

LOS ANGELES

CONSERVANCY nev

A W A R E N E S S A S S I S T A N C E A C T I O N VOLUME 34 NUMBER 1 JAN | FEB 2012







LEFT: Lincoln Place in Venice, threatened with demolition for nearly a decade until 2010. Photo by Ingrid E. Mueller. UPPER RIGHT: Baldwin Hills Village (Village Green), a National Historic Landmark. Photo by Flora Chou/L.A. Conservancy. LOWER RIGHT: Threatened with demolition for years, Chase Knolls in Sherman Oaks was featured on our Modern Committee's "How Modern Was My Valley" tour in 2000. Photo from Conservancy archives.

Garden Apartments: Design Fostering Community

by Adrian Scott Fine

Large multi-acre sites, green open spaces, moderate-to-low-density housing, and valuable real estate are all hallmarks of Los Angeles' historic garden apartment communities. They are also the reasons why many of these sites are increasingly threatened by redevelopment—currently at Wyvernwood in Boyle Heights; previously at Lincoln Place in Venice and Chase Knolls in Sherman Oaks.

The Conservancy is launching a new initiative in 2012 to counter this trend and showcase why garden apartments are so well loved by residents who call these communities home. The Los Angeles Garden Apartment Network will provide resources and networking opportunities to owners and residents of historic garden apartments, as well as to advocates for their preservation.

A New Way of Living

Throughout Greater Los Angeles and the nation, garden apartments tell an important story about how housing and site planning came together in the early twentieth century to create an entirely new and innovative approach to multi-family living.

Garden apartments are based on urban planning and landscape concepts adapted from

Please see GARDEN on page 6

Sixth Street Viaduct to Be Replaced

by Cindy Olnick

On November 18, 2011, the Los Angeles City Council certified the final environmental impact report for the Sixth Street Viaduct Seismic Retrofit Project. The report calls for the replacement of the 1932 bridge with a widened, realigned, cable-stayed suspension bridge of modern design.

Despite years of research and consultation with experts worldwide, the Conservancy and others could not find a way to halt or reverse the alkali-silica reaction that is slowly destroying the bridge. The demise of the bridge will be a tremendous loss to the history and landscape of Los Angeles, and to the many Angelenos who care so deeply about this icon. Yet this regrettable outcome presents an important opportunity for the city to look to the future without ignoring its past.

The Sixth Street Viaduct is the largest, last built, and most famous member of a remarkable collection of monumental bridges spanning the Los Angeles River. These bridges were designed to complement one another, making the collection a de facto historic district. The design of the new bridge should fit in with the collection, not stand alone. The new design can and should be exciting, contemporary, and sustainable—but also contextual.

We thank the City's Cultural Heritage Commission and Office of Historic Resources for their hard work and close collaboration in this effort. We are charting new territory, and we will use what we've learned as we move forward.

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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

The Conservancy welcomes applications for our 31st Annual Preservation Awards, which recognize outstanding achievement in the field of historic preservation. If you know of a preservation project that deserves special recognition, we encourage you to apply.

Award recipients are selected by an independent



Antelope Valley Indian Museum State Historic Park, one of the 2010 Preservation Award recipients. Photo © Stephen Shafer.

jury of experts in architecture, historic preservation, and community development. Recipients vary widely, from restoration, rehabilitation, and adaptive reuse projects to advocacy and education efforts by individuals and groups. We encourage submissions from throughout the county that illustrate the value and power of historic preservation. Eligible projects must be located in Los Angeles County and must have been completed by December 31, 2011.

The Conservancy must receive all 2012 applications by **Tuesday, January 31, 2012**. You can download an application at *laconservancy.org/awards* or request one by contacting the office at (213) 623-2489 or *info@laconservancy.org*. We'll announce the recipients in March and present the awards at a luncheon in May. Thanks, and good luck!

Your Legacy Is Our Future: Planned Giving to the Conservancy

For over thirty years, the Los Angeles Conservancy has fought to preserve the important architectural and cultural landmarks that connect us all to this unique metropolis. Remembering the Conservancy in your estate plans is one of the most meaningful things you can do to ensure that future generations enjoy our region's extraordinary built environment.

If you are interested in making a planned gift to the Conservancy—or if you already have remembered us in your estate plans—please contact Mitch Bassion, director of development, at (213) 430-4213 or *mbassion@laconservancy.org*. As our way of saying thank you for your planned gift, we will invite you and a guest to a 2012 Cornerstone reception at a historic home.

Thanks to Intern Andrew Goodrich

The Conservancy benefits greatly from the work of interns. We were particularly fortunate this year to have the longtime support of **Andrew Goodrich**, who interned



here for a full seven months. Andrew is a second-year student in the master of planning program at USC, focusing on preservation planning. Between June and September, he conducted extensive primary research on historic garden apartments in the Los Angeles region (see cover story). Once back in school, Andrew continued to help with updating our historic district website and with our current advocacy efforts to prevent demolition of Wyvernwood Garden Apartments in Boyle

Heights. We will rely heavily on his research as we launch the L.A. Garden Apartment Network in 2012, providing resources to owners, residents, advocates, and the public in service of preserving Greater L.A.'s rich yet vulnerable collection of garden apartments. Thank you, Andrew, for your exceptional service to the Conservancy!

Preservation Issues in the News

by Flora Chou, Adrian Scott Fine, and Marcello Vavala

For more information about these and other issues, please visit our website at *laconservancy.org*.

Wyvernwood

On October 20, the City of Los Angeles released the draft environmental impact report (DEIR) for the Boyle Heights Mixed-Use Community Project. As envisioned, this project would demolish Wyvernwood Garden Apartments, the first large-scale garden apartment community in Los Angeles (see cover story).

The public comment period for the DEIR ends in January. If you haven't yet, please take a few minutes to submit comments; visit *laconservancy.org* for details.

The Conservancy's comments point out the project's narrowly defined objectives, which favor new construction over preservation and undermine the purpose of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) by excluding consideration of less harmful alternatives. The EIR should evaluate a greater range of viable preservation alternatives that retain Wyvernwood's eligibility as a historic district in both the National Register of Historic Resources and the California Register of Historical Resources.

Our comments also emphasize that other historic garden apartments in Los Angeles and across the nation have been successfully rehabilitated and preserved. We added that Wyvernwood's existing buildings can be sensitively upgraded to better address the project's sustainability goals, without the considerable environmental impacts of new construction.

You can read our comments, as well as learn much more about Wyvernwood and how you can help prevent its demolition, on a new section of our website. For info, images, video, and more, please visit the Issues section at *laconservancy.org* and click on "Wyvernwood Garden Apartments."

UCLA Faculty Center

We are happy to report that the 1959 UCLA Faculty Center is no longer threatened





LEFT: The 1959 UCLA Faculty Center, now spared from demolition. Photo by Joe Fletcher. RIGHT: Signs posted at a November rally at the Venice Post Office. Photo by Adrian Scott Fine/L.A. Conservancy.

by plans for a new hotel and conference center. Although the building was proposed for demolition in August 2010, UCLA has chosen to relocate the conference center project to a new site.

Designed by the local firm of Austin, Field and Fry, the Faculty Center is unusual for the use of ranch-style architecture in a university and public institution setting. Its post-and-beam construction, floor-to-ceiling windows, and indoor-outdoor spaces create a casual, welcoming environment conducive to faculty lunches and convening.

The building is potentially eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources as a representative work of a notable architectural firm, as well as a unique example of California ranch-style architecture. The Conservancy is working on a statelevel landmark nomination for the building.

Venice Post Office

Among the post offices slated for closure by the United States Postal Service (USPS) is the 1939 Venice Post Office at 1601 Main Street, designed by Louis A. Simon. The Spanish Colonial Revival-style building has long been a neighborhood landmark. Modernist artist Edward Biberman created a mural for the lobby that depicts the early history of Venice.

Last summer, the USPS received formal appeals from the Venice Stakeholders Association, the Venice Neighborhood Council, the

Conservancy, and others. Congresswoman Janice Hahn urged the USPS "to grant the appeal and engage the Venice community in finding another solution to the ramifications of the decline in the use of postal services."

Despite these pleas, the USPS concluded in late September that it had no basis for setting aside its original decision to move its operations to a nearby annex. A subsequent appeal filed in October is now pending with the Postal Regulatory Commission.

Leuzinger High School

With technical assistance and support from the Conservancy, the Friends and Alumni of Leuzinger High School took legal action in late September to protect the historic buildings on the eighty-two-year-old campus in Lawndale. The local advocacy coalition filed a lawsuit in an effort to force the Centinela Valley Union High School District to prepare an environmental impact report and prevent additional losses on the site.

Spurred by the passage of two recent bond measures, the school district has launched a series of construction projects that have moved forward without any environmental review or evaluation of potential historic resources. In the past two years, the district's rapid demolition schedule has leveled the school's 1930s Industrial Arts Building and all seven of the postwar-era "finger" classroom buildings, so named because of their slender shape.

SAVE THE DATE: MILLARD SHEETS TOUR MARCH 18

On Sunday, March 18, the Conservancy and our volunteer Modern Committee will present Millard Sheets: A Legacy of Art and Architecture. This one-timeonly tour will showcase the art and architecture of Millard Sheets and his colleagues in the Claremont and Pomona area. Sheets (1907-1989), a nationally renowned artist, designer, and art teacher, was a native of the Pomona Valley and spent much of his career there.

The tour is part of Pacific Standard Time. This unprecedented collaboration, initiated by the Getty, brings together more than sixty cultural institutions from across Southern California to tell the story of the birth of the L.A. art scene. Details and tickets will be available soon at laconservancy.org.

MODERN SKYLINE TOUR: NOW AT 2 P.M.

Starting January 7, the Conservancy will offer our Modern Skyline tour at 2 p.m. instead of 10 a.m. It will still take place the first and third Saturdays of each month. By visiting the skyscrapers, plazas, and public art that define L.A.'s bustling Central Business District, this fascinating tour explores how a city grows, changes, and treats its historic fabric over time. For details and reservations, visit laconservancy.org/tours.



Our Modern Skyline tour explores the architecture, history, public art, and preservation of downtown's Central Business District. Photo by Annie Laskey/ L.A. Conservancy.

In Memoriam

Anthony J. Lumsden, FAIA (1928 – 2011)

Architect Anthony J. Lumsden, FAIA passed away September 27 at age 83. Among many achievements, Lumsden co-developed a building technology in the 1960s that literally changed the face of corporate architecture in the late twentieth century.

Lumsden was born in England and grew up in Australia, earning an architecture degree from the University of Sydney. He met architect Cesar Pelli while working for Eero Saarinen in the 1950s. In the 1960s, Pelli hired him at the renowned firm of Daniel, Mann, Johnson & Mendenhall (DMJM) in Los Angeles.



Working from ideas born at Saarinen's office, Lumsden and Pelli pioneered the glass membrane (skin) design system. By reversing the mullions (vertical elements that separate windows) inward rather than outward, the system enabled completely new ways of "wrapping" buildings in glass, creating smooth curtain walls. Perhaps his best-known example is the undulating Roxbury Plaza/Manufacturers Bank building at 9701 Wilshire Boulevard in Beverly Hills. Other notable designs include One Park Plaza at 3250 Wilshire and the Federal Aviation Administration building in Hawthorne.

Lumsden served as director of design at DMJM from 1968 to 1993 and formed his own practice in 1994. Among his favorite projects was the Donald C. Tillman Water Reclamation Plant in Van Nuys, which he designed in 1982.

Margaret Tante Burk (1918 – 2011)



Photo by Robert Peate.

Margaret Burk, noted businesswoman, publicist, author, and staunch supporter in the effort to save the Ambassador Hotel, passed away October 6 at age 93. Born in Savannah, Georgia, Burk attended Northwestern University and moved to Los Angeles in the 1930s. She led several successful careers and is perhaps best known for co-founding Round Table West, one of the country's largest literary luncheon programs.

In 1969, Burk became public relations director for the iconic Ambassador Hotel and Cocoanut Grove nightclub. She vividly conveyed the site's history in her 1980 book, Are the Stars Out Tonight? The Story of the World Famous Ambassador and Cocoanut *Grove.* Burk actively participated in the Conservancy's long effort to prevent demolition of the Ambassador, appearing at events and public hearings to testify to the site's singular importance. Though ultimately unsuccessful, the preservation effort was greatly bolstered by her involvement. We will always appreciate her generosity, friendship, and support.

Thomas Morales (1935 – 2011)

Tom Morales, one of the pioneers of the preservation movement in Los Angeles, passed away October 15 at the age of 76. A lifelong resident of Angeleno Heights, Tom tirelessly lobbied the City of Los Angeles in the 1970s to designate the neighborhood as a historic district; it became the city's first Historic Preservation Overlay Zone (HPOZ) in 1983.

Morales earned a degree in international business from USC and worked for companies including Toyota Motors, Hughes Aircraft, and Raytheon. He made Carroll Avenue his home in 1972. His passion for preservation is evident in his painstaking restoration of 1300 Carroll Avenue, an 1887 Victorian residence that was his longtime home. His legacy lives on through his son, Christopher; his beloved wife, Priscilla; and the efforts of the individual residents of the neighborhood, which he loved and had been part of for decades.



Photo courtesy Christopher Morales

Thanks To Our 2011 Walking Tour Docents

With eight different docent-led architectural tours of the downtown area, the Conservancy's signature Walking Tour Program reaches about 8,000 people each year. The following people made that possible in 2011 by volunteering their time, expertise, and enthusiasm as walking tour docents. Thank you!

Alice Allen Janis Ashlev * Reem Baroody David Berman Kenon Breazeale * Margaret Briggs Chris Brown * Roberta Brown Michael Burr Gail Burton Norm Carter **Bud Coffey** Pamela Corante Laura Crockett Jay Cywan Julie Downey * Marcia Enger Greg Figueroa ** John Ghini *

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* Gave over 15 tours ** Gave over 20 tours *** Gave over 30 tours

Thank You, At Home with History Volunteers!

Rainy weather didn't dampen the spirit of the more than 120 volunteers who participated in the Conservancy's November 6 tour, At Home with History. The skies cleared just as the all-day event began, and more than 700 guests explored six homes in three adjacent, mid-city Historic Preservation Overlay Zones (HPOZs). At each residence, volunteers served in docent or logistics roles, helping to make the sold-out event a huge success.

Our thanks go out to all volunteers (fifteen of whom were first-time Conservancy volunteers) for their time and talents. We simply could not have done it without you!



Volunteer docent Michael Goldstein describes one of the two tour homes in the Wilshire Park HPO7 Photo by Larry Underhill.

Volunteer Committee Officers, 2011-2012

Congratulations and thank you to our new and returning officers!

Historic Theatres Committee (HTC)

Chair: Michael Zoldessy Vice Chair: Scott Benson Recorder: Mariah Montgomery

Last Remaining Seats Subcommittee (LRSCOM) of the HTC

Chair: Ken Gehrig Vice Chair: Scott Benson Recorder: Tracy Fink

Modern Committee (ModCom)

Chair: Regina O'Brien Vice Chair: Charlie Fisher Commercial Council Chair: Sarah Farris-Gilbert

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Secretary: Cheryll Dudley Roberts

Members Only: Help Pick a **Film for Last Remaining Seats!**

Vote by February 1 at laconservancy.org

Last year, to celebrate the 25th Annual Last Remaining Seats series of classic films in historic theatres, Conservancy members selected one of the films (Sunset Boulevard) through a Fan Favorite poll. This year, we're bringing back the Fan Favorite poll by popular demand!

As a member of the Los Angeles Conservancy, you can help select one of the films for the 2012 season. Our volunteer Last Remaining Seats Subcommittee has chosen a small group of candidates. Now it's your turn to vote for the film you'd most like

Don't delay; the voting period lasts only a month and ends February 1.

To cast your vote, visit the Last Remaining Seats section of our website at laconservancy.org. If you don't have internet access, you can call the Conservancy office at (213) 623-2489.

Thanks for voting, and we look forward to the results!



GARDEN continued from page 1

the British and American Garden City Movements, fostered by planners Ebenezer Howard and Clarence S. Stein. The idea caught on throughout the U.S., particularly since for a time, the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) favored this new form of housing and backed such projects with loan guarantees.

Both public and private entities employed these concepts in Los Angeles, resulting in nearly fifty examples of historic garden apartment communities throughout the region. Common design principles include large expanses of shared open space, often park-like settings, low-scaled buildings oriented to face the landscape and each other, and a minimal network of streets that relegate the automobile to the rear or edge of the site. The careful design of the sites puts people first, prioritizing quality of life and opportunities for social interaction.

"This 'expression of humanness' and the extraordinary care taken by their designers to create healthy, safe, and beautiful places to live still resonates, some seventy years later," says architectural historian Katie Horak of Architectural Resources Group. Horak is developing a historic context of Los Angeles' garden apartments as part of the Network's effort.

Wyvernwood Garden Apartments has thrived in large part because of these concepts. Long-term tenants attest to the close-knit community and family ties spanning generations, fostered by the community's unique design. Yet the owners seek to replace the entire complex with a \$2 billion mixed-use development with 4,400 housing units. The Conservancy and many others oppose this plan, which would destroy an important part of Los Angeles history and a thriving community (see page 3).

Wyvernwood is not the first historic garden apartment community in Los Angeles to face demolition. The Conservancy and many others have worked hard to save other communities whose proposed destruction spurred intensive, multi-year advocacy efforts.

Lincoln Place in Venice is a good example. Built between 1949 and 1951, Lincoln Place spans thirty-nine acres and nearly 800 apartments in fifty-

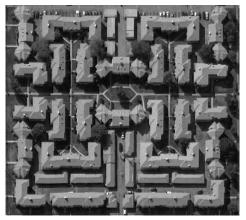
two buildings. It was designed by architects Heth Wharton and Ralph Vaughn for returning World War II veterans, with buildings featuring Moderne and International Style architectural elements.

The proposed demolition of Lincoln Place in 2001 led to an epic preservation battle lasting nearly a decade, with illegal demolitions, several lawsuits, and multiple hearings before the State Historical Resources Commission. The site has been nearly vacated in the intervening years. Preservation ultimately won out, when a settlement agreement was reached in 2010 that calls for the rehabilitation of all the remaining buildings. Owners of Lincoln Place now embrace preservation, recently submitting applications for Historic-Cultural Monument status as well as pursuing the Mills Act and federal Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit incentives.

An Issue of Broad Importance

Given their large presence, their importance to the urban landscape, and the sheer number of people who call them home, historic garden apartments have a significance that transcends their physical boundaries. Their preservation is important not just to Boyle Heights or Venice, but to the entire region.

"These places are rare and irreplaceable today, and need to be protected for future generations," says Steven Keylon, a resident of Village Green (1942) in Baldwin Hills. Village Green is the most recognized and well preserved historic garden apartment



This aerial view of Dorset Village in Los Angeles shows the careful site planning typical of garden apartments. Imagery © 2011 DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, U.S. Geological Survey, USDA Farm Service Agency, Map data © 2011 Cybercity, Google.



The Herrman family enjoys a birthday party at Park La Brea (1944). Spanning more than 150 acres, the site is the largest of L.A.'s historic garden apartment communities. Photo © 2011 Ross H. Martin.

community in Greater Los Angeles, and it has the highest-level historic designation in the country: National Historic Landmark.

Many original planning principles of garden apartment communities—shared open space, pedestrian-friendly design, and environmentally sensitive siting—have found renewed interest in the New Urbanism and sustainability movements of today. Yet given the desire for increased density and profitability, historic garden apartments are often seen as ripe for redevelopment.

Join the Network

This spring, the Conservancy will launch the Los Angeles Garden Apartment Network, with funding support from the Clarence S. Stein Institute and the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The network will help bring resources and assistance to all the historic garden apartments of Greater Los Angeles, shine the spotlight on this relatively little-known part of our history, and build greater awareness and understanding of this important building type.

If you appreciate the unique value of historic garden apartments, join the network! For details, and to share your own stories, visit our website at *laconservancy.org*.

OCTOBER 1 / NOVEMBER 28 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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The Los Angeles Conservancy is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Please mail or fax (credit card payments) this form to receive your membership card entitling you to a full year of benefits. Thank you, and welcome to the Los Angeles Conservancy!

Los Angeles Conservancy Attn: Membership 523 West Sixth Street, Suite 826 Los Angeles, CA 90014 (213) 623-2489 **a** fax: (213) 623-3909

Thanks for Going Above and Beyond in 2011!

As you know, membership support is essential to the Conservancy's efforts. Yet it provides only around a third of our operating revenue. We also rely greatly on additional philanthropy throughout the year for specific projects, from educational tours to urgent action on advocacy issues

We'd like to express our heartfelt thanks to the foundations, companies, and individuals who provided much-needed sponsorship, underwriting, and in-kind donations for the range of efforts we undertook in 2011. Your generosity is critical to our ability to pursue our mission. There are too many of you to name in these pages; for a complete list, please visit laconservancy.org. Thank you!

CONSERVANCY WALKING TOURS

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.

WEEKLY TOURS

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

Downtown's Modern Skyline NEW TIME!

First and Third Saturdays 2 p.m.

Union Station

Third Saturday

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



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2012 PRESERVATION AWARD APPLICATION DEADLINE

Tuesday, January 31

If you know of a preservation project that deserves special recognition, consider applying for a 2012 Conservancy Preservation Award. For details, visit laconservancy.org/awards.



LAST REMAINING SEATS **MEMBER VOTING DEADLINE**

Wednesday, February 1

Help choose one of the films for our 2012 series of classic films in historic theatres! Voting is open to active Conservancy members only, and you must vote by February 1. For details and voting, visit laconservancy.org.



MILLARD SHEETS: A LEGACY OF ART AND ARCHITECTURE

Sunday, March 18

Save the date for our special Pacific Standard Time tour of historic sites associated with artist and designer Millard Sheets in the Pomona and Claremont area. For details, visit laconservancy.org.