



Immanent Demolition of Theodore Roosevelt School

By Louise Ivers

A recently published Environmental Impact Report (EIR) calls for the total demolition of Theodore Roosevelt School at 1574 Linden Avenue, a distinctive Streamline Moderne structure designed by noted Long Beach architect George Kahrs in 1935 (fig. 1). It will be replaced by a group of contemporary buildings constructed around a landscaped playground and funded with \$38,700,000 from Measure K bonds. The EIR, however, identifies two alternatives: no project and major renovation. If the latter alternative is chosen the Streamline Moderne classroom building can be saved and upgraded with twenty-first century technology. The temporary bungalows will be razed and replaced with new construction. Major renovation is the most environmentally sound alternative as well because it will not use as many new materials or cause as much pollution from the demolition process. Members of the Long Beach Heritage Advocacy Committee have met with Long Beach Unified School District

Theodore Roosevelt School designed by noted Long Beach architect George Kahrs in 1935 (fig.1). Photo by Louise Ivers



officials to discuss the possible preservation of a portion of the school and they were sympathetic to our mission.

The designer of Theodore Roosevelt School, George Walter Kahrs (1889–1980), was born in Commack, New York and moved to Nebraska when he was a child. He studied at Washington University in St. Louis and received a degree in architecture from Columbia University in New York. He came to Long Beach in 1915, served in the United States Navy during World War I and entered into a partnership with Natt Piper (1886–1969) in 1919 after his return from the service. Piper, who was also an accomplished watercolorist, and Kahrs were one of the major architectural firms in early twentieth century Long Beach. They were quick to adopt the new Art Deco style in the

late 1920s and early 1930s, evidenced in the demolished Buffum Hotel of 1930 (fig. 2) and the Economy Open Air Market of the same year, still standing at the northwest corner of Broadway and Redondo Avenue.

Many new schools were built in the 1920s when the population of the city of Long Beach skyrocketed due to both a large influx of new residents and the annexation of great amounts of land. One of these was named after popular president Theodore Roosevelt and constructed in 1920–21 (fig. 3). It was designed by John Austin of Los Angeles and W. Horace Austin of Long Beach (but they were not related) in a Spanish Renaissance Revival style with arched openings in the projecting centerpiece, engaged columns, urns, and a hipped tile roof. An addition constructed in 1924 displayed Plateresque heraldic motifs above the entrance.

On March 10, 1933 a terrible earth-

(Continued on page 4)



Buffum Hotel (fig.2).



Message from the President

By Melinda Roney

We had a fantastic Awards Benefit in February. Many thanks to those people who made it so successful. Patty Moore headed the event and coordinated it with so many hard working people: Bobbi Burket, Jill Black, Mary Kay Nottage, Charlotte Mitchell, Rachael Rifkin, Julie Nemechek, Karen Clements, Jean Shapen, and Cheryl Marx. Mary Lou Martin and Chris Launi provided the wonderful pictures and presentation. Mary Ellen Mitchell and Brad Seeley were responsible for the very successful silent auction. We had over 250 people in attendance at the Benefit. The Awards Committee, headed by Karen Clements, did a wonderful job of choosing the 2012 Awardees.

Our Advocacy Committee is continuing with their many projects as well as reviewing the current Draft EIR for the Theodore Roosevelt Elementary School located at 1574 Linden Avenue. Dr. Louise Ivers noted in her book, Long Beach, A History Through Its Architecture, that it was built in 1935 and designed by George Kahrs, one of our city's premier architects. It was constructed of materials salvaged from the debris of the original building after the 1933 earthquake. We are working on a response to the EIR to study a major renovation alternative versus a total demolition. This school is an important part of our collection of WPA Schools. We will keep you updated on our progress.

Our Annual Great Homes of Long Beach Tour is on June 13, 2012. Mary Lou Martin and her committee have planned a "not to be missed" event. Tickets and information can be found on our website, www.lbheritage.org. Check the website on a regular basis to stay informed on any of our events or Heritage news.

A new column appears in this edition of our newsletter. It is entitled "What I Remember About Long Beach". We want you to share your memories of Long Beach. Long Beach is full of rich history and we all benefit when we share it with each other. Email your memory to preservation@lbheritage or mail to P.O. Box 92521, LB 90809. We look forward to hearing from you.

S A V E T H E D A T E !

Step back in time and enjoy celebrating the opening of

PEPPERTREE COURT

at the historic Bembridge House with a **Great Gatsby Garden Party**

July 15, 2012 2:00 – 6:00

Rescue-Quilt Honored

What's a rescue quilt? Unlike a rescue dog, it isn't found wandering the mean city streets, but instead is unearthed, dusty and forgotten, in the cavernous attic of Bembridge House. This one, worked in the Ocean Waves design, had never been completed, and consisted only of the decorative cover, which had begun to suffer the indignities of old age and neglect.

The rescuers were the quilters who convene Saturdays at Bembridge House, working some weeks at the large dining table and others—weather permitting—in the carriage house. They added filling and a backing and quilted all together, during which time Saturday afternoon visitors to the house were engaged to encounter the group of ten women plying this time-honored skill in their historic setting. They came to be known as the Carriage House Quilters, and on February 4th, after the thread and the thimbles had been stored away, they broke out into party mode!

Led by experts Elena Levine and Marion Nickle, who together have restored three Bembridge quilts before this one, the group decked out the dining room with lace tablecloths, Marion's beautiful tea serving pieces, and enough finger sandwiches and pastries to warm the heart of any hard-working seamstress. Two Bembridge officers, chair Charlotte Mitchell and Director of Collections Iris Schutz, had been asked to attend; this was the occasion of the official presentation of the completed quilt to these two Bembridge House representatives.

The quilt, like the three rescues before it, will be displayed in the house. The current project, an excellent quilt top discovered at an estate sale, will be finished and donated to the Bembridge Committee. As it is not related to the house,



Charlotte Mitchell, Iris Schutz, Marion Nickle and Elena Levine hold a rescue quilt at the Bembridge House.

it will be used in a fund-raiser, most likely as part of our silent auction at next year's Queen Mary benefit.

It is encouraging to see the house come back to life through the many and

varied activities to which it is host, and with the increasing number of people who find themselves happy to be part of its renaissance. Rescued quilts: rescued house.

Advocacy

By Wendy Harn

I am pleased to announce several new volunteers have joined the Advocacy Committee. The Committee members are: Craig Arnold; Wendy Harn; Karen Highberger; Louise Ivers; Maureen Neeley; Rachael Rifkin; Emily Tanaka; and David Waller.

The Advocacy Committee projects include:

- Strengthening the coalition of historic neighborhood districts
- Supporting the development and adoption of a citywide historic district ordinance

- Continuing the Downtown Plan property survey
- Working with the City to re-establish a staff position for the Historic Preservation Officer
- Working with the Long Beach Unified School District to develop a strategy to protect and preserve the historic architectural integrity of the Public Works Administration funded "New Deal" schools of the 1930s

Volunteers are always welcome. Please email WendyHarn@msn.com.

Theodore Roosevelt School (Continued from page 1)



Theodore Roosevelt School (fig. 3).

quake struck Long Beach and devastated many unreinforced brick masonry buildings in the city, including most of the schools. Roosevelt Elementary School was one of those which suffered great damage and had to be torn down. However, some materials were saved from the original structure, particularly the wood floors, and incorporated into Kahrs' design in 1935. After the earthquake Long Beach desperately needed building inspectors to assess the damage and in October of that year, Natt Piper was appointed to the post of City Building Inspector. Thus, the partnership of Piper and Kahrs was dissolved and George Kahrs worked on the plans for Roosevelt School with two engineers, J. H. Davies and C. D. Wallis. Meyers Brothers were the contractors for the building that cost \$118,289. On November 25, 1935 the *Press-Telegram* described the structure as "conservatively modern in its design." It had a steel frame, stucco walls, thirteen classrooms, a library, a kindergarten, home economics rooms, and a boys' room (probably a shop). The building was funded by the federal Public Works Administration (PWA). It has large, vertical triple glazed windows to allow natural light into the classrooms, which all face outward from a central corridor, because the amount of illumination created by

the electric bulbs of the thirties was minimal. Fluted piers, a characteristic Streamline Moderne motif, divide these openings and are complemented by horizontal lines in the spandrels below the second story windows. The centerpiece of the façade projects upward in two steps to accentuate the middle of the building and

a curved canopy shelters the entrance lobby, which retains its original yellow and green tiles set in linear patterns. Above the canopy is a distinctive, geometric art stone (cast concrete) relief. All of these architectural motifs, especially the curves and repeated lines, were inspired by the shapes of ocean liners, trains, and airplanes of the thirties. They implied modernity, technological advances, and hope for the future. The auditorium flanking the south side of the classroom structure also has a Streamline Moderne design with a curved canopy above the double doors and a series of folded planes across the top of the façade that resemble the fluting of the piers on the main building.

Shortly after the completion of Roosevelt Elementary School, George Kahrs designed another highly visible structure in Long Beach, the Veterans Memorial Building of 1936-37 (fig. 4). It was last part of the architectural trio that formed the Civic Center facing Lincoln Park that was demolished in the 1970s. Like Roosevelt Elementary School, the Veterans Memorial had a projecting central portion, fluted piers, and cast art stone reliefs. The sculpture over the entrance was by Merrell Gage, a well-

known California artist, and it depicted an American eagle flanked by figures holding a flower on the left and a sword on the right, symbolizing veterans' roles in peacetime and wartime.

This author hopes that Roosevelt School will not meet the same sad fate as the Veterans Memorial and that the LBUSD will save the Streamlined buildings for future generations of Long Beach children to learn in and acquire happy memories. We hope that the School District will choose the major renovation alternative and update the facilities of these structures. Roosevelt Elementary School is one of a group of 28 architecturally significant campuses that were



Veterans Memorial Building (fig.4).

constructed in the mid-1930s under the aegis of the PWA. The majority of these schools display either Art Deco or Streamline Moderne elements and they collectively form an important piece of our city heritage that should be preserved. Many of these buildings also have significant art works inside of them that should be kept intact as well. All of the post-earthquake schools were designed by the leading Long Beach architects of the period, including George Kahrs, W. Horace Austin, and Cecil Schilling. These structures are a unique asset in the history of southern California.

What I Remember About Long Beach: The “Long Journey” to San Pedro

By Melinda Roney

Some do not remember the Pontoon Bridge on Ocean Blvd. that allowed immediate access over the Cerritos Channel to Terminal Island. Immediate is much too strong of a word. The bridge was two wooden structures that floated on the water and slid back to provide an opening for the smallest sailboat or the largest ship. Many hours of my childhood were spent waiting for the bridge to open to traffic. I can only imagine the frustration of workers or Naval personnel who tried to cross over. The bridge was originally built after World War II as a 6-month structure to provide better access to the Naval Shipyards and the Navy Base. It lasted for 24 years and was replaced by the Gerald Desmond Bridge in 1968. Those with less patience or a job to get to drove to the Henry Ford Bridge (also known as the

Salt Lake R.R.
Bascule Bridge,
Long Beach,
California.



Badger Avenue Bridge) in Wilmington. It was built in 1948. It was a drawbridge (bascule type bridge) and was subject to closure to allow large ships to pass. At least you didn't have to wait for the sailboats. The Commodore Schuyler Heim Bridge was an elevator bridge built next to it in 1963. Today, the Ford Bridge is used for trains. After we made

it across the drawbridge we then had to take the ferry boat from Terminal Island to San Pedro. The Vincent Thomas Bridge, a suspension bridge, was built in 1963 and replaced the ferry. I have fond childhood memories of the “Long Journey” to San Pedro and I think of them today as we zip over the waters to the other side.

May Day Festival in Drake Park



The May Day Festival
in Drake Park will
include a May Pole.

This year's May Day Festival will be held at Drake Park, 951 Maine Avenue, on Saturday, May 5 from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m.

It will have two centers of activity. The Bembridge Heritage Homesite will offer tours from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. for a \$2.00

donation from adults. Children under 12 will be admitted free when accompanied by an adult. The Willmore City Heritage Association will have a booth in the park offering information and items for sale. St. Mary Medical Center and other groups will offer free health screening services and information about their facilities. Friends' House at Drake Park will provide a jumper, crafts, books, and other activities for children.

What's Up at the Bembridge Heritage Homesite



The garden committee, led by Elisa Trujillo, has put many hours into pruning the roses at just the right time so they will all be in bloom for the tour, as well as planting kitchen and herb gardens.

Our docents, under the direction of Jill Black, have been especially busy since the Victorian Christmas Party be-



By Charlotte Mitchell

Much to the delight of all of us at the Bembridge House, we have received two very generous donations for the completion of Peppertree Court. Chris Hogan has donated a beautiful fountain in memory of his late partner, Layne Johnson, as well as two stone benches for the court. The fountain will be dedicated at the Great Gatsby party. Andrea and Mike Burrous made a donation that will enable us to purchase a new gate for the back yard that will fit the décor of the garden.

We also want to thank Ed Sanchez, owner of Window Restoration & Repair, for the donation of hours of work that enabled us to finish the window repairs in the sunroom. We received a grant last year from the Long Beach Memorial Heritage Association to paint the back upstairs bathroom, the sewing room ceiling and the sunroom. Now that area of the Homesite looks wonderful.

Drake Park is again sponsoring a Health Fair and a May Day celebration

and we will again have the Bembridge House open for two hours for tours, as well as provide cookies and punch. We do this in order to help out the park with the activities they present for the children and adults in the area. This event will take place on May 5 and the tours will be from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m.

On May 6 the Bembridge House garden will be on the Mary Lou Heard Garden Tour. Last year we had over 600 people come to explore our grounds.

cause we kept the house decorated until the third week of January. Many school children are scheduled to take tours in the coming months which makes us very happy. We love to have the teachers and children tour our lovely house and learn about its history.

Don't forget to keep the date of July 15 open for the Great Gatsby party. You will find more on this in the next newsletter. It will be a fun event with games, music, good food and more.

Great Homes of Long Beach

The 2012 "Great Homes of Long Beach" self guided tour will take place on Sunday, June 3 from noon until five p.m. This year's tour will feature homes in Carroll Park, Virginia Country Club and other sections of the city. Six homes, each of different and unique architectural character, will be open to visitors who will hear informative talks by docents. The tour fulfills the educational objectives of Long Beach Heritage and the proceeds of the event will be dedicated to the

restoration and support of the historic Bembridge House, a landmark owned by our organization.

Each year Heritage volunteers work for weeks to develop the Great Homes tour. We expect the event to sell out, with over 600 visitors and volunteers participating. Ticket sales will begin at the end of April, so keep an eye out for a postcard that will supply you with all the details. You don't want to miss it!

Membership Report — March 1, 2012

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 2012–2013 year.

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Renee Simon
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Jean Bixby Smith
Julie Stindt
Mary Sullivan
Betty Sunofsky
Don & Marlene Temple
John & Patricia Walker
Joan Wells
Dorothy Wise
Christina Yanis



LOFTWALK 2012.

Join us for LOFTWALK 2012 at the Galaxy Towers on Saturday, March 31. It is the second year that we're celebrating a Mid-Century building and this year we also honor the Architects, Hugh+Don Gibbs, who are LB Heritage's 2012 Significant Architectural Achievement Award winners. The self-guided tour is from 5–8 pm, with a pre-party from 4–5 pm and a post-party from 7:30–9 pm (see website for info).

Tickets are \$30 (\$25 members, \$15 students). Reservations may be made by going to www.LBHeritage.org to pay by Credit Card or PayPal.

You may also mail a check to LB Heritage, P.O. Box 92521, Long Beach, CA 90809. Tickets will be held at check-in. For questions, call our office at (562) 493-7019. See you on Mar 31st at 2999 East Ocean Blvd!

Go to www.LBHeritage.org for details on sponsors and special discounts available only on the night of LOFTWALK 2012.

Calendar

March 31	Loft Walk
April 23	LBH Executive Committee
April 29	L.A. Heritage Day
May 5	May Day at Bembridge House
May 6	Heard Garden Tour at Bembridge House
May 28	LBH Board
June 3	Great Homes Tour
June 25	LBH Executive Committee
July 15	Great Gatsby Party
July 29	Annual Meeting

Walking tours — March 17, April 21, May 26,
June 16, July 21 at 9:00 a.m.

Long Beach Heritage

Newsletter Editor: Louise Ivers
Layout: John Lionel Pierce
P.O. Box 92521, Long Beach, CA 90809
Telephone: (562) 493-7019
Email: preservation@lbheritage.org
Website: <http://www.lbheritage.org>

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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Address _____

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Make your check payable to:

Long Beach Heritage

P.O. Box 92521
Long Beach, CA 90809

Telephone/Fax (562) 493-7019
Email: preservation@lbheritage.org
Website: lbheritage.org