

West Adams Matters



A Century in Gramercy Park

by Hily Greene

Not long ago, I had the wonderful opportunity to visit my family's past in the Gramercy Park section of West Adams. I am thrilled to share that little bit of history with you.

On the evening of Tuesday, April 17, 1906, John Stirk closed his San Francisco glass shop and headed home to his wife and two daughters, as he had each day for the five years. The following morning at 5:12 a.m., early risers heard the slow easy clip-clop of hoof beats on the city streets announcing the delivery of dairy products to their doorsteps.

Then, slowly at first, an unfamiliar sound came to everyone's attention. It was not the reverberation of cable cars passing

through the neighborhood. Those who walked to work began to feel as though they could not gain footing on sidewalks. Indeed the sidewalks themselves began to appear as though they had lost contact with the ground.^o

Frantic fathers and mothers ran from their homes holding their dazed and confused children as the roar of sound and motion overtook them. Men and women already at work stumbled from their downtown businesses.

Within minutes The Great San Francisco Earthquake of 1906 was over. Those who survived the quake felt lucky as they looked around to see the devastation, yet a far worse disaster was smoldering near the edge of the bay. Soon roiling smoke and fire began to overtake the city. Days later photographs taken would show that the few building

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WAHA Home Improvement Weekend

Saturday & Sunday, April 9 - 10

Please join WAHA as we help out one of our Harvard Heights neighbors by painting his house in April.

In the early 1980s, when WAHA was a new organization and the urban pioneer/historic preservation movement was just beginning in West Adams, we organized several barn raising-style "Tom Sawyer" days where WAHA members gathered to work on one person's home, doing plastering, painting and/or other necessary rehab projects. On April 9 and 10, we plan to initiate this activity again when we paint the exterior of Ellsworth K.C. Walker's home at 1720 S. Ardmore.

(continued on page 2)



University Gateway Project by Jean Frost

As most West Adams neighbors know, the University of Southern California has been growing dramatically in recent years, in no small measure because of the improvement in its curriculum, enhancement of its campus and numerous academic awards bestowed on the institution. One result has been an increased demand for student housing on and near the campus, which a number of private investors recently have been attempting to meet.

On Thursday, February 17, community members got their first look at the proposed University Gateway Project, a mixed use retail and student housing complex, with a presentation to the Hoover Project Area Committee (PAC), the advisory body to the Community Redevelopment Agency. Fred Jackson from Urban Partners made the presentation. It was unclear by the agenda posting whether any PAC action or public hearing was going to take place as this item was listed as a "presentation."

The University Gateway Project is proposed to be built at the corner of Jefferson Boulevard and Figueroa. The project's developer is University Gateway Development LLC, a private developer, not the University of Southern

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Home Improvement Weekend

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Ellsworth K.C. Walker was born in St Louis in 1916. He always had a great love of music, and studied at Juillard, before joining the Army during WWII. During this time period, Walker became friends with the Mills Brothers, who encouraged him to move to Los Angeles in 1943.

Walker went on tour with the Mills Brothers for six months and then worked for the Los Angeles County Board of Education for many years until his retirement.

In the '60s and '70s Ellsworth owned a record store on Hoover called K.C.'s Record Shop. He worked it during the day and went to journalism school at night at Los Angeles City College.

He moved into his home on Ardmore in 1960. Over the years he met many celebrities, calling Ray Charles and Bing Crosby friends.

We need volunteers to help out with this effort! Please call Todd Moyer at 323-731-7111 if you are willing to help out.

Volunteers will need to bring their own sanders, face masks, work gloves and other safety gear. WAHA will provide brushes, rollers, the paint, and plenty of refreshments.

From 1 - 3 p.m. on Saturday, we will also have a mini "Demonstration Day" to show you how to fix window sashes, caulk windows, prep for painting, and the like. Even if you don't want to learn about the carpentering and paint trades, however, we hope you'll join us and support this effort to give this house a facelift.

If it rains (and Lord knows, it might!) and/or if the work isn't complete, we've scheduled touch-ups for the following weekend, April 16-17. ●



Celebrating Black History Month

by Jean Frost

West Adams has been home to diverse cultures and history. In February, the West Adams Heritage Association joined with Congresswoman Diane Watson in a celebration of "Hollywood in Black and White" and Black History Month with a tour of the homes of African American Entertainers and celebrities who resided in the Historic West Adams District over several decades.

The Historic Preservation Committee Chair and the Publications Committee responded quickly to the Congresswoman's desire to share the history of African American celebrities of West Adams with a tour on February 7 for invited consulate staff (including South Africa, Ethiopia, Egypt, the Cameroons and other countries), relatives of famous performers, and invited dignitaries and friends of the Congresswoman. This became part of a weeklong celebration ("Hollywood in Black and White") which included events at the Max Factor Hollywood History Museum and the Magic Johnson Theaters in the Baldwin Hills Crenshaw Plaza. Actress Cheryl Francis Harrington volunteered to emcee the tour, organized with assistance from Laura Meyers. This newsletter's volunteer Art Director, Hilary Lentini, designed the tour booklet, which will serve as a tour brochure for future tours.

From Baldwin Hills Crenshaw Plaza, the tour bus wended its way through Jefferson Park, Expo Park West, West Adams Normandie, West Adams Heights (both north and south of the Santa Monica Freeway), Western Heights, Harvard Heights and Country Club Park. At 2203 South Harvard Boulevard one viewed the former residence of Hattie McDaniel (whose film appearances include roles in *Gone with the Wind*, *Judge Priest*, and *The Little Colonel*). Ms. McDaniel was one of the plaintiffs in the law suit that struck down the restrictive covenants that prohibited the sale of properties to African Americans or other racial, religious or ethnic minorities. Also a plaintiff in the case was Louise Beavers, whose former residence is at 2219 South Hobart. Demolished to make way for the Santa Monica Freeway was Ethel Waters' residence at 2100 South Hobart. For more information on the many different celebrities and sites, the tour brochure will be reprinted and distributed at WAHA's May Preservation Month meeting.

The bus also saw the Ray Charles RPM Studio, which recently was awarded Los Angeles Historic Cultural Landmark status, at 2101 West Washington Blvd., and a home owned by Lena Horne at 1200 South Arlington. The tour ended at the home of the late Celes King III at 1250 South Arlington Avenue. The King family greeted the tour group with refreshments; the King family intends to landmark the home and deed it to the City of Los Angeles. Celes King, the first black general agent in the bail bonds profession, became the bail bondsman to the Civil Rights Movement and was a civil rights leader and humanitarian.

The richness and depth of experience of those that came before us is impressive. Many performers lived here at the height of their careers. The tour honored the many creative lights (some famous and some not quite so famous) and provided a sense of history and continuity for generations to come. Relatives of artists, such as Chico Hamilton's nephew and brother, and pioneering journalist Fay M. Jackson's daughter, were able to provide personal stories and anecdotes. West Adams continues to be a diverse and inclusive community and home to many artists and entertainers. If reading this article proves of interest, please come to WAHA's May preservation meeting where the complete tour booklet will be available. ●



Clockwise from top, Ray Charles, Lena Horne, and Ethel Waters.

WAHA PRESENTS

"Historic Bungalows of Jefferson Park: A Home Tour"

On **Saturday, June 4**, WAHA and Jefferson Park neighbors will showcase a group of classic Craftsman Bungalows in WAHA's Spring walking tour of historic homes. A large portion of Jefferson Park was initiated nearly three years ago for study as a Historic Preservation Overlay Zone, and the tour will focus on a part of that specific targeted neighborhood. More details will follow soon (of course, we'll be calling for volunteers as well as tour visitors). ●

Around the House

Resources

by Suzie Henderson, Resources Columnist

I hope that you have all been staying warm and dry this rainy season! I have some great recommendations for your upcoming projects.

First of all, what you have all been asking for, a terrifically talented and affordable painter, David Ward, just bought a home here in West Adams. Hillary says if you want to see a fine example of his work, check out their house at 1625 S. Cimarron St.

Her next suggestion is Mark Cody, an artisan mason. He fixed and sealed their brick porch columns and matched the original blue/gray mortar color perfectly.

Trevor Norris recently had his clawfoot tub re-surfaced.° It was done on-site and cost only \$280.00. He says that°Joaquin Amador, contractor and owner of Pearl Glaze, was professional and personable.

I finally solved my problem of replacing my antique armoire hinge by having it replicated at JR Iron Works on Washington Boulevard. They specialize in architectural decorative iron works, antique and modern reproductions, stair railings, chandeliers and the like. I saw some fabulous dragon light fixtures that they reproduced. What a local treasure! In one day and for less than \$10, I had a perfect replacement.

To replace the mirror in the armoire, I used Antiqued Mirrors and was pleased with their prompt service and helpful attitude. My mirror has a complex curve to the top and a deep bevel. It looks perfect and they reinforced the frame area at no additional charge. They also repair and resilver.

Thanks to our helpful contributors. Please contact me with your recommendations at WestAdamsGoddess@aol.com.

Thanks,
Suzanne

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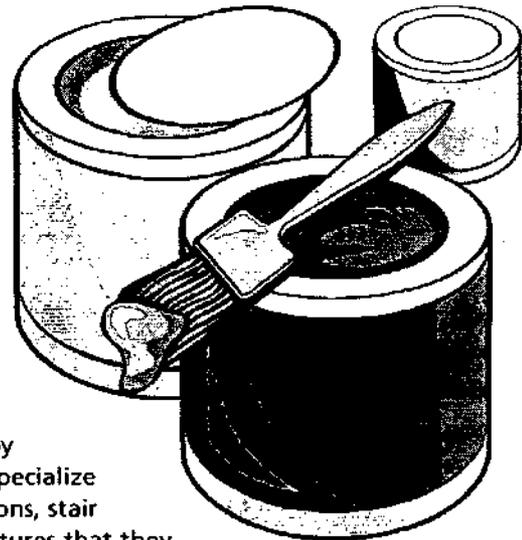
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EMILY By Diana Weihs

When people die, there are many rituals observed. Being Jewish, we bury our dead within twenty-four hours. We spend time at the home of a relative and share food. We sit shiva. We cover the mirrors. We don't wear leather shoes. We sit on small stools. People send food so that preparation is not necessary for those who mourn. We receive sympathy cards and donations are made to charities in memory of our loved one. We say kaddish, the prayer for the dead, for a whole year to honor the passing soul. An obituary is published.

When we lose a four-legged companion, none of these things happen. Truth of the matter be told, our little babies mean more to us than Aunt Esther, whom we see at weddings, bar-mitzvahs and funerals...maybe.

Emily deserves recognition. This is her obituary. This is her testament of a loving, unselfish too-short life.

We never knew where she came from, but the streets. She was matted and flea-ridden when a kind man befriended her. He had three large dogs and couldn't possibly keep another. He called the Amanda Foundation. We had been in touch with them, searching for a companion for our little poodle, Priscilla. Emily and Priscilla circled each other and sniffed and Emily gave Priscilla a kiss on the nose and so the contract was sealed.

She was perfect from the moment she came home with us. She ate anything we fed her, never had an accident in-doors and was as loving as can be to everyone she met. She found her own spot in our bed the first night.

Our neighborhood walks were the highlight of the day. Everyone who came in contact with us, had to be greeted by Emily, unofficial love ambassador of WAHA. She was a role model for humanity...love for no reason...anyone and everyone.

Everyone knew Emily and Priscilla by name...not my name, but theirs. There were a group of children that always stopped us to talk and stroke Emily. They wanted to stroke Priscilla too, but Emily stepped in and pushed her aside. Priscilla never minded - she knew Emily needed more attention, and Priscilla had more self-assurance. Emily was so kind to allow all the children to play with her. She would sit back on her derriere, throw her head back in glee and let out with a woo-woo-woo that would shake her whole body to the delight of all. The more the children laughed, the more Emily continued her aria.

She loved to roll on her back in the grass, to everyone's amusement. My husband, Michael, called her "a woman of the earth" and that she was. She never minded getting dirty. She never complained about anything. Twice a day, Priscilla had to clean out her food bowl, because it wasn't clean enough for her poodle persona.

She loved going to the park on 2nd Avenue, because it was always filled with children - more beings to entertain.

One day on our walk, as we approached David Raposa's house, Emily pulled me up his front steps to his front door and sat down. She turned to me and smiled. I could hear her say: "I'm not moving until I see my friend, David." I tried to explain there were no cars in the driveway and no one was home now. We would come back another day. No movement. How about going home and getting a cookie, I prodded? Still no movement. I reasoned, maybe we could walk to the park and come back later? Reluctantly, she slowly arose and returned to our traveling along the Avenues.

She took ill in December with pneumonia. She spent two days in an oxygen tent and two days later we were able to bring her back home. She was progressing nicely. Her infection had dissipated and she was on the road back to recovery. She was eating and her animated personality was returning, trying to make us laugh with her familiar antics. Then suddenly...she just stopped eating. She refused everything, even her favorite scrambled eggs or a slice of turkey. She suffered with diarrhea and began spitting up her water. We took her back to the hospital and they admitted her on Sunday, January 23. She went into renal failure. She died on Tuesday night at 9:13 p.m. in Michael's arms with Priscilla leaning against her and I kissing her nose and stroking her. We buried her in her sweater, wrapped in her blanket and placed her in her wicker bed and lowered her into the ground. She is in the shade of the lemon tree she loved to sit under in the cool grass, next to the fig tree. Michael said kaddish and we told her how much we loved her and covered her with the earth. Sleep in peace, my darling golden girl, you gave us so much love and joy and happiness, it was heaven having you with us for those all too short eleven years.

If anyone would like to donate something in Emily's memory, please contact The Amanda Foundation at 310-278-2935. They are an all-volunteer, non-profit organization who save pets from eminent death and find loving homes for them. Perhaps you could adopt a fur baby who will enrich your life? Thank you. ●



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Stepping Out

Mount St. Mary's College Offers Tours of Doheny Mansion

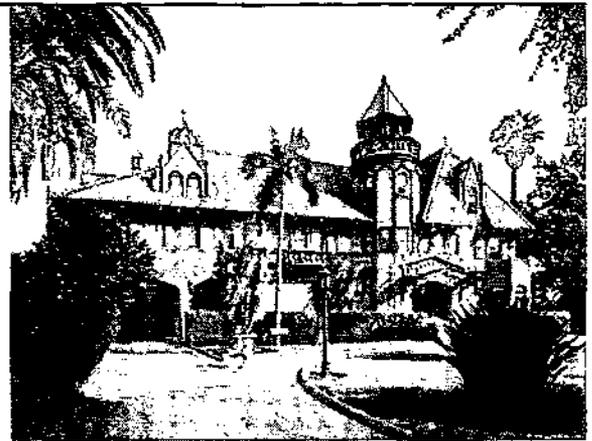
After more than a year of completely sold out tours of the Doheny Mansion, space is available for upcoming 2005 tours of the legendary residence at Mount St. Mary's College near downtown Los Angeles on **March 19, April 16, June 18, July 16, and Oct. 8.**

The home of oil baron Edward L. and Carrie Estelle Doheny for almost 60 years, the Gothic Renaissance-style Victorian mansion was designed by architects Theodore Augustus Elsen and Sumner P. Hunt in 1898. This well-maintained home boasts a marble-pillared great hall, the

Pompeian Room with imported Siena marble and a Tiffany iridescent glass dome, furniture copied by permission of the Italian government from Pompeian furniture in a Rome museum, and much of the original furnishings in its other opulent rooms. Visitors will step back in time as they learn the history of this fascinating family, and the lifestyle of rich and famous Angelenos 100 years ago.

Docent-led groups limited to 20 people will visit the first floor of the Mansion and outside surroundings. The cost of the tour is \$25 per person and reservations are a must. No children under 12, please.

Contact Angelic Rome at (213) 477-2764 to book reservations or for further information. Proceeds will benefit the preservation of this historic residence. ●



Life As He Knew It:

Photographs of Black Los Angeles from the Walter Gordon Collection at USC

An exhibition of fifty-eight photographs from the 1930s–1950s, depicting leading members of the Black community in Los Angeles is currently on view, through May 15, at the Doheny Memorial Library on USC's University Park Campus. The works were collected by Walter Lear Gordon, Jr., a practicing attorney in Los Angeles for sixty-seven years. Many of them were taken by staff photographers at the pioneering *California Eagle* newspaper.

Hours:

Monday–Thursday, 9 a.m.–10 p.m.

Friday–Saturday 9 a.m.–5 p.m.

Sunday 1–6 p.m.

For more information, see www.usc.edu/calendar/events/24700.html ●

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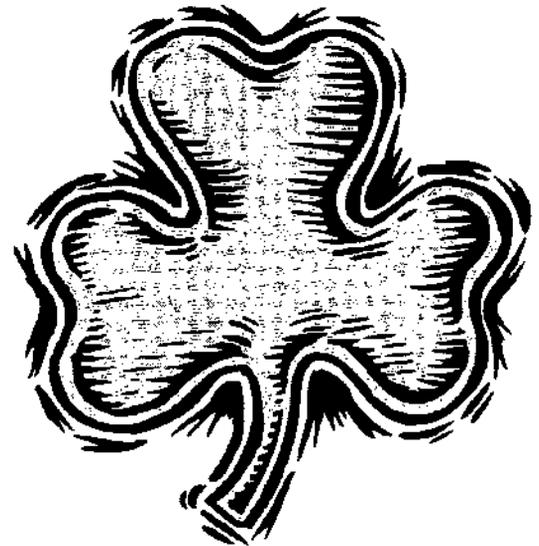
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For reservations call 213-747-67419 during business hours or send your donation payable to Casa de Rosas Inc, to Casa de Rosas, 2600 South Hoover St., L.A., CA. 90007, Att: Anna-Marie Erro.

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Preservation Matters



Scorched Earth by Jim Childs

WAHA Matters readers learned last Fall of the unpermitted demolition on Friday, August 13, of the circa 1895 Stoddard House and of the subsequent investigation into the incident by the Los Angeles Department of Building & Safety (LADBS). The Victorian cottage located at 1458 West 23rd Street was a contributing historic resource to the University Park Historic Preservation Overlay Zone.

Raymond Chan, LADBS Executive Director, in a December 23, 2004 letter, informed the property owners, the Sung Kwang Presbyterian Church, of the results of the Department's investigation. The letter stated that LADBS had determined that the demolition was in violation of the City's Municipal Code and under authority of LAMC 91.106.4.1 Subsection

10 the Department would record an affidavit with the County Recorder stating that it would not issue permits for any new development at the subject site for a five-year period terminating on August 16, 2009.

This Code Section is commonly known as the "scorched-earth" ordinance because of the severity of the sanctions. Although the ordinance has been on the City's books for well over a decade this is only the second time it has been enforced against a property owner for illegally demolishing an historic property. The first time was in August of 2003 against downtown mega-developer Geoff Palmer. Although the 1887 Giese House on Bunker Hill was planned to be relocated to the nearby Angelino Heights HPOZ, a non-permitted demolition took place on May 6, 2003. The demolition was apparently a misguided effort to facilitate completion of Palmer's Orsini Apartments Complex.

When the Stoddard House was razed in August, the University Park HPOZ Board called for an immediate investigation and asked for all appropriate remedies. LADBS conducted a public hearing on September 29. The LADBS Hearing Examiner, Hector Buitrago, reviewed the Staff report by Principal Inspector Alan Wendell and took sworn testimony. Speaking for the imposition of the "scorched-earth" sanctions were: WAHA Vice-President, Jean Frost, Frank Acevedo, Chair of the North Area Neighborhood Development Council, the Los Angeles Conservancy Director of Preservation Issues, Ken Bernstein and myself for the UP/HPOZ Board.

Although any illegal demolition in L.A. is a misdemeanor, the punishment is generally only a \$1,000 fine and/or six months in jail. However, the significant sanctions imposed by the "scorched-earth" ordinance are clearly a deterrent to developers who choose to circumvent official procedures related to historic structures. The inability to develop a site for five years can be an economic penalty of crippling impacts to a developer's bottom-line. The "scorched-earth" deterrent is therefore critical in the future success or failure of the City's Historic Preservation Overlay Zones.

The University Park HPOZ Board conducted its own public hearing for the Stoddard House demolition on October 19, 2004. The Board heard from neighbors, preservationists, members of the church's congregation and Ms. Mee Lee representing the Sung Kwang Presbyterian Church. The UP Board was unanimous in their support for implementation of the "scorched-earth" sanctions. In addition they informed the owners that when the five-year LADBS penalty period expired the subject property would still have to be in compliance with the University Park Preservation Plan and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines.

The Board members explained that because of the significant historic streetscape in which the lot was located they would only allow construction of a similar house or a move-on of a comparable historic structure. They recommended that the owners begin the search for an equal historic structure as soon as possible since a move-on could readily fulfill all compliance criteria. The Board took the position that if and when the Church had located an at-risk historic building for relocation they would be supportive of negotiations for lessening the penalty period. Although the Church can appeal the "scorched-earth" decision to the Board of Building and Safety Commissioners their compliance with HPOZ restrictions will still be enforceable. ●

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Workshop Options

To receive your free trees, you must first learn how to properly plan for, plant, and protect your new trees through one of our workshops. You may either complete the workshop online or personally attend a workshop located close to your neighborhood.

The Neighborhood Workshop calendar is updated monthly. The next one in the West Adams area is: Tuesday, April 12, 7 - 9 p.m. at the Baldwin Hills Library, 2906 S. La Brea. To attend, you need to make a reservation by calling 1-800-GreenLA (800-473-3652) and select Trees for a Green LA or e-mail us at Tree.Program@ladwp.com. Be prepared to provide your:

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A Visit to Gramercy Park *continued from page 1*

still standing were empty shells.

Almost nothing was left of John's glass shop. A difficult yet necessary decision was made: the Stirks would leave the Bay area for Los Angeles.

Indeed, this was not the first disaster they had endured living beside the bay. Years before the only son and middle child of the Stirk family passed away at a very young age. We will never know his name, birth date or how he died, or even where he was laid to rest. Records of every person having had a significant life event in or around San Francisco in 1906 and before were destroyed during the earthquake and fire. The task of rebuilding all the city records began from "hearsay."

In Los Angeles, John and Lillian settled into a rented home with their two daughters, Helen, 10 and Lillian (Lil), 8.



Helen, John and Lillian Stirk on front porch at Gramercy Park

Striving Forward

Lillian wanted more for and from her daughters than she had herself. Within the branches of her family tree there was a certain prominence. Her great, great-grandfather, James Hargreaves, invented the Spinning Jenny. Her uncle had married Alice Liddell, who we all know as "Alice" in Lewis Carroll's famed books.

Within her immediate family, however, both sides lived in housing supplied by cotton mills in her hometown of Ashton-under-Lyne, England. Almost every member of her family grew up and grew old working in the mills. As she grew up she considered herself greater than her humble beginnings, even adopting as an adult the more elegant form of her given name, Lily. Lillian immigrated to America in 1898, preserving only her ties to her beloved brother James, Aunt Louise and Uncle Jim, and their two daughters. Within two years she would marry John Stirk.

As the Stirk family began to make a life for themselves in Southern California, Lillian searched for a home to call their own. Eventually she found Gramercy Park, new neighborhood where only the "best" people lived, and a public school less than a block away. Lillian could see nothing but a bright future for herself and her family.

The Stirks' new home at 2448 Gramercy Park would be one of the first homes constructed in the area, in 1911. It was a stunning representation of craftsmanship in every detail: beveled glass at the front door, brass hardware, old growth woods polished to a fine finish. This attention to every detail was totally in character – Lillian had learned that to be careless or disorganized in your work or manners meant punishment during her formative years in the German boarding schools she attended as a child with her brother James.

However, growing up in the Stirk household was not always enjoyable. Rules of decorum were resolutely enforced. One of the wicked pleasures Helen and Lil enjoyed on several occasions was chewing gum, a childhood delight not appreciated by their mother. As the two girls came home from neighborhood adventures they would tuck the gum under the edge of the entry hall table, and Lillian was never the wiser.

Travel was a large part of Helen and Lil's youthful experiences, with a grand tour of Europe, summers on the island of Catalina basking with the well-to-do; and trips to fashionable places throughout the United States.

In 1924, Aunt Lil married Percy Carpenter, a local banker dealing with real estate. In 1949 – 1950 they built a home on Carmona in Baldwin Hills. Percy was racially prejudiced; he said he would not consider having anyone except a white person living in the neighborhood. In 1951 Percy suffered a heart attack while working in the back yard and passed away. Within a very short time after Percy passed Aunt Lil helped her long time friends, helper and housekeeper Mr. and Mrs. Armoline, a black couple, buy the home across the street.

In 1954 Aunt Lil married George Gregory, a former friend of Percy's and continued to live there until she passed in 1971, and he in 1973.

Helen met William Cornell Greene Jr.; both attended the 24th St. School. The Greene family lived just a block away at 2415 S. Western while the family home at 1455 N. Hayworth was being built. Neither home is still standing. William was the son of cattle and copper magnate William Cornell Greene, whose business interests stretched from New York City to Cananea, Mexico and most of Southern Arizona. In 1925, Helen and Bill junior were married.

Helen and William lived in Cananea most of the time, though their two children, William Cornell Greene III, my father-in-law, and Florence Elaine Greene (Aunt Ducky) were born in Los Angeles.

On Christmas Day in 1928 John Stirk passed away. With both daughters



married and nothing pressing to do, Lillian stayed on at Gramercy Park until moving to Pennsylvania. Helen and William divorced in the mid-1930's, the now single mom moved her family to the community of Hermosa Beach where they rented a home until one was purchased in Manhattan Beach. Each of these homes is still standing, just as they were when Helen, Ducky and Bill lived there.

Aunt Ducky married Leonard Lucas in 1955. And in 1957, William Cornell Greene III, married Carol Louise Hofmann. Ducky and Ted, as we called him, did not have children. Bill and Carol had two children, but only William Cornell Greene IV survived passed infancy. In 1996, I became part of the Greene family marrying Bill Greene IV.°

I come from a pretty large family and Bill from a very small one. I could not understand the lack of information and really a lack of interest about the Stirk/Hargreaves side of his family. Knowing so much about my own family I wanted to know about more about my daughter's heritage. Over this past year I have asked questions, sought answers, and found and solved some mysteries. Some mysteries still linger. For now I am thrilled that 2448 Gramercy Park will ever remain as a testament to the craftsmanship of yesterday with the preservation efforts in the Historic West Adams District. ●



William Green (above photo, front row, fourth from left) met Helen Stirk (below photo, front row far right) at 24th Street School.



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SOLD:

Lafayette Square Classical 1920s - 1626 Virginia Road, David Raposa (agent for Buyer) - Welcome, Catherine Daly and Ron Burch

Grand Six-Unit Craftsman in University Park HPOZ, circa 1909, 2101 Bonsallo. David Raposa (agent for Buyers).

Congratulations, Lisa Schoening, Don Lynch and Peggy King!

Spanish Bungalow in Kinney Heights - Cute hidden gem - 2241

West 24th St. - Adam Janeiro (Buyer's agent). Welcome, Peter Albers

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Jefferson Park Bungalow - Charming duplex. 3781 Cimarron.

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Spacious Jefferson Park Craftsman Bungalow - 2221 West

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University Gateway Project

continued from page 1

California. According to an article in the Daily Trojan on December 1, 2004, the developers will provide housing for more than 1,600 USC students. The plan creates 421 undergraduate apartments housing 1,658 students and providing 770 parking spaces of which 470 will be on site. The additional 350 spaces will be derived from a USC covenant for off site parking from USC's "parking surplus." In addition there are plans for a 70,000 square foot bookstore and related USC retail, a 7,000 square foot restaurant, and 6,000 square feet of retail. There will be 300 parking spaces for the non-residential uses. The project is eight stories high, and requires a South Community Plan Amendment and Redevelopment Plan variances. The developer also is asking to waive an OPA (Owner Participation Agreement) to be signed by the developer, which is a standard requirement when projects require discretionary action to the redevelopment plan. (An OPA also requires CRA Board approval.)

There are many positive goals that this project fulfills including: student housing, commercial retail amenities, tax increments to CRA, union construction jobs, and jobs after construction. Unfortunately, an MND (mitigated negative declaration) is being circulated to review the environmental effects of this project. If an EIR (Environmental Impact Report) is issued rather than the proposed MND (Mitigated Negative Declaration – a lower level of environmental review) and the project is refined and improved due to a fair and open CEQA process, these positive aspects mentioned above will remain.

However, there are clear problems. First of all, while project proponents have been working on this project for four years, the community was not involved in the advance planning process. When asked during the PAC meeting who in the community Urban Partners had met with in developing this proposal, they responded they met with the Figueroa Corridor Business Improvement District (BID), which is not exactly a public organization. (And, a principal of Gateway Partners LLC heads the BID). At no time were community organizations, the neighborhood council, or residents involved in this planning process. As a result, the premises on which many of their conclusions rest are based on very limited data and input. And as there are significant changes and variances required, and this is not a by-right project, the lack of inclusion is not sound planning.

Many community stakeholders and organizations, including WAHA, noted at the public meeting and in subsequent correspondence with CRA that there are some major issues with the current proposal, including:

- CRA as lead agency is circulating an MND as the project's environmental clearance. A project of this scale, when it is a variance from the Redevelopment Plan, a variance of the height requirements, dismissal of the routine requirement of an OPA, elimination of existing Q conditions, an amendment of the South Los Angeles Community Plan, reduces setback requirements, (among other variances including a conditional use permit from the city) — all elemental changes in the development of the Hoover Project Area – would normally mandate an EIR.
- An Owner Participation Agreement should not be waived when it is routinely required from other developers seeking discretionary action from the Redevelopment Plan.
- The need for parking is grossly underestimated. The developer's parking assessment for the residential uses was purely derived by what City Code requires, not on factual information on the genuine need, resulting in parking spaces for fewer than half the expected student bed count.
- Massing and scale and its impacts on the Shrine Auditorium and other nearby properties are underestimated.

The project evaluation also ignored how what happens at Figueroa and Jefferson impacts a much greater area of potential impacts than Figueroa and the USC campus. Much of the overwhelming scale of the project design is based on future changes to the South Los Angeles Community Plan and variances to the Redevelopment Plan. Moreover, the developer's own web site indicated that in fact this four-acre project is Phase 1 of a three-phase, 10+-acre project, raising the issue of significant cumulative impacts from this and other developments.

This project brings with it fundamental changes to how the University Park area is developed. Initial comments on the MND were due in February 28, but the administrative record remains open for comment until the environmental clearance is considered at the public Agency Board meeting (tentatively scheduled for March 17) and certified. If you are concerned about this level of environmental review, or specific aspects of the proposed project, please do consider writing an individual letter requesting that an EIR be required. Add your own personal knowledge of impacts to traffic circulation, parking, aesthetics, historic resources and cumulative impact. Address letters to: Robert Manford, City Planner, CRA, 354 S. Spring Street, Suite 700, L.A., CA. 90013; fax 213-687-9546. ●



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If you frequent a local business — retail store, restaurant, service provider, etc. — ask them if they would like to offer a discount to WAHA members. Explain that they would benefit from the increased exposure to many local consumers, and would be listed monthly in the WAHA newsletter. Or, call me at 323-733-6869 and I would be happy to contact them. — Steve Wallis

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

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



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CLIP AND SAVE

WAHA'S "NO EXCUSES" 2005 CALENDAR

Don't miss out on all the fun – mark your calendars now (or post this one on your refrigerator door) for WAHA's advance-scheduled events. And watch this newsletter for more information, and more events, as the year goes by.

April

Wednesday, April 6 – WAHA Evening Stroll

Saturday-Sunday, April 9-10 – WAHA Home Improvement Day

May

Wednesday, May 4 – WAHA Evening Stroll

Saturday, May 14 – Historic Preservation Month Celebration: Black History in West Adams

June

Wednesday, June 1 – WAHA Evening Stroll

Saturday, June 4 – WAHA presents its Annual Spring Tour, "The Historic Bungalows of Jefferson Park: A Home Tour"

Saturday, June 11 – "Community Unity Day" and West Adams Boulevard street festival, co-sponsored by United Neighborhoods N.C. and Apostolic Home Assembly (WAHA is participating with a TBA Historic Mansions Tour)

July

Monday, July 4 – WAHA's Annual 4th of July Picnic

Wednesday, July 6 – WAHA Evening Stroll

September

Saturday, September 24 – Angelus-Rosedale Cemetery Tour

October

Saturday, October 15 – Sunday, October 23 – The annual Frank Lloyd Wright Building Conference comes to Los Angeles in October, along with an associated Los Angeles Architecture Festival, and WAHA is participating with a TBA walking tour of Kinney Heights.

December

Saturday, December 5 – Sunday, December 6 – WAHA's Annual Holiday Historic Homes Tours and Progressive Dinner

Calendar ✓

WAHA March-April Calendar

Saturday, March 12

St. Patrick's Celebration fundraiser for Casade Rojas/
Sunshine Mission

Thursday, March 17

Community Redevelopment Agency Board Meeting

Saturday, March 19

Easter celebration at Bennie H. Potter - West Adams Avenues
Park (Bring your kids to meet the Easter Bunny!)

Thursday, March 24

WAHA Board Meeting

Wednesday, April 6

WAHA Evening Stroll

Saturday and Sunday, April 9-10

WAHA Home Improvement Weekend

WAHA's "No Excuses" 2005 Calendar

West Adams Heritage Association is planning many fun and informative events this year, including a Spring Historic Homes Tour in Jefferson Park, Evening Strolls through West Adams and nearby neighborhoods, the annual Angelus-Rosedale Cemetery Tour, a party or two, and the annual Holiday Tour.

AND, MUCH, MUCH MORE!

Just to make it easy for you, we've published the calendar on page 15 (just inside this back cover).

The WAHA Newsletter is a publication of the West Adams Heritage Association. Members and supporters of WAHA are invited to submit articles to the Newsletter. Letters will be published subject to space constraints and will be cut for length if necessary. Articles will be published subject to acceptance by the editors of the WAHA Board. Advertising is subject to the approval of the publishers. Although the Association appreciates its many fine advertisers, the Association does not accept responsibility for claims made by advertisers. Services and products are not tested and appearance of advertising does not imply, nor does it constitute, endorsement by the West Adams Heritage Association. Copyright 2005. All rights for graphic and written material appearing in the newsletter are reserved. Contact Director of Publications for permission.



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