



LOS ANGELES CONSERVANCY NEWS



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The Conservancy won a \$150,000 grant to help rehabilitate the famed Formosa Café in West Hollywood. Legacy bars and restaurants like the Formosa are exceedingly rare, threatened by development pressure, rising rents, changing demographics, and other factors. Photo by Douglas Hill, courtesy National Trust for Historic Preservation.

Raise a Glass to History—Before It’s Too Late

by *Cindy Olnick*

If you’re one of the many people who voted for the Formosa Café in last fall’s Partners in Preservation campaign, **thank you!** Created by the National Trust for Historic Preservation and American Express, Partners in Preservation awards preservation funding to projects across the U.S. By mobilizing nearly 60,000 votes for West Hollywood’s Formosa Café, the Conservancy won a \$150,000 grant to help rehabilitate the landmark’s original trolley car.

Many thanks to everyone who helped spread the word about the program, and special thanks to our campaign partner and the Formosa’s new operators, the 1933 Group. They will use the grant funding toward the building’s rehabilitation, slated for completion in 2018.

The Formosa Café is a beloved and exceedingly rare example of a highly threatened property type: the historic, or legacy, bar/restaurant. These businesses are closing or changing hands at an alarming rate. We learned of three more as this issue went to press: Du-par’s in Studio City (which may relocate), the Golden Bull in Santa Monica (changing management), and Twohey’s in Alhambra.

Some places close simply because their longtime owners retire. Yet most fall victim to development pressure, rising rents and/or operating costs, and ever-changing demographics.

A number of great establishments still thrive, including The Musso & Frank Grill in Hollywood, the Dal Rae in Pico Rivera, the Apple Pan in West L.A., and Pann’s coffee shop in Ladera Heights. Several came back from the brink of destruction. Bob’s Big Boy in Toluca Lake was saved in the 1990s by our Modern Committee, and Norms La Cienega survived a demolition scare in 2016. Downtown’s legendary Clifton’s Cafeteria suffered declining business for years before being restored, rehabbed, and reimagined for today’s market.

Please see HISTORIC BARS on page 5

Celebrate 40 Years of Preservation

Happy Anniversary!

This year marks forty years since the Conservancy’s founding in 1978. The staff, volunteers, and members of the Conservancy have made a significant impact in preserving the historic places that make L.A. County unique. Thank you!

Anniversaries are great times for reflection, and we have much to celebrate. Yet this is also a time to redouble our efforts and renew our commitment. What will Los Angeles look like forty years from now? How will we make sure that future includes the best of our past?

We’ll mark this milestone throughout the year in various ways, from special events and newsletter features to new initiatives. As always, for the latest news, join us on social media and subscribe to our email newsletters.

This anniversary is as much yours as anyone’s, since your membership makes this work possible. If you have a personal story to share—about the Conservancy or historic places in L.A.—please let us know. You can reach us at info@laconservancy.org.

Thanks again, and enjoy!



Members (and volunteers) Janet Raffalow and Alline Merchant-Dymakkus. Photo by Larry Underhill.

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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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programs is provided by the LaFetra Foundation and the

Kenneth T. and Eileen L. Norris Foundation.

Forty Years of Action, Awareness, and Assistance

by *Cindy Olnick*

Whether you just joined the Conservancy, have been a member for decades, or fall somewhere in between, you're part of a long tradition of preserving historic places. Here, we offer just a few highlights of what you've made possible.

By the late 1970s, Los Angeles had suffered the loss of beloved landmarks including the Richfield Building, Irving Gill's Dodge House, the Carthay Circle Theatre, the Victorian residences of Bunker Hill, and many others. The proposed demolition of the 1926 Los Angeles Central Library was the last straw, galvanizing the local preservation movement and serving as the catalyst for the Los Angeles Conservancy's formation in 1978.

What began as a small group of concerned citizens now has the largest membership of any local preservation group in the U.S., with nearly 6,000 member households. With your help, the Conservancy has prevented the needless demolition of a vast range of landmarks, from the city's first cathedral to the world's oldest surviving McDonald's.

Yet the Conservancy's founders knew that making a real difference would take more than saving single buildings. They created a broad mandate of advocacy and education, which we have followed ever since. Broad-based efforts include committees dedicated to Modern resources and historic theatres, collaboration on incentives such as the Mills Act property tax relief program, a Broadway Initiative to fuel downtown's revitalization, and a Neighborhoods Initiative empowering residents to preserve the unique character of their communities. Our Preservation Report Card assesses the preservation policies (or lack thereof) of all eighty-nine local governments in L.A. County, and we work with these governments to help them create or improve their programs.

Our award-winning walking tours, special tours, and other educational programs have introduced countless people to our shared cultural heritage and the need to sustain it. Since 1982, our annual Preservation Awards have recognized outstanding achievement in preservation. Launched by volunteers in 1987, Last Remaining Seats is now a summer tradition of classic films in historic theatres. After many years of working with youth, we're greatly expanding our student education program to tie more closely with statewide curricula and reach more young people than ever.

A crucial element of preservation is quick response to unexpected events that threaten historic buildings. Immediately after the civil unrest of 1992 and the Northridge earthquake in 1994, Conservancy staff and members provided technical assistance and damage assessment. These efforts helped to prevent the hasty demolition of damaged structures, as well as to integrate preservation into the rebuilding process.

The Conservancy has always helped people take an active role in preserving the historic places that enrich their lives and communities. Workshops and conferences have covered a range of topics, our research library is open to the public, and our website provides a wealth of information about local preservation topics and organizations.

Many of these efforts take the close collaboration of partners throughout the region, and none of our work is possible without our outstanding members and volunteers. For all you've helped to accomplish, and for all you will help to achieve going forward, **thank you!**



Conservancy members gather in front of the Central Library for our 1993 annual meeting. Photo from Conservancy archives.

Preservation Issues

by Adrian Scott Fine, Rosalind Sagara, and Marcello Vavala

For more information about these and other preservation issues, please visit laconservancy.org/important-issues.

Conservancy Loses Appeal of Jones Dog & Cat Hospital Lawsuit Decision

The Conservancy has lost a major effort to prevent the demolition of the Streamline Moderne Jones Dog & Cat Hospital building in West Hollywood. We had sued the City of West Hollywood to force its compliance with environmental law. We lost the lawsuit, and in November, we lost the appeal.

We are very disappointed in the Court's decision. West Hollywood will lose a rare, early example of the work of renowned architect Welton Becket and partner Walter Wurdeman. This loss is both needless and irreversible, and it could easily have been avoided.

The Conservancy believes that the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the project to replace the building (the Melrose Triangle Project) was inadequate and flawed. We filed a lawsuit against West Hollywood on September 18, 2014, following the City's approval of the project.

The Conservancy is not opposed to the development of a mixed-use, gateway project on the site. But the project did not need to come at the expense of a historic building that could be integrated and reused as part of the



Jones Dog & Cat Hospital in 2014. Photo by Hunter Kerhart.

overall design. Other local advocacy groups, including the West Hollywood Heritage Project and the West Hollywood Preservation Alliance, also advocated for the retention and incorporation of the Jones Dog & Cat Hospital building into the project.

CBS Television City

The Conservancy submitted a nomination in December to designate the storied CBS Television City complex as a Historic-Cultural Monument (HCM). This effort followed news in September that CBS Corporation was interested in selling the twenty-five-acre property. Announcement of a potential sale raised widespread concern over the fate of the architecturally and culturally significant campus, which was identified as National Register-eligible in Los Angeles' SurveyLA.

HCM designation would help protect the property by requiring preservation design review and approval (through the City's Office of Historic Resources) of any future redevelopment or adaptive reuse plans.

Opened in 1952 at the southeast corner of Beverly Boulevard and Fairfax Avenue, CBS Television City was the first large-scale facility in the United States designed specifically for television production. CBS hired the local architecture firm Pereira & Luckman, with Gin Wong serving as lead designer, to design its new headquarters. The campus integrated soundstages, studios, editing rooms, offices, rehearsal halls, shops, and storage. On the interior, flexibility was key: studio walls, and even some exterior walls, could be moved and rearranged to accommodate the needs of specific productions.

For more than six decades and counting, CBS Television City has been the portal for some of America's most beloved television shows. From within its modern and custom-designed stages, television broke new ground, from variety/sketch comedy television shows like *The Carol Burnett Show* to the life of Archie Bunker and the controversial issues of the day in *All in the Family*.



CBS Television City. Photo from Tom Gardner Collection/Conservancy archives.

Federal Historic Tax Credit Retained

Since its introduction in 1981, the federal Historic Tax Credit (HTC) has been critical in helping save thousands of historic places and leveraging billions of dollars in private investment. Yet congressional legislators in the House introduced a tax reform bill in November that would have eliminated our nation's primary financial incentive for historic preservation.

The HTC provides a twenty-percent tax credit on the total amount invested in a historic rehabilitation project, which often makes or breaks a project's financial feasibility. The HTC program has more than paid for itself, returning more to the Treasury than it costs and serving as a catalyst for revitalization efforts.

The HTC is one of our strongest tools and financial incentives. Without it, thousands of historic buildings across the U.S. would not have been rehabilitated or adaptively reused, or even be standing today. Current local projects made possible by the HTC include the Sears Building in Boyle Heights and the former Hamburgers/May Company Department Store in downtown L.A.

The House and Senate passed the final tax reform bill on December 20, restoring the full twenty-percent HTC. Yet it modified the process and timeframe for which an investor can use the tax benefit, making it payable over five years rather than at once.

Thank you to everyone who signed the online petition and urged their representatives to support the HTC!

Welcome M. Rosalind Sagara, Neighborhood Outreach Coordinator

The Conservancy is happy to welcome our new neighborhood outreach coordinator, M. Rosalind Sagara. She brings



over ten years of community outreach experience, advancing a variety of issue-based campaigns.

Rosalind is a co-founder of the nonprofit Save Our Chinatown Committee in Riverside. She previously served as a steering committee member of Asian & Pacific Islander Americans in Historic Preservation, a national network of advocates who care about Asian American historic and cultural resources.

She holds a master's degree in heritage conservation from USC. Most recently, she served as a consulting historian for Survey LA's Asian American Historic Context Statement.

With her strong background in grassroots preservation work, Rosalind will help us continue to advocate for places that matter to diverse groups of Angelenos and expand our outreach efforts across L.A. County.

"Historic places and those who care about them can have a strong role in creating more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable neighborhoods," she says. "That's exciting!"

Rosalind wants to know about current preservation-related threats in your neighborhood! Contact her at rsagara@laconservancy.org.

New Student Program for Night on Broadway

The Conservancy has worked to revitalize downtown's Broadway since our founding forty years ago. After launching our own Broadway Initiative in 1999, we joined City Councilmember José Huizar's Bringing Back Broadway initiative in 2008. This year, Bringing Back Broadway celebrates ten years of progress at the annual Night on Broadway street fair on **Saturday, January 27**.

We've always participated in this fantastic (and free!) event, but this year we're taking it to a new level. In addition to having volunteer docents and information panels at historic sites, we're launching a curriculum with five schools in the East Los Angeles neighborhoods of Boyle Heights and El Sereno.

Called Discover Broadway, this new curriculum crosses several disciplines, including art, math, English language arts, and history. It's designed for third graders but can be adapted for fourth or fifth grades. Students explore Los Angeles history through place-based learning, including how the community evolved on Broadway and the surrounding historic downtown. They also learn about historic preservation as it relates to culture and community, and apply this understanding to their own neighborhoods.

Lessons span three areas: Broadway history, architecture and design, and culture and community. Students learn about theatre architecture in several ways, including math-based color-by-numbers exercises and a game in which they search for Grandma in a movie palace. They use a Venn diagram to compare the Broadway of the past to the Broadway of today. They research people important to the area's development, from architects to entertainers. These are just a few examples of this expansive and varied curriculum.

In groups, the students will build models of Broadway theatre marquees from recycled materials. The models will be on display at the Kids Zone at Night on Broadway—be sure to stop by for a glimpse of what the next generation thinks!

Education staff members will visit classrooms throughout January for selected lessons, then leave teachers and parents with more comprehensive guides to continue their exploration. Students will receive an interactive guide to Night on Broadway, with a special homage to the *Kids' Guide to Broadway* we produced in 2003.

For details on Night on Broadway, visit nightonbroadway.la.



People filled the street at last year's Night on Broadway event. This year, enjoy events for families and people of all ages beginning at 3 p.m. on Saturday, January 27. Photo courtesy Night on Broadway.

Calling All Volunteers!

by Bruce Scottow

With its focus on Broadway's historic theatres, the annual Night on Broadway event has no bigger fan than the Conservancy. Each year, we reach out to our volunteers and ask them to lend their time and talents to this highly worthy—and equally festive—cause.

On **Saturday, January 27**, Conservancy volunteers will staff kiosks along the street with in-depth information about and directions to nearby theatres, historic sites, and places of interest. This year's event promises to be bigger and better than ever, so we need a particularly solid turnout of volunteers.

Current Conservancy volunteers received an email in mid-December with Night on Broadway volunteer registration instructions. If you have never volunteered with the Conservancy but are interested in volunteering for Night on Broadway, please email Bruce Scottow at bscottow@laconservancy.org.

Thank you!

HISTORIC BARS continued from page 1

Yet we've lost many culinary landmarks over the years—the original Brown Derby in Koreatown, Perino's in Hancock Park, the Buggy Whip in Westchester, La Villa Basque in Vernon, and Bahooka in Rosemead, to name just a few—along with countless coffee shops and neighborhood bars that make up the fabric of communities.

Many of us know that feeling of regret when we learn a favorite haunt is closing—a place we love but haven't visited for years. As former *LA Weekly* restaurant critic Beshia Rodell wrote about historic bars and restaurants, “We never want them to change, but we don't give them enough of our attention—or our money—to make change avoidable.” While this may often be the case, other establishments do solid business but simply can't adjust to tectonic market shifts—such as Du-par's, which will become a Sephora cosmetics store.

Some cities have taken steps to protect these vulnerable elements of our history. In 2013, San Francisco Heritage launched the Legacy Bars & Restaurants initiative. The preservation nonprofit created an online guide to more than 100 local venues, raising awareness and encouraging patronage. They also worked with community members and civic leaders to establish a Legacy Business Program through legislation and a ballot initiative. Inspired by programs in cities such as Buenos Aires, Barcelona, and London, San Francisco's program created a registry and historic preservation fund that provides grants for business assistance and rent stabilization.

Los Angeles may need to develop its own model to help struggling legacy businesses. Currently, local landmark designation protects buildings but not the businesses that occupy them. In the absence of legislation, we need more promotion and patronage of vintage bars and restaurants before it's too late.

Hungry for History?

The next time you're out for a cocktail or a bite to eat, consider a legacy bar or restaurant. If you have a favorite place you haven't visited in a while, make it a destination.

The *Offbeat L.A.* blog (offbeatla.com) has a great list of “The Oldest Surviving Los Angeles Restaurants,” more than twenty have closed since the list first appeared in 2015. We also have dozens on our website at laconservancy.org/explore-la/historic-places (type “Restaurant” in the Property Type field).

With enough attention and support, perhaps Greater L.A.'s legacy bars and restaurants can continue to generate priceless memories for our generation and those to come.

Thank You, Walking Tour Docents

In 2017, seventy volunteer docents gave a total of 725 tours to nearly 10,000 people! Thank you, walking tour docents, for your hard work and dedication!

Alice Allen	Michael Goldstein	Carol Mitchell*	Steve Slakey
Janis Ashley	Jody Gunn	Libby Motika	Chris Spry**
Liliana Barrios	Kellie Hardick	Ellen Nichols	Pamela Taylor
Kenon Breazeale*	Erica Hayward	David Nufer*	David Thompson
Bob Brennan	Randall Henderson	Andrew Odom	Nicole J. Thompson
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Bud Coffey	Leah Kabaker	Vivian Pine	Jan Westman
Carolyn Coughlin	Deke Keasbey	Paul Polacek	Mary Alice Wollam
Jay Cywan	Leslie Lambert	Monica Rejniak	
Terry Dadd	Eric Lynxwiler	Jerome Robinson	* Gave 20+ tours
Amanda Dillin	Steven McCall	Kip Rudd	** Gave 35+ tours
Gregory Figueroa	Dave McMenamin*	Judith Siegel	
Danny Fisk	Lindsay McMenamin**	Herb Silverman	
John Ghini	Stephen Melli	Kimberly Skavaril	

BECOME A WALKING TOUR DOCENT

by Bruce Scottow

For many Angelenos, the Los Angeles Conservancy's most visible presence is our weekend walking tour program, attended by thousands of tourgoers each year. With a resurgence of interest in downtown L.A.—particularly its restaurants, retail establishments, nightlife, and residences—we've witnessed a corresponding growth in interest in its history and architecture. That growth, in turn, creates the need to expand our corps of walking tour docents.

We will offer our training program for new walking tour docents this spring (dates TBD). If you are interested in becoming a walking tour docent, please fill out a volunteer application at laconservancy.org/about/volunteers, and we will keep you informed about upcoming training dates.

In the meantime, if you or anyone you know is interested in becoming a walking tour docent, we encourage you to take some of our current walking tours to experience it for yourself. Register online at laconservancy.org/tours.



Volunteer docent Jerome Robinson leads a walking tour. Photo by Alex Inshishian/L.A. Conservancy.

Thank You for Your Support in 2017!

Members like you played a key role in some great progress in preservation last year. **Membership dues provide nearly a third of the Conservancy's revenue**, making our advocacy and education work possible. Below are just a few highlights of what you helped achieve in 2017. Thank you, and best wishes for a happy and healthy 2018!

2017 By the Numbers

Took direct action to help preserve **150** threatened historic places



Partnered with **10** community organizations on educational programming and events



Mobilized nearly **3,000** people to take action on behalf of threatened places



Earned nearly **60,000** votes in the national Partners in Preservation campaign, winning **\$150,000** to help rehab the original trolley car at the Formosa Cafe (learn more on page 1)



Helped nearly **10,000** people discover historic downtown through our walking tour programs



Welcomed **1,046** guests at our L.A.'s K-Town: Culture and Community weekend, which included panel discussions, a film screening, food tasting, historic pub crawl, and walking tours

Brought over **700** students in grades 3-12 on walking tours of Los Angeles history and architecture



Provided **\$1,160** in scholarship funding to schools, subsidizing costs for over **one-third** of our student tourgoers



Welcomed more than **10,700** people into L.A.'s historic theatres for our Last Remaining Seats series, including a **first-time** visit to San Pedro's Art Deco Warner Grand Theatre

Appeared in the media more than **350** times



Expanded our online social media community by **15%**



Supported by nearly **6,000** members and **325** volunteers



Worked with **9** communities on new or updated preservation ordinances



Celebrated L.A. County's top preservation projects with **678** guests at our Preservation Awards Luncheon



Produced **3** short films for our LGBTQ Historic Places in L.A. project. To date, over **250** people have attended public screenings, and nearly **2,000** people have watched online

2017 Preservation Issues: Highs and Lows

Highs

- **San Gabriel passed updated historic preservation ordinance.** We worked closely with the City to update and expand its pioneering 1965 ordinance.
- **Pan American Bank listed in the National Register of Historic Places.** We successfully nominated this East L.A. bank with important Latinx history.
- **Filed litigation to prevent demolition of former Lytton Savings building (now Chase Bank).** This threatened landmark got a reprieve when the L.A. Superior Court ruled in our favor in April.
- **Los Angeles adopted Baseline Mansionization and Hillside Ordinances.** This multi-year effort helps protect older and historic neighborhoods from out-of-scale single-family construction.

Lows

- **L.A. City Council voted in support of plan to demolish Parker Center.** We urged the City to reuse rather than demolish the former LAPD headquarters, and we fought for years for a more transparent decision-making process.
- **Lost appeal in Jones Dog & Cat Hospital lawsuit against the City of West Hollywood.** We believe that the Environmental Impact Report for the replacement project is inadequate and flawed. Learn more about this loss on page 3.

Win or lose, we'll keep fighting for Greater L.A.'s historic places!

SEPTEMBER 25 / NOVEMBER 29

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

The Los Angeles Conservancy would like to acknowledge the generous contributions of our new or upgrading Supporting members, and the new and renewing members of our Sustaining, Benefactor, and Cornerstone groups.

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Joel and Danine Stensby
John Thomas and Chris Launi
Sally Tiongco
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Tony Valdez
Rosendo Velderrain and
Terry Adair



**SPONSOR
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THANK YOU, KOREATOWN TOUR PARTNERS!

Over the weekend of November 3-5, we welcomed over 1,000 guests on a series of special tours and events throughout Koreatown—a fascinating, dense, and diverse neighborhood with a rich history.

Thanks to everyone who attended, special thanks to the business owners and developers who opened your buildings to our visitors, and many thanks to the sponsors who helped make this event a success!

Tour Leaders

Hotel Normandie

The LINE LA and
POT Lobby Bar

The Wiltern

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Talo Management Group

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Wilshire Center Business
Improvement District

CONSERVANCY WALKING TOURS

Tours cost \$10 for Conservancy members and youth 17 or younger, and \$15 for the general public.

Most tours require reservations. We accept walk-ins on some tours, subject to availability.

For details and reservations, visit laconservancy.org/tours. Questions? Contact us at info@laconservancy.org or (213) 623-2489.

WALKING TOURS

Angelino Heights
First Saturday of each month

Art Deco
Every Saturday

**Broadway Historic Theatre &
Commercial District**
Every Saturday

Historic Downtown
Every Saturday

Millennium Biltmore Hotel
Every Sunday

Union Station
Every Saturday

Customized group tours available by special arrangement. For details, visit laconservancy.org/tours or contact us at info@laconservancy.org or (213) 623-2489.



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For the latest updates and hundreds of historic places to explore, visit laconservancy.org.

UPCOMING EVENTS



Photo courtesy Night on Broadway.

NIGHT ON BROADWAY Saturday, January 27

Don't miss this free arts and music festival in downtown's Historic Broadway District! See page 4 for details on our participation this year.



Photo by Larry Underhill.

WALKING TOUR DOCENT TRAINING Spring 2018

Do you want to lead walking tours of downtown L.A.? We'll hold our next docent training classes in the spring. Sign up to attend the trainings! Details on page 5.



Rally to save The Town House in 1993. Photo from Conservancy archives.

CONSERVANCY CELEBRATES FORTY YEARS 2018

The Conservancy was founded in 1978 as a small, grassroots group of concerned citizens. We're still going strong forty years later because of members like you! Learn more about our history on page 2.