



OUR CORNERSTONE

Volume XVII • Issue 3

Summer 2017

HPHT Archives Update

JJ JACKMAN

A wise and animated genie once noted that “Ten thousand years can give you SUCH a crick in the neck!” HPHT has been in business for 35 years, and while that’s a far cry from 10,000, it’s more than enough time to amass a significant amount of material, the maintenance and organizing of which can induce more than a few headaches.

This is the situation that HPHT found ourselves in recently as we began to make plans to celebrate our “jade” anniversary. In the years since the Trust’s founding, we’ve filled a small storage unit with dozens of boxes and filing cabinets brimming with newspaper and periodical clippings, event brochures, board meeting minutes and organizational paperwork, photos, maps and other documentation. Haphazardly arranged in less-than-ideal storage conditions, the Trust’s board members recognized the importance of cataloging these materials – to make them more accessible, to better narrate our own history, to fortify our institutional memory, and most importantly to celebrate our achievements towards our ongoing goal of preserving LA’s Arroyo Seco communities.

So how do we tackle this?

Enter ISLA, the Institute for the Study of Los Angeles. During the month of July, through the support of

ISLA and Occidental College, HPHT engaged skilled archivist Kim Walters to assess HPHT’s store of materials. Working with intern Katherine Torrey, Walters helped HPHT take the first major step towards organizing the collection, recommending next steps towards its preservation and accessibility for other institutions’

constituents and colleagues interested in the area’s history, as well as the general public. Equally important, this team unearthed several “gems” that HPHT will be displaying as a part of our upcoming 35th anniversary celebration.

HPHT thanks Kim and Katherine and our dear colleagues at Occidental College – Dale Stieber, College Archivist and Special Collections Librarian;

Anne Mar, Assistant College Archivist and Metadata Specialist; Dr. Jeremiah Axelrod and Christian Rodriguez of ISLA – for their invaluable work, oversight and good counsel in helping Highland Park Heritage Trust tackle this vital preservation project. We’re excited in the coming months to be able to share the fruits of this labor with you, our members, and the community as a whole. Look for news and updates on this project in future issues of *Our Cornerstone*, as well as information on our upcoming 35th anniversary celebration, taking place in early November of this year. ★



Katherine Torrey, Kim Walters, Dale Stieber, Christian Rodriguez

President's Message

SUMMER 2017

Happy Summer! The Heritage Trust is in full swing working on archiving and anniversary preparations. 2017 marks the 35th anniversary of our organization and we look forward to inviting you to our anniversary event this November – We will announce a date soon. Please drop us a line if you would like to be involved. Paired with our anniversary is 35 years of archival materials to carefully process. Our archiving committee has been hard at work with the archivists at Occidental College – please read JJ Jackman's article on this important endeavor. We are in a reflective mood as we look forward to the future of Highland Park Heritage Trust while looking back on 35 years of work by so many dedicated members. How has the Historic Preservation movement changed? What are our new challenges? What battles persist? How do we reach new audiences? In this issue we are delighted to have two of our newer members share their experiences in helping to carve a path forward for the Southwest Museum and the lure of the Arroyo Seco. We would like to hear from you too, our valued members new and old. After 35 years, what are your recollections of past preservation activities and actions? General Musings? Aspirations for our community? Please write to us at info@hpht.org, visit us on Facebook, call 323-908-4127 or attend one of our upcoming board meetings at 7 pm on the 2nd Monday of each month at the Highland Park Ebell Club.

Warmly,

LOUISA VAN LEER

CORRECTION: *In the Spring 2017 Cornerstone, Anne Marie Wozniak was noted as being HPHT membership chair for ten years, when, in fact, she has been membership chair for TWENTY YEARS! Thank you Anne Marie!*

Do you have a historic home or preservation story you want to publicize? Please contribute articles, photos and anecdotes to HPHT. Email to info@hpht.org.

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Arroyo Seco Seen from Near and Afar

KEIKO TAKIOTO MILLER

I have heard the name “Arroyo Seco” before. In fact, I have been to one near Taos, New Mexico, just north of Santa Fe, my original retirement destination. The desolate silence of the wind-swept high desert, where once roamed the ancestral Puebloans, called me. They lived with the seasonal temperament of water flow in the Arroyo Seco.

Things change, so did my destination: Los Angeles, California. Urban images of dense and diverse sediment of humanity below a maze of twisted concrete engineering feats conjured up in my head. Outside the window of my home in Erie, Pennsylvania, the evening sun trailed its simmering light onto trembling autumn leaves now wearing a scent of an early snowfall. In haste, I Googled a map of Los Angeles—no place in particular, my autopilot—green. Pausing a moment, I zoomed into one. “The Southwest Museum of the Native American.” In disbelief, I read it again. Something of it reassured me that I would remain in touch with the Southwest. An inquiry letter I wrote to the museum ended up on Carmela Gomes’s lap. She, on my visit to LA that January, offered to meet me, a stranger, with a leap of trust, and gave me a tour of the museum, El Alisal, and La Casa de Adobe. I left the Lummis’s dwelling ground with something enduring within. Our simple meal of porridge at Good Girl Dinette off Fig afterwards sealed our mutual promise to meet again. On the plane back to Pennsylvania I read the book gifted to me—*American Character: The Curious Life of Charles Fletcher Lummis and the Rediscovery*

of the Southwest. I wondered: Could those stones, which Lummis and his Native American workers carried out of the Arroyo Seco to build his house, be the Gabrielinos that have snuck in some of their own wild stories in the wild into those of his Noise-maker guests? My curiosity peaked enough to want to be closer to this Arroyo.

As a newcomer to LA, I began volunteering at the Audubon Center’s native plant restoration nursery right across from the Southwest Museum. Below, the Arroyo Seco, now muffled by the 110, trickled. Tongva-Chumash descendants, local foragers, historians, scientists, artists, docents, and community folks I’ve met at the teacher’s workshop led by Carmela, “The River that Runs through It: A Sense of Place,” at monthly Highland Park Heritage Trust community meetings, and on hiking trails in the San Gabriel Mountains, have helped me see the Arroyo as their life artery. At the 2017 Earth Day cleanup of the LA River-Arroyo confluence, a visceral pang urged me to do more to help bring the displaced Gabrielinos back to health.

During my first Lummis Day, I returned to the museum. Caught in between the symbolic designs on ancestral potteries of the Southwest and recent paintings in the show *For Love of the Arroyo*, I was overcome with a sense of disease, as if this “love” were a veil of denial, as one worn by Native Americans under the Spanish influence. Shouldn’t we let the Arroyo Seco live up to its essence again—to be wet and dry according to its own natural seasonal rhythm? ★



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Dispatch from Gideon Kracov

member of the Southwest Museum Site Steering Committee

The Southwest Museum was opened in Mount Washington in 1914 by Charles Lummis, a visionary journalist, multiculturalist and historian. In 1932, the Southwest Museum began to focus primarily on Native American culture. The Museum's collection of Native American art and artifacts is considered one of the most important and comprehensive of its kind.

In 2003, the Southwest Museum merged with the Autry Museum of the American West. At that time, the Autry assumed responsibility for the site's historic buildings (which include the museum and the 1917 Casa de Adobe, a large, hand-built adobe structure that was intended to be a replica of a historic early California rancho); its approximately 12-acre campus; its archive including an extensive library and photographic collection; and over 250,000 ethnographic and archaeological artifacts. While the Autry has undertaken the careful documentation, conservation, and preservation of the museum's vast collection of art and artifacts in its new Resources Center, and stabilization of the historic museum building to correct earthquake damage, the Autry and the community have not yet been able to establish a path forward on the most viable, appropriate, and sustainable use for the site, which remains significantly underutilized.

The Southwest Museum site was declared a "National Treasure" on January 22, 2015, by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. With this designation, the National Trust kicked off a complex, multi-phased planning process that included intensive stakeholder interviews; an online survey; a year-long event series to draw new audiences and communities to experience the site in new ways; and the formation of a Southwest Museum Site Steering Committee to work with all stakeholders to explore the future of the site.

Since December of 2015, I have had the privilege of serving on the steering committee (<https://savingplaces.org/swm-steering-committee>) along with a group of 15 volunteers from across Los Angeles representing education, politics, preservation, philanthropy, government, museums, Native American and tribal issues, and the North East Los Angeles community. I am an environmental and land use lawyer, and have lived in Mount Washington since 2006. I joined the Highland

Park Heritage Trust as a member earlier this year and have been very impressed with its passion and professionalism.

There are two official community representatives on the steering committee—Frank Parrello (a founding member of the Highland Park Heritage Trust) and Carol Teutsch, an ongoing member of the Highland Park Heritage Trust. They have been doing an amazing job as liaisons to local residents and neighborhood groups. Frank, Carol, and the whole steering committee take very seriously our charge of working together with the National Trust, the Autry Museum, Council District 1, and the community to find the best outcome for the Southwest Museum and the Casa de Adobe, because these places are such an important part of our neighborhood and greater Los Angeles. The steering committee has been reaching out to stakeholders like the Highland Park Heritage Trust, considering community priorities and needs, analyzing with expert consultants the demographics and market potential for the site, researching operating models and budgets of comparable historic sites and museums across Los Angeles County, understanding local educational needs, grappling with the considerable financial costs of restoring and operating the museum site and the Casa, and exploring a range of potential partnerships. We want to be solution-oriented and constructive.

These efforts are starting to pay off. Some exciting potential partnerships have emerged with longstanding, reputable Los Angeles institutions and groups that meet the steering committee's stringent requirements:

- A deep commitment to rehabilitating the historic buildings;
- An organizational mission to work with the local and Los Angeles community, and to use the museum site and the Casa in ways that enhance their history and legacy, and support the community's needs;
- The financial and organizational capacity to successfully tackle the large rehabilitation and operating costs in a way that will be financially sustainable over the long run; and
- A willingness to make the historic museum collection a significant component of the site's future use.

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The potential partners are in the process of conducting due diligence to determine if their organizations can make the needed investment in the preservation and operation of the museum and Casa buildings and grounds. Given the capital improvement requirements, it is not a decision that they take lightly. The steering committee is giving them ample time to do the necessary research and financial analysis. They understand that engagement

with the community and all stakeholders will be key to a successful future.

The latest update is that the potential partners are making progress and, if all goes well, we look forward to having them introduce themselves and share their ideas with the Highland Park Heritage Trust board and members, and many other community leaders and groups later this summer. All our fingers are crossed that there may be a good fit! Stay tuned! ★

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EVENTS & MEETINGS

Monthly HPHT Board and Program Meetings • 2nd Mondays: August 14, September 11, October 9 • 7 to 8:30 pm • Ebell Club, 131 S. Avenue 57, Highland Park • www.hpht.org or (323) 908-4127,

Bi-monthly Walking Tour • Saturdays: August 26, October 28, December 21 • 10 am to 12:30 pm • Sycamore Grove Highland Park area • register at <http://hpht.org/walking-tour.php> for 2017 tour dates or (323) 908-4127 • \$5 HPHT members, \$10 non-members

Highland Park/Garvanza HPOZ • 2nd & 4th Tuesdays of the month • 6 pm • Arroyo Seco Library Community Room, 6145 N. Figueroa St., Highland Park

The Sicilian Cart (exhibit) • June 30, 2017 -January 7, 2018, Italian American Museum of Los Angeles, 125 Paseo de la Plaza, Suite 406, Los Angeles, CA 90012 • (213) 485-8432 • info@italianhall.org

Alicia in Arroyoland (performances) • Saturdays & Sundays: August 12, 13, 19 & 20 • shows at 3:30 pm & 5:30 pm • Audubon Center at Debs Park, 4700 North Griffin Avenue, LA 90031 • Ticket information: www.brownpapertickets.com

CM Cedillo's Latin Jazz & Music Festival • September 23 (2 to 9 pm) & 24 (2 to 7 pm) • Sycamore Grove Park, 4702 N. Figueroa Street, LA 90065



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Address Correction Requested

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