

25 years of Preservation

# **West Adams Matters**

# L.A. Heritage Day Brings History to Life

Sunday, March 22 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Heritage Square Museum, 3800 Homer Avenue (Highland Park)

The L.A. Heritage Alliance will host its Second Annual L.A. Heritage Day on Sunday, March 22, at Heritage Square Museum. L.A. Heritage Day reconnects the public with greater Los Angeles' vast range of cultural institutions and resources, with activities for kids of all ages and tours of historic structures at the museum. The event is open to the public; admission is free for members of participating heritage groups, with the flyer inside this issue, and \$5 without the flyer.

Los Angeles City Councilmember Ed Reyes of Council District 1 has joined Project Restore, Preservation Arts and the Spectra Company as a sponsor of L.A. Heritage Day. The event is expected to draw dozens of heritage groups and



hundreds of guests for a range of programs including children's activities, living history interpretation, panel discussions about culture, preservation, and tips for promoting local heritage; and the chance to learn about a variety of local preservation organizations, museums, and historical societies.

Among the 60 participating groups are the Los Angeles Conservancy, Hollywood Heritage, West Adams Heritage Association, Highland Park Heritage Trust, Claremont Heritage, Cultural Heritage Foundation of Southern California, and many more.

For an area widely misperceived as having no "real" history, the Los Angeles (continued on page 11)

## WAHA Election Meeting & Potluck Sunday Afternoon, April 26 1314 West 25th Street (University Park)

WAHA is looking for a few good men and women. Our annual Board of Directors election is slated for April 26, and we need candidates to step up. WAHA currently has a 15-member board, and one-third of these positions are up for election each three years, on a rotating basis.

As always, we need board members with fresh, upbeat, enthusiastic ideas. This community was founded by the best volunteers in the nation, and now is the time for members (you!) to come forward. You need not spend an extraordinary amount of time doing tasks, but you must be committed to WAHA's goals of providing both member and community service. Generally speaking, board members are expected to attend all WAHA board meetings (usually held the fourth Thursday of each month), help with WAHA's fundraising efforts, and also will be given specific responsibilities for certain of WAHA's events, committees, and social functions, on a rotating basis.

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# In Memoriam: Martin Eli Weil (1940-2009)

Eminent restoration architect Martin Eli Weil, a longtime West Adams resident and a charter member of West Adams Heritage Association, passed away at his Harvard Heights home in late February.

An expert in historic design, materials and colors, Weil specialized in restoration projects of landmark historic homes – such as the recently

completed MacGowan Mansion on Adams Boulevard – and other significant historic properties, primarily in Southern California. Weil was renown in historic preservation circles, not just for his involvement with a series of famed projects – from restorations of Frank Lloyd Wright's Hollyhock House and Storer Residence to the El Capitan Theatre, the Ebell Theater, Pasadena City Hall, the Griffith Park Observatory, and the John Russell Popedesigned Henry and Arabella Huntington mausoleum in the gardens of the Huntington Library in San Marino, to name a few – but also for his unflagging support for numerous West Adams neighbors in their efforts to correctly identify original colors and appropriate materials for the restorations of their own historic homes.

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# **WAHA Board Elections**

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We don't have many requirements: a love of old houses and other historic buildings, an enthusiasm for community activities, membership in WAHA for at least six months, and a desire to preserve and improve our neighborhoods. WAHA always needs expertise in fundraising, zoning issues, and historic preservation. But if you have a program you'd like to initiate, those ideas are welcome, too.

If you'd like to run for the board, please submit a brief (100-word) candidate's statement introducing yourself to the membership. We will run these statements in the April WAHA Matters newsletter. The submission deadline has been extended to Monday, March 23. Please e-mail your statement to president@westadamsheritage.org. If you are still pondering your involvement but decide to run for the Board, that's OK. All Board candidates will be asked to present themselves at the election meeting in a very short (one- to two-minute) speech.

If you'd like to learn more about the requirements (and benefits) of serving on the WAHA board, please contact WAHA President Jim Robinson, at jghrobinson@ca.rr.com.

The meeting and election will be held at Philippe Soler's beautifully restored 1890 Queen Ann Victorian, which was relocated to West Adams in 1982 from its original location at 1116 Ingraham Street. The residence is not camera shy! It was featured in an Emmy-winning episode of "2 on the Town" and also the Mel Gibson film, "What Women Want."

Along with a tour of the house and the good fellowship of West Adams neighbors and friends, you'll have an opportunity to hear from the WAHA Board candidates before we vote. ●

# **WAHA Membership News**

Greetings, WAHA members! For most of you, it s almost time to renew your membership. This year, because we have added the option of on-line sign up, we have made a change in membership renewal dates. We have adjusted our membership to 365 days (instead of April to March). If you are a longtime WAHA member and usually pay your dues in April, your membership will continue to run from April through March. However, if you signed up on-line in July, your membership will run from July through June. Membership renewal letters will go out quarterly, with April to June renewal letters slated to go out in March.

We'd also like to note that your anniversary date remains your anniversary date whether or not you pay on time. For example, if you are due to renew in June in this new system and yet don't pay until September, WAHA will still send you an invoice for renewal the following June again.

If you're not sure of your membership term, check the address label on this newsletter. Pay your dues within 45 days of receiving your renewal notice to ensure you receive your newsletters and other membership benefits without a break.

If you have any questions about your membership, please contact Candy Wynne at 323-735-3749, or send her an e-mail at membership@westadamsheritage.org. ●

# President's Message by Jim Robinson

The next time you see WAHA stalwart Mitzi Mogul, please congratulate her. She was the point woman on WAHA's greatest achievement of 2008, winning – and then confirming – the state's designation of Flower Drive as eligible for listing in the California Register of Historic Resources.

Months ago, West Adams Matters reported WAHA's success in persuading the State Historical Resources Commission to protect Flower Drive's two-block stretch of small, Mediterranean Revival apartment buildings. The short north-south street sits between Figueroa Street and the Harbor Freeway, south of 38th Street.

Mitzi addressed the commission's original hearing in July, in Santa Barbara, along with a presentation by architectural historian Peter Moruzzi and a few words of support from me as WAHA president. A few property owners, a USC official and their hired consultant spoke in opposition. The commission voted 5-1 in favor of WAHA's nomination.

But it wasn't over. The losing side appealed, claiming it had new information, and the appeal was scheduled for hearing by the same commission at its next quarterly meeting, November 7, in Sacramento.

This time the opponents brought in a heavy hitter, hiring Rusty Areias partner in the Sacramento consulting firm California Strategies LLC. Areias is a former assemblyman, former director of California's Department of Parks and Recreation, and former chair of the California Coastal Commission. Before the meeting, he contacted every commissioner.

Mitzi represented WAHA alone. She and Michael Buhler, director of advocacy of the Los Angeles Conservancy, told the commission the opponents had not presented the new evidence required to justify a rehearing. But the commission disagreed, and voted 6-1 to reconsider their earlier decision.

Again, Mitzi made her arguments, as reported in the commission's minutes. Disputing her opponents, she said the presence of the Harbor Freeway on the east side of Flower Drive did not destroy the integrity of the historic streetscape on the west side. She noted that the city has other historic districts that are in full view of freeways. She said Flower Drive is unified geographically in terms of its architecture, form, and history, and should be regarded as significant.

Areias argued that the freeway had destroyed the street's integrity, and he gave a PowerPoint presentation to reinforce his argument. One of the Flower Drive property owners said the buildings were a burden, and he asked for consideration for owners who had invested a lifetime on their properties.

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### PROPOSED REVISIONS TO CULTURAL HERITAGE ORDINANCE

Amending a decades-old historic preservation ordinance is not proving to be a smooth ride for city officials.

After some vocal opposition by some owners of major historic properties, including the Biltmore Hotel, the Pacific Mutual Building and the Los Angeles Athletic Club, the previously scheduled public hearing on the matter has been deferred to May.

The City Planning Commission's consideration of amendments to the Cultural Heritage Ordinance, originally scheduled for March 12, has been continued to the Commission's meeting of May 14. The City Cultural Heritage Commission voted on November 20, 2008 to recommend these amendments, which represent a significant overhaul of the City's historic preservation ordinance.

The Office of Historic Resources (OHR) is proposing important changes, including increasing the size of the Cultural Heritage Commission from five to seven, clarifying criteria for historic designation, and changing the notification process for property owners. The revised ordinance would also create an application process – similar to that used by property owners in Historic Preservation Overlay Districts – when owners of Historic Cultural Monuments propose any work that requires a building permit.

One of the more controversial proposals within historic preservation circles is the section that would change demolition review procedures, while at the same time creating a City Council review process that may permit demolition for "hardship" reasons. Some observers are concerned this clause could create politically-inspired demolition approvals and/or demolitions based on economic "highest and best use" principles, which could easily lead to numerous demolitions.

The Cultural Heritage Commission held several public workshops and hearings on these ordinance amendments last year. The amendments have since gone through additional refinements as recommended by a Cultural Heritage Ordinance Working Group, convened by the OHR and the Office of Council President Eric Garcetti, that met five times between June and October 2008.

West Adams Heritage Association had testified at a hearing on February 6, 2008 and presented its "What Is Integrity?" PowerPoint slideshow, resulting in some clarifications to the proposed ordinance. However, WAHA was not asked to be a



Abandoned Bethune Library

participant in the Working Group. One of the changes proposed by that group, which included representatives from city departments, was to exempt city-owned properties from the same duty of required maintenance of their historic properties as private property owners have. WAHA has expressed concern about that exemption, given the often-poor maintenance record of city-owned landmarks (and other buildings) in the West Adams area. (Consider, for instance, the current conditions found at the original Washington Irving Library, HCM No. 307, at 1803 South Arlington, the Engine Company No. 18, HCM No. 349, at 2616 South Hobart, or the former Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune Library, 3665 South Vermont, which is not a landmark but has become a magnet for graffiti and gang activity since the city abandoned it last year.)

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# Around the House

### **Resources** by Suzanne Henderson

Happy Days are here again. Many good things have been happening in West Adams and I have the resources to prove it. This month we have another great painter to recommend. Mia says that Alfonso Castaneda is a real perfectionist and took care of many details beyond just painting, including repairing windows and having the hardware replated. He even noticed that their vacuum wasn't working well and took it home and fixed it. Now that is service! All of this and his bid was much less, than the others they received.

One of my friends has recommended a cleaning service. Clara and Nidia just recently started out on their own after having been with a large service for ten years. Neilia tells me they are friendly, reliable and do a thorough cleaning. They are available for both business and residential jobs.

Patsy Carter has recommended a great mechanic, who has been in the neighborhood for many years. She says that Yoon Kim is a neighborhood treasure. He always fixes problems at a reasonable price and he is honest and reliable.

Peggy King has a recommendation for a local handyman. That is something we all seem to need. She says that Daniel Portillo shows up on time and can handle jobs that are a little tricky. His prices are reasonable and he cleans up the job site every day. He can do plumbing, carpentry, a bit of everything, and he is very careful and competent.

Thanks to all my contributors this month. Remember we all await your recommendations and stern warnings. Please e-mail me with yours at WestAdamsGoddess@aol.com.

Alfonso Castaneda, painter 323-791-1810

Nidia & Clara's Cleaning Service, 213-271-4982 **Yong M. Kim** 2241 S. Vermont Avenue 213-730-0255

Daniel Portillo, handyman 310-559-3770

# **Theodore Payne Native Plant Garden Tour**

Saturday, April 4 and Sunday, April 5, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Discover how native plants can beautify the landscape, save water and time, and provide habitat for birds, butterflies and other wildlife on a two-day, self-guided journey through 45 Los Angeles-area gardens of all shapes, sizes and design styles — all containing at least 50% California native plants. Tour admission: \$20 per person for both days. Tickets are available at www.theodorepayne.org or by calling 818-768-1802. Proceeds from the Garden Tour benefit Theodore Payne Foundation for Wild Flowers & Native Plants, Inc., a nonprofit retail nursery, seed source, bookstore and education center at 10459 Tuxford St., Sun Valley.  $\blacksquare$ 



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# Pico Union: Layers of History

FREE Self-Guided Walking Tour Kick-Off and Community Fair Saturday, March 21, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Pico Union Branch Library, 1030 South Alvarado St.

The Los Angeles Conservancy is launching a new self-guided walking tour of historic Pico Union with an event celebrating the rich architectural and social history of the Pico Union Historic Preservation Overlay Zone (HPOZ). Volunteer docents will lead partial tours for this one-time affair.

Presented in partnership with the Los Angeles Community Redevelopment Agency and the Pico Union branch of the Los Angeles Public Library, the event--the first of its kind in Pico Union--will include brief remarks by District 1 Councilmember Ed Reyes plus a community fair with neighborhood organizations and resource providers.



Pico and Union Intersection, 1928

Los Angeles has long been a city where people from across the nation and the world have come to reinvent themselves with dreams and hopes of a new life. Pico Union is one of Los Angeles' most architecturally diverse neighborhoods, with a range of styles dating from the 1880s to the 1930s. "Pico Union: Layers of

History" celebrates the historic cultural diversity of the neighborhood and the architecture that embodies it.

Self-quided tour sites include:

- Two National Register Historic Districts: South Bonnie Brae Street, with a rare collection of intact Victorian-era homes; and Alvarado Terrace, with stately turn-of-the-twentieth century residences in a variety of styles among lush landscaping.
- Other individual historic landmarks: Important works by notable architects Elmer Grey, Sumner Hunt, William Allen, and more.
- Murals: Public art that provides the neighborhood with a rich sense of cultural identity, visual history, and collective expression. •

## Little India Tour

Explore the Sights & Tastes of India — Yet Never Leave Los Angeles Saturday, March 28, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Have you always wanted to know more about the culture and food of India? Did you know that in Los Angeles County alone there are more than 60,000 residents from the Central Asian subcontinent mostly residing in the Artesia area?

If your answer is "yes," please join WAHA member Mira Advani Honeycutt and members of the Los Angeles Mumbai (formerly Bombay) Sister City Affiliation this month as they conduct a tour of this exotic part of the County known as Little India. The four-hour tour will begin at 11 a.m. on Saturday, March 28 with a savory Vegetarian Brunch and conclude at 3 p.m. with flavorful cooling Indian ice creams at

Saffron Spot and traditional Chai Mumbai. Between feasts the tour will stroll through Little India visiting a variety of shops and learn about such topics as traditional Indian wedding jewelry; special occasion saris; contemporary music; ceremonial henna tattoos; and tour of a spice store and market. Take this wonderful opportunity to shop the ancient silk route and pick up an assortment of gifts for your summer holidays.







Tickets: \$35/person. Space limited.

Payable to: LA Mumbai Sister City Affiliation 2283 W. 21st Street, Los Angeles, CA. 90018

Please enclose names of all people in your group and a contact telephone number, e-mail and street address. Once your check has been received you will be contacted about the meeting location for the beginning of the tour.

For further information contact: m.advani@att.net The Los Angeles Mumbai Sister City Affiliation is a nonprofit volunteer organization dedicated to the promotion

of intercultural understanding. ●



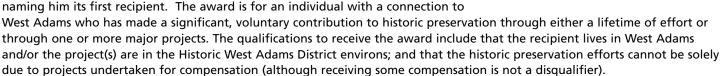
## **Martin Eli Weil**

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An early and active member of WAHA, Weil was instrumental in the creation of the Harvard Heights Historic Preservation Overlay Zone. He had lived in Harvard Heights since 1985, when he bought the 1905 "Lucy E. Wheeler Residence," the only Greene and Greene-designed house still extant in Los Angeles. Weil was a true West Adams "urban pioneer," moving to the District long before historic preservation had become popular in Los Angeles. Before he purchased his beloved Harvard Heights landmark, Weil restored another historic home in North University Park, where he had lived since the late 1970s.

Just days before he died, Weil was honored by Long Beach Heritage for his work as the color consultant for the exterior restoration of the Villa Riviera, a National Historic Landmark, 16-story Renaissance Revival chateau built in 1929 on Ocean Boulevard in Long Beach. Indeed, Weil won many awards and honors, including a California Preservation Foundation Preservation Design Award for the same Villa Riviera project, and a California Governor's Preservation Award in 1999 as part of the team which restored and seismically-upgraded Stanford University's Hanna House, a 1937 residence listed on the National Register of Historic Places and considered to be one of Frank Lloyd Wright's most important designs.

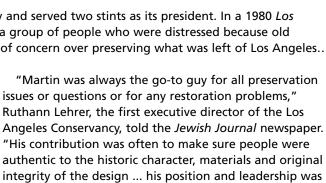
In 2006, WAHA established the Martin Eli Weil Historic Preservation Award, naming him its first recipient. The award is for an individual with a connection to



The WAHA Board will present this year's Martin Eli Weil Preservation Award at the organization's Annual Preservation Meeting on May 31st.

Weil had special expertise in authentic historic interior finishes, original paint colors, and period furnishings, and was especially well-versed in the work of Frank Lloyd Wright. He was one of the originating lecturers at USC's Annual Summer Program in Historic Preservation, and at the time of his death was scheduled to teach a class on Period Interiors and Furnishings at the USC School of Architecture this coming July.

Weil was also a founding member of the Los Angeles Conservancy and served two stints as its president. In a 1980 Los Angeles Times interview, Weil said the Conservancy "was started by a group of people who were distressed because old buildings were coming down all over Los Angeles. It was a question of concern over preserving what was left of Los Angeles.... There was no voice for what was happening to these old buildings."



Born in Glasgow, Montana, on July 2, 1940, Weil spent most of his youth in Omaha, Nebraska. Weil earned a bachelor's in art history from the University of Iowa and two master's degrees — one in architecture from the University of Pennsylvania and one in early American culture and decorative arts from the Winterthur program at the University of Delaware.

always to maintain historic authenticity."

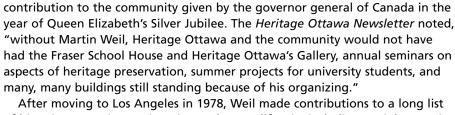
In 1971 he moved to Ottawa, Canada, where he took a job in the Division of Restoration Services of Canada's national Department of Indian and Northern Affairs. Weil



rose to become chief of that division. He also served as president of Heritage Ottawa, still the major preservation organization

In 1974 Weil founded the Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada, a nationwide learned society devoted to the examination of the role of the built environment in Canadian society. Among its members are structural engineers, landscape architects, architectural historians, urban historians, urban planners, sociologists, ethnologists, and experts in such fields as heritage conservation and landscape history. The Martin Eli Weil Prize continues to be awarded annually by the Society to a student who submits an essay on the role played by the built environment in the Canadian society. The winning essays are on the role played by the built environment in the Canadian society. The winning essays are presented as papers at a national conference that is widely reported in the Canadian press.





In 1977 Weil was honored with a Silver Jubilee Medal for his valuable

of historic restoration projects in Southern California, including: Wright's Ennis House, the Gamble House (Greene and Greene), the Workman and Temple Family Homestead Museum, Point Fermin Lighthouse, Sepulveda House, Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy's Mentryville restoration project, Pasadena City Hall, Union Church, and the Watts Tower. He also worked as a restoration architectural consultant for the cities of San Gabriel and La Verne.



One of his most noted accomplishments was the top to bottom restoration of the El Capitan Theater in Hollywood. The building had long been listed as contributing to the historic character of the Hollywood district. But with the restoration, the preserved El Capitan became a living, breathing link to the golden age of Hollywood. "It was an especially noteworthy decision to completely restore the theatre," Weil acknowledged in an interview, "because nobody in Los Angeles had ever taken one of the old picture palaces and restored it as a picture palace. The Wiltern Theatre was restored, but it serves as a performing arts center. Another theatre downtown was restored, but it serves as a church."

In recent years, Weil became involved in the effort to build support in the United States for Sim Shalom, the only Progressive Jewish community in Budapest, Hungary. The congregation's spiritual leader, Rabbi Katalin Kelemen,

is the first female rabbi in Hungary and is married to Weil's brother, Jesse Weil. Along with longtime friend and attorney Harold Tomin and attorney Roger Holt, Weil founded Friends of Sim Shalom, for which he secured nonprofit status in 2008.

Along with Jesse, Weil is survived by another brother, Peter Weil; nieces, Alexandra Borns-Weil and Janna Weil; and one grandnephew, Yonah Borns-Weil. The family has suggested contributions in Weil's memory be made online to www.friendsofsimshalom.org or to other charitable organizations.



Weil was known for his thorough research and attention to historic detail. In 2001, he was hired by the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy to develop a restoration plan for Mentryville's historic buildings. In these photos, Ranger Robert Reiss of the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (caretaker stationed and living at Mentryville) looks as Martin Weil confers about old Mentryville photos with Nicolene Cheney Knapp outside the Felton School. Behind them is the wash room; behind that, an outhouse (toilet). Weil was also keenly interested in historic photos as a basis for restoration research. Photos by Leon Worden.

# **Cultural Heritage Ordinance** continued from page 3

The United Neighborhoods Neighborhood Council (UNNC) Governing Board, which represents stakeholders in Historic West Adams, voted on March 5 to oppose any maintenance exemption(s) given to city-owned properties, while at the same time requesting that special consideration be given to private property owners who may be on low fixed incomes. UNNC also voted to oppose the hardship clause as a reason to permit demolitions.

The OHR hosted an additional informational workshop on the ordinance for owners of Historic-Cultural Monuments, on March 4. At the workshop, many owners requested additional time to review the ordinance prior to City Planning Commission consideration.

Background: The City of Los Angeles' Cultural Heritage Ordinance, originally approved by the City Council in 1962, created the procedures for the designation and protection of significant Los Angeles buildings and sites as Historic-Cultural Monuments. While the Ordinance has undergone several minor, procedural modifications over the past 45 years, it has never been comprehensively updated to give our city a state-of-the-art historic preservation program.

With the creation of the Office of Historic Resources in 2006, the Cultural Heritage Commission began discussing potential amendments to the Ordinance. The OHR staff has conducted considerable research on other cities' ordinances and has utilized guidance publications from the State Office of Historic Preservation to propose ordinance language that reflects "best practices" nationally. The staff also convened a Cultural Heritage Ordinance Working Group, including representatives of several City departments, that met five times between June and October 2008 and proposed additional refinements to these amendments. Here is a summary of the proposed ordinance changes:

#### • Increase number of Cultural Heritage Commissioners from five to seven

When the Commission experiences a vacancy and/or a recusal due to professional employment, it has, at times, lacked a quorum necessary for action. The City of Los Angeles is now a Certified Local Government (CLG) for preservation, which enables the City to obtain State and Federal grants for historic preservation planning. As a CLG, the Cultural Heritage Commission must have a required level of professional expertise in architecture, landscape architecture, architectural history, planning and related fields. A slightly larger commission size would allow access to a broader cross-section of professional expertise, while still ensuring diverse community representation on the Commission.

#### • Spell out designation criteria for Historic-Cultural Monuments

While the current ordinance does contain criteria for designation, they are ambiguously buried as a lengthy paragraph labeled "Definition of Monument," rather than defined as clear, separate criteria to evaluate eligibility. The new ordinance would generally retain the existing language, but would clearly label these provisions as criteria and differentiate them in separate numbered sections that would parallel California Register and National Register criteria. In addition, at the suggestion of the Cultural Heritage Ordinance Working Group, the proposed Ordinance would add a fifth criterion recognizing places that are significant because they reflect or exemplify the diversity of Los Angeles.

The other major substantive change in this section is to require that designated Monuments retain integrity – that the proposed Monument still have the ability to convey its significance. The current ordinance is silent on the issue of integrity, often leading to confusion as to how the Commission should evaluate significantly altered structures. The OHR has included language clarifying that the integrity finding should be applied with flexibility, particularly for resources that are significant for historic, social, and cultural associations, rather than their architectural or design qualities. In addition, the ordinance clarifies that a building's poor maintenance or dilapidated condition does not necessarily equate to a loss of integrity.

# • Change procedures for temporary stay of demolition to allow a property owner to be notified of the initial Historic-Cultural Monument (HCM) nomination hearing

The current ordinance does not allow for notification of the property owner that an HCM nomination has been filed until after the Commission holds an initial hearing to take the nomination officially under consideration. Many property owners





therefore feel "blindsided," not only by the nomination itself, but also by the realization that they were unable to participate in an initial public hearing affecting their own property. The delay in owner notification is currently necessitated because the "stay" preventing demolition or alteration of a resource does not go into effect until the Commission officially acts to take the matter under consideration. On several occasions (most recently for one of the first homes built in Van Nuys), property owners have demolished a building before it could be considered for potential HCM status.

Under the new proposal, the stay of demolition would begin when an application is deemed substantively complete by staff and scheduled for the Commission's hearing, rather than after initial Commission consideration. While this would lengthen the "stay" period by 10-20 days, it would provide for the ability to notify property owners of the initial hearing without triggering a preemptive demolition, and provide more appropriate due process.

#### Add provision for Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) review of additions, alterations, and demolitions

The Cultural Heritage Commission is sometimes the last, "hidden" step in the process to obtain a building permit. The Commission reviews projects only at the permit stage, not typically in coordination with other project entitlements. The Commission may only "object" or "not object" to the permit issuance, and its objection period is limited to 180 days, with a possible 180-day extension by the City Council.

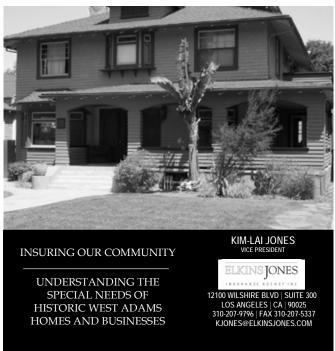
By contrast, the City's Historic Preservation Overlay Zone (HPOZ) Ordinance has a well-defined "Certificate of Appropriateness" (COA) process to review additions, alterations, and demolitions. The new ordinance would parallel the COA procedure in the HPOZ Ordinance, placing preservation review earlier in the process to improve clarity for the development community. The City Planning Commission has also previously requested that preservation-related input on projects affecting historic properties occur earlier in the process.

The draft ordinance proposes a streamlined Administrative COA (with no fee associated) allowing staff-level approval for minor rehabilitation work. The current draft ordinance adds language specifying more than a dozen categories of requests to which an Administrative COA would apply. A full COA would be required (with an application fee) for major alterations, additions, and demolitions. Ordinary repair and maintenance work is exempted from COA review altogether.

A COA process is found in most big-city preservation ordinances – including the ability to deny a demolition request, not just temporary delay demolition. The Commission's COA decisions would be appealable to the City Council; today, the Commission's 180-day demolition objections are not further appealable. The ordinance would create standards for review of demolitions that would directly parallel the standards that have long existed in the HPOZ Ordinance. Today, the City actually provides a higher level of protection for thousands of often-modest "contributing structures" in HPOZs, as opposed to its most cherished historic resources, the more than 900 HCMs.

### • Limit Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) review to designated Historic-Cultural Monuments

The original draft revisions to the Cultural Heritage Ordinance proposed that a COA be required for all "designated historic (continued on page 12)





# igwedgeAHA Matters

# President's Message continued from page 3

But the commission exists to protect California's history, and the commissioners' comments showed they understood that. They voted 6-2 to confirm their first decision.

Congratulations, Mitzi.

P.S. Flower Drive is now a district eligible for listing in the California Register of Historic Resources. It is not listed, because that would require the property owners' consent. But its designation as eligible gives it the same protection as listed properties under the California Environmental Quality Act.

#### It's show time!

Like many of us, Mitzi wears more than one hat. One of her hats is the presidency of the Los Angeles Historic Theatre Foundation, which currently is running a monthly series of Saturday tours of Los Angeles' old vaudeville and movie palaces on Broadway. Unlike the regular tours conducted by the Los Angeles Conservancy, these ones tackle one theatre at a time, offering top-to-bottom access, from the projection booth above the balcony to the dressing rooms in the wings and the underground storage and boiler rooms. There's also a terrific PowerPoint presentation on each theatre by historian Ed Kelsey. And it's FREE.

The next tour, on Saturday, March 21, is of the Los Angeles Theatre, built in 1931 at 615 S. Broadway. Check for details on the foundation's web site, www.lahtf.org or call 213-999-5067.

#### **Remembering Martin**

I'm always surprised at the coincidences in people's lives, and at the surprising things I learn about them after they've died. Six degrees of separation? Martin Weil, who died last month, was no exception.

I'd had several short conversations with Martin over the years. I'd been to his home once to pick up some material. He'd worked at my home as a tour docent. And we once discussed my need for an architect for an adaptive reuse project (he turned me down).

A couple of years ago, Martin acted as color consultant on the exterior restoration of the Villa Riviera, a fabulous, 16-story condominium chateau, built in 1928, that is Long Beach's most-recognized historic building. I told Martin I'd been president of the Villa's condominium board in the late 1980s, overseeing the building's *previous* restoration.

After Martin's death, Leslie Evans, WAHA's webmaster, told me he'd been Googling around and discovered that Martin had worked during the 1970s in my home town, Ottawa, Canada, where he served as president of Heritage Ottawa, that city's version of the Los Angeles Conservancy. Later, Martin moved to Los Angeles and was a founding member — and later president — of the Los Angeles Conservancy.

It is, indeed, a small world.

#### Web site news

Check out the new Members Only section of WAHA's web site, which allows access to a list of useful restoration resources



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Lighthouse Stained Glass 5155 Melrose Ave., L.A. (at Wilton), 323-465-4475 www.LighthouseStainedGlass.com and a sampling of back issues of our newsletter. We'll soon be adding more newsletters – about 250 more. Currently being scanned, they'll provide members with an invaluable archive, allowing them to search electronically for any person, place or event ever mentioned in WAHA's 25 years of newsletters. Later this year, we plan to add copies of past tour brochures and other material. All of us owe a huge debt of gratitude to WAHA's many contributors, past and present, whose work has made this archive possible for future generations to share.

#### Cobblestones

Here's a nice little victory for historic preservation. Last week, I noticed a Southern California Gas Co. worker wandering about our property, and he told me he was checking for leaks along Scarff Street, which runs alongside. He said the city planned to repave the street, and the company wanted to identify and repair any leaking pipes beforehand.

Well, that gave me an excuse to tell him about our historic neighborhood, and to show him Scarff Street's unusual gutters. They're original cobblestones, and, as far as I know, they're the only ones in our neighborhood. I told him how important it was that the stones not be damaged or paved over.

Later in the day, Jim Childs, who lives half a block north on Scarff, told me an amazing story. The gas worker and a companion were digging in the street in front of his apartment, and down in the dirt they discovered some cobblestones that had been buried during a previous repair. The workers carefully removed the stones and piled them at the curb, telling Jim that a guy down the street had told them the stones were historic. Jim thanked them and placed the stones out of sight, for reinstallation when the street is paved.

We take our pleasure in small victories.

#### Calling all candidates

If you've read this far, you're obviously a dedicated preservationist and just the sort of person WAHA is looking for to serve on its board of directors. We're a hands-on board, not an advisory one, which means you'll find yourself actually doing things – planning and producing events, saving endangered buildings or neighborhoods, or publicizing our activities through our newsletter and other methods. Our monthly meetings promise great food in historic surroundings – usually our own homes. If you're interested, please send a candidate's statement of up to 150 words by March directly to WAHA Editor Laura Meyers at president@westadamsheritage.org, so we can publish it in the April edition of *WAHA Matters*. And if you have questions or would like to talk before making a decision, please e-mail me at jghrobinson@ca.rr.com or call me at 213-663-3022. ●

# L.A. Heritage Day continued from page 1

region has more than 200 historical organizations, societies, and museums dedicated to preserving and promoting the rich and varied pasts of various regions, industries, and individuals. The L.A. Heritage Alliance is a network of preservation groups, museums, and historical societies launched in 2008 to unify and leverage their efforts. "We're working together to preserve the rich history of greater Los Angeles," says Brian Sheridan, one of the organizers of L.A. Heritage Day and the L.A. Heritage Alliance. "Though we've been successful as individual groups, as an alliance we can work smarter and more efficiently to preserve our heritage."

Other partipating groups include the Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences, Alhambra Preservation Group, African American Firefighter Museum, American Cinemeteque, Arroyo Arts Collective, Art Deco Society of Los Angeles, Associated Historical Societies of Los Angeles County, Autry National Center's Southwest Museum, Azusa Street Mission and Historical Society, Boyle Heights Historical Society, California Art Club, City of Los Angeles, Office of Historic Resources, California Preservation Foundation, Canoga Park / Owensmouth Historical Society, Claremont Heritage, the Cultural Heritage Foundation of Southern California, Culver City Historical Society, Dominguez Rancho Adobe Museum, Eagle Rock Valley Historical Society, Friends of the Gamble House, Friends of La Laguna, Friends of the Southwest Museum, Grier Musser Museum, Historical Society of Southern California, Hancock Park / Windsor Square Historical Society, Heritage Park, Historic Adamson House/Malibu Lagoon Museum, Jewish Genealogical Society of Los Angeles, L.A. Historic Theatre Foundation, Lanterman House Museum, Las Angelitas del Pueblo, Latino Heritage, Leonis Adobe, Little Landers Historical Society, Long Beach Heritage, Los Angeles City Historical Society, Los Angeles Museum of the Holocaust, Los Encinos Docent Association, Monterey Park City Historical Society, Montebello Historical Society, the Muckenthaler Cultural Center, Museum of the San Fernando Valley, Olmsted District Preservation Association, Point Fermin Lighthouse, Pomona Heritage, Rancho Los Alimitos, Rancho Los Cerritos Historic Site, the San Fernando Valley Historical Society, San Marino Heritage, San Marino Historical Society, Santa Monica Conservancy, Society of Architectural Historians - Southern California Chapter, Southern Pacific Historical and Technical Society, Venice Historical Society, the Whittier Conservancy, Western Educators, Shooters, and Troopers, William S. Hart Park and Museum, and the Yesteryears Dancers.

Heritage Square Museum is a living history museum that tells the story of Los Angeles' development through historic structures that were relocated to the site to save them from demolition. The museum is located just off the 110/ Pasadena Freeway at Avenue 43. For more information, visit www.heritagesquare.org. ●

# **Cultural Heritage Ordinance** continued from page 9

resources," including properties listed in or determined eligible for the National Register of Historical Resources. This provision raised significant concerns from the development community, as properties may have been determined eligible for the National or California Registers without going through the same public review process as properties officially designated by the City as Historic-Cultural Monuments.

Following discussions by the Working Group, the current draft limits COA review to designated Historic-Cultural Monuments. Properties listed in or determined eligible for the National Register and California Register would still be considered "historical resources" under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and, under a provision in Section 91.106.4.5 of the Municipal Code, would still require environmental review before the issuance of any permit that would adversely affect the resource. OHR staff is proposing a separate amendment to Section 91.106.4.5 specifically applying this required CEQA review to properties listed in the California Register, which had been omitted from the current version of this code section. In addition, based on input from the Working Group, projects that have received approval for Federal Rehabilitation Tax Credits or under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act will be exempted from the COA process, to avoid duplicative reviews.

#### • Create a "Certificate of Hardship" process to allow approval of demolition in specified circumstances

The Cultural Heritage Ordinance Working Group discussed concerns that the new COA process might "set the bar" too high and essentially prohibit all demolitions of designated Historic-Cultural Monuments. To address these concerns, the draft ordinance now contains a separate review process for proposed demolitions, allowing applicants to obtain a "Certificate of Hardship" based on specified findings.

The Certificate of Hardship details the specific information that should be submitted to substantiate a finding that denial of the demolition permit will deny a property owner of substantially all reasonable use of, or economic return on, the property. It also allows for approval of demolition based on a finding that an extreme hardship exists due to the peculiar conditions associated with the property and that the purpose and value of an alternative use of the property significantly outweighs the benefit conferred to the community from the preservation of the historical resource. The new language reflects the presumption that demolition of a Historic-Cultural Monument should occur only rarely, but allows policymakers some flexibility in reviewing demolition proposals.

• Allow City Departments to enter into a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Commission to tailor Certificate of Appropriateness review to the unique needs of City-owned historic resources

Several City departments participating in the Cultural Heritage Ordinance Working Group had indicated that the proposed COA process was not well-suited to certain public properties, public improvements, and infrastructure where no building permits are required. To address these concerns and ensure that the COA process does not adversely affect the City's public safety responsibilities and capital improvement programs, the new draft allows the Commission to enter into a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with other City departments upon request. The MOA may exempt from review certain types of activities affecting City-owned properties that would not alter character-defining features. It may also exempt from review those requests that have already completed reviews under CEQA and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, or clarify the timing of the Commission's review process and create protocols for inter-departmental coordination. To ensure transparency and public input, the MOA would require Commission approval, following a public hearing.

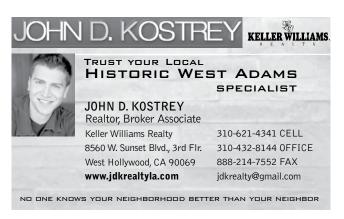
#### . Update Ordinance sections addressing purpose and duties of the Commission and definitions

Unlike most state-of-the-art preservation ordinances, the Cultural Heritage Ordinance presently lacks clear statements articulating either the City's overarching goals for historic preservation, or the Commission's specific duties. A new "duties" section would define the Commission's role and purview in preservation. The addition of a definitions section will allow the public to clearly understand the specific usage of terms.

Clarify process for potential repeal of Historic-Cultural Monument status

Occasionally, as with St. Vibiana's Cathedral in 1996, there is an attempt to repeal a site's Monument status. This section would





clarify that repeals are only possible if the evidence used to establish the designation was significantly erroneous, or in case of fire or disaster. It would also clarify that removal of Monument status triggers review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

### • Add language on compliance with CEQA requirements

The California Environmental Quality Act contains some of the most significant protections for historic resources in California. The Ordinance will ensure that projects affecting historic resources are given full review under the provisions of CEQA.

# • Add enforcement and penalties provisions, and owner's duty to keep a historic resource in good repair

The Cultural Heritage Ordinance does not presently have clear provisions on enforcement and penalties for violations of the code. This section would reference the existing penalty for illegal demolition – a five-year building moratorium under the "Scorched Earth" Ordinance. It would also propose a new administrative remedy for violations, including a new monetary penalty of one-half the fair market value of the property for an illegal demolition and one-half the cost of restoration for an illegal alteration.

Most effective preservation ordinances include clear provisions to address potential neglect and vandalism of designated historic properties. This section would reference existing City provisions in Municipal Code Section 91.8119.5 allowing the City to require securing and fencing of historic structures to prevent vandalism. These provisions ensure that historic resources are maintained to preserve their historic status.

#### • Include preservation incentives in ordinance

The Cultural Heritage Ordinance should not be seen as solely regulatory or punitive: it should include positive incentives that help make good historic preservation projects possible. The Ordinance therefore references the City's successful Mills Act Historical Property Contracts Program, the California Historical Building Code, and other preservation incentives found in other sections of the City's codes.

In response to the opposition by some property owners, OHR has posted a statement on its website, *http://preservation.lacity.org*. Here is an excerpt:

"The OHR believes that the new ordinance will significantly improve the review process for owners of Monument properties, in the following ways:

- Well over 90% of requests for alteration of Monument properties will continue to be signed off administratively under the new ordinance, just as they are today -- usually on the same day, "over-the-counter" or electronically.
- The new ordinance will create greater clarity for owners and make clear that certain work, such as ordinary maintenance and repair, is exempt from review altogether.
- The historic preservation standards on which approval is based will not be changing. These standards, used in every local government's preservation law, are meant to allow significant change to historic properties, not to "freeze" historic buildings in time.
- Demolition of Historic-Cultural Monuments may still be approved, and may be approved even if no economic hardship exists.
   Visit the website to download the complete proposed ordinance.



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Please DO NOT include my name, address, e-mail, or telephone in the WAHA membership directory.

We support preservation of the West Adams community's architectural heritage and beautification activities, and seek to educate Los Angeles' citizens and others about cultural heritage and restoration techniques.



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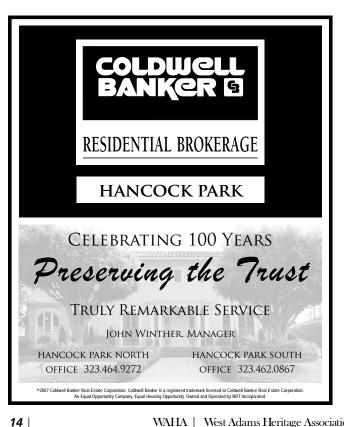
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This Newsletter is published 11 times a year Full Page: \$175 monthly; \$1,800 annually Half Page: \$90 monthly; \$950 annually

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## WAHA's 2009 "No Excuses" Calendar

We are planning a full slate of potlucks, Evening Strolls, Author Book Receptions and Historic Tours for 2009. Please put the event dates below on your calendar. Next month we'll flesh out the schedule.

**MARCH** 

Sunday, March 22:

L.A. Heritage Day at Heritage Square

**APRIL** 

Sunday, April 26:

WAHA Board Elections and Potluck

MAY

Saturday/Sunday, May 2/3 (TBA):

**WAHA Board Retreat** 

Sunday, May 31:

WAHA's Annual Preservation Brunch

JUNE

Saturday, June 6:

WAHA presents its Annual Spring Historic Homes &

**Architecture Tour** 

JULY

Saturday, July 4:

WAHA's Annual 4th of July Picnic

**AUGUST** 

Thursday, August 6:

WAHA New Member Dessert

**SEPTEMBER** 

Saturday, September 26:

Living History Tour at Angelus Rosedale Cemetery

**DECEMBER** 

Saturday and Sunday, December 5 and 6:

WAHA's Annual Holiday Tour and Progressive Dinner

Sunday, December 13:

WAHA Holiday Party

WAHA....Creating Our Future by Preserving Our Past

# Calendar

### **Upcoming Events**

NOTE: WAHA's previouslyannounced March 21 program HAS BEEN CANCELLED

### Sunday, March 22:

L.A. Heritage Day at Heritage Square (see story, page 1)

### Sunday afternoon, April 26:

WAHA Board Elections and Potluck, 1314 West 25th St.

— Candidates Statements due March 23. (see story, page 1)

#### Sunday, May 31:

WAHA's Annual Preservation Brunch

### Saturday, June 6:

WAHA presents its Annual Spring Historic Homes & Architecture Tour

# WAHA'S Annual Election Meeting & Potluck Sunday afternoon, April 26 At the home of Philippe Soler, 1314 W. 25th Street (between Hoover & Vermont)

Please join WAHA at this restored 1890 Queen Ann Victorian, which was relocated to West Adams in 1982 from its original location at 1116 Ingraham Street. The residence is not camera shy! It was featured in an Emmy-winning episode of "2 on the Town" and also the Mel Gibson film, "What Women Want." We'll

post more information about the event itself in the April issue of WAHA Matters. But please do note that this is also our annual Election Meeting. (See story, page 1).



The WAHA Newsletter is a publication of the West Adams Heritage Association. Members and supporters of WAHA are invited to submit articles to the Newsletter. Letters will be published subject to space constraints and will be cut for length if necessary. Articles will be published subject to acceptance by the editors of the WAHA Board. Advertising is subject to the approval of the publishers. Although the Association appreciates its many fine advertisers, the Association does not accept responsibility for claims made by advertisers. Services and products are not tested and appearance of advertising does not imply, nor does it constitute, endorsement by the West Adams Heritage Association. Copyright 2009. All rights for graphic and written material appearing in the newsletter are reserved. Contact Director of Publications for permission.

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