



LOS ANGELES CONSERVANCY NEWS



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Google's creative "building within a building" conversion of the "Spruce Goose" hangar led by ZGF Architects.
Photo by Connie Zhou.

This Goose is Golden

We will hold our annual benefit, **From Goose to Google**, on **Saturday, May 4** in one of Los Angeles' most amazing spaces: the massive airplane hangar built for Howard Hughes' legendary H-4 Hercules "flying boat," better known as the "Spruce Goose."

You may have seen this vast building before, on one or both of our previous tours of the Hughes Aircraft Company/Hercules Campus. Now, the landmark has completed its transformation into Google Playa Vista.

Six stories high and longer than two football fields, the hangar now encompasses a four-story tech campus that embodies vision, innovation, and the potential of reusing historic places while retaining their original beauty.

The event offers an extremely rare opportunity to visit an extraordinary space not open to the public. Guests will see how a series of visionaries created, saved, and transformed this hub of both mid-twentieth-century and modern technology.

About the Site

Billionaire industrialist Howard Hughes formed the Hughes Aircraft Company (HAC) in 1932 as part of the Hughes Tool Company, to track expenses related to his aviation interests.

Passionate about airplanes, ambitious, and a daring pilot, Hughes brought together

Please see HERCULES on page 6

Last Remaining Seats Member Presale Begins March 27

Our annual series of classic films in historic theatres returns for its 33rd season on June 1.

Thanks to all of our members who took the time to respond to our Last Remaining Seats survey last year. We heard you loud and clear!

This year, the majority of our screenings will take place on Saturday afternoons and evenings to make it easier for folks to join us. Plus, for the first time in the series' history, we're holding a screening on a Sunday afternoon!

This season also marks our return to The Wiltern after sixteen long years.

We have a great lineup of classic films this year, including three film noirs, a silent short, a western, and much more! Please see page 2 for the full lineup and schedule.

Members can take advantage of a special two-week presale beginning **March 27 at 10 a.m.**

Tickets are \$18 for members, \$22 for the general public, and \$16 for youth under 17.

For more information and to purchase tickets, visit laconservancy.org/lrs

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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.

Upcoming Events

For more information and to register for our upcoming events, visit laconservancy.org/events.

April 6, 13, 20, 27

Above the Skyline: For a limited time, our seasonal Modern Skyline tour includes access to OUE Skyspace at the top of the U.S. Bank Tower and a ride on the Skyslide (\$30 members and youth under 17; \$35 general public; laconservancy.org/tours)

April 11, 25 May 9, 23

A Woman's Place: Union Station & Chinatown: Back by popular demand, this special tour explores the history of two beloved sites through the stories of women (\$15 members, \$20 general public, \$10 youth under 17; laconservancy.org/womans-place)

Saturday, May 4

From Goose to Google: Our annual benefit takes place inside the former "Spruce Goose" hangar at the Hercules Campus in Playa Vista, currently the location of Google Playa Vista (see cover for more information; laconservancy.org/benefit2019)

June 1 - 29

Last Remaining Seats *: See classic films light up the big screens of L.A.'s historic theatres (\$18 members, \$22 general public, \$16 youth under 17; member pre-sale begins March 27 at 10 a.m. at laconservancy.org/lrs)

Saturday, June 1

8 p.m. *It Happened One Night* (1934)
Los Angeles Theatre

Saturday, June 8

2 p.m. *Los tallos amargos* (1956, Argentina)
Theatre TBA

8 p.m. *The Maltese Falcon* (1941)
Theatre TBA

Sunday, June 16

3 p.m. Epic Sunday: *Spartacus* (1960)
Theatre at Ace Hotel

Saturday, June 22

2 p.m. *A Day with Laurel & Hardy*
Orpheum Theatre

8 p.m. *Rebecca* (1940)
Orpheum Theatre

Saturday, June 29

2 p.m. *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* (1969)
The Wiltern

8 p.m. *Network* (1976)
The Wiltern

Thursday, July 25

Preservation Awards Luncheon: Celebrate the best preservation projects in L.A. County at our annual luncheon at the Millennium Biltmore Hotel (laconservancy.org/awards)

*Lineup subject to change.

In Memoriam: Robert W. Winter, PhD (1924 - 2019)

Dr. Robert W. Winter, architectural historian and author who pioneered the widespread study and appreciation of Southern California architecture, passed away on February 9 at the age of 94.

His specialty in the American Arts and Crafts Movement garnered him the nickname “Bungalow Bob,” though his work spans all types of historic architecture.

A native of Elkhart, Indiana, Bob became fond of architecture while attending Dartmouth College, where he studied American architectural history with renowned author and educator Hugh S. Morrison.

A teaching position at UCLA brought Bob to Los Angeles in 1956.

His partnership with David Gebhard yielded the iconic book *Guide to Architecture in Southern California*, widely considered the definitive guide to historic architecture in Los Angeles. Bob’s last book is the recently published sixth edition of the guide.

Bob co-wrote the cultural heritage ordinance for the City of Pasadena and served on its Cultural Heritage Commission.

He served on the State Historical Resources Commission, spent over a decade on the L.A. Cultural Heritage Board, and was an active member of the Conservancy’s advisory board. He also helped create our signature walking tour program.

In 2009, Bob’s decades of fostering awareness and appreciation of L.A.’s architectural heritage earned him the Conservancy’s President’s Award, the top award at our annual Preservation Awards ceremony.

Bob’s sense of humor and passion for the built environment influenced his teaching, writing, and life. We are saddened by the loss of a great preservationist, and grateful for his many contributions to Southern California’s architectural heritage.



Students Discover Broadway

by Sana Ahmed

Thanks to your support, the Conservancy introduced nearly 200 third- through fifth-graders to L.A.’s Historic Broadway district through our Discover L.A.’s Broadway youth program this year.

Launched in partnership with Night On Broadway in 2018, our series of workshops exposes students from downtown L.A. and nearby Boyle Heights to the history of the diverse people and places that make up the historic district.

Despite the cancellation of the 2019 Night On Broadway festival, we maintained our commitment to students and proceeded with our Discover L.A.’s Broadway program as planned.

Students worked collaboratively on a group art project using various mediums to depict the story of Broadway. In addition to workshops, participating teachers received multidisciplinary curriculum, aligned with California State Standards in History, Math, and Art, for further lesson planning.

The workshops culminated with a field trip to Broadway where students explored historic theatres and experienced the vibrant street first hand.

Conservancy youth programs like Discover L.A.’s Broadway are vital in nurturing a future generation of preservationists and are made possible by members like you. Thank you!



Fifth grade students from Euclid Avenue Elementary in Boyle Heights create art inspired by the historic buildings of L.A.’s Broadway. Photo by Sana Ahmed/L.A. Conservancy.



Intersection of Rose Street and Traction Avenue in the Arts District. Photo by Larry Underhill.

Pickle Works and the Changing Arts District

by Adrian Scott Fine

Preservation and development seem like contradictory ideas, especially for those who see the two in only black and white terms. Some see old buildings and entire neighborhoods as standing in the way of change. In reality, the idea of reusing old buildings and maintaining neighborhood character is about managing, not stopping, change.

How, then, do we plan for change while still allowing for increased density, affordable housing production, and high-rise development? Rather than either/or, what if it was both? When done thoughtfully and with heritage in mind, growth of this kind can complement and reinforce older neighborhoods.

Arts District: Then and Now

Denver has LoDo, or Lower Downtown. San Francis-

co has SoMa, or South of Market. In Los Angeles, we are fortunate to have the Arts District; no acronym just yet.

Each city has similar warehouse-filled districts that have found new life as studios for artists, housing, and hip restaurants. These attractive places have become destination neighborhoods with several things in common: heritage, old buildings, and irreplaceable authentic community character. It takes time and layers of history for these types of neighborhoods to be formed, and likewise rediscovered and appreciated.

The origins of the Arts District are far removed from its present-day haven where artists and hipsters commingle. It was not until the mid-1990s that it officially became known as the Arts District.

In the mid-nineteenth century, the Arts District was but acres of vineyards. Railroads and the citrus industry arrived in the late-

nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, transforming the area into an industrial warehouse and rail yard district. By the end of World War II, this neighborhood was thoroughly industrialized.

From the 1960s through the early 1980s, the area was well-known for its abandoned warehouses. Beginning in the '70s, artists priced out of the burgeoning Venice and Hollywood art scenes made the Arts District their home.

Vacant industrial warehouses made for massive studios at bargain prices. Yet it was not so easy in the beginning, with artists living in unsafe conditions and hiding during building inspections by the fire department. The live/work concept was not legalized until 1981 when the City finally acknowledged the problem and implemented the Artist-in-Residence (AIR) program. By rehabilitating vacant warehouses, these artists saved an



The Pickle Works building in 2013. Photo by Annie Laskey/L.A. Conservancy.

important part of L.A.'s industrial and transportation past.

James K. Hill and Sons Company Pickle Works/Citizens Warehouse

The first artists opened a number of avant-garde art galleries at the time, including The Art Dock, a drive-by street gallery in an eight-foot loading dock located in the Citizens Warehouse at 1001 East First Street.

Carlton Davis, an artist living in the building from 1981-85, created the innovative approach and invited different artists to display their work. As long as the metal roll-down door was open, The Art Dock was open for viewing.

Before its reuse as an auto-oriented art gallery and residences, the building originally housed the California Vinegar and Pickle Company, and later the James K. Hill and Sons Company Pickle Works (Pickle Works). The 1888 pickle business and building expanded over time, in several phases, until around 1909. The building's additions used the same structural wood frame system with brick masonry walls and

matching design details.

A once popular form of architecture in Los Angeles, the building was a rare surviving example of a Victorian-era brick industrial building.

In the mid-1980s, the Pickle Works building was converted to legal live/work space and housed artist lofts until 2007.

In 2005, an agreement between the owner and the City allowed the City to purchase the building and remove up to fifty feet from it to facilitate the widening of the adjacent First Street Bridge project.



The Pickle Works building was declared a total loss after a fire broke out in 2018. Photo by Jessica Hodgdon/L.A. Conservancy.

Ultimately, the City removed seventy-five feet, including the oldest portion of the building.

By 2013, empty and missing an end wall, the City's Bureau of Engineering announced plans to demolish the building. While the Conservancy's action averted that crisis, a new plan emerged last year with Metro's Division 20 project. The project calls for an expansion of the existing rail yard along the river and immediately north of the Pickle Works building.

The Conservancy and Metro were in the midst of negotiating a possible win-win solution when, on November 9, 2018, the historic Pickle Works building caught fire. The damage was extensive, resulting in a total loss.

Heritage Is a Fragile, Limited Commodity

When we lose a building like Pickle Works we lose a touchstone to L.A.'s past, from our industrial roots to our modern day arts scene. It is an issue of scarcity, as historic buildings and the entire Arts District are a scarce resource. Historic buildings are the underpinning of why the Arts District is so successful. People crave authenticity and creative environments with stories to tell.

You can't instantly build heritage. The Arts District is fragile, with a limited number of historic resources—now one less without Pickle Works. We can successfully blend old and new and guide this neighborhood throughout the coming years. The devil is in the details.

The Conservancy will continue to advocate, take a stand for the Arts District and other fragile neighborhoods, and press for planning that allows for change without losing neighborhood character. •

Hercules continued from page 1

a small group of hand-picked engineers, mechanics, and pilots to design planes to go faster than ever before. Innovations in aerodynamics, engineering, and communications by Hughes and his team led to setting multiple speed records.

In addition to being a brilliant aviator and filmmaker, Hughes was a determined entrepreneur. With the likelihood of U.S. involvement in World War II, Hughes sought to expand HAC into the lucrative market for wartime airplanes and defense systems. Needing more laboratory and production space, he purchased hundreds of acres of undeveloped farmland on the southeastern edge of Culver City, and leased part of it to his fledgling aircraft company.

As part of the campus, Hughes commissioned architect Henry L. Gogerty to design a building specifically for the manufacture of the H-4 Hercules “flying boat.” Completed in 1943, the hangar—known as the Cargo Building—became one of the largest wooden structures in the world.

Like the hangar, the Hercules was made of wood due to the shortage of materials during World War II. The aircraft became known (to Hughes’ disdain) as the “Spruce Goose,” though it was actually made of birch. Over two hundred feet long, with a wingspan of 320 feet, the H-4 still holds the record as the airplane with largest wingspan ever to fly. Hughes flew it just once: in 1947, in Long Beach Harbor, for less than a minute.

After Hughes’ death in 1976, HAC was sold and operations gradually moved away from the Culver City location. While Hollywood kept the Spruce Goose hangar standing by using it as a soundstage for such blockbusters as *Titanic*, *Avatar*, and *Independence Day*, over the years, many of the historic

buildings suffered from deferred maintenance.

The site got a reprieve in 2010, when developer Wayne Ratkovich bought twenty-eight acres containing the remaining historic buildings (determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places in 1991). Ratkovich and architect Brenda Levin led an ambitious rehabilitation of the historic campus. With the help of Matt Construction, the team stabilized collapsing buildings and, over time, adapted all the buildings for new uses while preserving their industrial character. The project earned them a Conservancy Preservation Award in 2014.

What is adaptive reuse?

Adaptive reuse is the conversion of an existing building for a purpose other than that for which it was originally designed. When respecting the historic features of a building, adaptively reusing a historic site is a great way to preserve our built environment.

The Conservancy offered a tour of the Hughes Aircraft Company Culver City campus in 2011, welcoming 600 people who braved a storm to see the buildings.

As buildings were adaptively reused as creative office and production use, a new wave of visionaries—creative and tech—began leasing space, attracted to the authentic character only history can provide.



The refinished “Spruce Goose” hangar in 2015. Photo by Adrian Scott Fine/L.A. Conservancy.

A second Conservancy tour in 2015 at the newly renamed Hercules Campus at Playa Vista welcomed yet another 600 visitors into the beautifully reimagined hub of innovation. Guests also saw the then-empty but beautifully refinished Spruce Goose hangar.

In 2018, Google completed its move into the hangar after a creative conversion led by ZGF Architects and implemented by Matt Construction. This “building within a building” includes four stories of office and meeting spaces—all with aviation-inspired names—along with soaring atriums and sight lines with expansive views of the historic enclosure.

A hub of innovation from day one, the Spruce Goose hangar has evolved beautifully to fuel new dreams, new economies, and new generations—which is exactly what preservation is all about. •

Reservations start at \$350; sponsorships start at \$2,500. Interest is high, and we expect to sell out. For details and reservations, visit laconservancy.org/benefit2019. Questions? Contact Jenelle Pope at jpope@laconservancy.org or (213) 430-4204.

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