

LOS ANGELES

CONSERVANCY

news

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LEFT: The Conservancy obtained an easement in 1985 from developer Wayne Ratkovich for the 1931 Pellissier Building and Wiltern Theatre. Photo from L.A. Conservancy archives. RIGHT: The Conservancy also holds an easement protecting the original exterior, interior, and landscape features of the Joseph Residence and Apartments, built between 1946 and 1970. Photo by Dean Cheng.

Local State Historic Parks on Closure List

by Adrian Scott Fine

On May 12, the Conservancy honored the Antelope Valley Indian Museum State Historic Park with a 2011 Preservation Award for its outstanding preservation and recent reopening. Imagine our surprise the very next day, when the museum appeared on California State Parks' list of parks it plans to permanently close due to the state budget crisis. The list of seventy parks includes five in Los Angeles County (four of which are designated as historic) and forty percent of all state historic parks in California.

Stabilizing and restoring the Antelope Valley Indian Museum building took nearly a decade of planning, two years of construction (including a temporary delay due to the loss of funding), and \$1.4 million. In addition to the irony of the timing, closing the museum after investing so much time, effort, and money would squander these resources as well as our heritage.

The other Los Angeles County state parks on the hit list are Los Encinos in Encino, Pio Pico in Whittier, Saddleback Butte in Lancaster (not a historic park), and Santa Susanna Pass in Chatsworth. Permanently closing these and sixty-five other parks would be incredibly short-sighted and unprecedented in California's rich history of parks.

State Parks has proposed park closures in the past, and the National Trust for Historic Preservation has twice included California's state parks on its annual list of America's 11

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New Web Feature Showcases Conservancy Conservation Easements

by Adrian Scott Fine

Saving historic places rarely takes a one-size-fits-all approach; the Conservancy most often applies a different set of tools and strategies in each case. While much of our work typically involves years of effort nudging a project toward a preservation outcome, the best way to permanently save a historic resource is through a conservation easement. An easement is a legal agreement recorded on the title of the property that runs in perpetuity with the deed, regardless of the owner.

Through a new feature on our website, the Conservancy for the first time can showcase our diverse collection of twenty-seven easement properties. The new Conservancy Easements section includes a description of each property and a slideshow with photos of the historic elements that each easement covers. To explore this exciting new feature, visit laconservancy.org.

Easements in a Nutshell

An easement is basically a private or partial legal interest transferred by a property owner to a qualified preservation nonprofit organization (in this case, the Conservancy) or government entity. The owner continues to own the property but transfers the specific set of rights represented by the easement to the easement-holding organization. As the easement-holding organization, the Conservancy is responsible for monitoring the property's condition, reviewing any proposed changes to the property, and ensuring that any alterations conform to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation (nationally recognized and widely used preservation standards).

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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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Thanks to the Getty Research Institute for access to the Julius Shulman photography archive.

Eldon Davis (1917-2011)

Renowned architect Eldon Davis passed away April 22 at age 94. His firm Armét and Davis (now Armét Davis Newlove Architects) created many of Los Angeles' most innovative postwar commercial structures, gaining international acclaim for their restaurants and coffee shops.

The prolific firm "established Coffee Shop Modern as a major popular modern style," wrote Alan Hess in the seminal book *Googie: Fifties Coffee Shop Architecture*. Their exuberant work uniquely interpreted the Googie style and created some of our most beloved landmarks. Characterized by soaring rooflines, walls of glass, lush plantings, and eye-catching signage, their designs reflected postwar optimism, the space age, and the booming car culture. Yet at heart, they created solutions for commercial needs, from time-saving open kitchens to economical use of materials in new ways.

Armét and Davis were responsible for the design of thousands of restaurants. Their prototypes for national chains such as Denny's and Big Boy were expanded throughout the U.S. and abroad. Yet they also created designs for many individual locations and small chains, including Norm's, Pann's, the Wich Stand on Slauson Avenue, and Romeo's Times Square (now Johnie's Wilshire).

A native of Washington State, Davis graduated from the USC School of Architecture in 1942. He focused on military and industrial projects during World War II. After working at the firm of Spaulding and Rex, Davis and former USC classmate Louis Armét formed their own firm in 1947. They expected to specialize in industrial design yet flourished with a vast range of commercial (and some residential) projects, from churches and country clubs to banks and bowling alleys.

The Conservancy's Modern Committee held a lecture and exhibition of the firm's work in 1993 and presented Davis and partner Victor Newlove with its Modern Master award last year. Davis was a special guest at our 2005 Curating the City: Wilshire Blvd. tour of Johnie's Wilshire. We will always remember his kindness and vitality, and we will continue our work to honor his indelible contributions to the Southern California landscape.

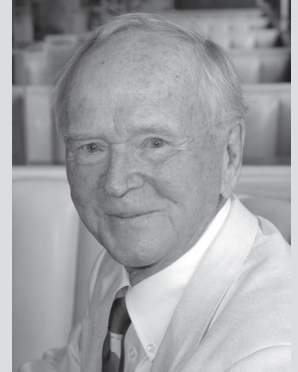


Photo by Larry Underhill.

Conservancy Staff Changes



We are delighted to welcome **Bruce Scottow** (pictured) to the Conservancy staff as our new educational outreach coordinator. Bruce is a native of Long Island and holds a bachelor's degree in sociology from Hartwick College in New York. After a long career in transportation, he was introduced to the Conservancy and our walking tours in 2007. He has been one of our most active walking tour docents ever since and has volunteered for our special tours and Last Remaining Seats. Bruce joined the education team in May, focusing on volunteer services and youth outreach while helping with all educational programs and events. Please join us in welcoming Bruce to the Conservancy staff.

We recently bid a bittersweet farewell to **Abby Matthews**, who left her position as membership assistant in June. She now works as a grants coordinator for GOOD Magazine, managing a portfolio of grant recipients from the Pepsi Refresh Project. In her two years at the Conservancy, Abby was responsible for the bulk of the Conservancy's membership records and helped coordinate several campaigns to help increase membership. We will miss Abby, but we wish her all the best in her new position.

Preservation Issues in the News

by Flora Chou, Adrian Scott Fine, Karina Muñiz, and Marcello Vavala

Leuzinger High School

Spurred by the recent passage of two bond measures, the Centinela Valley Union High School District launched a series of construction projects at Leuzinger High School in the South Bay city of Lawndale. The projects have moved forward without any environmental review or evaluation of potential historic resources on the eighty-one-year-old campus.

Located on Rosecrans Avenue near Hawthorne Boulevard, Leuzinger High School opened in 1930 in what was then a largely agricultural setting. The school acquired a distinctive identity soon after opening: in return for providing staging facilities for aspects of the 1932 Summer Olympics held in Los Angeles, the school was authorized to use the Olympic rings and motto as its emblem.

While the school's identity as the home of the Olympians is secure, the campus' physical identity is not: the school district has an aggressive demolition and construction schedule. In August 2010, the district demolished the school's 1930s Industrial Arts Building, and all seven single-story "finger" classroom buildings were slated for demolition as early as June 2011 until plans were temporarily withdrawn. Referred to as finger buildings for their long, slender shape and often arranged in rows with courtyard space in between, these structures typify postwar California schools and feature such green design elements as passive solar shading. The *Daily Breeze* reported in October 2010 that "about three-quarters of Leuzinger High would be torn down and rebuilt."

Local residents and Leuzinger alumni recently formed an advocacy coalition called Save Leuzinger's Legacy. In May, Conservancy staff attended a board meeting of the school district and urged the school board to prepare an environmental impact report (EIR) as part of its ongoing plans. We emphasized that the campus can certainly accommodate expansion and upgrades, which an EIR does not prevent. The California Environmental Quality Act, or CEQA, requires an EIR in order to outline impacts of a proposed project



Architecture at Leuzinger High: the PWA Moderne girls' gym (left) and one of the postwar-era "finger" buildings (right), recently proposed for demolition. Photos by Flora Chou and Save Leuzinger's Legacy.

on historic resources and evaluate alternatives to mitigate those impacts.

While not every older school campus is historic, the Conservancy does believe that the Leuzinger High School campus is potentially significant and should be properly evaluated. The campus contains a number of irreplaceable buildings that tell the story of both the school's and Lawndale's growth and development. Some of the buildings were designed by noted Southland architect T. C. Kistner of the firm Kistner, Wright, and Wright. They include a 1936 PWA Moderne girls' gymnasium that was financed in part through a Public Works Administration grant. The school expanded after World War II with new structures including the now-threatened finger buildings and the boys' gymnasium, which features exposed structural arches.

By reinvesting in its existing buildings, Leuzinger, like many other historic schools, can continue to meet the needs of students and the community while providing high-performing facilities for the twenty-first century.

Hollywood Grove HPOZ

In May, Hollywood Grove became Los Angeles' twenty-eighth historic district, or Historic Preservation Overlay Zone (HPOZ). Located north of Franklin Avenue between Canyon Drive and St. Andrews Place, the small neighborhood features homes constructed between 1905 and 1939. Seventy-eight percent of the homes were identified as "contributing structures" significant to the neighborhood's character.

Developed on a former avocado grove, the neighborhood reflects a mix of architectural styles, including Craftsman, American Colonial Revival, and Period Revival. It is a prime example of what a typical residential subdivision once looked like in Hollywood. Many of the homes feature wide front porches, and the streets are now lined with lush landscaping. The next time you're in the neighborhood, drive by to see this charming enclave for yourself.

Golden State Mutual Building

On June 1, the Los Angeles City Council officially declared the Golden State Mutual Life Insurance Company Building (Paul Williams, 1949) as a City of Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument (HCM). Local landmark status ensures that the city's Office of Historic Resources and Cultural Heritage Commission will review proposed changes to the building's significant elements.

With the recent closure of the Golden State Mutual Life Insurance Company, the Conservancy's Modern Committee, West Adams Heritage Association, and others are working to keep the building's many historic features intact (see cover story, May/June Conservancy News). These elements include two site-specific murals that flank the upper portion of the building's double-height lobby.

It is unclear how the landmark designation will affect the court proceedings over the murals, which are still threatened with removal. For background and updates, please

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STATE PARKS continued from page 1

Most Endangered Historic Places. Yet this is the first time in the hundred-year history of California's state park system that the state will actually implement the closures, which they plan to complete by July 2012.

Parks officials maintain that in deciding which parks to keep open, they tried to protect the most significant cultural and natural resources. However, a disproportionate number of state parks targeted for closure contain significant historic buildings and sites.

The closure of state parks is a growing issue confronting more than thirty states across the country. After years of underfunding and deferred maintenance, many state parks struggle to support even basic day-to-day operations.

California has the largest state park system in the nation, with 278 parks, including fifty-one designated as state historic parks. California's state parks recorded more than sixty-five million visits in 2010. As strong catalysts for heritage tourism, state parks are economic engines that contribute to the economy and overall are a good return on investment.

Some of the parks facing closure are in fact revenue neutral; they generate as much money as they spend. Why close these parks? What will happen to these parks after suffering from years of abandonment, neglect, and deferred maintenance? If implemented, this plan could end up costing the state much more than it saves.

Many questions need to be asked and fully addressed before this plan goes into effect, padlocking these important resources and keeping them off limits to the public for the foreseeable future.

Our parks need your help. The California State Parks Foundation is leading the effort to oppose the closures. You can join this effort by conveying to policymakers the message, "Don't Let Our State Parks Become Just a Memory." For details, visit calparks.org.

Sally Mendelsohn (1937-2011)

Photo courtesy Carol Mendelsohn.

Sally Mendelsohn, a beloved Conservancy volunteer for nearly twenty-five years, passed away May 11 at age 73. She will be greatly missed and remembered for her warmth, generosity, kindness, and integrity.

Born in Ashland, Oregon, Sally attended Lewis & Clark College and Portland State University. She moved to Southern California in the early 1960s, earning her teaching credential from Cal State Los Angeles. She worked at UCLA, then in the Technical Services department at the Cal State Northridge Library for nineteen years before retiring in 2006.

Sally graduated from the Conservancy's walking tour docent class in 1984. She led tours of historic downtown, volunteered for special one-time tours, and helped with administrative work in the Conservancy office. She even took extension courses in preservation to expand her knowledge. In addition to spending countless hours admiring historic places with tourgoers, friends, and family, Sally advocated for the preservation of La Reina Theatre in Sherman Oaks when it was slated for redevelopment (the façade was ultimately preserved). Her activism went beyond preservation; she fought for women's rights, adoptee rights, education, libraries, and funding for public space.

Sally's vast range of interests included poetry, folk and ballroom dancing, traveling, and West Texas music. She and her twin sister Sue perfected the art of "dawdling." She was renowned for her green thumb, enthusiasm for native plants, and beautiful flower arrangements. She was a member of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Studio City for forty years. She loved family and was particularly "tickled" with the arrival three years ago of her grandson, Gram.

Sally was perhaps best known for her generosity; she shared everything with others, from her love of historic buildings to flowers from her garden. "She took the ordinary and made it beautiful," said longtime friend Jane Prather. "She had an eye for beauty and loved to share it."

We're grateful to Sally's family for suggesting that donations in her memory go to the Conservancy, as well as to her church, the American Lung Association, and the weSPARK Cancer Support Center.

ISSUES continued from page 3

visit the Issues section of our website at laconservancy.org.

Self Help Graphics & Art Building

In May, the State Historical Resources Commission voted unanimously to determine the former Self Help Graphics and Art (SHG&A) building eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources.

This decision will help protect the building by making certain changes to it subject to public review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Since the building is located in unincorporated East Los Angeles, and the County government does not yet have a preservation ordinance, state-level recognition currently offers the strongest protection.

The building's listing sets an important precedent because it is based on its cultural, not architectural, significance. Very few landmarks at either the local or state level are designated solely for their cultural contributions, underscoring the need for greater recognition of our diverse cultural heritage. This type of official acknowledgment paves the way for other sites that deserve to be valued and recognized for their cultural importance. Since much of the SHG&A building's significance stems from events that took place in the 1970s and '80s, the listing also signals increasing appreciation of resources from our recent past.

Thank you to everyone who wrote letters and/or attended hearings in favor of the California Register nomination. We could not have achieved this level of success without your support.

For background on this issue, please see the November/December 2008 Conservancy News or visit laconservancy.org.

City Hall Tour Back for Limited Time with “Downtown at Sunset”

Our popular summer evening tours start July 20 – perfect for taking advantage of longer days, exploring all the great new offerings in the historic core of Los Angeles, and waiting out the commute if you happen to work downtown.

This special summer series includes slightly shorter versions of three of our standard Saturday tours, as well as three tours of Los Angeles City Hall, which we no longer offer on a regular basis.

City Hall explores the fascinating history and magnificent architecture of Los Angeles’ great 1928 civic building. This is the only time of year we offer this tour!

Modern Skyline explores how urban centers change over time: the blending of old and new, public art, younger buildings that are becoming landmarks in their own right, and the redevelopment of Bunker Hill.

Art Deco highlights the architecture and ornamentation of buildings from the 1920s and ’30s, featuring rich materials and classic geometric design.

Union Station offers an in-depth look this iconic L.A. landmark, the last great railway station built in America.

The tours take place Wednesday evenings from July 20 through August 24; they start at 5:30 p.m. and last about 1-3/4 hours. They cost the same as our regular tours: \$5 for Conservancy members and children 12 and under; \$10 for the general public.



The elaborate marble floor in the rotunda of City Hall. Photo by Mel Weinstein.

Space is limited, and reservations are required, so reserve now!

For details and reservations, visit laconservancy.org/tours or call (213) 623-2489. See you at sunset!

SCHEDULE

July 20	Art Deco
July 27	City Hall
August 3	Modern Skyline
August 10	City Hall
August 17	Union Station
August 24	City Hall



Photo by Larry Underhill.

My Favorite Landmark

by Willow Pappageorge, the Conservancy’s administrative manager

ADAMS HOUSE (Lloyd Wright, 1939) 7400 Tampa Avenue, Reseda

“The Adams family built this house themselves, living in a tent on the property as they were building. That’s one of the reasons I love this house. I grew up with hippie parents and lived in many tents, including a tepee in Colorado and a tent in Michigan while my parents built a geodesic dome. I also appreciate how modest the house is. It’s tiny by today’s standards [only 676 square feet], but I believe that architecture can be spectacular without being huge or overwhelming.”

Bill and Clara Adams dreamed of owning their own home but wanted it to be affordable and modest. Bill was inspired by Frank Lloyd Wright’s Usonian design principles of affordable good design for the working man, so he wrote to Frank Lloyd Wright asking him for a plan for a house. Wright was occupied building Taliesin West, so he sent their request to his son, Lloyd Wright. Wright’s design remains virtually intact and was featured on the Conservancy’s 2006 Spectacular/Vernacular tour.

What’s your favorite landmark? Tell us why your favorite L.A. County landmark means so much to you! E-mail news@laconservancy.org with “My Favorite Landmark” as the subject.

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EASEMENTS continued from page 1

Easements come to us in various ways, sometimes as a result of an advocacy effort. When the 1931 Pellissier Building and Wiltern Theatre faced demolition in 1979, the Conservancy helped to delay demolition by negotiating with the City, providing a feasibility study for alternative use, and holding a massive public rally. Backed by hundreds of supporters, the effort resulted in the Conservancy's first major victory. It also led to an easement from developer Wayne Ratkovich, who rescued the building by purchasing it and completing an extensive, sensitive restoration.

Strong, Permanent Protection

Many owners of historic landmarks look to conservation easements because they provide even stronger protection than traditional landmark or historic district designation. Many local preservation ordinances allow for only a delay, not denial, in the demolition of a designated landmark, as is currently the case in Los Angeles. Easements also are not subject to political issues that can threaten designated properties.

While many owners have the best intentions for their historic properties, future owners may not share the same values. As we have seen all too often, it is risky to assume that future owners will continue to preserve a historic structure, even if they voice such intentions. Residences, especially from the mid-twentieth-century, can be particularly vulnerable. As original or longtime owners move or pass away, the properties they stewarded for decades might be perceived as dated, in need of too much repair, or simply inferior to the development potential of the lot.

An easement requires both current and future owners to properly maintain the property, and it provides a legal means of enforcement. Because easements are recorded on the title for the property and run in perpetuity, regardless of the owner, they serve as a vital tool to protect historic places for future generations.

Some people donate easements to take advantage of potential economic incentives. If the property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places, an owner may be

able to take a charitable contribution deduction from their federal income taxes for the value of the conservation easement, if the contribution meets Internal Revenue Service requirements.

The value of an easement for the purposes of the federal tax deduction varies by property, based on an appraisal performed by a qualified appraiser. The property's development potential can also affect the easement value. For instance, properties that theoretically could otherwise be redeveloped at a much higher density might have a higher value of the easement and deduction. Anyone donating an easement should obtain solid tax and legal advice specific to their circumstances.

Conservation easement properties are generally privately owned by individuals or organizations who are outstanding stewards and wish to see them preserved, not harmed. Yet the easements do allow us to take action, even legal action if needed, to enforce their requirements.

Every Easement Tells a Story

Most of the Conservancy's easements cover only the building's exterior, but some are much more detailed, depending on the property and the owner's intent.

The Joseph Residence and Apartments is a good example. Built between 1946 and 1970, this property is one of the most significant examples of Storybook architecture in Los Angeles. Nicknamed "the Hobbit Houses," the eclectic cottages were designed by Lawrence Joseph, a former Walt Disney Studios artist. The Conservancy's easement protects the striking exterior, the remarkably detailed interior, and the original landscaping.

The Conservancy most recently received an easement on the Lucy E. Wheeler House,



The Conservancy holds an easement protecting the original landscaping, exterior façade, and interior features (pictured) of the Joseph Residence and Apartments (1946-70). Photo by Larry Underhill.

designed by Charles and Henry Greene. Located in the Harvard Heights Historic Preservation Overlay Zone (HPOZ), the ca. 1905 Wheeler House is the last remaining example of the firm's work in the city of Los Angeles. The late preservation architect (and Los Angeles Conservancy co-founder) Martin Eli Weil purchased the home in the 1980s and launched an extensive restoration, removing insensitive alterations and uncovering original Greene and Greene finishes and paint colors. An exceptionally detailed easement covers the home's exterior and interior features, including the original colors and finishes identified by Weil.

The Conservancy holds easements on properties throughout Los Angeles County, including in Downey, Whittier, and West Hollywood. We also have easements on three properties outside of L.A. County (in Santa Ana and Ventura), which we accepted early in the program.

Each of the Conservancy's easement properties has its own unique story and significance. Thanks to the protection provided by easements, these stories can continue to inspire us for years to come. For descriptions and photos of these remarkable places, visit laconservancy.org.

MARCH 30 / JUNE 5 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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Donors Celebrate Opening of Last Remaining Seats

The milestone twenty-fifth season of Last Remaining Seats kicked off May 25 with a sold-out screening of the 1954 classic *Rear Window* at the Orpheum Theatre in downtown Los Angeles.

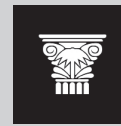
The evening was hosted by acclaimed film critic and historian Leonard Maltin and included a special performance by Robert York on the theatre's original Mighty Wurlitzer organ.

Last Remaining Seats sponsors, as well as Conservancy Cornerstone and Benefactor members, were invited to a pre-show cocktail reception at the historic Clifton's Cafeteria.

Many thanks to VIP Reception Sponsor Bank of America Merrill Lynch and Evening Sponsors Cathy and Steve Needleman.



Cornerstone members (l-r) Shev Rush, Catherine Meyler, and Kevin Lane. Photo by Larry Underhill.



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MEMBERSHIP LEVEL (please check one)

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 Dual/Household (\$60)
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 Sustaining (\$250)
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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 ■ fax: (213) 623-3909

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 or call (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

First and Third Saturdays

Union Station

Third Saturday

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



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UPCOMING EVENTS



Mel Weinstein

DOWNTOWN AT SUNSET

Summer Evening
Walking Tours

July 20 – August 24

Enjoy downtown Los Angeles at sunset on one of our special evening walking tours, including rare, limited tours of City Hall (pictured). See page 5 for details.

OTHER NEWS



Issue 24, June/July 2011

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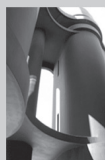
- ▶ [Annual Meeting at Natural History Museum June 12](#)
- ▶ [Golden State Mutual Declared Historic-Cultural Monument](#)
- ▶ [Last Remaining Seats Tickets Still Available](#)
- ▶ [Self Help Graphics & Art Building Gets Historic Recognition](#)
- ▶ [Summer Evening Walking Tours Start July 20](#)
- ▶ [Name That Building!](#)

Free Annual Meeting Features *Location Filming in Los Angeles*
Sunday, June 12, 10:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.
Natural History Museum, Los Angeles

Join us for our annual meeting at the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County's 1913 Building, recipient of a 2011 Conservancy Preservation Award.



Mystery Building Revealed!



Congratulations to Kathy Denton, who won our Issue 23 "Name That Building" drawing!

Kathy will receive a copy of the Taschen book *Sixties Design* by Philippe Garner.



Self Help Graphics Moves

In late March, Self Help Graphics & Art (SHG&A) left its longtime home at 3802 E. Cesar Chavez Avenue in unincorporated East Los Angeles. City voters failed in the election, the renowned Chicano arts organization moved to E. First Street in Boyle Heights. The Conservancy continues to work with SHG&A and other stakeholders to protect the organization's former home, a 1927 building that has played a strong role in Chicano art, cultural identity, and political activism.

SHG&A had occupied the building since 1978. The late artist Edouardo Chapea created the exterior murals that transformed the structure into a community room.

The building's significance dates back to the mid-twentieth century, when it housed the Catholic Youth Organization (CYO). The community center nurtured bands that created the famous East L.A. sound, including The Midlifers and the Sals Brothers. In the 1960s, the building housed The Vex, a music club that fueled the East L.A. punk scene.

The building's longtime owner, the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Los Angeles, sold the structure in 2008. The Conservancy worked with SHG&A and community members to document the building's significance, nominating it for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources. The State Historical Resources Commission will vote on the nomination at its May 19 meeting in Santa Monica.

One of two murals commissioned for the 1988 home office of the Golden State Mutual Life Insurance Company. The scene by Mike Mizell depicts the African American experience in California from 1882 to 1988. On the other side of the lobby is a sculptural piece by Charles Alston depicting the period from 1920 to 1980. Both murals are proposed for removal. Photo by Mike Miller, "Herb-Gardner" Collection/Los Angeles Public Library.

Golden State Mutual: Protecting Los Angeles' African American Heritage

Rarely does a single place have so many associations with African American heritage and layers of significance as does the former home office of the Golden State Mutual Life Insurance Company. From the architect, to the business, to the artists and their site-specific murals, the building tells a fascinating story of African Americans in Los Angeles, throughout California, and nationally. With the recent closure of the company, the Conservancy and others are working to save the building and keep its many significant elements intact.

What became the Golden State Mutual Life Insurance Company was founded in 1922 by William Nickerson, Jr., Norman Oliver Houston, and George Allen Bowers, Jr. It was one of

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