

Hollywood Heritage is a non-profit organization dedicated to preservation of the historic built environment in Hollywood and to education about the early film industry and the role its pioneers played in shaping Hollywood's history.

Hollywood Heritage to Offer Weekly Tours of National Register Boulevard District

Hollywood Heritage is once again offering visitors the opportunity to see Hollywood from a historic preservationist's point of view as they recommence their long-absent weekly walking tours.

Hollywood Heritage Barn docent George "Goldenvoice" Kiel has had his practice runs...well, walks...and is ready for Prime Time which, in this case, is 9:00 am Saturday mornings, starting June 17th.

Walkers will meet at the SE corner of Vine and Selma, original site of the Lasky-DeMille Barn near the Hollywood and Vine Red Line station. George chose 9:00 am because

it's relatively quiet at that hour, although George's voice can readily be heard at *any* hour.

The tour takes 1-1/2 hours and ends at the Roosevelt Hotel, after which one can return to the starting point by MetroRail (1 stop) to reclaim your car. If you can *arrive* by MetroRail it's recommended, since parking is always a challenge in Hollywood.

For the opening month, the cost of the tour is \$10 per person and only \$5 for Hollywood Heritage members. Participation is limited to 10 people per tour. Please reserve your spot by calling (323) 465-6716. Wear comfortable shoes.



The Wrecking Crew Is Saved From A Wrecking Crew

by Robert W. Nudelman

Early last year, Hollywood Heritage was approached by Art Laboe's office and friends about a recently closed recording studio. Located at the edge of the Sunset-Gower (originally Columbia) Studios at Sunset and Gordon, across from the Old Spaghetti Factory, it appeared to be a fairly nondescript building. Windowless and the victim of a couple of exterior modernizations, it had decades earlier been a grocery store.

After hearing the stories by the callers of the building's exciting

history, Hollywood Heritage determined that it had to be saved. This was the home of Western United Recorders from 1965 to the recent closing, though having had other names later on. Created from an existing studio that opened there in 1959, owner/engineer Bill Putnam designed and built three new studios inside, with offices above.

Putnam was a legend in the recording industry, pioneering in its development since the 1950s. The studio consisted of this and another structure a few feet to the west separated by a parking lot. The studio facility

to the west was later sold off and is today known as Ocean Way Studios, and is still a highly successful operation. These studios were used by a number of greats for mainstream pop recordings at the time, whereas the eastern studios became the center of rock and roll.

Here is where the famed Wrecking Crew was based. The Wrecking Crew was a group of studio musicians that played on more hit records than any other group, lead by such legends as drummer Hal Blaine, bassist Carol Kaye (yes, a woman

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City Fumbles Florentine Garden Plan

by Robert W. Nudelman

Florentine Gardens: This 1938 nightclub building and surrounding property were slated to be purchased by the Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD) last year so that the land adjacent to the CRA landmark structure would become a new fire station. The Florentine Gardens would be restored and used for community meeting space and as a live theater/concert facility for the Hollywood community (see our last newsletter).

Delays in making the purchase have caused the city to become a victim of its own “success.” Real estate prices have risen due to recently announced projects pushed by the city at Hollywood and Vine and at Hollywood and Western. This site is between them and the tide of projects has raised the price of these properties. Now the LAFD fears that the bond money approved to build this station may not be enough (rising construction costs must also be an issue). The Prop F Bond Committee reviewed the situation and made a determination on April 25. They determined to look elsewhere and withdraw the plans for the Florentine Garden site.

The fact is simple, the station needs to be built somewhere very soon, and was already at its third approved location while the other Prop F stations are completed, or nearing completion. This one is about to be priced out of the market before it can start. This leaves an area of many historic homes, apartments, and businesses short of adequate protection (the existing fire station is over 50-years-old). With all the new projects to be built, plus extensive new residential development in the area, the demand on this station and its *one* truck is unacceptable to the community and the city’s firefight-

ers. If new development is to proceed, the new fire station must be built, especially as CEQA approval documents are based on it being there when these new projects are approved. If no station is built, the approvals are null and void under state law (CEQA), and the development must stop until the situation is remedied to protect public safety.

Hollywood Heritage has spoken on this at the Planning Commission and the Prop F Bond Committee hearings. We realize the costs are increasing, but the city, as stated, is stuck. Their approvals of projects have caused the problem and they must find the money to move this important project forward. The need for the new fire station is imperative. The cost of land will be similar wherever they look in the designated area and will probably result in another site that has residential, including historic, properties. Such proposed demolitions blocked earlier sites. The city must act now or, at a minimum, stop new development in the area until it can prove that it can provide adequate fire protection for all.

On April 25, a this new position was announced by the city announcing the end of these plans and that the station was to be cancelled at this location. Reference was made to the problems of price and the need for eminent domain to obtain the property. Yet that same afternoon, councilmembers Garcetti

and LaBonge recommended to a city council committee to proceed forward with eminent domain for the Bernard Luggage Building.

Obviously the city has no problem using eminent domain in the area (about three blocks on Hollywood Boulevard separate the two properties) but the concern is which is more important. An approved fire



Historic photo of the Florentine Gardens

Hollywood Heritage Museum

station can wait, while a 4-star luxury hotel should move forward, even though the fire station would help to protect that hotel. The city’s burning desire was to build the hotel, not protect it or the surrounding community. Yet it is the financial impacts of putting forward the Hollywood and Vine project (where Bernard Luggage is located) that caused the price hike at the Florentine Gardens site. To not be able to respond to their own development plans with adequate public safety covering fire safety, puts the community, and the developer, at unfair risk.

1800 N. Highland Avenue: As discussed in the last newsletter, the owners of this 7-story office building, CIM Group, planned to gut and remodel this 1960s structure which, though not historic, is strategically located on Highland Avenue



The building at 1800 Highland Avenue, under renovation

photo courtesy of CIM Group

at Franklin Avenue, serving as a gateway building into Hollywood and the Hollywood Boulevard Historic District, less than 2 blocks away. Covered with six billboards and wall signs, it became an ugly signpost that greeted people to Hollywood.

In its plans to remodel the building, CIM had proposed variances to the city to keep the two illegal rooftop billboards and the “illegal” supergraphics wall sign that covered the entire window area of the façade facing north toward Highland Avenue.

Alerted to the Planning Commission’s meeting by the neighboring Hollywood Heights Homeowners’ Association, Hollywood Heritage appeared at the January hearing and battled the proposal. A representative of a neighboring property owner and a nearby resident came also to protest, while CIM Group rounded up a large contingency of speakers, most of whom seem to have little if any understanding of what a variance hearing was about. They simply felt CIM should get whatever it wanted because the “new” building would look better, not apparently knowing it would be substantially covered with billboards and signage.

After demonstrating that no real argument had been made to meet

the *legal* requirements for such significant variances, in addition to the aesthetic issues, Hollywood Heritage prevailed. We convinced the commission to overturn the Planning Department Hearing Officer’s findings. On a unanimous vote, the commission rejected the additional signage except for a rooftop neon sign to serve as a “welcome to Hollywood” sign, if it were to be built. The two billboards and 7-story supergraphics were removed. Still, two other supergraphics remain on the structure’s stucco walls facing west and north, but these are “by right” under the abysmal new sign ordinance.

Hollywood Heritage thanks the commission members for their strong support with this issue. With all the variances being proposed in Hollywood it was, and will be, important to have the commission’s support when it comes to legal definitions of a variance and what determines if it is valid, not the dog-and-pony show dragged out to hide and confuse the issue.

Every silver lining has a dark cloud though. At the city council’s PLUM (Planning and Land Use Management Committee) meeting on April

25, an attempt was made to break this agreement. Though she had supported the original approval of the planning commission to overturn the variances, Councilmember LaBonge’s planning deputy Renee Weitzer pushed to go around that approval.

The plan was to add the building to the Hollywood Boulevard Sign District so as to allow more signage by right, including the roof top billboards and the north facade windows. Ms. Weitzer was joined by a small army of lobbyists and CIM employees to push PLUM members to appeal the decision and change the district boundaries.

Thankfully, the committee was unable to do this as the date for appealing the decision had passed. Also, the agenda item was listed as a harmless “report” on the signage to the committee, not as a appeal or action item requiring a vote, as required by law. Despite furious lobbying, even long after the vote, this back door attempt to circumvent the law was thwarted. This, once again, shows that constant vigilance must be made to ensure that the city doesn’t break its own laws.

Hollywood Professional Building: This neo-gothic office building at the southeast corner of Hollywood Boulevard and Sycamore Avenue serves as the western gateway structure to the Hollywood Boulevard Commercial and Entertainment National Register Historic District. Erected in 1925 as a 5-story building, its success led its owner, Holly-

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Historic photo of the Hollywood Professional Bldg (1925)

Bud Lesser Remembered

Part family reunion, part *Evening @ the Barn* and part tea party, a good crowd of Lessers and The Rest of Us arrived at the Barn on Sunday, March 26 for *Remembering Julian "Bud" Lesser*, the Hollywood Heritage board member and enthusiastic supporter who died last March 22 at the age of 90.

The reference most often heard throughout the hour-long event was to Bud's amazing modesty. 'Amazing,' especially because he was a man of many accomplishments which he seemingly went out of his way to down-play. At Stanford he was a gymnast with Olympic aspirations yet many who were close to him at that time did not know that about him. One speaker noted that Bud attained the rank of Major in the Marines but his wife at that time was totally unaware of it.

But there was one thing that everyone who spoke that day *did* know and that was what a kind, enthusiastic, supportive and generous man Bud was. And he loved the Barn and its connection to Hollywood History.

At the close of the program the new sound system, so long lobbied for by Bud and finally made possible by a generous donation from Ruth and Sol Nudelman, as well as from Bud, was dedicated to him and the moment marked by a rousing version of *The Marine Hymn*.

Following tea, there was a screening of Bud's *The Saint Returns* (1952).

It was an event Bud would have loved.

Preservation *Continued from page 3*
wood pioneer C.E. Toberman, to add three additional floors in 1928.

Vacant since the 1994 Northridge earthquake, except for its ground level retail, it was purchased in 2004 by the CIM Group for conversion into housing. Work started last fall with massive seismic upgrades to meet all new codes.

Though architecturally significant, the 80-year-old building had seen its fair share of history. During the early seminal 1950s, Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz maintained a business office there (room 580) as shown by materials in the Hollywood Heritage Museum archives. This was during the production of their legendary *I Love Lucy* TV show, before the purchase of what would become Desilu Studios. Also, during the late 1940s-50s, this was the site of the Screen actors Guild. Its then president, Ronald Reagan, would serve there, holding the first of several elected offices he would later win.

Unfortunately, frequent remodeling had removed any evidence of these tenants. But a third one has remained completely intact. Famed modernist architect John Lautner had been a long-time tenant when the earthquake occurred, forcing him to vacate (he would die less than a year later). Lautner's many landmark homes of the '50s, '60s, '70s, and '80s were most commonly represented by "Chemosphere" the "flying saucer" house in the Hollywood Hills, now owned and carefully restored by Von Benedikt Tashen, of Tashen Books fame and a major Lautner fan.

The architect's office has remained intact on the eighth floor. I had seen it after the earthquake and notified Kip Rudd of the CRA of its significance. He notified CIM Group and it was agreed by all to preserve the walls and ceilings as part of the conversion, with no changes to the room layout. Even more interesting was that for all Lautner's involvement with the history of modern architec-

ture, his office was the only space in the building that had preserved the interior from 1928! The wood paneling and stucco work were perfectly maintained by him. Despite all his modern creations, Lautner was a preservationist, possibly a closet one as even the 1928 closets are preserved. His later years here were often spent restoring his homes that had been remodeled or expanding them in a way that continued their design and pedigree.

An early April tour of the building showed that CIM Group was performing a sensitive preservation of the building's structural issues and a conversion to apartments that was preserving Lautner's office as well as the building's original corridors, stairways, and lobby placements. A new restaurant will replace the International Love Boutique on the ground level, including a 30-foot ceiling height in the back. Occupancy is scheduled for September 24.

After Hollywood Heritage's battles with CIM Group at the 1800 Building described above, and at other Hollywood locations, their principal and founder Shaul Kuba asked to have Hollywood Heritage review projects in advance on issues (except for April 25), including some projects already being planned (CIM owns more buildings in Hollywood than anyone else). They are offering to be more responsive to Hollywood Heritage's concerns and their work at the Hollywood Professional Building is a good example (without our notification, Lautner's office would have been removed as just another space). CIM Group has been a frequent, and now a sometimes positive subject in our newsletter based on this new relationship.

Bernard Luggage Building: This Spanish Revival retail building serves as the southern edge outpost of the HBCED as the buildings south of it, notably the Brown Der-

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Remsen Family Makes Important Donation to Hollywood Heritage Museum

by Aaron Epstein

It is only natural when we think of Hollywood personalities, to think of actors/actresses, producers, writers, directors, etc. This is only natural.

However, even in the days of silents, the contribution of music, was every bit of importance to our enjoyment of the motion picture.

Our special added guest on February 16, Dorothy Remsen, and her

husband, Les Remsen, are principals in Hollywood and Los Angeles's music scene.

As a young man growing up in Wisconsin before World War II, Les Remsen played the trumpet. In high school he won a National Trumpet Competition and a scholarship to the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York. At the school he met a fellow student who excelled in playing the harp, Dorothy.

They married just as World War II broke out and husband Les joined the Marine Corp Band and Dorothy performed with the National Symphony Orchestra in Washington D.C.

After the war, Dorothy spent one very cold winter as the harpist for the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra. They immediately sought warmer climate and in the early 1950s, moved to Los Angeles where Les became Principal Trumpet Player for the L.A. Philharmonic and Dorothy became their harpist.

They immediately jumped into the Hollywood scene. For Dorothy it included being the solo harpist for Disney's *Mary Poppins* and Stephen Spielberg's *ET* and a founder of the Los Angeles Harp Society. Dorothy's recording sessions also included recording with composer, Igor Stravinsky.

For Les, it included founding of the L.A. Brass Ensemble, where he served as conductor, and which made numerous recordings. He also founded L.A. Brass Society as well as founding an audio/visual business which served the Hollywood media.

Their home is a short distance from the museum, in the hills immediately behind the Barn. They have been continually active serving as officers in community organizations for the betterment of Hollywood. Their participation has never wavered.

Because of an ankle injury, Husband Les was not able to be with us for the *Evening @ The Barn* event, but Dorothy was there with something very special for us. The Remsen's generously donated a large aerial photograph of Hollywood to the Hollywood Heritage Museum. We thank Dorothy and Les for their generous and continued support.



Hollywood Heritage board member Aaron Epstein with Dorothy Remsen who donated this large aerial photograph of Hollywood circa 1958 to the Hollywood Heritage Museum

Evenings @ the Barn on a roll . . .

by Kay Tornborg

There has been a steady growth in attendance at our *Evenings @ the Barn*, accompanied by a growth in new memberships as non-members enjoy the programs and sign-up as a result.

Sue Lloyd, grand-daughter of Harold Lloyd and our January head-liner, provided fascinating insights into the Bespectacled One's career and then screened *Hot Water*, a marital comedy that includes a turkey in a scene that, once seen, is never forgotten. The newly-issued box sets of DVD's, with some of Harold Lloyd's greatest hits, sold out (part of the DVD wraparounds were filmed at the Barn).



Bob Birchard threads the projector prior to screening of Francis Boggs films

photo by Alan Simon

Robert Birchard, Hollywood Heritage member and DeMille biographer, is turning his sites on silents director Francis Boggs (1870 - 1911) whose career blossomed at the Selig Polyscope Co. For February's offering Birchard shared with the audience the results of his research to date, which raised some tantalizing questions particularly in connection with Boggs' untimely death. He screened Boggs' entire oeuvre: *The Cattle Rustlers* (1908), *Blackbeard* (1911), *The Little Widow* (1911) and *Monte Cristo* (1908—the first movie filmed in Los Angeles), revealing Boggs' growing skill with silents just before he became silent himself.

There was an all-school reunion of sorts on March 15th at the Barn when many new faces descended



Hollywood High School Alumni, actresses Nanette Fabray and Carol Welles, along with Bob Baker (inset), shared their memories what it was like during those important high school years.

photo by Alan Simon

on the Barn for "100 Years of Hollywood High." Marc Wanamaker, lately a fixture of *Evenings @ the Barn*, brought his best slides of the school through the years, begin-



A collection of Hollywood High School Yearbooks from the museum archives was on display for the event

photo by Alan Simon

ning with the neighborhood at the turn of the century (scattered homes and orange groves) and bringing us up-to-date with the currently overcrowded (3000+ students) but still stately home of the Sheiks (that's the football team, for the uninitiated...). Representing the many celebrity grads of Hollywood High, star-of-almost-any-performing-genre-you-can-name Nanette Fabray and octogenarian puppeteer Bob Baker joined by Carol Welles and Hollywood High Principal Fonna Bishop

regaled the audience with wonderful reminiscences and even sang the school song! Another highlight of the evening was the keepsake program, printed to look just like a Hollywood High yearbook (the Poinsettia) by our in-house designer Sue Slutzky. Sue has been turning out gorgeous programs for each *Evening @ the Barn* and patrons are lining up for extras to send to friends. Next thing you know we'll see them on E-bay!!

If we're on schedule with this newsletter you'll be reading this at our next *Evening @ the Barn*, Hollywood Hoofbeats (also the title of the book), with Petrine Mitchum, author of this highly-entertaining tome on equine actors. If we're not on schedule you can read about this *Evening* in the next newsletter.

On May 25, our own Marc Wanamaker, along with co-author George Ross Jezek will presenting a unique 2-screen slide show discussing their new book, *Hollywood Past & Present*.

The last *Evening @ the Barn* before the Bowl opens is scheduled to be on Thursday, June 15th. Program to be announced (check web site).

bass player), and guitarists Tommy Tedesco, Glen Campbell and others. They would go from one session to the next playing in part or total for the music of many groups.

At this studio the list of bands (with or without the Wrecking Crew) included: The Mamas and the Papas, The Association, The Fifth Dimension, The Turtles, The Young Rascals (later just "The Rascals"), Gary Lewis and the Playboys, The Monkees (music here, vocals usually down the street at RCA Studios), as well as hits from Ike and Tina Turner (with Phil Spector), Petula Clarke, Scott McKenzie (*San Francisco* was recorded here), and Frank Sinatra to name a few. Sinatra's Reprise Records was upstairs at one point, and he recorded *Strangers in the Night* here as well as *That's Life*, and Nancy recorded *These Boots Are Made For Walking* there as well. The cover art to Sinatra's *Strangers In The Night* album shows Studio 1, looking today the same as it did 40 years ago.

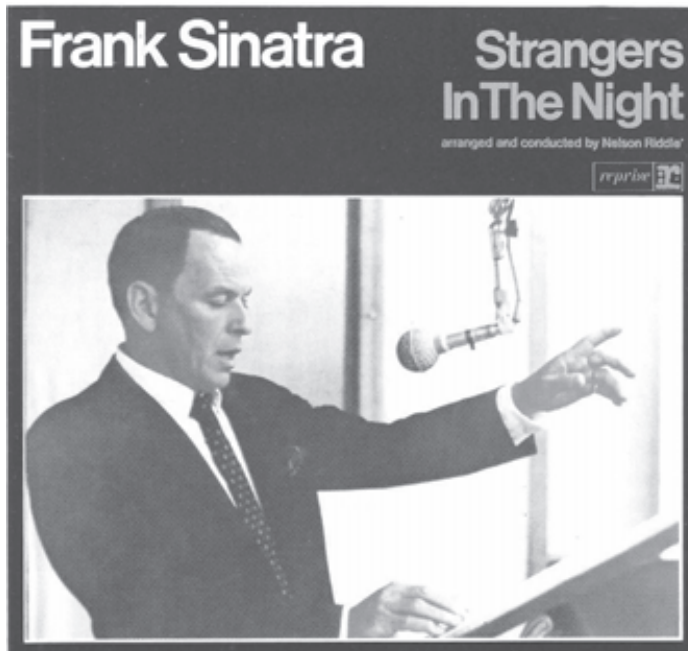
Studio 3, where many of the above groups recorded, was also taken over in 1966 by Brian Wilson to record the Beach Boys' classic *Pet Sounds* album, that would help to inspire the Beatles *Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* the following year. Several more Beach Boys' recordings were done there under Brian's direction.

Others would follow: Elvis Presley, Elvis Costello, Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers, The Red Hot Chili Peppers, Bob Dylan, Elton John, and the Rolling Stones (*Bridges to Babylon* was recorded there), to name but a few. The studio became entangled in ownership issues and was closed in early 2005 due to those ownership problems, not the studio's lack of business.

Plans were underway to sell the site for a condominium development, and Hollywood Heritage brought this to the attention of the CRA. The land was zoned for in-

dustrial (studio) use and the building had historic status because of its early association as a part of the original Columbia Studios (not the grocery store), without any knowledge of its music history. To their credit, the CRA, lead here by John Perfitt, whose brother had actually worked at the studio years before, agreed to oppose any variances to allow for the building of any residential use at this site as several developers had inquired.

At something of a standoff, a foreclosure auction as part of the bankruptcy was held in January 2006.



Wary of the unwillingness of the CRA to support condos here, only one bidder showed up, Doug Rogers. He won the auction with a minimum bid of \$4.1 million, thus preventing liquidation through the courts and any chance of demolition for condos or anything else. Rogers also bought all the recording equipment in the studio.

The interior was a mess as water poured in due to the then owners not cleaning the drains. Luckily, the three studios remained dry. Looking for an architect to take on the task of refurbishing the exterior and damaged interior, while preserving the historic studios, Rogers contacted Phillipe Stark in Paris. Stark jumped at the opportunity and headed to

Hollywood. He insisted on restoring all historic elements inside and out, adding new designs to the damaged interior and creating a new exterior look that utilized elements of the current one. Rogers strongly supported this and both agreed to remove the rooftop billboard as soon as possible (a Hollywood first!).

Plans are also afoot by Rogers to add historic names and recordings to the sidewalk on Sunset Boulevard, giving the illustrious studio its own walk-of-fame. Another highlight of the restoration has included Rogers' purchase of other analog

studio equipment to be used for recording the classic way and not just digital (this includes a mixing board from Abbey Road Studios in London, used by the Beatles).

Next to the studio in the parking lot separating it from Ocean Way Studios, Sunset -Gower Studios is building a new 6-story structure to house Technicolor. While this is important news, the new structure

has situated its utility systems a few feet from the East-West Studios. The CRA and Hollywood Heritage are working to help Doug Rogers convince Technicolor to move the equipment elsewhere so as to not harm either studio.

Doug Rogers, who came to Hollywood with his wife from New Zealand, needs to be thanked for his substantial investment in Hollywood and music history when no one else would do so. His plans for reactivating the studios are a model for historic/cultural preservation. Hollywood Heritage thanks him and will help in whatever ways possible to make this project a sound investment.

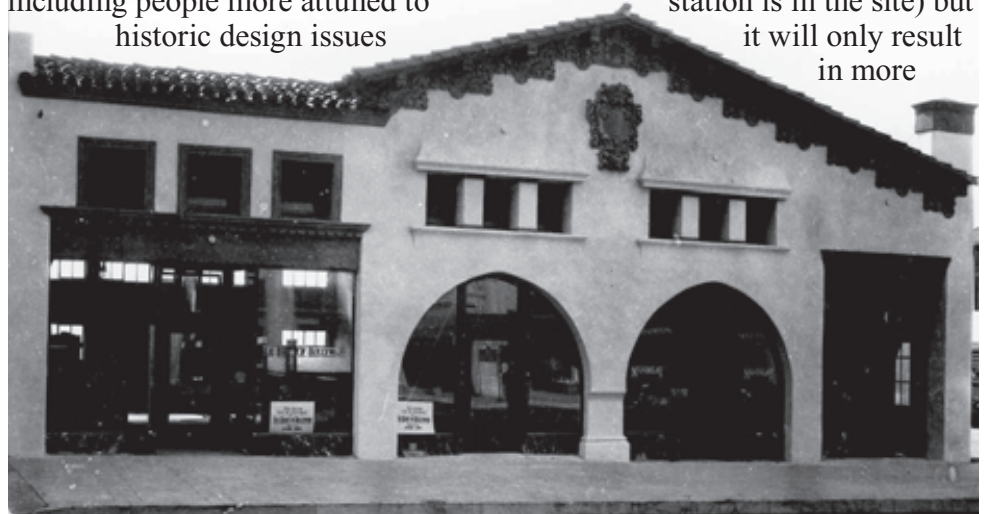
Preservation *Continued from page 4*

by, were demolished in a controversial application of the law. Designed by the same architect as the Brown Derby, Carl Jules Weyl, and identical to one of the Derby's structures, both opened in 1928.

Various remodelings have covered up elements of the façade, but it remained intact beneath and quite restorable. Owned by the Blue family since 1962, they have also owned Bernard Luggage for over 60 years including its previous location at Hollywood and Vine in the Equitable Building. Their building site has been proposed as part of a new project for almost five years. The owner, Bob Blue, has refused to sell and instead has proposed to restore his landmark building to its 1928 appearance. Plans to restore the façade were also drawn up by the block's developer, Gateway Capital, but they proposed saving only the front 12 feet. The developer has now gotten the support of the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) for them to acquire the property under eminent domain from Bob Blue and turn it over to Gateway Capital as part of their plans to build a "W" Hotel and condos on the block (the adjacent parcels will include 375 apartments to be built by Legacy Partners).

Hollywood Heritage has had issues with the project from the start. It is another "modern" design that owes more to the 1970s than to any of Hollywood's historic design references. Unfortunately, this is what the city pushes for, hence such stunning architectural landmarks as the Hollywood Galaxy, Hollywood and Highland, and the apartments at south east corner of Hollywood and Western (reminiscent of the charm of East Berlin's cozy Brutalism designs), to name a few, are what we have today. Thankfully, the city did not have design determination of Grauman's Chinese and Egyptian theaters, the El Capitan Theater, the Masonic Temple, Roosevelt Hotel,

Broadway Building, Taft Building, or almost any of the HBCED's landmarks— as none would have been allowed to be built today. (On a separate note, Councilman Garcetti needs to remodel this committee of architects to add others who are not so set in the defense of the 1970s being the Golden Age of Architecture, including people more attuned to historic design issues



Historic photo of the building designed by Carl Jules Weyl, now Bernard Luggage
photo courtesy of Marc Wanamaker / Bison Archives

and not only architects, and he has recently agreed to do this, hopefully very soon.)

Additionally, this Hollywood and Vine project has been given parking variances reducing its capacity to 15% below code, as if people paying \$300 a night in a hotel or \$2000 a month for an apartment, or \$1,000,000 for a condo, are your typical bus rider and won't have a car, and neither will those who come to visit them. As approved, tenants in the landmark 12-story Taft Building don't even need to park at all as they have no spaces in the new project that surrounds the 1921 office tower. These issues were brought up by Hollywood Heritage at the Planning Commission meeting on February 9, which was set to approve the parking and other variances.

The commission agreed to postpone the signage variances until later but seemed less enthusiastic about the barrage of billboards covering the project.

The parking variances were recommendations of the city in a misguided attempt to get people to take mass transit (a Red Line subway station is in the site) but it will only result in more

traffic congestion and an increase in parking demand as other neighboring projects and nightclubs/bars already have been approved to have parking shortfalls. Several, such as the Taft and Broadway buildings are historic. In addition, the project has grown in density to an overall FAR of 5.78, while the legally permitted limit is a maximum of 4.5. Even that limit cannot be allowed to go above 3.0 without several planning conditions being met, which has not hap-



Bernard Luggage on Vine St. near Hollywood Blvd. as it looks today

pened here.

One of these conditions is to preserve historic structures on the site. Here is where City Attorney Delgadillo redefines the English language. The city's proposal to eminent domain the historic Bernard Luggage Building, demolish 108 feet of its 120 foot length, leaving only the front few feet, is somehow defined by them as preserving the historic structure. This is the same as pulling someone drowning out of the water, hacking off their hand and tossing the remaining person back into the water, then claiming that they have saved the person, while proudly displaying the hacked limb. To prevent such folly as this by the city, the National Park Service makes it perfectly clear that a façade is not the designated structure in a National Register Historic District, but rather the entire building. The remaining 12 feet will probably not even qualify, thereby the city's plan would de-designate the building as a contributor to the National Register Historic District. Yet somehow, through all this, the city maintains that this is "restoring" the building.

This precedent is dangerous for other buildings in the district or elsewhere that are protected as local, state, or federal landmarks as City Attorney Delgadillo attempts to rewrite federal law along with the dictionary. Hollywood Heritage and Blue's attorney, Robert Silverstein, both argued these points in vain to the Planning Commission as they approved the variances to allow for reduced parking, increased density, and "restoration" of the front 12-feet of the Bernard Luggage Building.

The issue of eminent domain is still being challenged in court to block the seizure and demolition of the Blue property. To his credit, Councilman Garcetti has entered into conversation with Bob Blue and Robert Silverstein, along with the developer and CRA, concerning his potential to keep a substantial portion of the building as part of

the project, resulting in a partial re-design of the condominium setback and prevent the use of eminent domain and the resulting legal conflict. Otherwise the city is scheduled to take possession of the building on June 25.

With other projects proposed for areas in or adjacent to the HBCED, it is important to define restoration of a building as federal regulations do, with restoration by the original owner if they choose not to sell. We hope that Councilman Garcetti is able to make this happen. Then, we need changes to the design review committee, which he has also now stated he is willing to make.

Capitol Records Building: Shortly before the famed Capitol Records Tower celebrated its 50th anniversary on April 7, 2006 (though Frank Sinatra actually recorded there on



February 22, 1956 conducting a 56 piece orchestra for his instrumental album of Nelson Riddle's compositions, *Tone Poems of Color*) the *Los Angeles Times* reported that there was the possibility of converting the offices to residential condominiums. Hollywood Heritage had been told of their offers weeks earlier but had been reassured that they were unsolicited, brought on by the condo frenzy targeting every space possible for conversion or construction. Capitol had no intent to sell for this

purpose.

The *Times* article did have the effect of getting people to realize that even the most sacred remaining elements of Hollywood's entertainment legacy were at high risk (Capitol is the last record company located in Hollywood). Councilman Garcetti has assured us that he would not support conversion of the "stack of records" into condos. The real issue now is to keep Capitol from leaving Hollywood. The record business is off in general and Capitol's parent company, EMI, is constantly struggling, leaving Capitol in a frequent state of "what if we sell and move elsewhere" for the past 20 years.

Plans are afoot to expand and improve the Capitol campus and the city is now responding (see our previous newsletter for how the city had mishandled this situation up to now). Though protected by the Hollywood Redevelopment Plan the same as if it were a city landmark, Hollywood Heritage will continue to monitor the situation and act whenever necessary to protect the Capitol Record Tower and company.

Los Feliz Brown Derby: On May 19, the City Council voted 10-0 to approve the landmark nomination for the Brown Derby despite the owner's objections. A rousing speech for the Derby and historic preservation in Los Angeles in general was made by Councilmember LaBonge followed by similar vocal support from Councilmember Dennis Zine. LaBonge thanked Hollywood Heritage during his speech and we thank him for his unstinting support of the nomination. We also thank Rebecca Goodman and all the members of the Save The Derby Coalition, on their well-deserved victory.

This has been the result of months of efforts by neighborhood groups, led by the Save the Derby Coalition, Hollywood Heritage, The Los Angeles Conservancy—especially their Modern Committee, the Neighbor-

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hood Council, and hundreds of individuals. All who shared in their support of this nomination and its success.

The original staff report opposed the nomination, but the commission moved it forward at their February 16, 2006 meeting. After their site visit, the staff reversed its stand and took a position of support. Hollywood Heritage testified at both hearings and presented historic photos and menus from our museum archive to help demonstrate the architectural and historical importance of the building. Councilman Tom LaBonge, in whose district the Derby is located, spoke strongly in favor of the nomination in February, while his planning deputy, Renee Weitzer, spoke for it at the March meeting. The owners were not supportive of the nomination in its entirety, preferring a lesser version with some parts eligible for demolition.

Our last newsletter outlined other issues with this site and the plans for development on the surrounding parking lot. This vote will now give extra protection (though city landmark status can be removed, so it's *actual* effectiveness is not necessarily long-term) for the building, but the long-term needs can only be met by a well designed project that appropriately includes the Derby as part of this or any new project.

Special thanks to the Modern Committee's Marello Valava who wrote the nomination and Rebecca Goodman, who created the coalition and organized the community support at the various hearings.

1717 North Bronson Avenue: Though listed in four city reports from 1979 to 2003 as eligible for the National Register, the Community Redevelopment Agency signed off on the plans to demolish this 1904 house. Two of the reports were actually prepared for the CRA (1985 and 2003). The oldest structure left on Hollywood Boulevard is now

deemed unimportant and not significant in a report from the property's owner, prepared by Jones and Stokes (who have since stated that they will do no more "historic survey" reports in Hollywood).

Hollywood Heritage obtained a copy of the report during the public response period and responded accordingly. The house faced onto Hollywood Boulevard originally, but its entrance was moved around the corner to Bronson after retail was built on the Hollywood Boulevard side in 1919 by C.E. Toberman. This retail block still remains, but with a separate owner. This frontage development is similar to those built throughout Los Angeles, eventually resulting in the demolition of the original house, with few surviving exceptions today. This is the only such example in Hollywood and it is a year older than the landmark Janes House several blocks to the west, which has had retail located in front of it since 1985.

Janes House was moved back on its lot to allow for the later development, while the house on Bronson, being on a corner, simply realigned its entryway 90°, probably in the 1930s when the last of these houses on Hollywood Boulevard were being demolished. This house remains at the same location it has occupied for the past 102 years! Yet, none of this was deemed to have significance.

Hollywood Heritage contacted the Los Angeles Conservancy who also responded to the notice (the Hollywood Heritage response can be viewed on our web site). Though currently unoccupied and somewhat concealed by overgrown vegetation, it was obvious that this house needs to be preserved, and restored, on site.

The house and the retail show the development of Hollywood Boulevard from residential to commercial. The realignment of the entryway shows a unique resolution to access that probably saved it from demoli-



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Hollywood Heritage Newsletter is published quarterly by Hollywood Heritage, Inc., P.O. Box 2586, Hollywood, CA 90078 (323) 874-4005.

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Silent Society

No April Fools As Silent Society Celebrates 20 Years of Silent Film Focus

On April 1, 2006, twenty years to the day that it screened its first film at The Hollywood Heritage Museum, aka The Lasky-DeMille Barn, The Silent Society celebrated its anniversary with an all day event featuring four films produced by Cecil B. DeMille's own studio, which he ran from 1925-28. The loyal film buffs included visitors from Riverside, San Diego, Palm Springs, Bakersfield and even a couple that flew in from Atlanta, Georgia just to get a glimpse of these rarely screened films. *Rubber Tires* (1927) featured Bessie Love and Harrison Ford (the original one), *The Coming of Amos* (1925) featured Rod La Rocque and Jetta Goudal, *Eve's Leaves* (1926) featured Leatrice Joy and William Boyd (yes, Hopalong) and *The Road to Yesterday* featured Joseph Schildkraut, Vera Reynolds as well as Boyd and Goudal.

The Road to Yesterday, the evening attraction, was the only film personally directed by DeMille, while the afternoon trio was produced by his company. This rare look at films from the brief period when DeMille was not associated with Paramount just before his short stint at MGM was highlighted by program notes written by Richard Adkins, who also offered a display of memorabilia from the period. Adkins was the President of Hollywood Heritage when The Silent Society began screening films at the Barn and was responsible for making it possible for the then independent group to screen films there. The Society eventually became an official committee of Hollywood Heritage just a few months later.

Original Society founders Randy Haberkamp, Donna Fisk and Bob Birchard were on hand for the cake

cutting before the final feature. (The fourth founder, David Shepard, was busy spreading the gospel of silents at another presentation in Northern California.) The cake "Celebrating 20 Years of Silents" was generously donated by Thad Smith of the Music Box Theater.

Between the afternoon and evening screenings several of the cornerstone activists behind the Silent Society's presentations enjoyed dinner at Musso & Frank's just as D.W. Griffith and Charlie Chaplin would have done as far back as 1919. All four films were accompanied, in a marathon session, by Michael Mortilla who has been performing for Silent Society presentations for

19 years.

The Silent Society promises to continue screening silent films with upcoming performances in July and August at the Paramount Ranch in Agoura for the 19th season, and its third season in August at the Workman Temple Homestead in the City of Industry.

Several films preserved through the Society's Silent Film Preservation Fund will be presented at this summer's UCLA Festival of Preservation in August. Another DeMille production, *The Clinging Vine*, has been produced for DVD by David Shepard and will be available at in May.

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Final chance to get your 2006 calendars NOW! Beautiful, informative, practical, affordable, makes a great gift!! The calendar features the Lasky-DeMille Barn, inside and out, in its 4 sites and many functions over the years. Interesting historical data keyed to dates. Holidays, too! Also available: Hollywood Heritage's book *HISTORIC HOLLYWOOD: A Centennial History* by Robert W. Nudelman and Marc Wanamaker

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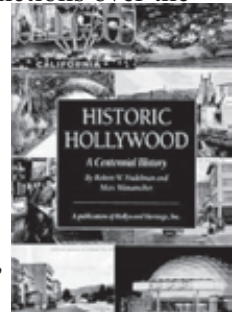
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tion in the past. It is a unique structure that presents a time capsule view of Hollywood's early 20th century development. This can be seen nowhere else today.

The current owner proposed the demolition for, what else, a condominium project. A creative solution is needed here for the house, and hopefully the retail frontage, to be restored and reused. Surrounding the house with a condo tower on two or three sides, or even one, would greatly harm its significance. Again the city presents one argument for preservation since 1979 (the first report) but backs off as soon as a developer shows up. That developer now has bought a property he was told could be demolished, despite 27 years of legal promises by the city to the contrary, inviting lawsuits from both sides.

Hollywood Heritage is working to protect this CRA designated landmark and come up with a plan that ensures its future. It is a history and economics lesson that can be seen and experienced and its context needs to be protected along with the house itself.

1802 and 1810-16 N. Whitley Ave.: Whitley Avenue serves as the entryway to Whitley Heights and its historic district. The three blocks south of there, ending at Hollywood Boulevard, are a rich mixture of housing types and styles especially from the late 1910s to 1930. Many of these properties are protected under the Hollywood Redevelopment Plan (Plan) as historic structures, but as we have unfortunately witnessed over the past year, City Attorney Rocky Delgado has overruled the law, violating sections of the Redevelopment Plan so as to accommodate developers and his political ambitions.

These two 2-story apartment buildings were built in 1919 (1802), and 1921 (1810-16), and were fully occupied until the past 2 months as affordable housing units, as op-



The Old Spaghetti Factory building when it served as the Hollywood Motion Picture Museum and Hall of Fame (c 1930) photo courtesy of Marc Wanamaker / Bison Archives

posed to the "luxury condos" now planned. 1802 has had some modifications and for that reason was not declared as significant in the Plan, but 1810-16 was given protection. The developers own report on this buildings stated "The building appears unaltered and retains all aspects of integrity" (page 12), and it retains most of its interior integrity as well.

Developer reports written to approve demolition, as now permitted by Delgado in clear violation of the Plan and even common sense, always attack the building by saying that it has been modified over time. Here, that is admittedly not the case. The structure has not been modified and has retained its appearance for 85 years, a rarity anywhere in Los Angeles. Yet, now the report says that it's not an exemplary example of architecture. Most buildings are *not*, otherwise exemplary would mean nothing.

It is a quality building that definitely looks of the period and is one of the very few left having this much of its architectural integrity intact. A key condition for historic status is the element of rarity from an earlier era, as there may be few, if any, exemplary buildings left. Therefore you save what are the best, most complete, examples. That

was the basis for the Plan's protective status when it was approved in 1986 and again in 2003.

Additionally, the CRA has yet to do the master plan for this area that the new project is *required* to meet. The city is derelict and cannot approve the project legally as to the Plan. That is why the proposal for a 5-story condo tower is inappropriate in scale and its "modern design."

These structures are important examples showing the development of Hollywood's housing. Within 2 blocks on Whitley Avenue are single family homes, courtyard apartments, and late 1920s classic apartment complexes. These two are the bridge between small and large scale housing, and this juxtaposition is not seen on any other street in Hollywood. The CRA and Councilman LaBonge need to protect our landmarks that they approved and protect the laws within the Plan.

The Old Spaghetti Factory Building: Our last newsletter outlined the history and potential demolition of this significant structure. Home of the first Hollywood Museum / Hall of Fame (1928-32), KNX-AM and CBS Radio (1933-38), the world famous Max Reinhardt acting school, then KMPC-AM radio and the beginnings of Gene Autry's entertainment empire until becom-

ing the Old Spaghetti Factory, the building's Hollywood history was as thick as mozzarella. Historic photos from Marc Wanamaker / Bison Archives showed that most of the exterior remains intact or is hidden by remodeling. The three large front rooms and their decorative floors, ceilings and walls are also intact.

Further review of the structure though, revealed that the back half of the building, originally the garage when the building served as its original purpose, a Studebaker dealership, had been removed, except for the walls. Apparently, during earthquake retrofitting in 1974 or '75, the massive wooden bow trusses were removed to reduce weight on the walls, and a plain flat roof was installed. Arguments were made about how this affected the level of significance of the build-

ing, but Hollywood Heritage has worked out a compromise with the building's owner.

The current owner bought the building for a mixed-use project of retail, offices, and condos. They preferred to remove the entire structure, and once again we defended the CRA's historic designation of the building against the CRA's later report favoring demolition. In a compromise, Hollywood Heritage agreed to all demolition of the rear section that was rebuilt in the 1970s in exchange for preservation and restoration of the 1924 front section's interior and exterior. The front area will be incorporated and reused as part of the new project. All of the remaining 1924 building will end up being restored with the exception of the rear outer wall.

This results in a win-win situation

for preservation and the developer. Thanks to Hollywood Heritage board member and architect Bill Roschen, who helped to negotiate this deal, which almost collapsed more than once. Richard Solares from GTO Development, owners of the site, also needs to be thanked for realizing that the historic significance of the building was an asset to their project and needed to be treated as such.

We still have some issues regarding the design of the new structure, which is slated to be 10-stories tall, and with creating a design which does not overpower this historic entryway to the project. But at least one issue has been settled and designs can always be modified to better reflect, not detract from, Hollywood's architectural history.

continued on page 15

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In grateful recognition of their generous support, we sincerely thank the following renewing members who have made contributions at the \$100 level and above as of April 2006. Category titles are names of historic Hollywood Studios.

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Preservation *Continued from page 15*

Madame Tussaud's Wax Museum: In 2003, a bizarre, for this location especially, structure was proposed to be built in the parking lot on the west side of Grauman's Chinese Theater. This was directly across Hollywood Boulevard from the Roosevelt Hotel and across Orange Drive on the west from the 1929 Hillview Cadillac Building. Both structures are listed in the Hollywood Boulevard Commercial and Entertainment National Register Historic District (HBCED), as is Grauman's. This strategic location is the most prominent open space in Hollywood and requires special attention so as to protect the visual and cultural importance of the historic Chinese Theater as well as to hold together this area of the HBCED.

Unfortunately, the ultramodern structure and its several large billboard size off-site advertising signs dramatically fail to meet these requirements. Fortunately, this version died (see our web site for our response to this project at the time). Unfortunately, it has reared its ugly head once more in a new modified (larger) version. This time the tenant is Madame Tussaud's Wax Museum, instead of Frederick's lingerie (can't the property owner, Grant Parking, find a more "dignified" tenant for such an important location?).

Madame Tussaud's though, unlike Fredericks, can chose its own design for the site. However, for some reason, they are sticking with this one, resembling a section of the *Star Wars* Death Star after having been blow up in *Return of the Jedi*, but covered with the billboards of the flying advertising ship from *Blade Runner*. It is wholly inappropriate for the historic district, qualifying as an "intrusion" according to the National Park Service definitions. If enough "intrusions" are built within the HBCED, sections can be de-designated from the district.

The HBCED contains two such

intrusions now, the Hollywood and Highland Center on the other side of the Chinese, and the Hollywood Galaxy on the other side of the Hillview Cadillac Building. The intrusion argument was even used by Grant Parking's own attorneys when they opposed the Hollywood and Highland project in the 1990s (see our letters on this on the web site), yet what they proposed here is even more of an intrusion. One can only assume that Grant Parking, and others, would like to see the HBCED broken so as to free up other locations for development without federal standards to protect landmarks. The Madame Tussaud's structure definitely makes that argument much more feasible.

Hollywood Heritage will not allow this to happen and will strongly oppose a project of this design as not meeting federal standards as well as being totally inappropriate in its overpowering of the one of the world's most famous structures, Grauman's Chinese Theater. We also call this to the attention of the CRA and Councilmember Garcetti, who have approval power over this through CEQA and the Redevelopment Plan, to not allow a third instance of intrusion in the HBCED. We insist that Madame Tussaud's reconsider their plans and come up with a design more appropriate to the rich legacy of Hollywood's architectural heritage and not one that recalls the villains of science fiction films. Much of their business worldwide is based on utilizing the stars of Hollywood in their exhibitions. They now need to return some of that profit to create a structure worthy of those stars and the community they came from, and the theater that brought many of them to prominence.

Tussaud's or whomever develops this site, needs to have a building that people point to for the right reasons. Otherwise the city should obtain it and turn it into a park with underground parking.



P.O. Box 2586
Hollywood, CA 90078

Mark Your Calendar

Thurs. May. 25th: Marc Wanamaker, along with coauthor George Ross Jezek will presenting a unique 2-screen slide show discussing their new book, *Hollywood Past & Present*.

Thurs. June 15th: *Final Evening @ the Barn*, Program To Be Announced. 7:30 at the Barn.

Wed. June 20th: Hollywood Heritage Board of Directors Meeting, 7:00 pm at Wattles Mansion.

Sun. July 23rd: *Silents Under the Stars*. All Star Comedy Night. 7:30 pm Paramount Movie Ranch in Agoura

Sun. Aug 20th: *Silents Under the Stars. The Lost World*. 7:30 pm Paramount Movie Ranch in Agoura

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