



April 23, 2013

Submitted by email

Mr. Jason Kruckeberg
Assistant City Manager / Development Services Director
City of Arcadia
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Email: jkruckeberg@ci.arcadia.ca.us

Re: Potential alterations to Chandelier Room at Santa Anita Park

Dear Mr. Kruckeberg:

On behalf of the Los Angeles Conservancy, we are submitting the following comments on the historical significance of the Chandelier Room at the Turf Club at Santa Anita Park. We are concerned about any significant alterations to this historic space as described in an April 11th article in the *Pasadena Star-News* (attached). The Conservancy understands design review is required through the City of Arcadia prior to project approval and permitting. As such we would strongly encourage a project that meets the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and one that is in full compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

The Conservancy shares the concerns of our members and several residents in the local community regarding the proposed alterations to the historic Chandelier Room. As described in the article, a "major face-lift" for the Turf Club is proposed, stating that the Chandelier Room "would be gutted and turned into what one person with knowledge of the plan called 'a nightclub.'" The project is further described by someone with knowledge of the plan as consisting of "removing the chandeliers and replacing the long, marble-top bar with a circular bar in the middle of the room." Our understanding is other distinctive features of the room would be altered as well, including the wood parquet flooring.

Santa Anita Park was identified as eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places as a historic district in 2006. It is architecturally and culturally significant as an example of the work of Gordon B. Kaufmann, as an important example of architectural design from Los Angeles in the 1930s, and for its pioneering role in the development of the California thoroughbred racing industry. Part of the venue's history also includes serving as the largest Assembly Center for the Japanese-American Internment during World War II.

When Santa Anita Park opened on Christmas Day, 1934, the original trackside structures consisted of the then separate grandstand and clubhouse buildings. Since then, several significant expansions in 1937, 1938, 1948, the 1950s and 60s, and in 1981 have enlarged the structures. By the 1950s, these additions had linked the clubhouse structurally to the grandstand.

The Turf Club's Chandelier Room is particularly significant as one of the few original spaces dating from Santa Anita Park's opening in December 1934. The room's traditional, classically inspired design with pilasters and inset panels defining the walls and gracefully curving wrought iron stair rails follows the similarly traditional Colonial Revival style that Kaufmann selected for the exterior of the clubhouse building. Distinguishing features of the Chandelier Room remain intact, including the four namesake crystal chandeliers and parquet flooring. The room's décor features several gilt palm trees and a collection of fine English paintings depicting racehorses hanging on the walls. The bar centered along one of the walls features a fascia with both Classical Moderne fluting and Chinese Chippendale fretwork associated with Colonial Revival design. The Chandelier Room was featured in an article describing the spaces associated with the luxurious Turf Club in *Sports Illustrated* in 1955.

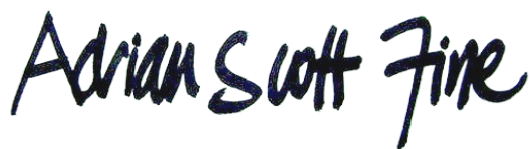
In 2000 Santa Anita Racetrack was listed by the National Trust for Historic Preservation as one of America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places. Given the long-standing threat to this place and the Chandelier Room's significance, the Conservancy requests to be notified of any submitted project for the space, and we look forward to participating in the subsequent discretionary review process.

About the Los Angeles Conservancy:

The Los Angeles Conservancy is the largest local historic preservation organization in the United States, with nearly 6,500 members throughout the Los Angeles area. Established in 1978, the Conservancy works to preserve and revitalize the significant architectural and cultural heritage of Los Angeles County through advocacy and education.

Please feel free to contact me at (213) 430-4203 or afine@laconservancy.org should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Adrian Scott Fine". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Adrian Scott Fine
Director of Advocacy

Enclosure(s)

cc: Pasadena Heritage
National Trust for Historic Preservation



Chandelier Room, circa 1956. Photo by Maynard L. Parker. Maynard L. Parker Collection, The Huntington Library.



Chandelier Room.



Bar at Chandelier Room, 2008.

Santa Anita Park considering major face-lift for Turf Club

By Larry Stewart, Correspondent Pasadena Star-News

Posted:

PasadenaStarNews.com

The Turf Club at Santa Anita Park could be undergoing a major face-lift that would take up to four months to complete and work could begin shortly after the current winter-spring meet ends April 21.

The Chandelier Room, which is part of the Turf Club, would be gutted and turned into what one person with knowledge of the plan called "a nightclub."

When reached by phone, Keith Brackpool, Santa Anita's new top executive, said a renovation plan is "being considered," but he declined to comment further or provide any details. Brackpool technically is the director of West Coast operations for the Stronach Group, which owns the Arcadia racetrack.

Another person with knowledge of the plan who could not speak on the record said city building inspectors were given a tour of the racetrack on Wednesday and shown what is planned for the renovation. There is nothing in writing at this point, this person said.

He also said most of the work would be in the Chandelier Room and would involve removing the chandeliers and replacing the long, marble-top bar with a circular bar in the middle of the room. A new floor and new furniture also would be part of the project.

Changing the ambience of the Chandelier Room, or whatever it would be called, would undoubtedly anger its regulars, but a plus might be more accessibility for all patrons and a more relaxed dress code than the one now that requires men to wear sports coats. "We're spending \$500 on security every racing day to keep people out of an area where no one goes," a track official once complained.

The proposed project would be part of the preparation for the 2013 Breeders' Cup, to be held at Santa Anita on Nov. 2-3.

The Chandelier Room has been around since the Arcadia racetrack opened on Christmas Day in 1934. The name comes from the four giant chandeliers that hang from the ceiling. They were imported from Versailles in France. The room's décor also includes four giant, strategically placed, gold-plated palm trees, along with three smaller ones behind the bar.

If the Chandelier Room is closed for remodeling, that could impact many of the events scheduled there for the offseason between the end of the winter-spring meet and the beginning of the autumn meet. Among those events are the Arcadia Rotary Club's installation dinner and a number of weddings. New sites would have to be found.

A California Horse Racing Board meeting was held at Santa Anita on Thursday. Brackpool, the former CHRB chairman, did not attend. Santa Anita President George Haines was there but referred all questions about the renovation project to Brackpool.

The hot topic at the CHRB meeting was sudden deaths among horses at the state's racetracks.

Discussion of this topic followed a report by Commissioner Bo Derek, a horse safety advocate who serves as the CHRB's chair of the Medication and Track Safety Committee.

Despite reports of a spike in sudden deaths - the New York Times this week called it "an alarming rate" - Dr. Rick Arthur, the CHRB's equine medical director, said the number has been about the same every year, around 20. He said there were 20 sudden deaths in fiscal year 2010-11; 19 in 2011-12; and 17 to date for 2012-13 (the fiscal year ends June 30).

Derek agreed with Arthur, saying there has been "no spike. "

The sudden deaths do not include those horses euthanized as a result of broken bones.

According to the New York Times, seven sudden deaths over the past 16 months were by horses trained by Bob Baffert. According to the Paulick Report, five of those deaths occurred during morning workouts and two occurred after a race. All seven horse deaths took place at Hollywood Park.

Two major issues facing the CHRB - the 2014 calendar year and added security in California racetrack stables - will be dealt with at the next CHRB meeting on May 23 in Sacramento, Chairman David Israel announced.

Israel said he would like to see surveillance cameras and more technologically advanced methods used for stable security rather than just security guards.

"If I were a hairdresser, I would OK with rent-a-cops outside the stalls, but I am not," he said.