



Culver City Historical Society Newsletter



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Winter 2023

HISTORIC SITE MARKING #13: THE VETERANS MEMORIAL BUILDING

By Hope M. Parrish

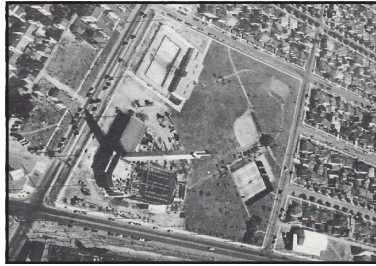
Culver City residents had a recent opportunity to participate in a local study regarding the Veterans Memorial complex (VMC) and park space. Here is some information about the site that you may enjoy.

In 1938 Culver City's city council approved plans to purchase 20 acres at Culver and Overland Boulevards from the Security First National Bank, with the plan to name the site Exposition Park.

The Project was developed by the Culver City Chamber of Commerce and The Exposition and Museum Corporation (a non-profit with Culver City notables on its board of directors: President Eugene Donovan (Citizen newspaper), Mayor Arthur Segrell, and Chamber President Blaine Walker, among others.

The original proposed design had a

180 ft. illuminated tower, a main building to contain costumes of famous motion picture stars, a broadcasting and television studio, a building to house motion picture equipment, a sound stage, an auditorium as well as a theater, café, and store building, along with elaborate landscaping.



With the advent of World War II, the project was put on hold.

Post war, on October 5, 1948, a special municipal election was held, endorsed by local service organizations, religious, labor, veteran organizations, the Culver City Chamber of Commerce, and the City Council. Culver City residents overwhelmingly passed the Recreation Bond for our new War Memorial and Recreation facility.

The new plan developed 10.95

acres of the park which included a standard Olympic-size pool (The Plunge) with graduated depth for both children and adults. The recreation building was to be dedicated as the Veterans Memorial Building and included a restaurant (Marion's Tower Restaurant), gymnasium for basketball (seating 1,500) and convertible for auditorium purposes (seating 2,100), stage, dressing rooms, club rooms, playrooms for children, and social rooms for adults, allowing for recreational activities for all ages. Aerial view pictured.

Culver City was the motion picture-producing center of the world, and no opportunity should be lost to capitalize on this most important element in the community. With the cooperation of the studios, the lobby might be arranged as a motion picture museum that could have tremendous appeal to tourists, bringing favorable national publicity to our city.

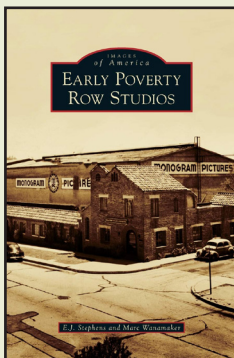
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Upcoming Program

General Membership Meeting and Program:

Hollywood Historian Marc Wanamaker Presents: Early Poverty Row Studios

Multipurpose Room, Veterans Memorial Building, Tuesday, January 23RD at 7PM



In the early 1900's filmmakers began showing up on the west coast of California to make their Two Reelers and Short Movie Comedies for the growing number of Nickelodeons. Full of ambition and short on cash, these film pioneers would find a barn, a warehouse, or even an empty field to quickly make their product and get it into theaters. One of the first was, Selig Polyscope Film Company, located in the Echo Park area behind the Chinese Laundry on Alessandro St. In no time, a variety of a small film companies (fly-by-nights) would end up near Sunset & Gower. Some would fold and some became the Greats of the Screen we know today, Paramount, MGM, Warner Brothers, Universal, Columbia and 20th Century Fox.

Happy 100th Birthday Columbia Pictures!!

Join us for an evening with our longtime friend and Hollywood Historian, Marc Wanamaker as he shares the fascinating history of the dawn of film in Los Angeles.

President's Message



Warm Seasons Greetings and Happy New Year! I hope that each of you had a safe and happy holiday season.

During 2023, the Society provided wonderful programs, lectures, walking tours, events, and museum exhibits! Our Open Sundays have been busy, and our programs have had full audiences. Speaking of programs, we are thrilled that our first program of the new year will be Marc Wanamaker presenting the early history of Hollywood "Poverty Row". It is a must see for all motion picture enthusiasts!

2024 is a special year in Culver City's rich history. 100 years ago, Marcus Loew purchased Metro Pictures and Goldwyn Pictures, both on the brink of bankruptcy. He knew that to succeed he needed a special man - Louis B. Mayer, to be studio head. It was the birth of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, creating one of the biggest studios in Hollywood history, both in film production and studio facility space. We are so happy that MGM is back in Culver City, and now under the ownership of Amazon Studios. Welcome back home MGM and Happy Birthday!

On September 4th, 1924, Harry Culver completed construction of the Hunt Hotel, the local skyscraper of the era! Happy 100th Birthday to our beloved Culver Hotel! This beautiful structure was almost set for demolition-- can you imagine?

Keep an eye out for our upcoming programs and events celebrating both these beacons of Culver City history. We will continue our Sunday lecture series this year, as well as outreach and visibility in our community. If you are looking for something to get involved with locally, become a volunteer. We need docents for walking tours, committee volunteers and residents, past and present to share their living histories.

We could not be where we are today without our volunteers, member support, gifted donations, and this community.

Thank you,

Hope M. Parrish



Pictured: Jack Bommarito, Dennis J. Parrish, Hope M. Parrish

Thank you to our VP of Programs, Dennis J. Parrish for presenting a wonderful history of Frank Sebastian's life and his many establishments including our local Cotton Club.

If you missed it, you can view on our YouTube channel.

OUR MISSION

The Culver City Historical Society was created for the purpose of collecting, preserving, and exhibiting the history, cultural, and civic accomplishments of Culver City and its environs.

OFFICERS & COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Hope M. Parrish	President
Michelle Bernardin	Immediate Past President
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Jack Bommarito	Co-VP Development
Mara Bommarito	Secretary
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Sofia Stark

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Maren Brown, Eve Mott, Sophia Vegas

WELCOME OUR NEW MEMBERS

Ryan Castinado
Sally Davies
Danny Kessler
Henry Ramos
JoAnn Turner
Jeffrey Samuels

IN MEMORIAM

Donald "Sonny" Clapp
Jean Barker

OTHER WAYS TO DONATE



Elizabeth and David Voncannon donated a years worth of stamps to mail out the newsletter. Thank you!

If you are a Ralphs shopper and have an online account you can designate the Culver City Historical Society as your "Community Contribution." Every dollar counts! This is a great way to help your Society without any extra cost to you.

www.ralphs.com/i/community/community-contribution-program

Spotlight



Early photos of the Culver City Postal Workers



Featured: George Marsh, Culver High Grad '75

Donated by Oscar Reynoso



OUR UNSUNG HEROES!

Many of you may know that all but two of the bronze plaques at the entrance of the Veterans Memorial Building were stolen this past October. With the "Tribute to Heroes" – Exchange Club event only a few weeks away our Culver High School Interns, who volunteer at the Society, got busy and recreated the plaques that once hung proudly on the wall. Thank you to Eve, Maren and Sophia for their thoughtful idea of recreating the missing plaques in remembrance of the many Culver City Veterans who fought for our freedoms. Job well done!! And thank you to our former mayor, Albert Vera for taking the time to show such appreciation to our volunteers.

Volunteering Activities: If you find yourself with time on your hands and would like to become part of the Society, we have opportunities for you! Become a Newsletter Contributor, docent with us on our historic downtown tours or even by sharing your photos with our members. Please contact hope@culvercityhistoricalsociety.org for more information.

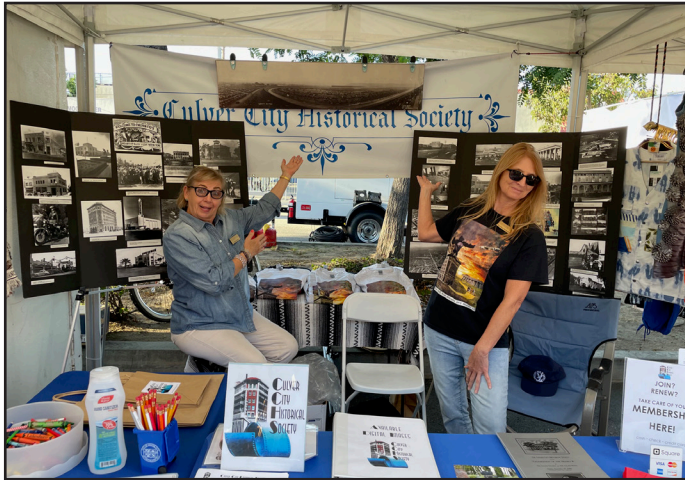


After nearly 23 years with the City, Christine Byers is retiring and will be taking a much needed break from working to focus on her family. She has been with Cultural Affairs since the division was established in 2001 and worked with both Julie Lugo Cerra and Michelle Bernardin who both served as Commissioners.

Historical Highlight



The Culver City Historical Society welcomes Yasmine-Imani McMorris, our sixth female mayor and first female mayor of color.

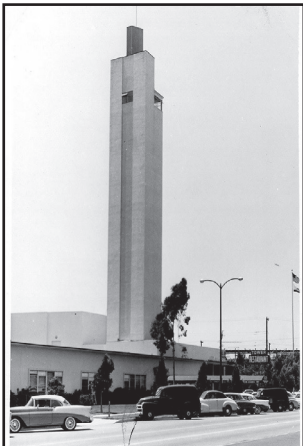


Shout-out to all our wonderful Culver City Arts Walk and Roll volunteers! Pictured: Valerie Meyer and Maureen Fleming.



We had a successful Sunday Series — *Citizen Kane* author Harlan Lebo. Pictured: VP Denise Renteria and Hope M. Parrish

HISTORIC SITE MARKING #13: THE VETERANS MEMORIAL BUILDING CONT.



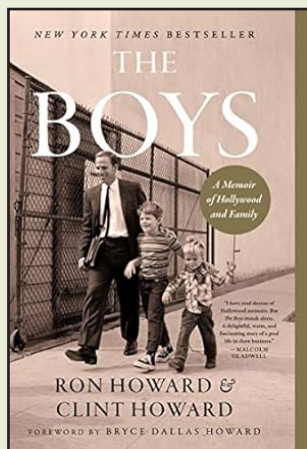
“This building is dedicated by a grateful people as a living memorial to those who, through unselfish service in time of war struggled to secure for all humanity the blessing of freedom and a world at peace.”

This plan now called for a 122 ft. tower, providing an exceptional view of Santa Monica Bay to Downtown LA. The tower could bring in revenue since it overlooked Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer's Main Lot and Lot 2 across the street and had potential to attract thousands of tourists.

Exposition Park was officially designated as Veterans Memorial Park on August 8, 1949. The Veterans Memorial Building cornerstone was laid on April 15, 1950 and behind it lays a time capsule that includes historical documents. The names of the local veterans who defended our Country during the Spanish/ American War, WW1 and WW2 were inscribed on bronze plaques installed at the entrance to the building, which was officially dedicated on March 9, 1951.

Community Conversation about Veterans Park. Have your voices heard! February 8, 6PM - 8PM at the VMC.

Culver's Corner



Happy Days, The Andy Griffith Show, Gentle Ben—these shows captivated millions of TV viewers in the '60s and '70s. Join award-winning filmmaker Ron Howard and audience-favorite actor Clint Howard as they frankly and fondly share their unusual family story of navigating and surviving life as sibling child actors.

"I have read dozens of Hollywood memoirs. But The Boys stands alone. A delightful, warm and fascinating story of a good life in show business."
— Malcolm Gladwell



DO YOU REMEMBER?

Answer bottom of page.



IN MEMORIAM

Ellen Litman
May 21, 1943 - Nov 2, 2023

HISTORIC FILM ARCHIVE ACQUIRED

By Mark Morris

A video collection consisting of 100 hours of interviews with movie pioneers, celebrities and early residents of Culver City has been donated to the Historical Society.

The Ross Hawkins Archive consists of oral history interviews first conducted by the former Society film producer as early as 1993 and continued until 2006. The collection includes names such as Douglas Fairbanks Jr., Cliff Robertson, Leslie Caron, Red Skelton, Daniel Selznick, Robert Mitchum and others.



The archive was curated, restored and additional interviews added in recent years by filmmakers Andre Champagne and Mark Morris. Names in the collection that are familiar to many Society members and residents offer insights into our collective history with colorful and engaging recollections –

names like Julie Lugo Cerra, Mayor Dan Patachia, June Caldwell, Steve Newton, the Pitti family.

This historic archive is unlike any other. Its unique blend of famous and not-so-famous pioneers of Culver City offering first person accounts of their history can be found nowhere else.

Our new archive proudly offers a new and untapped resource to researchers, authors and historians, and a licensing opportunity for documentary filmmakers.



Use the QR code for more information about the Screenland 5K.

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The Original Surprise Store
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It's that time of the year again! You can pay your 2024 dues online, donate and shop in our store, including buying a membership for a friend!

<https://www.culvercityhistoricalsociety.org/shop/>





P.O. Box 1356 Culver City, CA 90232 • info@CulverCityHistoricalSociety.org • (310) 253-6941

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

ARC OPEN DATES: 1st and 3rd Sundays, 1–3PM

Jan. 7 and 21, Feb. 4 and 18, Mar. 3 and 17

January 23rd: Program — Poverty Row

Multipurpose Room, VMC, 7PM - 9PM

February 8th: Veterans Park Community Meeting #3

Auditorium, VMC, 6PM - 8PM

March 7th - 10th: AVPA Spring Musical, *Mamma Mia!*

Robert Frost Auditorium

January 20th: AVPA Jazz Festival

Robert Frost Auditorium, 7PM

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

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The Wende Museum Justin Jampol (310) 216-1600

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!

☐ New Member ☐ Renewal

☐ Benefactor (\$1,000 +)

☐ Corporate Sponsor (\$500)

☐ Family Lifetime Member (\$500)

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☐ Business Member (\$50)

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☐ Youth Member (\$10)

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Mailing Address _____

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Voluntary Contribution to Museum Fund \$ _____

Voluntary Contribution to Julie Lugo Cerra Scholarship Fund \$ _____

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The Culver City Historical Society, P.O. Box 1356, Culver City, CA 90232

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