

West Adams Matters

Lights...Camera...Christmas: A Tinseltown Holiday in West Adams

"Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas" in Tinseltown splendor at the 19th Annual WAHA Holiday Historic Homes Tour & Progressive Dinner, on Saturday, December 3 and Sunday, December 4.

The house showcased in *Six Feet Under*, the residence used in the CBS TV series *Numb3rs*, and the former Busby Berkeley estate are among the featured properties on this year's Hollywood-themed holiday tour. Tour goers will also see the homes where such popular movies and TV series as *Cheaper by the Dozen*, *Poetic Justice*, and the pilot for the ABC series *Alias* were filmed.

Each of the homes will be decorated in holiday attire.

WAHA's traditional holiday tour features a sumptuous progressive dinner, with each course served in one of the featured properties. This year we are also scheduling a Sunday afternoon walking tour, in the same properties but without the food.

Ticket prices this year have stayed at last year's level - \$75 for non-members, \$65 for
(continued on page 8)



The Craftsman home from the CBS TV series Numb3rs dressed for the holidays

Tree Planting in Westmoreland Place

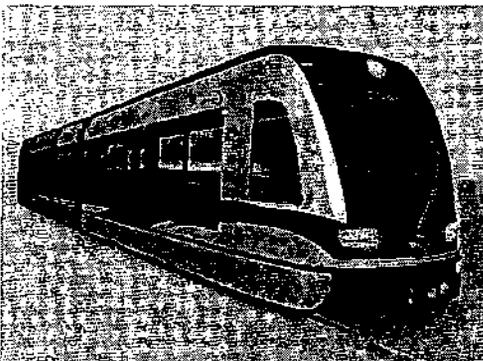
Saturday, November 12, 9 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Would you like to learn how to plant a tree, organize a neighborhood tree planting or witness a community in action? Come join us on **Saturday, November 12**, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., at the corner of 11th Street and Elden Avenue, in historic Westmoreland Place as 20 trees are planted throughout the neighborhood.

With funds from a Los Angeles Neighborhood Matching Fund (NMF) grant, and working in collaboration with TreePeople, volunteers from Leo Politi Neighborhood Association, parents and children representing Leo Politi Elementary School and several other neighborhood groups, will help plant Photinia fraseri trees, Camphor (Cinnamomum camphoras) trees and Mexican fan palms (Washingtonia robusta) along the 11th Street, Elden Avenue, Magnolia Avenue and Arapahoe Street parkways.

Originally named Westmoreland Place in 1903, this historic neighborhood is bound by Hoover Street, Pico Boulevard, Vermont Avenue and Olympic Boulevard. The neighborhood is home to residences built by noted Los Angeles architects John C. Austin, the firm Morgan & Walls, and Robert Hall Orr, and many of its Craftsman-influenced homes and Art Deco apartment buildings are still standing. And the neighborhood has been home to relatives of Phineas Banning and Hollywood stars such as

(continued on page 10)



Expo Line Light Rail Is Close to Fruition

Community Workshop, Wednesday, November 9 5-8 p.m.

The Mid-City/Exposition Light Rail Transit Project is the newest proposed extension of the 62-station Metro Rail system. In the works since the early 1990s, the light rail train route (once called "the Blue Line Extension but now searching for a new color-coded name) was originally envisioned as a route connecting Downtown to Santa Monica and the beach via the Exposition Right-of-Way.

Since 1999, the Metropolitan Transit Authority has had an interim plan in the works that would service much of the West Adams, USC, and Expo Park

(continued on page 4)

Table of Contents

COMMUNITY MATTERS	
Washington Boulevard Specific Plan	5
Clark Library Renovation	11
PRESERVATION MATTERS	
Preserving Public Spaces	6
IN THE GARDEN	
Tree Pruning 101	10
MEMBER DISCOUNTS	12
WAHA BOARD MEMBERS	14
WAHA CLASSIFIEDS	15

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Scorched Earth Again: Update on the Lucas House Demolition

There's news to report about the 1904 Lucas Residence, a historic North University Park Colonial Revival Victorian which lost its secondary structures to unpermitted demolition earlier this year.

First, the property has a new owner: WAHA member Ann Dorr. And second, two months after a July 20 public hearing, the City of Los Angeles Building & Safety Department has issued a ruling which applies the so-called "scorched earth" ordinance preventing new construction on the site.

The Lucas Residence is a "Contributing-Structure" to both the Menlo National Register Historic District (1987) and the North University Park Specific Plan (1983).

During the public hearing on the demolitions, Xavier Izquierdo, the property owner who is also a Century 21 real estate agent, stated he had not authorized the demolitions and claimed that his partner, Juanisto Ortiz, had hired a cleaning crew to rid the property of "fleas, flies and debris."

On September 27, Raymond Chan, the B&S Executive Officer, issued a letter describing the Department's investigation, and its determination that the demolitions violated the City's Municipal Code. The Department will record an affidavit with the County Recorder stating it would not issue permits for any new development on the site for a five-year period ending April 10, 2010.

The Code Section is commonly known as the "scorched-earth" ordinance because of the severity of the sanctions. Although the law was passed well over a decade ago, this is only the third time that it has been enforced against an owner for illegally demolishing an historic property. The first time was in 2003 against downtown developer Geoff Palmer for demolishing the 1887 Giese House on Bunker Hill. The second time was 2004 against the Sung Kwang Presbyterian Church for their demolition of the 1895 Stoddard House in the University Park Historic Preservation Overlay Zone.

However, in a unique bifurcated interpretation of the Ordinance, Chan added; "This action shall not prevent the issuance of permits to rehabilitate the remaining structure provided that any proposed work complies with any applicable University Park Specific Plan requirements and that approvals are obtained from the Department of City Planning due to the historical designation of the site within the Menlo Avenue / 29 Street Historic District."

When the enforcement of "scorched-earth" ordinance was initially proposed some community members where opposed because of their fear that the Lucas House would just sit and deteriorate. However all of the concerned historic preservation organizations which made comment for the record favored the bifurcated solution. The West Adams Heritage Association, North University Park Community Association, Adams Dockweiler Heritage Association, University Park HPOZ Board, LA Conservancy, and the H.P.O.Z. City Alliance along with City Councilman Bernard Parks' representative advocated for the application of the "scorched-earth" ordinance but allowing for the restoration. This decision allows for restoration of the Lucas Residence, an eventuality that will please the many preservation organizations involved in this case. ●

-- by Jean Frost

President's Message

by Jefferson Davis

Planting Trees

When I was in the sixth grade, my class planted a row of Maple trees at the entrance to my grammar school. These tiny little saplings were cared for over the years by the following classes and today stand over 50 feet tall. I can not tell you how much pride I have every time I drive up to my old school and gaze at that magnificent stand of greenery.

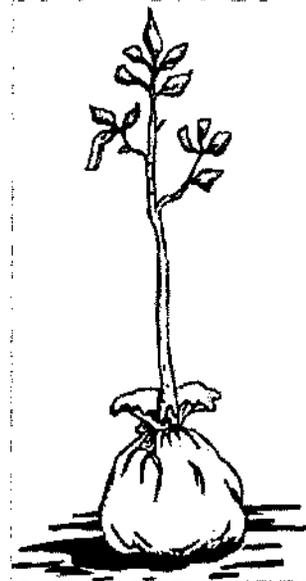
Trees are very important to our neighborhood. They provide shade to cool our houses, leaves to clean our air, and buffers to dampen the city noise. A row of trees can beautify the most downtrodden street. Here in West Adams, many sidewalk tree specimens have disappeared due to their lifespan, the encroachment of development, and just plain neglect.

What can you do to bring back these wonderful trees along our sidewalks? Get involved. Westmoreland Place, one of the newest neighborhoods to join WAHA, is hosting a tree-planting event in conjunction with TreePeople, a local tree planting organization (www.Treepeople.org). Come learn everything you need to know about trees and how to organize your own event for your neighborhood. Bring the kids! Come see what a community in action looks like.

By participating in this event, I can promise that for years to come it will inspire pride in you and your family whenever you pass this stand of trees that you help plant.

So, I hope to see you at Westmoreland Place on Saturday morning, November 12, 9 a.m. to 1pm. We'll gather on the corner of 11th and Elden, and then dig in.

Jefferson Davis can be reached via e-mail, jeffdavis@yahoo.com



Historic West Adams House Destroyed in Third Suspicious Fire Two Firefighters Suffer Serious Injuries in Blaze

by Leslie Evans

At 4:30 in the morning of September 16 fire broke out in the vacant 4,486 square foot 1902 Victorian home at 1655 West Adams Blvd., just east of Normandie Avenue. In a few minutes fire engines from seventeen Los Angeles fire companies with some 80 firefighters were on the scene as well as six ambulances and three separate Arson Squad units, all under the direction of Assistant Fire Chief Jeffery Mottram.

The flames brought terrified residents out of their beds at three or four houses on 25th Street, which backs up to the burning house, where people in their nightclothes dragged out garden hoses and began wetting down their roofs and fences, which were already charring from the heat. Also at risk were the live-in residents of a home for mentally ill people that abuts the 1655 house to the west.

At the height of the blaze, the west wall of the house collapsed on two firemen, who were trapped in the flaming wreckage. Rescue crews dug them out, but not before one had a broken leg, arm, and wrist, and the other, according to a report by Fire Department public relations officer Jim Wells, "suffered first degree burns to his chin, left ear, and substantial bumps and bruises." Both were transported to California Hospital where they were listed in serious condition.

The fire and the injuries to firemen were reported in the Los Angeles Times and on both KNBC (Channel 4) and KCAL (Channel 9) TV.

The house at 1655 W. Adams had stood vacant since two separate fires in 1992 had gutted the upper stories. Bad luck involving fires seems to have dogged the property owner, Angele Lang, for many years. Previously she owned a two-story Craftsman house at 2632 S. Raymond Avenue. Following a long altercation with her tenants in that building, in which the tenants secured a court order to keep Ms. Lang off the property on a claim of harassment and she and the tenants filed lawsuits against each other, the house was burned in a suspicious fire on April 1, 1991. That house remained unrepaired for the following five years until it was demolished after a city abatement order. It is now an empty lot.

The following year her rental property at 1655 West Adams burned, twice. Then, in May 1998, there was yet another suspected arson fire at a home Angele Lang owned, at 2633 Van Buren Place, which had been vacant at that time for a few

(continued on page 12)

Community Matters

Expo Light Rail

continued from page 1

area, linking these communities with other light rail transit to Hollywood, the San Fernando Valley, Pasadena, and Long Beach.

Current plans call for a 9.5-mile line extending along the Metro-owned Exposition right-of-way from the existing Metro Rail station at 7th/Metro Center in downtown Los Angeles to Venice/Washington in Culver City, with an initial segment constructed at least to Vermont Avenue adjacent to Exposition Park. The Mid-City/Exposition Light Rail Transit Project will include eight to nine new stations plus upgrades to existing stations, providing up to eleven stations for the length of the initial segment of the route to Culver City. The alignment will primarily be at-grade. The Metro Board's vision and intent is eventually to complete the light rail line to Santa Monica.

PROJECT PROCESS AND SCHEDULE

When Metro began work on the Mid-City/Westside Transit Corridor Study six years ago, its first phase included evaluation of a list of transit alternatives for the Westside. After considerable analysis and additional stakeholder input, light rail was adopted for the Exposition Corridor as the Locally-Preferred Alternative (LPA), and a Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Report (DEIS/R) was prepared. Thousands of comments on the DEIS/R were received and recorded, and have been incorporated into the next steps. Preliminary Engineering Design, which commenced in January 2003, is scheduled for completion in 2005.

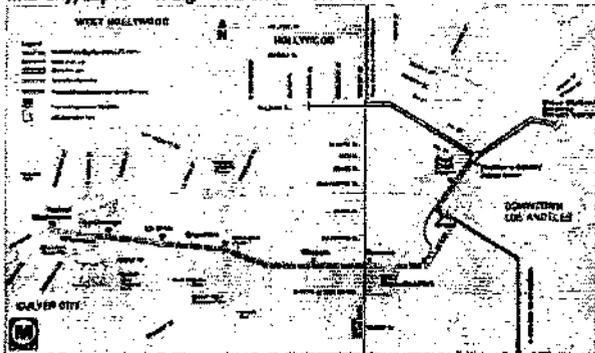
The Final Environmental Impact Statement/Report (FEIS/R) is now completed and public meetings were scheduled to provide the public an opportunity to provide comments. There is one community workshop still slated on **Wednesday, November 9, from 5-8 pm** in Exposition Park at the California Science Center, Muses Room, Wallis Annenberg Building.

Written comments, accepted until November 28, should be sent to Anthony Loui, Mid-City/Exposition LRT Project Manager, Metro, One Gateway Plaza, Los Angeles, CA 90012 or e-mailed to louia@metro.net.

The light rail will have two stops directly servicing the University of Southern California and Exposition Park facilities, and several more stops in the Jefferson Park-Leimert Park-Crenshaw neighborhoods.

One station of MTA's Mid-City/Exposition Light Rail Transit Project will be near the northeast side of the University Park Campus. The other will be located by the southwest corner of campus near Exposition Boulevard and Vermont Avenue.

Mid-City/Exposition Light Rail Transit Corridor



It is not yet determined whether the route will swing into Downtown along Hill Street or Flower Street. USC and some stakeholder businesses and institutions along the Figueroa Corridor would prefer the Flower Street Alignment because they think it would serve more people since the street currently hosts more activity centers than Hill Street. The Hill Street would yield a travel time that is five minutes longer (considered eons to transit planners) but would better serve Trade Tech. "Trip times must be taken into account as potential riders might decide to drive their cars if the trains take too long from point A to point B," Bingham Cherrie, associate vice president of planning for Capital Construction Development and former USC official, told the Daily Trojan student newspaper.

The university has also asked that the light rail be treated, in effect, as a subway near the campus. USC wants the tracks for the preferred option on Flower to be built below ground passing through the Flower-Exposition, Figueroa-Exposition and USC Pardee Way-Exposition intersections, Cherrie said. The primary concern of the university administration and trustees is the disruption in connectivity and aesthetics between the University Park campus and Exposition Park the line could create if it is built above ground. "Currently, the respective parks represent more than 300 acres of greenspace in the inner city of Los Angeles," Cherrie wrote in an e-mail to the Daily Trojan. "We are concerned that such a division will affect both campuses - the museums and Rose Garden to the south and academic and residential buildings to the north."

Going underground is a far more expensive alternative, and the MTA is still trying to decide whether it can afford the Flower Street route as a result. The agency has asked USC to contribute to the added costs.

The other key environmental concern occurs as the route travels along Exposition west through residential neighborhoods that were built quite close to the train tracks. "Reach out and touch someone" will take on new meaning for those property owners with residences facing the train. The EIR discusses some of the proposed mitigations, but those with concerns and ideas to help solve these problems should respond in writing to the document.

In any case, now that it looks as if this light rail project is moving forward, longtime observers like Cherrie hope it will serve not just workforce commuters but also students and leisure travelers. "As the freeways become more congested, rail transit will become more attractive," Cherrie wrote. ●

Community Matters

Washington Boulevard Specific Plan

The United Neighborhoods Neighborhood Council (UNNC) and community "stakeholders" (residents, business owners and property owners) are currently working together to create and implement a proposed Specific Plan for the Washington Boulevard Corridor between Normandie and Crenshaw.

Specific Plans are land use tools utilized throughout Los Angeles to help create development that is compatible with existing uses and the character of distinct neighborhoods, to enhance economic vitality, and to protect communities from nuisance uses and visual blight.

In June, 2004, the UNNC Governing Board passed a related "Vision Statement" for our community's



commercial corridors, which envisions in part a "pedestrian-friendly, transit-friendly, green, sustainable, livable urban village that is sensitive to historic preservation" for Washington Boulevard and other streets, such as Jefferson, Western, and Pico. Then in September of 2004, UNNC voted to support the concept of a Specific Plan for Washington Boulevard.

Now a Task Force is meeting regularly to prepare a proposal. If you are interested in the future of Washington Boulevard and would like to get involved, please e-mail Task Force chair Stevie Stern at unitedneighborhoods@yahoo.com.

The Task Force also has been visiting neighborhood groups and block clubs in October to present the initial ideas and proposal. If you have a meeting planned and would like to have a presentation this month so your neighbors can learn more about this, please do contact Stevie. ●

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Andrews Place. - David Raposa (Seller's agent)

Adams Normandie Craftsman – 1616 West 25th St. -- Jane Harrington

(Buyer's agent)

Jefferson Park Bungalow – 2340 West 30th Street – David Raposa (Buyer's agent)

SOLD:

Craftsman Bungalow with very nice historical detail in the Chas. Victor Hall

Tract. 2 BD, 1 BA, den. 3112 Brighton. \$450,000 - Jane Harrington (Buyer's &

Seller's agent) - Congratulations, Victor & Roberta Quiroz

Avenues Craftsman Fixer - 2508 9th Avenue. David Raposa (Buyer's agent) --

Welcome, Derek Ritchie & Jamie Foley

Boyle Heights Craftsman - Adam Janeiro (Buyer's agent) - Congratulations,

Erick Lopez & Leah Ebnange

Highland Park Artist's Retreat - 1212 El Paso Drive. \$495,000 - Adam

Janeiro (Buyer's agent)

Adams Normandie Bungalow - 1618 West 23rd St. -- Jane Harrington

(Buyer's agent) -- Welcome, Christy & Brendan Louie

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Preservation Matters

PRESERVING PUBLIC SPACES

The neighborhood council representing the section of West Adams that stretches from the 110 Freeway to Western has taken a stand on preserving public buildings and spaces for public use.

On October 6, NANDC, the Empowerment Congress North Area Neighborhood Development Council, voted to support two resolutions, supporting both the retention of the Exposition Park Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune Library structure and the Old Firehouse No. 18 structure as community spaces.

A new library is being built about two miles from the current structure on South Vermont. Although City officials have proposed selling the building at market rate for, presumably, commercial use, NANDC conducted several public meetings of its own and determined that, at least from its stakeholders' perspectives, it is more important to continue the facility's life as a community public structure.

The proclamation reads in part:

"We, the Governing Board of the Empowerment Congress North Area Neighborhood Development Council... do hereby proclaim our support for preserving the Exposition Park Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune Library structure as a community space. ...

"Whereas, a recent survey of local residents, conducted by the Committee to Save Bethune for Community Use; confirms the demand of residents that the Bethune structure be maintained as a public space that serves the immediate community. 100% of the residents surveyed favored retaining the building for community services such as after-school programs for area youth, including tutoring, mentoring, computer classes, job training, and adult education classes.

"Whereas, for more than 30 years the Bethune Library has provided a safe environment for children and adults to learn and explore the world, and whereas, the loss of a low-cost, no-cost public facility which serves

the overwhelming and well documented needs of this community will be a heavy blow to those living in the immediate vicinity.

"Now, therefore, we proclaim our support and strongly urge and encourage unity and cooperation from Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, Councilmember Bernard C. Parks, Councilmember Ed Reyes and the Board of Library Commissioners. We ask that a remedy be found that preserves the Exposition Park Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune Library structure as a community space."

In addition, NANDC adopted a similar proclamation supporting the preservation of the historic firehouse, which is a Los Angeles Cultural Historic Monument located at 2616 South Hobart, as a community space, for similar reasons. The resolution reads in part:

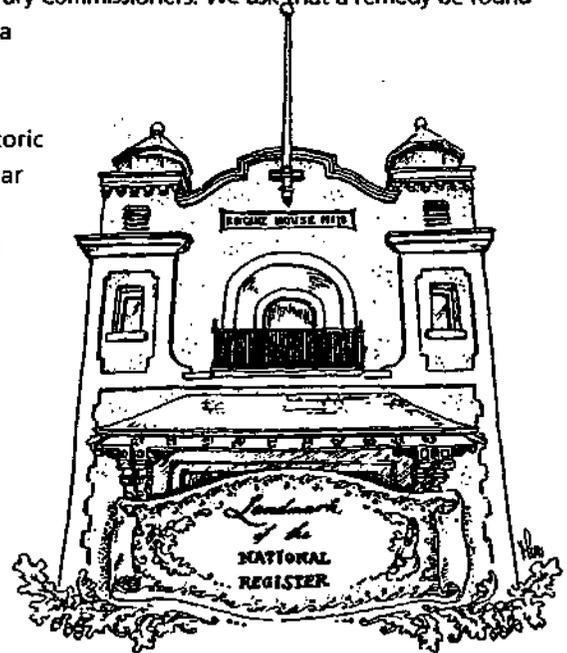
"Whereas, during the Charette held on Sunday, August 17th, 2005 conducted by the Community Redevelopment Agency and attended by Councilperson Bernard Parks, participants expressed unanimous support for preserving the structure for community use. Further, participants unanimously rejected the notion that the property be subdivided or used to develop housing.

"Whereas, Engine House No. 18 was added to the National Register of historic places in 1982 and it is a Mission Revival style building designed by renowned architect John Parkinson. The age and character of the structure are symbolic of the history and heritage of Los Angeles and specifically West Adams, Jefferson Park, and Exposition Park neighborhoods. The structure and adjoining property have served the people of this community since 1904 and should be allowed to continue this mission. Public access to historic buildings of this type must be maintained to insure their preservation.

"Whereas, Engine House No. 18 holds a value to this community far above the real estate market value.

"Further, there is a need for meeting space, arts space and office space for the use of Block Clubs, neighborhood associations, the Neighborhood Council, and other community groups. The cost to create such a new structure would be far above the cost needed to maintain Fire House No. 18 in this mission. Public access and control of this property must continue to meet the needs of the community.

"Now, therefore, we proclaim our support and strongly urge and encourage unity and cooperation from the Community Redevelopment Agency, Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, Councilmembers Bernard C. Parks and Ed Reyes. We ask that a remedy be found that preserves Engine House No. 18 property as a community space." ●



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A Tinseltown Holiday in West Adams

continued from page 1

WAHA members. The special walking tour will be priced at \$40 per person. We mailed out invitations with sign-up details in early October. If you lost yours, you may visit the WAHA website, www.WestAdamsHeritage.com to download the return form. We do expect this tour to sell out, so send in your form right away if you haven't done so already. **PLEASE NOTE: ADVANCE TICKET SALES ONLY — NO WALK-INS!**



Busby Berkeley's former estate, now known as the Peace Awareness Labyrinth & Gardens at the Guasti Villa, lit up for the holiday season.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

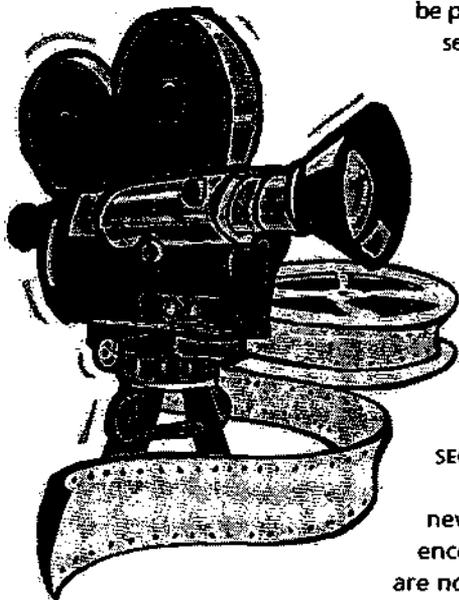
As always, this year's Holiday Tour is WAHA's biggest volunteer event. By the time the weekend is over, we will have thanked, literally, hundreds of volunteers who have served as docents, tour guides, greeters, reservations and check-in team, logistics managers, house captains, kitchen captains and assistants (and, yes, dishwashers), food servers, researchers, costumers, decorators, babysitters, schleppers, and clean-up crew. We hope one of those volunteers will be YOU. If you would like to volunteer please call this year's volunteer coordinator, SeElcy Caldwell at 323-292-8566. Please don't hesitate to call – we will need all the helping hands we can muster, and especially for

newcomers this is a great way to meet neighbors and fellow preservationists.

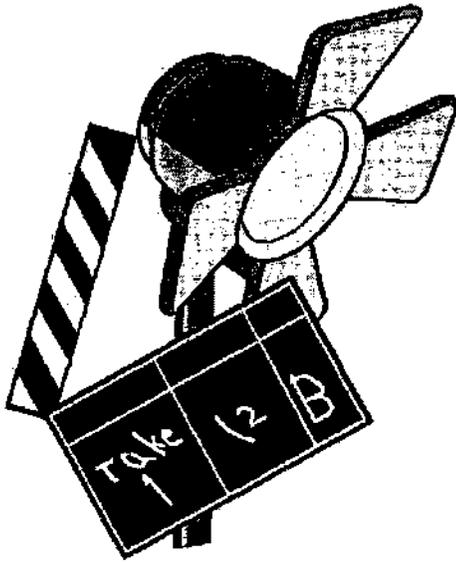
Please be assured, we try to pay great attention to the care and comfort of our volunteers. There will be plenty of food, plus work breaks (well, we hope!), and time set aside for all volunteers to tour a selection of this year's houses. Over the years, WAHA members have often invited their out-of-area friends and work colleagues to join them as volunteers (that is, if they aren't participating as paying guests), and we encourage you to do this as well. Please contact SeElcy if you'd like to volunteer as a docent, in kitchen and/or food prep capacities, check-in or logistics. If you are available to help decorate, or for other advance art and creative tasks, please contact Laura Meyers (323-737-6146). Jacqueline Hill (323-766-8842) would be able to use your help if you are available during the day in the week before the tour to do pick-ups and deliveries to the various tour houses.

Lindsay Wiggins is handling shepherd assignments. Contact her at 323-733-1246 or, BETTER, via e-mail wigginsLA@comcast.net. Please note that, as we have done in recent years, shepherds will be required to attend a mandatory training, tentatively scheduled for Sunday afternoon, November 20. AND, we will be calling on you to help out with additional tasks. **ALL SHEPHERDS ARE REQUIRED TO SIGN UP FOR A SECOND VOLUNTEER "GIG."**

The Holiday Tour is WAHA's major annual fundraising event (which pays for this newsletter as well as our many preservation support and advocacy activities). We encourage all of our members to take the tour – and bring their friends – on the day they are not volunteering. ●



LAST CALL FOR TINSELTOWN HOLIDAY TOUR TICKETS!



Holiday Tour & Progressive Dinner: \$75 (WAHA members: \$65 per person) – Saturday, December 3: Docent-led tours on the half-hour from 3 p.m. through 6 p.m. Sunday, December 4: Docent-led tours on the half-hour from 4 p.m. through 6 p.m.

Holiday Walking Tour (Sunday afternoon only): \$40 – Timed-tours depart every twenty minutes from Noon through 3 p.m.

To order tickets, please send a check made payable to "WAHA" to: WAHA Holiday Tour, 2209 Virginia Road, Los Angeles, CA 90016 Please include an e-mail address or phone number for confirmation.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, please call the WAHA Reservations Hotline at 323-732-4223, e-mail wahaholiday@aol.com, or visit www.WestAdamsHeritage.com.

Please note: NO WALK-INS ALLOWED! We will NOT be selling tickets on the day of event. This tour DOES sell out. ●

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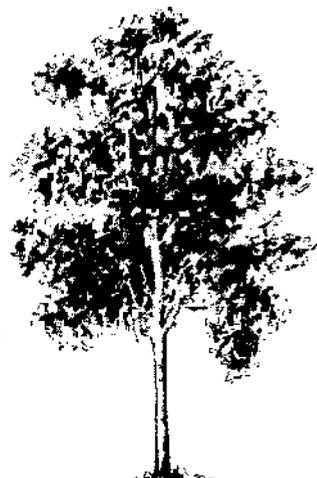
Wednesday, November 9, 7 - 9 p.m.

Unsure how to prune your pear, or trim your tipu? Certified Arborist Gary Knowlton will tell you how when he gives a Slide Presentation/Talk on Trees at Williams Hall, Barlow Hospital, 2000 Stadium Way in Echo Park.

His presentation will include illustrations on the proper way to prune trees as well as tips on other maintenance. He will also discuss how to determine the right tree for the right spot.

There will be time allowed for questions and answers and light refreshments served.

This event is sponsored by the Central Group of the Sierra Club, Angeles Chapter. Contact Sallie Neubauer for more information, 323-666-9651.



Trees for Westmoreland Place

continued from page 1

Buster Keaton and Mack Sennett. After WAHA expanded its borders to include Westmoreland Place and the Leo Politi Neighborhood Association, the neighborhood was featured in one of this year's Evening Stroll series in April.

Planting trees provides multiple benefits, such as cleaning our air, cutting down on noise, cooling our streets and homes, combating the Greenhouse effect and increasing property values by beautifying streets and neighborhoods. Community tree plantings help unite neighborhoods and foster resident involvement in the community.

Both the Photinia and Camphor trees were selected because they are drought tolerant, approved by the City of Los Angeles and do not lose their leaves in the fall. Photinias are especially well-suited for narrow parkways, grow to about 15 feet high, produce large clusters of white flowers in the spring and tolerate heat and smog. Camphors grow well in wide parkways, grow up to 50 feet high and produce small, fragrant flows in the spring. These shade trees will be planted in between the Mexican fan palms, keeping the historic look of the neighborhood while providing much needed shade.

The neighborhood was originally planted with Mexican fan palms in the early 1900s and Jacaranda trees were planted on Westmoreland Avenue in the mid-1900s. This first tree planting in more than 50 years will help fill in the gaps where trees

have died or been removed.

Formed in 2002 to empower its neighbors to take personal responsibility for the care of their neighborhood, as well as foster pride and respect for their neighborhood, the Leo Politi Neighborhood Association, named after Leo Politi Elementary School, which lies within its borders, will be leading the community tree planting starting at 1049 Elden Avenue, which is one of Los Angeles' newest Historic-Cultural Monuments.

There will be refreshments. TreePeople will bring all the tools necessary for the tree planting as well as some work gloves. Please wear closed-toe, sturdy shoes and bring a hat and sunscreen. For more information, contact Jim Grace at jimgrace@sbcglobal.net or 213-385-4320. ●

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UCLA's Clark Library Closes Stacks for Six-Month Remodel Library to Remain Open

The stacks at UCLA's William Andrews Clark Memorial Library in Los Angeles' historic West Adams district will temporarily close for the next six months to make way for needed renovations.

In October, students and librarians packed up and transferred more than 50,000 old and rare books to UCLA's Southern Regional Library Facility on UCLA's Westwood campus.

The relocation will make way for a \$1-million renovation of the air conditioning and heating system within the library's two subterranean storage facilities ("stacks"). The annexes were built independently of the library's 1926 original structure in the late 1940s and 1960s to expand book-storage capabilities.

"The air conditioning system we had was inadequate," said Peter Reill, director of UCLA's 17th- and 18th-Century Studies Center, which administers the library. "It couldn't both keep the temperature and the humidity low enough."

Frequently described as "a hidden gem," the library is UCLA's oldest building, having been deeded 79 years ago to the nascent university by Los Angeles philanthropist and copper-fortune scion William Andrews Clark Jr. in memory of his father, Montana State Senator William Andrews Clark. Located about 10 miles east of campus at 2520 Cimarron St. in the heart of the Historic West Adams District, the library specializes in English 17th- and 18th-century literature and history and regularly hosts popular chamber music concerts and conferences that draw scholars from around the world.

In addition, the Clark houses the largest collection outside of the British Museum of works by and about the 17th-century English playwright, poet and essayist John Dryden. It is also a Mecca for Oscar Wilde scholars, who travel far and wide to avail themselves of the world's largest collection of works by and about the 19th-century novelist, playwright, humorist and aesthete.

This is a place where the public can actually hold a Shakespeare folio or leaf through one of Wilde's college notebooks or pore over important editions of Geoffrey Chaucer, Ben Jonson and John Milton, or books once owned by Jonathan Swift, Thomas Hobbes, William Hogarth and Sir Isaac Newton. The books being relocated represent just more than half of the library's entire collection of approximately 100,000. Still, the volumes slated for transfer have an estimated value of \$25 million. One volume alone — the Shakespeare folio — is worth \$5 million.

The renovation is being done with no state support beyond the salaries of library staff involved. A \$500,000 grant from the Ahmanson Foundation is helping to pay for the work. The library matched the Ahmanson grant with funds from its \$22-million endowment, which dates back to Clark's original gift of the structure to what was then known as the University of California Southern Branch.

The Clark library's historic original 1926 facility, which has a reputation for lively scholarly conferences and chamber music concerts, will remain open until the renovation's scheduled completion. During that period, the library will host eight scholarly conferences or lectures and seven public concerts. "We felt it was imperative for us to keep this presence since these events very much constitute the public face of the Clark Library," Reill said. "We want the public to continue to use and enjoy the library." ●

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

Community Matters

Arson Fire

continued from page 3

years. Flames burst out around midnight from the second story windows of the empty house and threatened to spread to the homes on both sides. In that case the fire department arrived in time to save the house. Arson investigators told neighbors that the fire had been started, apparently deliberately, in a second floor stairway with inflammable materials and rags. Ms. Lang's parents later fully restored the Van Buren house and today it is in use as a group home.

The house at 1655 W. Adams, once a showplace, has long been a trouble spot for the community. After the 1992 fires the place remained vacant and boarded for thirteen years. In 2003 the Citywide Nuisance Abatement Program, a division of the City Attorney's office, opened an abatement prosecution against the owner, who does business or owns properties under several names, including Angele Lang, Angele De Leon, Angele Walden, and Cheri Lang.

Angele Lang, to settle on the name most neighbors know her by, owns numerous properties in the West Adams area. In the summer of 2003 Lang began discussions with the Adams-Normandie Historic Preservation Overlay Zone (HPOZ), in which the house is located, on proposals to repair and renovate the property. Toward the end of 2003 plans were mutually agreed on for this repair work to go forward.

Then in December 2003 two events took place. On an action by the Citywide Nuisance Abatement Program Angele Lang was tried and convicted for failing to act in a reasonable time to make the repairs to 1655 West Adams, sentenced to community service, and ordered to complete repairs promptly. She then transferred ownership of the house to UCLA economics graduate student Piotr Jawien. According to City Attorney Amy Brothers this transaction took place with no money changing hands. The title to the property had been transferred several times before, always remaining within the Lang and DeLeon families or apparent friends of the family. Jawien later appeared before the HPOZ Design Review Board and reneged on the agreed restoration plan. Thereafter the house sat unchanged throughout 2004 and 2005.

The CNAP attorneys in the spring of 2005 filed charges against Jawien, as the legal owner of the property, for failing to make needed repairs. This came to a court hearing on May 5 of this year. Just

before 5:00 pm the night before the hearing, Jawien filed papers, which dated from almost a year earlier but had never been recorded, again transferring the property, this time to Agatha D. Lang, the daughter of Angele Lang.

The city attorneys responded by filing joint charges against Jawien, for the period in which he had owned the house, and Agatha D. Lang. This came to a hearing in Los Angeles Superior Court June 14 in front of Commissioner Bruce Mitchell. Neither Piotr Jawien nor Agatha D. Lang appeared. In their place Angele Lang asked the court to be able to represent the property. The Commissioner granted this, but professed to be perplexed as to what Angele Lang's interest was if she was not the owner. Lang testified that Piotr Jawien lived with her daughter in a small carriage house at the back of 1655. She also submitted petitions from nearby residents under the title "Save the Women's Veterans' Home from the City," stating that her intention was to repair the property for use as a home for women veterans. An attorney representing Jawien was also present, and told the court that his client was a schizophrenic and unable to appear in court.

Deputy City Attorney Amy Brothers asked the court to appoint a professional receiver to determine if the property could be saved. The court refused, on the ground that it would place too large a lien on the property, and instead ordered an inspection by a regular Building and Safety officer. Attorney Brothers asked the court to prohibit any further changes of owner, stating that the current nominal owner, Angele Lang's daughter Agatha D. Lang, had sued her mother the previous year for placing the daughter's name on property titles without the daughter's permission. Commissioner Mitchell ruled that sale of the property would not be permitted without his review, "to prevent changes of title to evade enforcement."

At a second hearing before Commissioner Mitchell, on August 8, the Building and Safety report recommended demolition of the structure. Members of the Adams-Normandie HPOZ Design Review Board later expressed skepticism at the claim that the historic house could not be repaired, as there had been no structural change in the property since their long negotiations with Angele Lang in the fall of 2003 on the details of how the repairs would be carried out. A city receiver was then appointed to hire a demolition crew, which had not yet happened when the fire destroyed the property on September 16.

LAFD Arson Investigator Mario Newte later confirmed that the fire at 1655 West Adams was a case of arson. He would not comment beyond that except to say that the case remains under investigation, and that "we are following all leads." ●

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Calendar ✓

WAHA November Calendar

Saturday, November 12: Tree Planting in Westmoreland Place (see page 1)

Saturday, December 3 and Sunday, December 4: WAHA Annual Holiday Tour, "A Tenseltown Holiday in West Adams (see page 1)

WAHA Board Meeting (TBA): Please contact Jefferson Davis



HOLD THE DATE!

**WAHA
Holiday Party
Sunday,
December 11
2-5 p.m.**

Jingle bells are ringing in West Adams, and we are beginning to make plans for our annual Holiday party. Please mark your calendar for Sunday afternoon, December 11, when we'll celebrate at the historic Durfee Mansion in Kinney Heights. All WAHA members -- plus Holiday Tour volunteers -- are invited.

Bring yourself, dress up, party! (This soiree is NOT a potluck.) Our hosts are the Brothers of St. John of God. More details will arrive with your December WAHA Matters newsletter. Please note: we will appreciate an RSVP by December 7 to WAHAholiday@aol.com

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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