, but the adaptive reuse option is most economical on a cost per square foot basis ($315 vs. $334).

The shame in all of this is that the architect and developer who originally started this project with the RDA wanted to use as much of the building as possible. THEIR structural study showed the building to be sound—it is made of reinforced concrete—and the design flexible enough to house a library, community center and shops to make the project economically feasible while bringing the unique design of the theater into the final development. These structural studies and architectural plans were not discussed in the May 3rd staff review.

A compromise has been offered by the RDA which "potentially" reuses the tower in the new development, but our city's track record of incorporating elements of razed buildings is dismal. Check out the state of the Looff carousel roof or the terra cotta figures from the Jergins Trust building. So, for all intents and purposes, one of the last remaining icons of North Long Beach's vibrant history will be consigned to the trash heap, in exchange for what? We will be watching as the design moves forward for this project, ever hopeful but regrettably resigned to the fact that—once again—our children's children never know that North Long Beach once supported three grand theaters. We cross our fingers that the outcome will be a unique development that serves the neighborhood and city well.

Continued from page 1: LBH Position on the Seaport Marina Hotel

with dinner dancing nightly, a 24-hour coffee shop, two cocktail lounges, convention and meeting rooms seating 1000 people, a gift shop, liquor shop, a yacht catering service and a children's playground.

The building would be integrated with landscaped areas, a cabana club would be constructed near the swimming pool, and parking would be provided for over 650 automobiles. Every room would have "television and radio, maid-call service, message at desk systems and color television available to those who desire it."

Thus, the Edgewater Inn was an important addition to the Long Beach hospitality business in the early 1960s. It was across from the recently completed Alamitos Bay Marina and would cater not only to tourists driving down Pacific Coast Highway, but also to people who docked their yachts across the way, as well as to conventioners and members of many groups who had gala events at the hotel.

9-16 June 1963 was "Hospitality Open House" week at the Edgewater Inn, when the public could preview the facilities. The lavish new hotel was formally opened by a dinner dance which was sponsored by the Children's Benefit League of Long Beach. According to the Los Angeles Times two orchestras, conducted by Alvino Ray and Frank Martz, played respectively in the Saber Room and the Empire Room.

The Seaport Marina Hotel has distinctive elements characteristic of the mid-century "Googie" style of architecture that has been documented and deemed worthy of preservation by both scholars and pop culture aficionados. Both the plan and the elevation of the buildings have angular aspects, seen in the double zigzag layout of the guest room wings, the "Y" shaped piers of the main building, and the folded roofs of the circular lobby and convention facilities. These striking roofs and piers are similar to the ones found in Roy Sealey's design for the Pittman Dog and Cat Hospital in Los Angeles, which has been recently restored to its original condition.

The roofs of the Seaport Marina main building are concrete shell vault construction, which is characteristic of Mid-Century Modern architecture. The walls of the main building include textured stone veneer and patterned concrete blocks.

See Seaport Marina Hotel page 6
Don't Miss This Year's Hollywood Bowl Event

Back again by popular demand is our annual evening at Casa Alegre and the Hollywood Bowl. So make reservations now for Saturday, August 14—it's always a sell out. We will be treated to a scrumptious dinner and a tour of the fascinating 1924 multi-level Spanish style home owned by long time LBH supporters Rick Hobbs & Brad Seeley and located in the picturesque Hollywood Hills. They are gracious hosts and the food is always fabulous.

Following dinner we will attend the historic Hollywood Bowl. The program headliner is Harry Connick, Jr., who will perform with the Los Angeles Philharmonic. Harry Connick, Jr. is one of America's favorite contemporary artists who sings everything from romantic ballads, to big band standards, to pop classics.

Tickets are $99 per person for members and $110 for non-members. This includes transportation by charter bus from Long Beach, dinner, open bar and Hollywood Bowl admission. Space is limited, so don't miss out. Call 562 493-7019 for reservations or send your check to the Long Beach Heritage office, P.O Box 92521, LB 90809. Your guests are welcome.

Continued from page 5: Seaport Marina Hotel

that give visual variation to the structure. The hotel was originally arranged around lushly landscaped courtyards and every room had a view of either the marina or the trees and plants in keeping with the mid-century concept of ‘bringing the outside in.’

The architect of the Seaport Marina Hotel, Roy Anthony Sealey (born 1917), was one of the few prominent African-Americans practicing this art in mid-century Los Angeles. He graduated from the University of Southern California and at first worked for Paul Revere Williams, co-designer of the Roosevelt Navy Base in Long Beach. He contributed drawings to Williams’ book, The Small Home of Tomorrow.

According to the DEIR, Alternative Number 1, which is “No Project/No Development,” is the environmentally superior alternative for the site. Long Beach Heritage concurs that keeping the existing hotel and restoring it would cause the least impact on traffic, aesthetics, air quality, and biological resources. The exterior of the main building should be restored to its former appearance and the hotel rooms should be upgraded to attract more guests. This is the preferred alternative.

Alternative Number 2, “No Project/Existing Zoning Alternative,” is Long Beach Heritage’s second choice, provided that the main building of the Seaport Marina Hotel is preserved and adaptively reused. The existing guest rooms could be demolished and new ones constructed. The refurbished hotel would attract a clientele similar to those who presently patronize the mid-century resorts in Palm Springs.
Preserving buildings from the 1960s also poses technical and philosophical challenges.

Some buildings thrived on the energy of the era: the Victorians of Bunker Hill fell to the city’s new financial and cultural hub, including the Music Center of Los Angeles County (Welton Becket & Associates, 1964-1967). As devastating as these losses were, the fact remains that the newer buildings have since gained significance in their own right. This has happened before—such as with the 1904 Hollywood Union High School at Sunset and Highland. It was replaced in the 1930s with the current Streamline Moderne campus, which is now being proposed for Historic-Cultural Monument status.

We’ve lost, and are losing, important buildings from the Sixties largely because people don’t understand or appreciate them. Most recently, the Columbia Savings Building (Irving Shapiro, 1965) at Wilshire and La Brea was demolished for a massive mixed-use development, despite an intensive preservation effort and clear proof of its significance. Time and time again, we heard decision-makers sigh and say, “I just don’t like it” or “I just don’t get it.”

Preserving buildings from the 1960s also poses technical and philosophical challenges. For instance, many buildings feature mass-produced, easily replicated, and/or experimental materials. Is actual historic fabric as important for these structures as it is for those of stone, brick, and old-growth wood? How do we adapt car-oriented designs to the contemporary desire for pedestrian-friendly communities? While a number of 1960s architects pioneered energy-efficient modern design, many others didn’t, instead taking full advantage of the era’s cheap and plentiful energy. How do we enhance the sustainability of these buildings while maintaining their historic character?

We’ve barely scratched the surface of these issues, although our efforts to preserve the 1966 Century Plaza Hotel helped to clarify an important one. The process of determining how to preserve the hotel building as part of a mixed-use development has yielded groundbreaking treatment protocols for aluminum, which will serve not only the Century Plaza but countless other buildings from the Sixties and beyond.

“The Sixties Turn 50” program launched in September 2009 and continues through July 2010, combining tours and other events with online activities at laconservancy.org/sixties. Long after the events have ended, our collective actions will shape how Los Angeles recognizes and protects its rich 1960s legacy.

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CA E N D A R

July 25  Annual Meeting
July 26  Board Meeting
August 14 Hollywood Bowl
August 23 Executive Committee
Sept. 19 Rose Park Restoration Fair
Sept. 27 Board Meeting
Nov. 12 Loft Walk

LBH Membership

Long Beach Heritage is a non-profit education and advocacy group promoting public knowledge and preservation of significant historic and architectural resources, neighborhoods and the cultural heritage of Long Beach. Dues are due on May 1st each year.

Name ________________________________
Address ___________________________________________
City ___________________________ Zip ________________
Telephone ____________________________

☐ Call me with information on how I can participate in LBH as a volunteer

☐ Heritage Friend $ 45
☐ Heritage Student/Senior $ 30
☐ Heritage Household $ 75
☐ Heritage Preservationist $100
☐ Heritage Contributor $250
☐ Heritage Patron $500
☐ New member ____________

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