

The Pergola: Structure and Symbol

BY SHERRILL KUSHNER

In Palisades Park, atop the 100-foot sandstone bluffs rising from the beach, sits the pergola – a unique and storied structure that is synonymous with Santa Monica and, for that reason, is the centerpiece of the Conservancy’s logo.

The pergola is approximately 75 years old and, through its lattice-work panels, residents and visitors alike have enjoyed an



incomparable view of Santa Monica Bay for more than three generations. Its timber frame is reminiscent of the Arts and Crafts style of the early part of the 20th Century, and it sits on

land donated by the Santa Monica Land and Water Company in the northern end of the park.

When it was in danger of deteriorating twenty years ago, the pergola was dismantled, piece by piece. A new cement foundation was laid, and the intricate structure was then painstakingly reassembled.

The pergola was chosen for the Santa Monica Conservancy’s logo because this well-known and beloved landmark is symbolic of the architectural treasures that have been preserved from Santa Monica’s past – treasures that can still be enjoyed now... and long into the future.

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ENSURING THAT THE PAST HAS A FUTURE

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Revival Survival

BY SHERRILL KUSHNER

“We loved it the minute we walked in,” said Gerard Casale, who, with his wife Stephanie and their small children, moved from Malibu into the Pueblo Revival-style home at 710 Adelaide Place. “We were looking for a house with character and substance that didn’t require fixing up. This house had an Old World exterior with an upgraded interior.” Not long after they moved in, Casale applied for landmark designation. Within four months, the designation was granted.

The home, built in 1923, was designed by Robert Stacy-Judd and is the sole example of his work in Santa Monica. The house is two stories with rooflines simulating adobe construction, and one of its most outstanding features is the Mayan profile that distinguishes the principal window surrounds.

“Most of the exterior of the property,” according to the Landmarks Commission report, “appears relatively unaltered, retaining much of its architectural integrity.” That integrity reflects



period revival styles which grew in popularity after World War I. Pueblo Revival, specifically, imitated Native American dwellings of the Southwest, such as the Taos Pueblo in New Mexico.

Casale researched Stacy-Judd’s work and philosophy and discovered that the architect wrote a book in 1939 entitled *Atlantis: Mother of Empires* in which he made a connection between Atlantis and societies of past and present. Casale notes that Stacy-Judd was interested in the astrological effect of the moon

NEWS

Prop’d Up

BY PETER ALTSCHULER

Preservation has been preserved. Prop A, the anti-landmarks ballot initiative, was defeated by a coalition of homeowners and renters who clearly saw preservation as a community issue.

Voter “turnout” in this by-mail election was triple that of single-issue in-person balloting – 34% of registered voters returned ballots, though 49% of homeowners took part. Homeowner response was highest North of Montana, which has the highest number of single family homes, and provided the strongest support for the measure: 70% in favor. By contrast, Ocean Park, at the southern end of town, was most opposed: 71%.

Sunset Park, by a 2% margin, was the other neighborhood favoring Prop A, which would have required agreement by a property’s owners before a building could be given landmark status, making it virtually impossible to prevent the demolition of historically important structures. Historic districts would have required unanimous approval by all affected property owners.

For most of Santa Monica’s residents, however, it was clear that a victory for Prop A would have jeopardized the character of the city – with its mix of older and newer homes, apartments, and commercial buildings – and put the fate of their neighborhoods in the hands of developers, who sponsored the ballot initiative.

The Santa Monica and Wilshire Corridors and the Downtown/Pico neighborhood were the other areas that helped defeat Prop A... and ensure the enduring charm of the community.

rising and falling, as seen through or reflected on the windows of a structure. “It’s like Spanish style meets feng shui,” jokes Casale.

His motivation to landmark was two-fold: to preserve something that deserved to survive intact and to reap the economic benefits (landmark properties are eligible for reduced property taxes and the waiver of permit fees). “The landmarking process can be intimidating, but it was not as draconian as I expected,” says Casale. However, he does urge the Landmarks Commissioners to publicize the benefits of landmarking, streamline the process, and apply a consistent, organized protocol for applicants. [Editor’s Note: This is an ongoing point of discussion, which the Conservancy is working with the City to improve.]

Save the Date: July 27

LA MESA DRIVE HOUSE TOUR FEATURES ARCHITECTURAL MASTERWORKS

On July 27th from noon to 5 p.m., the Santa Monica and Los Angeles Conservancies are co-sponsoring Save Our Neighborhoods’ house tour on elegant La Mesa Drive.

Five outstanding homes, including the Oscar Niemeyer house profiled in the last issue of the Conservancy News, a John Byers home, a unique garden, and period furnishings will be featured. Tour proceeds will be used to pay the remaining expenses of Save Our Neighborhood’s successful effort to defeat Prop A, and excess funds will be donated to the Santa Monica Conservancy. Tickets are \$50 per person.

For more information or to volunteer to be a docent or tour assistant, please call 310.399.4692.



Historic Preservation Programs at USC

BY KEN BREISCH

[Editor's Note: Ken Breisch is a Santa Monica Conservancy board member who is also the Director of the Historic Preservation Program at the USC School of Architecture. The Summer program, the only one of its kind in California, was honored with a 2003 Preservation Award by the Los Angeles Conservancy.]

The School of Architecture at the University of Southern California offers a variety of classes in historic preservation aimed at students, professionals, and the general public. Best known among these are its Summer Short Courses. Entering their eleventh year, these classes, offered in late July, consist of fifteen days of lectures and field trips. They're intended to provide a general introduction to preservation and a way for professionals to refresh or expand their knowledge in specialized areas, such as law and planning, economics, documentation, the interpretation of cultural landscapes, or materials conservation.

Five years ago, the School of Architecture also established a Graduate Certificate in Historic Preservation and, last year, a full Master's Degree Program. While more academic, these programs are committed to practical, hands-on experience. As part of the course work, students have collaborated with local organizations on research and reports aimed at supporting historic preservation in L.A. Class projects over the past few years have included the production of "as-built" measured drawings of Frank Lloyd Wright's Freeman House and of the Breed Street Shul, a historic synagogue in Boyle Heights. USC students, on behalf of the L.A. Cultural Heritage Department, have also documented the original configuration of Simon Rodia's house at the Watts Towers; produced an introductory brochure about the history of the West Adams Neighborhood; and created, in collaboration with Latino high school students, a history workbook about West Adams for third and fourth graders.



USC preservation program students on a field trip in Exposition Park.

This year, a documentation class has been using a Getty Preserve L.A. Grant to produce a cultural landscape report on the Rose Garden in Exposition Park.

Since Greene and Greene's Gamble House in Pasadena and the Freeman House are both administered by the USC School of Architecture, students have been able to participate in the development of significant historic structures reports and rehabilitation plans for the preservation of these two important buildings. They can, as a result, personally contribute in a variety of ways to the ongoing success of these projects.

During its first decade, more than 400 individuals from across the state have attended USC's summer architecture program and several dozen have graduated with a Certificate in Historic Preservation. As part of their experience at USC, they have made contacts with outstanding professionals and institutions in the field and created networks and friendships that have helped to strengthen the preservation movement in California. For more information on any of these classes, please contact me at breisch@usc.edu.

Past Presence

BY PETER ALTSCHULER

California tends to work on a five year plan. If something isn't paying off in half a decade, it tends to be, like movie sets, torn down and replaced. That didn't happen on Third Street.

Santa Monica's only historic district stretches back 100 years, and it offers a glimpse of the City in its first surge of growth. Officially, Santa Monica is older by decades, but homes in Ocean Park were scarce until the land was subdivided in the 1880s, and the most active period of construction – on Third Street, at least – didn't start until 1902. In the succeeding ten years, 36 homes were erected inside the boundaries of the historic district, which includes all of Third Street between Ocean Park Boulevard and Hill Street; portions of Second Street between Ocean Park and Hill; minuscule, one-block-long Beach Street, which runs between Second and Third; and Hill Street between 2nd and 3rd.

BEGINNINGS

The house at 237 Beach is the oldest original structure in the district, dating from around 1880. The First Methodist Episcopal Church at 2621 Second St. is technically older, but it was moved to its present location (from Arizona and Fourth) in 1900. After that, the Hostetter house on the corner of Beach and Second and the house at 242 Beach date from 1893, and 245 Hill St. (currently the home of the minister of The Church In Ocean Park and her family) was erected in 1899. The houses on Third Street itself went up in the decade from 1902 to 1912.



The Moses Hostetter House which was built in 1893.

Of the 44 structures in the District, 37 are original, and 29 are in the California Bungalow style. Many feature open porches and have ample land around them offering light on all sides, views to rear yards, and a casual openness that is increasingly rare.

RESIDENT PROFILE

The streetscape is impressive in its style and, more and more, its prime condition, but it was always a working-class neighborhood. Compared to the architectural styles in other working-class sections of the City, such as nearby Sunset Park (developed in the decades after World War I), Third Street looks more upscale today. That's due, in part, to the preservation activities of homeowners who make those homes their primary residences.

Ironically, when the historic district was first proposed and approved in 1990, many of the properties had absentee landlords who leased out the houses to renters. With no interest in preservation (some owners were collecting lots in preparation for razing the homes and erecting a huge apartment complex), the area was visibly shabbier. Now, in a little over a decade, the houses – and the property values – have improved in the hands of owner occupants.

THE LANDMARK PROCESS

For those pioneers, landmarking took a great deal of fortitude. With input and assistance from the Conservancy, the outlook is good that the City will make the administrative side of historic preservation and landmark status far more streamlined. In fact, in correspondence with Suzanne Frick, the head of the Planning Department, and other members of the Planning staff, the City advises us that they are working diligently to improve staff training and are in the midst of a project to put the entire Historic Resources Inventory online, a process expected to be completed this summer.

Each property in the Inventory also has a specific DPR (Dept. of Recreation and Parks) Sheet that provides details, but they will not be included in the initial online database. For copies of the DPR Sheets, which you'd want if you're considering landmark status for your property, you can call Elizabeth Bar-El at 458-8341 or simply look them up at the Santa Monica Public Library.

Until the online version is available, a call to those individuals or a visit to the planner on duty at the public planning counter at City Hall can help you get assistance (and the DPR Sheet) for a particular address. For information on how you can help achieve these procedural improvements more quickly, contact the Conservancy.

New Members

- | | | |
|-------------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Hans Agneessens | Cheryl Lee | Suzanne Myer |
| Roger Genser | Doug McDermott | Michele Nasatir |
| Suzanne & Norbert Larky | David Moss | Henry Varney |

New Landmarks

BY PETER ALTSCHULER

In the last issue of the Conservancy News, there was a short article about a house on Raymond Ave., which had been purchased by a developer and restored to its period best. That house at #502 is now an official Santa Monica landmark.

It's joined by Santa Monica High's Barnum Hall, erected in 1938 during FDR's administration as a WPA project. The Streamline-Moderne building, which houses two Federal Arts Project works created by a Santa Monica artist, also served as the first Civic Auditorium.

Another Streamline-Moderne commercial structure is 507-517 Wilshire Blvd., erected in 1940. It has been home to many small businesses, but it spent its first 30 years as the LLO-DA-MAR Bowl, a bowling alley with a coffee shop, cock-



507-517 Wilshire



317 Georgina

tail lounge, and offices on the mezzanine. Saved from demolition last year, it is one of 105 structures in the Central Business District which took form in the 1920s as year-round residences went up north of Montana Ave. and east of 7th St.

Two other new landmarks – the Worrell Residence at 710 Adelaide Pl. and the McFadden Residence at 317 Georgina – were both identified in the 1985-1986 Historic Inventory (the first place to check the landmark potential of your property).

The Worrell Residence (see page 1) was home, in the late '40s, to Ferde Grofe, composer of the *Grand Canyon Suite* and arranger of Gershwin's landmark *Rhapsody in Blue*.

The most recent former occupants of the McFadden home left an equally lasting impact. Actor/producer Paul Michael Glaser's family lived there, and his wife, who died of AIDS, inspired the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation. Yet the house is remarkable for more than that. The asymmetrical Spanish Colonial home was built in 1923 for local entrepreneur Austin McFadden by Webber, Staunton, and Spaulding, who also designed the Casino on Catalina.