



LOS ANGELES CONSERVANCY NEWS



May/June 2021 · Volume 43 Number 2



The Cinerama Dome in 2016. Photo credit: Jessica Hodgdon/L.A. Conservancy

Is The Cinerama Dome Threatened?

Pacific Theatres recently sent shockwaves throughout Los Angeles and the entertainment world when it announced that, even as COVID-19 restrictions were lifted, it would not reopen its theatres—including the Cinerama Dome in Hollywood.

Would the historic Cinerama Dome be sold, altered, or worst, demolished? Could its landmark designation be its only saving grace?

Despite efforts from preservation groups like the L.A. Conservancy to save the Cinerama Dome in the 1990s, and secure its designation as a local Historic-Cultural Monument (HCM), the future of this 1963 Mid-Century Modern marvel unfortunately remains uncertain.

In Los Angeles, HCM designation ensures a thorough review of any alterations or demolition proposals that may arise, but it does not prevent demolition outright. However, if an HCM is proposed for demolition, an environmental review process will be triggered and require the consideration of a range of preservation alternatives.

Thankfully, the outpouring of support for the Cinerama Dome means that this beloved movie house will more than likely be preserved. It is our hope that it will reopen for public use and continue to entertain the public as one of the most unique places to take in a movie-viewing experience.

Not all historic landmarks are so lucky. Many times, historic places have to be saved multiple times. This is where you come in. Whether we're facing our first or third advocacy effort on behalf of a historic place, your membership and support of the Los Angeles Conservancy strengthen our voice and influence.

When we're working with property owners, public officials, and other stakeholders in the community, they know we represent a large constituency of people who care about Los Angeles. People, like you, who believe in preserving the places that tell L.A.'s history and their history too. Thank you for your continuing membership and support!

Please see CINERAMA on page 6

Announcing: **LRS Unseated**

Each year, our Last Remaining Seats (LRS) Volunteer Committee works very hard to help plan L.A.'s beloved film series. And while we can't welcome you back to L.A.'s historic theatres this June, the LRS Committee still wants to celebrate the classic films and historic places of Los Angeles. We're excited to announce something they've been working on to help get you through until we can see you again!

LRS Unseated is a collection of self-guided tours of filming locations throughout Los Angeles, put together by the LRS Volunteer Committee. *Was Sunset Boulevard* actually filmed anywhere near Sunset Boulevard? Where did James Dean first say "hi" to Natalie Wood in *Rebel Without a Cause*?

Find out when you join us for *LRS Unseated!* Self-guided driving tours will be available for all different areas of L.A. County, plus a walking tour for downtown L.A.!

For full tour details, visit laconservancy.org/lrs-unseated and please be sure to sign up for our e-mail list and follow us on social media to join in the fun.

We look forward to welcoming you back to the theatres for our 35th Anniversary season of Last Remaining Seats in 2022!

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The Los Angeles Conservancy is a nonprofit membership organization that works through education and advocacy to recognize, preserve, and revitalize the historic architectural and cultural resources of Los Angeles County.



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Major funding for the Los Angeles Conservancy's programs is provided by the LaFetra Foundation and the Kenneth T. and Eileen L. Norris Foundation.

Upcoming Events

For more information and to register for our upcoming events, visit laconservancy.org/events.

Coming Soon!

REVERED RESIDENCES. Join us this summer for *Revered Residences*: a benefit celebrating the legacy and versatile designs of Los Angeles architect Paul Revere Williams! We'll take you on an exclusive virtual tour inside L.A.-area homes he designed and hear remarks from several homeowners his granddaughter, Karen E. Hudson. \$35 Members/\$75 General Public. Sponsorships begin at \$500 and have exciting benefits. **Tickets and sponsorships go on sale in July.**

On Sale Now!

PAUL REVERE WAS HERE: DRIVING TOUR WITH AUDIO Get on the trail of L.A.'s legendary architect Paul Revere Williams with a self-guided driving tour! The *Paul Revere Was Here* driving tour gives you the freedom to visit sites associated with Williams up close and personal. laconservancy.org/PRWasHere.

In Memoriam: Robert F. Maguire III

The Los Angeles Conservancy is saddened by the passing of Robert F. Maguire III, the real estate developer and civic leader who forever changed downtown L.A.'s skyline. Maguire dominated L.A.'s commercial building boom during the 1980s and '90s and was a key figure in saving the historic Central Library from demolition. He wanted to make L.A. thrive in the best possible way.

"His courage and ambition enabled him to commit to an unprecedented and complex project that combined historic preservation, constructing new office towers, creating new public spaces and using the transfer of development rights," remembers Ruthann Lehrer, the Conservancy's first executive director. "He radiated energy and charisma in his drive to make an important contribution to revitalizing downtown."

"In my 40 years of knowing and working with Rob Maguire," said former Angels Flight Railway president John H. Welborne, "starting with our early-1980s efforts to delay the proposed demolition of the Central Library, Rob always was supportive of preservation-focused requests, including how to rebuild the Central Library's historic West Lawn (now named Maguire Gardens)."

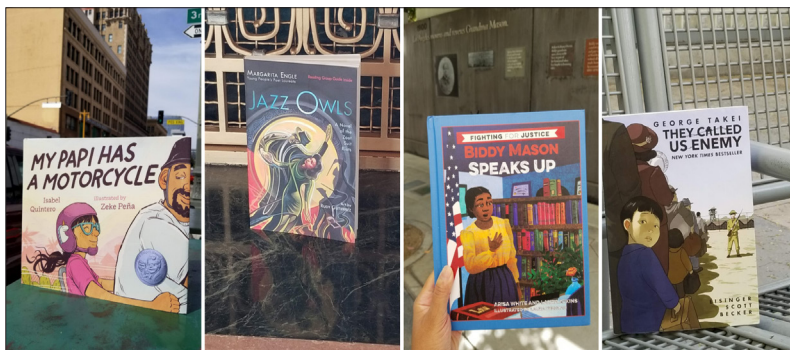
"Rob believed that his development projects had an obligation to preserve and enhance the public realm," remembers Doug Gardner, former Conservancy board chair who worked for both Maguire Thomas and IM Pei & Partners. "He was convinced, unlike many developers, that high-quality design made good economic sense."

In the 1980s, Maguire spearheaded the Los Angeles Central Library redevelopment plan, a high-profile undertaking to save the library from demolition. He developed the U.S. Bank Tower in 1989 and the Gas Company Tower in 1991, resulting in \$125 million to help fund library repairs. The Conservancy stands grateful for Robert F. Maguire's passion, creativity, and determination to help preserve L.A.'s beloved Central Library.



Robert Maguire III (far left) during a 1987 check presentation. Photo courtesy Los Angeles Public Library Institutional Collection

Coming in July! People + Places: A Book List for Kids



Photos by Sana Ahmed/L.A. Conservancy.

Last year, the L.A. Conservancy launched a brand-new, curated book list called “People + Places: A Book List for Kids,” designed to serve as a great introduction to the built environment and why saving places matters.

We’re excited to announce a new “People + Places” book list for 2021! Building on last year’s list which targeted children in grades K-5, this new book list will include books for students in middle and high school, in addition to students in elementary school.

Young Adult Librarians from the Los Angeles Public Library’s Teen’Scape department supported the creation of the high school book list. Each book on the list will come with a free downloadable reading guide containing discussion questions and activities. All of the books on this year’s list were specially curated to incorporate stories and topics from diverse communities. These books tackle important topics in an age-appropriate manner.

Highlights include:

- **My Papi Has a Motorcycle** (Grades K-5)
- **Biddy Mason Speaks Up** (Grades 6-8)
- **They Called Us Enemy** (Grades 6-8)
- **Jazz Owls: A Novel of the Zoot Suit Riots** (Grades 9-12)

For more on “People + Places: A Book List for Kids” and other upcoming student programs, visit: laconservancy.org/student-programs.

Join the Legacy Business Network!

What would L.A. be without places like Canter’s Deli? Roscoe’s House of Chicken and Waffles? Vroman’s Bookstore? If you love L.A.’s historic businesses and want to support them, subscribe to the L.A. Conservancy’s Legacy Business Network!

By signing up to the Legacy Business Network, you’ll learn about programs and policies in support of longtime businesses, and receive updates on legacy businesses, and funding opportunities, such as the recently passed Restaurant Revitalization Fund.

Sign up today at: bit.ly/LegacyBusinessNetwork.

Suehiro Café Wins Historic Small Restaurants Grant



Kenji and Junko Suzuki. Photo credit: Kenji Suzuki.

Interview by M. Rosalind Sagara

When Junko Suzuki and her sister Yuriko opened Suehiro Café in 1972 in L.A.’s Little Tokyo, they had no restaurant experience, but plenty of dreams and perseverance. The name of their restaurant, Suehiro, means ‘to prosper’ and for nearly five decades, the restaurant owners have done just that. We recently interviewed second-generation owner Kenji Suzuki about the Café and a much-needed grant he received in May.

RS: Your mother was one of few female business owners in Little Tokyo when Suehiro Café first opened. What drove her success?

KS: Pure will. She overcame many economic challenges in the early years and made sure every person who walked through our door would be a repeat customer. She warmly welcomed and thanked them: “Welcome, please come in” and “Please come again” in her native Japanese. And when she said it, you *felt* it! It’s how she built a steady flow of customers over forty years. Our employees continue this tradition today.

RS: What is your restaurant’s biggest challenge?

KS: COVID-19 and not being able to fully open indoor dining. If L.A. were to allow us to open at greater occupancy levels, we would still be hampered by physical distancing requirements between tables. For a small restaurant like ours, this restriction is the biggest challenge we are currently facing.

RS: Congratulations on being one of 25 historic restaurants awarded with a \$40,000 grant from the National Trust for Historic Preservation! How will you use the funds?

KS: We and others on our block have recently been vandalized. Acid-attack graffiti which left permanent markings on our windows. We will replace our windows and make other façade repairs. These improvements not only benefit our business, but our landlord, and Little Tokyo.

For more on the Suehiro Café visit: suehirocafe.com



The Mafundi Institute. Photo by Rita Colfield.

Community Leads Effort to Designate the Watts Happening Cultural Center a Historic-Cultural Monument!

by M. Rosalind Sagara

On April 6, 2021, the Getty and Los Angeles City Planning announced the Los Angeles African American Historic Places Project, a three-year project to work with local communities and cultural institutions to identify, protect, and celebrate African American heritage within the city.

This new project aims to increase representation of African American heritage in the local landmarks program. Currently less than 4% of the city's Historic-Cultural Monuments reflect L.A.'s African American heritage.

The Friends at Mafundi (FAM), a coalition of local community stakeholders, hope the Watts Happening Cultural Center (also known as Mafundi) located at 1827 East 103rd Street will become the next building associated with African American heritage added to the city's local landmarks program. The building is city-owned and was identified for redevelopment in 2020.

This sparked concern among community members who believed future plans for the property could threaten the historically significant building. Since 1969, the Watts Happening Cultural Center has been a center for Black art, culture, and activism in Watts. It

currently houses the Los Angeles Education Corps' YouthBuild Vocational Training Center, Homeless Free America, and the Watts Coffee House, a longtime small Black-owned business.

In February 2021, FAM submitted a nomination to designate the Late-Modern style building designed by architects Robert A. Kennard and Arthur Silvers, who were partners at the time it was built in 1969. Both Kennard and Silvers were born in Los Angeles and graduates of the USC's School of Architecture. They were from a generation of post-World War II architects whose work was inspired by Richard Neutra, Victor Gruen, and Paul R. Williams. They were also active leaders in the Civil Rights Movement and encouraged young people of color to pursue careers in architecture and planning.

The Watts Happening Cultural Center was the first major construction in Watts after the 1965 Uprising. It became a prominent cultural center in Los Angeles where community-serving organizations, including the Mafundi Institute, Watts Writers Workshop, and Watts Prophets provided a variety of educational and enrichment activities for local youth and residents. Classes in martial arts, dance, and

theater were offered as well as set construction, sculpting, and art history. It was not uncommon for actors Diahann Carroll, Karl Malden, Robert Vaughn, and Vicki Carr to drop by the Center.

On April 15th, actor Roger Moseley expressed support for the designation of the Watts Happening Cultural Center, recalling the opportunities he had as a young person to hone his acting skills in the building. The Cultural Heritage Commission voted to take the HCM nomination of the Watts Happening Cultural Center under consideration.

To learn how you can support this nomination, visit: laconservancy.org/issues/watts-happening-cultural-center.



Denise Edwards, owner and chef of the Watts Coffee House. Courtesy Denise Edwards

Preservation Snapshots



Taix French Restaurant by Gary Coronado; The Fairfax Theatre photo by Bill Counter.

Taix French Restaurant

On Tuesday, June 2nd, the Los Angeles City Council voted 15-0 to approve the Taix French Restaurant's Historic-Cultural Monument (HCM) nomination, as amended by Councilmember Mitch O'Farrell.

Earlier this year, O'Farrell severely modified the HCM designation and scope of its protection only to include two exterior signs and a bar top—not the Taix building itself.

An HCM designation is tied to historic buildings and places, not building fragments, and this decision sets a dangerous precedent for historic places in the future. Not only does it dismiss Taix as a historic resource but it also opens the door for Historic-Cultural Monument nominations to be hijacked and manipulated for purposes other than heritage conservation, devaluing L.A.'s preservation program that has helped protect over 1,200 historic places throughout Los Angeles.

We wish to thank all of the community

members and organizations who submitted their concerns to Councilmember O'Farrell and to their own City Councilmembers. We hope that in the process some groundwork has been laid for the future.

For a deeper look into why Taix's HCM nomination could have a lasting, detrimental impact on L.A.'s historic preservation program, please read our blog post:

bit.ly/Taix_Blog.

Fairfax Theatre

On Wednesday, June 3rd, L.A.'s Cultural Heritage Commission (CHC) unanimously voted to send the Fairfax Theatre on for landmark consideration!

Ten years ago, the City of Los Angeles rejected a nomination for the Fairfax Theatre—a historic theatre in the heart of the Fairfax District—to be listed as a Historic-Cultural Monument (HCM).

But in May of this year, the CHC agreed that the theatre should get a second

chance at landmark status!

The Conservancy supports this nomination, which was spearheaded by our friends at the Art Deco Society of Los Angeles and Save Beverly Fairfax.

The new nomination focuses on the theatre's cultural significance to the historic Beverly Fairfax community—which lies directly across the street from the theatre—and its historic importance to the neighborhood's Jewish population as an important community anchor. (In October 2018, the Beverly Fairfax Historic District was officially listed in the National Register, an undertaking which earned a Conservancy Preservation Award.)

The CHC's reversal is a testament to the power of community advocacy, and a reminder of how the passage of time can impact our collective civic memory leading to a greater appreciation of our cultural heritage.

CINERAMA continued from page 1

The Cinerama Dome is only one of many saved historic places whose future remains uncertain. CBS Television City recently became an active advocacy issue again, while the Barry Building's longtime struggle to remain standing continues.

Learn more about their preservation stories below.



The Cinerama Dome, courtesy David Crane



CBS Television City, courtesy CBS.



Barry Building, by Adrian Scott Fine/L.A. Conservancy

THE CINERAMA DOME

In 1998, Pacific Theatres proposed a project that would have destroyed the Cinerama Dome's plaza, box office, and marquee, and overshadowed the existing dome on the exterior, making it virtually invisible from the street.

The community jumped into action to save the theatre, successfully nominating the theatre as a local Historic-Cultural Monument (HCM).

Together with the Conservancy, community and preservation groups advocated for the more sensitive infill seen today.

The Cinerama Dome was just thirty-five years old when it was landmarked, far less than the average fifty-year threshold for historic designations.

Designed by Welton Becket and Associates, the Cinerama Dome opened in 1963 with the premier of *It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World*. It is not only a significant example of L.A.'s modern "jet age" architecture, but also as the world's first all-concrete geodesic dome.

In 2021, Pacific Theatres announced it did not plan to reopen its theatres—including the Cinerama Dome—after closing them due to pandemic closures. We are monitoring the situation and will press for its re-opening.

CBS TELEVISION CITY

CBS Corp. sold its Television City property to Hackman Capital Partners in 2018. That same year, the Conservancy successfully nominated the studio as an HCM with the full support of CBS and its leadership.

In March 2021, Hackman Capital announced plans to build new stages and offices through the property. While we have long-anticipated new development, we have serious concerns about a proposed new multi-story building to be built directly on top of the iconic CBS Television City studio.

This design is incompatible and potentially jeopardizes the HCM's historic status. We believe there is a win-win opportunity and are hopeful we can work with Hackman Capital toward a solution that will allow for expansion while still maintaining the look and feel of the beloved studio.

Completed in 1952, Television City was one of the first and largest complexes built expressly for television production and broadcasting. CBS hired the architecture firm Pereira & Luckman to design its new headquarters with visionary Chinese American architect Gin D. Wong, FAIA as the lead designer.

THE BARRY BUILDING

Completed in 1951, the Barry Building was designed by local architect Milton Caughey for owner David Barry. The building's best-known occupant was Dutton's Bookstore, a fixture for over twenty years. Despite its HCM status, the Barry Building was threatened in the early 2010s, when owner Charles T. Munger sought to raze the Barry Building and alter the Coral Tree Median for a new development project.

Despite the public outcry in support of the Barry Building, the final Environmental Impact Report called for its demolition. The City's Planning Commission granted Munger an extension to work on an alternative "that may retain most of the Barry Building." The project was abandoned the following year.

In 2016, Munger used seismic concerns as a means to evict commercial tenants. In 2019, a request to demolish the historic structure was requested with no replacement project in place. Munger is interested in selling the property as a vacant parcel and is using demolition by neglect to circumvent historic preservation protections. The Conservancy continues to advocate for a preservation alternative, as many redevelopment objectives can indeed be met by reusing the Barry Building.

FEB 15 - APR 15

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

The Conservancy acknowledges the generous contributions of our new and upgrading Supporting members, and the new and renewing members of our Sustaining, Benefactor, and Cornerstone groups.

Travertine (\$10,000)

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Membership Matters

Please Consider Increasing Your Membership Support!

Membership contributions provide about a third of the Conservancy's annual income. All membership dues go towards general operating support, enabling us to do the day-to-day work of preservation, like having a member of our Advocacy team attend a City Council meeting remotely or in person, or enabling one of our educators to run a virtual elementary school workshop or summer camp program.

The Conservancy has not raised our basic membership rate of \$40 since 2005, making it one of the best deals in town. When you are up for renewal, please consider giving a little extra support to the Conservancy's work by going up to the next membership level. If you're an Individual \$40 member now, please consider increasing to the Household membership of \$60. Or if you're a Supporting member at the \$100 level, please consider increasing to the \$250 Sustaining member level.

One easy way to increase your gift is to become a monthly member, beginning at \$5 per month. If you're already a monthly member, consider tacking on a few extra dollars to your current monthly membership. It all makes a difference.

Become a Benefactor or Cornerstone Member

Benefactor and Cornerstone level members provide a crucial source of funding for the Conservancy's programs. They also receive some special benefits, like an invitation to an annual Cornerstone reception at an architecturally or historically significant venue. Benefactors contribute \$500 annually (or \$42/month), while Cornerstone memberships begin at \$1,000 annually (or \$84+ monthly).

For more information about Los Angeles Conservancy Membership levels and benefits, please visit: laconservancy.org/membership-benefits.

CONSERVANCY TOURS : WALKING & VIRTUAL

WALKING TOURS

Socially distanced, open air walking tours are now available! \$10 for Conservancy members and children twelve and under; \$15 for the general public. Reservations required: laconservancy.org/tours.

Art Deco:

Learn how Art Deco became a defining architectural style in the city. **Saturdays, 10:15 a.m.**

Historic Downtown:

Take a ride on Angels Flight® and step inside Grand Central Market! **Saturdays, 10:00 a.m.**

Union Station:

Tour the historic waiting room, visit the Fred Harvey Restaurant, and more. **Saturdays, 11:00 a.m.**

Modern Skyline:

Marvel at downtown's sleek high rises and get up close to public art. **Every 2nd Saturday at 10:30 a.m.**

VIRTUAL TOURS

Virtual presentations are conducted via Zoom. \$8 for Conservancy members; \$12 for the general public. Register at: laconservancy.org/events.

Broadway Theatre Virtual Tour: "Behind the Curtain"

Tour the Los Angeles Theater, one of the most lavish theatres on Broadway. **Wednesday, June 23 at 6 p.m.**



Los Angeles Conservancy

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Support L.A. County's Legacy Businesses! Now more than ever, it is crucial to protect our precious historic legacy businesses that help us understand, appreciate, and celebrate our city's diverse history. Share your support for these small businesses by joining us on social media using hashtag #ISupportLegacyBusinesses



Photo by Sana Ahmed

INDIA SWEETS & GROCERY
3920 Sepulveda Boulevard
Torrance, CA 90505
(310) 378-9686

For decades this South Bay gem, tucked away in a small shopping plaza, has been stocking authentic South Asian groceries and serving up mouthwatering hot dishes. (Locals claim their samosas are the best around!) **Open daily, 11 a.m. - 9 p.m.**



Photo by Carley M. Hildebrand.

NEW YORK BAKERY
3120 West 8th Street
Los Angeles, CA 90005
(213) 385-3125

This charming, Korean-owned neighborhood bakery in Wilshire Center is a much-loved mainstay and go-to for all your baking needs. It's popular for custom cakes, a delicious array of cookies, and friendly service. **Open daily, 6:30 a.m. - 9 p.m.**



Photo by Jason Armond/L.A. Times.

GARDENA BOWL COFFEE
15707 S Vermont Avenue
Gardena, CA 90247
(310) 532-0820

This busy diner attached to a bowling alley is famous for its mix of American, Hawaiian, and Japanese food. Owned by the Nakano family, specials like egg foo young and oxtail soup have earned it a fiercely loyal clientele. gardenabowlcoffeeshop.com