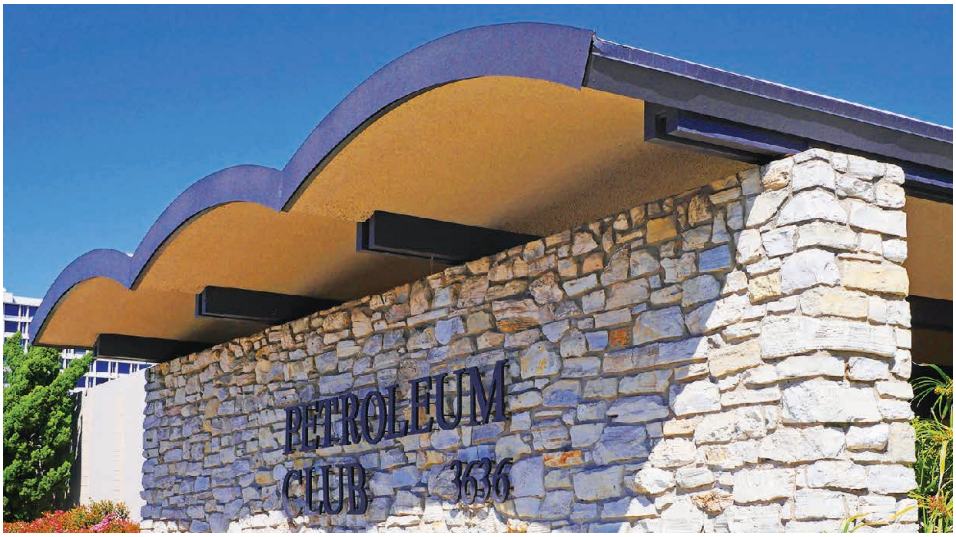
VOLUME 37 | NO. 2 | SPRING 2019

LONG BEACH HERITAGE

UNCERTAIN FUTURE FOR THE LONG BEACH PETROLEUM CLUB

by Louise Ivers



Photos by Louise Ivers. Above: Entrance, Right: Indoor shuffleboard game and signs of companies that were members of the Petroleum Club, Below: Front door handles made from oil drilling bits, More photos on page 3.

Oil has long been an integral part of the Long Beach economy. In 1921 the Shell Company brought in a gusher called "Alamitos Number One" in Signal Hill and soon the area was positively bristling with wooden oil derricks. In 1924 Shell drilled another well on the grounds of the Virginia Country Club and in 1927 more oil was discovered in Alamitos Heights. By 1926 there were 18 refineries in the vicinity of Long Beach and the Richfield Company constructed a large terminal at the port. Extensive drilling began in the harbor in 1936 and still continues today. A consortium of companies using the acronym of THUMS built offshore oil platforms in the ocean in the 1960s and beautified them with sculptures, lights, and fountains. You can still see these brightly lit islands as you drive down Ocean Boulevard at night. Due to all of these petroleum projects, the city coffers received generous oil royalties that funded many worthwhile projects in Long Beach.

Because of all of this drilling and refining activity, many local citizens were involved in various facets of the oil business. In the summer of 1954 Lee Foust and C. L. Fowler came up with the idea of creating the Petroleum Club and made a list of 150 prospective members. A board of directors was appointed and the organization rented a club room at 4635 Atlantic Avenue. The members decided to build the present headquarters at 3636 Linden Avenue and ground was broken on January 1, 1958. The grand opening of the Petroleum Club, designed by local architect J. Richard Shelley (1923-2011), was on May 17th of that year. The new building provided "dining, dancing, and entertainment facilities for 550 people in a theater-type banquet room, a large circular bar adjoining a card room, a private conference room and a women's dining room." (Press-Telegram, September 26, 1957) Bernard Zimmerman of Beverly Hills created a metal sculpture of a gasoline cracking plant, now unfortunately lost, that was placed in the lobby.

The Petroleum Club still retains its original features, such as the rough-cut stone veneer on the façade and in the lobby, barrel vaulted entrance, stained glass windows, and immense round bar. A long mural on canvas designed by Walter A. Miller, which depicts the Signal Hill oil field in 1925, adorns one of the walls in the Grand Ballroom. A large swimming pool is located on the south side of the structure. Membership in the Petroleum Club has greatly declined in recent years and the building has been sold to the Wilkes Group, which may demolish it in the near future. The historic, Mid-Century Modern Long Beach Petroleum Club is one of the most endangered structures in the city.

(cont'd page 3)

PRESERVATION AWARDS HONOR PEOPLE COMMITTED TO LONG BEACH HISTORY AND HISTORIC PLACES

By Sarah Locke

Louise Ivers (center) receiving the Preservationist of the Year award

Thank you to all who attended the 2019 Preservation Awards! It was an incredible night aboard the Queen Mary as we celebrated historic preservation. We presented outstanding examples of Long Beach architecture, but more importantly we recognized the people committed to these places. They put the character of our City at the heart of the work they accomplished. A vibrant future for Long Beach depends on the people who choose to do this work and it was an honor to share their efforts.

Mayor Robert Garcia joined the celebration to congratulate our award winners and express his support of the work we do in the community. He was joined by Councilmembers Suzie Price and Daryl Supernaw, in addition to staff from Long Beach Development Services. The City of Long Beach is our partner in helping us to ensure that our community is aware of the benefits of historic preservation and the incentives available for the revitalization of historic places. Each of the people and projects that were showcased highlight the positive impact of historic preservation.

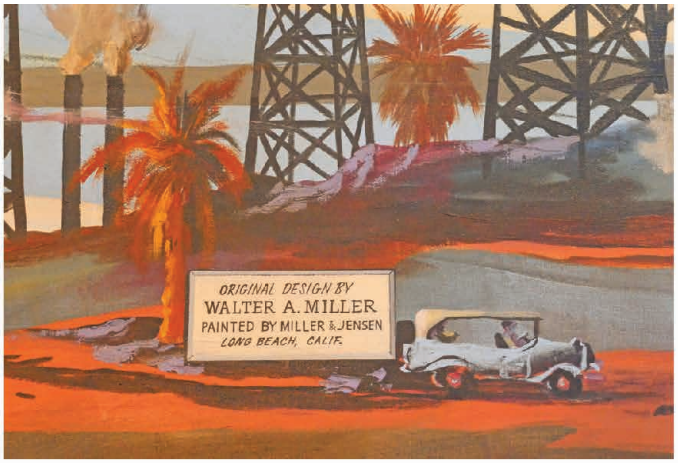
This very special event was made possible through the support of many members, volunteers, and sponsors who made contributions and dedicated their time because they recognize that our City is at its best when we celebrate its history and the character of our older buildings. I especially want to acknowledge the volunteers who created the videos that were part of the awards presentation. Our Awards Jury conducted the interviews and we had a great team of videographers plus one very dedicated editor, Bill Rich, who produced these stories. Visit our website to watch the videos and learn about each award winner's unique story. Our generous sponsors included the Queen Mary, Port of Long Beach, Convention and Visitors Bureau, and Clark Construction.

Nominations will be welcomed again beginning in summer 2019 for next year's Preservation Awards. If you know of a project in progress or a person who deserves to be honored, sign up on our website to receive the latest news and notification that it is time to submit your nomination.

From left to right: Rancho Los Cerritos, Edward Ahdoot of Rockwell Properties with Zoiah Koshki, George's '50s diner George Alvarez receiving his award, and Dominique Hohman

From left to right: Jeff Forney from CVB and Harvey Keller, Greg and Kim Killingsworth, Councilmember Supernaw, Sarah, award winners Melissa & Blake Nicolai, and Oren Tanzer from Summerjax

THE LONG BEACH PETROLEUM CLUB *(CONT'D)*



Photos by Louise Ivers. TOP 2 IMAGES: mural of the Signal Hill oil field in 1925 by Walter Miller in the Grand Ballroom of the Petroleum Club BOTTOM LEFT: Round bar at Petroleum Club. BOTTOM RIGHT: Lobby of the Petroleum Club

NEW GRANT NEIGHBORHOOD HISTORIC DISTRICT

by Louise Ivers

A charming small neighborhood in North Long Beach has become the city's newest Historic District. Only a block long, but packed with pleasant architectural surprises, the 6000 block of Walnut Avenue contains a number of Spanish Revival style homes that are well preserved. These houses have typical details such as terra cotta tile roofs, arched openings, and stucco walls. They were the modest residences of middle class citizens and were mostly constructed in the late 1920s and early 1930s when this type of architecture was popular in Southern California. The Long Beach City Council approved the Grant Historic District on March 5th.

Photos by Louise Ivers. Left is a duplex at 6036-6038 Walnut Avenue. Above shows a house at 6056 Walnut Avenue

ANNUAL GREAT HOMES TOUR FEATURED AS SIGNATURE EVENT FOR ARCHITECTURE WEEK

Photo by Louise Ivers. Twentieth Century House by architect Hugh Davies.

Six residences to be showcased on the June 2nd self-driving tour

TICKETS ON SALE NOW

lbheritage.org

Long Beach Heritage's annual Great Homes tour will include six significant private residences of various periods and architectural styles. For the first time, this year we will partner with Long Beach Home + Living and our Great Homes tour will be the signature event at the kickoff of Architecture Week. Included in the tour are a Miner Smith "Bungalow Mansion" built in 1921 in Belmont Heights, which has many original interior features; the "Twentieth Century House" designed by noted local architect Hugh Davies in 1936, which was the first International Style modern residence built in Long Beach; and a Mid-Century modern home by Cliff May and Chris Choate located in the Lakewood Rancho Estates that has been carefully restored.

Buy your tickets before May 15th to get early bird pricing ($40 members, $45 non-members.) Tickets increase by $5 in each category on May 15th. Visit lbheritage.org to learn more and purchase tickets. See the full lineup of events for Long Beach Architecture Week events at architecture.lbhomeliving.com.

LONG BEACH HOME + LIVING PRESENTS
LONG BEACH ARCHITECTURE WEEK

LONG BEACH ARCHITECTURE WEEK 05-31 through 06-09

Long Beach Architecture Week is a celebration of architecture, preservation, sustainability, and the city's future growth. Participants can expect both experiential events and learning opportunities geared toward architecture and Long Beach enthusiasts. A special issue of LB Home + Living will be dedicated to the event. All proceeds will benefit Long Beach Heritage.

THIS PLACE MATTERS

Many community members have expressed their concern for the future of the Petroleum Club. The Good Spirits Club met for the last time and posed with a This Place Matters banner to show their support for reuse of the building. The Petroleum Club is architecturally significant, but also a cultural icon that has acted as a community gathering place for decades.

PRESERVATION MONTH TO INCLUDE PHOTO CONTEST, JANE'S WALK

by Sarah Locke

Tiny Jane Jacobs, a doll created for the Tiny Activist Project, accompanied a guest to last year's Jane's Walk event in Craftsman Village Historic District.

For more than forty years, the National Trust for Historic Preservation and National Park Service have co-sponsored Preservation Month. Hundreds of organizations and thousands of people across the nation join in a celebration of historic places to highlight communities, promote tourism, and share the benefits of preservation.

Long Beach Heritage invites you to participate in our photo contest during Preservation Month in May 2019. We want to capture our historic districts and landmarks through your lenses. Simply snap a photo and share it with us on social media. Winners of the photo contest will be celebrated at the kick-off party for the first annual Long Beach Architecture Week. Visit our website and social media accounts for more information on how to contribute or just follow along.

Also during Preservation Month, Walk Long Beach will host Jane's Walk events throughout the city. Jane Jacobs was a seminal figure in city planning and a passionate advocate for the necessity of saving older, smaller buildings to ensure a vibrant city for all. Attend a Jane's Walk near you to meet neighbors or venture to a different part of the city to discover something new. The Long Beach Heritage quarterly walking tour of North Pine will be our featured event for Jane's Walk. Tickets are $10 and available at lbheritage.org. Visit walklongbeach.org for a full list of Jane's Walk events throughout the city. The Jane's Walk event will take place on May 4th during the North Pine Avenue Tour.

PRIDE REAL ESTATE PROFESSIONALS ASSOCIATION

By Jacqueline Case

Pride Real Estate Professionals Association (PREPA) held their first educational series event, "The Art of Buying & Selling Real Estate in Historic Districts," at Studio One Eleven on March 19th. Christopher Koontz, Long Beach Planning Bureau Manager, and John Thomas, President of Bluff Heights Neighborhood Association and Historic District, led the program.

Members of Long Beach Heritage and representatives from the historic districts were in attendance to lend their support. Jacqueline Case, the President of PREPA, has been working hard to create more awareness of historic districts and continued education within the real estate industry. Partnering with John Thomas and Sam Dragga, Long Beach Heritage Vice President for Education, PREPA will continue to hold educational classes for the community and will work with Pacific West Association of Realtors (PWR) to implement an ongoing class for realtors.

Overall, the event was a great experience and provided knowledge and support for our historic districts.

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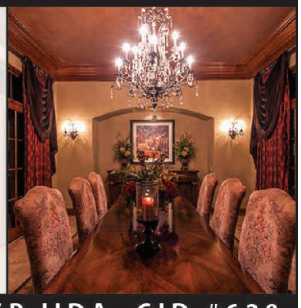

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BEMBRIDGE HOUSE NEWS *By Chris Hogan*

Well, we've had a breather from all the rains these last few months. Despite all the extra work they have caused, we gardeners can't be anything but happy about all the precipitation – the gardens should definitely be in "super-bloom" mode later this Spring!

In the last issue, I mentioned Victorian Christmas at the Bembridge House. Now that it is months past, I can give you an update. The holidays are always our biggest season. First came all the days of decorating in November. Then because of the three big Christmas events, seven more regular tours (including one consisting of a bus load of visitors from Orange County), and at least three special smaller tours, hundreds and hundreds of guests toured the House in December. Some of the visitors who attended took a survey about their experience. Many people were first-time attendees and their responses were overwhelmingly positive about Victorian Christmas in almost all aspects. The gardeners also brought in more than $3,000 in their Garden Boutique. In early January (before all the decorations come down), we also hosted the Volunteer Thank You Party. So this year it literally was a "full house" at the Bembridge homesite for almost eight weeks.

Thank you again to each and every volunteer who worked very hard to make the 2018 Bembridge House Victorian Christmas season so amazing.

It seems earlier than usual, but we have already started doing school tours at the House. The typical third grade classes have visited, enjoying the home and the interactive tours we developed for the outside. But already this year, the House has had a much wider range of students. The American Studies professor of a new CSULB class on the history of Long Beach set up a field trip for his class to the Bembridge House. The university students were extremely interested in all that they saw and learned, and asked very intelligent questions. Their insights were excellent. On the other end of the age spectrum, the House also had its first-ever kindergarten visitors, who were members of five classes from Edison Elementary (the neighborhood school). They walked to the House and enjoyed 45-minute tours which had an emphasis on Dorothy and Neil's own childhood experiences at their home. Talk about full of energy – the kindergartners were nonstop! The children were also positive in their comments ("the best day of my life" from one). The House will continue with school tours throughout the Spring.

By the time you are reading this, the gardeners will have held the second annual Bembridge Gardens Spring Tour and the Hospitality Committee will have hosted its Springtime Tea. Because of all the groups' planning and preparation, I'm sure both events were successful. Don't forget to check the newly updated Long Beach Heritage website at LBheritage.org for Bembridge House happenings.

Photo by Chris Hogan: Bembridge House garden

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CONTRIBUTER
Linda Bagwell
Betty Chaney
Kristi Fischer
Liz Handley
James Hayes & Cathy Ceig
Chris Hogan
Harriett Ibbetson
Louise Ivers & Allen Guerrero
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CALENDAR

May is Preservation Month!
Visit lbhertitage.org for more info.

June 2nd – Great Homes Tour
Tickets on sale April 15th

MAY 31st THROUGH JUNE 9th
Architecture Week

WALKING TOURS
Every 2nd Saturday - East Village
9:30 a.m. @Linden Ave & Ocean Blvd

Every 3rd Saturday - Downtown
9:30 a.m. @205 East 3rd Street

Every 4th Saturday - Willmore City
9:30 a.m. @953 Park Circle

May 4th - North Pine Walking Tour
A featured event for Jane's Walk
9:30 a.m. @345 Pine Avenue

BEMBRIDGE TOURS
Every Tuesday at 1:30 & 2:30 p.m.

Every 4th Saturday at 1:30 & 2:30 p.m.

LONG BEACH HERITAGE

Newsletter Editor: Louise Ivers
Layout: BeachCityDesign.com
P.O. Box 92521, LB, CA 90809
PHONE (562) 493-7019
WEB www.lbheritage.org
EMAIL preservation@lbheritage.org

BECOME A MEMBER!

Long Beach Heritage, a nonprofit organization supported by members and volunteers, is the preeminent resource for advocacy and education about the integral role architectural heritage and historic places have in the city's unique character and its future development. Read about membership levels and benefits at www.lbheritage.org/get-involved/become-a-member.

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❍ Call me with information on how I can volunteer with the Long Beach Heritage

❑ Heritage Student/Senior.....$45
❑ Heritage Friend.....$60
❑ Heritage Household.....$75
❑ Heritage Preservationist.....$100
❑ Heritage Contributor.....$250
❑ Heritage Patron.....$500
❑ Heritage Associate.....$750
❑ Heritage Sustainer.....$1,000
❑ Heritage Benefactor.....$2,000

❍ I'm a new member!

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PO Box 92521
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PHONE (562) 493-7019
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