



West Adams Matters

Discovering Our Heritage: New Research Brings to Light Surprising West Adams History

by Laura Meyers

Even after more than three decades of historic research and preservation advocacy in the West Adams District, we still can be surprised — delightfully — when we learn about "new" resources in our midst.

From 19th century cottages to Modernist marvels, bungalows to mansions, commercial buildings, religious institutions and public structures, we are still constantly finding new potential landmarks.

In this issue of WAHA Matters beginning on page 6, we explore four local historic resources you may not (yet) know about: a Victorian farmhouse cottage erected by one of Los Angeles's most important pioneers; the career of a significant architect who specialized in religious designs; a newly-identified historic district that is emblematic of Depression Era multi-family housing; and a mid-century modern building designed by famed architect Richard Neutra.

Although it's true that the West Adams District has the largest collection of designated historic resources in Los Angeles, there seems to be a constant stream of newly-revealed treasure.

Consider the discovery of actress Ruby Dandridge's home (now Los Angeles Historic Cultural Monument [HCM] No. 1046) in Wellington Square; the group of Mediterranean Revival Fourplexes on Flower Drive, now a California Register Historic

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Clothing That Tells a Story: 23rd Annual Art of Motion Picture Costume Design

Step Out with WAHA on Saturday, February 28, at 2:00 p.m. FIDM, the Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising, 919 S. Grand Ave. (Downtown)

Please join WAHA's own costume designer extraordinaire Rory Cunningham and fellow West Adams residents for a special afternoon with Oscar -- Oscar costumes at the FIDM Museum, that is.

The annual Art of Motion Picture Costume Design exhibition at the FIDM Museum celebrates the art and industry of costume design, and honors the work of designers in the industry. Costumes from all five Oscar-nominated films – *The Grand Budapest Hotel, Inherent Vice, Into the Woods, Maleficent*, and *Mr. Turner* – will be on view. In addition, a suite of costumes from last year's Academy Award-winning film, *The Great Gatsby*, will be exhibited.

WAHA's special tour of the exhibition offers not only a look at the beautiful costumes on display but also an insider's view of how costumes help define a movie's look and characterizations. (continued on page 5)



A curator fits Maleficent's costume onto a manniquin

West Adams' Newest Landmark: John L. Matheson/Church of Latter-day Saints Residence Voted an HCM

WAHA has been working with West Adams Heights/Sugar Hill neighbors for more than a year to save the John L. Matheson/Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) California Mission Residence, located at 2067 Hobart Blvd. and designed by famed architect Frederick Roehrig.

This 1909 Tudor-Gothic Revival was brought to everyone's attention in September 2013 when it was advertised for sale as a teardown in favor of apartment units, and an estate sale offered not only belongings but also such house parts as the windows and light fixtures. The realtors never disclosed in the MLS to potential buyers that the property is located within the Harvard Heights HPOZ.

At WAHA's request, Council District 10 staff and Council President Herb Wesson reviewed the situation, and agreed that the community should not risk the loss of this historic gem. A year ago, Council President Wesson nominated the Matheson/LDS Mission Residence as a (continued on page 3)



The John L. Matheson/Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Residence in a 1941 photograph, while it was serving as the California Mission headquarters for the Mormon Church.

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Coming Soon in our next issue:

How Caltrans plans to spend \$42.781 million dollars to

move traffic two blocks — A look at the proposed Interstate 110 Transitway Connector Project, I-100 HOV/HOT offramp to Figueroa Way (AKA "The Flyover") and its impacts on historic resources in West Adams.

THANK YOU TO OUR WONDERFUL HOLIDAY TOUR VOLUNTEERS! It truly takes an "army" to run a successful Holiday Tour, and WAHA wishes to thank everyone who lent a helpng hand, and are especially the homeowners who opened their doors to our more than 400 tour visitors: Zen Center of Rinzai-Ji, Paul King & Paul Neilsen, Sandra Kobrin & Jason Levine, Doug Lloyd & Truc Le, Karen Haas & Paul Pratt, Kim Lai Jones, Mimi Munson, and Carolyn & Russell Friend.

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President's Message by John Patterson

The calendar has once again turned a page, and the New Year is off to the races. We've barely had a chance to catch our breath following the great success of our Holiday Tour, and already, our "To Do List" is getting longer with each passing day.

I know that there won't be enough time to accomplish all that I'd like to in the few remaining months of my term, but rest assured, I won't be going far, and will remain very involved in all things WAHA. I anticipate continuing to chair the annual Holiday Tour, and also hope to stay on as Communications Chair in order to maintain our interaction with our membership through an ever-improving series of emails.

Most important to me will be to maintain the close rapport that has grown with so many of our WAHA members, many of whom I now consider to be close personal friends. As I tell so many people, the sense of community that I have found in Historic West Adams I had not experienced in all of the years I've lived in Los Angeles.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank Martha Bringas once again for opening her wonderful View Park home to us for our "Volunteer Appreciation Celebration" on January 11th. What a great way to start the New Year! And thank you to all of the volunteers who helped us put on this volunteer thank you. Jeff and I prepared the tasty Jambalaya you all enjoyed, as our way of expressing our appreciation for all that the WAHA community has done in supporting us over these past five years that I have served in this role.

I'm looking forward to the New Year, with all the challenges and successes that are sure to be a part of a very exciting 2015! John Patterson may be reached by e-mail at president@westadamsheritage.org

Candidates Sought for WAHA Board

ASK NOT WHAT WAHA CAN DO FOR YOU...

WAHA is looking for a few good men and women. Our Board of Directors election and Annual Membership Meeting is on Sunday, April 19, and we need candidates to raise their hands.

As always, we are looking for board members with fresh, upbeat, enthusiastic ideas. This community was founded by the best volunteers in the nation, and now is the time for members (you!) to come forward.

You need not spend an extraordinary amount of time doing tasks, but you must be committed to WAHA's goals of providing both member and community service, and its historic preservation mission of advocacy. Generally speaking, board members are expected to attend all WAHA board meetings (usually held the fourth Thursday of each month), help with WAHA's fundraising efforts, and share in the responsibility for WAHA's events, committees, advocacy, and social functions.

We don't have many requirements: a love of old houses and other historic buildings, an enthusiasm for community activities, membership in WAHA for at least six months, and a desire to preserve and improve our neighborhoods. WAHA always needs expertise in fundraising, zoning issues, and historic preservation. But if you have a program you'd like to initiate, those ideas are welcome, too.

If you'd like to run for the board, please submit a brief (100-word) candidate's statement introducing yourself to the membership. We will run these statements in the April WAHA Matters newsletter. Submission deadline is Monday, March 2. Please e-mail

your statement to news@westadamsheritage.org. If you are still pondering your involvement past that deadline but decide to run for the Board, that's OK (although your name may not be on the ballot), since all Board candidates will be asked to present themselves at the April 19 election in a very short (one- to two-minute) speech. If you have not submitted a candidate's statement to the newsletter, you are required to be present at the election itself to run for the board.

If you'd like to learn more about the requirements (and benefits) of serving on the WAHA board, please contact WAHA President John Patterson, at president@westadamsheritage.org. ●



Matheson/LDS Residence continued from page 1

Historic Cultural Monument. It's taken awhile to work its way through the City Hall system, but on January 23 our wait was over, and the Los Angeles City Council voted to add the Matheson/LDS Residence to the City's list of Historic Cultural Monuments, "forthwith."

During the Mormon LDS ownership of the property, some alterations were made to the exterior, and a vault sealed in what had been a side entrance. These changes took on historic significance because the use of the house by the Mormons is part of its cultural heritage and historical significance. Parts of the interior of the residence were smoke damaged from a fire, but most character-defining architectural elements—including exceptional brick work, exotic wood inlays, imposing staircase, beamed ceilings, arched niches and windows, and other Gothic Revival elements—are intact and restorable.

In the days leading up to the City Council vote, the owners still were advertising the property as a tear-down. Ever the optimists, however, WAHA preservationists saved (by purchasing at the estate sale in September 2013) some of the house parts, including at least one magnificent slag glass chandelier and many windows, in the hope that the house would be saved. Now it looks like that will happen.

WAHA extends its appreciation and gratitude to Council President Herb Wesson and CD10 staff members who worked to save this historic resource, and to all of the neighbors without whose vigilance this successful outcome would not have happened. The property is still for sale, and WAHA will continue to monitor the situation to help assure new owners will properly restore the house.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH The 34th Annual Black Doll Show

On view through February 14

The William Grant Still Arts Center, 2520 West View Street

At the William Grant Still Arts Center on West Adams Boulevard, jazz superstars and comic book superheroes are gathered together this month — in miniature, for its 34th Annual Black Doll Show — "A League Supreme: Jazz Superheroes."

This year, over seventy-five unique handmade and collector dolls and media art— Black superheroes past and present, from comic book icons to an inspiring superhero league of jazz musicians— are showcased in this futuristic fantasy-scape.

The exhibition includes murals by Patrick H. Johnson, AISE, and Jessica Reid, and dolls by Patricia Shivers, Dale Guy Madison, and Fana Babadayo, as well as media art by visual artists Ronda Brown, Jabari Hall Smith, Sankofa, and Gustavo Alberto Garcia Vaca. Guest curator Keisa Davis is an educator and community programs producer, and a native of Crenshaw district. She also works as the Education Coordinator at The William Grant Still Arts Center, with a background in media arts.

The Black Doll Show was started in 1980 by the Friends of William Grant Still Arts Center, with artist Cecil Fergerson as its first curator. Inspired by the "Black Doll Test" conducted in the 1940s by pioneering psychologists Mamie and Kenneth Clark that concluded that many African American children preferred playing with white dolls over black dolls, the Black Doll Show at the Center is the longest-running display of black dolls in Los Angeles. The William Grant Still Arts Center is located in Old Engine Company No. 67, just north of Adams, between Crenshaw and La Brea. ●

African American Military Portraits from the American Civil War

On View Through Saturday, April 4

Central Library, Getty Gallery, 630 West 5th Street (Downtown)

The mostly forgotten role of African American soldiers and sailors in the American Civil War is revealed and celebrated in the exhibition "African American Military Portraits from The American Civil War: Selected Images from The Library of Congress Collections." The exhibit, which is from the California African American Museum (CAAM), provides a compelling portrait of the 180,000 African American soldiers and commemorates the 150th Anniversary of the American Civil War with photos, documents and artifacts.

"When most people think of the Civil War they just think of slaves and they don't realize a lot of the black soldiers were volunteers from the North and were free," said Ed Garcia, CAAM exhibition curator. "I wanted to show the pictures and tell the stories of the black soldiers who have been completely forgotten."

According to the exhibit's press materials, during the Civil War, black soldiers were paid \$10 a month for their service, while white soldiers received \$13 a month. Some of African American soldiers' duties were non-combative, which included feeding and caring for white officers' horses, and others served in the infantry and artillery.

The exhibits features large-format images reproduced from original antigue photographs, and selected from the Liljenguist Family Collection of Civil War Photographs and the Gladstone Collection of African American Photographs, both of which are housed at the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. Addition images are from The Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library at Yale University. The exhibition is free and open during regular library hours. For more information visit www.lapl.org. ●



A doll inspired by jazz pianist, composer and harpist Alice Coltrane soars through the air.







S tepping Out



On View: The Great Gatsby costumes by Catherine Martin, 2014 Oscar Winner Costumes Design. (L to R) Elizabeth Debicki as Jordan Baker, Tobey Maguire as Nick Carraway, Carey Mulligan as Daisy Buchanan, Joel Edgerton as Tom Buchanan, Leonardo DiCaprio as Jay Gatsby

Oscar Costumes continued from page 1

Most of this year's nominated designers have been previously recognized by the Academy for their film work. Costume designer Milena Canonero, nominated for Wes Anderson's *The Grand Budapest Hotel*, is a three-time Oscar winner. *Inherent Vice* earned Mark Bridges his second Academy Award nomination. He won in 2012 for *The Artist*. Colleen Atwood, nominated for Disney's fairy tale musical *Into the Woods*, is another three-time Oscar winner. Another Disney movie, *Maleficent*, earned costume designers Anna B. Sheppard and Jane Clive a costume design nomination. Rounding out the nominees is Jacqueline Durran, who took home Oscar gold in 2013 for her work on the period film *Anna Karenina*. She was nominated for the period picture *Mr. Turner*.

Along with the Oscar-nominated costumes, the exhibition also spotlights costumes from twenty 2014 films, including *Birdman*, *Big Eyes*, *Jersey Boys*, *The Boxtrolls*, *Belle*, and others.

As always, we look forward to a fun and informative tour. Meet in front of the exhibition, in the park area at 2:00 p.m. Admission is free. And, everyone is invited afterwards for cocktails and dinner (no host) at the nearby Stillwell Hotel. (Parking is available under the FIDM building, but if you are joining the group for the later cocktails and dinner, be sure to park in a different lot that remains open until at least 9 p.m., as the FIDM lot will close when the museum closes.) ●





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Costumes from the film Selma will also be showcased at the annual FIDM exhibition

Discoveries

continued from page 1

District; or the Stewart Farmhouse on West 31st Street, now HCM No. 1028 and the second oldest identified wood frame house still standing in Los Angeles.

These "hidden" gems were not necessarily concealed: over the years, the 19th century Woolen Mills Zanja sat exposed on Figueroa just north of Adams. People strolled by it every day. It was just that no one recognized it for what it was: The last remaining visible irrigation ditch from Los Angeles' earliest days.

SurveyLA brought some of these previously-unrecognized historic resources to light, including numerous small pocket historic districts. In this age of social media, WAHA is also now occasionally contacted by descendants of original owners with photographs and records of properties in their earliest days. Sometimes a layer of history is revealed when you look more closely: several of our West Adams churches began life as Jewish synagogues, for example, which explains why their stained glass windows include six-point stars.

Although the West Boulevard Bridge (HCM No. 1023) was "hiding in plain sight," its history and its association with a tragic train wreck was a complete surprise to us.

Indeed, West Adams' newest landmark, the John L. Matheson/Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) California Mission Residence, a remarkable 7,000-square-foot Tudor/Gothic Revival manse designed by famed architect Frederick L. Roehrig, was not accurately identified until it became endangered in 2013 (see story, page 1).

Indeed, there no doubt remains quite a treasure trove of historic resources not yet identified. Do you know of one? Do let us know, at news@westadamsheritage.org.

Col. J.J. Warner: A Pioneer's Legacy Rediscovered by Laura Meyers

In 1831, Jonathan Trumball Warner became one of Los Angeles's earliest Anglo settlers, joining a handful of adventurous men who included William Wolfskill, John Temple, Louis Vignes, and Abel Stearns (among others). These men were carving a future in a dusty pueblo governed by distant rulers in Mexico.

Like the others, Jonathan Warner soon adopted a Spanish name – Don (or Mister) Juan Jose "J.J." Warner. We remember



him today for the famous "Warner Ranch" in San Diego, which stood on the immigrant road and once served as a stopping place for covered wagon pioneers coming to California. Warner was also an elected official, an author of an important early history of Los Angeles, and the publisher of one of Los Angeles's earliest newspapers, the weekly *Southern Vineyard*. He outlived all of his fellow Mexican-rule Anglo pioneers, and thus was hailed by the 1890s as one of most notable of the early "Argonauts" of California's pioneer days.

To our surprise, the neat Victorian cottage farmhouse he built in the West Adams area in the 1880s still survives intact on what was in his era a dusty road called "University Avenue," now known as West 36th Place. Warner's farmhouse was erected on the open plains southwest of the city limits, in what was then known as the University District (so named for USC, which was established in the same period of time.) He transplanted a pair of palm trees from his Downtown vineyard to his new quarters, where they thrived towering over the neighborhood until recent years.

This 1,888-square-foot Queen Anne/Eastlake Victorian was first identified in 1969 by historian Patricia Adler in a report to the Community Redevelopment Agency, and then promptly lost to history again. Over the years, I had noticed a well-kept Victorian home while driving the street. But I only recently read the Adler report, and connected the "dots."

Col. Warner is a significant historic personage for Southern California, where he spent the later years of his life. He was a charter member of the Los Angeles Historical Society, and friends with Pio Pico for sixty years. When he died, in 1895, he was buried at Rosedale Cemetery, at a funeral attended by many local leaders.

Warner was born in Connecticut, in 1807, the descendent of American pioneers. In 1830, at the age of 23 and weary of cold New England winters and ill



health, Warner journeyed from Connecticut to St. Louis. He had no set idea about heading further to California, but, as he later recalled, Warner "was swept westerly by the strong and uninterrupted current of humanity flowing in that direction." He joined the Rocky Mountain Fur Company trading expedition headed by the famed mountain man, Jedediah Smith. The expedition, which set out with 85 men and 23 wagons hauled by mules and oxen, first headed toward Santa Fe, and eventually passed through a vast region and arrived in Southern California, having traded most of the furs for Mexican silver.

By the following year, Warner was working as a clerk for Abel Sterns and for John Temple in Los Angeles, and then he ran a trading post for 10 years. In 1837, he married Anita Gale, the daughter of a Boston captain. Her father left her in California as a child as a ward of Dona Eustaquia Pico, mother of Gov. Pio Pico. By 1844, Warner had become Mexican citizen and obtained a land grant from Gov. Manuel Micheltorena to Agua Caliente in a beautiful valley in San Diego. He renamed it Warner's Ranch.

His neighbors knew him as Don Juan José Warner, although sometimes they called

him "Don Juan Largo," a reference to his height, 6'3. In 1846, Gov. Pico granted Warner an additional four square leagues. Soon afterwards, the famous Mormon Battalion passed through, as the war which resulted in California becoming a U.S. state was being waged. Warner confirmed his ownership of the land with the new American authorities, and lived on the ranch until the local Cupeno tribe burned his ranch buildings, stole his cattle and drove him out, in the early 1850s (although ownership did not pass to new hands for several more years).

During this period Warner was also elected to the State Senate representing San Diego County (1851-52), and also served as a San Diego County Supervisor. By 1857 he had officially resettled in Los Angeles, and was elected to the State Assembly representing the City of Angels in 1860.

In Los Angeles he worked as a notary public and as a Spanish and English translator and interpreter. The Civil War made Warner a strong Union man. Indeed, in Los Angeles republicans and democrats alike joined together to create the "Union Party," which included all voters who were not "secessionists" in Confederate-leaning Los Angeles.

Warner was the joint author with Dr. J. P. Widney and Judge Benjamin Hayes of the 1876 Centennial "Historical Sketch of Los Angeles County," his contribution covering the period from September 8, 1777, to January, 1847. He was recognized as an authority on early California history and especially on early fur

trapping and trading. In his later years, Warner was a frequent contributor to the letters columns in the local newspapers, never tiring of telling newcomers about the California he had known.

After leaving the ranch in San Diego, Warner had "retired" to a vineyard on Main Street in what is now Downtown Los Angeles. But with his eyesight failing (he eventually became blind), Warner sold his vineyard and purchased a property out in the country, west of Rosedale Avenue (now Normandie) outside the city limits. There he lived out his days with his daughter, Mrs. Rubio, and his grandchildren. (His wife had died years earlier, in 1859.) Warner died there in April, 1895.

In his final years, Col. Jonathan Trumball Warner (also known as Juan Jose Warner) lived in this Victorian-era cottage on West 36th Place





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A Neutra Right Here in West Adams

by Jean Frost

In West Adams we are surrounded by monuments and wondrous architecture and think we have a wide knowledge of the great buildings surrounding us. Every once in a while we encounter a forgotten gem, a property that surprises us. We didn't know it was there. The USCowned Richard Neutra-designed building on West Adams Boulevard, just east of University Avenue, is such a building.

Building permits tell us the building was constructed in 1962 as the USC Child Guidance Clinic and had its grand opening in 1964. Since it was a scant twenty something years old during the 1985 historic resource survey for the Hoover Redevelopment Project Area, it did not rise to the level of historic importance. When the historic survey was updated in 2005, the building had achieved more gravitas due to its are and the trend for modern buildings finding r



due to its age and the trend for modern buildings finding new acknowledgment. If you go by quickly, your eye will first be taken by the Kerckoff Hall, a Tudor Revival style residence designed for a prominent businessman during West Adams' period as a fashionable upper class neighborhood. Los Angeles Historic C

prominent businessman during West Adams' period as a fashionable upper class neighborhood, Los Angeles Historic Cultural Monument No. 606. Sharing the same address of 746 West Adams Boulevard, on the northwest corner of the parcel is the Neutra building. It bears all of the classic marks of a Neutra International Design building. As architectural historian Peter Moruzzi noted in the

2005 historic survey: "The primary (east) elevation features ribbons of fixed windows separated between floors by verticallygrooved wood spandrels. A concrete path leads to the metal-framed glazed entrance, which is sheltered by a flat porch roof supported on its south by a red brick wall. The second story south elevation projects over the first floor, both floors of which are punctuated by large, wide fixed windows. Horizontality is especially pronounced on the west elevation, which features virtually uninterrupted ribbons of fixed windows.

"The north elevation is without overhanging eaves and its one- and two-story elevations contain a mixture of clerestory windows and ribbons of fixed glazing. Originally an "O"-shaped plan with a landscaped center courtyard that was open towards the northwest, a small one-story addition constructed in 1967 enclosed the center courtyard space. Compatible



in design, materials, and workmanship, the new construction complemented the original building.

"Today, lush landscaping consisting of clipped grass, low shrubs, hedges, and mature trees enhances the building's east and north elevations. Low shrubs bordering a paved parking area are south of the building; a paved driveway parallels the structure on the west side of the parcel. While cognizant of the modest one-story addition, the property continues to exhibit a high level of physical integrity, particularly along its primary (east) elevation.

"Of wood frame construction and capped by a flat roof, the one- and twostory International Style office building is primarily rectangular in plan and characterized by a broad horizontality. Exterior elevations are sheathed in stucco, vertically-grooved wood panels, and red brick. Deep often cantilevered overhanging

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eaves are utilized on portions of the south, west, and east elevations. Additionally, the west elevation incorporates the horizontal plank shading system characteristic of the architect, Richard Neutra."

Richard Neutra is considered one of the most significant architects of the twentieth century and is credited with introducing the International Style to American architecture. His most famous residential design is his first Los Angeles commission, the Lovell Health House of 1929. Nestled among the lush setting of Kerckoff Hall, West Adams' own Neutra designed building is a hidden gem. •







Mormon Architect Harold W. Burton

by Janet Kay Hemming

West Adams' newest designated Historic Cultural Monument, the John L. Matheson/Church of Latter Day Saints California Mission Residence, is an important resource for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, having served as our California Mission headquarters and in other functions for a quarter-century, from 1929 until 1954. In October 2013, neighbors learned that this 7,000-square-foot mansion had been designed by one of Southern California's most important architects, Frederick Louis Roehrig, designer of the Rindge Mansion, the Ramsey/Durfee and Pasadena's Castle Green, among other landmarks.

But more recently, while further researching the significant historic and cultural connections of the residence to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormon Church), which owned the property for a quarter century, WAHA contacted the LDS Public Affairs Department, Los Angeles Mission, where I work.

In researching LDS records, we learned that an important LDS architect, Harold W. Burton, was responsible for its remodel in 1938 into the LDS California Mission headquarters. Burton's legacy includes several churches now listed on the National Register of Historic Places, including one church in the Historic West Adams District.

In late 1928, E. J. and Mildred B. La Fon sold their home at 2067 South Hobart Blvd. to the Corporation of the Presiding Bishop of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to serve as the mission office and Western outpost of the Church's Spanish American Mission, based in El Paso, Texas. The rapid growth of the Spanish-speaking missionary work in Southern California prompted the move. It served that function for five years, and then was utilized as residential quarters until November, 1938.

Then, according to California Los Angeles Mission Manuscripts, LDS Church History Library, Quarterly Historical Record, "After nearly thirty years at 153 West Adams [Blvd.], the California Mission headquarters were moved to 2067 South Hobart Blvd., Los



Angeles. The new mission headquarters is in the old Spanish-American home, which was purchased some ten years before by Elder Melvin J. Ballard for President Rey L. Pratt of the Mexican Mission...."

At that time, the California Los Angeles Mission was under the direction of President Wallace Aird MacDonald, Jr. In June of that year President MacDonald inspected the home and made a complete report of the alterations needed to make the building on South Hobart suitable for use as a mission home. Part of his desire to make a change was to move the mission headquarters in a nicer neighborhood, as the area around 153 West Adams Blvd. was becoming more industrial. He asked "approval to investigate moving Mission Headquarters to the new location." Permission was granted by the First Presidency of the Church and on June 27 President MacDonald sent sketches of the proposed changes, prepared by Architect Harold W. Burton, to Church Headquarters.

The remodel of 2067 Hobart Blvd. for its new use only took about six to seven weeks and the residence officially became headquarters for the California Los Angeles Mission on November 19, 1938. The home was described in the Quarterly Historical Record as "a substantial, dignified headquarters in a lovely and desirable residential district.... The remodeled building is an ideal home and fills every requirement of the Mission, providing ample office space with spacious Mission Home apartments for lady missionaries and ample quarters for Elders." ("Elders" is a term for male missionaries.) Today, several characterdefining elements from the Mormon ownership remain in the house.

Architect Burton was one of the most prolific architects in LDS Church history. Several of Burton's works are listed on the National Register of Historic Places, including what is now the Los Angeles Stake Center (built in 1929) at 1209 Manhattan Place in Country Club Park.

This Art Deco masterpiece, first known as the Hollywood Stake Tabernacle and then as the Wilshire Ward Chapel, is also designated Los Angeles Cultural-Historic Monument No. 531 The church building synthesizes the Art Deco style with Gothic and Byzantine overtones. It was not unusual for Art Deco to incorporate classical or ancient characteristics into a modern idiom, and especially for ecclesiastical design, this would have been highly desirable. The older styles provide

Wilshire Ward Chapel (photos on this and facing page)



a sense of tradition while the modern expression demonstrated a forward thinking attitude; both connoted permanence. Respect for history and looking toward the future are both part of religious celebration and this design is a fine example of that combination.

Biography

Harold W. Burton (1888–1969) was an early 20th-century architect with works throughout the western United States and Canada. Burton was one of the most prolific architects of chapels, meetinghouses, tabernacles, and temples for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS Church).

In 1910 he opened an architectural firm with Hyrum Pope (Pope and Burton) in Salt Lake City, Utah. They were particularly fond of Frank Lloyd Wright and the Prairie School architectural style. As young architects Pope & Burton won design competitions for two of their better-known works, the Cardston Alberta and Laie Hawaii temples of the LDS Church. Burton moved to Los Angeles, California in 1927 to set up another office in the firm with Pope.

After Pope unexpectedly died in 1939, Burton established a new firm with his son Douglas W. Burton. Together they continued to design many buildings, including some for the church. In 1955, Harold became the chief supervising architect for the LDS Church. One of his final works was the Oakland California Temple. Aside from places of worship, Burton also designed civic buildings and homes. Many of his works exist today, some of which are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Other works by Burton:

- Malcolm and Elizabeth Keyser House (1913)*NRHP listed
- Julia Budge Nibley House (1914)
- Walter Scott Weiler House (1914)
- St. Paul's Episcopal Church Salt Lake City (1917)
- Brooklyn Chapel Meetinghouse (1917) *Currently the Evening Star Baptist Church on Franklin and Gates
- Denver First Ward Meetinghouse (1918)
- Vernal Second Ward Chapel (1918)
- Centerville Ward Chapel (1918)

• Highland Park Ward Meetinghouse (1924) *NRHP listed in Highland Park Historic District (Salt Lake City, Utah)

• Ezra Thompson Building (1924) *also known as the former Salt Lake Tribune building

• Memorial House Facade (1926) Memory Grove (Salt Lake City)

• Provo First Ward Meetinghouse (1928)

• Phoenix Second Ward Meetinghouse *NRHP listed in Roosevelt Historic District (Currently the Great Arizona Puppet Theater)

 University Ward Chapel (1929) *NRHP listed in University Neighborhood Historic

- District (Salt Lake City, Utah) • Davis County Courthouse (1929)
 - Davis County Courthouse (1929)
 - Stewart, LeConte House *NRHP listed
 Honolulu Stake Tabernacle (1941)
 - Fonolulu Stake Tabernacie (1941)
 Fast Day Interstake Conter (1050/a)
 - East Bay Interstake Center (1950's)

• McKay Foyer on Brigham Young University - Hawaii Campus (1957)

• Las Vegas Ninth Ward Meetinghouse (1961) ●

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A Hidden Pocket: Washington Gardens

Hidden even in West Adams are little pocket neighborhoods off the regularly beaten path. One such neighborhood is Washington Gardens, tucked just north of Washington Boulevard on Westmoreland and Orchard Avenues. We recently learned about this Depression Era enclave of nearly-identical Minimal Traditional apartment buildings, 22 in all, that has been identified as a historic district by SurveyLA.

According to SurveyLA, Washington Gardens is a "rare" and "excellent, highly intact collection of apartment buildings that use Colonial Revival details to embellish the simple forms of U-shaped, Minimal Traditional multi-family residences." As SurveyLA explains: "All of the apartment buildings in Washington Gardens are U-shaped, and are oriented with the wings



of the U-shape projecting towards the street. The buildings have stucco siding and were constructed in the Minimal Traditional style with elements of the Colonial Revival, Hollywood Regency, and Streamline Moderne styles. The stylistic variations are subtle. The massing, form, and plan of the buildings are consistent, disguising the variations in the numbers of units. The buildings of the district have symmetrically-balanced front façades with centered entryways and windows arranged in pairs. Decorative details differ between buildings, but all integrate key features of the Colonial Revival style, including broken pediments on door and window surrounds and string courses separating the first and second floors.

Washington

"Cantilevered balconies span the recesses of the U-shape at the second floors of the buildings. Staircases for second floor access are located behind Classical door surrounds. Garages are accessed through a rear alley. Spaces between buildings and street-facing entrances are reserved for pedestrians. Eucalyptus trees line Westmoreland Street.

"The narrow period of significance 1940 reflects the year that all buildings within the district were constructed. Of the 22 buildings within the district boundaries, all 22 buildings (100%) are contributors to the historic district. All buildings within the boundaries of the blocks comprise the original development and are contributing properties to the district.

"The subdivision was developed in 1940 by Aetna Construction and Consolidated Hotels, a corporation responsible for a number of multi-family subdivisions in Los Angeles in this period.

"Washington Gardens was constructed by Aetna Construction and managed by Consolidated Hotels. Developments from this builder, of this size and number of units (over 200 as originally constructed), and from this time period were usually arranged in superblock configurations. Aetna Construction and Consolidated Hotels were also responsible for Dorset Village, a multi-family garden apartment development of comparable size, also designed in the Minimal Traditional style with Colonial Revival details. Washington Gardens conforms to the street grid, emphasizes pedestrian access at the front façade, and relegates vehicular access to rear alleys.

"There are no architects listed on building permits for the district, but these design details can be found in other developments built by Aetna Construction for Consolidated Hotels in the early 1940s.

"When the development opened in June 1940, advertisements described Washington Gardens as moderately priced and emphasized its proximity to downtown Los Angeles and existing shopping corridors along Vermont Avenue and Washington Boulevard. Units featured electric, "matchless" appliances, which were advanced safety features at the time."



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Remembering the Tuskegee Airmen

by Laura Meyers

The Tuskegee Airmen — the proud, pioneering group of World War II African American fighter pilots and service personnel — lost three more Southern California members in December and January.

Lowell C. Steward, who for many years lived on Virginia Road in Lafayette Square, died in Ventura on December 17.

Three weeks later, and on the same day, lifelong friends Clarence Huntley Jr. and Joseph Shambrey each died at their respective Los Angeles homes, both at age 91.

The legacy of these three Tuskegee Airman is an important one to remember, especially as those who were eyewitnesses to both the war and the breaking down of racial barriers are passing from our midst.

By mid-century on the eve of World War II, there had been unrelenting advocacy to persuade the government to accept African Americans for training by the Air Corps in

military aviation. Despite strong resistance from the military establishment and many officials in the War Department, and after considerable debate on the subject, the government finally agreed to establish a program in which African American applicants would be trained in all aspects of military aviation and sent into combat as a segregated unit.

It established an aviation unit near Tuskegee Institute, Alabama, in cooperation with the institute for the training of African American pilots for the Army. This unit was to be called the 99th Pursuit Squadron.

The first pilot class completed the training and received their wings on March 7, 1942. First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt was a strong supporter of the Tuskegee Airmen. She even "inspected the troops" and flew with a recent graduate. A total of 926 pilots graduated from Tuskegee Army Flying School over the years, including Lowell Steward, who graduated as a 2nd lieutenant in June, 1943.

In 1984, Steward told interviewer Studs Terkel that the military organizers of the "experiment" were skeptical about its chances. "As one of the officers in charge put it, if it doesn't work out, it'll be down South and nobody'll see 'em fail anyway," Steward said. "We'll give'em a chance. If they succeed, I guess it won't hurt anything. If they fail, we'll hush it up and nobody will know about it." Later, he told the Los Angeles Times, "They didn't believe that Negroes had the mental capacity to do anything other than menial jobs. I had never touched an airplane, but that so incensed me that I said, 'Hell, I know I can fly.' "

The Tuskegee Airmen were nick-named "Red Tails" because of the distinctive red paint on their tails. Airplanes in Tuskegee, Alabama where the group trained were painted with red markings to identify students. When the unit moved to North Africa, replacement aircraft were often bare metal with no paint except for basic identification numbers. It was decided that the colors of the trainer aircraft of Tuskegee would carry over into combat. A simple "A" on the side of the fuselage would designate the 99th Pursuit Squadron, "B" the 100th, "C" the 301st, and "D" for the 302nd.

The Airmen had an illustrious record in combat. The 450 Tuskegee Airmen assigned to the African/European Theater flew 1,578 missions —15,553 combat sorties while fighting the Germans, both in North Africa and Italy; the unequaled record of not having lost a single bomber, while they were escorting, due to enemy aircraft action. Tuskegee Airmen earned more than



Above: Clarence Huntley Jr. (with plane); Top right: Lowell C. Steward in uniform

150 Distinguished Flying Crosses, while combating racism and prejudice at home and abroad. Bomber crews saw the "Red Tails" as a welcome sight.

In 1944, Steward was shipped to Italy and flew missions over Germany in P-39 Aircobras, P-40 Warhawks and ultimately, P-51 Mustangs, arguably the most advanced American fighter of the war. Among other things, the unit scored three kills of the German Me-262 jet fighter in a single day in 1945. Steward was ultimately awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross.

Two years earlier, in 1942, Huntley and Shambrey, who had grown up in the same Los Angeles neighborhood and ran track together, also enlisted together in the U.S. Army Air Corps and entered the Tuskegee Institute. They were both 19. The pair were shipped to Italy two years later with the 100th Fighter Squadron of the 332nd



History Matters



Fighter Group, as mechanics for the elite squadron's fighter planes.

The contributions of the Tuskegee Airmen and their struggle to achieve parity and recognition as competent military professionals, leading to the War Department's evaluation of its racial policies and the ultimate desegregation of the military. The Tuskegee Army Airfield closed shortly after its last class graduated, on June 29, 1946.

Both Huntley and Shambrey were aware of the importance of the Tuskegee Airmen in the history of race relations in the United States, their relatives say. Shambrey's son,

Tim, told the Associated Press that his father recalled getting off a train in segregated Alabama, where the Airmen trained. While a hospitality station welcomed white troops with handshakes and free coffee, Tim Shambrey said that "When he and his buddies came off, dressed in their uniforms, of course they didn't get any congratulations" and they had to pay for their own coffee.

Huntley and Shambrey both returned to Los Angeles after World War II and got married to their respective sweethearts. The two men kept in regular touch throughout their lives. They served in the Korean War as well, as combat engineers. In civilian life, Huntley worked as a skycap at Los Angeles International and Burbank Airports for more than six decades, into his late 80s, while Shambrey worked as a supervisor for the Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation.

For his part, Steward, after being discharged in 1946, moved to Los Angeles and tried to buy a house, only to be repeatedly denied bank loans because he was black. "After several encounters like that he said, 'I need to figure out how to finance my own home.' That's when he went to real estate school," his son, Lowell Steward Jr., later recalled.

He studied for his real estate license while working as a railway baggage porter. Soon, Steward became one of the first black real estate agents in Los Angeles and went on to a 40-year career in the industry.

He also helped organize and later served as president of the Los Angeles chapter of Tuskegee Airmen, Inc., a group devoted to preserving the legacy of the fighter pilots. And, he founded a scholarship foundation in the name of the Airmen.

Now, according to Ron Brewington, president and historian of the Los Angeles chapter of Tuskegee Airmen Inc., there are only about 20 living Tuskegee Airmen still alive in Los Angeles, and he estimates there are 200 known Tuskegee Airmen still living across the country. The oldest known living Airman is 105 years old, according

to Brewington. As of last July, there were a total of some 1 million World War II veterans still alive in the United States; the U.S. Veterans Administration estimates that some 400 die every day.



Top: Tuskegee Airmen prepare for war; above, Clarence Huntley Jr. (with his nephew and a friend); Right: Lowell C. Steward at war



Cause to Celebrate: The Nature Gardens at the Natural History Museum in Exposition Park *Plus a Conversation with Vanessa Vobis*

For decades visitors have been entranced by the historic Rose Garden at Exposition Park. A casual stroll through the park invites one to see weddings, quincinieras, and lovers charmed by the Rose Garden, built in 1927 with the planting of 15,000 rose bushes of more than 100 varieties.

So often we see proposals that deteriorate the beauty around us. Christmas Tree Lane (the original entrance to the Coliseum off Figueroa) has been severely affected and never restored to the extent promised in the EIR for the CSMI parking structure. In 1986, plans to dig up the Rose Garden to build an underground parking garage led to protests in the media. The Los Angeles Times ran an editorial opposing the plan: "There are times when the leaders of Los Angeles seem perversely intent on living up to the image that many outsiders have of them—insensitive and uncouth rabbits who would, say, dig up a garden to put in a parking lot."

Over time, one sees many environmental victories but too often they are accompanied by decline and ill-conceived modernizations. But there is good news. One outstanding new asset and incredible improvement to the Exposition Park setting are LA NHM's Nature Gardens. 153,000 square feet of asphalt parking lot and concrete hardscape has been replaced with 3.5 acres of perennials, wild flowers, succulents, and water and built form that attracts wildlife and birds - cause to celebrate.

About 102,000 cubic feet of concrete sidewalks, stairs and walls were crushed on site and recycled into the garden. In their place are more than 200 varieties of perennials, 31,000 plants, set along a half-mile of winding, decomposed granite pathways that allow water to permeate and replenish groundwater. What an amazing transition for the Park which adds — not detracts — to the historic Museum of Natural History and its Rose Garden setting.

What is truly remarkable is the excellent orchestration from concept through realization. The creators of this space really knew what they were doing and had a strong mission. As its landscape architect Mia Lehrer explained, landscapes have to be performative: "Performative is a term that embraces sustainability in a very deep way and implies that any solution to create



spaces somehow leaves the place better than it was."

Lehrer explained "We're not trying to make this garden a chaparral or true pure native Southern California....We're trying to make it an instructional and hopefully beautiful place for people to learn about plant materials, to learn about what they do for us. When you find a spider in your bathtub or on your plants, you realize what it's doing for you. You don't automatically want to squish it."

I asked West Adams Heritage Association member Vanessa Vobis (who had a direct hand in the Gardens' evolution from their very infancy) to share some of her personal experiences with the creation of the Nature Gardens. "When I first moved to Los Angeles in 2010, I started to volunteer at all kinds of organizations and at the Natural History Museum they were just starting up a little prototype vegetable garden to see what it would be to teach classes about growing your own food.....That was the initial start, just as a pure volunteer, weeding the beds, taking care of the plants. Then as I

was hired on into the museum, I became more involved with that three acres of garden space that we have and I was able to assist our horticulturalist in some of the initial planning of that garden space....I worked for Carol Bornstein, the Director of the Gardens, who worked closely with the design team like Mia Lehrer to wrangle this whole thing together."

"What did I do?...As Carol's assistant I did a lot of research for her: for materials such as huge bamboo screens to make walls more hiddenSome of the fruit trees, the vegetable garden, some of the plants were having issues and (I had to find) a pest management consultant in Los Angeles who we could contact....All the Gardens are 100% organic so we don't spray for bees or wasps. We use integrated pest management systems (IPM) to control....I was really her research assistant....Currently I am in public programs so I oversee all of our gardening workshops and classes."

The Nature Gardens offer a variety of elements each with unique intentions as described on the NHM website and their Nature Gardens map: (Numbers below are from the LA NHM Map (not sequential) and descriptions below are from the LA NHM website)

1 *Transition Garden* which reveals L.A.'s history. Spanish missionaries planted olive trees. Settlers brought plants from their homelands, which flourished thanks to the L.A. aqueduct

2 Floss Silk Trees, with showy rose-colored flowers, hail from South America. Small parakeets that thrive in L.A. are nourished by these trees, which have abundant seeds in their large green pods.

6 Living Wall, created from stone and recycled concrete, is a wildlife habitat. Blooming succulents, spiders, and snails live in its cracks and crevices

7 Listening Tree where you can look for the silver "trumpets" and listen for the oak tree soaking up water from the earth, due to an amplification system that taps into the tree's xylem tubes. The installation was created by artist Alex Metcalf.

Community Matters



8 *Urban Water Feature*, designed by Mia Lehrer + Associates, is a metaphor for the Los Angeles River, whose headwaters disappeared and then reappeared down river.

9 Get Dirty Zone where you can literally play in the dirt, the foundation of everything in nature! Explore compost bins for small creatures like pillbugs that help create soil, check out our soil sifter, and discover how roots grow.

10 Dry Creek Bed is a metaphor for L.A.'s waterways, whose seasonal streams disappear underground. It's also an outdoor classroom and a bird watching spot.

11 *Bird Watching Platform*. Los Angeles County has more species of birds than any other county in the U.S.! Bird walks stop at this platform, where you can spot local and exotic flyers.

12 Pond, teeming with wildlife, was designed to represent the harnessed Los Angeles River, a water source that disappears below ground and then reappears into seasonal stream.

13 Hummingbird Feeders, as Los Angeles is home to more bird species than any other locale. Stop by these hummingbird feeders and you'll likely find a plentiful number of hoverers.

14 Edible Garden where you'll find our lush vegetable, fruit, and herb gardens. Take a gardening class, or a Nature Walk, and you may get to taste what we're growing.

What does Vobis finds most inspiring about the Nature Gardens? "I am so happy to see that it inspires hundreds of people throughout the day. It's a perfect location for people in urban Los Angeles to come and see a good representation of the Los Angeles basin as an inspiration site. It is also an active research site for our scientists...we study bio-diversity here in downtown Los Angeles....L.A. actually is considered a bio-diversity 'hot spot' so we have a huge migration of different birds and so forth and our gardens are great scientific test grounds to study different kinds....We found already several different species of insects that had not been documented ever before."

Bio-diversity, she explained, is the "interrelationship between different organisms, different plants, animals, habitat, species...the garden spaces create a habitat. We purposely selected plants that foster a good environment for insects, mammals, reptiles, amphibians and birds."

How best to explore this new neighborhood asset? Vobis suggests that you "budget a good forty-five minutes to an hour to walk to different spaces that catch your eye. There is a pond that is just beautiful. People love to sit at it and ponder and watch the dragonflies. There is a pollinate area where you can see hummingbirds slipping behind every five seconds with modern butterflies and then there's the vegetable garden. I would encourage (visitors)... to make a big loop through all of the different spaces to get a good sense of the different areas.

"Now it is starting to fill in more to create more of these nooks and shady little gems to sit and observe and meditate if you will. "It really speaks to some good collaboration between our scientists and our education staff coming together to really start to envision what we want this space to be and what the point of the whole thing is. So it was meant to be an active scientific research site as well as a



Vanessa Vobis

site where we can do education and it was also meant to foster that bio-diversity.... That team that came together was really on the same page....Aesthetics was a key focus for our director in our education department...whenever ideas were being put forth in the design process."

The Nature Gardens have provided the NHM an opportunity to extend their cooking workshops and integrate them with the Erika J. Glazer Family Edible Garden specifically. Vobis noted, "This week we have tamales, next month making tortillas from scratch, studying corn and raising other kinds of grains, then, later, a chocolate workshop." These special workshops take place along with regular classes on beginning and advanced vegetable growing, classes on composting and on how to prune fruit trees.

The Gardens opened in 2013, to celebrate the hundredth anniversary of the Museum. (It is called Garden13 to commemorate that date.) The reuse of materials is quite stunning. Along the garden pathway, rebar is constructed to create planted arches to guide you along your walk. Some of the benches and

garden boxes are made with recycled railroad tracks. We applaud all of the creators of these Gardens in their design and execution. The NHM has free hours on the first Tuesday of the month, October through June. General Admission (adults), \$12. Seniors (62+) and students with an ID, \$9. For more information call 213-763-DINO, or visit www.nhm.org.

Vanessa Vobis officially has an MFA is printmaking but unofficially in interdisciplinary studies which has included the study of plants. "The MFA has really taught me to be quite interdisciplinary from design skills to put disparate things together connecting the dots essentially." She is also a UC Master Gardener.

— by Jean Frost

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



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WAHA's 2015 Calendar

We are beginning to plan our year — Don't miss out: please add WAHA's events to your new 2015 calendars.

FEBRUARY

Join WAHA to Tour the Oscar-Nominated Costumes at FIDM Saturday, February 28, 2 p.m. (see story, page 1)

MARCH

Raise Some Dough for WAHA: Pizza Rev Fundraiser Monday, March 9 (all day) --

It's a fabulous day for pizza! Any time, all day long -- buy a pie at Pizza Rev's Midtown Crossing location, to benefit WAHA (the more we eat, the more WAHA earns!)

APRIL

WAHA Elections and Annual Membership Meeting Sunday, April 19 (Hold the Date)

MAY

Memorial Day Weekend -- Honoring Those Who Served in War Sunday, May 24 at Angelus Rosedale Cemetery (Hold the Date)

JUNE

SprIng Historic Architecture Tour Saturday, June 6 (Hold the Date)

JULY

Celebrate the 4th of July with WAHA Saturday, July 4



Calendar

Upcoming Events FEBRUARY

Join WAHA to Tour the Oscar-Nominated Costumes at FIDM

Saturday, February 28, 2 p.m. (see story, page 1)

MARCH

Raise Some Dough for WAHA: Pizza Rev Fundraiser Monday, March 9 (all day) --



It's a fabulous day for pizza! Any time, all day long -- buy a pie at Pizza Rev's Midtown Crossing location, to benefit WAHA (the more we eat, the more WAHA earns!)

APRIL

WAHA Elections and Annual Membership Meeting Sunday, April 19 (Hold the Date)

JUNE

Spring Historic Architecture Tour Saturday, June 6 (Hold the Date)



Present this flyer or simply mention us at the register!

WAHA....Creating Our Future by Preserving Our Past

The WAHA Matters 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 2015. All rights for graphic and written material appearing in the newsletter are reserved. Contact Director of Publications for permission.



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