



OFFICE OF HISTORIC RESOURCES

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SURVEYLA DISCOVERIES: INTRIGUING HISTORIC RESOURCES IN WEST ADAMS, BALDWIN HILLS & LEIMERT PARK

The findings for SurveyLA, the Los Angeles Historic Resources Survey, continue to be posted on the SurveyLA web site at www.preservation.lacity.org/survey/reports. The latest results to be posted cover the West Adams-Baldwin Hills-Leimert Community Plan Area. These results also coincide with this fall's release of the Draft New Community Plan for this area.

This article is the second in a series of features on some of the interesting "finds" from SurveyLA. The West Adams community has long been recognized as one of Los Angeles' most historic areas, with a high concentration of Historic Preservation Overlay Zones (HPOZs), or historic districts. While much of this area had been the subject of previous surveys for the HPOZs, SurveyLA found numerous



The 1931 Leimert Theatre, now the Vision Theatre, anchors historic Leimert Park Village

interesting individual resources and potential historic districts throughout the area.

The Leimert Theatre, now known as the Vision Theatre, an Art Deco movie theater built in 1931 that is an artistic anchor of the Leimert Park community.

The Ray Charles Residence at 3910 S. Hepburn Ave., originally built in 1945, which was his first residence in Los Angeles as his fame began to spread nationally.

The Ella Fitzgerald Residence at 3971 S. Hepburn Ave., just down the street, where the renowned singer lived from 1957 to 1980.

The Fifth Avenue Christian Church, at 1426 S. 5th Avenue, a rare surviving church from this time period,
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DWP BUILDING BECOMES LOS ANGELES' NEWEST HISTORIC-CULTURAL MONUMENT

The Los Angeles City Council on September 21 approved downtown Los Angeles' Department of Water and Power (DWP) Building, now also known as the John Ferraro Building, as Historic-Cultural Monument #1022.

The Cultural Heritage Commission and City Council found the DWP Building significant based on multiple criteria of the Cultural Heritage Ordinance. First, the building is important to the history and development of Downtown Los Angeles, representing the district's growth and evolution through the post-war era. In addition, it reflects the DWP's role in creating the infrastructure that enabled the phenomenal post-

World War II growth of Los Angeles. The building also embodies the characteristics of Corporate International Style architecture, and is a notable work of Albert. C. Martin & Associates, one of Los Angeles' most prominent architectural firms.

The building retains its original form, detailing and integrity with very few alterations. Its design emphasized its structure as an open frame, with concrete floor slabs extending well outside the glass enclosure, highlighting its system of horizontal planes. The windows are set in and become effectively invisible, especially at night when interior

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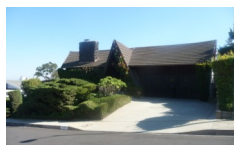
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with Queen Anne and Gothic Revival design features.

Arlington Heights Elementary School at 1700 S. Bronson Ave., an excellent example of a PWA Moderne elementary school from 1936, designed by noted architect Roland Coate.



4124 S. Cloverdale Ave., an unusual Tiki/Polynesian inspired single-family home from 1961.

4245 W. Don Alanis Pl., an excellent example of a Mid-Century Modern residence, beautifully sited and executed, and an early work of noted architect Raymond Kappe.



4232 S. Don Alegre Pl., an excellent example of a Mid-Century Modern residence designed by Case Study architect Harold Zook.

4346 W. Victoria Park Pl., an excellent and very intact example of Prairie Style architecture, which is uncommon in Los Angeles.



1907 S. La Cienega Blvd., 3601 W. Slauson Ave. and 3312 W. Florence Ave. (left) - all exemplary, intact examples of 1960s Googie car washes with dramatic pylons and signs.

Virginia Road School, an exceptional 1925 Renaissance Revival style elementary school pre-dating the 1933 Long Beach earthquake.



3111 W. 71st St., a Craftsman home from 1903 that represents one of the only intact residential buildings in Hyde Park, prior to its consolidation into the City of Los Angeles.

5615 W. Homeside Ave., a Folk Victorian house built in 1890, which is a rare intact example of 19th century development in this area.

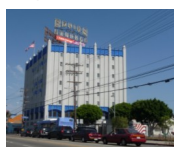


Barker Brothers Furniture at 3700 W. Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd., a 1949 Late Moderne freestanding retail building de-



signed by noted architect Claud Beelman, and significant for its role in the postwar commercial development of Crenshaw and Baldwin Hills.

St. Paul's Presbyterian Church, at 5100 W. Coliseum St., a 1956 Mid-Century Modern church designed by noted architect Robert Alexander, also the architect of adjacent Village Green.



Bekins Moving and Storage Company at 1306 S. Crenshaw, a 1928 amalgam of the Gothic Revival and Art Deco styles.

Phillip's Bar-B-Q at 2617 S. Crenshaw Blvd., a rare example of a restaurant with mimetic architecture, in the shape of a rustic barn.



The Kokusai Theatre at 3016 S. Crenshaw Blvd., a neighborhood theater, originally constructed in 1941, associated with the influx of the Japanese American community into the Crenshaw district in the post-World War II period.

The Forum Theatre at 4058 W. Pico Blvd., built in 1923, an excellent example of a Beaux Arts neighborhood motion picture theatre from Hollywood's golden age.



The Catch One Discotheque at 4069 W. Pico Blvd., constructed in 1925, reportedly the first LGBT African American disco in the nation; its owner, Jewel Thais-Williams, opened a medical clinic in the same building to provide medical care to disenfranchised LGBT/African American patients.



Angelus Funeral Home, at 3875 S. Crenshaw Blvd., a noted example of Mid-Century Modernism with Hollywood Regency stylistic influences, designed by noted architect Paul R. Williams.



The Tom Bradley Residence at 3807 S. Welland Ave., a Minimal Traditional home that was the residence of the first African American Mayor of the City of Los Angeles at

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the time of his election.

Historic Districts



The Arlington Palms Historic District, consisting of 67 residential buildings, constructed between 1908 and 1930, with deep setbacks and a distinctive streetscape, including consistently spaced, tall palm trees in combination with shorter, broad palms.

The Baldwin Hills Estates Historic District, a neighborhood of 832 homes, of which 85% were identified as contributing structures to the potential district, which is an excellent example of a post World War II residential subdivision, with terraced lots offering commanding views of the Los Angeles basin.



The Baldwin Plaza-Sunset Fields Historic District, one of the city's largest and best-preserved collections of Mid-Century Modern apartment houses, mostly built from 1954-62, with abundant subtropical landscaping and buildings with tropical names such as "The Bahamas," "The Tahiti," "Newport," "The Lanai," "The Islander," and "Coco Capri."



The Crenshaw Village Historic District, which includes approximately 100 multi-family buildings all built in 1948 as part of a rigorous post-war construction campaign aimed at eliminating the housing shortage; the complex is also significant for its association with noted Los Angeles developer Paul Trousdale.



The Leimert Park Historic District, which includes about 1,200 buildings built between 1927 and 1945. Leimert Park represents an important example of a planned residential community, developed by Walter H. Leimert, with buildings in a variety of styles, including Spanish Colonial Revival and Streamline Moderne. The neighborhood is also significant as an early community that broke through racially-restrictive housing practices, becoming home to African American and Japanese American communities; Leimert Park Village, the neighborhood's commercial district, became a significant African American cultural center.



The Crenshaw Seinan Historic District, which includes 71 properties on Crenshaw Boulevard, Bronson and Norton Avenues between Coliseum and 39th Streets, and significant for its association with the Japanese American community that settled here in the years following World War II; the neighborhood features visual characteristics and landscaping evocative of Japanese design traditions.



What Is SurveyLA?

SURVEYLA: THE LOS ANGELES HISTORIC RESOURCES SURVEY PROJECT is the first-ever comprehensive inventory of our city's historic resources.

The survey findings will have a multiplicity of benefits and uses: it will help direct future growth, shape the revision of Los Angeles' 35 Community Plans, streamline environmental review processes, provide opportunities for public education, assist in disaster planning, and spur heritage tourism and the marketing of historic neighborhoods and properties.

The J. Paul Getty Trust and the City of Los Angeles have entered into a grant agreement for SurveyLA under which the Getty has committed to providing up to \$2.5 million to the project, subject to matching requirements by the City. Field surveys and evaluations will occur through 2013. The Getty Conservation Institute (GCI) is also providing technical and advisory support for SurveyLA. For more information visit the SurveyLA website, www.SurveyLA.org.



DWP BUILDING BECOMES LOS ANGELES' NEWEST HISTORIC-CULTURAL MONUMENT

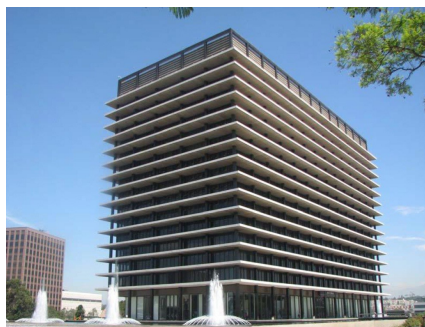
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illumination further emphasizes the building's horizontal lines.

As an all-electric facility, the building proudly announced its purpose and design when its internal illumination was originally lit at night, shining like a lantern for all to see, especially from the nearby freeways. The reflecting pool and fountains, with its gold lights and dramatic sprays, unmistakably linked the building and the agency to the precious resource that made Los Angeles possible. The 625 foot by 350 foot reflecting pool, creating a moat around the building, was designed to hold 1,250,000 gallons of water.

The DWP Building's prominent site places its Modern design on one of the most visible locations in Los Angeles. Given the equally central role of water and the DWP in the history of Los Angeles, the building stands as an effective symbol of the city itself. As the first high-rise building atop Bunker Hill, it occupies the key site on the west side of the major civic axis balanced by Los Angeles

City Hall (for which the Albert C. Martin firm had been part of the project team almost forty years earlier). Its high-rise form is also balanced by the adjacent Music Center, with the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion (completed in 1964 and constructed concurrent to the DWP Building) and the Ahmanson Theater (completed in 1967) set perpendicular to the main Civic Center



An exterior view of the DWP Building (HCM #1022, 1965). 111 N. Hope St.



An interior view of the DWP Building

axis.

On the interior, the building lobby is a grand, double-height space where the main office for customer service was originally located and where DWP customers can still pay their bills. The floor of the main lobby is surfaced in the same square granite pavers utilized for the exterior rectangular plaza surrounding the tower. A distinctive spiral staircase toward the rear of the lobby, leading to a lower level, is composed of a series of wedge-shaped, granite treads.

The building was also noted for its use of new technology: its heating, air conditioning and lighting systems were experimental and all interconnected. The modular ceiling systems combined lighting and air conditioning functions in a single unit and supplied conditioned air to the room while also exhausting air from the same fixture and removing heat generated by the fluorescent lamps and ballasts.

OHR ASSISTS IN PRESERVATION OF VENICE POST OFFICE

To facilitate the transfer of the now-closed Venice Post Office to a preservation-minded buyer, Hollywood producer Joel Silver, the OHR has agreed to enter into a preservation covenant, ensuring that the building will be preserved in accordance with historic preservation standards. OHR staff joined Mayor Villaraigosa and Silver on October 10 at a groundbreaking ceremony and press conference celebrating the building's renovation.

The former Venice Post Office building was designed under the supervision of U.S. Treasury Architect Louis A. Simon and dedicated in 1939. In 1940, the federal government commissioned

artist Edward Biberman to create a mural for the post office lobby, for placement over the postmaster's office. Completed in 1941, the "Story of Venice" mural depicted the early history of Venice, including a portrait of Abbot Kinney framed by the canals he built, a wooden rollercoaster that once stood at the Venice Pier, and oil derricks.

The Post Office building became a cherished community landmark, in part because it is situated at a prominent site in the community, on Windward Circle, at the corner of Windward

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SURVEYLA MOVES FORWARD, ADDS TO CONTEXT STATEMENT

SurveyLA is making its way through the city and field surveys are wrapping up in several Community Plan Areas in the south San Fernando Valley including Sherman Oaks-Studio City-Toluca Lake-Cahuenga Pass, Encino-Tarzana, and Canoga Park-Winnetka-Woodland Hills-West Hills. Surveyors are recording resources relating to early development histories of these communities as well as those evidencing Post WWII growth and development. Now surveyors are ramping up to begin work in Brentwood-Pacific Palisades, Bel Air-Beverly Crest, and Westchester-Playa del Rey.

In addition to these in-progress surveys, the following Community Plan Areas have been completed.

- Baldwin Hills-West Adams-Leimert Park
- South Los Angeles
- Southeast Los Angeles
- Central City North
- West Los Angeles
- Palms-Mar Vista-Del Rey
- San Pedro
- Wilmington-Harbor City
- Harbor Gateway

The survey teams are also undertaking final edits and reviews on the surveys for Hollywood and Sunland-Tujunga.

As survey data is compiled, the OHR is working on posting the reports at <http://www.preservation.lacity.org/survey/reports>.

By early 2013, the OHR plans to have survey data available to the public in a searchable online format. SurveyLA findings are first and foremost used as a planning tool to provide information to make informed decisions regarding historic resources. No properties identified in the survey results are designated or subject to any type of review under the City's historic preservation ordinances. And if you know of any properties we missed, particularly those that may have important cultural associations, we welcome your input! Since surveys are an ongoing process, we may add to the findings at any time.



As part of its work in Central City North, SurveyLA documented the Lung Kong Ting Yee Association (1949) at 989 N. Broadway

While the field surveys progress, the OHR is developing the associated citywide Historic Context Statement which ties important resources to themes significant in the historic, cultural, and architectural history of Los Angeles. This year the OHR received a Certified Local Government grant from the State Office of Historic Preservation to develop themes relating to Los Angeles' rich Chinese American history. This context is the first in a number of ethnic/cultural themes that will be completed for SurveyLA over the next couple of years and will serve as a model for those to follow in both structure and format.

While it is common practice in the preservation field to write "stand alone" narratives when developing contexts for ethnic/cultural themes, this approach does little to convey the complexity of settlement and migration patterns in Los Angeles, which continue to the present day. Here, varying groups have settled and moved throughout the city over time, leaving unique and layered imprints on the built environment. Because of these overlapping histories, and multiple uses of places over time, SurveyLA's ethnic/cultural themes are purposely integrated throughout the context statement and not separated out as stand alone narratives. This approach provides a fresh perspective on developing these themes within the larger framework of a citywide context statement.

Only a handful of resources in Los Angeles relating to Chinese American history are designated and there are no written comprehensive historic contexts relating to this history. Important themes to be developed will cover an almost 100-year period of time and reflect the history and development of the Chinatown area as well as citywide contributions of Chinese Americans to Los Angeles' social and cultural history. This focused context will hopefully uncover previously unknown resources and provide a solid framework for evaluating their significance.

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HISTORIC-CULTURAL MONUMENT PROFILE: THE BROWN-GORSLINE HOUSE

The Brown-Gorsline House, built in 1878 in University Park, was approved as Historic-Cultural Monument #1021 on August 24. This one-story single-family residence was designed in the Victorian Italianate style, roughly square in plan. Significant interior spaces include 14-foot high ceilings, extensive wainscoting, built-ins, ornate plaster ceiling medallions, and cast iron fireplace mantels.



The Brown-Gorsline House (HCM #1021, 1878), 2626 Portland St.

The house was built for Thomas Bruen Brown, an attorney from a prominent Washington DC family. The home originally stood on an 11.7 acre property

Pueblo, and the Perry House (also 1876), now at Heritage Square.

and was moved to its current location in 1890 when Brown began to subdivide the property for residential development as the Belgravia Tract. The home was sold to the Gorsline family in 1934, which still owns the property.

Although original permit records for the home do not exist, its design has been attributed to noted architect Ezra Kysor, who also designed the Cathedral of St. Vibiana (1876), the Pico House (1869-70) at El

OHR ASSISTS IN PRESERVATION OF VENICE POST OFFICE

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Avenue and Main Street. The site was previously a lagoon which had been filled in when Venice was consolidated into the City of Los Angeles.

With an operating deficit of more than \$8 billion, the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) announced the closure of up to 10 percent of the nation's post offices last year. The Venice Post Office was among the first Southern California locations to close, and postal operations were consolidated at a nearby Venice postal annex. Local Venice stakeholders and the Los Angeles Conservancy began advocacy for the preservation of the building.

Fortunately, the USPS' efforts to sell the property were subject to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, which requires review of Federal "undertakings" affecting historic properties. To avoid a "Finding of Adverse Effect" under Section 106, the sale was to be accompanied by a preservation covenant ensuring future review of proposed alterations in accordance with preservation standards. When State legal restrictions precluded the State Office of Historic Preservation from accepting the covenant, the OHR agreed to step in to become the public agency that

would review future proposals for work on the Post Office building under the covenant.

Producer Joel Silver, who closed escrow on the Venice Post Office building in late August, comes to this project with significant preservation credentials, having restored Frank Lloyd Wright's Storer House in Hollywood and Auldbrass Plantation in South Carolina. Upon completion of the renovations, Silver will move his production companies —Silver Pictures and Dark Castle Entertainment— into the building. The *Lethal Weapon* and *The Matrix* producer has indicated his willingness to permit public access to the lobby several times per year through community events and tours.



Mayor Villaraigosa and Joel Silver get a close-up look at conservation work on the "Story of Venice" mural

rarily removed, treated in Zakheim's conservation studios, and then re-installed in its original wall space. Boto Design Architects is overseeing the building rehabilitation, with landscape design by Mia Lehrer and Associates; work is expected to be completed in approximately 18 months.