

West Adams Matters

West Boulevard Bridge is Pending Historic Landmark Status

by Mitzi March Mogul and John Patterson

Historic West Adams is filled with landmarks that we may not pay all that much attention to as we drive by every day. The West Boulevard Bridge, erected in 1933 over Venice Boulevard, is one such historically significant structure. Now West Adams Heritage Association along with neighbors, adjacent neighborhood organizations, the Mid City Neighborhood Council, and Council District 10 are working together to recognize, designate and rehabilitate this historic bridge.



The story and significance of the West Boulevard Bridge, like so much of the story of Los Angeles, begins with real estate development. As the city pushed west, as new communities were founded and developed, the need for transportation developed simultaneously. As early as 1902 when George Crenshaw and his son Charles began buying property, and as Moses H. Sherman and Eli P. Clark also purchased real estate in the area, these developers and entrepreneurs understood that without adequate transportation the communities they built would be isolated, no matter how attractive they may be. With the development in 1905 of Venice as a beach resort, the need to link the distances became even greater. Many small railway companies were created throughout Los Angeles, some of them traversing only one street or one small area.

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History Comes Alive at Angelus Rosedale Cemetery Entertaining Lives: Saturday, September 29

History Comes to Life when WAHA presents the 22nd Annual Living History Tour. Marilyn Monroe's grandmother, a "Cotton Club Cutie" and Buster Keaton's cameraman, join other vaudeville and Jazz Age performers will all be showcased at this month's Living History Tour. Flappers, singers, dancers, magicians, and even a celebrity chef — a host of colorful entertainers rest at Angelus Rosedale Cemetery, one of the city's oldest, most historically significant cemeteries.

At the tour, visitors will "meet" some of Los Angeles's most interesting early performers and entertainment industry personages as costumed actors, at graveside, portray the lives of a Civil War-era escape artist, a headlining dancer who lost her life just as she was breaking into the movies, a mezzo soprano who fought for civil rights, and a Chinese-American dancer/actor/MC, among other quirky and wonderful characters.

Angelus Rosedale Cemetery was founded in 1884, and is now home to many generations of Los Angeles's citizens, representing every race, faith, and creed. Each year, WAHA tells some of their life stories while touring the historic grounds and elaborately-carved monuments of

(continued on page 3)



Mildred Washington

Historic Landmark Briggs Residence Open House Wednesday, October 3, 5-7 p.m.

3734 West Adams Boulevard (between Arlington and Crenshaw)



Another of West Adams' landmarks has been beautifully restored!

MSIA, the Church of the Movement of Spiritual Inner Awareness, owner of the Guasti Villa and the MacGowan/Briggs Estate, invites WAHA members and friends of historic preservation to an open house for the Briggs Residence, built by Dr. Granville MacGowan for his wife's mother, Mary Briggs.

Many of you saw the house over two years ago when MSIA did an open house before any rehabilitation took place, or at WAHA's first Art in Historic Places Tour. Come join us on October 3 to see "after," as the work on the house is expected to be nearly completed. The architects and contractors will be on hand

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Annual Living History Tour — Helping Hands Are Needed!

WAHA's annual Living History Tour takes place every autumn at Angelus Rosedale Cemetery. Amid the elaborate headstones and monuments, costumed actors bring to life – and tell the stories of – a half dozen fascinating residents from Los Angeles' earlier times. This year's tour is slated for **Saturday, September 29**, and we invite your participation now to help with the event.

The tour is one of our organization's signature events, and has become known as a compelling way to tell the diverse story of Los Angeles' history, from the 1850s to the present day. WAHA's Living History Tour Committee members research and write the scripts, cast the actors (well, twist their arms!), costume them, create graveside vignettes, and, of course, handle all the myriad accompanying tasks.

Would you like to help? Please contact Laura Meyers at lauramink@aol.com or 323-737-6146, or write tours@westadamsheritage.org. ●

West Adams-Baldwin Hills-Leimert Park Plan Unveiled

On September 13, Department of City Planning Staff announced that the Draft West Adams-Baldwin Hills-Leimert New Community Plan is available for public review online and its Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) has been published for public comment in accordance with State CEQA Guidelines. Copies of the DEIR are available for review at the Jefferson Branch Library, 2211 Jefferson Blvd., and at the Washington Irving Library, 4117 West Washington Blvd., among other locations; WAHA will also have a copy and expects to have committee meetings to review it.

The Planning Department welcomes your comments on both the Draft Plan and DEIR. You may e-mail, send by regular mail, or fax them to Reuben Caldwell's attention (fax, 213-978-1477, reuben.caldwell@lacity.org; Policy Planning and Historic Resources Division, City of Los Angeles, department of City Planning, City Hall, 200 N. Spring Street, Room 667, Los Angeles CA 90012). Please note that all comments regarding the DEIR must be received by Monday, October 29, 2012.

The West Adams-Baldwin Hills-Leimert (West Adams) Community Plan is one of 35 Community Plans that make up the Land Use Element of the City's General Plan. It serves as the blueprint for growth and development in the area. The Plan includes goals and policies for the various types of uses of land, including residential, commercial and industrial as well as specific development standards for the Community Plan Area.

Plan Boundaries

The West Adams Community Plan Area is generally bounded by Pico and Venice Boulevards to the north, Robertson Boulevard and Culver City to the west, the Baldwin Hills, unincorporated Los Angeles County and the City of Inglewood to the southwest, and Arlington and Van Ness Avenues to the east. The Community Plan Area is one of three located within the City's South Los Angeles Planning Region. The West Adams Community Plan Area includes 3 Council Districts and 8 Neighborhood Councils.

The New Community Plan will not only revisit the goals and policies for the area, but will also establish a district plan known as the West Adams Community Plan Implementation Overlay District (CPIO) that will address the various land use issues in the community and provide regulations tailored to the specific needs for several CPIO subdistricts identified for the Plan Area.

The proposed CPIO "overlay" district as well as amendments to the existing Crenshaw Corridor Specific Plan will include design standards that encourage attractive and well-designed projects. They will also regulate permitted land uses, height, bulk and overall design of buildings along the major commercial corridors of the Plan Area. They will encourage sustainable, mixed-use development around transit stations, promote a greater diversity of retail and neighborhood services that provide access to healthy foods and physical activity. The development standards will further regulate industrial districts to preserve the area's economic/ job base while protecting adjacent residential uses.

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President's Message by John Patterson

One of WAHA's primary functions since its inception almost 30 years ago has been to protect the architectural treasures of our neighborhood. That foundation is facing a significant challenge with the recent demise, statewide and here in Los Angeles, of the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA).

This Agency offered at least a nominal level of protection for some of our cherished structures, and in certain project areas, including several in Historic West Adams, the CRA had strict historic preservation guidelines and long lists of identified historic structures. The current situation is quite complex, with the project areas' land use regulations (including historic preservation regulations) still in place but few staff members present to enforce them.

With CRA's safeguards now stripped away, it is incumbent upon WAHA to step up to fill the void. We have already experienced the first wave of such "abandonment" of protection with regard to the Russell Judson Waters Carriage House on Portland Avenue in University Park, which earlier this summer suffered an indiscriminate alteration with the removal of character defining double-hung wood windows, and their replacement with those ubiquitous vinyl atrocities so commonly utilized in so many historically blind "rehab." Although the owner has been ordered to return the windows to their original state, at the time I write this it has not yet happened.

We must commend the astute eyes and aggressive action of our local preservation activists, including Tom Florio, Don Ferguson and Laura Meyers, for their immediate efforts in bringing the situation of the non-permitted work to the attention of the proper authorities, and their subsequent diligence to have the issues properly addressed.

The larger challenge will be to identify other structures threatened by CRA's demise within our Historic West Adams boundaries, and to raise the funds necessary to research and nominate them for Historic Cultural Monument status (and/or incorporate the former CRA project areas into the City's HPOZs). This will be a huge undertaking on all levels. We have begun to lay out the structure for a major fundraising effort, and you will see in the coming months a common theme to our preservation and fundraising endeavors.

Our fundraising efforts will include an aggressive solicitation of corporate sponsorships; an outreach to the memberships of like-minded preservation organizations; as well as through WAHA's introduction in the soon-to-be-published iBook by Jett Low entitled *Untold LA*, which will showcase many of the wonderful historic structures of Historic West Adams. This project is a great and necessary opportunity for WAHA members to take an active part by joining this effort. I would encourage our members to offer their participation to the WAHA Preservation Committee, to support what will be a truly monumental undertaking.

John Patterson may be reached by e-mail at President@WestAdamsHeritage.org

Living History Tour *continued from page 1*

L.A.'s first lawn cemetery.

This year's tour commemorates not only Los Angeles's longtime role as the center of this country's entertainment industry, but also the roles several of these personages played in the larger history of civil rights. In addition, the tour memorializes the 150th anniversary of the Civil War (1861-1865).

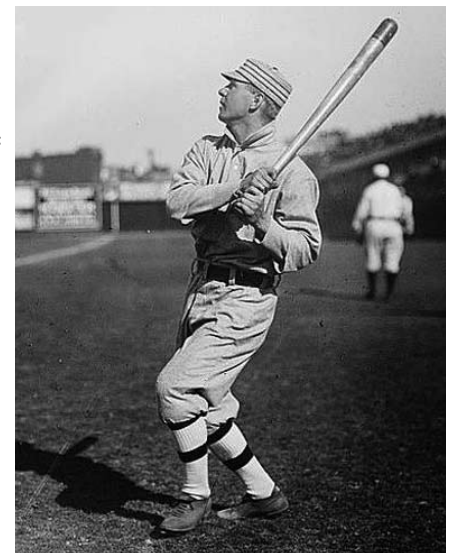
This year's portrayals include:

- Della Hogan Monroe, Marilyn Monroe's colorful grandmother; Mrs. Monroe had baby Norma Jean baptized at the Hawthorne Foursquare Church in 1926;
- Victor Dol, L.A.'s first chef trained in Paris, who opened an elegant French restaurant in 1876 that soon earned the nickname "Delmonico's of the West";
- Rita Carewe, a Jazz Age starlet and "Baby WAMPAS" (Western Association of Motion Picture Advertisers) winner who appeared in films with Delores del Rio, Edward Everett Horton, and Mary Pickford;
- Sadie Cole, a Fisk Jubilee singer and a civil rights activist who helped desegregate L.A.'s cafes and beaches;
- Byron Houck, baseball pitcher for the 1913 World Series Philadelphia A's, who later became Buster Keaton's cameraman on "The General." Houck was the Vernon Tigers' ace pitcher when the team was owned by Roscoe Fatty Arbuckle;
- Mildred Washington, a vaudeville dancer and choreographer who headlined at Sebastian's Cotton Club in Los Angeles;
- Harry Cooke, magician and Civil War Union Army "scout" who was America's first escape artist;
- Honorable Wu (Harry Gee Haw), Chinese-American actor, singer, dancer, and vaudeville impresario: "The Broadway Mandarin."

TICKET SALES/TOUR TIMES

Advance Reservations and Ticket Purchases Only -- No Walk-ins! The early morning tours are already SOLD OUT.

Tours depart approximately every 20-25 minutes, with the last tour at noon. Each tour has a limited number of spaces. The Living History Tour is a two-plus-hour docent-led walk through the cemetery, over uneven terrain; visitors are advised to wear appropriate clothing and walking shoes. Tickets: \$25 in advance, paid by September 24. \$35 after that, or on day of tour, if space is available (this entire tour often sells out.) Children under 10 attend free. Purchase tickets online at www.WestAdamsHeritage.org, or utilize the postcard/mail-in form if you prefer to send a check. For more information, e-mail tours@westadamsheritage.org. ●



Byron Houck at bat with the Philadelphia Athletics

Stepping Out

Briggs Residence Open House, Wednesday, October 3

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to answer questions, and as a bonus, some of the first floor of the adjoining MacGowan Residence will also be on view. This will be a rare opportunity to visit both the MacGowan and the Briggs Residences together.

Come celebrate.

There should be plenty of parking on the street.

Contact Carol Jones for further information: 323-737-4055 ext 1124 or carol@msia.org.

MSIA plays a major part in the stewardship of Los Angeles' historic monuments, and the organization reminds us that as a way of serving the community, the Guasti Villa at 3500 West Adams is open to the public for tours, labyrinth walks, and garden visits five days a week almost every week of the year. You can find the schedule of open hours and many free open events at <http://www.peacelabyrinth.org>. ●



The MacGowan Residence will also be open

WAHA Steps Out: A Bowling Night at the Midtown Lanes

Friday, September 21 – beginning at 6 p.m.

AMF Bowling Center, Midtown Lanes; 4645 Venice Blvd. (at San Vicente)

WAHA invites you to step back to the 1960s and Step Out for a fun night of bowling, socializing with your neighbors, and (if you want, no host) drinks at a vintage bar -- all in one great locale, the Midtown Lanes. We have reserved three bowling lanes, starting at 6 p.m. The evening is "no host" -- you'll need to rent your own bowling shoes, and pay the fees (together just \$16) if you bowl (but you can hang out with us for free!)



The AMF Midtown Lanes, built in 1961, offers traditional bowling on 24 lanes and also features Maria's Cafe, a classic coffee shop with terrazo floors that features traditional diner food plus Mexican and Southern specialties, not to mention breakfast that's served all day. If bowling is not your thing, come anyway: play a game of pool in the bar or just cheer the rest of us on. ●

Harvest Moon Fundraiser for Garden School Foundation

Sunday, September 23

4:30 p.m.

Historic home of Karen Haas and Paul Pratt, 2187 West 24th St. (Kinney Heights)

Please join fellow school-and-gardening enthusiasts for a beautiful evening under the Harvest Moon in support of garden-based education! The party will raise funds for the Garden School Foundation (GSF), a nonprofit dedicated to garden-based learning in outdoor classrooms. The Guest of Honor is Evan Kleiman, who, in addition to being the host of KCRW's "Good Food," has been an early and ardent supporter of GSF. Since its inception, this one-acre urban farm/classroom has been located at 24th Street Elementary School in the heart of West Adams. At the Harvest Moon celebration, guests will enjoy live music, delicious hors d'oeuvres, live and silent auctions, and tours of the 24th Street Elementary School gardens for early birds. Tickets: \$50 adults, \$25 children (age 15 and under); \$200 Sponsor.

Contact: Hilary Maybank, hwmaybank@earthlink.net, 213-434-4080; or visit www.gardenschoolfoundation.org for more information. ●

Around the House

The West Adams Time Bank

West Adams is now home to an innovative exchange group.

The West Adams Time Bank is an interconnected community of people who help each other by sharing their abilities, talents and experiences. By both giving and receiving, members learn to appreciate the value of each and every member and also come to believe in the value of their own contributions. When you provide a service for another member you earn one time credit for each hour you spend providing the service. You can then exchange each time credit you earn for an hour of service from someone else. Instead of separating the community into those who need and those who provide, the Time Bank recognizes that we all have needs and gifts to share.

The West Adams Time Bank is a part of the Arroyo S.E.C.O Network of Time Banks. Members of these Time Banks live in the following neighborhoods; Pasadena, Altadena, North East Los Angeles, Echo Park, Silverlake, Los Feliz, Frog Town, Lincoln Heights, Boyle Heights, Downtown Los Angeles, Westlake, Koreatown, and, of course, West Adams.

How to Join

To apply for membership to the Arroyo S.E.C.O. Network of Time Banks click here, go to <http://arroyoseco.timebanks.org/welcome> and click on the link: Apply for Membership

Register and fill out the on-line two page Application form. Once your application has been reviewed by your local Time Bank committee, a coordinator will contact you to inform you of the next steps, usually an interview or an orientation. Most neighborhoods review applications on a monthly basis. Thank you for your patience.

You are encouraged to read The Core Values of Time Banking which is found just below the Apply for Membership link.

The West Adams Time Bank is coordinated by ANNA member Kathie Adams. ●

*Article submitted by
Marianne Muellerleile*



UNNC

United Neighborhoods
NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL

MAKE A DIFFERENCE. HERE.

If you are at least 14 years old AND live, work, own property, own a business, go to school, worship, shop, or belong to an organization in the UNNC area, get involved in UNNC.

What is UNNC?

UNNC is your Neighborhood Council -- an elected board of 23 people who care about the community, representing our neighborhoods to L.A. City Council, agencies and departments.

UNNC helps make decisions about trees, parks and green space; youth and community activities; keeping neighborhoods clean and safe; helping bring beneficial shopping and business services to our area; maintain our historic neighborhoods; and gives members of the community a voice in making those decisions.



UNNC ELECTIONS Saturday, October 27, 2012

COME OUT AND VOTE

- NO Voter ID Required And NO Registration Required.
- Meet and Greet Candidates, October 25th 7PM - 9PM at Council District 10 Office: 1819 S. Western Avenue, 90006 (enter on Manhattan Place).
- Elections are on Saturday, October 27th, 10AM - 4PM at Council District 10 Office.

BE A CANDIDATE

- File to become a candidate between August 28th and September 27th.
- Learn about being a candidate on September 20th at the Candidate Information Session at the South Seas House: 2301 W. 24th Street, 90018.
- For details and to file as a candidate go to www.UNNC.org/elections OR call the Elections Hotline at **818-293-8683** (818-293-VOTE).

BE INVOLVED

- Attend UNNC meetings.
- Meetings are held the first Thursday of each month, at the Council District 10 Office: 1819 S. Western Avenue, 90006 (enter on Manhattan Place).
- Meetings begin at 6:30PM and refreshments are served.



The United Neighborhoods of the Historic Arlington Heights, West Adams and Jefferson Park Communities is a Certified Neighborhood Council of the City of Los Angeles. OUR VOICE • OUR CITY • OF NEIGHBORS • BY NEIGHBORS • FOR NEIGHBORS

www.UNNC.org • You can contact us by emailing president@UNNC.org or calling **323-731-8686**
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Preservation Matters

West Boulevard Bridge

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Passengers traveling beyond that would need to transfer to the rail line of another company. This was both expensive and unwieldy for those passengers. Street railways in Los Angeles in those days were anything but a safe investment, and one by one the small railways were acquired by larger companies, which were then able to standardize fares, timetables, track gauge, and routes, and make them more profitable.



What became the “Venice Short Line” (VSL) started in 1897 with a terminus at Hill and 4th Street in Downtown and extended along 16th Street (now Venice Boulevard) to the Vineyard Junction (where today Venice and San Vicente meet), from there traveling up to the Beverly Hills area. A few years later the line was extended, first to Ocean Park (Abbot Kinney’s first resort), and then, in 1903, directly to Venice City Hall and the Lagoon Line, just in time for the opening of the new resort.

Beginning in 1911 when Pacific Electric took over operation, the Venice Short Line continued to be a spectacular performer in transporting crowds to the shore. However, dense traffic encountered in Los Angeles and the rise of competing bus lines gradually caused patronage to drop. The oft proposed Vineyard Subway would probably have saved this line; without it, the eventual conversion to busses was inevitable. The VSL was the “big” line of the Western District. It was the shortest, most direct rail route to the western beaches and passenger traffic on good beach days reached the highest points recorded on the entire PE system. Had the Vineyard Subway been built, and had this line been four-tracked (as was intended), the Venice Short Line undoubtedly would have become the trunk line of a comprehensive rapid transit system for western Los Angeles. In 1913 the VSL served 4,777,000 riders, a figure that was not surpassed until 1920. After a decline in numbers for some years (that period saw the ascendance of the automobile), ridership climbed to and reached its peak at over 6 million in 1945.

By 1909 they were busily engaged in the extension of the Washington Boulevard line. Although one would like to believe that they were altruistically serving the Los Angeles traveling public, it is clear they had an ulterior motive, which was to market their new residential developments. The railroad business was profitable however, and Sherman, Clark, Huntington, and others became wealthy from it. When Lafayette Square and Victoria Park opened to some success, the Venice Short Line was more than justified—it was both necessary and successful. It became one of the most heavily traveled lines in the area. However, larger populations also caused increased problems, and thus the stage was set and events set in motion for what would eventually lead to the construction of the present day West Boulevard Bridge.

In particular the development of Lafayette Square played an enormous role in the story as it quite literally pushed the boundaries of residential communities further and further from the original Civic Center. Lafayette Square was and is an upscale residential park located in what was then called the “West End” of Los Angeles. Having purchased the land in 1902, George L. Crenshaw and his son, Charles R.L. Crenshaw, laid out several tracts, first along Crenshaw Blvd. They began selling lots first in Crenshaw Heights, probably in order to test the viability of such a far-flung neighborhood. Finally, in 1912, they laid out Lafayette Square. The subdivision and improvements included nine gateways marked by balustrades, 100 elegant electric streetlights, extensive landscaping and a central park modeled after the park in front of the Municipal Theatre in Rio de Janeiro. They called it Lafayette Square to honor a family name: the initial “L” in their names stood for “Lafayette.” (One of the streets in the development was called “Virginia” after George’s wife; the other street names continued a thematic association.) The subdivision officially opened on September 22, 1912 and the first residence was constructed in 1913. The Square soon became popular with developers as well as those intending to build for personal use.

The boundaries of the Square were Crenshaw (also residential at that time, part of the Crenshaw Boulevard and Crenshaw Heights Tracts) on the east, Washington on the south, West Boulevard on the west, and 16th Street on the north. West Boulevard was so named because that was then the western city limit. Beyond it were groves and vineyards—the remainder of the Nadeau Vineyard Rancho at the east end of what had been the Rancho Las Cienegas de la Tijera. 16th Street occupied what are now the southerly lanes of Venice Boulevard, occupied by small residences. The northerly (westbound) lanes of Venice were occupied by the Los Angeles Pacific Railway’s “Venice Short Line” although Venice was later widened and its course slightly altered.

The 16th Street (Venice) line carried passengers all the way to Venice, making stops along the way. One of those stops was Vineyard Junction, located approximately on the rear portion of the site of the current Lowe’s Home Improvement Center: near where Venice and San Vicente converge. The Vineyard power station was located in the area of what is now the rear portion of the Lowe’s parking structure, facing Venice Boulevard.

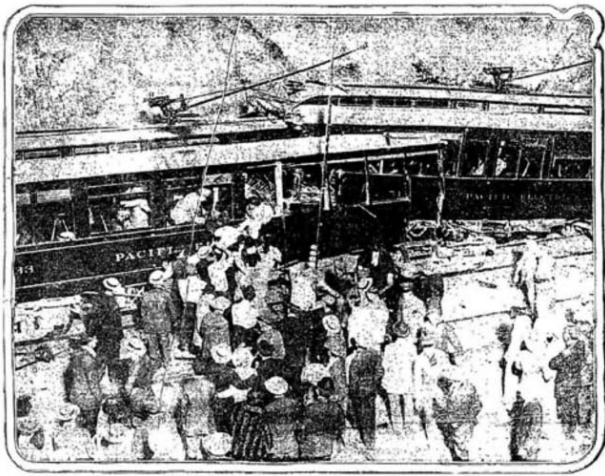
To the north lay the fledgling communities of Victoria Park, Hancock Park, Beverly Hills, and Hollywood. Automobile access was limited between the West End and those northern communities, and in particular, pedestrians were forced to cross the railroad tracks in order to cross 16th Street. Neighbors in the area had complained about the dangerous “death-trap” grade crossing to no avail.

On the evening of Sunday, July 13, 1913, a train was stopped at Vineyard Station. Another train was on approach. Both were eastbound, headed home to the city. It had been a warm weekend afternoon and throngs of people had gone to Venice to enjoy the beaches, restaurants, and other local entertainments. That popular resort had been open for less than 10 years and provided a welcome respite from the daily grind. The crowds that day were especially large and the trains back to

the city filled beyond capacity, but the mood was festive. The railway had added "special" or extra cars to accommodate the homeward bound patrons.

When the first train bound for the city reached Vineyard Junction it was forced to stop for an unusual length of time, due to an electrical wire which had fallen across the track. While that wire was deactivated and removed, some people disembarked and milled about on the platform while waiting for the train to continue. The second train, also inward bound from Venice, was on approach filled beyond capacity.

The flagman of train number one, knowing that the "Special" was coming behind them, walked back down the track to the west to alert the oncoming train. He claimed that he walked 900 feet west down the track, waving his lantern as a warning signal. It was after nine o'clock at night, dark, and he swung his lantern as a signal. He could have placed torpedoes on the track, but didn't. (A torpedo was a canister which, when placed on the track and crushed by the wheels of the train, produced a loud audible bang. This was a common safety measure designed to get the attention of the conductor who might have looked away from or missed the visual signals.) The oncoming train conductor failed to notice either the flagman or the "slow board," and because the approach to the station rounded a curve, didn't see the first train still standing in the station. In addition, it was reported that some pranksters on train number one took advantage of the flagman's absence to blow the train's whistle a few times causing further confusion. The motorman of the special did hear the whistle and assumed that the train which preceded his was pulling out of the station and all was clear for him to enter. Train number two was estimated to be traveling at approximately 50 mph and did not slow down on approach to the station. At 9:40 p.m. it slammed into the rear of train number one, telescoping the three cars.



The great crash

This confluence of events caused an unheralded disaster: a spectacular and deadly crash in 1913 in which fifteen people were killed and at least 125 injured, perhaps some of them fatally. Over 1,000 people were involved.

Among the first people on the scene was Dr. Harry G. Marxmiller, who lived at the corner of 16th and West Boulevard. Dr. Marxmiller had practiced medicine in Los Angeles since 1906. From his house atop the bluff he saw the sparks and the flash of light from the original power line problem and shortly thereafter heard the crash as train number two plowed into train number one. For over two hours Dr. Marxmiller was the only professional on the scene in that inaccessible location, far removed

from the center of town and medical attention. Dr. Marxmiller testified at the inquest that the Pacific Electric ran trains at much too great a speed through that area and said that he had been among a group of residents who had previously complained to the City Council and the Railway company about the excessive speed; he said that they had often remarked that it was a "wonder" an accident had not happened before.

The Public Utilities Commission met on July 15, 1913 and called for a conference of the Mayor, Board of Public Utilities, representatives of the City Council and Board of County Supervisors, management of the Pacific Electric Railway in order to create a definite plan for immediate safeguards to the public. On September 14, 1915, Lafayette Square residents officially petitioned the city and the railroad for a viaduct crossing at West Boulevard. The city agreed to study the matter.

The Lafayette Square resident's formal petition to the Public Utilities Board pointed out that without a crossing connecting West Boulevard with Sherman Drive at Sixteenth Street they "have no direct contact with the central part of the city." Children had to walk up to two miles to school in order not to have to cross the tracks. Further, many stores refused to make deliveries because of the distance. They requested a grade crossing at which the train would stop for pedestrian/vehicular traffic. Chief Traffic Engineer Howell stated that such a request was impractical due to the 3% grade. Howell instead presented plans for a viaduct over the tracks which were approved by the Board and forwarded to the City Council.

However, on September 24, 1915, the Public Works Committee reaffirmed its earlier report and sent it back to the full City Council. This was despite a separate report by the Public Utilities Board which stated in part that the proposed grade crossing "is so situated that it will be the worst death trap within the limits of the city." They presented to the full City Council alternative plans for a viaduct to be built over the rail lines, connecting West Boulevard on the south with Sherman Drive on the north. Residents of the area had already told the City Council that they would withdraw their request for a grade crossing in favor of the viaduct. The proposal put forth by the Utilities Board suggested a payment schedule for construction of a viaduct, the total cost of which would be \$40,000: 50% (\$20,000) would be paid by the Pacific Electric, 25% (\$10,000) by the City, and 25% by property assessment. Some felt that the Pacific Electric

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Company should bear the entire cost. If the City Council were to decide in favor of the grade crossing, the Pacific Electric Company threatened to appeal to the State Railroad Commission, precipitating a lengthy legal battle. The Utilities Commission stated that in the event of such an appeal, it would appear before the Railroad Commission and contend that it has no jurisdiction in this matter. It was further stated that such a matter would take at least two years.

There continued to be delays in construction of the viaduct, including the interruption by the Great War (World War I). Finally, in January 1920, construction began on a wooden bridge crossing. Lafayette Square would finally be linked to West Boulevard and provide direct access to West

Hollywood, Beverly Hills and other north west communities. It was stated at the time that “the owners of Lafayette Square had recently dedicated to the city the necessary land required in connection with the building of the viaduct.” The construction of this bridge, albeit of the most basic kind, was instrumental in the further development of Los Angeles to the west, offering new opportunities along with access. But while urban growth demands amenities, so infrastructure must also keep up with growth.

Eventually, a series of easements was agreed to between the Pacific Electric Railway Company and the City of Los Angeles. The main easement, recorded on December 14, 1916, was to allow the construction of a bridge connecting West Boulevard on the south and Sherman Dr. on the north. The terms of this easement called for the construction of “a first-class construction to be of concrete and none other.” It allowed for the city to construct and maintain all aspects the bridge, and it also required that upon completion any remaining excavation should be either removed from the site or compacted so as to prevent any deterioration.

Finally, on July 6, 1932, the Board of Public Works finally awarded a contract to the Lynch-Cannon Engineering Company for construction of a new bridge—something more efficient and modern in both technology and design. The plans called for a reinforced concrete structure with a 50-foot roadway at a cost of \$59,986.72.

This bridge, as with the original wooden bridge, connected West Boulevard, which lay to the south of 16th Street (Venice) with Sherman Drive, which was a short road from the Venice Short Line to Pico on the north. Sherman Drive was essentially the rear entry to Victoria Park Circle, as Lafayette Road, one block east of West Blvd. was the service entrance to Lafayette Square.

The Pacific Electric Railway eventually became a wholly owned subsidiary the Southern Pacific Railroad. Eventually as various bus lines were created and automobiles became more prevalent the railways and in particular the Venice Short Line offered less frequent service and eventually was discontinued in March of 1948. Final abandonment of rail service occurred on September 1, 1950 when busses were substituted; rails were removed with the exception of a short piece of the inbound main adjacent to the Culver City Station.

The West Boulevard Bridge is an important reminder of the many incidents and circumstances which contributed to the development of the city of Los Angeles and in particular the transportation patterns which in turn also contributed to urban development. It was a transformative moment, politically, mechanically, and culturally.

The design of the bridge is a very pleasing combination of classical elements integrated with the Art Deco style. Its distinctive style and prominent location, its association with notable figures from the early years of the city, as well as its dramatic story, are compelling reasons for its preservation and recognition as a Historic Cultural Monument. One might even take the view that it is that most important of monuments: a headstone of sorts, in recognition and memory of the many people who died in the Great Wreck of 1913. Although they gave their lives unwillingly that night, the incident galvanized citizens, civic, business, and government entities to take actions which no doubt resulted in saving many more lives over the ensuing years. There had been previous train crashes, wrecks, and accidents, but none that resulted in such a terrible loss of life. It was not until the night of July 13, 1913 that sufficient thought was given to instituting greater safety measures. Those safety measures resulted in the bridge which, by offering a new convenience, also generated new avenues for business and entertainment. The bridge provided access between residents of the area located south of Venice Blvd. and the burgeoning business districts of Wilshire Boulevard and Hollywood. The bridge has acquired an iconic status, as it marks the western entry to the West Adams district. The bridge is not only a connection between communities but it is also a tangible connection between past and present and represents a turning point in the growth and development of the city.

One of the thoughts expressed in the aftermath of the wreck and subsequent investigations, was the hope that this kind of incident would never happen again—that the new safety measures would prevent such tragedies. Indeed, it would be many years before something of the same magnitude would happen in Los Angeles, when a Metrolink train and a Union Pacific train crashed in Chatsworth on September 12, 2008. Twenty-five people were killed and many others injured. That incident was also the result of operator error—inattention to the signals, also on a curved section of track. As long as human beings operate large, heavy, dangerous equipment, there will always be the danger of serious accidents. More ironic is the fact that the new Exposition Line has many grade crossings, seemingly in disregard of historic precedent, if not railroad regulations.



Preservation Matters

Some may argue that there are other bridges, in particular those which connect downtown with East Los Angeles, which are more attractive in design or more impressive feats of engineering, however the West Boulevard Bridge is unique in that it is an urban bridge which connects relatively close communities which would otherwise remain disconnected and isolated. It's lesser size and perhaps more subtle design in no way detracts from its significance. Rather this bridge is the connective tissue in the story of urban development, in which real estate transactions, architecture, transportation, and social conditions, and tragedy came together and altered conditions, and in so doing changed local history. ●

EDITOR'S NOTE: At press time, the HCM designation of the West Boulevard Bridge was scheduled for a final determination hearing at a meeting of the Cultural Heritage Commission, on Thursday, October 4, at 10 a.m. WAHA members are encouraged to support the nomination by attending the hearing or by sending an e-mail advocating designation to Lambert.Giessinger@lacity.org.



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Preservation Matters

Swooning Over Googie in West Adams

Standing on the corner of Washington Boulevard and 10th Avenue is the only “Googie” style building in the West Adams District. The Stan’s Kite Coffee Shop (now Vintage Hollywood) building was designed in 1964, and is one of our community’s significant historic/cultural resources, notable for its Atomic Age architecture, as well as its representation of broad patterns of local history, including its association with the boxer Sugar Ray Robinson’s Youth Foundation, and the center’s role in the West Adams District after the Watts Riots of 1965. The Kite/Vintage Hollywood building is also a unique example of the work of its architect, Robert O. Clements. For all of these reasons, it meets the qualifications for designation and has been nominated as a Los Angeles Historic Cultural Monument.

The restaurant is an excellent example of the “Googie” type of architecture, which was pioneered here in Southern California and became an important architectural reference. Googie architecture was born of the post-WWII car-culture and thrived in the 1950s and 1960s. Bold angles, colorful signs, plate glass, sweeping cantilevered roofs, and pop-culture imagery captured the attention of drivers on adjacent streets. Bowling alleys looked like Tomorrowland. Coffee shops looked like something in a Jetsons cartoon. This example of Googie-ness has been a diner, a comedy club, and, now, a small cabaret theatre venue and collection of memorabilia devoted to Black Hollywood.

The Kite is a rare example in this community and represents the relationship between the style and the neighborhoods in the same way that neighborhood movie theaters were important expressions of theater design, different from the larger, more showy first-run theaters. Both play an important role in fleshing out the story of architectural, social, and economic development.

This establishment was the second (and last) of what was to be a chain of restaurants. The original was called Stan’s Kite on Vermont Avenue near 92nd Street. That building has recently been undergoing renovation after standing empty for many years. This building



was simply called “Kite Coffee Shop” to distinguish it from the original. It opened for business in 1967. In the mid 1970s it was sold and renamed the Safari, then the Eat Shop. It closed in the 1980s and remained shuttered for many years. In the mid-1990s there was a brief attempt to re-open the building as a comedy venue called “Mixed Nuts” which did not last long. A few years ago it was turned into a nightclub and small “museum” called Vintage Hollywood.

The entire shopping center complex, including the coffee shop, is the work of architect Robert O. Clements, son of noted architect Stiles O. Clements. Stiles Clements is known for his Art Deco designs of the 1920s and ‘30s.

In 1941, Clements’ son, Robert, graduated from the School of Architecture at University of Southern California. After serving in the Marine Corps, he returned to Los Angeles and in 1945 joined his father’s firm. Although his father’s

name remained on the business, Robert became chief designer for the firm and assumed its management, with a large staff of architects and engineers. Under the name Stiles and Robert Clements and then Robert Clements and Associates, a wide variety of projects were designed, including commercial, industrial, retail -- everything except residential. The firm retained a full-time staff person whose sole responsibility was Business Development and Public Relations. The firm’s aim was “to fulfill the building plans of any client.” Many of their employees -- licensed architects -- were in charge of individual projects as the firm reached out to secure commissions for a wide range of projects, not only in Los Angeles County, but to other States, as well. The firm’s name is on projects in Pittsburgh, Seattle, Portland and Phoenix. All of these are in the latter part of Stiles Clements’ life, after he and his son became partners.

As a teenager, Robert O. Clements, Jr. worked in the family business and spent long hours with both his father and grandfather. He recalls that his grandfather, although retired, would visit the office as a place to, in modern parlance, “hang out.” He would arrive by chauffeur-driven limousine from his home in Beverly Hills, but he did not engage in design work or critique the work of others. Robert Clements Jr. recalls that from the time Robert, Sr. returned from his military service in late 1945, he assumed responsibility as the chief designer for the firm and was solely responsible for design work after that time. Stiles O. Clements aged, retired and eventually passed away on January 16, 1966 at the age of 82. Robert Clements, Sr. died in

1987. Due to confusion with the way the names appeared on the business and therefore on various building permits, several commissions have been incorrectly attributed to Stiles Clements which were actually the work of Robert Clements the senior.

The work of Robert O. Clements is largely unrecognized by architectural historians and aficionados because they have focused so heavily on Stiles O. Clements. However, on smaller buildings Robert O. Clements exhibits real talent, producing designs that are modern, elegant, and engaging. Certainly the design for the Kite is imaginative and made good use of its corner location. Research confirms that this was the only coffee shop design by the Clements firm, making it a unique representation of their architectural oeuvre.

The shopping center as a whole is connected with broad patterns of history and cultural heritage. It is an example of a type and represents patterns of business—and by extension, social and economic—patterns of development in the community. Furthermore, if we examine the larger backdrop of conditions in Los Angeles in 1965, it is clear that the single most influential event was the Watt's Riots. The aftermath of the riots left an atmosphere of fear and mistrust with regard to the area (valid or not), leading to abandonment of wide swaths of communities. Many types of businesses were unable to obtain insurance due to "redlining" schemes. Others were unable to obtain small business loans or other standard types of financial assistance.

It was in this climate that Washington Square Shopping Center opened, and was unable to successfully compete for up-market tenants and establish itself as a premier shopping destination for the neighborhood, which was clearly the original intention. Among the original tenants were the Salon de Beauté, Sears Shoe Repair, National Dollar Store, Suzy Laundromat and Suzy White Clean Town, His Shop—Men's Clothing, and Thrifty Drug Store. The anchor tenant was the Food Giant market, which later became a Ralph's Market, a Ranch Market, and now. Unable to fulfill its initial promise, the owners made little effort to maintain or improve the center, even as the surrounding community did revitalize. However, this neglect also resulted in the center remaining relatively unchanged from its initial design.

The Sugar Ray Robinson Connection

The Kite/Vintage Hollywood piece of the complex is also associated with Sugar Ray Robinson, who is considered by many authorities to have been the best fighter in history. The professional boxer was six times a world champion: once as a welterweight (147 pounds), from 1946 to 1951, and five times as a middleweight (160 pounds), between 1951 and 1960. Robinson's performances in the welterweight and middleweight divisions prompted sportswriters to create "pound for pound" rankings, where they compared fighters regardless of weight. He was inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame in 1990.

He won 89 amateur fights without defeat, fighting first under his own name and then as Ray Robinson, using the amateur certificate of another boxer of that name in order to qualify for a bout. He won Golden Gloves titles as a featherweight in 1939 and as a lightweight in 1940. Then Robinson won 40 consecutive professional fights before losing to Jake LaMotta in one of their six battles. He had ups and a few downs in his career, and Robinson continued to fight until late 1965, when he was 45 years old. In 201 professional bouts, he had 109 knockouts. He suffered only 19 defeats, most of them when he was past 40. His outstanding

ability and flamboyant personality made him a hero of boxing fans throughout the world. In retirement he appeared on television and in motion pictures and, while living in an apartment building on Adams Boulevard in 1969, he formed a youth foundation.

The former boxer established the headquarters of his Sugar Ray Robinson Youth Foundation in this same structure, right next door to the coffee shop. The Foundation's purpose (then and now) was to work with underprivileged youths to build self-esteem by providing year-round program activities related to sports, fine arts and the performing arts. The Foundation's work reflects the vision of its founder, the late prize fighter Sugar Ray Robinson, who said: "By offering youth opportunities to express themselves through sports, artistic activities and cultural enrichment, we can get to the children who are not reached by other methods and help keep them out of trouble." ●

Editor's Note: This article excerpts from Mitzi March Mogul's nomination of the Kite Coffee Shop for HCM designation and WAHA's West Adams Landmarks of African American History (available for purchase at www.WestAdamsHeritage.org). This building is also slated for a Final Determination Hearing at the Cultural Heritage Commission on October 4.





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Community Matters

New Community Plan

continued from page 4

The Transportation Improvement and Mitigation Program (TIMP) for the West Adams-Baldwin Hills-Leimert New Community Plan (NCP) will identify transportation programs needed to accommodate land use patterns/densities and population and employment growth anticipated under the NCP, and the resultant increase in vehicle trips projected by the year 2030.

Transportation Programs considered include:

• Plans and Strategies for Public Transit Improvements,

The West Adams Community Plan Area can be characterized as a transit rich community with numerous Metro Local and Metro Rapid buses passing through the CPA. The Plan Area is unique in that residents will benefit from not one but two light rail transit lines traversing the Plan Area by the year 2018. Proposed changes in land use and urban design as part of the TIMP for the New Community Plan are expected to encourage transit ridership in concert with the provision of safe, convenient, accessible, and easily identifiable transit locations also playing a major role in encouraging and facilitating transit ridership.

• Transportation Demand Management (TDM),

A TDM program is a set of strategies, measures and incentives to encourage residents to walk, bicycle, use public transportation, carpool or use other alternatives to driving alone. The West Adams Community Plan will describe TDM strategies actively being pursued within the Plan Area as well as provide a list of recommendations to be considered as part of a comprehensive TDM Program.

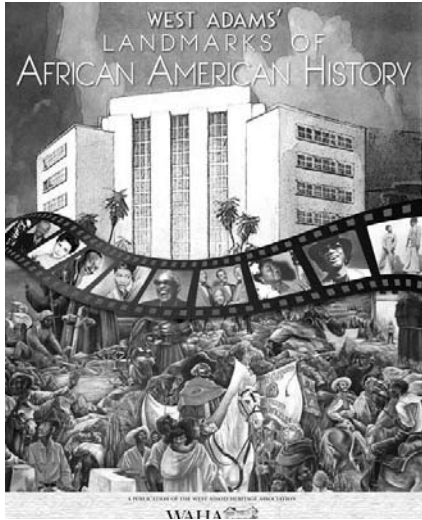
• Residential Neighborhood Traffic Management,

Traffic intrusion onto residential streets by commuters seeking to bypass congested major and secondary highways is of increasing concern and the Plan will outline several steps that can be taken in order to develop and implement Neighborhood Traffic Management Plans.

**• Highway and Street Infrastructure Improvements, and
• Street System classification changes.**

The West Adams-Baldwin Hills-Leimert Community Plan Area is comprised of mature communities with established structure setback lines along major and secondary arterials. Major street widenings are not likely to be feasible in most areas and therefore, the Plan seeks to implement a series of Modified Street Standards that reflect the presence of historic buildings, relationship to transit stations and other local conditions. ●

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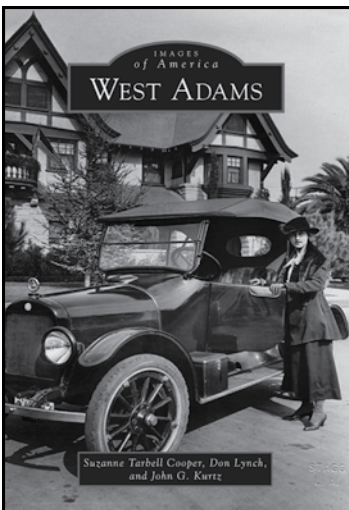
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Upcoming Events

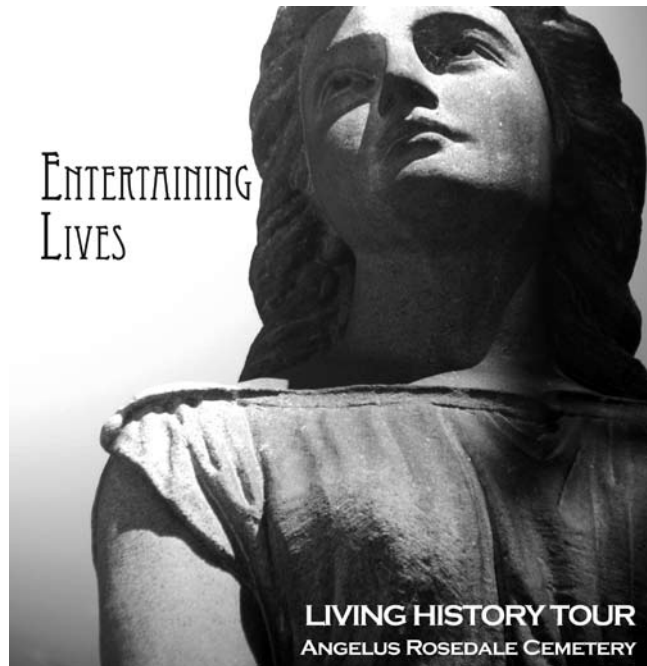
SEPTEMBER

Friday, September 21, 6 p.m.:

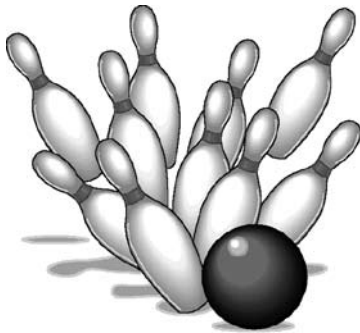
WAHA Steps Out to the Midtown Lanes! Bowling, dining, socializing -- please do join us (no host). 4645 Venice Blvd. at San Vicente. (See page 4)

Saturday, September 29:

History Comes to Life: Annual Living History Tour at Angelus Rosedale Cemetery. Meet characters whose "Entertaining Lives" still resonate today, including L.A.'s first Paris-trained French chef, actors, dancers and even Marilyn Monroe's grandmother! (See page 1).



SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 29



LET'S GO BOWLING - WAHA STEPS OUT TO THE MIDTOWN LANES, FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 21

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