

Whitley Heights Civic Association



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THE PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Brian Moore

In spite of the current national economic slump and all its attendant gloom, it appears that Whitley Heights and its immediate environs are on the verge of a renaissance in many areas. Our nomination to the National Register of Historic Places has been submitted to Sacramento for its verification process prior to its being forwarded to the Department of the Interior in Washington D.C. There will shortly be a voting process for approval by mail to all homeowners in our proposed Historic District. If the majority assents and Sacramento approves, our designation as the Whitley Heights Historic District could be a certainty by July of this year.

There has been much labor on this lengthy process of documentation. Many full days have been volunteered by members who often have worked late into evening hours to finish the nomination. It is a pleasure to say thank-you to volunteer members Judy deTurenne and Garth Wilson and to Board members Tod Jonson, Jim Mathes, Bob Primes, Jim Gillie and Millie Lord. I personally feel that each one of them is a great blessing to our Hill.

The topic that has been on everyone's mind since serious consideration of it began last summer is closure of our streets.

This is being given top priority now by the Board of Directors who hope to have a closure plan readied by summer. Proposed methods of closure, competitive bids and community ideas are being considered for the establishment of our private neighborhood. We must remember, however, that it can be established only by a majority vote of the Los Angeles City Council.

It is obvious that we need closure of our streets when we consider the crime on our Hill. I regret to say that burglary is not uncommon, prostitutes are still using our streets, night and day, as expedient rendezvous, East LA cruisers on Friday and Saturday nights use our streets as shortcuts from the Freeway to Hollywood Blvd., etc. It is time that our streets become a safe part of our homes once again.

Highland Ave. has taken an unexpected turn for the better with the opening of the Chen-Chen Hotel, the Legion's Theater Center and the new condominiums being constructed. The Chen-Chen is a local find. There is an excellent Chinese restaurant featuring Mandarin style cuisine, a coffee shop open from 8AM until 8 PM with an American menu and also a sushi bar. A liquor license is forthcoming and many Hill residents have already walked down and en-

joyed these restaurants plus the small but elegant lobby. Parking has yet to be perfected, but the owner has informed us that there is to be valet parking to the Methodist Church lot.

The Liberty Theater at Legion Post 43 is a small repertory theater that will feature a new production every two months. There are plans for expansion to a dinner theater. Currently the company plays nights on Thursday, Friday, Saturday and a Sunday matinee.

The new condominiums on Highland as well as those on Grace Ave. will be additions to the new look of our Hill. Certainly there will be more traffic and congestion, but we will be gaining neighbors who will be homeowners and hopefully as interested in our area as we are.

In closing, allow me to address those of you who are reading this who are not members of our Association. The members of the Whitley Heights Civic Association and its Board of Directors comprise and direct a truly unique organization. We are in earnest about bettering our neighborhood, its relations to the Hollywood area and the directions our community will take in the future. We share everything we do with you, the non-member. Our work, our time, our collective and individual thoughts and, yes, this newsletter. We are ready to go to City Hall or to Sacramento to aid you or your neighbor in a community affair. We have members who are lawyers, accountants and politicians. They advise and guide us and will help you too. We have members who are artists, musicians, designers, producers and actors. They share their talents in a neighborly way. Our unique village in this large city wants you to be a real part of our community. Think about it: \$5.00 for the remainder of this year, \$10.00 beginning July 1st. Your dues would be wisely used and appreciated. Checks can be sent or taken to Dick Lewis, our Treasurer, at 6740 Whitley Terrace. Thank you.

GARBAGE CONTAINERS

There are numerous complaints about garbage containers put out too early and left too long or just not taken in at all, particularly on Milner Road. It is an old problem and the same offenders are still guilty of it. There is a city ordinance prohibiting garbage containers on the street other than the day of collection, and there is a fine involved if a citation is made. The ordinance which requires us to keep our garbage containers off the street and covered was made for two reasons. First, garbage cans can become a health problem. They attract flies, rats and other unhealthful scavengers. (How many of you have lost pets to the coyotes?) Rats carry Bubonic Plague, incidents of which have been cited in Los Angeles recently. Secondly, garbage containers are an eye-sore. Most of us who live in Whitley Heights have a pride in our homes and our community. Out of respect for your neighbors, please comply with the ordinance. Garbage containers on the street make it look like we're a trashy neighborhood.

THE HERITAGE CORNER

Brian Moore

The earliest mention that I can find of our area in Bancroft's History of California refers to an "interesting battle and its aftermath".

Early in the year 1772, a band of hostile Indians from the Tehachepi area ambushed and massacred many of Chief Cahuenga's people who lived in the pass that now has the chief's name. When the invaders retired they took with them nearly one-hundred captive women and children, leaving behind twenty-seven of their own warriors who fell captive to Cahuenga, who himself had been seriously wounded in the battle.

The old chief, like his allies and neighboring Chiefs Miguel and Louis, was on friendly terms with the newly arrived missionaries from Mexico. As soon as word reached Father Junipero Serra, who was at Mission San Gabriel, he hurried to the Indian village with a few assistants and soldiers and set up a field hospital to assist the wounded.

After a day or two, Serra saw the Indians set up twenty-seven stout green posts in a semi-circle in front of Cahuenga's tent, and learned that the chief intended to roast the prisoners alive. He could not move from his tent, and so commanded that the roasting take place where he would have a good view of it. It was to begin at sunset of that day.

Father Serra pleaded with the chief for the captives' lives but Cahuenga stubbornly and gleefully insisted that they must burn at the stake. The War Dance was begun and wood gathered and piled around the stakes. There was only Sergeant Arguello and three troopers to oppose hundreds of well armed Indians, so force to save the captives was out of the question.

Father Serra then proposed to Cahuenga the idea of a prisoner exchange. He would go personally to bring back the women and children if the captives were spared. This novel idea appealed to the old chief, but still he was not willing to forego the pleasure of seeing his enemies writhe in the flames.

The good priest then gathered the husbands and fathers of the captives and explained his idea to them. After much grave discussion, a favorable vote was taken to support Father Serra's idea. He sent a message immediately to San Gabriel and in two days a pack train arrived from the mission escorted by seven more troopers.

The next morning, accompanied by Chiefs Miguel and Louis with their followers and the twenty-seven captives, the Father set out to an unknown land of hostiles in a legendary land of lakes. After a journey of eight days, the party arrived at the home of the hostiles who still held their captives. After much negotiation and parleying, the exchange was effected and Father Serra returned to Cahuenga with his company.

The success of Serra's expedition, so novel in its purpose, added greatly to the missionary's prestige among the Indians.

"THE BARN"

Brian Moore

Any of us who have driven north on Vine Street and looked to the left in the parking lot adjacent to the "Hollywood Palace" have seen it. Looking lonely, out of place and neglected, it sits there on blocks and waits for fate to make another move. It is called "The Barn" - and that is just what it was when it sat at the corner of Selma and Vine in 1913, a livery barn for hay and horses until one day, three young men involved in a promising new industry came by and looked at it. They needed a large building (and it was by 1913 standards) in which to film one of the new "movies". They rented it but could only afford it by the week. There, however, they made the first "blockbuster" film ever made in Hollywood, there in that livery barn. It was called "The Squaw Man" and the three young men were Cecil B. DeMille, Jesse Lasky and Samuel Goldwyn.

The Barn was later moved to the Paramount Studio lot and used as a gymnasium for many years. In recent years Paramount considered demolishing it, but asked the Hollywood Chamber of Commerce if they could instead provide a setting and use for it. A member of the Chamber of Commerce, a private businessman, envisioned the Barn as part of an entertainment-cultural complex next to the "Hollywood Palace". The Barn was moved there and put up on blocks to await re-furbishing and a new life.

These are hard economic times. The plans for the entertainment-cultural complex have been scrapped, in favor of a proposed high-rise building and the future of the Barn is once again in question.

In early January of this year, the Hollywood Chamber of Commerce approached the Board of Directors of the Whitley Heights Civic Association about the possibility of moving the Barn to the green picnic-pad adjacent to Milner Road. Supervisor Ed Edelman wanted an agreement between the Chamber group and the W.H.C.A. before approving the plan.

On January 11, six Board members and one member of the Association met with Mr. Mack Foreman, Mr. Bill Welch and other members of the Chamber including Mr. Buddy Ebsen who is honorary chairman of Hollywood Heritage. At this meeting we expressed our unanimous opposition to having any of our green area taken. We also asked for a time and money guarantee for restoration of the Barn and for suitable security. We insisted that, if placed at the Milner site, the Barn should be on the level parking lot adjacent to, but not intruding on the park area.

A meeting was scheduled in Supervisor Edelman's office for January 20th and we asked that we be included in their meeting. In the intervening week, several groups met here on the Hill, including a full Board meeting and an on-the-site meeting on January 17. Residents who lived adjacent to the Milner area or who lived within sight of the proposed area were invited to attend.

From this meeting came the decision from the large majority of those attending that we ask that no green area be taken; that the Barn be placed elsewhere until the permanent site could be prepared; that an alternate site on Fairfield Lot #4 be considered; that plans for landscaping and security be drawn up prior to the move; that no restroom facilities be opened in the park until the Barn opened 'as a museum'; and that Whitley Heights be represented on the governing board of the proposed museum. We also wanted evidence of the financial ability to complete the restoration before moving it to the Hollywood Bowl site.

These points were presented at the Jan. 20th meeting and were discussed by the Hollywood Bowl and Philharmonic representatives who are lessees of the county land. Supervisor Edelman, who was very considerate of the Whitley Heights position, asked that all points be taken under consideration by all parties involved.

The Philharmonic organization seemed willing to trade to the Lot #4 site if they would be allowed to construct a double-deck parking structure in the corner of Fairfield Lot #1. Supervisor Edelman ended the meeting by asking for further parking studies to be made and for some form of financial guarantee from the Chamber.

In the intervening month, a hard decision has not been reached. It is the general understanding, at the time of this writing, that the Barn will be sold to Universal Studios as an attraction on their tour. Hollywood Heritage and other preservationists deeply regret its being taken from Hollywood and being placed as a commercial attraction. Others are relieved that it may once again be spared demolition.

The Barn, one of Hollywood's first and true artifacts, once again waits for tomorrow.

SECURITY

Bob Primes

Just when we might have thought that crime was taking a little nap in our neighborhood, alas and alack, out of the blue the villains strike! A few weeks ago, Vance and Gini Colvig were having a little soiree for some of their more distinguished friends. When one particular coterie of guests emerged from their motorcar at Bon Air and Whitley, they were surrounded by five young darkish ruffians who pointed bananas at them from inside their coat pockets (or were they .357 Magnums?) and in a speech pattern most coarse and unpleasant to the guests' ears, demanded (and got!) their wallets, purses, car and house keys, gifts to the Colvigs, jewelry, etc., etc. They then departed in a large, beige, late model car, perhaps a Cadillac or a Lincoln. Needless to say, the soiree got off to a disastrous start.

The Moral of this story is exceedingly simple.

LET'S PUT UP THOSE GATES!!

Regretfully we acknowledge the deaths of two of our neighbors, Ermalinde Conrad and Walt Davis.

CULTURAL HERITAGE MEETING AND HOLIDAY OPEN HOUSE

Brian Moore

On December 13th, a special General Meeting of the Whitley Heights Civic Association was called by the Cultural Heritage Committee to discuss the issues of being nominated as a Historic District and to ascertain by vote how many homeowners would favor a place in the National Register of Historic Places. This well attended meeting was also a Holiday Open House for members and guests.

The meeting was held from 5-7 PM on Sunday afternoon, preceded by the Open House which began at 3:30. About eighty people were present for the two events which were held at the Las Palmas Recreation Center which was rented for the occasion. The Board provided liquid refreshments including wine, egg-nog (potent and non-potent), soft drinks and coffee. Food was contributed by many members. And what a lovely contribution! There was a large variety of delicious holiday foods including everything from incredible pate, platters of party sandwiches, chips and vegetable dips, special pastries, cheeses, cookies, homemade cakes, just to name a few.

The outpouring of contributions was indicative of the Whitley Heights spirit of neighborliness and proved once again that powerful, communal feeling exists here on our Hill. A great thanks is due to those who contributed food, bartended, hostessed and did general clean-up. Thank you reliables.

At the meeting President Moore explained the process of nomination to the National Register and told of the many avenues of documentation of Whitley Heights history that had been pursued to insure adequate information on 166 homes specifically, and of the areas' development generally.

Vice-President Feingold spoke of tax advantages under the present laws regarding Historic Preservation. He explained the advantages of our Association becoming a non-profit charitable organization that could enjoy healthy tax write-offs for contribution to a Historic District.

Mr. Vance Otis of Vance Otis Realty Co. spoke on the change of property value under a Historic District, and since there is so little precedent in Los Angeles, the conclusion reached was that a National Register designation coupled with our hoped-for future closure would certainly escalate real estate value.

President Moore explained that there are very few restrictions for the homeowner with Federal and State recognition of a Historic District. The exception is demolition of a structure within the District's boundaries. A house must be offered for sale for 180 days within a district before it is demolished. This "demolition delay" is designed to keep a district intact. Had it been in effect in 1978, the sudden demolition of "Topside," Burton Holmes' former estate and one of our most historic homes would not have been possible.

Closure was briefly discussed and it was pointed out that being designated a Historic District would aid considerably in the financing of the system. Also, the threat to Whitley Heights of the proposed Metro subway tunnels under our homes was seen in a more positive light when it was explained that no Federal funds can be used to finance a project that would endanger a historic district without a lengthy and costly Environmental Impact Report.

After a question and answer period between the Cultural Heritage Committee and the membership, the vote was taken by the homeowners present for approval or disapproval. The vote was 67 for approval and 1 for disapproval. Bob Primes and Brian Moore then presented the Whitley Heights Cultural Heritage Slide Show with commentary by President Moore.

Many of our members have expressed the feeling that this was one of our most successful general meetings due to the interest in the topic discussed, but especially because of the sharing in a neighborly way of our special contributions and interest.

STREET CLOSURE

Jim Mathes

Now that the application is in for the designation of Whitley Heights as a National Historic Site, the Board can once again focus its attention on the process of closing our streets to public access.

The decision to apply for the historic site designation first was based on knowing the political realities of pursuing a successful closure. Not only must we meet the challenge of exact locations for all the gates and the best method for financing the entire project, we must also enlist the political support of our Councilwoman Peggy Stevenson and, through her, the rest of the City Council. The ordinance that will be submitted for approval to the full City Council will have to be very carefully written in order to protect our services and our property. While there is some precedent for closing public streets while retaining public services, Whitley Heights still represents a unique situation in its position in the Hollywood Community. The results of closing our streets could, and probably will, have many political overtones throughout Los Angeles.

EDITOR'S NOTES: SERENDIPITY, A STONE'S THROW AWAY

Carol Gilbert

Just wanted to share an unexpectedly magic night with you. I recently walked, yes walked, with some neighbors one Saturday evening to a play and to dinner. Where, you might ask in our neighborhood? Well, we had the pleasure of seeing Brian Moore star in "Sunrise at Campobello" at the Liberty Theater and afterwards went to the Chen Chen. The walk, the play, Brian's performance and the Chen Chen were all delightful.

CONGRATULATIONS

... to the Youseffs on Wedgewood on the birth of their baby.

"CHRISTMAS CAROLING"

Carol Gilbert

How nice it was to reinstate the Whitley Heights Christmas Caroling this year. A group of hearty residents and guests gathered at Tod Jonson's home for rehearsal on Dec. 23. With some refreshments in our stomachs and inspiration in our hearts, the group began its trip around Whitley Heights. Special thanks to Jim Mathes, Melissa Hilton, Fred Burgess and to Jeanne and Charles Manfred for opening their homes so graciously to the carolers and providing such lovely refreshments. Warm times were shared by all.

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