

West Adams Matters



Ghosts of Christmas Past in Victoria Park

Saturday, December 2, and Sunday, December 3

It will certainly be **A Holiday to Remember** in West Adams at the 20th Annual WAHA Holiday Historic Homes Tour & Progressive Dinner, on Saturday, December 2, and Sunday, December 3.

On the first weekend of each December, the West Adams Heritage Association celebrates a century of community traditions by presenting an annual Holiday Historic Homes Tour and Progressive Dinner. This year, we invite you to join us for a champagne toast as we celebrate WAHA's milestone 20th Holiday Tour in grand fashion by visiting a half-dozen elegant period residences in Victoria Park, a handsome and historic neighborhood established a century ago on the northwestern edge of the West Adams District.

A Holiday to Remember Tour will showcase festively decorated residences, including a unique Gothic Revival manor, an Art Nouveau-influenced Arts & Crafts mansion, and a Victorian-inspired Craftsman, among others.

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Haunted West Adams *by Laura Meyers*

After more than a century of life, it is probably not surprising how many interesting people lived in, and sometimes died in, our West Adams houses. But what may surprise some of you is that some WAHA residents continue to stay in our world long after death has claimed them.

Or so report some of our members who have experienced things that go bump in the night.

"L.A. has more ghosts than any other city in the United States," says psychic/medium Michael J. Khoury, who leads walking tours and group investigations of haunted places in Pasadena, Orange County

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Frightful Halloween Festival

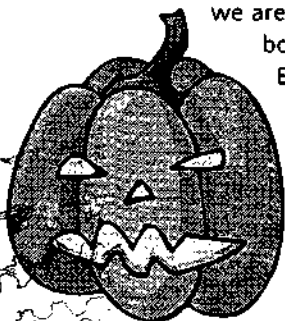
Sunday, October 29 3-5 p.m., Gramercy Park

Hear ye, all you little ghosts and goblins! And ghoulish grown-ups. Come one, come all, to the 2006 thoroughly frightful and fabulously fun West Adams Halloween Festival!

Just like last year's event, this year's Halloween Fest will be held in Gramercy Park on the Sunday just before Halloween. There will be fun games to play and sweets to eat, and we'll be grilling up those famous Wa-Hot Dogs. Especially for the kids, we are offering a petting zoo, pony rides, moon bouncers, face painting and balloon animals.

Expect a special visit from and demonstration by our neighborhood fire station. And, we will have a Costume Contest, for kids and adults alike! So, put on that Halloween costume and stop on by. It promises to be a fun time for all ages!

For further information, please feel free to contact Karen Ide at karen@meriwetherproductions.com. ●



Evening Stroll in Wilshire Park

Wednesday, October 25 5-7 p.m.

The Espresso Cart will be at 3923 West 9th St.

Please join WAHA on an Evening Stroll through Wilshire Park, a historic community that has been nominated as one of L.A.'s newest HPOZ historic districts. Wilshire Park is located just north of West Adams, between Wilton Place and Crenshaw, south of Wilshire Boulevard and north of Olympic.

As you walk through these tree-lined streets, you'll discover a residence that was home to a Ziegfield Follies dancer, a home built by the DuPont family as a wedding gift, and the residence of trumpeter and bandleader Harry James and his wife, Louise

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Evening Stroll in Wilshire Park

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Tobin, a vocalist with Benny Goodman, among other gems.

Learn about several Hollywood directors and screenwriters who lived in Wilshire Park during the 1930s and 1940s, including the director of *Never On Sunday*, and *Topkapi*, and Oscar-winning writer-director Joseph L. Mankiewicz, famed for his work on *The Ghost and Mrs. Muir*, *A Letter to Three Wives*, *All About Eve*, and *Cleopatra*. Plus, see the home that served as the exteriors location for the popular TV series *My Three Sons*.

You'll also stroll by the home of novelist Janet Fitch (*White Oleander* and the new *Paint it Black*) and several other Hollywood entertainment arts-related residences, including those once belonging to seven-time Oscar nominee Arthur Piantadosi, and art director John Kosh.

Wilshire Park is not ALL about Hollywood. You'll also discover a historic Catholic church which became one of the first Los Angeles parishes to outreach to Korean-speaking immigrants.

Wilshire Park is also home to architect Lloyd Wright's first commissioned residence, the Weber House. Wright was the son of Frank Lloyd Wright, and worked on this project while his father was in Japan working on the Imperial Hotel. In 1921, Chicago businessman William Julius Weber moved with his wife to Los Angeles. He asked Lloyd Wright to create a bold and distinctive Prairie style home -- the same architectural style for which Wright's father had become famous.

The Espresso cart will be placed in front of the Weber House (pictured below), 3923 West 9th St., near 4th Avenue (west of Wilton Place). The house is now owned by Stephen Rebello, co-chair of the Wilshire Park Neighborhood Association.

The Stroll is from 5-7 p.m. Coffee drinks are free to the first 50 "customers." Homes can only be viewed from the outside -- no open houses. Say hello to neighbors, meet new friends, bring out your (leashed) dogs for a walk, and get a close-up look at this wonderful neighborhood. ●



Lloyd Wright designed this home in 1921.

President's Message

by Jefferson Davis

Too many houses are keeping me awake at night!

Last Thursday night was a tough night. I just could not get to sleep. Some people lose sleep over stress, finances, insomnia or maybe indigestion. Me, it's houses. And this time, a single house down in Jefferson Park.

A former Board member called to inform me about a demolition order on a nuisance property on 27th Street. It seems the property had been vacant for 20 years and the homeowner did not have the resources or the will to fix it. What was usual about the property, the former Board member told me, was that it had been built by a famous architect and at one point was toured annually by the USC School of Architecture. He just didn't know the name of the architect.

Immediately I went to the address to find a house covered in overgrowth and barely visible from the street. But, she was there -- A glorious mid-century Modern 1940's structure peeking out from the behind the cedar trees.

While I am not that versed in modern architecture, it looked like a Lloyd Wright house to me. Within moments, in my mind, I had it as the star attraction to our 2007 Holiday tour, with Lindsay Wiggins singing its praises as she ushered in 700 paying tour goers. I had articles written about it in all the national magazine of how a community found a "lost" Wright masterpiece in its own back yard. I couldn't get it off my mind and spent the whole night lying in bed, dreaming up ways to save that house.

Back to reality. Indeed the house was built by a famous architect. Not a Wright, but an equally-daring Modernist master, Raphael Soriano, who designed Julius Schulman's home (Schulman is considered the foremost architectural photographer of Modernism in America.) In addition, Soriano's name has been in the news lately as the architect of the illegally demolished Jewish Community Center in Boyle Heights -- one of the trigger events that has pushed the City to start a survey of all historic buildings in Los Angeles.

WAHA has now quickly become very involved in saving this house. We are researching the house and the lot as well as beginning to contact city officials. We will ask the Building and Safety Department to rescind the demolition order as we work the homeowner to fix or sell this important cultural landmark. I hope to be sleeping soon.

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

Gramercy Housing Says "Grand Merci" to WAHA and Y'all Come!

Saturday, November 4, 4-6 p.m. at Gramercy Housing Group, 4th Avenue (corner of Washington)

Gramercy Housing Group wants to give a BIG THANK YOU—a "Grand Merci" to West Adams Heritage Association, and they're hosting a party to do it!

WAHA has provided wonderful new window treatments with a historic motif to cover the windows of the beautiful building at the corner of Washington Boulevard and Fourth Avenue. If you've driven along Washington any time in the last 10 years, you've undoubtedly noticed the forlorn looking and yes, down-right ugly, painted-out windows on that corner. Hallelujah! And thank you, thank you, thank you—from the community as well—for enhancing the view!

Please join GHG and WAHA for a wine and cheese reception and an opportunity to tour the building and learn more about this great resource in our midst! Please stop by to meet and greet your friends and neighbors on Saturday, November 4.

Gramercy Court is the home of Gramercy Housing Group—a non-profit organization providing affordable housing, child care, and social services for young single mothers. GHG has recently become a PATH Partner—one of the organizations operating under the "umbrella" of PATH—People Assisting the Homeless. This much needed facility offers the means for young women who are transitioning out of abusive households or foster care themselves to have the opportunity to break the cycle they are in and become productive members of society. GHG provides not only the affordable housing (an apartment for the young mother and her child), but also parenting classes, child care, case management, and a myriad of resources and tools to help them move on with their lives.

Additionally, GHG has just expanded its child care center and will now be offering child care facilities at reasonable cost to residents of our community.

This building is a fabulous example of adaptive re-use of a 1920's historic building, on a street begging for revitalization. Washington Boulevard was the street of dreams to a cadre of developers. By 1886, Washington Street was already touted as "the broadest and finest avenue out of the city...[it] is the main thoroughfare to Santa Monica and the sea." At a width of 100 feet, Washington Street was conceived as "the future Grand Boulevard from Los Angeles to the ocean." By the 1920s, Washington Boulevard had indeed become a grand avenue of commerce. The boulevard was lined with thriving businesses, and Model T's jammed the roadway. Residents could walk to several cafes and soda fountains, and see new movies at the Arlington Theatre.

In 1923, druggist Herbert Kalliwoda hired architect H. C. Deckbar to design the Majestic Pharmacy Building, a two-story brick building at the corner of Washington and 4th Avenue. By the time Gramercy Housing Group acquired it, the building was not only not majestic - it was dilapidated. We are fortunate that it is still part of our streetscape—with its new use strengthening the fabric of our community. ●

Around the House

Resources by Suzie Henderson

It is time to enjoy the cooler weather and get some of those neglected projects accomplished. Just in time for fall projects, I have lots of good suggestions for you this month.

Lara Elin says that Zoran Stojanovic is a licensed contractor and a wonderful man, who has helped them out on several projects; always with a warm gracious smile and an endlessly enthusiastic spirit. His specialties are carpentry (from framing-to-finish) and tile work. Many of their neighbors have also used him for various projects and were always pleased.

She also suggests Ritz for plumbing and heating. She says they have been around a long time and aren't frightened by gravity heaters or asbestos, AND they are actually honest. They have been able to buy antique toilet parts there to keep their antique toilets in working order... always a useful thing.

There are many types of wood siding, and many of us have learned to our dismay that some are no longer available in the sizes of years ago. If you need to have it custom milled, the best deal can be found at Ganahl Lumber. They have a number of locations, but Los Alamitos is the closest location to Los Angeles. Ganahl has been around longer than West Adams and they really know their lumber.

Freeway Building Materials is a recommended resource for used brick.

I have had another recommendation for Discount Tile Center on Venice just west of La Cienega, so I thought it was worth another mention. They have good prices and a good selection. The store is not the most user friendly, so if you need ideas on tile or patterns, it is suggested that you do some shopping around the fancy tile stores; getting an idea of what you want and getting samples. Then bring the samples to Discount Tile and see what they have. Usually their delivery times are much better, as well as their prices. Ask about a contractor's discount.

Usually in this column I only have suggestions to help you, but this month, Nancy Senter told me that our local animal shelter at 3612 11th Ave needs your help. They are in desperate need of old newspapers for bedding. Apparently fewer people are taking the papers these days, so there is a real shortage. All you need to do is sack them up, stick the bags in the car trunk, and drop them off. They are open long hours and you can even just leave them outside.

Thanks for your continued help with resources. As always, I can be contacted at WestAdamsGoddess@aol.com with your great recommendations and stern warnings.

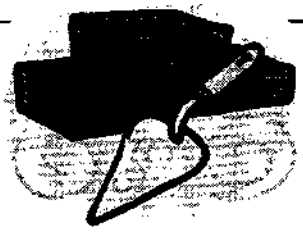
Discount Tile Center
8627 Venice Blvd., 310-202-1915

Freeway Building Materials
1124 South Boyle Ave, East Los Angeles, 323-261-8904
www.freewaybuildingmaterials.com

Ganahl Lumber
10742 Los Alamitos Blvd., Los Alamitos
714-527-2285 or 562-346-2100
www.ganahl.com

Ritz Plumbing and Heating, 310-473-4060

Zoran Stojanovic, General Contractor
310-663-1186



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Saturday: 7:30 am - 2 pm
Sunday: 10 am-12 Noon

Around the House

Warning: Do You Have Defective Plastic Drain Pipes?

A warning has been issued about defective plastic drain pipes sold between 1984 and 1990.

Black ABS plastic pipe is standard material in homes for the drainage for toilets, sinks, bathtubs, and showers, including the main stacks that connect to the sewer system. It is much larger than water pipes, usually 3" to 5" around. Between 1984 and 1990 five of the principal manufacturers produced large amounts of defective pipe, which was mainly sold to contractors and homeowners in California.

The defective pipe is overly brittle. It eventually develops circumferential cracks next to joints, leading to disastrous leaks in walls and ceilings. The law firm of Lieff, Cabraser, Heiman & Bernstein led a successful class action lawsuit against five manufacturers of the defective pipe. As a result of the suit, a fund has been established to pay some amount to homeowners who have suffered damage, to cover replacement of the defective pipe and reclosing the involved walls and ceilings.

Many WAHA members bought and restored their old homes during the period when the defective drain pipe was being sold. They may have used it in repairing old plumbing during their restorations. In our case, we had to entirely replumb our house when we purchased it in 1988, and now it appears that the drain pipes our contractor used were, unknown to him, part of the bad batches.

We had our first pipe failure in July 2005 in the ABS drainpipe under a third-floor bathroom. Almost \$3,000 later we had a section of the cracked pipe replaced and the hole in the 2nd floor ceiling below repaired. At that time we did not know about the mass sale of defective pipe in the 1980s.

The second failure was in June 2006 on the next floor down, in the drain pipe underneath the toilet in the 2nd floor bathroom. This led to opening the ceiling in our dining room. We had to wait for repairs for the inspector from the class action settlement to make an inspection and advise us on how much of the installed ABS pipe to have replaced.

Visit these websites for more information:

A Houston, TX, website describes ABS pipe and provides a drawing of the potential circumferential cracking problem in defective pipe stock produced between 1984 and 1990: <http://www.procheck.cc/abs.htm>

Official website for the class action suit against ABS manufacturers, with the official claim form and descriptive information: <http://www.abspipes.com/>

Description by an experienced inspector of the ABS pipe problems: <http://www.codecheck.com/abs.htm>

Website of the attorneys who represented the homeowners in the class action suit over the defective pipe: http://www.lieffcabraser.com/abs_pipe.htm. ●

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Jazz with the Stars

Saturday, October 21, 8 p.m.

Nate Holden Performing Arts Center

The Lafayette Square Association annual fundraising gala, "Jazz with the Stars," presents Ronnie Laws & Friends in the event's new home, the beautiful, state-of-the-art Nate Holden Performing Arts Center, 4718 West Washington Blvd. Ronald "Ronnie" Laws is an American jazz, blues and funk musician. In 1972, Laws joined the fledgling group Earth, Wind & Fire, playing saxophone and flute on their album "Last Days And Time." In 1976, he began his solo career with the album "Pressure Sensitive." His most famous instrumental song, "Always There," became an instant jazz-funk classic, covered by numerous artists. Ticket prices are \$50 and \$75. Call 323-692-2722 for more information. ©

Torrance Historical Society Hosts Tour of Historic Homes

Saturday, October 14, and Sunday, October 15, 11 a.m.-4 p.m.

The Torrance Historical Society & Museum and Lane Home Furnishing are hosting the Original Fall Tour of Historic Homes in Old Torrance on Saturday, October 14, and Sunday, October 15, from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. both days. Visitors will tour the inside of more than a half dozen homes, and will see how others have renovated, updated and decorated their historic homes to accommodate today's life-style, while managing to preserve the charming architecture and characteristics of the past.

The homes on the tour reflect an eclectic mix — from Bungalow, to Craftsman, to Clinker Brick — which characterize and add to the charm of Old Torrance, which was founded 1912.

Tickets for the Original Fall Tour cost \$18 and may be purchased directly from the Museum either day of the tour - no advanced ticket purchase is necessary.

The Museum will also have opportunity tickets available for both a Lane Recliner and Cedar Chest. The winner of the recliner can choose any fabric, including leather, and the winner of the Cedar Chest has 19 styles from which to choose.

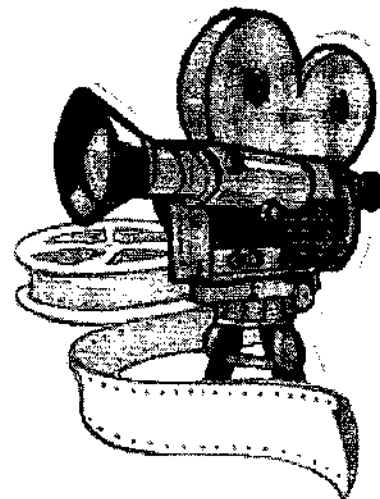
Complimentary Torrance Bakery cookies and lemonade will be served at the Torrance Woman's Club, a local historical landmark (circa 1925). Members of the Woman's Club will be on hand to provide guided tours of the Clubhouse, as well.

The self-guided Original Fall Tour of Historic Homes begins at the Torrance Historical Society & Museum located at 1345 Post Avenue. Proceeds from the fund-raiser directly benefit the Museum's archiving activities, historical discoveries, research projects, special programs, its operation and exhibits. For additional information, please call the Museum directly at 310-328-5392. ●

And the Winner is...

Wednesday, October 18, 3:30 p.m.

You are invited to a screening of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences 2006 Student Academy Award Winners on Wednesday, October 18, at 3:30 p.m. at the Memorial Branch Library, 4625 W. Olympic Blvd. Thirteen students from nine colleges and universities have been selected as winners in the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences' 33rd annual Student Academy Awards competition. The event is sponsored by Friends of the Memorial Library. For more information, call 323-938-2732. ●



Craftsman Weekend

Friday, October 20 to Sunday, October 22

Pasadena area venues

Pasadena Heritage, a nonprofit preservation organization, will present its annual Craftsman Weekend on October 20-22. Craftsman Weekend reaches an important milestone this year, celebrating the 15th anniversary of the largest and most comprehensive salute to the Arts & Crafts Movement in the Western United States.

The Weekend's offerings will include a tour of significant Craftsman-era houses, exhibits by antique dealers specializing in the Arts & Crafts Movement and modern craftsmen specializing in the period style, and a lecture series by nationally prominent Craftsman Movement experts.

Visit www.pasadenaheritage.org for detailed information. Many of the specific events do sell out early. ●

Masquerade Ball Benefit for Casa de Rosas

Saturday, October 28, 7 p.m.-Midnight

Ramsey-Durfee Mansion ("Villa Maria")

Casa De Rosas is proud to announce its Second Annual Masquerade Ball to be held at the fabulous Ramsey- Durfee Mansion (aka "Villa Maria," at the Saint John of God complex) on October 28. Enjoy hors d'oeuvres and cocktails. Bid on prizes in a silent auction. Participate in the costume contest while swing dancing to the jumpin' tunes of a live band, *The Hollywood Combo*. The Ramsey-Durfee Mansion is located at 2035 West Adams, just west of Western. Talent also includes DJ Sable.

Come enjoy a masquerade party at a renowned historic landmark knowing you are also helping to provide both short-term emergency and long term affordable housing for women. All proceeds will go towards the Casa de Rosas in continuing its shelter and SRO hotel operations. Suggested donation: \$30.00 per person, \$50.00 per couple if you purchase your tickets in advance, and \$35.00 per person and \$55.00 per couple at the door. Call the Casa de Rosas at 213-747-7419 during business hours or send your donation to: Casa de Rosas Inc., 2600 South Hoover Street, Los Angeles, CA. Attn: Anna Marie Erro.

Casa de Rosas Inc. is a 501(c)(3) corporation and donations are tax deductible as permitted by law. Executive Director Anna Marie Erro and the Board of Directors, Jean Cade, Ed Dorr, Jean Frost, Roxanne Brown, Jennifer Still appreciate your support.

Casa de Rosas is both an LA Historic Cultural Monument and on the National Register of Historic Places. Architect Sumner Hunt designed Casa de Rosas, built in 1896, as the Los Angeles campus of the international Froebel Institute, which originated a program that became kindergarten education. The building containing the ballroom was added between 1908 and 1920. Between 1908 and 1951, the campus accommodated a girls' collegiate school and a hotel-restaurant, and it later served as an Army barracks and showplace for USO shows during World War II. It became the Sunshine Mission women's shelter in 1951, when Sister Essie Binkley West, a radio evangelist and contemporary of Aimee Semple McPherson, purchased Casa de Rosas for \$4,000. It is Los Angeles' longest continually operating shelter and transitional housing for women. ●

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A Holiday to Remember in Victoria Park

continued from page 1

Victoria Park was laid out in 1905 by an investment syndicate that included General Moses Sherman, Eli P. Clark, and the architect Frank M. Tyler. In a newspaper report of the time, Victoria Park was described as a private residential park "located at the northwest corner of West Adams Hill, between Pico and 16th Streets" (now Venice Boulevard), "just west of the city limits...The park drives, which take the place of streets, are all 100 feet in width, with petrolith-paved roadways and seven-foot cement sidewalks." Moreover, "the continuous stretches of lawn and shrubbery is most attractive. Victoria Park is beautifully lighted by stone and wrought-iron electroliers, fifteen feet high, with five large electric globes on each." The developers lined the winding streets with "hundreds of palms, acacias and Monterey pines," along with tropical plantings.

Victoria Park was initially marketed as an ideally located and exclusive community, "with a superb view of the city and of the mountains, from Old Baldy to the sea." And at first the City's well-to-do did indeed build imposing homes around the Circle, from about 1909 to 1916. However, the war and real estate recession of 1916 took its toll, and the south side of Victoria Park remained

largely vacant until the 1920s. As a result, you will see in today's Victoria Park neighborhood an eclectic collection of architecture from the heyday of the Arts & Crafts era to the period revival styles of the Roaring Twenties.

The homes on this year's tour feature an abundance of period touches, including massive hearths, antique light fixtures, carved woodwork, and many (many) examples of stained glass windows that are evocative of the William Morris/pre-Raphaelite aesthetic which influenced the later Arts & Crafts style. Among the stunning stained glass art pieces, you'll see an ode to Muses, several Art Nouveau floral designs, and an amazing one-story landscape triptych.

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, without the food.

The tour will raise funds for WAHA, which since its founding in 1983 has used revenues from a variety of tours to support preservation of the community's architectural and cultural heritage.

WAHA has been dressing up and opening our holiday doors to

visitors for twenty years. For our first Holiday Tour, which featured four houses, each homeowner was responsible for preparing food. "We hadn't quite worked out the logistics of a progressive dinner," recalls Ed Trosper, that tour's co-chair and one of the founders of the WAHA Holiday Tour. "We had two sets of four tour groups, and started them simultaneously at each of the houses. So some visitors had dessert first!" By year two, WAHA had worked out the bugs, and now the Holiday Tours progress through the meal in proper fashion. (Of course, in year two, the trolleys didn't show up, so the guests had to unexpectedly drive from house to house!)

Since its inception, we have created, cooked up, and dished out not only twenty main courses, but also at least 40 different appetizers, 25-plus desserts, a score of delicious salads, and countless variations (from curried to sherried to gingered) of pumpkin and squash soup – served up each year to some 600 visitors and volunteers.

As always, many, many, many volunteers are needed for this year's Holiday Tour. All the houses and kitchens need to be staffed on the nights of the Tour. But in addition there are lots of volunteers who assist behind the scenes in other roles, and on other days. Can you help with any of these tasks:

- Prep Cook - cook in your own home the week before the Tour
- Volunteer Dinners - pick up and deliver volunteer dinners on Saturday 12/2 and Sunday 12/3, tentatively from 4 to 6 p.m. both days
- WAHA Holiday Party - assist Mike Medina, events chair, with this party (for our members and wonderful volunteers) on Sunday, December 10
- Goody Bags - identify sources to find items and fill goody bags with donations for distribution to Tour visitors
- Shopping - Trader Joe's, 99 Cent Store, Smart & Final, Von's, the Flower Mart — they'll all get a WAHA visit or two
- Holiday decorating - some of our tour properties can use a helping hand hanging ornaments, garland and other seasonal "attire" during the week before the Tour
- Street decorating - install signs at Tour houses on Saturday 12/2 by 2 p.m.



If you are available any of these times, please raise your hand and volunteer. Contact us at volunteers@westadamsheritage.com. We have slated volunteer training for the afternoon of Sunday, November 19 (time and location TBA).

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). Since its founding in 1983 WAHA has used revenues from a variety of tours to support preservation of the community's architectural and cultural heritage. We encourage all of our members to contribute to that effort by taking the Holiday Tour and Progressive Dinner — and bringing their friends — on the day they are not volunteering.

If you purchase your ticket by November 10, prices this year will stay at last year's level — \$75 for non-members, \$65 for WAHA members. After November 10, all tickets are \$85 apiece. We will be mailing out invitations with sign-up details in October.

Each year, some of you wish to purchase large groups of tickets, and we love that you do so — but please contact us no later than November 1 to reserve your block of seats. Please be sure to return the forms and your checks as early as possible, so that you and your guests will not be disappointed. It is not unusual for this event to sell out.

If you have joined WAHA at a membership level that may provide tickets to you and a guest for this tour, please DO contact us by November 1 with your reservation, so we can be sure to accommodate you.

As always, if you just want to peek inside the homes and you ARE volunteering for the event, you may do so for free during the Sunday afternoon walking tour.

As you can see, WAHA's Holiday Tour is a complex event. If you would like more information about any aspect of the tour, contact Tour Chair Lindsay Wiggins at wigginsla@comcast.net.



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Spacious Arts & Crafts Bungalow — Great Kinney Heights neighborhood, HPOZ. Original never-painted woodwork, leaded & stained glass, original fabric wallcoverings. 3 BD, 1.5 BA, 2,058 sq. ft. per Assessor. 2190 W. 24th. \$780,000. David Raposa

Mixed Use Opportunity — Three stories -- 7 residential apartments above 3 storefronts. Low rents. \$750,000. Carlton Joseph, 323-737-4858

20-Unit Apartment Building — 4044-4948 Gelber Place. \$1.8 million. Nancy Deaven, 323-737-7761

Mid-Century — Probate overbid sale, 1,230-sq-ft, 3 BD, 1 BA 1951 house in great neighborhood (needs TLC). 4368 Moore St. \$775,000. Nancy Deaven

Conservatorship Sale — 4534 165th St. Needs Probate Court approval. 2 BD, 2 BA. \$490,000. Nancy Deaven

IN ESCROW:

Adams Normandie — Huge duplex Craftsman home needing TLC. David Raposa (Buyer's agent)

SOLD:

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FOR MORE INFORMATION, or to confirm reservations, please call the WAHA Reservations Hotline at 323-732-4223, e-mail wahaholiday@aol.com. ●

Haunted West Adams

continued from page 1

and Hollywood. "There is more drama and trauma here."

From Civil War soldiers and camels at the Drum Barracks in Wilmington, and Phineas Banning himself still greeting guests at his Greek Revival mansion a block away, to Rudolf Valentino walking his dog in Whitley Heights, to Mae West still living the high life in her Hancock Park penthouse, the Los Angeles area is replete with reports of ghostly sightings and spirited encounters.

The West Adams area is no exception. The West Adams has its share of fascinating and unexplainable stories, and mysterious phenomena. For example, we've heard that Elizabeth Short (aka "The Black Dahlia") haunts locations throughout Southern California, including the site at 39th and Dalton where her remains were found. Over on Raymond, a malevolent spirit kept chasing tenants away until the property owner cleansed and purified the house by burning bundles of sage and rosemary. Any number of Victorians in North University Park seem to have babies crying in empty rooms.

And, although we have still not learned the identity of the ghost who occupies Greg Stegall and Michael Smith's former house on Oxford, it certainly did toss a picture at us when we questioned its existence a few years ago! This noisy spirit rattled doors and repeatedly scared Greg and Mike's cat. "The hair would perk up on her back and she'd go running," recalls Smith. And she was not alone. "After a new roommate had lived with us for about a month, he asked us if a ghost lived in the house."

Here are a few more spectral tales from the 'Hood.

A Lingerin' Lady

From the time when Linda LeFever first purchased her West Adams home, more than 25 years ago, she has never been totally alone in the house. LeFever and her then-partner would be sitting on the living room couch when suddenly, out of the corner of her eye, something would flit up the stairs. "There would be a strange energy," LeFever recalls. "Did you see that?" I'd ask. And yes, they both had. "It's a very benign presence, but we'd experience it very frequently. She was there all the time – like she was trying to make herself known."

Eventually, LeFever used a Ouija board to inquire about the ghost. A name was spelled out: "Mrs. Hodges." Some time later, a West Adams neighbor researched the house, and discovered that, indeed, a prior occupant not only was named Mrs. Hodge, but that she had died in the house. Elderly and blind, she had lived her later years limited to the first floor, though her husband continued to sleep in the marital bed upstairs. (No wonder she is so eager to traverse to the second floor!)

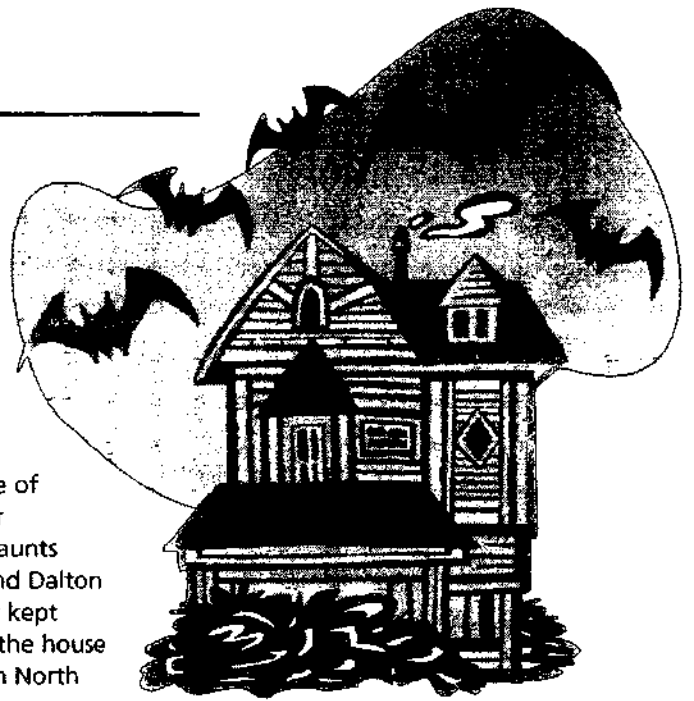
"She really is very sweet," says LeFever, although "we see her less and less now."

The Bird Man

An Irishman who lived in Apartment 3 at 2336 Scarff St. for years kept literally hundreds of birds in the three-bedroom unit. He would walk around University Park, wearing a signature hat. Then one day back in the 1970s nearby residents realized they hadn't seen him for awhile. The landlord finally went into the apartment and, as you might imagine, discovered the man dead — as were many of the birds. The stench was so strong that the landlord opened all the windows, whereupon most of the remaining birds flew away. The only way to clean up the mess was to take down all the plaster, down to the studs. But while this work was commencing, the Bird Man seemingly returned — still wearing his fedora. That was enough for the landlord, who left the apartment empty for more than a decade. He was afraid to walk in the door. Finally, though, the place was fixed up in the 1990s, and rented. Has the Bird Man crossed over? Apparently not. Just two months ago, the current tenant, a young man named Carlos, took a photograph in the apartment, and there he was, a blurred image in the room.

A Troubled Spirit

Manson family members once occupied a Gothic-inspired century-old house in West Adams, and filled the attic with Satanic symbols. Ever since, reportedly, the attic has housed an evil spirit. When the Jesuit Order owned the property and two adjacent residences, a number of the priests refused to live in the house, according to Leslie Evans, who has written several articles about the place.



“...The Jesuit Order for some fifteen years owned three transition Victorian-Craftsman homes that stood side by side on Menlo Avenue,” Evans reports. “They were used as accommodations for priests. Two were two stories with a low attic above; the third was larger with a full third story marked by gothic windows, like a country church. Unluckily, what came to be known as the Jesuit Houses were back to back with a long empty lot on Vermont Avenue where, in the early 1990s, a new Ralphs supermarket was built. Ralphs wanted to demolish the three houses for their parking lot. After an uproar of several years’ duration, they agreed instead to put them up on blocks and move them to other locations on the same block.”

Evans and his wife, Jennifer Charnofsky, wangled an invitation inside the houses after they were moved but before they were restored. While Charnofsky was talking to the caretaker’s daughter, Evans started wandering around one of the residences.

“I found the stairs to the attic,” he writes. “The attic at first appeared to be a single unfinished room with one small window on each of the four sides. Bare rafters and a rough plank floor, like many in the neighborhood. Then I noticed something odd. There was a small room, not more than six by six, off to my right where the roof sloped down where it faced the street. Why, when there were four windows in the attic, build a windowless room? I could see that it was also unfinished on the inside. It was a pool of blackness, but as I took a step toward it I saw a bare light bulb hanging on a cord just inside the doorless entrance.

“I took another step toward the tiny room, and then was struck by an overwhelming sense that there was some evil presence in there. I couldn’t shake it off. I looked ahead and said to myself, “Five steps and I can pull the string on the light. This is nonsense.” I willed myself to cover the distance in a few quick strides and grab the light string. All I could manage was one more step forward before freezing. I didn’t care how silly it would look. Better to look silly than to wind up alone in a dark corner with whatever was in there. I turned around and bolted down the stairs.”

Some years later, Evans met one of the priests who had lived in the residence, and discovered that, in fact, he wasn’t alone in his fear of the attic. Turns out that when the Jesuits had purchased the property, the attic was filled with Satanic carvings. The priests encountered unaccountable activities: objects disappearing from rooms and frequent loud noises when no one else was present.

Moreover, when the priests did some research, they discovered that Manson family members had squatted in the house during the late 1960s. For those of you too young to remember, along with the famed slayings in August 1969 of actress Sharon Tate, coffee heiress Abigail Folger and her boyfriend Voytek Frykowski, hair stylist Jay Sebring, and Leno and Rosemary LaBianca, Manson family members also later claimed to have murdered many more individuals whose bodies have yet to be found.

So, is one of their troubled spirits haunting a manse in West Adams? Read Evans’ entire account at www.shaggyman.com.

A Little Girl

Back in 1927, twin 12-year-olds, Marion and Marjorie Parker, were adored by their father, banker Perry Parker, an officer at Los Angeles First National Trust and Savings. The Parker family lived in a two-story, wood-shingled Victorian-style home at 1631 S. Wilton Place, and the girls attended Mt. Vernon Junior High, a few blocks west at Bronson and 17th Street.

But that December, the Parker family idyll was to end. Psychopath Edward Hickman kidnapped young Marion for ransom, but after she wrote her father a note (“Dear Daddy and Mother, I wish I could come home. I think I’ll die if I have to be like

(continued on page 12)

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Haunted West Adams

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this much longer...”), Hickman strangled the youngster and then severed her legs and arms with a razor. To get his ransom, Hickman placed Marion’s body in his car — propped up and covered with a blanket so only her head would show — and drove to a rendezvous with Perry Parker. Parker handed over the money, and minutes later made the gruesome discovery of his daughter’s torso. Marion’s face had been powdered, hair combed and eyelids sewn open with black thread.

Two decades ago, when author Marvin Wolf (*Fallen Angels*) telephoned the then-owner of 1631 S. Wilton to tell her about the famous kidnapping and murder, she interrupted the story to say, “Oh, that accounts for our ghost.”

Seems that the owners had noticed what they felt was a benevolent, small child spirit who moved small objects and occasionally could be heard walking through the house. When Wolf was telling the Marion Parker tale, the lights in the house flashed repeatedly on and off.

A few years later, after paranormal researchers from UCLA had “confirmed” a ghostly presence, the house was sold to James Stokes, who said he didn’t believe in ghosts at all. Indeed, he said he spent a quiet decade in the house with no eerie happenings at all. But in the late 1990s, after contracting to sell the 2,520-square-foot house, and after he began packing to move to Ohio, Stokes said little things made him think that maybe, just maybe.... Someone (or something) kept turning the tea kettle off. And closing doors he had opened. And Stokes’ dog started behaving peculiarly. “Maybe,” Stokes mused, “she doesn’t want to see me go.”

Longtime Residents

WAHA member Paula Perelman Brynen responded to our request for haunted tales. She writes, “I live WAHA adjacent in a 1936 house and have spirits in my home (not those one imbibes!).”

“My husband’s family has owned our house since 1945. He has adult children as well as our daughter. Both of the older kids heard or saw things while they were growing up. I started experiencing it when I moved in.

“My step-daughter (21 at the time) and I were in the back of the house when we heard footsteps coming down the hall. My husband was not home, so we both thought it was him arriving. We went to the hall and there was no one there. We both knew that it was a spirit and actually asked it to leave. Kinda creeped us both out. We still talk about it.

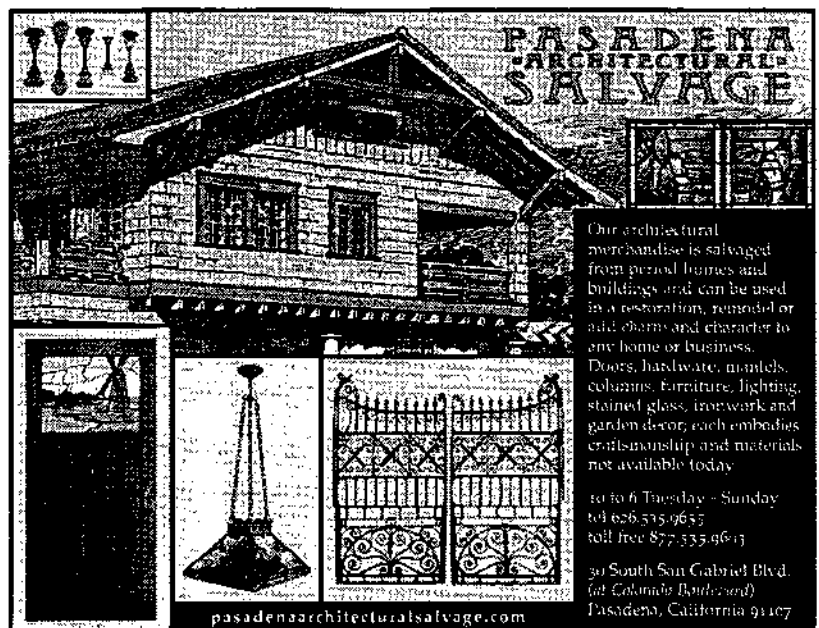
“One day, while my daughter was in diapers, I was changing her in the bathroom. She looked up, pointed to the upper corner of the room and said, ‘Look mommy, man.’ I asked her about it a few days later and she brought me back to the bathroom and pointed to the same spot. She then would not take a bath in that room for a week. I told the guy that the rules of the house are no scaring the kid. He could stay but not be frightening. Elyse started taking baths in the bathroom again the next day.

“My nanny and her friend both, in separate occasions, experienced sounds in the house that they identified as ghosts.

“I live with them as long as they follow the rules — you can stay but no scaring us or our friends. It seems to work out just fine.”

The Brynens don’t know who their “roommates” are. Paul’s aunts lived in the house for many years. Before that, one aunt and her husband occupied the place. But, points out Paula, “the hubby smoked cigars but we have never smelled them from our ghost.”

If you’re fascinated by these ghostly tales and want more, consider a ghost tour. That’s right. In October and throughout the year, Khoury takes living mortals along on his paranormal tours and investigations — for a price, of course (\$45-\$199 for regularly scheduled group tours, \$250 per person for private ghost hunts). Check it out at www.icghosts.com, or call 626-791-1129. So far, he hasn’t created a West Adams version — but who knows? Perhaps if we come up with enough tales from our crypts, we can have a West Adams area ghost hunt, too. ●



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In Memoriam: Raphael Garcia

by Jim Childs

Raphael Garcia died from complications of a massive stroke at Good Samaritan Hospital on Friday, September 8. Garcia, a noted preservationist, resided at his Queen-Anne Victorian Mansion, the Salisbury Residence, at 2707 South Hoover in North University Park, for many years. Garcia had been instrumental in the founding of both the North University Park Community Association and the West Adams Heritage Association in the early 1980s. His remains will be cremated and in accordance with his wishes no memorial service will take place.

The above obituary notice serves its function since it is brief, factually accurate and takes up little newsprint. However to those of us who knew Ralph his story is much more complex. He was surely a preservationist, but he was also a son, a brother, a lover, a worker, an employer, a landowner, a community activist, a businessman, an artisan, a friend, a confidant, a neighbor, a gossip, a collector and a perfectionist.

Ralph served with me for many years on the CRA Adams-Normandie 4321 PAC and I had the opportunity to interview him as part of a series on "neighbors" for the community newsletter. I would like to share him with you today. Taken from the PAC Newsletter, Spring 1993:

Ralph's Story

New Year's Eve, 1960, New York, N.Y.

Fresh from the airport a new emigrant is just in time to join the celebration on 125th Street in "Spanish Harlem". Raphael Garcia, nineteen years old, had arrived in AMERICA. Earlier that day he had bid farewell to his family and his friends and, like millions of other refugees before him, fled the repression in his homeland to seek a free life in a new land. He arrived with hope, courage and 23 cents.

"Leaving Cuba was a very painful decision but the Castro Communist regime was an oppression I could no longer live with. At first I tried New York, then Puerto Rico, Miami, back to New York and finally here in Los Angeles, November 1963. When I first got here I said, 'This is my home. I love this place.' I still do."

On his second day in L.A. Ralph saw a "Help-Wanted" sign for an upholsterer. He quickly read a "how-to-do-it" book and applied for the job. The boss was skeptical at first, but Ralph reassured him he was indeed "experienced" it was just that "they do upholstery a little differently in Cuba." The bluff worked and Ralph began a fifteen year career, his craftsmanship always improving until he was doing restoration work on the finest of antique French furniture.

In 1967 Ralph was working full time and studying art at LACC when something happened that would change his life forever. As he left for work that morning "I heard banging coming from one of the mansions around the corner at St. James Park. I thought they were doing some kind of repair work. When I got home the house was gone. Bulldozed in one day! I couldn't believe it, how could someone in this country destroy something so beautiful?"

Longing for a real home, Ralph left his studies and took a second full time job as a busboy at the Ambassador Hotel and shortly thereafter he became a waiter. On weekends he worked part-time jobs as well. By 1969 he and his partner, Sergio Gutman (another Cuban exile) had saved enough to purchase 19 St. James Park.

The following year disaster struck the Park when five of the remaining mansions were demolished in one week. "At that time Mount St. Mary's (who had been given the houses by Mrs. Doheny) thought they needed land for parking. Councilman Lindsay held a meeting which I went to but nobody would listen to me when I pleaded with them not to tear down the houses."

Ralph and his partner began to acquire additional houses with a purpose, not only of developing a profitable rental business, but to save houses from the bulldozer. Today they own over a dozen properties, six of which are within the St. James Park National Register Historic District. Three of their properties are Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monuments.

The hard work of trying to restore and maintain a dozen properties requires an eighteen-hour day, seven days a week. The many and diverse skills required to do that are a challenge that Ralph eagerly accepts. "At first we really couldn't find the skilled help necessary to do the quality repair work so I had to learn to do it myself. Today, this kind of work brings me joy."

Ralph's natural ability to quickly become proficient in any craftsman skill, whether it be in working wood, iron or stained glass, has inspired him to try to make each of his properties a work of art. The only catch to his commitment is that Ralph wants to do all the work himself and admits, "I need at least three lifetimes to complete all the projects I have before me now." ●

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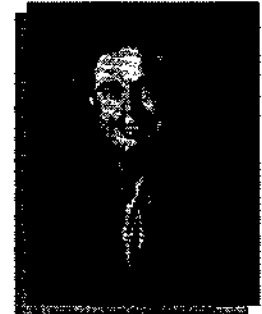
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