



Community Engagement Is Key

Community engagement supports better understanding of the concerns, needs and aspirations of the public, and it leads to improved decision-making and increased likelihood that projects are widely accepted. A good example is Meztlí Project's recent outreach and programming surrounding the two lobby murals in City Hall.

Meztlí was hired by the City's Department of Cultural Affairs to lead the community engagement phase of the Department's Reframe initiative. Conservancy members and our Board participated in community feedback activities, and two Board members were part of the project's Working Circle, ensuring that our perspectives were considered. When approved by City Council, Meztlí's recommendations will inform how Cultural Affairs and other City departments make decisions about the murals and other related cultural programming issues.



The Santa Monica Civic Auditorium. Credit: Stephen Schafer Photography

Now, two different projects and two different public agencies are considering the fate of two more historic and cultural resources important to Santa Monica: The City-owned Civic Auditorium and the School District-owned English Building at Santa Monica High School (Samohi). Both agencies are considering how to address revitalization of these historic buildings. These are healthy opportu-

nities for community engagement to address complex issues, and will empower people with different perspectives to work together to find sustainable solutions.

The Conservancy is raising its voice to promote community engagement as a necessary step towards understanding various priorities, building trust, and defining objectives for the revitalization of these buildings. It is the Conservancy's goal to activate our members, community partners and the public to provide the information and background necessary for an engaged and informed community to effectively convey its views to decision-makers.

For the Civic Auditorium, the City is currently considering next steps, now that the process mandated by the Surplus Land Act is closed. Any new initiative for the Civic

ENGAGEMENT *continues on page 4*

Vote on Landmarking of Black Women's Clubhouse Slated for 2024

The new year is expected to bring a vote by the City Landmarks Commission on a Conservancy nomination to grant Landmark status to a 1958 clubhouse built and still occupied by one of the oldest African American women's clubs in Southern California.

Founded by seven Black women in 1921, the Philomathean Charity, Literary and Art Club supports an array of social services and educational opportunities for local African Americans. Its mid-century modern clubhouse at 1810 Broadway was once at the center of a thriving Black community before construction of the 10 Freeway in the 1960s displaced many residents.

One of the Club's proudest achievements took shape on April 19, 1970, when members and their guests, including the mayor of Santa Monica, gathered at the clubhouse to celebrate having paid off their mortgage. They had paid off the property and were redirecting the funds for the establishment of a college scholarship program for Black high school seniors. Still active today, the program

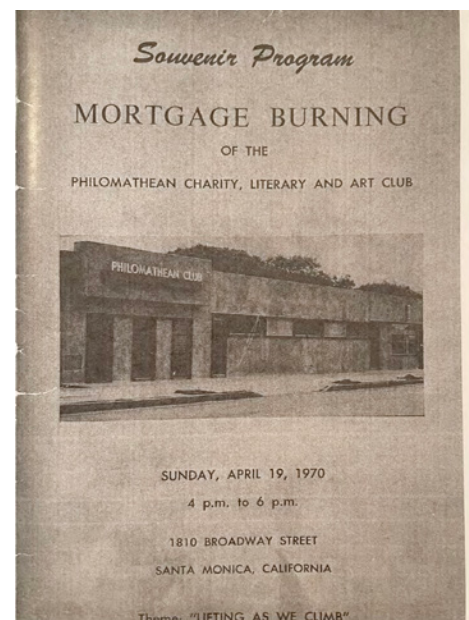
has provided countless students who come recommended by Club members, with hundreds of thousands of dollars of support.

In recognition of this and the Philomathean Club's century of service to the local community, the Conservancy worked for more than two years with Club leaders and the Quinn Research Center (QRC) in preparing the 68-page Landmark application. Once City staff finish their review, it will go to the Landmarks Commission for a vote sometime in 2024.

In the meantime, the City of Santa Monica has awarded a preservation grant to the Conservancy to create educational materials focused on bringing the rich history of Broadway to light. The *Broadway Neighborhood Black History Project* is a collaboration with the QRC and 18th Street Arts Center. Also participating are the Santa Monica History Museum and Santa Monica Public Library.

The project may take the form of signage, printed neighborhood guides, as well as other collaborative outreach and creative educational programming that continues the im-

portant work of remembering and recording the stories of Broadway.



Philomathean Club Souvenir Program, April 19, 1970. Image courtesy of the Quinn Research Center

OUR MISSION

The Santa Monica Conservancy is the leading voice for preserving our historic places. We promote understanding of the cultural, social, economic and environmental benefits of historic preservation through education, assistance and advocacy.

JOIN US

The Santa Monica Conservancy exists because of the involvement and generosity of people like you. Become a member today and strengthen our voice for preserving Santa Monica's architectural and cultural heritage.

To sign up, visit smconservancy.org/ways-to-give/become-a-member/ OR call or email us at the contact info below.

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Visit the Preservation Resource Center:

Please consult our website, call, or email us for monthly tours and walk-in hours.

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This newsletter is supported in part by a grant from the City of Santa Monica.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

To remain relevant as Santa Monica's leading voice in preservation, it is necessary to reflect our community's interests in the work that we do. I agree with the direction spearheaded by our Executive Director Kaitlin Drisko, that to fulfill this goal, we have to be out among our stakeholders, building trusting relationships.

What can these relationships help us accomplish together? For one, we want to develop a much more ambitious education program in the local schools. We also want to interact with an even broader cross section of the public, and to fairly reflect our community's diversity across our organization, including the board. For example, we want to better integrate the voices of younger people who often have a different perspective on preservation. One way we are doing this is by investing in and promoting the activities our Preservation Next affinity group for the next generation of preservationists.

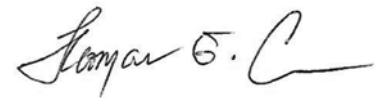
Community engagement is also key to addressing the many advocacy issues that we are dealing with today, and to ensuring positive outcomes in the context of preservation. These include the reframing of the City Hall Murals, the future of the Santa Monica Civic Auditorium and the adaptive reuse proposal for the Samohi English Building.

We support the City's Reframe: City Hall Murals project, including the recommendations that Metzli Projects included in their recent Executive Summary. We fully understand that once an artwork enters public space, the community's interpretation of the artwork can become more relevant than the work's original intent. It is understandable why, with the passage of time, many now see one of the murals as containing racist depictions of indigenous people. We credit the community members who have voiced harm, and the opportunity granted by Reframe to give those voices time, space, and weight. Their recommendations do not include covering the murals, a position which the Conservancy has held since the beginning.

Regarding the Civic Auditorium and English Building, there is a lot of information out there that folks have yet to consume. We believe our role may be to facilitate an understanding of the opportunities that will lead to positive outcomes for both buildings, and to ensure that everybody is working with the same information. The Civic is particularly challenging because it appears that in all scenarios a substantial subsidy is needed, and the City says they don't have funds to support the building's revitalization.

We are excited to be fulfilling our promise to expand to serve the broadening needs of our community using a mix of tried and true methods, as well as new approaches and initiatives. To stay relevant, we must continue to listen to you, our supporters, members, partners, and stakeholders. Thank you for taking the time to share your ideas and resources with us. Together, we will ensure that Santa Monica's past is the ground for our future.

Happy Holidays to you and your family,



CALIFORNIA INCLINE — Photography is not the only means of recording the built environment! Santa Monica-based artist Fielden Harper has been documenting the city through her site-specific paintings for many years. Most of us encounter the California Incline going west on California Avenue across Ocean, as the road opens to a view of the water and Malibu coast. Harper's painting offers a totally different perspective of the incline from the east, flat against the vertical plane of the bluffs. To see more of Harper's work, visit fieldenharperart.com. (Image: California Incline, 48in x 96in.)

Farewell from a Grateful Intern

by Connor Brain

This past summer, I had the privilege of serving as an intern for the Santa Monica Conservancy. My time was spent helping research and document the city's historic landmarks — illuminating Santa Monica's vibrant urban landscape and rich history. What an incredible ride it has been!

I gained profound insight into the crucial work the Conservancy does as an advocate for preservation and a guardian of Santa Monica's cultural heritage. Under historian Nina Fresco's expert guidance, my research primarily focused on the iconic Civic Auditorium,

tracing its storied past as a renowned entertainment venue and its significant ties to the civil rights movement during the 1960s. In a time marked by uncertainty about the Civic Auditorium's future, this project proved incredibly special for me.

Throughout this journey, I learned invaluable lessons in diligence, commitment and the unyielding passion required to lead



in preservation. I owe immense gratitude to Nina for everything -- her continuous mentorship and for showing me that preservation transcends mere documentation; it entails passionate civic engagement and the cultivation of community.

I embarked on my Conservancy adventure after graduating from UCLA earlier this year with degrees in Political Science and Professional Writing. As for right now, I'm backpacking across Europe, exploring historic sites and thoroughly enjoying the food. Nevertheless, I am incredibly excited to return to Southern California and once again be involved with the Conservancy!

Docents on the Road Again

by Libby Pachares

Docents have long wanted to visit the San Francisco Bay Area where pioneering architect Julia Morgan was based. This trip became a reality in November when 21 Conservancy docents and guests visited the East Bay for a special Julia Morgan tour.

Staying for two nights at the spectacular Morgan-designed Berkeley City Club (nicknamed "The Little Castle"), docents experienced her architectural genius first-hand, including swimming in its magnificent indoor pool. Members of the Berkeley City Club Conservancy led docents on an informative tour of their beloved landmark, which was built in 1930 as a social club and residence for women.

The group visited several other Mor-

gan gems in the area, including the Phoebe Hearst Memorial Gym on the UC Berkeley campus, and the Campanile, library, and alumni hall on the bucolic grounds of Mills College in Oakland, where docents were delighted to hear the ringing of the Campanile's famous bells.

These tours were led by Julia Morgan scholar and docent friend Karen McNeil. Other trip highlights included taking in a delightful production of "Cinderella Enchanted" at Berkeley's Julia Morgan Theater and sharing delicious meals at Julia's Restaurant at the Berkeley City Club.

The Docent Council thanks member and trip director Phillis Dudick for the truly memorable experience and looks forward to more travel in the future.



Docents pose in front of the Sather Gate at UC Berkeley. Photo: Yeudit Cohen



Ruthann Lehrer holds the Oscar that went up in outer space with international space station astronauts. Photo: Moonie Fishburn

Docents Have Oscar Moment

by Libby Pachares

A group of over 20 Beach House Docents recently toured the Academy of Motion Pictures' Margaret Herrick Library in Beverly Hills. The group was enthusiastically welcomed by Library staff who had taken and greatly enjoyed the Conservancy's Marion Davies Guest House tour.

Docents were delighted to discover a treasure trove of materials relating to Davies and William Randolph Hearst. A team of expert librarians and archivists, including a paper conservation expert, shared some wonderful artwork (posters, cigarette cards, scrapbooks) and papers. Highlights included a poem that Hearst had penned for Davies and a thank you letter written by Jacqueline Kennedy to the actress, with

a postscript from John F. Kennedy.

The October 4 visit was made even more memorable because of the story behind the Library's beautiful Spanish-Romanesque style building at La Cienega and Olympic Boulevards. Originally the site of the Beverly Hills water purification plant, the building was threatened with demolition in the 1980's. Conservancy Board member Ruthann Lehrer, who was personally involved in the campaign to save the building as the Executive Director of the Los Angeles Conservancy, explained the happy confluence of factors that led to the building being saved and repurposed as the Herrick Library.

Now that docents have been introduced to this wonderful resource, they look forward to mining the Library's archives to update and refresh the Beach House tour materials.

Housing Mandate Rolls on Across the City

by Mario Fonda-Bonardi

The State mandated Housing Element, which requires that Santa Monica plan for about 9,000 new units of housing in the next eight years, is being implemented throughout the city. What it means, in real numbers, is that properties that were originally zoned for 2-3 stories can now go up to 4-6 stories if they provide 10-15% of affordable units in the unit mix.

The height increases are just one of the many incentives, concessions and waivers that developers can demand from the City. Needless to say, these new housing incentives put pressure on historic preservation, which is also a community benefit, and by-pass typ-

ical City review processes, placing the burden on individuals and community groups like the Santa Monica Conservancy, to speak up and protect historic properties and cultural heritage from demolition.

Most of the initial projects were 50-100 unit projects by larger developers but now smaller projects are starting to reflect similar height and density increases as smaller developers come to the fore using smaller parcels.

When these projects were first proposed, individuals and community groups expressed enough concern that City Council requested staff schedule two workshops to explain the technical intricacies of the new regulations to residents and describe how this may result in our 2-3 story city being replaced with a 4-6

story city.

The first virtual workshop was on October 30 and an in-person presentation was held Wednesday November 8 at City Hall chambers. A recording of the 10/30/2023 meeting can be viewed online. Search "Santa Monica Housing Town Hall on October 30, 2023 on YouTube.

Meanwhile the State has yet to respond to the City's request that Santa Monica not be forced to up-zone the boulevards (Main, Pico, Ocean Park, Montana) that currently have an "NC" zoning (Neighborhood Commercial at 2-3 stories). Not up-zoning would go a long way to preserving the historical quality of these beloved low-rise neighborhood-serving streets.

Metzli Concludes City Hall Mural Study

by Ruthann Lehrer

During this past year of community engagement around the murals in City Hall, I was privileged to participate in the Metzli Project's Working Circle as a representative of the Santa Monica Conservancy.

The Working Circle was a group of twelve members of the public selected to represent different constituencies. It acted as a "think tank" and advisory body to resolve responses to the controversies around the City Hall murals.

It was an intensive, interactive, and collaborative process, and a deep learning experience for all of us. Other Working Circle members came from the School District, Santa Monica College faculty and students, Community Corps, Gabrielino-Tongva and Kizh tribes, Pico Youth and Family Center, and City staff.

Most Working Circle members were focused on the legacy of colonialism, white supremacy and injustices endured by the First People, Mexicans and other migrants, and all people of color. It was illuminating



The Working Circle meets in the lobby of City Hall. Photo: Kenneth Lopez

to see how powerfully these experiences outweighed any understanding of the murals in their historic context. Many Working Circle members felt harmed by the image of kneeling Indigenous people juxtaposed with standing Spanish colonial invaders.

The Acknowledge + Reframe process of understanding the City Hall murals led by Metzli became the springboard for generating new ideas about integrating Indigenous and minority perspectives into the city's civic and public life.

Metzli made the following recommendations in its concluding report:

- Commission new artwork in City Hall lobby.
 - Commission new interpretive panels.
 - Ensure that Santa Monica's Public Art and Commemorative Landscape centers on equity and belonging.
 - Create additional educational materials about the murals.
 - Expand DEI and trainings for City staff.
 - Adopt a citywide Land/Territory Acknowledgment Initiative.
 - Improve representation on Santa Monica committees.
 - Facilitate Land Back in Santa Monica. Facilitate Kuruvungna Springs relationships.
- After City Council reviews and hopefully accepts these recommendations, implementation will be managed by the Arts Commission, its Public Art Subcommittee and Cultural Affairs Director Sofia Klatzker. The Conservancy expects to continue to be involved and supportive as these efforts move forward.
- To access Metzli's report, visit smconservancy.org and search "Executive Summary."

ENGAGEMENT *continued from page 1*

Auditorium should include community engagement that is transparent in decision-making, addresses the underlying history of the site and commits to rehabilitation of the historic building.

The English Building is a unique historical resource on the Samohi campus as the only original building from the first construction period of 1924 that survives today. The School District is considering adaptive reuse and modern additions that blend the past history of the school with the next generation of learning, providing a unique ed-



The English Building at Santa Monica High School. 7th Street Elevation composite: Nina Fresco

ucational environment for Samohi students. District officials are seeking community feedback on this concept.

Your support of the Conservancy strengthens the voice of historic preservation as City

and School District officials are poised to make key decisions about the future of historic resources in our community. Watch for more information in our e-blasts and website. Let's make history part of our future!

SMC Hosts First Annual Historian's Dinner

by Mario Fonda-Bonardi

The Santa Monica Conservancy recently hosted its first annual Historians Dinner, honoring individuals who are keeping the city's history alive through their historical detective work and passion.

Santa Monica has hundreds of dedicated preservation workers and volunteers serving in its five major preservation organizations, including the California Heritage Museum, Heal the Bay, Museum of Flying, Santa Monica Conservancy and Santa Monica History Museum. But the distinguished guests invited to the October 26 dinner at the Conservancy's Preservation Research Center often do their deepest historic work alongside or in addition to the historical organizations they support.

This year's honorees included Nina Fresco, historian, Conservancy Board member and Santa Monica Planning Commissioner; Mark Gorman, Ocean Park historian; Jim Harris, executive director, Santa Monica Pier Corp.; Paddy Kalistro, president and publisher, Angel City Press; Richard Orton, historian; and Anne Wallentine, curator, Santa Monica History Museum.

The evening's hosts were Conservancy Executive Director Kaitlin Drisko and Conservancy Vice President and Board member



Honorees and hosts sit down to dinner. From left to right: Jim Harris, Kaitlin Drisko, Mark Gorman, Mario Fonda-Bonardi (standing), Paddy Kalistro (standing), Richard Orton, Anne Wallentine and Nina Fresco. Photo: Tom Cleys for the Santa Monica Conservancy.

Mario Fonda-Bonardi. The delicious meal was catered by Papille Gustative and organized by Phyllis Conkle.

The three-hour dinner was enlivened by discussions that included the fine points of historic accuracy and current preservation-related initiatives. Yet the most encouraging report was from Angel City Press, whose owners are retiring. Rather than sell themselves to a competing publishing company, which would only buy their few best sellers and dump the rest, the owners are selling their company to the Los Angeles Public Library so that all 150 of their books in print will remain publicly accessible in perpetuity. This is a true gift to Southern California readers and historians.

Preservation Next Plans Another Exciting Year

The Conservancy's Preservation Next affinity group to cultivate the next generation of preservation enthusiasts will offer a fresh slate of activities in the new year following an exciting 2023 that included production of a video series illuminating the group's mission.

Plans for 2024 call for a continuation of stimulating events, as well as opportunities for dialogue and connection around the role of historic preservation in the local urban fabric.

Looking back on 2023, members gathered on August 10 for a special tour of the 18th Street Arts Center, conducted by Senior Director of Public Programs & Engagement Michael Ano and mentor artist-in-residence Dan Kwong.

Later in the year, Preservation Next produced a series of eight videos showcasing the students, and emerging and mid-career professionals of Preservation Next. The videos, to be posted on the Conservancy's website next year, demonstrate how participants are shaping the philosophy and practice of historic preservation.

Preservation Next welcomes participants



Dan Kwong talks to members of Preservation Next in his studio at 18th Street Arts Center. Photo: Catherine Azimi for the Santa Monica Conservancy

from a variety of fields, and encourages them to support and become involved in the work of the Conservancy at large, including membership, volunteering and Board development.

Preservation Next is managed by founder and Conservancy Board member Catherine Conkle and Conservancy Communications Manager Catherine Azimi. Contact catherine@smconservancy.org for more information and to join.

Mosaic to Explore Santa Monica's Diverse Arts Culture

The Conservancy's *Mosaic* series will devote its 2024 season to Santa Monica's diverse arts and entertainment world, beginning with an episode celebrating the star-studded history of the currently shuttered Santa Monica Civic Auditorium.

The program will examine the cultural significance of the venerable venue and its adaptability to stage everything from antique shows, to the Oscars, to concerts that spanned the spectrum of entertainment diversity, from Ella Fitzgerald to the Beach Boys.

The Civic also played a role in the social revolution of the 1960s, including presentation of two rousing appearances by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and a taboo-testing performance by George Carlin of his famous monologue "Seven Words You Can Never Say on Television," which later got him arrested.

The Civic's future remains uncertain and the *Mosaic* episode will conclude with a look at the developing community campaign, including the Conservancy, to help return the iconic hall to the important cultural resource it was for decades.

A *Mosaic* episode originally set for December 2023 on African American entrepreneur Vernon Brunson will now air in 2024 in conjunction with a Brunson exhibit at the Santa Monica History Museum, a *Mosaic* partner.



Promotional poster for "Stars for Freedom" civil rights benefit held at the Civic Auditorium. Credit: Unknown

Advocacy Committee Report

by Ruthann Lehrer and Carol Lemlein,
Advocacy Committee Co-Chairs

LANDMARK NOMINATION FOR PHILOMATHEAN HALL

As reported on page 1 of this newsletter, the Conservancy submitted a Landmark Nomination for Philomathean Hall this past October, prepared by Carolyne Edwards and Nina Fresco. Built in 1958 at 1810 Broadway, the building remains an intact reminder of the era, before construction of the Santa Monica Freeway, when this part of town was the center of a vibrant and thriving African American community. The designation will mark an important step in commemorating this history and the Philomathean Charity Club's continuing significant contributions. The site's full history, detailed in the nomination Statement of Significance can be accessed by searching "Philomathean nomination" at smconservancy.org.

PROTECTING ROOSEVELT'S HISTORY

The Conservancy continues to interact with School District staff and project teams concerning their master plans for facilities improvements where significant historic resources exist, while at the same time, the plans undergo environmental review. Our response letter to the preparation of an EIR for Roosevelt School, in which a potential historic district would be lost, requested a robust analysis of alternatives that would preserve the district.

An EIR often addresses such significant adverse impacts through requiring mitigation such as documentation prior to demolition. However, EIR reviews are also supposed to analyze environmentally preferred alternatives. We hope the Roosevelt EIR will do the same, establishing a new precedent and potentially charting a different course.

ADVISING REALTORS ABOUT THEIR PRESERVATION RESPONSIBILITIES

When Conservancy staff or volunteers spot a realtor's shingle standing at a house that is listed on the Historic Resources Inventory, we respond by contacting the realtor to advise them that they have a legal responsibility to disclose this to potential buyers. We provide information about the significance of the building as well as benefits available for preservation, such as Mills Act contracts, and scenarios for balancing preservation with new construction.

This occurred in October for a rare 1913 Craftsman Airplane Bungalow at 1921 20th



Women and girls pose at a Philomathean Charity Club Inc. social event in the 1950s. Photo: Quinn Research Center



Students at Roosevelt Elementary School. Photograph by Victor Haveman, 1936.

St. that seemed slated for possible demolition. Located in a residential neighborhood historically occupied by African Americans, the structure is one of only three such designs in the city. The house is architecturally intact but in poor condition, with room for expansion behind the structure.

If a demolition permit is filed, the Conservancy has an opportunity to file an application for landmark designation, which City regulations require the demolition applicant to pay for. We hope to avoid that adversarial position after having educated the realtor and potential buyers. Yet that is a tool we would not hesitate to use when necessary to protect and preserve an important historic resource.

REDUCING THE COST OF LANDMARK DESIGNATION

We were very pleased last June when City Council, responding to advocacy by the Conservancy and our members, approved the Landmarks Commission's return to monthly meetings, reinstated the nonprofit waiver for application fees for designation, and requested that legal staff reconsider the justification for removing demolition reviews from the Commission's responsibilities.

Six months later, as City staff prepares for

next year's budget update, the resumption of monthly Commission meetings has indeed taken place, but the agendas are surprisingly light. One reason for this is that applicants for designation, whether or not they have access to the fee waiver, must pay the City's costs for outside consultants to evaluate the application. This amount is typically around \$6,000, putting designation out of reach for many in our community.

Prior City support included financial incentives for property owners of designated buildings, such as fee waivers for building permits. No other City in California undermines the public benefits of identifying and protecting its historic resources with similar financial burdens. Most cities do not charge for applications, or they charge small amounts.

We estimate the annual budgetary impact for full City subsidy of all designation fees at about \$30,000-\$60,000, a minuscule percentage of the City's annual budget of over \$740 million. It's also a small price to pay to facilitate access for landmark designation to marginalized communities that are now financially excluded from identifying and protecting their cultural heritage sites.

A WARM WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS!

Robert Ayer	Samantha Normandin
Yehudit Bernstein	Gordon Polon
Sarah Chandraraj	Marty Russell
Dora Fourcade	Kerry Samovar
Erik Lerner	Morgan Sykes Jaybush
Ellen and Stephen Mark	Tanya Troglin
Gwilym and Peggy McGrew	Sarah Weber
Jaleh Mirhashemi	Miriam Zlotolow

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IN THIS ISSUE:

Community Engagement Is Key	P1
News from Broadway	P1
Farewell from a Grateful Intern	P3
Housing Mandate Rolls On	P4
Metzli Concludes City Hall Mural Study	P4
SMC Hosts Annual Historian's Dinner	P5
Mosaic to Explore the Arts	P5
Advocacy Committee Report	P6

VOLUNTEER WITH US!



Volunteering with the Conservancy is a great way to make an impact on historic preservation, learn about local history and make new friends in the community. Oppor-

tunities are open to anyone with the time and interest and no prior experience is necessary.

For more information, email us at volunteer@smconservancy.org.

Save the Date
**HAPPY BIRTHDAY,
 MARION!**

**Sunday,
 January 28, 2024**

at the Annenberg
 Community Beach House



UN/HOUSED: A HISTORY OF HOUSING IN SANTA MONICA

**Opening Friday, February 2
 Santa Monica History Museum**

Un/Housed: A History of Housing in Santa Monica examines the influences that have shaped Santa Monica's residential landscape. From the historical perspectives of policy and development to the poignant narratives of migration, affordability, redlining, zoning, restrictive covenants, and the ever-relevant topic of rent control; the exhibition delves deep into the heart of Santa Monica's housing legacy.



Adobe house on Bundy Drive, 1940. Courtesy of SMHM/Bill Beebe Collection (3.2.4548)



The show seeks to engage the community in a dialogue about the past, present, and future of housing; where housing is not just a structure but a reflection of community, inclusivity, and shared heritage.