LONG BEACH HERITAGE

Volume 18, No 1 Spring 2008

Coming Soon!

Long Beach Heritage will offer a Historic Sites Bus Tour on Sunday, April 20th from 11:00-3:00 pm. The tour will view historic sites throughout Long Beach. There will be informative commentary and lunch. Detailed information will follow giving the starting point, lunch selection and cost. This event will require advance reservations and be limited to the number of seats on the bus.

2008 Hollywood Bowl Event

Save This Date: Saturday, August 30, 2008!

The tenth annual Hollywood Bowl/Casa Alegre fund raiser promises to be an exciting event. It has been sold out in the past, so make your reservations as soon as possible. Our gracious hosts, Rick Hobbs and Brad Seeley, are in the process of making some wonderful improvements to the front of the Casa. So, those of you who have attended the Bowl event before will not want to miss the newest additions and those who have never been to the Casa will be in for a treat.

The Hollywood Bowl performance is by John Williams, who is a multiple Academy Award winner and incomparable film music composer. He is guaranteed to delight, amaze, entertain, and more.

Tickets are $98 per person for members and $108 for non-members. They include transportation by charter bus from Long Beach, dinner, open bar, and Hollywood Bowl admission. Space is limited, so be sure to make your reservations early. Send your checks to the Long Beach Heritage office, P. O. Box 92521, Long Beach, CA 90809. Your guests are welcome.

Share Local History: The *Signal Tribune Newspaper* wants to feature your historical photos for their "Reminiscing" feature. Share your photographs with over 25,000 readers in the Long Beach neighborhoods of Bixby Knolls, California Heights, Los Cerritos, Wrigley Heights and the City of Signal Hill. For more information call (562) 427-8678 or send an email to newspaper@signaltribune.com.

Partners in Preservation

The Art Theatre

Beginning with this issue of our newsletter, Long Beach Heritage will feature a spotlight article on people and organizations that have been successful in preservation efforts in Long Beach. We are pleased to profile Sybil and Jan van Dijs of SJvD Design of Long Beach in this edition.

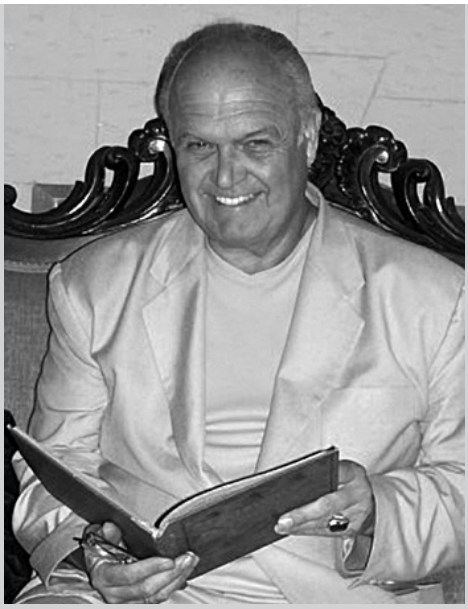
Sybil and Jan van Dijs have completed many unique projects in Long Beach which include adaptive reuse and programming of warehouse, commercial and residential buildings. Most notable perhaps was the reuse project of the Ebell Theater. Looking to save and program the historic structure formerly the Ebell Women's Club, SJvD Design and partners successfully transformed the building into beautiful condominiums and a multipurpose area which now serves as a venue for weddings, receptions, meetings and other social gatherings. These events take place in a building constructed in a Spanish Baroque Revival style with extraordinary ornament on the facades.

The SJvD Design group will embark on yet another great example of historic renovation and programming. On March 5, 2008, the Art Theater located on 4th Street closed to allow a thoughtful and detailed historic restoration effort led by Jan van Dijs. This Art Deco Theater is the last remaining original movie house in Long Beach still in operation. The exterior was the creation of architect Cecil Schilling after the 1933 earthquake in a Streamline Moderne style. Although the interior of the theater has been significally altered, the exterior still displays the Art Moderne design. The marquee and facade will be restored with shops on either side of the auditorium. The lobby, concessions, lighting, stage arcade and seating will be recreated with Art Deco motifs. Details for enhancing and updating the movie sound systems, projection and acoustics are also being evaluated.

What is unique to the SJvD Design group is their philosophy and dedication to programming historic and cultural assets. They plan to keep the Art open as a neighborhood theater that shows foreign and independent films. In addition to movies, ideas for live theater and art shows are being discussed. Working with neighbors around the Art Theater on noise and parking related matters and developing successful strategies will be a tactic deployed during the restoration project.

We salute Jan and Sybil van Dijs and their efforts toward historic preservation of our vital historic assets in Long Beach!

Message from the President



The history of a city is essential to its identity as a viable and unique community. We often don't realize how fortunate we are in Long Beach to have such a widespread stock of both residential and commercial historic structures. It is easy to concentrate on the desecration of downtown Long Beach and lament the loss of so much of the historic fabric, but it is just as easy to overlook the resources which still exist in the rest of our city.

I recently had the opportunity to lead a historic tour of the city at the request of a design jury serving a furniture competition at CSULB. The members were from various areas of the country, New York to Texas. We began at Rancho Los Alamitos, toured most of the 17 historic districts, drove to the Rancho Los Cerritos and surrounding area, and ended up on Signal Hill to survey our fascinating cityscape. They were highly impressed. They had previously thought Long Beach was a non-descript suburb of Los Angeles. Education is key to preservation.

Historic districts were formed because of the desires of the residents and were created to preserve and stabilize the various neighborhoods. The resultant efforts were due to perseverance of the Office of Historic Preservation and the Cultural Heritage Commission. The CHC is celebrating its thirtieth anniversary this year. It was created to prevent the haphazard destruction of the built environment, and it has done its' job well. The continued operation of the CHC is of the utmost importance to address projects which affect historic properties throughout the city. I have served on the CHC since 1993, first as a regular commissioner and then as ex-officio commissioner, due to my background in architectural history. Our normal agenda has been four to twelve items for our consideration. Since the new fee schedule was established last fall, the agenda items have dwindled to two in December and one in January. In February the meeting of the CHC was cancelled due to no agenda items. This was the first time since 1993 that the meeting was cancelled!

I am extremely concerned that the new fee schedule is at least partially responsible for the lack of items brought to the CHC. I'm not sure that it represents what is actually occurring in the historic districts. We need to contact our council members and the mayor to revisit the new exorbitant increases in building and planning fees so that voluntary compliance continues. Fees for services should be reasonable for the services provided and not be punitive consequences for ownership, restoration, and maintenance of historic properties.

—Stan Poe

What's Up at the Bembridge House

By Charlotte Mitchell

All of us are very excited about the news that the work on the ADA accessible restroom and the storage area will begin the first part of March and should be well under way by the time you read this. We will then be able to advertise our events to the general public which should result in increased participation. We have purchased a National Register plaque and will proudly display it on the front of the house.

The leaded glass windows have been repaired, cleaned and re-installed. The stained glass windows look especially beautiful when the sun shines on them. A new program has been started under the direction of Elena Broun-Levine and Marion Nickle. Needle-art classes will be taught on Saturdays from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. for ten weeks. The class started March 1 with ten eager students. More on this as the class progresses.

We had some major plumbing repairs due to pipes that had completely disintegrated and had to be replaced. This was something we had not budgeted so we will have to work even harder to raise a bit more money this year. With such wonderful volunteers working at the house I know we can do it.

The Bembridge House is open for tours every Tuesday from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. and on the fourth Saturday of each month from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. We continue to have people drop by and they are always entranced with the house. Our knowledgeable docents under the direction of Carol Ann Smith and her committee are very much appreciated. We have received many donations during the past year from our members and friends who have such warm feelings for the house. In February, donations were made in the name of Stan Poe to celebrate his birthday. This is a great way to honor a special event.

Now that spring has arrived, it is time to plant the garden with some colorful flowers. We who volunteer in the garden have fun and enjoy seeing the results of our labor. We could use more eager gardeners and would love to hear from anyone interested. Please call the office if this is something that appeals to you.

I would like to thank all who help make the Bembridge House a shining star for Long Beach Heritage.

Gearing Up for "Great Homes"

Our annual spring home tour is slated for Sunday, June 8th, from noon until 5:00 pm. Since last year's very successful Great Homes Tour sold out, our members are advised to order tickets early.

"Long Beach's picturesque neighborhoods and tree-lined streets provide the prefect backdrop for the architectural treasures on this year's tour," reports tour chair Mary Lou Martin. "We will present six architecturally distinguished homes in the Virginia Country Club, Belmont Heights, Naples, and Bluff Park areas, including a lovely 1927 Spanish Colonial Revival, a classic California bungalow, and a Greene and Greene house."

Docents stationed throughout the houses will describe interior and exterior features, as well as provide a brief history of each home. Proceeds from the event support our historic Bembridge House. Ticket announcements are to be mailed to members the last week of April, but in the meantime SAVE THIS DATE!

Long Beach Heritage Advocacy Report

Adaptive Reuse in Action!

Recently the Long Beach Redevelopment Agency announced that exclusive negotiations with AloftLB LLC for the development of an Aloft Hotel have begun. The boutique hotel will be located at the southwest corner of Broadway and Long Beach Boulevard. The great news is that the RDA has required the developer to integrate the existing historic American Hotel as part of the project!

The American Hotel of 1905 is one of the oldest buildings in our downtown and the only building demonstrating Romanesque Revival design elements. The original American Hotel was a mixed-use model of ground floor retail stores fronting Broadway and hotel rooms above. Unique to the American Hotel is a central light well designed to provide natural lighting to the interior spaces. Although the bottom of the façade of the American Hotel has been altered, it typifies the great historic architecture of the turn of the century in Long Beach.

A major component of the Aloft Hotel project will be the adaptive reuse and programming of the American Hotel. Plans include the use of the American Hotel entry and central light well as an open multipurpose area for art exhibits and meetings. Exactly how much of the original hotel building will be integrated into the Aloft hotel is still to be determined.

The adaptive reuse and consideration of the American Hotel into the Aloft project demonstrates the awareness and "new" way of thinking for city officials and staff when dealing with historic and cultural resources. The level of transparency by the RDA and thoughtful planning to include the American Hotel are signs of the success of the education efforts of Long Beach Heritage. The progressive, inclusive and patient tactics of the Advocacy initiatives are paying off. The Advocacy committee will continue to monitor the progress of the Aloft Hotel and adaptive reuse of the American Hotel.

The Historic Preservation Element (HPE) of the General Plan is moving along on schedule. Essential to promoting and securing our cultural and historic resources, the HPE will be the enforcement tool used by developers, staff and planers when dealing with historic buildings and neighborhoods. The HPE presentation is currently being developed for community meetings and the Advocacy Committee will monitor the process and send out meeting notices via out Web site.

As an ongoing commitment to our wonderful historic neighborhood associations, LBH will host an informative meeting in April (location/time TBA). The meeting will include an update of the ongoing preservation initiatives by the city from staff and an open dialogue on outstanding issues of concern that threaten our historic neighborhoods. Each Historic District will be notified of the meeting and location. Please come prepared to ask questions and offer ideas on issues about living in and sustaining historic neighborhoods.

Finally, the Advocacy Committee is monitoring many projects that may include historic or cultural resources. Beginning March 1, 2008, the status of these and other projects will be available on the LBH Web site. Support and other timely efforts critical to our preservation strategies will also be available on the Advocacy Committee site. Please monitor the site frequently to see how you can help the preservation and education objectives of Long Beach Heritage

Membership Report April 2008

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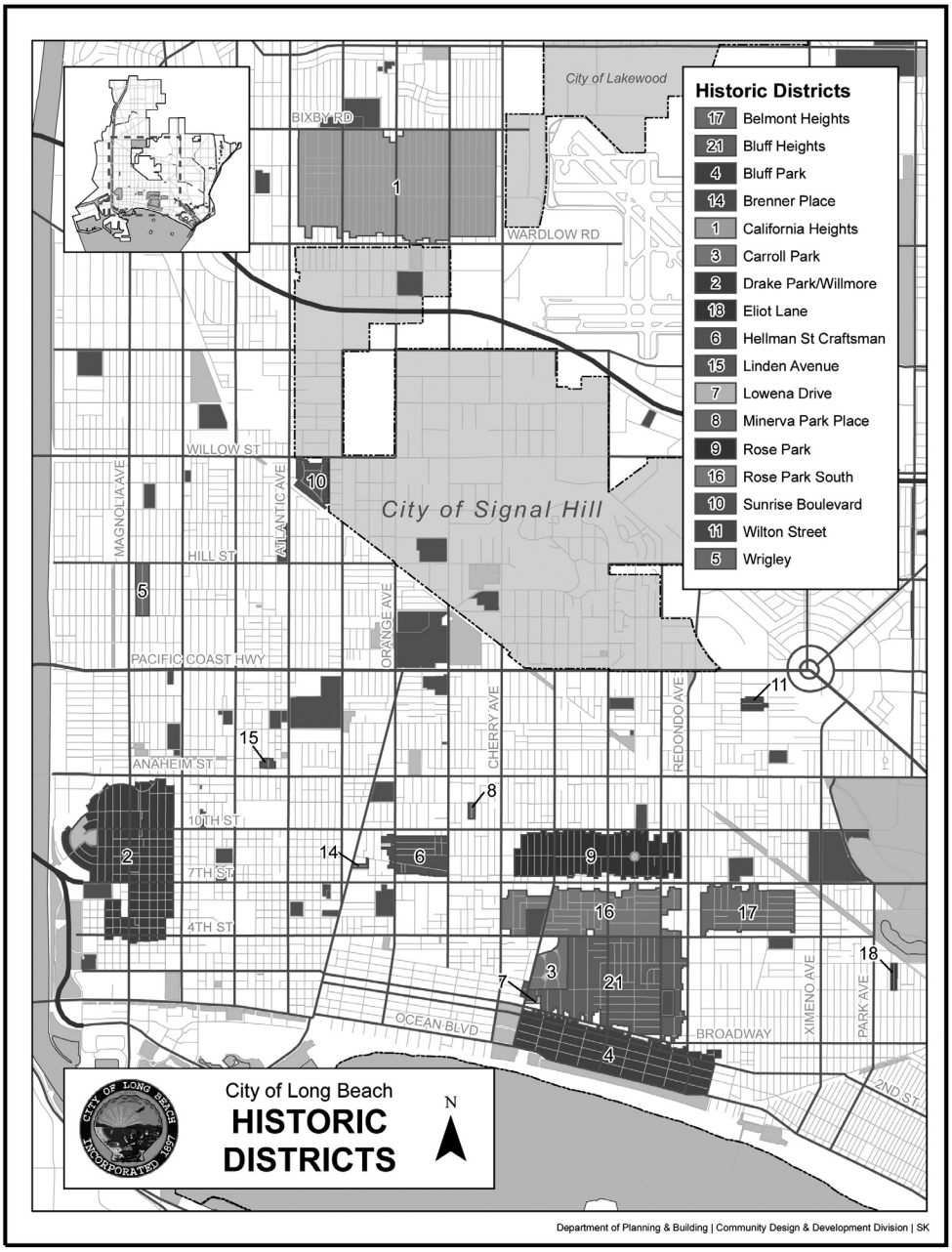
The Historic Districts of Long Beach



The boundaries of the California Heights district are: Wardlow and Bixby Roads and Lime and Gardenia Avenues. This area of Long Beach was established in 1929 by Jotham W. Bixby out of agricultural lands of the Rancho Los Cerritos. Consisting of approximately 1,500 predominantly Spanish Colonial Revival homes built in the late 1920s, this is the city's largest historic district. You can also spy a few examples of Craftsman bungalows and Tudor Revival and Neo-Traditional homes of the late 30s and early 40s. Some older homes were relocated there from downtown Long Beach during the early development.

Willmore City/Drake Park was the first historic district declared by the city. By 1978, the boundaries were Fourth Street to Twelfth Street and Loma Vista to Pacific Avenue. Willmore City, named for William Willmore, the developer of the American Colony, which was renamed Long Beach, was part of the city's original 1881 plan and contains the highest concentration of late nineteenth and early twentieth century homes in the city. Victorian, Craftsman, Mission, Prairie, Italian Renaissance, and Spanish Colonial Revival styles are all represented. Drake Park, originally called Knoll Park in 1904 when it was annexed, was named for Colonel Charles Drake who developed the Pike and the Virginia Hotel in 1905-06.

The Carroll Park district was originally part of the Alamitos Township. The boundaries are Carroll Park East, Carroll Park West, Carroll Park North, Junipero Avenue, and Third Street. Landscaped "islands," curving streets, several old barns, and Craftsman bungalows can be found as well as one great Mission Revival example. The curving streets were designed to keep farm wagons out of the neighborhood on their way to the downtown city market.

Bluff Park was the second historic district formed as a defense against the high rise multi- unit buildings being erected on Ocean Blvd. Its boundaries are Junipero Avenue, Loma Avenue, Ocean Boulevard, and Second Street. Large and architecturally distinctive houses were built between 1903 and 1949 along the ocean bluffs. Craftsman bungalows and Period Revival styles predominate.

The boundaries of the Wrigley District are 2008-2191 Eucalyptus Avenue, 439 W. 20th Street, and 417 W. 21st Street. It was named for chewing-gum magnate William S. Wrigley, Jr., who developed this two-block area of Spanish Colonial Revival style homes between 1928 and 1934.

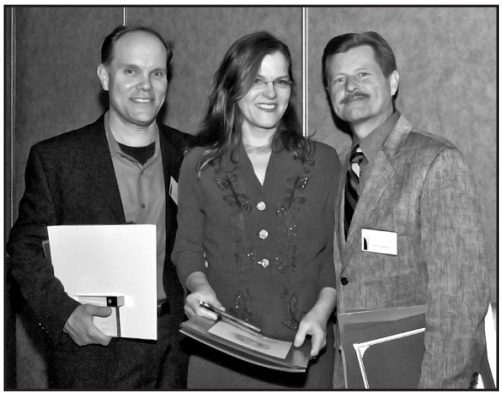
The boundaries of the Hellman Street Craftsman District are the north side of Ninth Street between Orange and Walnut Avenues, Hellman Street from Orange Avenue to Walnut Avenue, including Toledo Walk to the alley; both sides of Orange Avenue from 730-937 Orange Avenue, west side of Walnut Avenue between Hellman Street and Ninth Street, and 733-915 Hoffman Ave. Named for Isaias W. Hellman who developed this neighborhood, the district features Victorian residences, Craftsman bungalows, and Spanish Colonial Revival homes.

Lowena Drive is a particularly picturesque district that resembles a Hollywood set of the silent movie era. Its boundaries are 230, 260, and 280 Junipero Avenue and 2202, 2220, and 2230 Lowena Drive. Chateauesque structures built between 1919 and 1926 are found on this street named for developer H. N. Lowe, whose family owned a flower farm on the land in 1898.

Minerva Place is a very tiny district on Minerva Place between 10th and 11th Streets. Its boundaries are 1045-1085 Minerva Park Place and 1724 and 1746 E. 11th St. Sixteen Spanish Colonial Revival homes were built in 1925.

The Rose Park Historic District boundaries are the east side of St. Louis Avenue, the alley north of Seventh Street, Coronado Street, and 10th Street. Though Craftsman bungalows constructed between 1910 and 1922 dominate, Spanish Colonial

Long Beach Heritage Awards Benefit



(Top) Chris Launi, Suzanne Tarbell Cooper, and John Thomas received a merit award for their book at the LBH Benefit.
(Bottom) Richard Poper and family at the LBH annual Awards Benefit.

3rd Annual May Day Celebration: "Spring into May" Day

The 3rd Annual May Day Event will be held Saturday, April 26 from 1-5pm at Drake Park (10th & Maine) and the Bembridge Heritage Homesite (953 Park Circle) in Long Beach. Last year over 600 people enjoyed this day at the Park and about 325 toured the Bembridge Homesite.

The year 1943 is the focus for the 2008 living history tour. Besides the traditional May Pole Dance, we are partnering with "Cover the Uninsured Week". Other highlights will include games, face painting, May Day crafts and storytelling.

The suggested donation is $2 for Adults. Children under 13 are admitted free.

Event partners to date include Long Beach Heritage, Bembridge Heritage Homesite, Drake Park representing the Long Beach Parks Deptartment, Willmore City Heritage, Willmore Community Police Center, Friends' House at Drake Park, Narodni International Folk Dancers, St. Mary Medical Center, Long Beach Health Department, Long Beach Firefighters Association Local 372, and Vice Mayor Bonnie Lowenthal.

(Top) Charmingly dressed children at the 2007 May Day festival.
(Bottom) Children dance around the May Pole.

Historic Neighborhoods cont'd from page 4

Revival homes of the 20s and 30s, as well as Neo-Traditional styles of the 40s, are among this district's more than 500 architecturally significant structures. Rose Park South is an extension of the Rose Park district which was established later at the request of the residents. Craftsman style homes are the most common types of dwellings. The boundaries are the north side of Fourth Street, south side of Seventh Street, Cherry Avenue, and Coronado/ Obispo Avenues..

Sunrise Boulevard is a conglomerate of many period styles, including an old Bixby home moved from La Linda Place. The boundaries are 2515-2596 Lime Avenue, 2444-2588 Olive Avenue, 638-836 Sunrise Boulevard, 701-745 Vernon Street, and 804 E. Willow Street. Originally a ranch and then a dairy, this neighborhood predominantly features Craftsman bungalows built between 1908 and 1924. The El Cortez, built in the early 1920s as a "motor court," or motel, is now an apartment complex.

Wilton Street was originally constructed for the staff at Community Hospital on Termino. The small homes have very deep lots and boast formal dining rooms. The boundaries are 3800-3926 Wilton Sreet between Termino and Grand Avenues, 1634 Grand Avenue, and 1637 Termino Avenue. The Spanish Colonial/Mission Revival homes were constructed in 1924 by a single builder.

Bluff Heights, the newest district was originally part of the Alamitos Township. The boundaries are Junipero Avenue, Redondo Avenue, Fourth Street. Many Craftsman bungalows were built between 1910 and 1923. Some unique structures include late nineteenth century farmhouses and the former home of architect Harvey Lochridge at Third and Obispo.

Eliot Lane is another diminutive district comprised of Eliot Lane between Third Street and Colorado. A single block of small Mission Revival homes lines a very narrow street. At one time these homes were almost identical.

Brenner Place is another single builder district that is small, but significant for its style. It consists of a single block located east of Alamitos Avenue between Seventh and Hellman Streets. Ten identical single-story houses on both sides of a narrow private street and two two-story structures next to an alley create a sense of intimacy of a bygone era.

The Linden Avenue district is interesting because of its varied architectural offerings. Boundaries are the alley north of Anaheim Street to 14th Street, consisting of eight houses located at 1324 - 1357 Linden Avenue. Seven of the homes were built for prominent citizens and display Victorian, Classical Revival, Craftsman, and American Foursquare architectural styles popular in the early 1900s, while the Mediterranean multi-family structure was constructed at a later date. The district includes the Hancock Motors showroom with its wonderful Art Deco façade by Schilling and Schilling at the southeast corner of Linden and Anaheim Street.

Belmont Heights was originally a separate town until its annexation by Long Beach in 1909. The boundaries are Newport Avenue, Roswell Avenue, Fourth Street, and Seventh Street. It has a few Victorian homes, though Craftsman bungalows predominate. The historic streetscapes extend beyond the district and warrant further exploration.

LONG BEACH HERITAGE

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CALENDAR

April 20	Historic District Bus Tour
April 26	May Day at Bembridge House
April 28	Executive Committee meeting
May 19	LBH Board
June 8	Great Homes Tour
June 23	Executive Committee meeting
July	Annual Meeting
July 28	LBH Board

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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.

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❑ 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
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