LONG BEACH HERITAGE

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Historic Southern Pacific Depot Moved

PHOTO BY CHERYL PERRY

The Southern Pacific Depot was successfully relocated to Willow Springs Park on California Avenue between Willow and Spring Streets.

By Cheryl Perry

If you read our Fall 2014 newsletter there was an article about the Southern Pacific Railroad Depot that was going to be saved and moved. Well, we are happy to report that the Depot was successfully relocated to Willow Springs Park, which is on California Avenue between Willow and Spring Streets. This is the second move for the Depot. Originally built at 225 W. Broadway in 1906, it was moved to 1475 San Francisco Avenue in 1936, where it was then used by the City of Long Beach as a chemical laboratory. The striking Mission Revival style architecture of the Depot was probably designed by Southern Pacific employee Daniel Patterson, who was their official architect during the period of construction.

Because it is one of a very select few

(Continued on page 5)

2015 Great Homes of Long Beach Tour

The 2015 "Great Homes of Long Beach" tour will take place on Sunday, June 7, from noon until five p.m. This year's tour will feature homes in Bluff Park, Belmont Heights and other sections of the city. We are targeting six homes, ranging from "bungalow mansions" to Mid-Century Modern masterpieces, which will highlight the unique architectural character found in Long Beach. This year's tour will feature houses that are among the most visually attractive and beautifully restored buildings in the city, so be sure to mark the date on your calendar.

While the tour fulfills the educational objectives of Long Beach Heritage, the proceeds of the event are dedicated to the restoration and support of the historic Bembridge House, a landmark owned by our organization.

This year's tour will feature six homes ranging from "bungalow mansions" to Mid-Century Modern masterpieces and will highlight the unique architectural character found in Long Beach.

Each year Heritage volunteers work for weeks to develop the Great Homes tour. Please know that 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 applicable details. You don't want to miss it!

President's Message

By Cheryl Perry

Listening to the award recipients at the Long Beach Heritage Preservation Awards Benefit last month proudly describe their projects, I was amazed by how often the term "community" was used. These were awards for the preservation of "buildings," yet it was the effect on the community that seemed to resonate for the listeners. It then dawned on me that the primary benefit to any preservation project is the resulting effect it has on the surrounding community. Preservation of buildings is not done in a vacuum and it is not the building itself that matters as much as what its preservation does for those who see it and experience it.

Preservation of just one building can change the feel of an entire block or an entire neighborhood. It can bring a sense of pride to all who pass it, can make one smile at its beauty or bring back fond memories. But more importantly, it can bring people together. The awardees demonstrated this fact in all of their projects. Whether it was getting to know neighbors they had never met before or sharing their gained knowledge with others doing similar projects, it always resulted in its effect on "people". And it is "people" who are the community.

Ruthann Lehrer, the Historic Preservation Officer for the City of Long Beach from 1989–2003, summed it up for me that night in a statement, "Preservation builds Communities." How right she is. As Long Beach Heritage continues to encourage the preservation of buildings, we are effectively encouraging the building of closely knit neighborhood communities, which in turn will make Long Beach an even stronger city overall.

Bembridge House Spring News

By Chris Hogan

Wow!! It was a wildly successful Victorian Christmas Season at the Bembridge House. Throughout December and early January, more than 400 people toured the fabulously decorated rooms and charming grounds — the House's greatest-ever Holiday attendance, in fact. The gardeners brought in over $1000 in donations from all the planters, bird feeders, wreaths, and other "goodies" they had created — another record. Once again, Love in the Mirror (a charity to help the homeless organized by a local grade-school boy) held its annual toy give-away for hundreds of children at the Bembridge Carriage House. This year each child received a book, too. And again, Long Beach Pride purchased Victorian Christmas Tour tickets, distributing them to needy families and individuals. The final event of the Holiday Season, the Volunteer Thank You Party in early January, was highly attended as well. Obviously, it was a busy time for the House!

Thanks to everyone and every group who contributed in one way or another — the many historic neighborhoods, the aforementioned organizations, Project ALOFA, the Long Beach Firehouse Museum and its vintage fire engine, the South Coast Chorale, Santa Claus, and all the other countless volunteers and docents who made 2014's Victorian Christmas the most memorable yet.

Now the Bembridge House is gearing up for springtime. The gardeners have been tirelessly pruning the scores of rose bushes, trimming, mulching, and planting new drought-tolerant seedlings. The gardens should be spectacular by May. The collections specialists are continuing to inventory the House's contents. (After all these years, there's surprisingly still more to do.) Besides the many upcoming scheduled and special tours, the docents are preparing the program for the school groups. Classes of third grade students visit the House every spring to learn about Dorothy Bembridge, her family and her home, and how they all fit together with Long Beach history. The Carriage House Quilters are finishing their current project, a red work quilt. A few select pieces of the House's furnishings have been recovered with vintage fabrics donated by these ladies. In April, the House will host another musical recital, too.

The last part of our 2014 LBNHMA grant — the refurbishing of the downstairs back bathroom with new historically accurate linoleum, incorporating preservation of some of the original flooring in an appropriate design, will be completed by mid-March. Thank you again to the Navy Trust for providing the opportunity to rehabilitate and restore one of the greatest local cultural treasures, the Bembridge House.

"Bungalow Mansions" by Miner Smith

By Steffie Hands

As you have driven or walked through Long Beach, you may have noticed certain bungalows with unique tree trunk features. One that we have all seen is at the corner of Ximeno and Broadway, which used to have a unique fountain as well. This is one of the 23 "bungalow mansions" in the city built by the designer Miner R. Smith.

Miner Robert Smith was born in Ohio in 1877. He learned stonecutting in New Jersey and at age 19, while working for a New York stone company, Miner was charged with turning the giant granite columns used in the construction of a building at Columbia University in New York City. He moved to Los Angeles in 1904, where he founded an art stone business called M.R. Smith Stone and Mantel Co. Miner came to Long Beach during the housing boom as a building contractor in 1919 and remained here until 1926. His "bungalow mansions" had unique characteristics, such as ornamental concrete porches and fireplaces that looked like logs or trees. He also added more built-in cabinetry than was common in the average bungalow, and some of his homes had "plein air" landscape paintings installed on the walls. He moved to East Los Angeles in 1926 and died in San Bernardino County in 1965 at the age of 88.

There was a Miner Smith home that burned down a few years ago, but the fireplace and porch remained. The house was rebuilt to historic specifications and was bought by a young couple. The husband grew up on Mira Mar Avenue, amongst several Miner Smith homes, and he and his wife have a true appreciation of the unique significance of their bungalow.

Smith's descendants have given his original sketchbooks, some photographs and marketing materials to the Historical Society of Long Beach. A couple of Miner Smith bungalows will be on this year's Great Homes Tour.

Miner Smith "bungalow mansions" had unique characteristics, such as ornamental concrete porches (right) and fireplaces that looked like logs or trees (above).

Historic Preservation in the Ninth District

By Louise Ivers

Council Member Rex Richardson has taken an interest in historic preservation in the Ninth District, which he represents. Members of Long Beach Heritage met with him to discuss their concerns about the possible demolition of the Houghton Park Clubhouse at 6301 Myrtle Avenue, designed by George W. Ferris of the City Engineer's office in 1929 and constructed in 1930. Richardson realized that this relatively intact and important example of Spanish Revival architecture is one of the irreplaceable gems of North Long Beach. He agreed that it is worth saving and that it should become a Long Beach landmark.

In addition, Council Member Richardson has located his field office in another North Long Beach historic structure, the original Fire Station Number 12 at 6509 Gundry Avenue. This unique Spanish style building, also completed in 1930, may have been designed by George Ferris as well, because he was the city architect at that time. Long Beach Heritage has presented the paper work to nominate this structure as a city landmark to Development Services.

We applaud Council Member Richardson's efforts at preserving architecturally significant structures in his district and hope that both the Houghton Park Clubhouse and Fire Station Number 12 will soon be restored to their former glory.

The Demise of the State Office Building

By Louise Ivers

The former State Office Building at the northwest corner of Broadway and Cedar Avenue was designed and built between 1979 and 1983 by Kenneth S. Wing and Hugh and Donald Gibbs, noted Long Beach architects. It was constructed in a Late Modern style with huge horizontal wooden beams extending beyond glass walls to provide shade for interior offices. The building had a distinctive profile, a courtyard entrance, and a curved stairway cantilevered from the façade. However, it was vacant for a long time and finally demolished at the end of 2014. The photographs portray the State Office Building in September and December of the past year.

PHOTO BY LOUISE IVERS

PHOTO BY LOUISE IVERS

The State Office Building in September (above) and in December (left) during demolition.

Volunteer Spotlight: Joan Sasaki

By Chris Hogan

Joan Sasaki has been a volunteer tour docent at the Bembridge House for over a year. She is a Seal Beach resident, but lived in Long Beach as a child. She also continues to docent at Rancho Los Cerritos where she has been leading school tours for ten years and has been involved in its living history program for five years. Luckily for all of us, a good friend from her "Mommy & Me" classes at the Rancho recommended that Joan look into being a Bembridge docent.

In her tours at the House, Joan impersonates Dorothy Bembridge. Recently, she has also added Dorothy's mother, Hazel Rankin, to her repertoire. "I get a lot of joy from seeing people smile and getting absorbed by the characters," Joan explains. Joan does much research (and vintage-clothes shopping) to "flesh out" her tour personae to involve the visitors seeing the home.

"I like the story of the fireplace called `the Miracle on 10th Street,'"Joan says. For those of you who don't know, one afternoon Dorothy was having a meeting with the PEO at the House, and as she often did, she lit a fire in the fireplace in the second parlor.Suddenly, a neighbor came running in and shouted, "Your roof is on fire!" When the fire chief arrived, he told Dorothy that she had ten minutes to collect what she wanted and then must evacuate. While her lady friends gathered their things to leave, Dorothy prayed. Within a very short time, the fire chief ran down from the attic and told her that the wind had stopped. The fire had gone out on its own. Joan always enjoys including that story as part of her tours.

The Bembridge House committee is grateful to have Joan as such a hard-working and inspiring docent.

In her tours at the House, Joan impersonates Dorothy Bembridge. Recently, she has also added Dorothy's mother, Hazel Rankin, to her repertoire. Joan does much research (and vintage-clothes shopping) to "flesh out" her tour personae to involve visitors seeing the home.

Southern Pacific Depot Moved (Continued from page 1)

PHOTO BY CHERYL PERRY

The former Southern Pacific Depot (left) makes its way from San Francisco Avenue, along Magnolia Avenue to Ocean Boulevard, over to Atlantic Avenue and up to its new home in Willow Springs Park.

railroad depots remaining anywhere in the United States from the early 1900s, Long Beach Heritage lobbied for the preservation of this rare remaining example of Mission Revival architecture and nominated it as a City of Long Beach Historical Landmark.

Because it was facing certain demolition when the property was sold, Larry Rich and the Office of Sustainability came to the rescue and obtained a grant to enable the Depot to be moved and become a part of the Willow Springs Park project.

Larry Rich and project manager Katie Rispoli of *We Are the Next*, along with other members of their fantastic team, walked alongside it as the Depot made its way from San Francisco Avenue, along Magnolia Avenue to Ocean Boulevard, over to Atlantic Avenue and up to its new home in the park. Many residents came out to witness this historic event as the Depot passed by. Willow Springs Park is in the early stages of development and the Depot will become the Visitors' Center, sited near an underground artesian well site discovered in 1882 that was the original water source for Long Beach and adjacent to where a railroad line once ran. Its location will be next to a new walking trail and on a rise that will provide panoramic views of the City.

Summer Splendor at Santa Anita

By Maureen Poe

In the blink of an eye it will be summer with these cool, cloudy days a faint memory. Settling into the midst of the summer will be the July 25, 2015 concert by the California Philharmonic, Phantom in Paris, celebrated at the historic and lovely outdoor venue, Santa Anita Park. On several Saturdays when the park is not being used as a race track, it is transformed into a gorgeous concert location.

Looking back to last summer's concert which Long Beach Heritage attended, I remember sitting at comfortable tables after being escorted there by youthful attendants and listening to an energetic jazz group with a pre-concert program. Dinner and drinks were served to the crowd in anticipation of the concert to begin. The sun was ducking behind the domed concert area as it melted into a sunset. The San Gabriel Mountains colors changed from warm green to peach, pinks and purples as the sun slid down. Stars burst from the darkening sky, and the concert began under the genius direction of Victor Venor.

This coming July concert will touch our senses with feelings of love, intrigue, and romance. The pieces included in the event will be *Phantom of the Opera*, *Les Miserables*, *La Vie en Rose*, *Gigi*, *A Man and a Woman*, *An American in Paris*, and Franck's *Symphony in D Minor*. As in the past, director Victor Venor will explain each piece and add a bit of humor to provide a personal touch to the music.

Tickets will be available soon for a coach to sweep guests to and from Santa Anita, a delicious dinner and the concert at a reasonable price. You will want to set aside July 25 as the date for another memorable event.

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Membership Report—March 2015

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Recent Preservation Success Stories

The Hot Cha Café at 957 East Fourth Street (left) is still boarded up and surrounded by a protective fence. Mrs. Chapman's Angel Food Donut shop at 5590 East Seventh Street (below) has been replaced by a new Dunkin Donuts restaurant. Mrs. Chapman's iconic giant fiberglass donut was restored and placed above the Dunkin Donuts sign.

by Louise Ivers

Mrs. Chapman's Angel Food Donut shop at 5590 East Seventh Street, built in 1958 and designed by local architect John Duffy, has been replaced by a new Dunkin Donuts restaurant. However, the iconic giant fiberglass donut has been restored and placed atop the sign. It now has chocolate frosting and a liberal amount of sprinkles, attracting passersby again, as it has in years past. Many groups in Long Beach came together to support the restoration of the donut, including Long Beach Heritage and the Fourth Street Business Association.

The Hot Cha Café at 957 East Fourth Street is still boarded up and surrounded by a protective fence, but it has been nominated as one of *Los Angeles Magazine's* "12 Historic Buildings in Los Angeles Under Threat." Hopefully, this publicity will convince the owner to restore the distinctive coffee pot, a Long Beach city landmark, to its original appearance.

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Calendar

LBH Board	March 23
LBH Executive Committee	April 27
LBH Board (date change)	May 18
Great Homes Tour	June 7
LBH Executive Committee	June 22
Loft Walk (Portfolio Tours) Announcement coming	TBD
LBH Annual Meeting	TBA
Santa Anita Concert	July 25

Walking tours

Downtown on the 3rd Saturday at 9 a.m.

East Village on the 2nd Saturday, 10 a.m.

Bembridge Tours — Every Tuesday & the 4th Saturday at 1:30 & 2:30.

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.

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- ❑ Call me with information on how I can participate in LBH as a volunteer
- ❑ Heritage Student/Senior $ 45
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