



National Trust *for* Historic Preservation
**Where Women
Made History**
Telling the full American story.

How Women's History is Changing Preservation

MAY 8, 2026

FEATURING



- **Chris Morris, Senior Director for Preservation Programs / Where Women Made History, National Trust for Historic Preservation**
- **Arabella Delgado, Lead Researcher, Los Angeles Women's Landmarks Project**
- **Kelsey Smith, Content Coordinator, Los Angeles Conservancy**
- **Evan McAvenia, USC MHC/MUP Graduate Student**

WHERE IT STARTED





SurveyLA

Los Angeles Historic Resources Survey

- **503 square miles**
- **880,000 parcels**
- **More than 1,320 Historic Cultural Monuments**
- **Only 2% designated for women's history and achievement**

THE FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEM

5%

**National
Historic
Landmarks**

2%

**Los Angeles
Historic
Cultural
Monuments**

2%

**National
Parks
and Park
Units**

?

**National
Register of
Historic
Places**

A RADICALLY DIFFERENT APPROACH

Fundamentally **transform the designation process** to begin correcting decades of systematic exclusion of diverse women's history and achievements.

Establish a new national model for designation of historic places in which gender and racial equity is the norm.

Reposition preservation and landmark designation as **opportunities for public engagement and student education.**

Encourage and model **equity across all aspects of the project.**

TRANSFORMING THE SYSTEM

We want to change the designation process to finally allow missing women's history to be added into existing landmark designations:

- Bradbury Building
- Hollyhock House
- Barnsdall Art Park
- Arzner-Morgan Residence
- Ruskin Art Club
- Garment Capital Building
- Casa de Rosas
- Monday Women's Club



Bradbury Building, celebrating owner and Mexican-American immigrant, Simone Martinez Bradbury

SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM

Women's history is not adequately conveyed, whether intentionally or unintentionally. As a result, this history is not a part of designations.

In cases where women are included in the designation, **their contributions are diminished and/or overshadowed** by other histories.

Even in sites designated specifically for women's history, that **history is rarely intersectional**.

Significance statements often **minimize women's contributions** through gendered language and/or insufficient research.

Professionalization of the process makes nominations difficult for the average community member to carry out.

Description: The Arzner/Morgan residence is a two story hillside home constructed to resemble a Grecian villa. Its unique site, high above the Los Angeles basin, was the determining factor in the design of the home and its interaction with the terraced gardens which surround it. The structure itself contains several large rooms which flow into each other. The main level, composed of a living room and solarium which runs the length of the house, has a kitchen and servants quarters. The living room opens onto a Doric-columned loggia which overlooks the city. Upstairs space consists of a large sleeping area, a library with fireplace and dressing areas. There is a sun porch on this level, as well as a covered terrace similar to that of the main level. Wrought iron lighting fixtures, wall sconces, door knobs, and other decorative elements reinforce the Grecian classical motif of the design. The terraced gardens and flagstone paths create a variety of unique spaces as one proceeds up the hillside. The residence has a copper roof. The home contains two master baths and dressing areas. Wood throughout is Southern gum and pine with oak floors. Several decorative friezes depicting life in classical Greece are located in the main rooms of the residence.

Significance: 2249 Mountain Oak Drive was the residence of Hollywood's first and most famous female director, Dorothy Arzner, and her companion, the talented avant-garde danseuse, Marian Morgan. Designed by architect W. C. Tanner in 1931, the home resembles a Grecian villa, carefully sited among terraces and gardens in the hills above Los Angeles.

Dorothy Arzner had grown up in Hollywood, where her father owned a restaurant. She attended the University of Southern California with thoughts of a medical career, which she later abandoned in favor of courses in art and architecture. Befriended by William De Mille, she obtained a position at Paramount Studios, then Famous-Players Lasky Corporation, as a script typist and worked her way up to the positions of writer and editor. In 1922 she edited Rudolph Valentino's Blood and Sand, followed by The Covered Wagon (1923), directed by James Cruze. By 1927, she was directing her own features, the first being Fashions for Women. During her career, she directed such stars as Esther Ralston, Frederic March, Ginger Rogers, Sylvia Sydney, Katherine Hepburn, and Merle Oberon. After a particularly difficult film (First Comes Courage) and a lengthy bout with pneumonia, Arzner returned from filmmaking in 1943. She taught

Significance: film at the Pasadena Playhouse and UCLA, and made several television commercials. She moved to Palm Springs in the 1960s, and continued to reside there until her death in the late 1970s. Miss Arzner's companion, Marian Morgan, was a significant figure in contemporary or "modern" dance movement in the 1930s and 40s. Her contribution to the budding art style were notable.

The home of Miss Arzner and Miss Morgan reflects the lifestyle of the Hollywood creative community of the 1930s. Its classic lines are an unusual architectural design for the period, when most were choosing period revival styles of a later genre. The floorplan and open spaces are dramatic, as is the site. The residence is integrated with the site through a series of intricate terraces, courtyards and gardens. The relationship of interior and exterior spaces is harmonious, permitting a unique blend of indoor/outdoor space.

Bibliography: Original building document

Kay, Karyn, and Gerald Peary. "Interview with Dorothy Arzner", Cinema Magazine, Number 34 (1974)

Original building plans

**SAMPLE NOMINATION | HCM #301
ARZNER-MORGAN RESIDENCE**

Basic Information	
Community Area Plan: Hollywood	Architect: W.C. Tanner
Council District: 4	Architectural Style: Greek Revival
Ownership: Private	Original Use: Private Residence
HPOZ: n/a	Current Use: Private Residence, Rental Prop.
NRHP: n/a	Integrity: Excellent
Date Built: 1931	Period of Significance: 1931 - 1951
Original Form Prepared By: Dr. James Wiegerink (owner)	

Overview of Current Significance Statement
<p>Significance is based on it serving as the home of Dorothy Arzner, “the first and most famous female director” in Hollywood, and her “companion” Marion Morgan. After her graduation from USC, she obtained a position at Famous-Players Lasky Corporation (Paramount) and worked her way from script typist to writer and editor. When she retired from filmmaking in 1943, she taught at UCLA and the Pasadena Playhouse.</p> <p>Mention is given to Marion Morgan as a “significant figure in the modern dance movement” but Arzner is clearly the focus of the significance statement. Additionally, Morgan is named as Arzner’s “companion.”</p> <p>Architectural style is noted in the nomination as part of the physical description. Based on this nomination’s narrative alone, the architectural significance does not rise to the level required for Criterion 3.</p> <p>HCM file does not have a section to fill out which criteria the building falls under, but narrative suggests only Criterion 2.</p>

Potential for Women’s Heritage Amendment
<p>Women’s heritage is prominent, but could be amended to emphasize contribution to LGBTQ history. It is noted that Arzner never attempted to conceal her sexual orientation or identity. In the latter half of the 20th century, her oeuvre was foundational for feminist film critique. Emphasis could be added to the contribution of Marion Morgan to performing arts history.</p>

Resources for Further Research
Bio and bibliography - https://wfpp.columbia.edu/pioneer/ccp-dorothy-arzner/

UCLA Film & Television Archive appears to have a collection on Arzner’s life and career.

New York Public Library for the Performing Arts maintains a collection on Marion Morgan in their archives

Additional Notes
<p>The period of significance is based on the time that Arzner lived in the home. Note: HCM nomination dates the construction to 1931, but LA Conservancy write up dates that Arzner began living in the home in 1930.</p> <p>Marion’s name is misspelled as Marian throughout the significance statement.</p>

Significance Findings (X - current ; X - after amendment)								
Women	Black/African American	Latinx	AAPI	LGBTQ	Historic Personage	Architecture	Residential/ Commercial/ Industrial Development	Broad cultural, economic, or social history
X				X	X			

Scenario
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> No Amendment Needed – this HCM was nominated for its association with women’s history and contains a significance statement that is focused on the contributions of women Name Change Only – this HCM has a significance statement that focuses on the contributions of women to its history, but has a name that does not signal its importance to women’s heritage Minimal Changes to Narrative and/or Documentation, NO change to criteria – this HCM has a significance statement that identifies women’s heritage through its criteria and historical narrative, but could use more detail or information to emphasize women’s contributions. Minimal or no additional research is needed Significant Changes to Narrative and/or Documentation, NO change to criteria – this HCM has a significance statement that identifies women’s heritage in its criteria and historical narrative, but the overall nomination form is very basic and does not fully explain women’s contributions. In these cases, all historical significance is underdeveloped in the written narrative. This scenario requires additional research and significant editing to the existing narrative. Significant Changes to Narrative and/or Documentation, need change to criteria – this HCM does not identify women’s heritage in its criteria and may or may not point to women’s contributions in the historical narrative. If women’s history is mentioned, it does not rise to the level of significance to be included in criteria. This scenario requires significant additional research, editing, and new writing to the existing narrative. Even without these changes, the narrative does articulate that the building is significant. Complete Rewrite – this HCM has minimal information and is largely incomplete. It not only lacks women’s history, but it fails to adequately convey the significance of the site through its criteria, narrative, and documentation. This type of amendment might be subject to a new review by the City Council and the Cultural Heritage Commission.

DECISIONS DRIVEN BY IMPACT

Critical decisions about where to invest our limited time and resources are guided by a **detailed impact scoring system**. This prompts us and our partners to consider a wide number of variables—political and owner support, community partnerships, potential threats, diversity of representation and geography, ability to set a precedent—that are likely to result in the greatest impact.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P
			Council District	Property Owner	Community Plan Area of HCM Representation	Underrepresented Neighborhood	Intersectional History	Community Interest	Owner Support	Council Member Support	Integrity	Other Interested Groups	Level of Work	Threat Level	Precedent Setting	Overall Score
1	HCM	Name			Highest Representation Hollywood - 220 Wilshire - 166 Northeast Los Angeles - 152 Downtown - 143 South Los Angeles - 123 Silver Lake - Echo Park - Elysian Valley - 97	Na - 0 Yes - 1 Don't know - ?	Na - 0 Yes - 1 Don't know - ?	Na - 0 Yes - 1 Don't know - ?	Na - 0 Yes - 1 Don't know - ?	Na - 0 Yes - 1 Don't know - ?	Na - 0 Yes - 1 Don't know - ?	Na - 0 Potentially but need to contact and create partnership - 1 Identified person or group has interest and is willing to partner - 2 Don't know - ?	Difficult to access info, significant time or resources needed to do amendment - 0 Doable with a longer time frame - 1 Reasonable level of work for project to am within desired time frame - 2 Don't know - ?	Na threat - 0 Potential threat - 1 Significant/immediate threat - 2 Don't know - ?	Adherer to traditional practice - 0 Challenger traditional practice OR narrative - 1 Challenger traditional methods AND narrative - 2 Don't know - ?	11-14 - Very high 8-10 - High 5-7 - Medium 0-4 - Low
3	6	Bradbury Building	14	Downtown Properties LLC, affiliate of Gau Capital Partners	Downtown/ 143	0	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	0	1	9
4	12	Hollighock House	13	City of LA	Hollywood/ 220	0	0	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	9

MODELING AND INSPIRING CHANGE

A replicable model with new tools and a clear framework allows others to follow our example while adjusting to their circumstances and priorities.

The visibility and impact of our work is expanded when cities, organizations, and property owners are inspired by our work and take the initiative to add women's history into the historical narratives at their own sites.





MODELING AND INSPIRING CHANGE

Our approach to **landmark designation prioritizes diverse women's history and achievement.** This provides a clear and very public set of examples for how women's history can and should be incorporated into local landmarks, and sets a new benchmark for future landmarks.



DRIVEN BY COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

Outreach to a wide array of organizations, institutions and individuals ensures the work of LAWL reflects the places and stories of women's history that are most important to local residents and communities.

$$\begin{array}{ccccc} \mathbf{45} & \mathbf{+} & \mathbf{80} & \mathbf{=} & \mathbf{200+} \\ \text{PROJECTS \& } & & \text{PEOPLE} & & \text{POTENTIAL WOMEN'S} \\ \text{ORGANIZATIONS} & & & & \text{LANDMARKS} \end{array}$$



ENGAGING THE PUBLIC AND EMPOWERING THE NEXT GENERATION

A new series of tours, events, activities, and trainings by the L.A. Conservancy will introduce the public to the many women history-makers highlighted by our research and designations, with a special focus on connecting students, young people, and families to the women who shaped L.A.

Nearly a dozen **K-12 curricula meeting CA State Standards and teacher trainings** created with UCLA History and Geography ensures the next generation of students at LAUSD will learn about diverse women's history as an integral part of L.A.'s history.

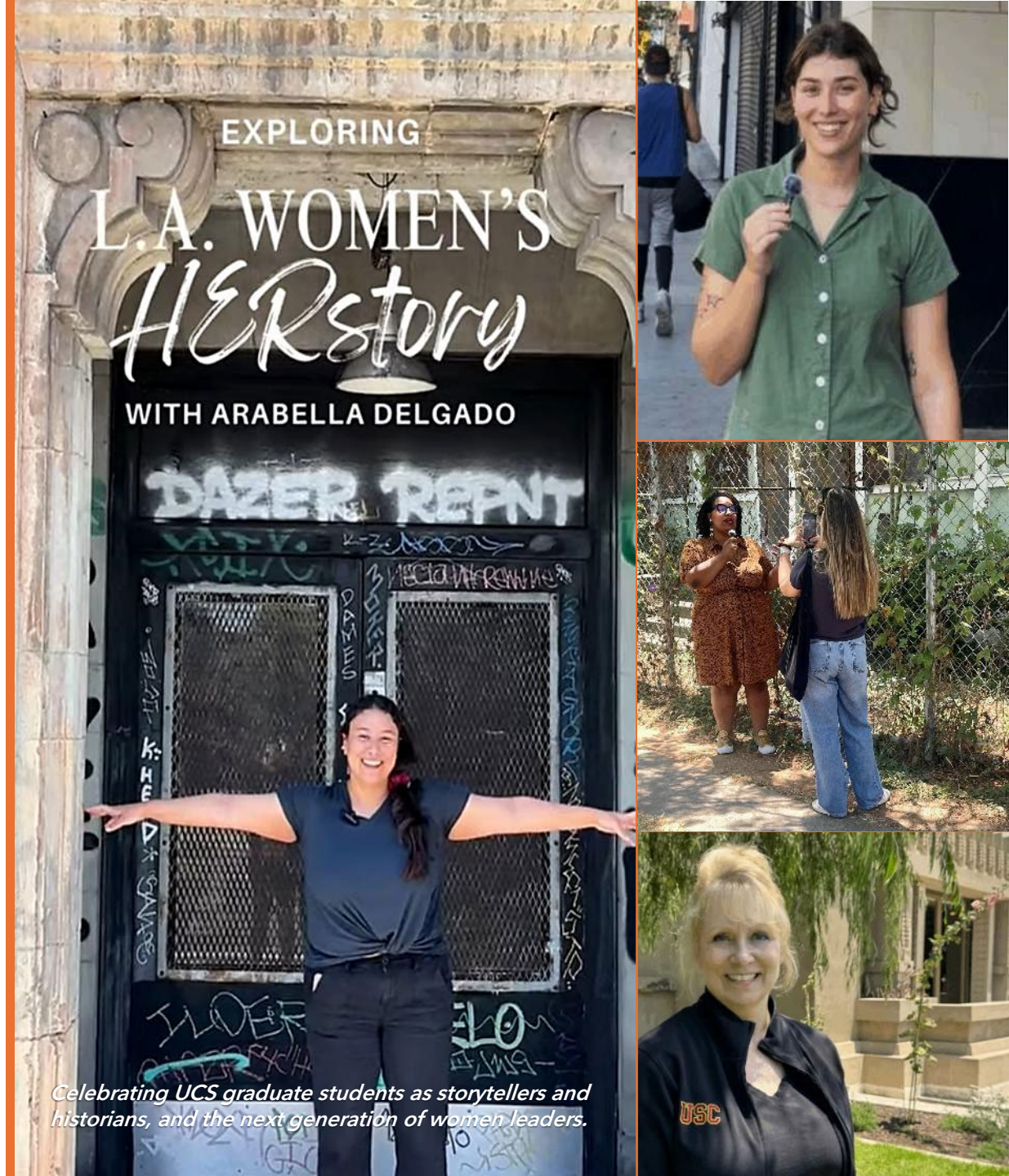


ENGAGING THE PUBLIC AND EMPOWERING THE NEXT GENERATION

Video histories and short-form documentary film spotlight extraordinary women and the historic places that embody their legacies today.

Storytelling through the L.A. Women's Landmarks video series and coordinated social media campaigns with USC students, extends engagement across multiple platforms.

Digital engagement anchored by an interactive, GIS-powered StoryMap of Los Angeles women's history will highlight thematic narratives and invite audiences to explore the city through a new, more inclusive lens.



Celebrating UCS graduate students as storytellers and historians, and the next generation of women leaders.

LAWL SOCIAL MEDIA: #WomensLandmarkWednesday

July 9, 2025 - April 8, 2026

831.2K VIEWS

In the first 9 months of #WomensLandmarkWednesday—social media posts made on Wednesdays as part of our L.A. Women's Landmarks Project initiative—our posts have received a total of 831,200 views.

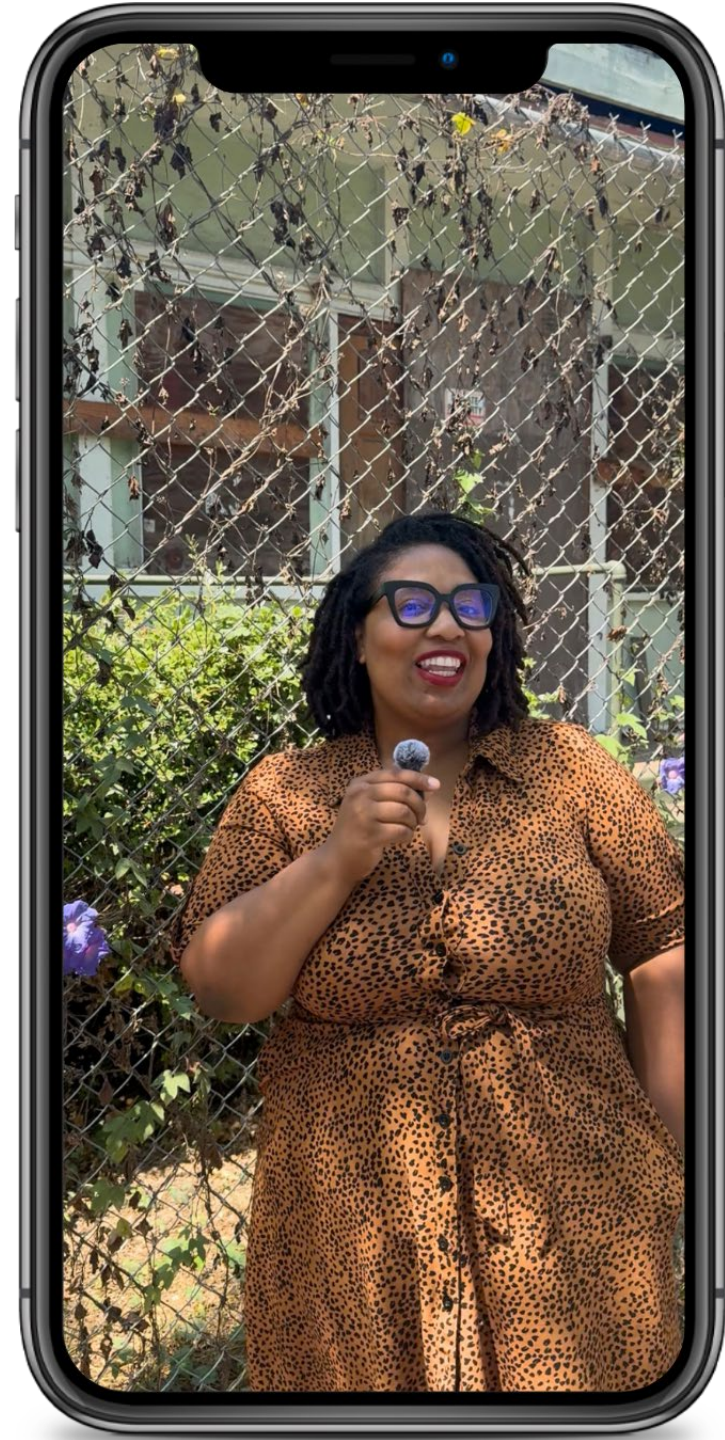


LAWL SOCIAL MEDIA: #WomensLandmarkWednesday

First 4 videos:

190.8K VIEWS

Our first four videos, highlighting Aline Barnsdall, Florence Casler, Etta V. Moxley, and Simona Martinez Bradbury, have generated 190,800 views across Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, and YouTube, demonstrating strong interest in women-centered, place-based storytelling.



LAWL SOCIAL MEDIA: #WomensLandmarkWednesday

MAKING THE VIDEO

- **Research**
- **Script + Interview Questions**
 - **Hook**
 - **Talking Points**
 - **Call to Action**
- **Filming**
- **Editing**
- **Copywriting**
- **POST IT!**





Learning Through Practice: Student Contribution

Course Objective:

“By the end of this course, a student will be able to **effectively and efficiently articulate (orally and in writing) the historical and culturally-appropriate aspects of women’s history** associated with a particular site and become familiar with important contexts across women’s history. Students will hone their research, writing, and documentation skills through the amendment of a real-world City of Los Angeles Historic Cultural Monument (HCM) application including the **development of historic contexts, statements of significance, photo documentation, and presentation to city commissioner.**”

Course Structure + Research

- **Primary source research** (archives, images, records)
- **Developing historic contexts** from scratch
- Learning how to **write for policy and impact**, not just for class
- **Incorporating oral history** + qualitative methods
- Translating research into **clear arguments**
- **CITATIONS!**

Arabella's Research Guide .XLSX

File Edit View Insert Format Data Tools Help

Menus 100% Arial 10

A1	Name	Description	Type of Resource
1	Name	Description	Type of Resource
2	Independent Voices	This is an open-access digital collection of alternative press newspapers, magazines, and journals. Using their digitized collections, the Library of Congress has primary source sets by historic themes. See the sets for "Women in Science and Technology" and "Women's Suffrage"	Archival Collection
3	Primary Source Sets	This research guide provides researchers with links to various resources to study American women's history. This research guide provides researchers with links to resources on women's history; organized by individual women and theme.	Archival Collection
4	American Women	Maintains records related to the history of the United States government.	Research Guide
5	American Women History	The world's largest library; digital collections are easily accessible; physical collections are accessible in Washington D.C. with a valid research card.	Research Guide
6	National Archives	A digital project that maintains online collections related to transgender history and information for further research;	General
7	Library of Congress	A searchable website that collects articles and resources; all entries are "linked" to other related sources so users can easily see material on the same topic.	General
8	Digital Transgender Archive	Searchable database of historic American newspapers; great resource for those that do not have Newspapers.com account	General
9	Bunk History	Open access materials on JSTOR, a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary sources.	General
10	Chronicling America	Primary sources relating to the history of women's contribution to the American economy.	General
11	JSTOR Open Access	A selection of biographies of American women; a great resource for those including "historic personage" in their nominations.	Archival Collection
12	Women Working, 1800 - 1930	A list of topics in women's history; each topic contains links to articles, biographies, lesson plans, etc.	Educational Resource
13	Biographies: Every Woman Has A Story	Lesson plans by topic, includes links to relevant articles. A list of resources for people researching women's history.	Educational Resource
14	Women's History by Topic	Recordings of webinars on different topics in women's history; some contain links to supplemental information.	Research Guide
15	Lesson Plans	Resources on teaching different topics in women's history; sourced from various institutions, ranging from primary source material to articles to lesson plans.	Educational Resource
16	Research Resources	Digitized material relating to women's history from the Smithsonian's collections.	Archival Collection
17	Webinars in Women's History	Searchable database of digital records maintained by the Smithsonian.	Archival Collection
18	Resources to Teach Women's History	A guide to women's history research using primary sources; links without a "lock" icon are open access.	Archival Collection
19	Digital Collections	A great guide for people new to research and need help navigating libraries and archives.	Research Guide
20	Digital Records (searchable)	A great guide for people new to archival research and now to navigate archival institutions.	Research Guide
21	Women's History: Primary Sources	A timeline of feminist history with linked videos, articles, and resources for further research; geared for learning and teaching about feminist history.	Educational Resource, Research Guide
22	Women's History Research	A series of 26 short films that document the contributions of little-known American women.	Digital Media
23	Women's History Research in Archives		
24	Click! The Ongoing Feminist Revolution		
25	UnLadylike 2020		

Evaluation Process



CRITERION 1

Significant Events

Hollywood, Women's History,
LGBTQ+ History



CRITERION 2

Significant Persons

Dorothy Arzner and Marion
Morgan



CRITERION 3

Landscape Architecture

Florence Yoch

Making the Research Real

Mock CHC Hearing

- 10-minute presentation of site significance
- Panel of “commissioners”
- Live Q&A and critique

Takeaways

- Turn research into clear arguments
- Defend significance in real time
- Practice real-world preservation process

2249
MOUNTAIN
OAK DR
HCM #301

Presentation for;
Mock CHC Hearing
April 30, 2025
Evan Elizabeth McAvenia



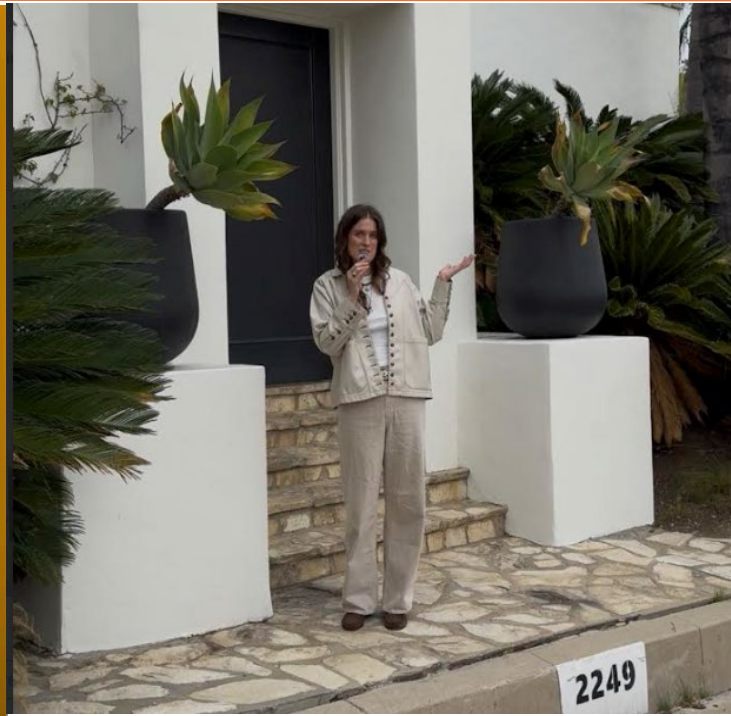
Seeing Our Work in the World

We saw our work shared across public platforms including the L.A. Conservancy, LAist, the Save As podcast, and through video storytelling and presentations, giving our research a life beyond the classroom.

This experience showed us what careers in preservation *actually* look like, exposing us to the full range of work from research and writing to media, public engagement, and advocacy.



July 3, 2025
For the Record: Reclaiming Wc ...
Save As: NextGen Heritage Cor





GETTING STARTED

- Some Simple Steps to Get Started (PDF)
- Slide Deck from March 31, 2026 Webinar (PDF)
- *Story: A Toolkit for Change: Guidance from the Los Angeles Women's Landmarks Project* by Sarah Pawlicki (PDF)

EVALUATION & ASSESSMENT

- Women's History Research Guide (Spreadsheet)
- How to Evaluate Your Landmarks in 5 Steps (PDF)
- How to Evaluate Your Landmarks in 5 Steps: Los Angeles as a Case Study (PDF)
- Template: Evaluating Historic Sites (PDF)
- Sample Evaluation: Mack Sennett (PDF)
- Template: Setting Priorities with an Impact Score (PDF)
- Template: LAWL Impact Score (Spreadsheet)
- Slide Deck: Women's Heritage in Los Angeles: An Overview of the Representation of Women in Existing Historic-Cultural Monuments in Los Angeles, California (Presented by Arabella Delgado on July 17, 2024) (PDF)

PARTNERSHIPS

- The Importance of Outreach & Partnerships (PDF)
- The Alliance Review: *Something We All Can Agree On—Women's History is Our History* (2025, No. 4) by Christina Morris

BUILDING NEW TOOLS FOR CHANGE



A Toolkit for Change: The Los Angeles Women's Landmarks Project

Some Simple Steps to Get Started

Meaningful change doesn't happen overnight. It can feel overwhelming to confront the challenge of rethinking how you do the work of historic preservation. But you have already taken the first—and perhaps the most important—step of being curious to learn more about how you can more fully represent women's history and other underappreciated histories in your work. Here are a few simple steps that you can take, either on your own or with colleagues, fellow commissioners, city staff, or partner organizations to begin understanding how women and other communities and identities are represented in your local landmark designations, and how you can do more to ensure they get the equitable recognition they deserve.

Question the Status Quo

Regardless of your role in the preservation movement, start by asking yourself how you currently do your work and/or participate in the designation process.

- What are your priorities?
- What types of places and projects do you generally work on?
- Have women's stories been *any* part of those projects or designations? If not, why not?

There's no wrong answer here but try to be honest in your assessment of the barriers that stand in the way to a more inclusive preservation practice.

- You simply don't have enough time? There are too many other competing priorities?
- You don't know where or how to start?
- Is it too much work?
- You never thought about it?
- Something else?

Start Small

Don't try to change everything at once. Start with a discrete and manageable task, like evaluating a small sample of your existing landmarks. If your community has a designation or landmarking process, choose a few existing nominations (3-5) to review individually or as a

Name:
 Address:
 Local Landmark #: | Date of Designation:

Page Numbers

BASIC INFORMATION	
Neighborhood:	Architect:
Council District:	Architectural Style:
Ownership:	Original Use:
Other Local Designation:	Current Use:
National Designation:	Integrity:
Date Built:	Period of Significance:
Original Form Prepared By:	

OVERVIEW OF CURRENT SIGNIFICANCE STATEMENT
<p>Questions to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why was the site originally nominated or designated? • What criteria determined historic status? • What are the main points of the historical narrative? • Are there any blatant omissions from the narrative? Any groups, individuals, historical events, etc. that should have been included? • What language is used to talk about women? Is there a gender bias? • Is there something that this narrative does particularly well that could serve as a model for other nominations?

POTENTIAL FOR WOMEN'S HERITAGE AMENDMENT
<p>For this section:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify points in the existing narrative that need to be expanded in an amendment. For example, are there specific people or events that were mentioned but deserve more attention? • Identify points that were NOT included but should be • Consider how the historic narrative shifts when you include new information—does it change the overall significance?

RESOURCES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH
<p>Resources to identify:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Links to digital resources • Archives or specific archival collections • Relevant secondary sources • Names of subject matter experts to reach out to <p>This section is not intended to be a comprehensive list of resources. Identify places to start research or resources that come up as you evaluate the significance statement.</p>

ADDITIONAL NOTES
<p>Add any notes that are important to consider for a possible amendment but did not fit into the previous sections. Notes to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any details on integrity • Recent ownership change • Ongoing or proposed projects • Current debates over the site • Changes in site use <p>Add any comments that fit the needs of your project and organization.</p>

SIGNIFICANCE FINDINGS (X – in nomination/designation; X – identified through evaluation)								
Women	Black/ African American	Latinx	AAPI	LGBTQ+	Disability History	Indigenous	Working Class/ Labor History	Immigrant History

*Adjust categories to align with project goals and local designation process.

LEARN MORE AND FOLLOW OUR PROGRESS



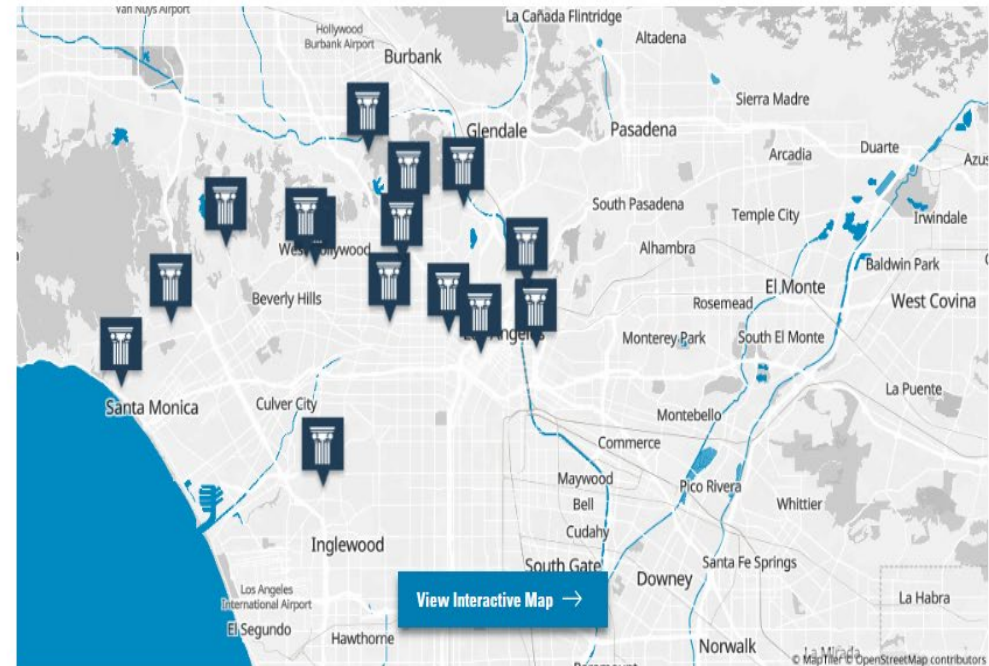
SCAN ME

bit.ly/LAWomensLandmarksProject

ISSUE

Los Angeles Women's Landmarks Project

The National Trust for Historic Preservation's Where Women Made History initiative and the L.A. Conservancy are working to address the significant underrepresentation of women and their contributions to Los Angeles landmarks.





National Trust *for* Historic Preservation
**Where Women
Made History**
Telling the full American story.

QUESTIONS & DISCUSSION

Thank You!

Visit Our Website:
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