



SANTA MONICA CONSERVANCY NEWS

ENSURING THAT THE PAST HAS A FUTURE

OCTOBER 2003

VOL 1 No 3

LANDMARKS TOUR:
SUNDAY,
NOVEMBER 9
1:45 - 4:30 PM

BUS TOUR OF SANTA
MONICA LANDMARKS
NARRATED BY KEN
BREISCH.

SEE INSERT

MARION DAVIES
ESTATE:

SMC BOARD MEMBER
REMEMBERS 415 PCH &
DONALD O CONNOR

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(EUCALYPTUS TREE)
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JOIN A SMC
COMMITTEE!

ADVOCACY
EVENTS
INCENTIVES
...OR GET INVOLVED
ACCORDING TO YOUR
INTERESTS OR SKILLS

VISITOURWEBSITE
WWW.SMCONSERVANCY.ORG

HOLDING ON TO HOLLISTER HOUSE

The Santa Monica Conservancy played a key role in saving an historic 1905 beach cottage in the South Beach Tract in Ocean Park. The SMC Advocacy Committee and especially SMC member Joel Brand led the troops, putting out flyers in the surrounding neighborhood, urging residents to speak up at a City Council meeting or contact Council members to fight the property owner's appeal of a landmark designation.

The two-story house at 128 Hollister Avenue had recently been designated a landmark. The owner, wanting to build a modern rental unit on the site, appealed the Landmarks Commission designation. The City Council decided to uphold the Landmarks Commission designation.

The house at 128 Hollister is one of a few remaining examples of American Foursquare architecture still intact in one of Southern California's unique historic beach communities. This type of architecture was prevalent in Santa Monica, particularly Ocean Park, in the first decades of the 20th century. At the turn of that century, an early rail line that ran along Nielsen Way stopped on the top of the 100 block of Hollister Avenue. Crowds of pleasure-seekers then walked down the block to the Crystal Pier at the western terminus of the street. The Crystal Pier, long demolished, was the hot attraction in Ocean Park at the time. Initially this part of Hollister Avenue was lined with small, temporary cottages built as vacation homes until Mr. Hollister and Mr. Wadsworth decided to develop the block with more commodious and sightly houses of which this is one.

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DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES

A CALL TO ACTION:

The City is in the process of creating a set of development guidelines for downtown Santa Monica. It has hired ROMA Design Group to assess the status of the downtown area and recommend guidelines for developers with projects in the area from Colorado to Wilshire and from Second to Seventh Streets. The SMC Board voted to urge the Planning Commission, the Architectural Review Board ("ARB") and the City Council to consider historic preservation in these guidelines.



312 WILSHIRE BOULEVARD IS ELIGIBLE FOR LISTING IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

A 1994 survey of downtown revealed that 39% or 47 of our historic structures had been demolished through approved redevelopment and since that 1994 survey, another 10% have been lost. This leaves fewer than 70 buildings with enough original detail to be considered for landmark designation.

The Planning Commission and the ARB will hold a joint meeting on Wednesday, October 29th, at 7:00 p.m. in Council Chambers to consider the ROMA Design Group's recommendations. SMC members are needed at the October 29th meeting as well as at subsequent City Council meetings to speak about including historic preservation in the guidelines and to reinforce its

CONTINUED PAGE 3: DOWNTOWN

CONSERVANCY BUSINESS

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

Many members have received membership renewal forms. Don't forget to return them with your check. Your continued support of the Conservancy will help achieve its goals. If you have friends who might be interested in preservation, we'll gladly send them membership information. Just send us their names and addresses (or e-mail addresses).

ANNUAL MEETING SET FOR MAY BOARD CANDIDATES NEEDED

SMC's Annual Meeting is set for next May during National Preservation Week. The meeting is tentatively scheduled to be held at the Aero Theater on Montana Avenue where, after Conservancy business, attendees will be treated to a movie screening. At the annual meeting, members will elect new board members, vote on bylaw changes, hear about the year's accomplishments, set goals for the coming year, and join in presenting awards for achievement in local historic preservation. Board members are elected by the entire membership for a three-year term and there are three positions to fill -- one to replace charter member Pam Vavra who moved, with her enthusiasm and skills to Oregon, and two other positions which are open in accordance with the board members' staggered terms. If you would like to be a candidate for the SMC board, please contact President Tom Cleys at 310-452-9456.

BOARD MEETINGS

The Board of the Santa Monica Conservancy usually meets the fourth Wednesday of each month. On October 22nd and November 19th, the meetings will be at the Community Room in the Montana Avenue Branch Library, 1704 Montana Avenue, from 6:30- 8:45 pm. There will be no meeting in December. Beginning in 2004, meetings will be held at the same time but at the Community Room in the Fairview Branch Library at 2101 Ocean Park Blvd. All are welcome to come, listen, speak up or volunteer.

SMC WEB SITE

The SMC volunteers are working hard to get phase I of the Conservancy web site up and running. Our web site premier will feature listings of events and news, information about SMC committees, board members and volunteer opportunities, and historical information about Santa Monica and preservation here. The site will be located at www.smconservancy.org. We will alert you as soon as we are on the wires!

Later editions will include detailed information about all of Santa Monica's landmarks as well as some significant, undesignated sites and detailed information about the designation process, local preservation incentives and more.

I WAS A GOVERNESS AT THE MARION DAVIES ESTATE

A BIT OF NOSTALGIA BY DORIS SOSIN
FOREWORD BY SHERRILL KUSHNER

In 1928 media magnate William Randolph Hearst built, for his mistress, film star Marion Davies, a beachfront estate at 415 Pacific Coast Highway in Santa Monica. Julia Morgan, architect of Hearst Castle in San Simeon, designed the expansive mansion, which featured a 100-room Georgian Revival house later known as Ocean House. After World War II the property was sold, the main house was demolished (in 1956), and three buildings were added. In 1959 the five-acre site was purchased by the State of California who leased it to the City of Santa Monica. The City, in turn leased it to the Sand and Sea Club from 1960 - 1990. The site has been determined to be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historical Places and is listed in California's Register of Historical Resources. The North House, the one remaining original structure, has been designated a Santa Monica landmark. After the 1994 Northridge earthquake caused severe damage, all the structures were closed. In 1999 the City Council approved a reuse plan for the site. The original elements- the North House, the swimming pool and bulkhead that surrounded the house-will be saved.



MARION DAVIES ESTATE, 1940S
SANTA MONICA PUBLIC LIBRARY

I came to Los Angeles in 1953 on a one way plane ticket from Washington, D.C. I was a young college graduate, looking for a new, independent life. I came at an opportune time when the vistas in Los Angeles were wide open and breathtaking and people welcomed newcomers with open arms.

In no time I melded into an exciting community. One Sunday afternoon I had been invited to tea by Sarah Mankiewicz (family friend and wife of Herman Mankiewicz, the screenwriter). While there, I was offered a summer job as a governess to the children of famed comic actor and dancer Donald O'Connor. He would be renting the Marion Davies Beach House in Santa Monica. I was thrilled. But first, I had to be interviewed by the psychiatrist, Dr. Hacker of the famed Hacker Clinic in Beverly Hills. He made such decisions for Donald O'Connor. I had never met a psychiatrist before and I was very much on guard, but I landed the job!

The beach house was grand and elegant. Burnished wooden floors, expansive rooms, Oriental rugs, massive vases with fresh flowers, wide wooden framed windows overlooking the sand. One reached the bedrooms by climbing broad steps with polished wooden banisters leading to a vast landing. The bedrooms had sweeping vistas of the ocean and were spacious and airy. I particularly remember the bathrooms being unusually large and beautifully appointed.

The Lawfords lived next door, to the south of us, and next to them lived Philip Glass, the composer. I could hear the fun at the Kennedy/Lawford parties from my window on many nights.

I saw very little of Donald; I was left on my own to spend the days on the beach with the two children and drive them to their appointments with friends and family. During those years there was a thriving beach club on the property and one could buy hamburgers which we ate while sitting around the pool filled with ocean water. There must have been a cook at the beach house because I remember good breakfasts and dinners being served in the home. It was grand and spacious.

When the summer was over, I went on my way to pursue my new life. Many years later I bumped into Donald O'Connor at a fundraiser. I asked him to dance for old time's sake. He was most gracious.

THE BOUGHS AND THE BYERS

NEWLY LANDMARKED

The Landmarks Commission has made three new designations since our last newsletter. They are 128 Hollister Avenue (article on page 1), 2034 La Mesa Drive, and the Eucalyptus Deanei tree at 522 Twenty-fourth Street.

The John Byers House at 2034 La Mesa Drive was built in 1924. It is a very good example of the Monterey Revival Style with its pitched roof, horizontal aspect and cantilevered second floor balcony. Byers was particularly interested in a native local architecture and excelled in its interpretation. This is one of eight houses that Mr. Byers designed on La Mesa Drive and one of dozens in Santa Monica and Los Angeles. Byers career in Santa Monica spanned over 30 years during which time he built homes for



2034 LA MESA DRIVE

many notable citizens. He lived in this house with his family until the 1950s.

The large Eucalyptus Deanei tree at 522 -24th St. was planted over 80 years ago by renowned horticulturalist Hugh Evans. Mr. Evans was proprietor of Evans Rare Plant Garden in Santa Monica. He was involved in beautifying the City through planting new and interesting varieties of shade trees. This particular variety was not as widely imported as others which makes it a rarity in Southern California in spite of the success of Mr. Evans experiment. The tree is over 100 feet in height and is visible over 4 blocks away. Listed in Exceptional Trees of Los Angeles by Hastings and Heintz, the tree attracts students and enthusiasts from far and wide.

DOWNTOWN

FROM PAGE 1

importance. You may e-mail or snail mail your comments as well. The more public input that is received, the more likely the City is to implement our request.

We believe that the guidelines should strongly reflect sensitivity toward the preservation of historic resources because preservation enhances the quality of life and the quality of the built environment while maintaining the character of a city and its cultural heritage for residents and visitors to enjoy. We believe the guidelines should also require adaptive reuse and, in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards, stylistically compatible remodeling of the remaining buildings that have landmark potential. If any doubt exists about the value of a building to the City's history, the Landmarks Commission should be consulted for review.

Preserving our significant historic commercial buildings is part of the Conservancy's mission. Help us by giving your input to these City boards and commissions and to City Council.

THE LANDMARKS COMMISSION CHANGING OF THE GUARD

In July, Barbara Schnitzler resigned from the Landmarks Commission because of a move to New York. Barbara was a passionate and vocal member of the Commission as well as a founding member of the Santa Monica Conservancy. Her position has been filled by John Berley. John is an executive board member and past president of the Society of Architectural Historians. He has extensive knowledge of the history of Southern California.

In August Bob Posek handed in his resignation from the Commission. We were sorry to get this news, but fortunately the City Council has many worthy applicants from which to choose a replacement.

LA MESA DRIVE TOUR DRAWS 400

This past July, the Santa Monica Conservancy, along with the Los Angeles Conservancy and Save Our Neighborhoods, sponsored the first-ever tour of elegant La Mesa Drive. Four outstanding homes were open, one was designed by John Byers, another by Oscar Niemeyer, the others featured a unique collection of Art Deco and Lalique furnishings, and the film memorabilia of director Frank Shaffner. (Copies of the informative, illustrated tour booklet are available for \$5 by contacting the Santa Monica Conservancy at (310) 456-0399.)

Thanks to the coordinators of this huge undertaking: Barbara Schnitzler, Ruthann Lehrer, Nina Fresco, Sherrill Kushner, Bea Nemlaha, Doris Sosin, Tom Cleys and the nearly 60 docents who narrated the tour and provided security.

Our Events Committee is working on another house tour for next summer, Landmarks of the Future, featuring unique contemporary houses in the City. If you are interested in helping (or including your home), contact Doris Sosin at (310) 393-1207.



2108 LA MESA DRIVE

NEW MEMBERS

DANIEL AND DIANA ATTIAS
 JOHN BERLEY
 BERKELEY BLATZ
 KRISTINA DEUTSCH & JOEL BRAND
 CHARLOTTE BRYANT
 MARCIA CARTER
 KAREN COMEGYS
 JANE AND TRAVIS DOUGLAS
 BERNAY GRAYSON
 DEBBIE AND DAVID HARRIS
 EMMALIE HODGIN
 LESLIE HOPE
 MARY HUBBELL
 JAMES HOLLY & RANDI HUTCHINSON
 ANITA KARBELNIG
 CATHY LARSON
 DAVE AND ANN LELAND
 EVE LICHTGARN
 KATHLEEN MASSER
 ANNI MICHAELSEN
 IDA O DELL
 RICHARD ORTON
 MYRA AND EARL POMERANTZ
 LANCE PEKALA & JILL RISEBOROUGH
 NEAL ROBERTS
 CAROL ROSENBERG
 REID AND LAURA SHANE
 WENDY C. SHARP
 JOSH WEINSTEIN & LISA SIMMONS
 MINA SOLOMON
 JOYCE AND HUGH SYME
 PETER SPELMAN & STEPHANIE TAINSKY
 BETTY TOMELO
 JEFF PEAK & SUZANNE VERGE
 CAPRICE WALKER
 JILL WALKER
 ROBERT & SUZANNEWHAYNE
 JUDITH WILSON
 KATE WINEGAR
 JUDITH WOODHAMS COLLAS
 EUGENA YASNOGORODSKY

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 NINA FRESCO
 COPY EDITOR PETER ALTSCHULER

NEIGHBORHOOD MARKETS SAVED

In September, a group of nearly 30 vocal Santa Monica residents successfully urged the City Council to save one neighborhood grocery store slated for the wrecking ball and another from potentially going out of business. Before the advent of the refrigerator and automobile, a trip to the corner grocery store was essential to the pattern of urban life. People had to buy groceries on a day-to-day even meal-to-meal basis. And almost everyone walked to the store, so close proximity to customers was important. By virtue of their location, many corner stores became the social and physical anchors of an intersection or neighborhood. The store's interior became the neighborhood parlor and outside became a place to gather or to play.

Today's stores are still vital to neighborhoods as an alternative to shopping at the more impersonal super markets where parking isn't always easy and long lines make shopping time-consuming. Since children and many seniors often don't have access to easy transportation, being able to walk to a store is essential.

In Santa Monica, the Council's unanimous

decision allowed the corner store on the 600 block of Marine to avoid costly remodeling pursuant to a Planning Commission decision that would have required the owner to take down its murals and restore the original but expensive clear glass windows underneath. The market at 2225 Fourth Street near Strand, built in 1929, won't be demolished to provide a front yard for a two-unit condominium.

The market at Marine and Sixth is potentially an historic landmark. Council's vote to preserve its use is a good first step toward the preservation and restoration of this cultural icon that connects our past to our present in such a practical way. Congratulations to SMC member Abby Arnold and all those who testified.



THE MARKET AT MARINE AND SIXTH STREETS

SOURCES: WWW.SURFSANTAMONICA.COM AND THE NAT'L BUILDING MUSEUM NEWS RELEASE

HOLLISTER

FROM PAGE 1

Alterations made to buildings in this neighborhood through the 1930s are part of the story of the South Beach Tract's development from an area of temporary summer cottages to an area of larger homes suitable for full time residence. The saved Hollister house is extraordinary in that it has had only one exterior alteration--in 1918--since it was originally built. Therefore, it is one of the more pristine representatives of the early 1900s and the American Foursquare style.

Some characteristics of American Foursquare houses are: 30x30 feet or 30x36 feet in size; 2 1/2 stories over the basement with four more or less equally sized rooms on each floor; a hipped roof; a porch spanning the entire (or almost nearly) front of the house; plain exterior walls.

Congratulations to those who helped save the house, including the Landmarks Commission and City Council.



SANTA MONICA CONSERVANCY

SAVE THE DATE:

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 1:45 PM

OUTSTANDING DESIGNATED LANDMARKS IN
SANTA MONICA: A BUS TOUR

For more information, see insert in this newsletter.

ALSO FOR YOUR CALENDAR:

- OCTOBER 22 SMC board meeting at Montana Avenue Branch Library
- NOVEMBER 9 Bus Tour of Santa Monica's Outstanding Designated Landmarks
- NOVEMBER 19 SMC board meeting at Montana Avenue Branch Library
- JANUARY 28 SMC board meeting at Fairview Branch Library

THERE WILL BE NO BOARD MEETING IN DECEMBER

P.O. Box 653 SANTA MONICA, CA 90406-0653