A Brief History of Culver City’s Major Houses of Worship
By Ryan Vincent

Culver City’s first house of worship, St. Augustine Church began when the Figueroa family donated land in 1883 in what was to become Culver City, when Washington Blvd. was just a dirt road. In 1887 a modest wood framed church that sat 200 was built, and in 1922 it was expanded to seat 500. On Christmas Morning 1957 the current church opened, which seats 1,070.

Before Temple Akiba was built, Culver City’s Jewish congregants held high holy days in Veterans Memorial Auditorium. The initial sanctuary on Sepulveda Blvd. was dedicated in 1955, and its latest renovation, with a new entryway courtyard and a sanctuary including windows for the first time, was completed in 2015.

Culver-Palms United Methodist Church has enjoyed a prominent place on Sepulveda Blvd. next to the YMCA, First Southern Baptist Church is located in Culver City’s earliest neighborhood (just a couple of blocks from City Hall) and Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church on Overland is just a few blocks from Culver City High School. Early Grace Evangelical congregants met at the Scout Hut on Culver Blvd. before its members built the original church (now the Fireside Room) by hand, including pews and pulpit, in 1948. The main church, also built by church members including the wrought-iron, was dedicated in 1952 and seats 220.

Recent history has not been kind to Culver City Seventh-day Adventist Church on Washington, which has been hit by cars four times, and Culver Community Church on Washington and Sawtelle has also had to deal with vehicle damage. Culver City Presbyterian Church, built circa 1950 and able to accommodate 224 with another 50 in the loft, has thrived despite the 405 Freeway having been built just a block away.

Culver City’s King Fahad Mosque, with its 2,000 worshipper capacity, marble façade, Turkish hand-made tiles, and 72-foot-high minaret, opened in July 1998. The mosque demonstrates Culver City’s diversity, both in terms of demographics and religious tolerance. When a group gathered in 2006 to protest at the mosque over unfounded connections to the 9/11 attacks, clergy from other faiths stood arm-in-arm to protect the King Fahad.

“Now that’s what I call people of the faith,” Usman Madha, Director of Administration and Public Relations, told Annenberg Digital News in 2011. “When you believe in God, you have mercy and love. It doesn’t matter if you’re Catholic, Christian, Jewish, or Muslim.”

UPCOMING EVENTS

January 17, 2018 General Meeting and Program – Installation of Officers
NOTE SPECIAL LOCATION! The Crystal Dining Room at The Culver Hotel, 7PM

Please join us for the Installation of Officers for the 2018-2020 term, including former Vice President of Programs Hope M. Parrish, who will be taking the helm of the Culver City Historical Society as our next president.

We look forward to officially recognizing this new group of board members:

- President – Hope Parrish
- Vice-President, Development – Laura Stuart
- Vice-Presidents, ARC/Museum – Ellen and Art Litman
- Vice-President, General Programs – Ryan Vincent
- Treasurer – Carolyn Wispe Burns
- Secretary – Fred Alexander
- Immediate Past President – Michelle Bernardin

The Installation of Officers will be held during an hors d’oeuvres reception at The Crystal Dining Room at The Culver Hotel on Wednesday, January 17, 2018, 7 p.m. The Crystal Dining Room entrance is next to the hotel’s outdoor patio, across from ArcLight Culver City movie theater. Limited seating. Please use the enclosed RSVP form to reserve your tickets in advance.
Dear Members and Friends,

Happy Holidays!

It gives me such pleasure to use this space to introduce you to the Historical Society’s new president, Hope Parrish. After working with her as Vice-President of Programs and getting to know her as a friend for the last four years, I have come to know her great love for Culver City and its people. It’s infectious! She has taken the programs of our General Meetings to new heights, exploring interesting and popular subjects of our city’s history – down to its pastrami sandwiches!

I am happy to give her this opportunity to reach out to you in advance of her installation as president, because the next newsletter does not come out until Spring! I hope you will lift her up as you did me, and continue your essential support of the Historical Society.

We cannot do this without you.

– Michelle

It has been such a privilege to be Vice-President of Programs for the past four years. It was a wonderful experience for my father, Dennis, and me to bring you programs of our wonderful local history of the studios, businesses, and community.

When I received the call from nominating chair Steve Rose asking if I would accept this position as president, it was without hesitation that I said YES. I hope that I can continue the work that Michelle Bernardin, past presidents, and board members have set in place. I thank the board members in advance who will be staying on, and I welcome our soon-to-be new board members for taking on their tasks.

It is such an honor and a privilege to pick up the mantle. I look forward to seeing everyone at our installation and throughout this coming year as we continue the good work from our Culver City Centennial celebration by sharing passion for our city’s history with our community.

– Hope

In Memoriam

George Zermeno, husband of our founding president, passed away in November. He is survived by his wife, Catherine “Cathy” Zermeno, their daughter, Melissa, and her family. George worked in the movie industry and helped add to the Historical Society collection with photos like a behind the scenes look at It’s a Wonderful Life, filmed at what today is known as The Culver Studios.

Welcome Our New Members

Carmen and Fred Alexander
Pamela Helvey & Lillian Caldwell
Eric Kalmus
Heather Coombs Perez
Anthony Spano
Laura Stuart
Robin VanZak
Glee Willis
Culver City’s rich history encouraged and supported many activities in celebration of our first hundred years. Locals, under the umbrella of the Centennial Committee, planned a broad scope of events from the beginning of the year-long commemoration to the end: the kickoff at Sony Pictures; an old-fashioned community parade; a 5K Run through downtown, including both of our historic studio lots – Sony Pictures Studios and The Culver Studios; our Historic Bus Tours; and much more. There were many opportunities for residents to enjoy what I often call “painless education” – sweet bites of our amazing history!

One of the highlights was the involvement of Culver family descendants. Pat Culver Battle, Harry Culver’s only child, was always a supportive presence in Culver City. Chris Wilde, her younger son who lived in Southern California for some time, gave us a helping hand by supporting the Society, and he served on the Centennial Committee as an advisor. Pat’s elder son, Dr. John Battle, and his family graciously planned their vacations to coincide with our closing ceremonies and presented the Society with a plaque. Meeting the newest member of the family, three-year-old Culver, and his older sister, Addison, resulted in many smiles.

Our schools participated on many levels, and streetlight banners showed off many students’ Centennial artwork. At the closing ceremony, representatives from our newest sister city, Capo de Oro, in Sicily, Italy, were in attendance to officially celebrate our relationship.

Recently, the City Hall courtyard was renamed for the remarkable H. Dale Jones, who retired from his city service as Chief Administrative Officer. The courtyard will have a new Centennial garden with restored public artwork. Restoration so far has included the Society’s first marker, seen below.

Our Centennial: A Recap

The Society’s first marker, presented in 1981 to commemorate the 1928 City Hall, was amongst the restored bronze plaques. (Julie Lugo Cerra)

The Culver City Julian Dixon Library is exhibiting hand-made quilts that show off a plethora of our historic sites! Stop by the library to see them on display. And don’t forget to note the beautiful Japanese Meditation Garden in front, a gift from our second sister city, Kaizuka, Japan.

“Yarnscape” quilt project is on view at the Culver City Julian Dixon Library. (Nancy Kuechle)

Please visit your Historical Society Archives to see our latest exhibit and to support the new board, headed by President Hope Parrish. Many good wishes for a productive term, with thanks to Michelle Bernardin and cabinet who have worked so hard!

Yours in history,
Julie
MARK YOUR CALENDAR

January 17
General Meeting and Installation of Officers
Crystal Dining Room, The Culver Hotel, 7PM

April 18
General Meeting and Program
Multi-Purpose Room, VMB, 7PM

ARC OPEN DATES
1st and 3rd Sundays, 1-3PM
Jan. 7, Jan. 21, Feb. 4, Feb. 18,
Mar. 4, Mar. 18, Apr. 1 (Closed for Easter)

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Business Member Roster
These fine Culver City area businesses support our work to preserve Culver City history for future generations. Please show your support by your patronage of their services and products.

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Please Renew or Become a Member of the Culver City Historical Society Today!
Join others in preserving the history of the “Heart of Screenland” and support the Culver City Historical Society Archives and Resource Center (ARC). We can’t preserve local history without you!

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- Individual Member ($20)
- Non Profit Organization ($15)
- New Member
- Renewal

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