



The 1966 Century Plaza Hotel, proposed for demolition and replacement with two 600-foot towers. The hotel received a \$36 million facelift a year ago. Photo by Gary Minnaert.

“City of the Seekers” Tour Celebrates L.A.’s Unique Spiritual Legacy

by Adam Rubin

On **Saturday, March 14**, the Los Angeles Conservancy and its Modern Committee will hold a special, one-time tour, “City of the Seekers: L.A.’s Unique Spiritual Legacy.” The Los Angeles region has long been considered a place of reinvention and creation, be it in the arts, architecture, personal identity, spirituality, or virtually any other aspect of life. The area is home to a number of religious sites and organizations, many of which started or took root here in the early decades of the twentieth century and are deeply woven into the city’s history. “City of the Seekers” will celebrate this unique identity and the architecture that embodies it.

Among the five tour sites is the Self-Realization Fellowship Mother Center on the crest of Mount Washington. Located in the Mission Revival-inspired former Mount Washington Hotel (1909), the Self-Realization Fellowship has used the building as its headquarters since 1925. For nearly thirty years, Paramahansa Yogananda, founder of the Self-Realization Fellowship, led daily prayer and meditation sessions in the gardens surrounding the hotel and held lectures, seminars, and writing sessions in the main building.

Additional tour locations include the 1966 Chapel of the Jesus Ethic at the Foundation of Nisience in Glendale; the 1936 Philosophical Research Society in Los Feliz; the 1896 Bonnie Brae House, birthplace of the modern Pentacostal movement in North America; and the 1923 Angelus Temple, a National Historic Landmark and the

Please see CITY OF THE SEEKERS on page 6

Century Plaza Hotel Threatened by Massive Redevelopment

by Mike Buhler

The owners of the Hyatt Regency Century Plaza Hotel in Century City have announced plans to raze the highly significant building and replace it with two 600-foot towers. The new project would include a boutique hotel, condominiums, and mixed-use space, plus two acres of open space. The venerable hotel received a \$36 million facelift completed in 2008.

Built as the centerpiece of Century City, the Century Plaza Hotel was designed by Minoru Yamasaki, architect of New York’s World Trade Center towers (1964-1971) and Century City’s twin Century Plaza Towers (1975). Yamasaki appeared on the cover of *Time* magazine in 1963 and was one of several world-renowned architects enlisted by Welton Becket during Century City’s master planning. The twenty-story hotel was constructed between 1964 and 1966. Its highly elegant design featured a curved shape offering a scenic view from every room and a sweeping facade along the Avenue of the Stars. Innovative in its formal expression, the hotel strongly conveys the postwar optimism of the 1960s.

The Century Plaza opened in 1966 and has served ever since as a premiere hotel for celebrities, politicians, and world dignitaries. Its completion also spurred a new wave of development in Century City over the next decade, helping to forge its reputation as a truly modern, world-class destination. The hotel has been nicknamed the “West Coast White House” since the 1970s. Ronald Reagan brought the hotel into the spotlight with his frequent stays and two presidential victory celebrations in the 1980s. With meeting rooms, restaurants, shops, and a ballroom large enough to accommodate 2,000 people, the Century Plaza has hosted countless conferences and events for Angelenos and visitors alike.

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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.

The Conservancy News is published bi-monthly.
 Editor: Lisa M. Snyder
 Lithography: The Prince of Printing

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Thanks to Julius Shulman and The Getty Research Institute for access to his photography archives.

Letter from the President of the Board of Directors:

Despite the Economy, We're Busier Than Ever

by Thom Miller

In recent conversations, people have asked, "Is the recession slowing things down at the Conservancy?" It would seem that we might have fewer preservation issues at the moment, with tightening credit and shrinking investments putting the brakes on development. Yet we're as busy as ever.

Although we've seen fewer projects break ground, developers are hard at work on proposals and requests for entitlements. They're obtaining government approvals now for the right to begin projects as soon as the economy turns around. As in any other year, a number of these projects threaten historic resources.

As described in our cover story, the venerable Century Plaza Hotel in Century City is threatened with demolition and replacement by two 600-foot-tall towers. On the Miracle Mile, the unique Columbia Savings building is slated to be razed for mixed-use construction that includes nearly 600 condominiums. In Hollywood, the Capitol Records tower, Hollywood Palladium, and CBS Studios building on Sunset Boulevard are part of major high-rise projects now in the entitlement process. Although the developers of these three projects have announced plans to save the historic buildings, the Conservancy is closely monitoring the proposed new developments and their impact on these historic resources.



While the Conservancy is all for sensitive development that meets the needs of the community, new development must respect, preserve, and thoughtfully integrate the historic structures in their midst. We're working harder than ever to make sure this happens.

We're also busy with related efforts that have broad implications on preservation issues. For instance, we interviewed candidates for the Los Angeles City Council District 5 seat regarding their views on preservation. We mailed transcripts to all Conservancy members who live in Council District 5, which is home to the Century Plaza Hotel and many other historic resources, as well as a large number of our members. We also posted the document online at laconservancy.org. While the Conservancy cannot endorse candidates for public office, we can provide important information to help you make informed decisions at the polls.

Needless to say, your membership support is as crucial as ever. Thank you for helping us protect historic structures that chronicle L.A.'s rich history, strengthen our communities, conserve our resources, and enrich our lives.

Important Member Survey Enclosed

The Conservancy needs to know what you think about our current communications efforts, including how, what, and when you'd like to hear from us. As a member, your input is critical in helping us find the best ways to communicate with you. Please take a few minutes to complete the enclosed survey and return it to us by **April 1**. You can enter to win two reserved seats at a 2009 Last Remaining Seats screening! We'd like to also take this opportunity to remind you that for the most up-to-date information, you can sign up for Conservancy E-News at laconservancy.org (click the orange "Sign Up for E-News" button on the left). Thanks in advance for your feedback!

Corrections

In the January/February issue of Conservancy News, the cover story on our 2008 Preservation Report Card mistakenly cited L.A. County as spanning over 9.9 million square miles. While it might seem that big, the county is actually slightly over 4,000 square miles, with a population of over 9.9 million. In the same issue, our Preservation Issues update on the Columbia Savings building stated that a forty-foot-long bronze water sculpture was 1,300-square-feet. This square footage actually describes the stained-glass skylight by French artist Roger Darricarrere. We apologize for the errors.

Preservation Issues In The News

by Mike Buhler, Flora Chou, and Marcello Vavala

New Easements

In late December 2008, the Conservancy accepted facade easements on two significant properties: the Petitfils-Boos Residence in Windsor Square and the Roosevelt Building in downtown Los Angeles. Conservation easements provide the strongest method of protecting historic properties from demolition or inappropriate alteration by requiring all exterior work (and in some cases, specified interior work) to be reviewed and approved by the easement-holding organization. The Conservancy currently holds easements on twenty-six properties, ranging from commercial and civic buildings to residences both modest and monumental. If the building is listed in the National Register of Historic Places or is a contributing structure in a National Register Historic District, easement donors can deduct the value of the easement as a charitable deduction from their income taxes.

The Petitfils-Boos Residence, completed in 1922, is an Italian Renaissance Revival-style house located in the Windsor Square Historic Preservation Overlay Zone (HPOZ). It is listed in the National Register of Historic Places and is designated as Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument #835. Designed by distinguished local architect Charles F. Plummer, the home features a terra cotta-clad exterior (unusual for a residence) and a red-tiled roof, and is set on a raised lawn surrounded by an ornate wall and entrance gates.

The monumental Roosevelt Building, named after President Theodore Roosevelt, is one of sev-

eral notable commercial buildings designed by the firm of Curlett & Beelman. Located at 727 West Seventh Street at the corner of Flower Street in downtown Los Angeles, the twelve-story building was completed in 1927. This building is also in the Italian Renaissance Revival style. Notable features include a terra cotta-clad facade resembling rusticated stone blocks and an arched entrance on Seventh Street with columns of purple Levanto marble. Now known as Roosevelt Lofts, this former retail and office structure has been converted into 222 upscale condominiums by developer Roosevelt Lofts, LLC. The building is listed in the National Register of Historic Places and is designated as Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument #355.

For more information about our easement program, you can download a brochure at laconservancy.org/easements.pdf or call Marcello Vavala, the Conservancy's preservation associate, at mvavala@laconservancy.org or (213) 430-4217.

Michael White Adobe

The Michael White Adobe on the campus of San Marino High School is threatened with demolition in order to expand the school's swimming pool. The San Marino Unified School District has offered to sell the adobe for \$1 to anyone willing to relocate it. The building is one of only a few dozen nineteenth-century adobes remaining in L.A. County.

Constructed around 1845, the adobe was home to Michael White, an English sailor who arrived in California in 1829. With California under Mexican rule at the time, White adopted the name Miguel Blanco and became a Mexican citizen in order to be married and own land. In 1928, the San Marino School District acquired the adobe and its remaining land for a future school. Construction of an elementary school started after World War II, and San Marino High School relocated to the site in the mid-1950s. The school district built a swimming



Michael White Adobe. Photo by LAC staff.

pool and athletic facilities around the adobe. The adobe was restored by community leaders and has sat vacant for the past few years.

The Michael White Adobe is locally designated as a San Marino landmark and is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. It was documented under the federal Historic American Building Survey (HABS) in 1935, not long after the program was established in 1933.

The Conservancy commented on the initial study for the pool expansion's environmental impact report. We urged the school district to investigate alternatives for retaining the delicate adobe in place and, as a last resort, relocating and restoring the structure. The demolition of a historic resource this rare should not be an option.

Griffith Park

On January 27, the Los Angeles City Council voted to declare Griffith Park as Historic-Cultural Monument (HCM) #942. At over 4,000 acres, Griffith Park is the largest HCM in the city and one of the largest locally designated landmarks in the country. Since Colonel Griffith J. Griffith and his wife deeded land to the city in 1896, Griffith Park has evolved to become an integral part of the city. It incorporates many layers of historical importance, including cultural and architectural resources in addition to wilderness areas.

The city's Office of Historic Resources is working with other city agencies to develop guidelines for the park's maintenance and administration. Thank you to the Griffith Family Trust for submitting the nomination, and to Van Griffith and Councilmember Tom LaBonge for their full support of the nomination. Thank you also to all the citizens who wrote letters and attended public hearings showing how much this beloved landmark means to the people of Los Angeles.



Roosevelt Building. Photo by Bruce Boehner.



Petitfils-Boos Residence. Photo by LAC staff.

Celebrate the Best in Historic Preservation!

Join the Conservancy and hundreds of business and community leaders on **Thursday, May 14**, for our 28th annual Preservation Awards Luncheon, celebrating outstanding achievement in the field of historic preservation. The event takes place from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at the Millennium Biltmore Hotel in downtown Los Angeles.

Selected by an independent jury of leading experts from the fields of architecture, historic preservation, and community development, the Conservancy's Preservation Awards honor those who embody the best in preservation in Los Angeles County. Award recipients include restoration, rehabilitation, and adaptive reuse projects; historic landscape projects; and people and projects that help to advance education or program development in historic preservation. Our Preservation Awards Luncheon has earned a reputation as one of the most interesting and inspiring awards programs in Los Angeles.

The luncheon is also one of our key fundraising events. Individual tickets are \$125, and table sponsorships range from \$1,250 to \$5,000. Your participation will help foster the continued revitalization of Los Angeles' rich architectural and cultural heritage. For details and tickets, visit laconservancy.org or call the Conservancy's Development Office at (213) 430-4204. We hope to see you on May 14!

California Preservation Conference in Palm Springs

The 34th Annual California Preservation Conference will take place **April 16-19** in Palm Springs. Titled "The Culture of Leisure: Rethinking the California Dream," the conference features dozens of sessions in six educational tracks, among them The Political Playground: The Politics of Preservation; Greening the Culture of Leisure: Sustainability and Preservation; More Than a Feeling: Preserving Local Character; and Beyond Martini Modern: A Sober Look at Resources of the Recent Past. Exclusive tours will highlight Palm Springs' mid-century modern architecture, landscapes, tribal history, and culture of leisure. The conference also includes special events at some of Palm Springs' most historic and architecturally significant venues. And of course, attendees will present CPF's signature Three-Minute Success Stories. For details, visit californiapreservation.org or call (415) 495-0349.

L.A. Heritage Day Free for Conservancy Members!

The Conservancy is proud to participate in the second annual L.A. Heritage Day on **Sunday, March 22** from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Heritage Square Museum. Presented by the L.A. Heritage Alliance, this festival-type event seeks to reconnect the public with greater Los Angeles' vast range of cultural institutions and resources.

L.A. Heritage Day offers something for everyone—tours of historic structures; a scavenger hunt and other activities for kids and families; panel discussions about culture, preservation, and tips for promoting local heritage; and the chance to learn about a variety of local preservation organizations, museums, and historical societies.

The Los Angeles region has more than 200 heritage groups dedicated to preserving and promoting the rich pasts of various regions, industries, and individuals. The L.A. Heritage Alliance was formed in 2008 to help these groups leverage their efforts through workshops, networking, and events such as Heritage Day. "We're working together to preserve the rich history of greater Los Angeles," says Brian Sheridan, one of the organizers of the L.A. Heritage Day and L.A. Heritage Alliance. "Though we've been successful as individual groups, as an alliance we can work smarter and more efficiently to preserve our heritage."

Admission is free for members of participating groups (including the Conservancy); simply download a flyer from our website. For more information, please visit laconservancy.org. Hope to see you there!



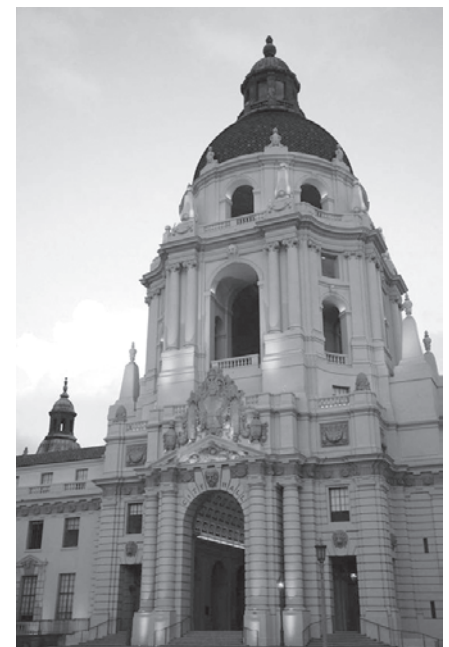
SAVE THE DATE!

Member Tickets for LRS Go on Sale Wednesday, April 1

Tickets for the 2009 Last Remaining Seats (LRS) film series will go on sale exclusively to Conservancy members on **Wednesday, April 1**. We hope you'll take advantage of early ticket sales and join us for another exciting year of LRS in Broadway's beautiful historic theatres. Tickets will be available to the general public on April 15. You'll receive a printed series brochure in the mail; for a preview of this year's lineup, please visit laconservancy.org.

Society of Architectural Historians Conference in Pasadena April 1 - 5

The Society of Architectural Historians (SAH), an international nonprofit membership organization that promotes the study and preservation of the built environment worldwide, will hold its 62nd Annual Meeting in Pasadena in early April. Of interest to architectural historians, architects, preservationists, students, professionals in allied fields, and the interested public, the conference includes tours and education sessions, and kicks off with a day-long preservation colloquium. The Conservancy is proud to participate in planning for the conference, and we will lead a walking tour for attendees. For more information, visit sah.org.



Newly restored Pasadena City Hall will be featured as part of the SAH Annual Meeting in April. Photo courtesy of Architectural Resources Group.



Volunteers Make Things Happen

The Conservancy's annual volunteer appreciation party was held on January 25 at the beautiful and historic Doheny Mansion on the campus of Mount Saint Mary's College in the West Adams area. The record number of volunteer guests, pictured in front of the mansion, were treated to tours of the mansion by Doheny docents. A light repast was served in the Pompeian Room. The Conservancy thanks all of our volunteers for their hard work and dedication throughout the year. Photo by Ellen Underhill.

Special Thanks to the Walking Tour Docents Who Gave Tours in 2008!

Tony Abraham	Dave Dumars	Deanne Neiman	Steve Slakey
Alice Allen	Sharon Eastman	Steve Ort	Don Sloper ♦
Nancy Arnheim	Marcia Enger	Gail Ostergren	Judith Sobol
John Arroyo	Annabel Enriquez	David Peake	Lorraine Stark ♦
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Bill Barlow	Sarah Finer	Paul Poloccek	Jill Thomsen
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Roberta Brown	Mike Henderson	Judith Siegel	Judy Weinstein
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Gail Burton	Richard Hilton	Shannon Simonds	Ted Wolfe
Norm Carter	Gordon Johnson		
Bud Coffey	Deke Keasbey		
Grayson Cook	Nancy Lilienthal		
Pamela Corante	Eric Lynxwiler		
Laura Crockett	Patricia McGovern	♦ Gave fifteen or more tours in 2008	
Marie Demir	Rob McManeus	♦♦ Gave over twenty tours in 2008	
Julie Downey	Margit Meeker	❖ Gave over thirty tours in 2008	

Volunteer Profile: Martha Gruft

by Connie Humberger

Meet MARTHA GRUFT, a veteran "all-around" volunteer who is responsible, dependable, and someone you definitely want on your team. Martha has been a Conservancy volunteer for nineteen years! She is an active member of the Last Remaining Seats Committee and has worked at every series. She's also volunteered at countless special tours, including



all four HPOZ tours, Mainly Main, Spectacular/Vernacular, L.A. NOIR-chitecture, and Curating the City: Wilshire Boulevard. These are only a few of Martha's many volunteer contributions.

Born in Massachusetts, Martha graduated from secretarial school and went to work for a law firm before deciding to vacation in California. Upon arriving, she quickly felt "it was the right place to be." She rounded up her affairs in Massachusetts, moved west, and has not looked back.

Martha got married and had a son, Alex, of whom she is very proud. As a boy, Alex had volunteered at local libraries during school. Martha was not familiar with volunteering, but when she began reading about Conservancy tours, she thought maybe there was a way of connecting by volunteering, and so she followed in her son's footsteps. She could serve, broaden her knowledge, and have fun. That's what she's been doing ever since.

Martha now volunteers for several organizations, such as Pasadena Heritage, West Adams Heritage Association, and the American Cinematheque. She loves movies, theater, good food, and trying new restaurants. She is an avid reader, especially of mysteries: she's on the steering committee for the 2010 West Coast Crime Convention. Yet Martha considers her greatest achievement to be, by far, her son.

Thank you, Martha; you are a true asset to the Conservancy!



Photo by LAC staff.

New Members' Tour of Union Station

Each of the 1,580 new members who joined the Conservancy in 2008 was invited to attend a special walking tour of historic Union Station on February 7. Thanks to the talented docents – Michael Burr, Greg Figueroa, John Ghini, Mike Henderson, Joan Renner, Stewart Rupp, Shannon Simonds, Jill Thomsen, Donald Weggeman, and Judy Weinstein – who helped make the day such a success! Thank you also to everyone who attended. We welcome you to the Conservancy and hope you will remain active year-round.

CITY OF THE SEEKERS

continued from page 1

former home of Aimee Semple McPherson's Four-square Gospel church.

Tourgoers will drive themselves to each stop, where they will receive a docent-led tour of the site. Tickets are \$25 for Conservancy members, \$30 for the general public, and \$10 for kids twelve and under. For details and tickets, visit laconservancy.org. If you have questions, call (213) 623-2489 or e-mail info@laconservancy.org.

The tour is one of several "City of the Seekers" events in March. Other events include a talk by Erik Davis, author of *The Visionary State: A Journey Through California's Spiritual Landscape*; "Mystic Los Angeles," a screening of rare, unusual, and never-before-seen short films and video exploring the mystical side of our city; and "Within Heaven's Earshot," an exhibit of religious album covers. Please visit laconservancy.org for details.

RIGHT: The 1966 Nisience Chapel of the Jesus Ethic (top) and the 1909 Self-Realization Fellowship Mother Center (bottom) will be featured on the "City of the Seekers" tour on March 14. Photos courtesy of the Foundation of Nisience (top) and Pfeiffer Partners Architects, Inc. (bottom).



CENTURY PLAZA continued from page 1

The hotel was purchased by Next Century Associates in June 2008. In a *Los Angeles Times* article from June 3, 2008, Next Century head Michael Rosenfeld called the Century Plaza "a jewel in my hometown." In the same article, hotel industry consultant Alan Reay of Atlas Hospitality called it "an iconic building in a fantastic location."

Assault on the Sixties

The proposed demolition of the Century Plaza Hotel is the latest evidence of an ongoing assault on the area's iconic architecture of the 1960s. Just last November, the City of Los Angeles Planning Commission approved the demolition of another Century City landmark, Welton Becket's Gateway West Building (1962), as part of the New Century project. The commission did not require the consideration of preservation alternatives for the project. Welton Becket's own offices in Century City (Welton Becket, 1960) were demolished in 2005.

Other recent losses of significant sixties resources include the National Theatre in Westwood Village (Harold Levitt, 1969) and the Azusa Foothill Drive-In Theatre (1961). Recently threatened structures include the Columbia Savings building (Irving Shapiro, 1965) at Wilshire and La Brea, the Commonwealth Savings building (Gerald Bense, 1961) in North Hollywood, and the Driftwood Drive-thru Dairy (1961) in El Monte, which was determined eligible for the California Register in November 2008. Buildings from this era are particularly vulnerable because so few have been recognized with landmark designation. Of the 942 Historic-Cultural Monuments designated in the City of Los Angeles, fewer than twenty hail from the 1960s, and only three of those are commercial buildings.

The Conservancy is working hard to ensure fair consideration of alternatives to demolition of the Century Plaza Hotel, as well as the full recognition of its significance. We will continue to advocate for the protection of the Century Plaza Hotel and other significant resources from the 1960s.

NOVEMBER 24, 2008 / JANUARY 12, 2009 MEMBERSHIP REPORT

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 Sustaining (\$250)
 Benefactor (\$500)
 Cornerstone (\$1,000, \$2,500, \$5,000)
 Travertine (\$10,000)

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Daytime Ph _____

E-mail _____

Please send me Conservancy E-News

FOR GIFT MEMBERSHIPS

Please enter your contact information so that we may acknowledge your gift.

Given by _____

Address _____

City, St, Zip _____

Daytime Ph _____

PAYMENT OPTIONS

I've enclosed my tax-deductible* payment of \$_____ by:

- Check payable to L.A. Conservancy
 Credit Card (Visa, MasterCard, AmEx, or Discover)

Card # _____

Exp. Date _____ VCode _____

Name on card _____

Signature _____

* Less value of premiums; call for details.

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 Art Deco, Evolving Skyline, and Historic Core. Pre-payment is required on all others. 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 District

Every Saturday

Historic Core

Every Saturday

BI-WEEKLY AND MONTHLY TOURS

Angelino Heights

First Saturday

Downtown Renaissance: Spring & Main

Second and Fourth Saturdays

Evolving Skyline

First and Third Saturdays

Union Station

Third Saturday

Union Station Family Tour

Fourth Saturday, 11 a.m.



Los Angeles Conservancy

523 West Sixth Street, Suite 826

Los Angeles, California 90014

laconservancy.org

TIME VALUE

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IMPORTANT: MEMBER SURVEY ENCLOSED

(You could win reserved seats at Last Remaining Seats!)

FEATURED WALKING TOUR



LAC archives

DOWNTOWN RENAISSANCE: SPRING & MAIN

2nd and 4th Saturdays

Connect L.A.'s past with its future on this walk through the former financial district, now a hub of revitalization. The tour includes a visit to a loft unit in the 1904 Pacific Electric Building (subject to availability).

UPCOMING EVENTS



LAC archives

"CITY OF THE SEEKERS" TOUR

Saturday, March 14, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Various sites throughout L.A.

Our special spring tour explores L.A.'s unique spiritual identity, both the personalities and the places integral to our city's history. Don't miss this one-time tour and related events! See cover story for details.



Ennis House, a 2008 recipient. LAC archives

PRESERVATION AWARDS LUNCHEON

Thursday, May 14, 11:30 a.m.

Join the Conservancy at the Millennium Biltmore Hotel in downtown L.A. to celebrate the best in historic preservation in 2008. The 28th annual luncheon honors outstanding contributions to the preservation of historic sites across L.A. County.