



The Fairmont Century Plaza Hotel, photo courtesy Fairmont; The Academy Museum of Motion Pictures, photo by David Crane, Los Angeles Daily News/SCNG; The Herald-Examiner Building, courtesy Big Orange Landmarks.

## Historic Preservation is Worth the Wait!

By Lisett Chavarela

As 2021 comes to a close, the Conservancy is thrilled to celebrate the long-awaited re-opening of three spectacular Los Angeles landmarks: the 1966 Fairmont Century Plaza, the 1939 Academy Museum of Motion Pictures (formerly the May Company Wilshire department store), and the 1915 Herald-Examiner Building.

Each of these historic monuments is rich with cultural and architectural significance, and each one was once threatened with demolition. The Los Angeles Conservancy was involved in saving all three of these buildings and, happily, all three have been preserved and are now part of the future of Los Angeles.

This is what preservation looks like—the confluence of patience, creativity, and resolve, pressing for creative solutions that preserve the integrity of historic structures without compromising their potential to serve future generations in new, purposeful ways.

### Fairmont Century Plaza Hotel (1966)

The Century Plaza Hotel was billed as “The Hotel of the Future” when it debuted in 1966. Designed by prominent Japanese American architect Minoru Yamasaki (who later designed New York City’s World Trade Center), the striking crescent shaped building features elements of Mid-Century Modernism and New Formalism.

Hailed as “twenty stories and one million square feet of luxury,” the hotel is linked to countless historic events, including the “Welcome Back to Earth” celebration honoring the Apollo 11 Mission in 1969: the first ever Presidential State Dinner held outside the White House.

A beloved City treasure, the Century Plaza has hosted countless weddings, anniversaries, bar and bat mitzvahs, birthday parties and other celebrations, cementing its place in the hearts of Angelenos and visitors alike.

*Please see WORTH THE WAIT on page 6*

## Donate to the Preservation Advocacy Fund

As a member, you care about preserving the historic places important to L.A.’s history and future. Please consider a thoughtful contribution to our Preservation Advocacy Fund.

**Your donation is now worth double thanks to a generous \$25,000 matching gift from Conservancy supporters including Wesley Phoa and Margaret Morgan, and Alan Merson.**

Historic preservation can be a slow process requiring significant effort and resources. We face many challenges and need your support to continue our important work. As you’ll read in this issue:

- We filed a lawsuit to ensure our nomination for the Chili Bowl receives due process.
- We’re advocating for places that tell stories of underrepresented communities.
- We’re intervening in the Cal Trans I-110 Flyover Project in historic West Adams which has yet to show purpose or need.

Your donation directly supports our efforts to preserve L.A. County’s most beloved cultural and architecturally significant historic places.

**Please make your gift to our Preservation Advocacy Fund today at [laconservancy.org/PAF](http://laconservancy.org/PAF).** Thank you for your membership and support!

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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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Major funding for the Los Angeles Conservancy's programs is provided by the LaFetra Foundation and the Kenneth T. and Eileen L. Norris Foundation.

## Conservancy Staff Updates

We are pleased to welcome the Conservancy's new Communications Assistant, **Michelle Vazquez**! Michelle is a native Angeleno from the San Fernando Valley who recently graduated from the University of California, Santa Barbara with a bachelor's degree in communications and a minor in professional writing. As the Communications Assistant, Michelle will help implement communications and marketing strategies that promote the Conservancy, its programs, advocacy issues, membership, and other initiatives.

The Conservancy is also pleased to welcome the newest member of the Education Department! In November, **Lia Schifitto** joined the education team as the Volunteer and Program Coordinator. She will oversee the Conservancy's 200+ volunteers, create educational content and assist with programming. She has a master's in sustainable cultural heritage from the American University of Rome and a bachelor's in history from the University of Toronto.

Earlier this year, we said goodbye to our Development Manager **Gabriela Philo**. After almost two years at the Conservancy, Gaby has moved on to become the Director of Development at the Andrew Goodman Foundation. This was a nice promotion from an organization that Gaby had volunteered at for many years.

At the end of October, our wonderful Administrative Assistant, **Helen Huang**, also set forth on a new path. Helen has gone back to school in library sciences and has accepted a position at a library in Burbank. She was with us for almost five years and endeared herself to everyone with her helpfulness and friendliness. The Conservancy will miss her and Gaby and wish them both the very best!

## Join the Conservancy Team!

The L.A. Conservancy is currently hiring for the roles of Development Manager, Operations Assistant, and Neighborhood Outreach Coordinator.

We welcome applications from individuals of all backgrounds, experiences, abilities, and perspectives. Please visit our website for full job descriptions and to apply:

[\*\*laconservancy.org/employment\*\*](http://laconservancy.org/employment)

### CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS!

Interested in putting your passion for historic preservation into action? Become an L.A. Conservancy volunteer! The Conservancy started as an all-volunteer organization, and volunteers remain essential to our work. We are currently welcoming applications from folks who share the Conservancy's mission of saving the places that make Los Angeles County so special. From leading walking tours to working popular events like Last Remaining Seats, there's no shortage of interesting and fun ways to help support the Conservancy's mission. To apply, please fill out our volunteer application form at [\*\*laconservancy.org/about/volunteers\*\*](http://laconservancy.org/about/volunteers).



Volunteers in 2019, by Larry Underhill.



Photo by Gary Kavanagh.

## 'Tis the Season for Making Memories!

The 2021 holiday season is *here* and after nearly two years of pent-up pandemic energy, 'tis the season to gather with your friends and loved ones ... safely!

Looking for some safe, entertaining, and educational ways to spend the holidays here in L.A.? Let the Conservancy help! Whether you're searching for something to satisfy the mother-in-law who has everything, your design-loving BFF, your outdoor enthusiast, or something for your friend who still isn't quite ready for indoor activities, let us help relieve some of the guesswork!

Our holiday-themed and evergreen offerings are sure to entertain even the grinchiest grinch on your list.

### VINTAGE L.A. CHRISTMAS

What Los Angeles lacks in snow it makes up for with elaborate Christmas displays. Join us for Vintage L.A. Christmas, a *virtual tour* that will visit some of the most festive sites in Los Angeles' past.

This virtual tour will visit sites throughout L.A. County that all have a long history with decorating for the holidays. We will

tour a boulevard in Altadena that has been a festive thoroughfare since 1920, see the elaborate Christmas displays from some of L.A.'s most iconic department stores of Christmas' past, and learn how the Mayor and city staff celebrate the season.

**Wednesdays, December 15, 22, 29 at 6:00 pm. \$12 general public, \$8 members.**

### HOLIDAYS AT UNION STATION

Explore one of L.A.'s most iconic gems, Union Station, during the most festive time of the year!

Learn the history of this extraordinary Spanish Colonial Revival and Art Deco monument as you enjoy the sounds and sights of the season, including Union Station's spectacular holiday tree. (Your Instagram feed will thank you.)

You'll cover the majority of Union Station from the famous Waiting Room—seen in countless movies—to the Fred Harvey Restaurant, much of which has been beautifully decorated for the season.

**Tuesdays, Dec. 7, 14, and 21. \$15 general public, \$10 members.**

### BOOK A GROUP TOUR

Explore Los Angeles' history and iconic architectural gems virtually or in person *with your own personal docent!* Private group tours are perfect for holiday gatherings, social clubs, family outings, and more!

In-person group tours are up to 12 persons per docent; larger groups will have more than 1 docent. (For Virtual Group Tours, we can accommodate up to 100 guests.)

Choose from the following tours:

- Historic Downtown
- Art Deco
- Union Station
- Modern Skyline
- Past Meets Present

Visit our website for full tour details and pricing at [laconservancy.org/group-tours](https://laconservancy.org/group-tours) or email us at [info@laconservancy.org](mailto:info@laconservancy.org).

### WALKING TOURS

Staying in town this holiday season? L.A.'s spectacular winter weather makes it the perfect time of year to get out and explore L.A. history! Grab a friend (or fly solo) and take advantage of our weekly walking tours departing from downtown Los Angeles. Explore Downtown L.A.'s Art Deco majesty, take a ride on Angels Flight, nosh on festive treats at Grand Central Market, and so much more!

Check the back page of this newsletter for a full list of our self-guided tours, and you can always see our most up-to-date tour listings at: [laconservancy.org/tours](https://laconservancy.org/tours)

### GIFT A MEMBERSHIP

Need a last-minute stocking stuffer? Gift the history buff in your life a membership to the L.A. Conservancy! It's a perfect holiday gift for fans of Los Angeles history and architecture.

Individual memberships start at just \$40 annually and come with fantastic perks! [www.laconservancy.org/join](https://www.laconservancy.org/join).



The Chili Bowl in West Los Angeles, one of Los Angeles's oldest remaining examples of programmatic architecture, is threatened with demolition. Photos by Marcello Vavala/L.A. Conservancy and The Los Angeles Public Library.

## The Chili Bowl Denied Historic-Cultural Monument Status

On December 7th, 2021, The City of L.A.'s Planning and Land Use Management (PLUM) Committee voted against the pending Historic-Cultural Monument (HCM) nomination for the 1935 Chili Bowl in West Los Angeles. In the 3/1 vote, Councilmember Gil Cedillo voted in favor but Councilmember Mike Bonin, in whose district the Chili Bowl is located, refused to reconsider his objection to the nomination.

The L.A. Conservancy believes this decision is shortsighted, as this all but ensures the demolition of a rare, intact example of programmatic architecture. Had the PLUM Committee approached this differently, a design review process would have been afforded to incorporate the Chili Bowl with new housing development, or potential relocation to a safe, new receiving site. We have been advocating for HCM status of this humble but historic structure since 2019.

Earlier this year, PLUM voted to recommend against the Chili Bowl following Councilmember Bonin's office speaking out against the nomination. However, the public was blocked from speaking at this meeting, including the Conservancy as the applicant.

This was a clear violation of the Brown Act, which guarantees the right of public comment. We challenged the City for violating the California Brown Act, requesting it address and remedy the violation. The West Los Angeles Sawtelle Neighborhood Council also passed a motion requesting the City Council to reopen this matter.

However, on June 29, the full City Council took up the pending matter and, with PLUM's recommendation, voted to deny the Conservancy's nomination for the Chili Bowl. Since this issue is not an isolated incident involving a pending HCM and PLUM not following Brown Act protocols, we took action.

In August, we filed a Petition for Writ of Mandate with the Los Angeles County Superior Court against the City of Los Angeles, challenging the City's violations of the Brown Act and won. The December 7th hearing was a direct result of this legal action and we are hopeful the City will do better going forward, allowing for a transparent public process.

While we consider that a small win, the rejection of the Chili Bowl as a Historic Cultural Monument is a loss that will only serve to

erase more of L.A.'s increasingly endangered programmatic buildings.

It is always going to be easier to clear a site and demolish, but that does not make it right or better for our city, our environment, and our quality of living if we routinely throw away what makes us special.

The Conservancy believes that L.A. deserves something better: opportunities to celebrate our unique history, while also adding to it with new housing and adaptively reusing historic buildings. Small in stature but with a mighty and whimsical architectural punch, the Chili Bowl could easily be incorporated as part of any new housing on this site and the Conservancy views this decision as a missed opportunity.

We will continue to advocate for the preservation of the Chili Bowl through either relocation or as part of any environmental review process and the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

For full background on this issue, visit: [laconservancy.org/chilibowl](https://laconservancy.org/chilibowl).

# Preservation Snapshots

## Hung Sa Dahn/ Young Korean Academy



*Hung Sa Dahn's 24th Annual Convention, December 25, 1937. Photo courtesy Korean American Digital Archive, USC Libraries.*

On November 4, 2021, the Cultural Heritage Commission recommended the Historic-Cultural Monument (HCM) nomination for the Hung Sa Dahn/Young Korean Academy to the City Council's Planning and Land Use Management (PLUM) committee. *Thank you for your support!*

Ahn Chang Ho, Korean independence activist and prominent leader of the early Korean American community in the U.S., founded Hung Sa Dahn in San Francisco in 1913. The organization's mission was to build civic and political leadership capacity for the Korean independence movement from Japanese colonial rule (1910-1945). Ahn's teachings beyond the goal of independence promoted Korean sovereignty through democracy. Its membership was varied, consisting of day laborers, farmworkers, and shopkeepers, as well as ambassadors and diplomats.

Hung Sa Dahn continued to serve as a political voice following liberation. South Korea experienced political and social turmoil in the 1950s-1980s, both on account of the Korean War and subsequent authoritarian rule, which ran counter to Hung Sa Dahn's core philosophies.

The property at 3421 South Catalina Street was leased by Hung Sa Dahn in 1929, then purchased in 1932 as its first standalone headquarters. For more on this important site, visit [laconservancy.org/issues/hung-sa-dahn](https://laconservancy.org/issues/hung-sa-dahn).

## The West L.A. Civic Center



*The West L.A. Civic Center. Photo courtesy Historic Resources Group.*

Built between 1957-1965 to meet growing demand for government services, the West L.A. Civic Center is significant for its Modernist architecture and role in expanded government services following WWII.

More recently, it's become hallowed ground for L.A.'s skateboarding scene, attracting skaters worldwide with its stairs and ledges. In January 2021, the County and City selected Abode Communities and Avalon Bay Communities to redevelop the site. As currently planned, the 1960 Courthouse, 1961 branch City Hall, 1962 Community Center (Senior Center), and 1965 Amphitheatre are to be demolished.

This means an eligible historic district marking an important part of West L.A.'s growth will be erased. Preservation through adaptive reuse is readily achievable in this project, and can complement the proposed new mixed income housing.

Until someone in leadership steps forward and presses for an alternative that successfully marries the old with the new, this development team will continue to seek the easy way out.

L.A. deserves better. Please join us in pressing City Councilmember Mike Bonin and County Supervisor Sheila Kuehl for another alternative! For details on how to help, visit [laconservancy.org/issues/west-la-civic-center](https://laconservancy.org/issues/west-la-civic-center).

## The I-110 Flyover



*Proposed I-110 Flyover Structure and St. John's Cathedral. Rendering by Caltrans District 7.*

In a perceived effort to improve traffic congestion on the I-110 Freeway, the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) has proposed constructing a two-lane "flyover" ramp in the heart of University Park. The ramp, which would reach approximately 55 feet at its highest point, would allow drivers to exit the freeway at Figueroa Way and 23rd Street.

If constructed, the proposed I-110 Flyover would create a new physical barrier between the historic St. John's Cathedral and the surrounding neighborhood, obstructing key viewsheds and degrading the overall character of the community.

Based on a May, 2018 lawsuit filing by West Adams Heritage Association (WAHA), Caltrans settled, agreeing to suspend activities and prepare a EIR in the future. While the Flyover project has remained quiet since 2018, as of October, the proposed project is back. Now Caltrans is looking at either the Flyover or a surface route alternative.

Despite no support from the community or a clear purpose and need, Caltrans is expected to spend \$7.8 million toward the environmental review and approval process for this proposed project. The Conservancy is pressing Caltrans on the purpose and need for this project, and will participate in the EIR process. For more on this issue, please visit [laconservancy.org/issues/i-110-flyover](https://laconservancy.org/issues/i-110-flyover).

## Worth the Wait *continued from page 1*

Even so, in 2008, the owners of the Century Plaza Hotel announced plans to raze the building and replace it with a mixed-use development, including two 600-foot towers.

The Conservancy launched a campaign to build public support for saving the hotel, making its preservation a political campaign issue in the 2009 City of Los Angeles Fifth Council District election, nominating the hotel to be on the National Trust for Historic Preservation's list of America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places.

In 2009, new L.A. City Councilmember Paul Koretz filed a motion to nominate the hotel for designation as a Historic-Cultural Monument (HCM) and successfully pressed for a preservation-minded resolution.

The Conservancy, with the National Trust for Historic Preservation, worked with the developer Next Century to create a plan that preserved the historic hotel and created new housing. The Century Plaza became an HCM in 2013. The historic structure includes both hotel space and condominiums—retaining most of its significant historic features. Two new towers are compatible with Century City's skyline and built in the rear of the property.

In September, 2021 the Fairmont Century Plaza Hotel reopened to the public and is once again a 'hotel of the future.'

### **The Academy Museum of Motion Pictures / May Company Wilshire (1939)**

Nearly thirty years after it closed, the May Company Wilshire building reopened as the Academy Museum of Motion Pictures in September 2021. Its restored iconic gold-tiled cylinder at the

corner of Fairfax Avenue beckoning motorists and passersby anew.

Designed by Albert C. Martin, Sr. and Samuel Marx, May Company Wilshire opened in 1939 as the company's first freestanding department store. The building remains the grandest example of Streamline Moderne architecture in Los Angeles and a cherished touchstone for many Angelenos. In the early 1990s, May Company California merged with J.W. Robinson's to form Robinsons-May, closing multiple locations, including the Wilshire store.

Not long after, new owners announced



*The Herald Examiner Building in the late 1930s. Los Angeles Public Library.*

plans to demolish the structure and build a hotel, two office towers, retail uses, and parking. The Los Angeles Conservancy jumped into action, engaging neighborhood residents and elected officials, culminating in the late Councilmember John Ferraro's influential support to help save the building and secure its landmark status.

Former Supervisor Ed Edelman facilitated the building's sale to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in 1994. The building reopened as LACMA West in 1999 but failed to flourish.

Enter the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences who secured a long-term lease and a stunning vision worthy of a museum devoted to the arts, sciences,

and artists of moviemaking. The museum is now open to the public.

### **Herald-Examiner Building (1915)**

In 1913, Julia Morgan, California's first certified female architect, designed the Herald-Examiner Building. It was her first major commission for William Randolph Hearst and one of the few industrial buildings she would design.

The remarkable Mission Revival building opened in 1915. Its red tile roof and blue and yellow tiled domes immediately made it a visible neighborhood landmark. It housed the newspaper's offices until 1989, when the newspaper (by then renamed the Herald-Examiner) closed.

Within a few years, Hearst Corporation began exploring the possibility of demolishing the building to make it a parking lot.

The Conservancy put out a call to action and formed a Blue-Ribbon Task Force, co-chaired by then Councilmembers Joel Wachs and Rita Waters, and the "Friends of the Herald-Examiner Building." We nominated the building for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. It was determined eligible for listing, following Hearst Corporation's objection to the nomination.

There was an outpouring of support to preserve the Herald-Examiner Building and Hearst dropped their demolition plans. Over the next few decades, the building became one of the most popular filming locations in Los Angeles.

In 2016, Georgetown Company partnered with Hearst Corporation to bring back the architectural legacy and prominence of the building.

This September, the Herald-Examiner Building reopened as Arizona State University's California Center with mixed-use space available for restaurants and shops.

# AUGUST 16 / OCTOBER 15 MEMBERSHIP REPORT

The Conservancy acknowledges the generous contributions of our new and upgrading Supporting members, and the new and renewing members of our Sustaining, Benefactor, and Cornerstone groups.

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## An Interview with Rory Cunningham!

Interview by Liz Leshin, Director of Development



Photo by Larry Underhill.

Recently, we had the pleasure of interviewing one of the founding members of our film series *Last Remaining Seats*: Rory Cunningham!

### How did you first get involved with the L.A. Conservancy?

My first job in L.A. was in the Eastern Columbia Building (when the L.A. Conservancy had offices there). One day the Conservancy's mail came to our office, so I delivered it and asked the receptionist about the photos of the beautiful buildings on the wall. Having always loved historic architecture, and having studied architecture and art history in college, the receptionist shared information and asked if I'd like to volunteer.

I took the docent training course and in early 1987 helped plan an event about the Downtown Historic Theaters, which morphed into *Last Remaining Seats*. I have volunteered at LRS every year since.

### What do you enjoy most about LRS?

I love seeing the theaters filled with people who want to see films the way they were meant to be seen. I also love watching people coming into the theaters for the first time as their jaws drop taking in the beauty in the spaces.

### What compelled you to become a Pillar Society member and why should others consider joining?

I've been committed to the Conservancy's mission since 1986 with my volunteering and advocacy. And now my husband, David Pacheco and I have the ability to support the LAC financially. For those who truly love the historic architectural and cultural diversity of Los Angeles and have the financial ability to sustain these valuable resources, it's my belief that the LAC is the best organization to support.

**To learn more about the Pillar Society, visit [laconservancy.org/pillar-society](http://laconservancy.org/pillar-society).**

## CONSERVANCY TOURS : WALKING & VIRTUAL

### WALKING TOURS

Socially distanced, open air walking tours are now available! \$10 for Conservancy members and children seventeen and under; \$15 for the general public. Reservations required: [laconservancy.org/tours](http://laconservancy.org/tours).

#### Art Deco:

Learn how Art Deco became a defining architectural style in the city. **Saturdays, 10:15 a.m.**

#### Historic Downtown:

Take a ride on Angels Flight® and step inside Grand Central Market! **Saturdays, 10:00 a.m.**

#### Union Station:

See the beautiful architecture of this iconic L.A. landmark up close and personal. **Saturdays, 11:00 a.m.**



## Los Angeles Conservancy

523 West Sixth Street, Suite 826

Los Angeles, CA 90014

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## TIME VALUE

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Google Street View

### Doan's Bakery

22526 Ventura Boulevard  
Woodland Hills, CA 91364  
(818) 591-9236

Founded in 1984, Doan's is famous for its white chocolate coconut Bundt cake (a must try—just ask Tom Cruise) as well as an array of pies and cakes. It's highly popular during holidays, so it's best to get your orders in early for your apple, pumpkin, or sweet potato pies!

[doansbakery.com](http://doansbakery.com)



Photo by Bill Esparza

### Rosy's Tamales

10981 Glenoaks Boulevard  
Pacoima, CA 91331  
(818) 834-6948

If you take your holiday tamales seriously, look no further than Rosy's in Pacoima. Prepared with family recipes from the Nayarit region of Mexico, the holiday season can see Rosy's tameria producing up to 1,500 a week so you'll want to get your order in early!

**Phone calls or walk-ins only.**



Photo courtesy Brent's Deli

### Brent's Deli

19565 Parthenia Street  
Northridge, CA 91324  
(818) 886-5679

Brent's Deli, routinely voted as one of the best delicatessens in L.A., is ready for the Challah-Days! One of the most loved legacy businesses in the valley, it first opened its doors in 1967 and has been a go-to ever since. (Go for the pastrami... stay for the black and white cookies.)

[brentsdeli.com](http://brentsdeli.com)