

# West Adams Matters

## WAHA Presents 2013 Martin Eli Weil Award to Laura Meyers

by Jean Frost

WAHA members and friends gathered on Sunday morning May 5 for the Annual WAHA Preservation Brunch and to present the Martin Weil Award. The award recognizes the legacy of preservation architect Martin Weil and recognizes an individual who has by their endurance and activism furthered the cause of historic preservation in WAHA's neighborhoods. It is the highest award WAHA presents for preservation advocacy.

The 2013 Martin Weil Award was presented to longtime WAHA member and activist, Laura Meyers. Laura has been a key WAHA advocate and a member of the WAHA Preservation Committee. She has nominated, on behalf of WAHA and others, many historic cultural monuments and National Register listings. In accepting the award, Laura stressed that many efforts were successful and achieved, not solely by her effort, but as part of a team. "It takes a village to do historic preservation" she remarked.

As WAHA members, friends and guests shared a continental breakfast at the charming and beautifully restored Italianate Victorian, the Brown-Gorsline

(continued on page 8)



2013 Martin Weil Award winner Laura Meyers, flanked by WAHA Preservation Chair Jean Frost (far left), former Cultural Heritage Commissioner Helen Madrid-Worthen and WAHA President John Patterson.

## WAHA's Warriors by Helen Madrid-Worthen, former Cultural Heritage Commissioner

Helen Madrid-Worthen was the featured speaker at WAHA's annual Preservation Brunch. She shared her experiences and insights of a youth spent in the West Adams District (before it was known as the "Historic West Adams District") and her years volunteering on the Los Angeles Cultural Heritage Commission:

Thank you for inviting me to this special WAHA celebration on the happy conclusion of the Brown-Gorsline house becoming the #1021 historical monument for the City of the Angels! I see from some of the material shared with me the meticulous research and loving attention to detail by many interested parties that went into this successful nomination. As a former Cultural Heritage Commissioner, I'm very appreciative and congratulate your dedicated efforts that resulted in this monument designation. It is a great pleasure for me to come kind of full circle back to visit an area that was home to my family from the late '40s until my mom, the last to leave the West Adams area, moved out in 1990.

I'd like to reflect a bit of what being here today means to me and share what I remember of this, my old neighborhood. I was born in Los Angeles "lo these many years ago," but my family moved from the area to Mexico where my dad was originally from, when I was about two years old. We did not return to L.A. until about 1949. At the age of 12, though

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## WAHA's Annual Patriotic Picnic

Thursday, July 4th

11:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

**Across the front lawns of 2173, 2179 and 2203 West 20th St.  
(Western Heights)**

Please don your patriotic best (red, white, and/or blue), and join WAHA at our annual All-American 4th of July party and picnic.

Food. Fun. Patriotic music, a jumper for the kids and fun for the whole family.

Our gracious hosts are Dan and Anne Hakes, Chris Carlson and Demetrius Pohl, and Natalie Neith.

As always, Wa-hot dogs (and hamburgers) will be on the grill, cold drinks are on the house, and the Potluck Picnic IS ON YOU — please bring salads, main dishes, desserts, or fruits to share (each adult should try to bring enough for 10 people, and let's avoid food that will melt on a summer day! If you prefer a different meat, please bring it cooked.) ●

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**CELEBRATE THE 4TH OF JULY WITH WAHA!**

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## WAHA Ice Cream Social Set for Sunday, August 18: Call for Volunteers

Put on your summer whites or Victorian-inspired attire and join WAHA for an afternoon (2-5 p.m.) of ice cream and other sweets, old-fashioned entertainments, and visiting with neighbors.

This is always one of WAHA's most popular events. Of course, we need volunteers. If you would like to donate cakes for the Cake Walk or baked goodies to eat with the ice cream, please contact Suzie Henderson at [events@westadamsheritage.org](mailto:events@westadamsheritage.org). We look forward to a lovely afternoon of genteel delights. ●

## Annual Living History Tour Plans Are Underway — Helping Hands Are Needed for September 28 Event!

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. Among the personages to be portrayed this year is Jennie Bovard (pictured right), USC's first female professor. Visitors also learn the history of this cemetery, and the role it has played in the lives of generations of Angelenos.

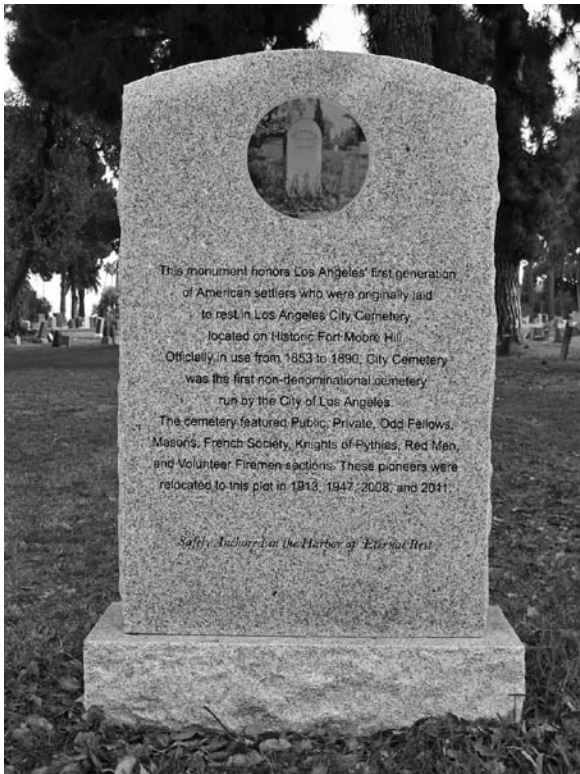
This year's tour is slated for **Saturday, September 28**, and we invite your participation now to help organize the event.

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, also organize the tour itself, with all the myriad accompanying tasks.

There will be a few random meetings scheduled in July, with a more regular schedule of meetings in August and September.

Would you like to help?

Please contact Laura Meyers at [lauramink@aol.com](mailto:lauramink@aol.com) or 323-737-6146, or write [tours@westadamsheritage.org](mailto:tours@westadamsheritage.org). ●



## *President's Message* by John Patterson

I'm very pleased to welcome two new members to WAHA's Board of Directors, Georgia Toliver and Harold Smith. It is very gratifying that two long-time members have been compelled to step forward to support our efforts to promote WAHA as well as share in the responsibilities of managing our wonderful neighborhood organization. I also want to thank Eric Bronson for his years of dedicated service to WAHA, and wish him well as he moves on to tending the family farm in Michigan.

We are about to reach a major milestone - the 30th anniversary of WAHA's founding! Much has been accomplished during these past three decades, and much remains to be done in the years ahead. One of our biggest challenges will be to identify and encourage the next generation of preservationists from amongst the ranks of our neighborhood residents. I am very encouraged to share with you that our Membership Committee has been successfully revitalized over the past couple of months, and that you will be hearing much more from them in the weeks ahead as we strive to significantly improve our communications and interactions with our individual members and families.

We have much to look forward to as we approach our 30th Anniversary celebration, not the least of which will be a soon-to-be-revealed revitalization of the WAHA website!! We are also renewing our dedication to, and expanding, our focus on West Adams' cultural heritage, with planned further research, events and the publication of a second edition of WAHA's "West Adams' Landmarks of African American History."

We also face numerous preservation challenges in our neighborhood, especially with the demise of the CRA (Community Redevelopment Agencies) that will no longer offer even a modicum of protection for some of West Adams' most vulnerable sites. It will be up to us to step forward to fill in this gap, and we will need assistance from you, our determined WAHA members, to assist our Preservation Committee in facing this challenge. We're laying the groundwork for preservationists' recruitment and training seminars to provide the necessary tools for this coordinated project. We will look forward to having you join us in that effort.

*John Patterson may be reached by e-mail at [President@WestAdamsHeritage.org](mailto:President@WestAdamsHeritage.org)*



### **In Memoriam: Maggi Fajnor (1944-2013)**

Maggi Fajnor, a devoted advocate for the North University Park and West Adams communities, longtime WAHA member, historic preservation activist, and a founder of the community stakeholder participation organization PlanCheckNC, lost her courageous battle with cancer on June 5.

Born the oldest of five children, Maggi grew up in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. In the late 1960s, she moved to Los Angeles with her first husband, where she subsequently earned her Bachelor's degree from UCLA, and Master's degree in urban planning from USC, all while raising their young daughter, Rebecca. For many years, Maggi worked for various planning firms on several high profile projects, including the inception of Los Angeles' first Metro Rail line, Staples Center, and Hollywood & Highland.

After retiring from professional urban planning, Maggi devoted herself to empowering neighborhoods Citywide to engage with City government through community-based planning. She was an early and active participant in the grassroots Empowerment Congress established by then-Council District 8 Councilmember Mark Ridley-Thomas and was an original elected member of her local Neighborhood Council, NANDC. She founded PlanCheckNC to help educate and empower neighborhood stakeholders and promote participation in neighborhood planning and land use issues throughout the City.

She was named the 2006 Pioneer Woman awardee for Council District 8 by Councilmember Bernard C. Parks and was a long-time member of the North University Park Design Review Board.

"Maggi was a gracious, feisty and dedicated Neighborhood Council leader who helped build PlanCheckNC into a highly respected organization in the City. By connecting and educating Neighborhood Councils on planning and land use issues, PlanCheckNC is now considered by the Planning Department to be their main conduit to Neighborhood Councils," said Grayce Liu, General Manager, Department of Neighborhood Empowerment. "She will be fondly remembered and missed."

The Los Angeles Planning Department also posted a remembrance: "It is with sadness that we learned of the passing of Maggi Fajnor, one of our South L.A. CPAC members, and an active member of our South L.A. Community for many years. She was an amazing woman who worked tirelessly to address many issues facing South L.A. as well as citywide. Maggi, always a pleasure to work with, was truly passionate about improving the quality of life for the residents of South L.A."

Maggi is survived by her husband Craig, daughter Rebecca (Hugues) Marchand; sister Mimi Duffy; brothers Harold (Linda) Hofsommer, Ken (Mary Carla) Hofsommer, and Bill Hofsommer; in-laws John and Carolyn Fajnor; sister-in-law Lisa Fajnor, and many wonderful nieces and nephews.

A family service was held on June 8th at the historic Angelus-Rosedale Cemetery. A celebration of Maggi's life will take place at a later date. Donations may be made in Maggi's memory to the American Brain Tumor Association at <http://www.abta.org/>. ●

[Editor's Note: Please go to page 9 to read an article Maggi wrote in 2010, when we learned of the appointment of a then-new Planning Director, Michael Logrande.]

# Preservation Matters

## Plaque Envy

by *Ulrick Theer*

As residents of Historic West Adams, my wife and I couldn't help but feel a certain twinge, a kind of vague unease resolving into downright envy when, upon visiting an older home belonging to a friend or trekking through one of the neighborhood's many historic tours, we would notice one. Burnished by time. Quietly opulent. Radiant with gentility. A historic plaque. A statement of worth. A glorious proclamation: I – this building – am...(hush of awe, please!)...a Monument.

Why such heightened sensitivity? A few years earlier, the two of us had purchased a bungalow we regarded as historic. It was built in 1911, had the type of external architecture books call Craftsman but, we were forced to admit, had an interior which had been somewhat altered by previous owners. Well, not altered exactly. What was the word our well-informed, architecturally-schooled friends used? "Gutted." Since we didn't shrink from challenges, the two of us spent six years restoring this house to a historically accurate state, what our real estate agent called an "artful reproduction." Though our feelings were stung by this description, it was still home to us, we loved it, and we were never leaving. Sensing an opening, our agent offered us an opportunity to buy a REAL historic home, one whose architectural features had not been altered in the least. Rebuffing him at first, we mulled the opportunity over, agreed we'd NEEEEVER be baited by such a ploy, then shamelessly jumped at the chance.

The previous owners of our new historic home had known about the "monumenting" process but eventually rejected the idea, for various reasons. We had no such qualms. Our spirits soared at the thought that we too might join the ranks of those living in monuments. People With Plaques. Following a timid course, we made inquiries and discovered that having a house monumented by a professional, uh, monumenter could be pretty costly. Since my wife and I were both momentarily out of work and both relished challenges, we cleared our schedules (psychologically speaking) and took it on.

In school, my wife had been an anthropology major while I pursued philosophy, so a love of research (her) coupled with a sublime disregard for practicality (me) came to us quite naturally. We spent a couple of months in Los Angeles' main public library turning up one obscure fact after another about the owners of our house, the architects, and the cultural and architectural climate in turn-of-the-century Los Angeles. There were no uninteresting facts, only amazing, wonderful, and astounding ones.

The application for the status of Historic Cultural Monument requires an applicant to select a relevant category of Significance among: Distinctive Example of Architecture, or Constructed by a Noteworthy Architect, or Inhabited by Historic Personages, or the Site of Historic Events. We were beside ourselves with joy. Our house was all of these! And then some!

Our home had been built by Michael Shannon, a retired cop. But not just any cop. In the 1880s, he was Los Angeles' first traffic cop! We found ancient newspaper interviews in which he described his activities in detail. His mandate was to ensure that horses walked through his intersection, never cantered, never trotted. A violator would be pulled ruthlessly off his mount. Such was the breadth and scale of Shannon's fame, that the intersection he ruled (Temple and Spring) was known as Shannon's Point. His wife, Nellie Shannon (*née* Holmes), was one of Los Angeles' first woman real estate entrepreneurs. She was successful enough to have paid for our house; her name was on the 1909 deed. There were regular notices in newspapers from the 1920's of meetings of various literary societies – which she chaired – and of gracious little teas in our house. Here were significant events indeed!

Then there was the son. As a teenager at the turn of the century, Michael Francis Shannon won an oratorical competition (the subject was *Ben Hur*) and was profiled by the *L.A. Examiner*. Later, he was a Deputy District Attorney who prosecuted movie moguls like Sam Goldwyn. After turning to private practice, he specialized in celebrity divorces, some so infamous his name regularly made the papers. He had a flair for the dramatic, once flogging himself in court to prove a client charged with beating a small child could not have done harm. In middle age, Michael Francis Shannon campaigned for and became Grand Exalted Ruler of the Elks, a feat with no modern equivalent but sufficiently noteworthy in 1934 to be celebrated at a grand ball attended by L.A.'s mayor, California's governor and two thousand assorted notables.

Our architects, Train and Williams, had constructed much of early 20<sup>th</sup> century downtown, including the Los Angeles Stock Exchange. They had laid out USC and redesigned Angel's Flight and while their names had none of the lasting luster of Greene and Greene or John C. Austin, history buffs and fanatics who obsessed over Los Angeles' architectural trivia certainly knew who they were.



When we had assembled these remarkable facts and carefully photographed our home's well-preserved historic details, we were put on a schedule to appear before the Cultural Heritage Commission. We had created a compelling and wonderfully detail-rich Power Point presentation which I volunteered to deliver. Ordinarily, this would be

*This article first appeared in WAHA's 25th Anniversary issue of WAHA Matters, in May 2008. WAHA hopes that in this, our 30th Anniversary year, many of our members would pursue Historic Cultural Monument status for their own home and/or one of West Adams' historic places.*



# Preservation Matters

done by a polished professional but, funds being tight, we went with me. I'd condensed my presentation to a brisk twenty minutes and could not contain my dismay when on the tenth floor of City Hall in front of all five commissioners and numerous historians and preservationists, the President of the Historic Commission wearily asked when I might finish. I had just gotten to my photos of the Shannon family grave, surrounded by trees and charmingly set on a lovely rise in Inglewood Cemetery. It had been hard to locate.

Gulping, I wrapped it up. The Commissioners sighed audibly.

Three months later we received a letter. We were now Los Angeles Historic Cultural Monument No. 885. After a few moments of awe in which the enormity of what we'd accomplished sank in, my wife and I did the obligatory verbal review. We recounted for each other the hundreds of hours of library research, the drives crisscrossing downtown in a systematic fashion, tracking down every Train and Williams building, extant or demolished, the phone calls to the USC School of Architecture, the visits to the Los Angeles Police Department's Museum (to identify a very young Michael Shannon in their archives), the hours and hours spent photographing every detail of the house (doorknobs, wainscoting, crown moldings) and then we fell silent, locked eyes with the kind of steely kinship common to those who've walked through fire together and my wife blurted: "We need that plaque."

Two months later, it arrived. My wife photographed me opening the box, removing it, cradling it. Interesting side note: weeks earlier, I'd had a phone call from the Cultural Heritage Commission's resident Historian politely inquiring where I intended to mount our plaque. "Next to the front door," I said. "Left side or right?" he asked. "Right," I said tentatively. "Fine," he said skeptically. I was left with a lingering unease.

Time passed. Both of us still had time on our hands. Too much time. "You know what?" I said one day after a long and thoughtful silence, "loads of people have what we have, an HCM plaque. That's really just a local accomplishment. But how many people...?"

I paused for effect.

"...have a National Register plaque?"

"Where would you mount it?" my wife asked, immediately getting to the point, the only point which mattered. In this, she and I were in agreement. Position was everything. "Above the HCM," I said. "Hmm," she said, "Above...? Or below?" "Above," I said firmly.

"I wonder what's involved..." she mused, and glued herself to the computer. After a few days, she concluded: not much. She figured we already had the photographs, we already had the historic research, we knew our dates, names, places, significance, we knew it all, we had it all. The application for the National Register would amount to a mere sequel of the L.A. monument application. This would be a cake walk.

Or should have been. In her rush to reach a fore-ordained conclusion, that the Feds would be no more demanding than our city, my wife had somehow glossed over critical differences. The Federal government is exacting in ways cities can't begin to dream of. The instructions for filling out the National Register application – in mind-numbing single-spaced legalese – are one hundred thirty-two pages long.

We had to submit "a 7.5 or 15 minute series United States Geological Survey (USGS) map." It took hours to figure out what this was. More hours to figure out which one showed our house. "No copies," the Feds warned, anticipating a rivalry with Chinese "7.5 or 15 minute series" map bootleggers.



*The set of plaques that inspired Theer: the W.W. Seaman House at 2341 Scarff Street is a Los Angeles Historic Cultural Monument, a Contributor to the St. James Park National Register Historic District, and is individually also listed on the National Register.*

Silly things like the location of the prospective monument become exercises in scientific precision chiseled in the language of professional cartographers. "Determine the Universal Transverse Mercator grid references for the point corresponding to each vertex" was one of the more user-friendly instructions. Less lucid was: "Read the coordinate counter scales right to left for the easting and upward for the northing to get a measured value in three decimal places."

"I thought this was going to be easy," I growled testily. "Just a few details more, that's all they want," my wife said reassuringly. I wasn't reassured.

All our photographs had to be redone. The Feds wanted different paper, more angles, more close-ups, better labels done with pencil. No ink. Everything we'd done for Los Angeles was imprecise, too general, too slap-dash.

Then there was the Federal requirement for historical context. Whereas the Los Angeles Historic Commission was content for us to describe the house as "Craftsman With Tudor Influences," the Feds wanted a thorough and detailed history of the Arts and Crafts

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# Preservation Matters

## Plaque Envy

*continued from page 5*

movement, beginning with William Morris. That's right, THE William Morris, born 1834, died 1896. Between his heyday and the construction of our home lay half a century, every year of which we were told we must account for. This sent us scurrying to our reference works.

And we had a minder. Like visitors to a strange and alien land where outsiders were regarded with suspicion, we were assigned a State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) or "shippo," as she referred to herself when we could reach her in Sacramento, which wasn't often. She reviewed each of our submissions – and there were many – returning them with red-penciled notes in the margins. "How did this style develop?" was one of her critiques of my fifteen page description of the Craftsman movement. I'd had English professors at UCLA who were more lax.

"Are you sure this is worth it?" I regularly asked my wife. We'd re-submit the application only to be hit with: "The National Register recognizes the work of master architects, but the property must express a particular phase in the development of the master's career." A particular phase?! How on earth was I supposed to define our house's "phase"? Frank Lloyd Wright had his Usonian phase, his textile block system phase, and so forth, but Train and Williams had no biographers and their phases, if there ever were any, had never been systematically classified. What was I supposed to write about this?

"Be creative," my wife advised.

After weeks of this, the mind tends to go soft and disintegrate. When I could stand it no longer, when my whole life seemed to have launched into a kind of meaningless death-spiral, when I'd finally decided that this quest to live in a historic home and have its existence documented for future generations was one enormous mistake, when our *folie à deux* to obtain a plaque and then another plaque seemed an unconscious drive for extinction, my wife pronounced us finished.

A month later, we appeared before the State Historic Resources Commission, meeting in Pasadena City Hall. This time I let her do the talking. Our "shippo" – who had herself done a Power Point presentation for the Commission, advised my wife to be brief. "Thank you for considering us," my wife said. "That was tough," I muttered.

Three months later came the letter. Our home had been added to the National Register. "What about the plaque?" I asked while she pored over the letter. "That's funny," she said. "It doesn't say anything about it."

We're still working on it. It may be a few months. From time to time the daily civility of our existence breaks down and we'll have a plaque spat. "Below," she'll say. "Above," I'll reply. Meanwhile, I've got ideas. There's a California State Monument designation and it's a doozy. Not the designation, itself. I don't give a damn about that. It's the plaque.

State plaques afford a monument an opportunity for real expression. Details, such as our home's first owners, their occupations, their accomplishments, their meaning to local, state, and federal culture are not only welcome – they're celebrated! I've seen California State Monument plaques containing multiple paragraphs! I could envision something really splendid for our house, not the usual dry rambling prose, but something lush... and really lyrical. It would be a real show-stopper, a big brass splash of celestial dazzle just above the far too somber Historic Culture Monument and National Register plaques.

Or maybe just below. ●

*Ulrik Theer and his wife, Lisa Ellzey, live in the Holmes-Shannon house, Historic Cultural Monument No. 885. They have looked into the requirements for getting on the UNESCO World Heritage list.*

Advertisement for Andre Jones Wood Company. The ad is framed in black and contains the following elements:

- Company Name:** ANDRE JONES WOOD COMPANY, written vertically in two columns on the left side.
- Image:** A black and white photograph of a large, multi-story historic house with a prominent porch and gables.
- Services:** EXPERT HOME RESTORATION & REPAIR, CUSTOM CABINETS, MOLDING & WOOD FINISHING.
- Contact Information:** ANDREJONESWOODCO.COM and INFO@ANDREJONESWOODCO.COM.
- Phone Number:** 331-007-5490, displayed vertically on the right side of the ad.

WAHA Steps Out:

## Sydney Weisman and the Wayne Peet Trio at the Farmer's Market

Thursday, June 27 7 - 9 p.m. (Please arrive early)

Farmer's Market West Patio, 6333 West Third Street

WAHA member Sydney Weisman will be performing with The Wayne Peet Trio at the Thursday Night Jazz at Farmer's Market event, Third and Fairfax, and WAHA is stepping out to enjoy their performance.

Just join fellow Wahonians on the West Patio for an evening of fun and great music. If you have not heard Sydney sing, you are in for a treat. A marvelous selection of fine food and great beers and wine will be available for purchase. We hope to see you there.

The Farmer's Market presents FREE Thursday Night Jazz and Friday Night Music on the Market's West Patio all summer long. The Thursday Night Jazz will feature a variety of styles from Latin and hip hop to country and contemporary. Friday Night Music presents an eclectic mix of music including salsa, rock n' roll, swing, Brazilian, reggae, Western Swing, Country Rock, and much more! Thursdays and Fridays, now through September 6, 7 - 9 p.m.

All Market restaurants, grocers and shops are open during the shows, so you can shop and dine while enjoying terrific bands. For more information about the concert series (or the Farmer's Market itself) contact: 323-933-9211, facebook.com/farmersmarketla, or farmersmarketla.com ●



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# Preservation Matters

## Weil Award *continued from page 1*

Residence, those gathered to celebrate Laura's achievements were reminded of just a few highlights of the many, many contributions to preserving our architectural and cultural assets. A special thank you is due Donn Gorsline, USC Professor emeritus, for providing the setting. Laura (along with Mitzi Mogul and Jim Childs) also provided assistance to Donn on his successful HCM nomination. And thanks are also due Helen Madrid-Worthen former Cultural Heritage Commissioner who at the brunch recounted childhood tales of the neighborhood and talked about the importance of monument designation. She urged those present to continue to be involved.

WAHA recognizes that a number of Laura's nominations were important "saves." On Laura's birthday in August, 1989, a bulldozer was parked in front of 2146 West Adams (now the Wells-Halliday Residence, HCM No. 458.) The bulldozer raised a flag about the future of the Wells-Halliday Residence and was a call to action, even though she later learned the bulldozer was really for work on an adjacent oil field. She worked with the local council office to designate the house which became the Carl Bean Aids Residence.

Laura also was a key member of the community "team" that successfully advocated to save the South Seas House, now a well-used and much loved community resource run by L.A.'s Recreation & Parks Department. But back in the early 1990s, it was a wreck – homeless vagrants had burned a hole in the living room, using pieces of the house as firewood, and the city-owned house was in danger of being demolished. Laura and others led an effort to raise money, bring together a construction team and make a plan to rehab the house – eventually the council office stepped in and found well over a million dollars, and the house was restored, opening to the public in 2003.

The Glenn Lukens House, designed by Raphael Soriano, was another property headed for a wrecking ball. Laura, along with Eric Bronson and Stevie Stern, spent 7 hours at a Building & Safety Commission hearing to convince the Commission not to allow LADBS staff to demolish the nuisance-abated house. At the same time she nominated the house for landmark status, and later worked very hard – along with Eric and other WAHA members – to make sure that the house was properly sold to a preservation-minded buyer.

At the very same time, the Starr Dairy Farmhouse was also in danger, and Laura helped prepare an emergency nomination before a sale could reach the Probate Court in an overbid auction situation. As you may know, the current owner of the Starr Dairy Farmhouse, WAHA member David Raposa, is meticulously restoring the property.

And Laura was active in designating the Stewart Farmhouse which is scheduled to be moved to a site where it can be restored and saved from the wrecking ball.

Laura coordinated the research, writing and editing of WAHA's "West Adams Landmarks of African American History," which tells the stories of nearly 150 local sites associated with black history. She also has been the coordinator of WAHA's annual Living History Tour for about six years. Its focus is both the historic architecture in the Angelus Rosedale Cemetery and also the important stories of the 100,000+ historic personages buried there. Along with others, Laura researches the biographies of those people who represent every aspect of Los Angeles and U.S. history.

There are too many details to recognize every effort and achievement. Laura has been the preservation advocate voice in many public arenas: the CRA Hoover Project Area Committee (later Exposition Park) and the neighborhood council for her area. ●

Here is a partial list of Laura's successful HCM nominations:

*Walker Mansion (collaborated) HCM 419*  
*Wells-Halliday HCM 458*  
*Guasti Villa/Busby Berkeley HCM 478*  
*Lycurgus Lindsay/Polish Parish HCM 496*  
*Benjamin Waters Residence HCM 598*  
*Julius Bierlich Residence (Laura's own home) HCM 599*  
*Gray House ("Numb3rs") HCM 598*  
*Auguste Marquis/Filipino Federation/Six Feet Under HCM 602*  
*Rosenheim Mansion HCM 660*  
*Rives Manson HCM 661*  
*Dryden Residence HCM 705*

*South Seas House/Joseph Dupuy residence HCM 757*  
*Cline Residence\* (in collaboration) HCM 854*  
*Statton Residence \* (in collaboration) HCM 855*  
*Starr Dairy Farmhouse \* (in collaboration) HCM 865*  
*Lukens/Soriano House HCM 866*  
*Waters-Shaw Residence (on Severence) HCM 884*  
*Lucy Wheeler/Green & Green HCM 991*  
*Golden State Mutual Insurance – MURALS (in collaboration – Laura worked on the murals piece) -- HCM 1000*  
*Brown-Gorsline Residence \* (in collaboration) HCM 1021*  
*JM Stewart Cottage/Farmhouse HCM number not yet assigned*



*Martin Eli Weil.*



## Los Angeles: Who Defines the Vision?

by Maggi Fajnor, Summer 2010

The announcement Monday morning of the appointment of Michael LoGrande as the City's Planning Director to succeed Gail Goldberg provoked many questions and much comment.

Many involved in planning issues in the City question this appointment suggesting that it is vitally important to pin down Mr. LoGrande, the Mayor and Austin Beutner on critical planning issues.

But I would suggest reframing the discussion. It is vitally important that the Neighborhood Councils, Associations and all stakeholders of the City be heard on critical planning issues.

The Department of City Planning has changed quite meaningfully over the past four years. Those concerned with the future of this City must work to insure that the choice is made to build upon this recent progress and not allow the Planning Department to excessively focus on speedy case processing to the exclusion of policy planning and real community engagement.

Great Cities inspire a vision. The vision must come not only from the developers, the Director of Planning or even the Mayor, but rather must originate with the residents.

Los Angeles as a City is a mosaic of communities. As such our city provides a unique opportunity for selecting one's lifestyle by supporting a collection of diverse community identities from rural horse country, to beaches, the canals of Venice, traditional bungalows or ranch house communities to the ultra urban experiences of downtown.

These communities are the heart and soul of our City. If our City is to move forward into the 21st Century we must morph the vision of endless suburban sprawl into a vibrant multi-nodal entity resonating from this mosaic.

To achieve this vision, Neighborhood Councils, Associations and all stakeholders must stop asking for a seat at the table and recognize that all stakeholders already have a place at the table. What is called for now is to be heard from their rightful place at the table.

NCs have a particular charge to be part of the conversation; serving as the voice of their communities is their mandate under the City Charter. However, taking a seat as a full participant requires diligence, determination and educating oneself to be prepared to take part in the discussion. It is not a task for the fainthearted.

To ensure that the unique vision of each of our communities is protected and enhanced, neighborhood and civic leaders need to be especially vigilant and loudly assert their participation, insisting upon a process based on transparency and an open door policy.

Progress must be measured not in number or speed of cases processed, but rather in the completion of real plans for individual communities that both residents and developers can count on.

Communities must insist upon plans that are comprehensive and detailed, that include all of the zoning, infrastructure plans, design guidelines and other measures that implement those plans so they provide a consistent guide for implementing the vision of the community.

And, by providing a clear, enforced guide for development within each community, these plans will eliminate the need for case processing except in a truly special situation. Continuing this work must be the priority for our City to develop confidently forward into the future.

I would invite Mr. LoGrande to continue the Planning Pilot Program that was initiated under Ms. Gail Goldberg. This has been a very productive relationship with PlanCheckNC, a grass-roots alliance to promote local stakeholder participation in planning issues.

Recognizing the role of the Neighborhood Councils as part of the City structure, the Planning Department Pilot Program has provided greater transparency and opened new channels of communication on neighborhood concerns.

PlanCheckNC provides a liaison with the Planning Department, giving neighborhood councils early access to all project entitlement applications and helping to train community leaders on land-use planning.

We stand ready to continue the dialogue and invite all stakeholders to join in to define a greater future for our City. ●

*(At the time of this writing, Maggi Fajnor was the chair of PlanCheckNC.)*



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# Preservation Matters

## WAHA Warriors *continued from page 1*

native-born, I had to learn English (not easy for a teen-ager). My younger siblings were communicating within a few months, but it took me about a year. You see, they didn't care if they mispronounced words as long as they could play with their new friends. But though harder for me – the pay-off, is that I learned English better. And it gave me an understanding of the struggle that all immigrants – no matter from where -- have to overcome in learning a new language, adapting to new ways and trying to fit in.

I grew up attending St. Agnes church, went to Vermont Avenue Elementary for one year, and graduated 8<sup>th</sup> grade from St. Vincent's Elementary Catholic School just around the corner on Figueroa and Adams. Even then I was sowing early roots in the WAHA West Adams historical district even though I did not know it. But in the olden days when I was at St. Vincent's, it was in the original location – where the #110 Adams freeway offramp is now! Even then I experienced first-hand how the area was changing and evolving. And there is a pattern beginning here, as you'll see!

We first lived in this area on the north side of 22<sup>nd</sup> street and where our first home was is now the 10 Freeway Vermont Avenue offramp, just one block west of Vermont. The house across the street still stands but mine is now part of the side of the 10 Freeway. I remember that at the time there were few Latinos in the neighborhood. In 5<sup>th</sup> grade I sat next to the only Spanish-speaking girl in the classroom so she could translate for me and I could do the class work. After graduating from St. Vincent's, I got a scholarship to a then prestigious all-girls high school, St. Mary's Academy. At the time I was really disappointed that I was not going to be going to St. Agnes high school, right here in the neighborhood. But it wasn't the proximity that I would miss – it's that at that time St. Agnes was the only coed catholic h.s. in Los Angeles. How times have changed! To get to St. Mary's I had to learn to take two buses and ride for an hour for at least the first couple of years. But though the bus ride was tedious, it went through the Leimert Park area adjoining what now is the Baldwin Hills. And it did give me the chance to drive on West Adams where I transferred on Crenshaw. The bus ride gave me the chance to admire the beautiful mansions that lined West Adams Boulevard. And I'm sure planted seeds to begin appreciating wonderful old architecture. In those days I could never have imagined that many years later I would be going inside various of these mansions as they were being considered for monument status.

After the freeway took our first house on 22<sup>nd</sup> street, my grandmother bought a house here on 1341 West 25<sup>th</sup> street. We also moved to be near her so mom could keep an eye out for her. For quite a few years we lived at 1315 W. Adams Blvd., owned by an estate. In those days my mom ran it as a rooming house for single men as it had eight bedrooms upstairs, with the family living downstairs. I believe when the estate finally sold, it was bought by a preservationist member of WAHA. In any event although I had long moved away when I got married, I often came back. Although all of us kids had grown and moved away, we would often return for family get-togethers as our mom was still here.

By the mid-'80s I was living in the San Fernando Valley when I was asked to serve on the Los Angeles Cultural Heritage Commission. It seems there were few Valley residents willing to come "over the hill" into the big city to serve on commissions. For me that was not an obstacle as I had worked in Downtown L.A. for the majority of my career and I loved my city and thought I was quite familiar with it. I was also fortunate to work for a company that was a good corporate citizen – the Gas Company – that gave me time off from work to serve on the Commission.

My eight years on the Commission opened my eyes to the beauty and fascinating differences that make up the cultural mosaic that is our city and how much more there was to it than what I thought I knew. When I was a child living in Mexico, we would often come to visit my grandmother and other family who at that time lived in East Los Angeles. But by the time we actually moved back here, my grandmother had retired from her business in East L.A., and moved to what was then considered "West Los Angeles" by the Eastsiders, but which through my commission experience, I learned had become known as the Historic West Adams District.

The Commission taught me that there is beauty and important historical value to be learned even in the most humble of abodes and structures. One of the highlights of my Commission experience were going into East L.A. and going inside what was then the boarded up "historic Breed Street Schul" with all the pigeons roosting there: it was a most unique example of the Jewish immigrant experience in early Los Angeles before that community began its migration to the Westside. Another unforgettable experience was climbing a ladder to go inside the Octagon House while it was still on risers after it was newly moved to Heritage Square. I got to visit so many important elegant mansions all over our city, some in the prestigious areas of Bel Air and Los Feliz;



# Preservation Matters

areas bordering the city of Santa Monica; the bohemian, eclectic Eagle Rock area; several beautiful and some not quite so beautiful examples of architecture in the WAHA district; some of the Doheny Park private residences before they became part of the college; the Carthay Circle area; the Wilshire Boulevard corridor; there was the wonderful adobe that was part of the original Gilmore Rancho that became today's famed Farmers Market and now the Grove. Of course not all were elegant structures. There was the Milagro Market area in East L.A. and the entire block of small company tin houses surrounding it. What a unique example of a company town neighborhood for its era. If memory serves me, this was where many railroad workers lived and shopped at the railroad company store. But a very important lesson I learned, that though humble by comparison to some of the historic Victorian mansions of, say, Angelino Heights and the likes of Pasadena and Beverly Hills, it was still important in preserving the history and documenting the evolution of our city from its humble beginnings as a pueblo in the Olvera Street and Chinatown areas, to the likes of this beautiful home we celebrate today.

But enough of rambling on about my Commission experience. I just wanted to share that as a local, one does not always see, or if we see don't always value, what's right under our own eyes, or in our own neighborhoods. Often it takes new eyes to see the beauty that was there all along. So for you who are the new eyes, I thank you!

It was a serendipitous journey that brought me to today. I do not have degrees in architecture, engineering, history nor art. But I was lucky that when I had the time and opportunity I was willing to listen and learn from those that had the training. With their help – the late David Cameron and Martin Weil, the Christy McAvoy, the Jim Childs, Jean Frosts and David Raposas, who so generously took the time to share with me their knowledge and experience and patiently answered my questions, I hope that I did not disappoint as a Cultural Heritage Commissioner for our city. Who could have imagined that a little first generation Mexican-American girl would be able to contribute to the preservation of the heritage of our great city.

So in closing, I want to encourage each and every one of you who because you are here today, I know you already have a passion for preserving the cultural heritage of our city. In every corner of our great city of Los Angeles there is history that needs to be recognized, acknowledged and preserved. Whether it be with restoration, adaptive reuse as in the Breed Street Schul that is now an important new community center serving today's new immigrants to that area; or by whatever tools you have at your disposal, keep up the good work! We will soon have a new Mayor in our city. Why don't you all polish up your resumes and be ready to volunteer to serve on the Cultural Heritage Commission as starters! I promise you a most rewarding experience!

Thank you for inviting me to join your celebration today and keep up the good work, my WAHA warriors! ●



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# Preservation Matters

## The Two-Minute Hearing

by Jean Frost

As WAHA Matters newsletter readers, I imagine you have been tracking the efforts made by WAHA to see that the National Register eligible W.T. Bishop Mansion and the Roger Williams Baptist Church along with its cloisters are rehabilitated in a manner that conforms to historic standards.

It has been a long road since WAHA appealed the Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) and its Categorical Exemption (CE), the environmental document issued by the Office of Historic Resources (OHR). On April 16, the South Area Planning Commission (SAPC) was scheduled to hear the appeal. Lacking a quorum, Commission staff cancelled the meeting two and a half hours before it was to be held.



WAHA was informed that it would lose its appeal on the technicality that action was not taken by the SAPC. WAHA would lose its voice without ever being heard because of a statutory limitation.

WAHA worked diligently to seek the solution of a special meeting. At WAHA's request, Councilman Parks was considering "245-ing" the matter which would cede jurisdiction to the City Council. This became unnecessary when a special meeting was finally called within the legally required 24 hour notice for April 30, the last day of statutory control for the OHR.

WAHA's Preservation Emergency Response Team (P.E.R.T.) arrived at City Hall for the 4:30 APC Special Meeting. The P.E.R.T. members believing that their grievances would finally be heard were surprised when:

- the meeting was called to order,
- staff reported that the applicant agreed to and staff recommended a continuance,
- the APC commissioners moved to do so without hearing any opinions, \*continued the case to May 21st,
- and adjourned.

Hence a two-minute meeting. If you blinked you missed it. It took hours of effort to arrive at that moment.

By the time May 21 rolled around, the owners had requested another continuance. But that meant that the P.E.R.T. team once again needed to drive to another hearing – this time in South Los Angeles – for another two-minute session, at which point the actual hearing was put off again, until June 18.

The good news is that yes, WAHA is having our appeal heard by the

Area Planning Commission, so that we can then move our concerns about the environmental clearance process for a historic resource to the City Council, if necessary. But getting to this point has been an effort by everyone involved. ●

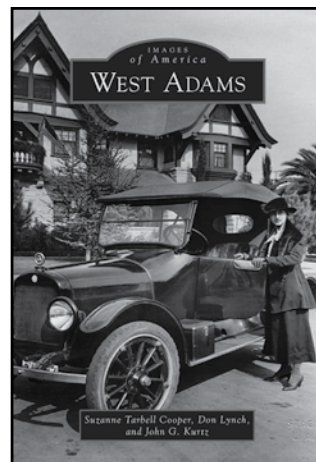
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## WAHA's 2013 Calendar for History Buffs and Preservation Advocates

### JUNE

Stepping Out with WAHA: Sidney Sings at the Farmer's Market  
**Thursday, June 27**

### JULY

Patriotic 4th of July Picnic,  
on July 4th (natch!)  
**Thursday, July 4**

### AUGUST

WAHA's Ice Cream Social  
**Sunday, August 18**

Don your summer whites or Victorian-inspired attire and join us for an afternoon (2-5 p.m.) of ice cream and other sweets, old-fashioned entertainments, and visiting with neighbors.



### SEPTEMBER

Potluck in Historic Van Buren Place  
**Sunday, September 15, 4-7 p.m.**

Join us at Norma Reynold's home, 2639 S. Van Buren Place

Living History Tour at Angelus Rosedale Cemetery  
**Saturday, September 28**

Actors portray, in costume and at graveside, a half dozen of the historic personages buried at this landmark cemetery.

### DECEMBER

Holiday Historic Homes Tour & Progressive Dinner  
**Saturday and Sunday, December 7-8**

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

# Calendar ✓

## Upcoming Events

### JUNE

**WAHA Steps Out: Sydney Weisman and the Wayne Peet Trio at the Farmer's Market — Thursday, June 27:**

WAHA Steps Out: Sydney Weisman and the Wayne Peet Trio at the Farmer's Market. Please join fellow Wahonians on the West Patio for an evening of fun and great music. No host; plenty of food and beverages for sale. Please arrive early. Farmer's Market West Patio, 6333 West Third Street. (see story, page 7)

### AUGUST

**Ice Cream Social —**

**Sunday, August 18** (see Calendar, page 15)

### SEPTEMBER

**WAHA General Meeting & Potluck —**

**Sunday, September 15** (see Calendar, page 15)

**Living History Tour at Angelus Rosedale Cemetery — Saturday, September 28**

(see Calendar, page 15)

## WAHA's Patriot 4th of July Picnic

**Thursday, July 4,**

**11:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.**

**2173 W. 20th Street (Western Heights)**

Please join WAHA for Our All-American 4th of July Party, to be held across the front lawns of 2173, 2179 and 2203 West 20th Street.

Patriotic music, a jumper for the kids and fun for the whole family! WAHA provides hot dogs and hamburgers on the grill and beverages. Bring a potluck side dish or dessert to share serving at least 10 people. (see story, page 1)



**WAHA's 2013 Calendar of Events (with details) is on page 15.**

*The WAHA Matters Newsletter is a publication of the West Adams Heritage Association. Members and supporters of WAHA are invited to submit articles to the Newsletter. Letters will be published subject to space constraints and will be cut for length if necessary. Articles will be published subject to acceptance by the editors of the WAHA Board. Advertising is subject to the approval of the publishers. Although the Association appreciates its many fine advertisers, the Association does not accept responsibility for claims made by advertisers. Services and products are not tested and appearance of advertising does not imply, nor does it constitute, endorsement by the West Adams Heritage Association. Copyright 2013. All rights for graphic and written material appearing in the newsletter are reserved. Contact Director of Publications for permission.*

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