LONG BEACH HERITAGE

Volume 21, No. 4, Fall 2011

The Future of the Long Beach Redevelopment Agency

The American Hotel, 1905. Photography bt Louise Ivers.

By Louise Ivers

Redevelopment agencies (RDAs) have been in the news a lot lately. After Jerry Brown was elected governor he outlined numerous reductions to help balance the budget in California, which is in dire straits. One of these entailed abolishing RDAs statewide to save money. The legislature approved this cut, but allowed the reconstitution of the agencies if they agreed to contribute what local city administrators refer to as "ransom payments" to the state, i.e. funds for the public schools. At first it seemed that the Long Beach RDA was headed for extinction, but the City Council voted "to pass legislation opting in to the state's new redevelopment program, which would require an initial payment of $34 million," according to the 8 August issue of the Press-Telegram. However, Long Beach and other California cities are suing the state in the Supreme Court to repeal the redevelopment bills approved by the legislature and signed by Jerry Brown. The 12 August edition of the Press-Telegram stated that the Long Beach RDA will be able to resume its role by the end of September and that the League of California Cities' case will be heard by the court in January 2012. According to city officials, redevelopment projects that were set to begin in the near future will be prioritized. These include the Panel Brick Style American Hotel on East Broadway, an adaptive reuse project of the oldest extant commercial building in the city, constructed in 1905. Another downtown adaptive reuse project is the 1936 Streamline Moderne Acres of Books building on Long Beach Boulevard which will become an arts center. The Atlantic Theater of 1942, designed by eminent architect Carl Boller, is slated to become a library which will incorporate the distinctive Streamline Moderne stepped tower into its future design.

Although the actions of RDAs have been criticized by some citizens for declaring entire city blocks "blighted" and demolishing them wholesale, dislocating tenants and not providing "affordable housing" to replace old buildings, and destroying historic structures that could have been adaptively reused, the Long Beach Redevelopment Agency has supported saving various important buildings in our city throughout the years. The RDA has recently helped fund such projects as the Ebell Club Lofts on East Third Street and the Art Theater on East Fourth Street. The facades of these structures have been meticulously restored and lend interest to local streetscapes. The RDA has funded numerous façade improvement projects throughout the city, as well as graffiti abatement and code enforcement. These elements greatly contribute to the quality of life in Long Beach. The adaptive reuse of architecturally significant buildings is a major factor in the historic preservation movement in our city and without RDA funding these projects will become few and far between.

Message from the President

By Melinda Roney

I am honored to be your new President and will work hard to further the continuing mission of Long Beach Heritage. As I look around at those members who have continued to faithfully serve us and at the list of past Presidents, I realize that these are "very big shoes" and impossible for one person to fill. I will be looking to our past and current leaders for support and guidance.

We thank Stan Poe for his many years of tireless service and dedication to Long Beach Heritage. It is good to know that Stan will be on our new board as President Emeritus and Director of Special Activities. We are looking forward to Stan's very interesting and fun tours of Long Beach. We also thank Past President John Thomas for consenting to serve on our board as a chairman of advisors. We all know how much John has contributed to LBH and look forward to his continued help.

David Waller will continue as Vice President of Advisors as he has done so well in the past. A new face, Wendy Harn, will serve as Vice President of Advocacy and Maureen Neely will continue to tirelessly work with both of them.

In the future, we will highlight the accomplishments, tasks, and goals of each of our dedicated board members. We have a great board of directors. My philosophy is that great people do great things. My role will be that of coordinator. I will attend meetings and offer support wherever possible. This will be a learning curve for me and I look to the awesome people around me to "straighten" some of the curves.

Flower Mart Facing Demolition

By Louise Ivers

The former Long Beach Flower Mart building at 1085 Long Beach Boulevard has fallen upon hard times. Not only is it a bank repo, but it is part of a three lot parcel that is for sale by the Kerek Land Company for $3,300,000. A recent internet search indicates that it is in escrow, sold "as is," and advertised as a good place to construct a medical building because it is across from St. Mary's Hospital. This information indicates that the 1928 neoclassical structure, once a part of "automobile row" on American Avenue (the original name of the street), will be demolished in the near future.

Flower Mart Building, 1928. (Photography by Louise Ivers)

Last month one of the art stone pilaster capitals crashed to the ground, causing the bank to remove all of the rest of them, no doubt for safety reasons. The Flower Mart, however, still retains decorative panels and fleur de lis reliefs. It is one of the few buildings from the 1920s that still remains on Long Beach Boulevard, but the new owner will probably want to demolish it.

Advocacy Report

By Wendy Harn

As a new LBH Board member and the new VP of the Advocacy Committee, there is a great deal to learn. Here is just a blush:

The Downtown Plan

Maureen Neely continues to work with Steve Gerhardt, LB Senior Planner, on the documentation of historic properties included in the Downtown Plan. The preparation of the Downtown Plan involved yet another survey of every single property that had not previously been surveyed. However, when comparing this latest list with the earlier Jones & Stokes Survey and other documents, there are many discrepancies. Maureen has been compiling a list of missing properties, including annotation as to why each property should be included for historical reference and documentation.

In a July 26, 2011 meeting, Gerhardt advised that properties can be continuously added to the Downtown Plan historic inventory. This was encouraging, but preservationists must still identify those properties and justify their addition.

Historic District Coalition

Karen Highberger is coordinating a luncheon meeting of all LB Historic Districts on August 27th. It is vital that all historic districts be supported by LBH, and through that support, become empowered to protect and preserve those elements unique to their districts.

Updated Historic District Guidelines

Amy Bodek, Director of LB Development Services, advises that the City is working on strengthening and clarifying the design guidelines for all historic districts. LBH will partner with city staff and the historic districts to complete this project. The hope is to establish a uniform guideline covering all historic districts that can be referenced by property owners, as well as be uniformly applied by city staff and the Cultural Heritage Commission during the project review and approval process.

What's Up at the Bembridge Heritage Homesite

By Charlotte Mitchell

It is the beginning of the new fiscal year for Long Beach Heritage and we at the Bembridge House are very excited about some new projects. First of all, the back yard will be completed very soon and we are naming it Peppertree Court. It should be very lovely when finished with many roses, camellias, silver sheen pittosporum, a Mayten tree and many other plants in keeping with the green and white color scheme. There will be a fountain and two arbors with climbing roses. Soon our members and friends to will be able to use this space for their special celebrations, big or small.

September 23 we will have an evening of Victorian Magick at the house. The program will start at 7:00 p.m. and entertain you with demonstrations of nineteenth century conjuring. This is a fun and easy way to support the Bembridge House which is owned by Long Beach Heritage and is an important addition to historic Long Beach. Tickets are $40.00 for members and $45.00 for non-members. Call the office for more information-562-493-7019.Get your friends together and support this event.

It doesn't seem possible, but this is the last newsletter before our annual Victorian Christmas which will take place December 4. Please put this date on your calendar as it is always a lovely event with the Bembridge House decorated by many of the Historic Districts and Santa there to get you into the spirit of Christmas. If you would like to volunteer to help with this event please call the office and you will be put in touch with the right person to guide you.

The garden committee has worked very hard to keep the garden in such beautiful shape with many lovely roses and flowers in bloom right now. Drive by and take a look. You will be impressed.

Please take note of the information about the sewing class. It's a great way to have a few hours of fun friendship with other ladies and learning at the same time. The samplers make a wonderful keepsake. All this should keep us busy until the next newsletter when I will report on the repairs and painting that is going on at the house in the next two months.

Fourth Annual Restoration Trade Fair

The annual Restoration Trade Fair hosted by the Rose Park Neighborhood Association will be held on September 25 at Burbank Elementary School at Fourth Street and Junipero Avenue. Many vendors and local organizations will be on hand to promote accurate restoration of historic homes. Long Beach Heritage will have a booth at this event. Craftsmen will give demonstrations and workshops to interested attendees.

Architectural Heritage in Southern California

William G. Blatt House, 1914; Craftsman. (Photography by Louise Ivers)

By Sasha Witte

There is an amazingly wide variety of architectural styles in the Los Angeles area. Here is a brief description, along with some interesting facts, about several of the most common ones:

Arts & Crafts homes were built around the turn of the twentieth century. Both Pasadena, where I grew up, and Long Beach have neighborhoods chock full of beautiful Craftsman bungalows. The bungalow came to the West as an export of the British presence in India. It was originally inspired by banglas built in India by British colonials. In England William Morris began a "back to handicrafts" movement that influenced American designers as well. Many bungalows have cozy human-scale rooms that feature beautiful simple wood work. There are a lot of beautiful Craftsman bungalows found in Long Beach in the Bluff Heights and Bluff Park neighborhoods, among others.

Schilling & Schilling, Hotel Lafayette, 1929; Art Deco.

275 St. Joseph Avenue, 1931; Spanish Style. (Photography by Louise Ivers)

Spanish Colonial Revival was a popular design motif between 1920 and 1935 in Southern California. Inspired by the style of the Panama California Exposition buildings of 1915 in San Diego and books published in the 1920s with excellent illustrations of architecture in Spain, these homes are romanticized versions of Spanish villas. A prime example of Spanish Colonial Revival style is the Adamson House in Malibu and many examples can be found in Bixby Knolls and California Heights in Long Beach.

Art Deco is the name commonly given to the style that dominated the decorative arts between the world wars. Art Deco received its official baptism at the Exposition des Arts Decoratives et Industriels held in Paris in 1925. Art Deco attempted to resolve the dilemma between quality design and mass production. Its geometric style was applied to anything from teacups to building facades. Designers had a taste for the exotic, finding inspiration in the art of ancient Egypt and in Native American styles. After the big 1933 Long Beach earthquake, a great many of the existing Long Beach buildings were remodeled with Art Deco facades. Examples include Hancock Motors on Anaheim Street and the Lafayette Hotel on Linden Avenue by Schilling and Schilling.

Cliff May Ranch House, 1954. (Photography by Louise Ivers)

Streamline Moderne a later variation of Art Deco in the mid to late 1930s. Some people call it "Depression Modern." Buildings were inspired by ocean liners and airplanes during this era and display parallel horizontal lines and curved corners. Here in Long Beach there is an amazing example of a Streamlined Moderne apartment building on First Street just east of Redondo Avenue.

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Frank Lloyd Wright is a towering figure in the history of American architecture and arguably the greatest design influence in the United States during the first half of the twentieth century. His style still seems fresh and relevant today. A great example of his architecture both inspired by nature and Maya geometric, abstract design is the Barnsdall Park Home, also known as the Hollyhock House, in Los Angeles.

The Post-War Era was a time when people were looking for new and relevant ideas. In the Midwestern and eastern areas of the United States architects like Mies Van der Rohe and Philip Johnson were influenced by the German Bauhaus. On the west coast, Charles and Ray Eames created architecture and furniture with a fresh modern appeal. Featuring simple walls of glass and metal, their work was extremely innovative. The Eames Home in Pacific Palisades is sometimes available for viewing on Modernism Tours in Southern California.

The Ranch House was personified in the architecture of Cliff May. He combined romantic images of the California lifestyle with functionalism. May was dedicated to making residences appropriate to modern life. His homes were built with the idea that families of the future would no longer have servants. They were "wash and wear" homes built for privacy and nurturing environments. The buildings were typically low lying and appeared to "hug the land." We are fortunate to have some fabulous examples of his architecture in northeast Long Beach near El Dorado Park.

Architectural styles are forever evolving. One thing that, in my opinion, makes Long Beach special is the historic districts that have been created in many areas to preserve our amazing architectural heritage.

Membership Report — September 1, 2011

PRESERVATIONIST MEMBERS AND ABOVE

Dues are due in May so many names are missing from this report. If your name is among them, be sure you have paid your dues for the 2011–2012 year.

BENEFACTOR
RMS Queen Mary

SUSTAINER
The Ackerman Family

PATRONS
Mike & Andrea Burrous
Kathleen Bursley
Enid Busser
Marsha Jeffer
Geraldine Knatz
Mary Lou Martin & Chris Byrne
Melinda Roney & Walter Wojak
Terence & Anna Ulaszewski
Kenneth Walker, F&M Bank

CONTRIBUTORS
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Chris Hogan
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Michele Marek
John & Dianne McGinnis
Ana Maria & Kevin McGuan
Maureen Neeley & Dan Roberts
Jenny & David Shlemmer

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Michael & Kathleen Bohn
Lynn Brandt
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Kaye Briegel
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Claudine & Paul Burnett
Betty Chaney
Karen & Dick Clements
Sherry Cragg
C.J. & Dave Crockett
Vicki & James Cunningham
Bill Cwiklo
Nanette Dahlen-Wan
Judith Edison
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Robert & Scarlett Finney
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Kathryn Gregory & Richard Roth
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Steffie Hands
Karen Highberger & Louis Gaudio
Rick & Bradley Hobbs-Seeley
Harriett Ibbetson
Louise Ivers & Allen Guerrero
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Diane Jordan
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Duane Kuster
Ruthann Lehrer
Jim & Kathy Lingle
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Iris Schutz
Pamela Seager
Renee Simon
Brian Smith
Jean Bixby Smith
Julie Stindt
Mary Sullivan
Betty Sunofsky
Don & Marlene Temple
John & Patricia Walker
Joan Wells
Dorothy Wise
Christina Yanis

Facebook Lessons

Interested in giving Facebook a try but don't know where to start? Vice President of Public Awareness, Rachael Rifkin, is offering free one-on-one lessons. Contact her at (562) 424-2362 or at lifestories2day@aol.com to schedule a lesson.

Contribute Now to Our Preservation Awards Benefit Silent Auction

Help us to get an early start! Long Beach Heritage is looking for donations of items to be offered at our silent auction during the Annual Preservation Awards Benefit which will be held on the Queen Mary on February 23, 2012. This is an opportunity for you to show your support of Long Beach Heritage and to help us to meet our fundraising goals. All donors' names will be included in the display boards which show the description of each item. Event attendees can easily read the names of the companies and individuals who have donated to the Auction and we will encourage people to patronize those establishments. What great publicity! Help Long Beach Heritage and promote your own company, your favorite hair salon, or your favorite restaurants at the same time. It's a win win!!

The Awards Benefit pays tribute to the organizations, individuals, and businesses that actively participate in the historic preservation efforts in the city. This is our major fundraising event of the year and the proceeds support our mission to provide educational and community programs about preservation, and to support our very own Bembridge Heritage Homesite, a local landmark which is listed in the National and State Registries of Historic Places.

It is with community support such as yours, and with the countless hours and commitment of our many volunteers, that we are able to raise public awareness of the architectural and historic significance of our unique city and its diverse neighborhoods.

Donations to the auction are most often in the form of a gift certificate to a store, a restaurant, or an activity of some sort but also might be concert, theater or movie tickets, a week-end get way, a week at a time-share, or an offer of professional services. We also welcome small antique and other items. Use your imagination; think about what you would bid on. We are hoping to make our 2012 Silent Auction better than ever and we need your help to do that. We hope that you will help advance our preservation efforts by providing a contribution that we may include in our auction.

Thank you for your support.

Please mail certificates by December 31, 2011 to:
Mary Ellen Mitchell / 2424 Ostrom Avenue / Long Beach, CA 90815
or call (626) 353-5765 to arrange for pick-up or to request further information or donor forms.

Bookworms at Bembridge House!

It was a benign infestation and required no corrective measures: two book discussion groups found their way to Bembridge House this spring, and many of the bookworms declared they would like to come back some day.

The Literary Ladies book discussion group of Long Beach AAUW held its April 11th meeting in the historic home. Aware that the kitchen is functional but small, they decided on a potluck lunch. The weather was perfect and as they arrived they found some of the Bembridge garden crew hard at work. On hearing about the special occasion, Linda Renner took off her muddy gloves, cut some feverfew, and arranged a centerpiece for the large dining table. The salads and desserts were stored in the refrigerator while the women had an extensive tour of the house by Jill Black, volunteer chair for Bembridge. After the meal, the book under discussion was The Bookseller of Kabul by Asne Seierstad. Although all eight of the women live in or near Long Beach, only Bobbi Burket, Heritage secretary, had been to the house before. All were effusive in their enjoyment of the tour and their pleasure in being able to meet and chat in such a charming setting.

The second group, from Torrance, came in June. This time Bobbi was the tour guide, her first attempt at the task. She was "startled by the degree of their enthusiasm and the great number of questions about the house and the former residents. Good thing I did my homework!" Several of these women are former teachers, and they were particularly interested in the thank-you letters from the third grade students who come on field trips to see the house and to learn about the importance of historic preservation.

If you're interested in using the facility for an event of your own, or would like to arrange a tour, please contact the Heritage office at (562) 493 7019. To explore volunteer possibilities at Bembridge, phone Jill Black at 562 495 3377. We love to welcome new folks to the house.

Thirteenth Annual California Heights Home and Garden Tour

The California Heights Home and Garden Tour returns Sunday, October 2, 2011, from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Presented by the California Heights Neighborhood Association (CHNA) and sponsored by local realtor, Lewis Ebersole, the tour showcases five historic homes, three charming gardens and highlights local home improvement and restoration resources.

The tour, which began in 1997, is expected to draw 600 visitors, with an additional 100 residents volunteering their time and talent throughout the day.

While highlighting the value added aspects of maintaining and restoring the neighborhood's historic fabric, the home tour remains the largest source of income for the volunteer-run CHNA, providing funding for ongoing community improvement projects and public outreach, including historic lamp post restorations, Cal Heights ReLeaf, weekly Clean Streets, CalHeights.org, The Heights newsletter, community meetings and annual ice cream social. Past projects include the mural at Orange and Wardlow by Art Mortimer, historic district street signage and neighborhood information kiosks.

The 2011 tour hosts guest speaker, Carole Coates, co-author of California Revival, Vintage Decor for Today's Homes, showcasing the latest indoor-outdoor design trend that uses vintage furnishings, pottery, tile, paintings and decorative arts from California's golden Spanish Revival period of the 1920s to 1940s.

Tickets are $20 presale and $25 at the door. All tickets include a Cal Heights Dining Discount Card and the popular home tour brochure, featuring home portraits by Ellen Kirk. Live music and light refreshments are included.

Purchase tickets online at calheights.org, or mail checks to CHNA Home Tour no later than Tuesday, September 27, to 3553 Atlantic Ave #350, Long Beach, CA 90807.

Art Deco Tour

Robert Schilling (center) and his family attended the LBH Art Deco Tour led by John Thomas on August 27 at the Hotel Lafayette. Bob's father, Cecil, and his uncle, Arthur, designed the building in 1928–29. Bob spoke about his father's career and brought architectural renderings of the Lafayette to share with the audience. (Photography by Chris Launi)

Beginning Embroidery Sampler Class

A beginning embroidery class will be held at the Bembridge House on October 15. This class will be open to people of all ages and types of experience and promises to be both fun and educational. It will cost $30.00 for five sessions. Students will create a sampler with embroidery stitches. Some supplies will be furnished, but you will need to buy others, which the instructor will tell you about. Please call Marion Nickle at (562) 799-2405 for registration and further information.

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Calendar

Sept 23	Victorian Magick 7:00
Sept 25	Rose Park Restoration Fair
Sept 26	LBH Board
Oct 2	Cal Heights Home Tour
Oct 15	Sampler Class at Bembridge
Oct 24	LBH Executive Committee
Nov 28	LBH Board
Dec 4	Victorian Christmas at Bembridge
Feb 23	LBH Awards Benefit

Walking tours Oct 15, Nov 19 and Dec 17.
Remember, Walking Tours are free to members.

Long Beach Heritage

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LBH Membership

Long Beach Heritage is a non-profit education and advocacy group promoting public knowledge and preservation of significant historic and architectural resources,neighborhoods and the cultural heritage of Long Beach. Dues are due on May 1st each year.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____

- ❑ Call me with information on how I can participate in LBH as a volunteer
- ❑ Heritage Friend $ 45
- ❑ Heritage Student/Senior $ 30
- ❑ Heritage Household $ 75
- ❑ Heritage Preservationist $100
- ❑ Heritage Contributor $250
- ❑ Heritage Patron $500
- ❑ New member _____

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