



# Historical Highlights

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Fall 2013

## HARRY CULVER'S 1913 "DREAM SPEECH" REENACTMENT AT THE CALIFORNIA CLUB

### COLUMN ONE

#### CCHS GIFT SHOP REDO AND NEW HISTORIC MUG

The Historical Society has renovated our Gift Shop and added new items just in time for the holidays.



A new Society mug has been designed with our logo along with six images of Culver City (cont'd. pg. 5)

### CC COUNCILMAN JIM CLARKE ANIMATES AUDIENCE WITH CITY PLANS



On Saturday morning, July 20, 2013, over fifty Society members and friends gathered at the California Club in downtown Los Angeles to celebrate and, in many ways, revisit a seminal moment in our city's history.

One hundred years ago, on July 22, 1913, Harry H. Culver, then a young real estate developer, made an important announcement at an earlier site of the California Club. He presented his vision for a new city before directors, stockholders and friends of the newly-formed Culver Investment Company with such enthusiasm that the enthralled group named it "Culver City" by acclamation. (cont'd. pg. 4)

## OCTOBER 16 GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING: ELECTIONS

### *Special Program: "The Kirk Douglas Theatre"*

The Culver City Historical Society's Fall General Membership Meeting will be held on Wednesday, October 16 at 7:00 pm in the Multi-Purpose Room at the Veterans Memorial Building, 4117 Overland Avenue, at the corner of Overland Ave. and Culver Blvd. Please park and enter from the rear of the building.

This is "Election Night" to choose the Society's next slate of officers and we ask the entire membership to come out to support and vote for the next Board which will take the reins for the 2014-2016 term.

The program, "The Kirk Douglas Theatre and Its Metamorphosis," will be presented by Eric Sims, Operations Manager of the Kirk Douglas Theatre. Sims will tell of the history of the theatre and discuss its transformation from its origin as a motion picture theater thru its current theatrical productions for the Center Theatre Group. (see pg. 5 for more information)

The public is invited to enjoy the free program and students are encouraged to attend. The CCHS Archives & Resource Center (ARC) will be briefly opened following the meeting. For more information, please call the Society at (310) 253-6941 or email us at [info@CulverCityHistoricalSociety.org](mailto:info@CulverCityHistoricalSociety.org). Also, visit our website: [www.CulverCityHistoricalSociety.org](http://www.CulverCityHistoricalSociety.org) for updates.

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Michelle Bernardin



Dear Members,

I hope this note finds you having had a wonderful summer, and getting excited for cool days, autumn leaves, and warm sweaters.

Your Historical Society has had a busy summer, and in these pages, you will find the evidence of just that! Our annual picnic, the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Harry Culver's speech at the California Club announcing his dream of a city between downtown Los Angeles and Venice, and the fun we had during the Fiesta!

Starting September 1, we are experimenting with a change to our public open hours, in the hopes of accommodating more of our members and the public, and not competing with the bevy of events that create some parking congestion at the Veterans Memorial Building on Saturdays. Through the end of 2013, come visit us on the first and third Sundays from 1:00-3:00 pm.

If you didn't stop by the ARC during the Fiesta, I encourage you to come by and see our redone gift shop corner, as well as new signage, new display pieces, and a few new pieces of merchandise!

And speaking of shopping, because the holidays are almost upon us, I wanted to highlight a few websites to make your shopping much easier — while supporting the Historical Society at the same time!

Most of the items that are sold at the ARC are also available on the web. Go to CCHSstore.com for all things Historical Society.

Also, Amazon has become synonymous with shopping from the comfort of your couch. The Historical Society is now affiliated with Amazon, so that if you launch Amazon through our dedicated link, a portion of your purchase will be given to us! Just go to our website and click on the Amazon icon.

As always, thank you for supporting your Culver City Historical Society!

### *Holiday Shopping?*

Consider giving the gift of history to your family and friends for any occasion!  
Shop now! [www.cchsstore.com](http://www.cchsstore.com)

Be sure to visit our **ONLINE STORE!**  
[www.cchsstore.com](http://www.cchsstore.com)

Support your **Culver City Historical Society** while you shop!

Clockwise from top left:  
Blanket, Notecards, Umbrella  
License Plate Frame, Books

Just released!  
*Culver City Chronicles*

## Historical Highlights

Web: [www.CulverCityHistoricalSociety.org](http://www.CulverCityHistoricalSociety.org)  
PO Box 3428 · Culver City, CA · 90231-3428  
Tel: (310) 253-6941 · Fax: (310) 253-6942  
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The Culver City Historical Society, founded in 1980, is a non-profit membership organization created for the purpose of collecting, preserving and exhibiting the history of Culver City and its cultural and civic accomplishments.

The Society Newsletter is published quarterly.  
Editor & Publisher..... Judy Stangler  
Contributing Writers..... Julie Lugo Cerra,  
Marc Wanamaker, Sharon Shore

### Officers and Committee Chairs

Michelle Bernardin ..... President  
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Julie Lugo Cerra ..... VP, Museum/ARC  
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Gerry Sallus ..... Government Liaison  
Sharon Shore ..... Costumes Chair  
Winston Gieseke ..... Webmaster  
Kevin Lachoff ..... Photographer

### Editor's Column

As noted in our Costume column, we have a terrific display from the 1962 film, *Billy Rose's Jumbo*. Many of us going to high school at that time remember elephants walking down Overland Ave. going from MGM's Lot 1 on Washington Blvd. to Lot 3 on Jefferson Blvd. for filming. This is a call out to anyone who may have photos of that incredible site, as it was truly historic!

There is a new page on the Society's website, "Society History." We felt that a space on the website was needed to put to "paper" our own Society's history. On it, we've listed the original founding members, past presidents, and a short narrative on how this group came to be.

**Remember, it's YOUR Historical Society—we can't succeed without YOU!**

### RENEW YOUR SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP

by Tami Eskridge,  
VP, Development and Membership Chair

We hope you have renewed your membership and continue to enjoy the many new and exciting things coming up.

Your membership dues support the Society's diverse efforts to keep Culver City's wonderful history alive for future generations, as well as preserving memorabilia and maintaining our Archives & Resource Center (ARC). And, remember, a CC Historical Society membership makes a wonderful gift — especially for Culverites in distant areas!  
(see form on pg.8)

# REEL CULVER CITY



by Marc Wanamaker

## REMEMBERING HARRY CULVER'S VISION OF THE "MOVIES"



As we approach Culver City's Centennial, it seems appropriate to look back to the early days of filmmaking in the city – the industry that Harry Culver first encouraged, and which led to the city's motto of being the "Heart of Screenland."

## MGM SIGN KNOWN THE WORLD OVER

For decades, the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studio's rooftop sign once crowned the top of the tallest stage on the MGM lot. Recognized the world over, everyone who lived in Culver City at one time or another or who was a Los Angeles resident could see the sign from miles around. It became a Culver City icon and appeared in all media at one time or another worldwide.

## INCE-TRIANGLE STUDIO BECOMES FIRST CC STUDIO IN 1915



When Thomas Ince and Harry Culver were planning the new Ince-Triangle Studios in 1915, a metal sign was designed to announce the new studio by placing it on the highest building on the new lot.

The Ince-Triangle Studio would be the first studio built in Culver City. The new sign would show the names of the companies that represented the Triangle Film Corp: NYMPC/KB (New York Motion Picture Corp. and

Kessel and Bauman, founders of NYMPC) and producer-director Thomas Ince.

The sign was first placed on top of the three-story administration building facing east and west on Washington Boulevard. At that time there were few buildings in Culver City and the sign could be seen for miles around.

## "ART" AND "LEO THE LION" ENTERS THE CITY

By the end of 1918, the Triangle Film Corporation split up and Thomas Ince moved his operations to his very own studio a quarter mile east further on Washington Boulevard (today it is The Culver Studios).

The next year, Samuel Goldwyn purchased the former Ince-Triangle Studio, and while the new Goldwyn metal sign was being built, a wooden box was placed over the former Ince-Triangle sign until the new sign was ready.



At the end of 1919, the new Goldwyn sign was placed on top of the building. The new sign's logo announced: "Goldwyn Studios," topped with the head of a lion encircled with the latin words *Ars Gratia Artis* ("Art for arts sake") and illuminated with light bulbs. The lion, of course, became the iconic "Leo the Lion."

## METRO-GOLDWYN-MAYER CREATED AS A MERGER OF STUDIOS

In 1923, the Goldwyn Company (Samuel Goldwyn had left his company in 1921) merged with Louis B. Mayer Productions and by 1924, added Metro Pictures Corporation renaming the company, "Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer."

A new sign had to be made which replaced the former Goldwyn Studio sign on the main administration building that once housed the Triangle and Goldwyn offices. The new sign incorporated the former Goldwyn "Leo the Lion" round sign with the designation, "Controlled by Loew's Inc." (the Holding company of Metro Pictures Corporation) underneath. This "circle" sign sat atop the letters "Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios."

## ICONIC SIGN TOPPED TALLEST STAGE ON LOT

By 1939, the sign was moved to the tallest stages on the lot and one of the tallest buildings in Culver City at that time. From that vantage point, the iconic sign could be readily seen for miles around. It stayed there until it



was moved again in the 1980s to the newly-built Filmland Corp. Center building, across the street facing the studio lot. The sign had been modified by this time displaying only "Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer" with a newly-designed round "Leo the Lion" on top.

## MGM MOVES AWAY IN 1992

In 1992, MGM left Culver City and moved to Santa Monica where the sign was to top their new corporate office building, but due to special sign regulations in Santa Monica, the sign never was placed on their building but went into storage where it sits today.

The historic studio lot carried the Lorimar name at the end of the 1980s, until Sony Pictures Entertainment became the owner in 1990, and the sign was changed to read Columbia Pictures on one side and Tri-Star Pictures on the other.

# CULVER CITY HISTORICAL SOCIETY ~ ~ ~

## ***JULY 20 CELEBRATION OF HARRY CULVER'S "DREAM SPEECH"*** (cont'd. from pg. 1)

Re-enacted by Councilmember Jim Clarke, Culver's speech explored themes of modernity and purpose, mass transit, and economic development – issues that have transcended time and are very pertinent to today's Culver City as well.

The Society thanks The California Club; Club member George Kieffer, without whose support the authenticity of the event location would not have been possible; and the Culver City businesses and individuals who were incredibly generous in their raffle prize donations: AKASHA, ALANDALES, Culver Center Flowers, Culver Hotel, Ron Fields Designs, Stuart Freeman, Goda Yoga, MEET in Paris Restaurant, MelroseMAC, and The Wellness Spa.



***"Harry Culver" gives an energetic but detailed speech of his dream of a new city to Culver City Councilmembers, and many Society members and guests who enjoyed the reenactment as well as the raffle gifts from several city merchants.***

***It was definitely an historic "step back" into our city's significant history at the beautiful California Club.***





## NEW CCHS GIFT SHOP AND HISTORIC MUG (cont'd. from pg. 1)

historical sites including: the 1928 City Hall, the Helms Bakery coaches, the famed Ships restaurant, the Culver Theatre, the Studio Drive-In, and The Culver Studios.



At \$10 each, they will make wonderful holiday gifts as well as a great reminder of our special city with each cup of coffee (or hot chocolate)!

At this year's Fiesta, the Society was happy to host a book-signing with our own Julie Lugo Cerra. A great turnout came to enjoy her new book, *Culver City Chronicles*, another wonderful account of this special city, which is now featured in our newly expanded Gift Shop.

Julie, a Founding Member of the Society, has been the official City Historian since 1996.



Julie Lugo Cerra, signing her new book and sharing CC history at the ARC with Fiesta guests.



## OCTOBER 16 PROGRAM: "THE KIRK DOUGLAS THEATRE"

The Historical Society's Fall General Membership Meeting will be held on Wednesday, October 16 and will feature guest speaker Eric Sims, Operations Manager of the Kirk Douglas Theatre and President of the Culver City Downtown Business Association.

Sims will speak on "The Kirk Douglas Theatre and Its Metamorphosis," tracing its history from an early popular Culver City motion picture theater into today's beautiful and intimate Center Theatre Group venue for experimental theatrical productions.

He will share the Center Theatre Group views and plans for its experimental theatre productions, and his talk will be illustrated with pictures and documents relating to the theater's history and renovation and its landmark productions.



Sims, who is closely involved with the development and programs of the City's landmark Kirk Douglas Theatre, is a most knowledgeable and entertaining speaker. He will depict how the theatre was transformed and describe the planning and technical work that went into its renovation. He will also outline his personal background and career in theater, and how he came to the Center Theatre Group and the Kirk Douglas Theatre.

THE JULY 17 ANNUAL PICNIC was as delicious as ever! With the wonderful food from Santa Maria BBQ, raffle prizes, and fabulous music along with visits to the ARC, it was a great day of community fun!



## NEWS FROM THE COSTUME CHAIR...

by Sharon Shore  
Costumes Chair



### CATALOGUING THE COSTUME COLLECTION FOR THE FUTURE

Beginning in the spring of this year, we continued a project to transfer handwritten costume catalog information from notebooks to the Society's museum collection database. We hope to finish the transfer by the end of the year. At completion, the cataloged contents of our collection will be more readily available to our members, researchers, and the general public.

The process of creating a database for the entire collection can lead to renewed consideration for understanding the collection. We now know that 26 different film productions can be positively identified by labels sewn in the inside of some costumes.

Periodically, we have shown films associated with costumes on display, if known. A whole new dimension is added to the display when the costume appears "in action" within the film narrative.

Although the Society has a small but growing collection of DVDs and videos in the archive, only one film is matched with a costume.

Thanks to a donation of Volume I of a set of Esther Williams films by Stuart Freeman, the rhinestone-covered swimsuit in our collection appears as it looked on Esther Williams in *This Time for Keeps* (1947).

Some of you might have seen the costumes from *Billy Rose's Jumbo*, currently on display, as they appear in the final scenes from the film,

shown during public open hours, thanks to a loan from Judy Stangler.

Following are the twenty-five other films that have been identified with our MGM costumes in the collection. It is our hope to build the Society's DVD library with copies of them. Some are obscure and difficult to locate.

Assistance by a donation and/or information about the availability of any of the films listed would be much appreciated and add to the pleasure of seeing them in historical context.

Our film screenings in the ARC during public hours are free and open to all.  
~ Sharon

*Billy Rose's Jumbo*, 1962  
*The Bride Goes Wild*, 1948  
*Broadway Serenade*, 1939  
*The Brothers Karamazov*, 1958  
*Give a Girl a Break*, 1953  
*Honky Tonk*, 1941  
*The Kissing Bandit*, 1948  
*Les Girls*, 1957  
*A Life of Her Own*, 1950  
*Little Women*, 1949  
*Living in a Big Way*, 1947  
*Love Me or Leave Me*, 1955  
*Madame Bovary*, 1949  
*Meet Me in St. Louis*, 1944  
*Merry Widow*, 1952  
*Neptunes's Daughter*, 1949  
*The Painted Veil*, 1934  
*The Pirate*, 1948  
*Saddle the Wind*, 1958  
*Small Town Girl*, 1953  
*The Swan*, 1956  
*Take Me Out to the Ballgame*, 1949  
*Three Wise Fools*, 1946  
*Two Sisters from Boston*, 1946  
*Undercover Maisie*, 1947  
*Valley of Decision*, 1945  
*Words and Music*, 1948



### MARK YOUR "2013" CALENDAR

- OCT. 12: "LA AS SUBJECT"**  
ARCHIVES BAZAAR - USC
- OCT. 12: SCREENING OF "THE MUSIC BOX" w/LAUREL & HARDY**  
AT "MUSIC BOX STEPS DAY"  
IN SILVER LAKE
- OCT. 16: CCHS GENERAL MEETING**
- NOV. 16: Genealogy Garage:**  
"Genealogical Treasures  
in Historical Societies" –  
with Julie Lugo Cerra

The CC Cultural Affairs Commission  
meets on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of the month  
in the Council Chambers, City Hall.

For more information on any of these  
events, please contact the CCHS:  
info@CulverCityHistoricalSociety.org  
or Tel: (310) 253-6941  
Or visit our web:  
www.CulverCityHistoricalSociety.org

### 2013 ARC Open Dates

Call to confirm dates: (310) 253-6941

**NOTE:** New days are now  
SUNDAYS

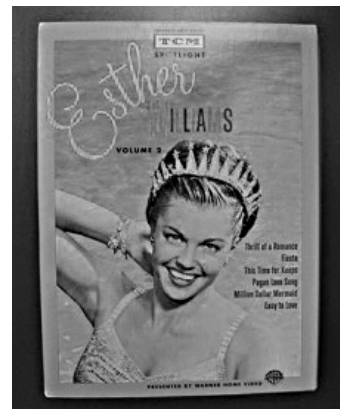
► 1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Sundays, 1-3 pm ◀

Oct. 6	Oct. 20	Nov. 3
Nov. 17	Dec. 1	Dec. 15

(Also by appointment)

### Welcome New CCHS Members

- Laura Frakes
- Julie West
- John Bruner



Above: DVD set box label- Esther Williams wearing the Society's rhinestone bathing suit.

Left: GM handwritten label with film production number for Doris Day's costume from *Love Me or Leave Me* (1955).

## An ARC Update

by Julie Lugo Cerra  
Vice President,  
Museum/ARC and  
City Historian



### SOCIETY'S GIFT SHOP HAS NEW LOOK

When you next visit the ARC you will see some changes in our display space. This is to accommodate the savvy new look accomplished by the Development Committee for our "Gift Shop."

In the process of re-arranging, we have a "wall of theatres" in our "screening" area. We have learned more about our early theatres, thanks to member/researcher Alex King and from a 1945 re-opening program from the Meralta Theatre, donated by Museum Committee member William Barnett.

### MERALTA THEATRE HISTORY DOCUMENTS

A fire closed the Meralta in 1943, and due to a wartime moratorium on building, for the next two years, the second floor auditorium of the 1928 City Hall was equipped as a theatre for the community. The Meralta re-opening program even shows sketches of the owners, Pearl Merrill and Laura Peralta, and the new theatre.

This is especially timely as our October program will showcase the Kirk Douglas (originally Culver) Theatre. Our oversize photo of the Culver Theatre shows its opening day marquee in 1947!

### SOCIETY WELCOMES CC GRADS

We have enjoyed some nostalgic

moments with our returning Culver High grads – and the Class of '63's 50-year reunion was the last of the season on September 28. Those dropping by will see a beautiful rendering of the Helms Bakery Building, along with a replica of the cardboard Helms Coach that many young students enjoyed receiving on school tours of the Bakery. We also have a great vintage Helms postcard.

### "A CELEBRATION OF THE MOVIES" TO BE SCREENED

We continue to assist many students and others who are researching Culver City. Special thanks to Costume chair Sharon Shore and her crew (esp. Denice Renteria), who screened the movie *Jumbo*, to go with the costume exhibit. We will be showing *A Celebration of the Movies* video in September/October. (It features fun times, like "munchkin" Jerry Maren singing "The Lollipop Song" from *The Wizard of Oz*.)



Julie Lugo Cerra and Tom Sparks at the ARC.

During the Fiesta – which sent us record crowds – we met Tom Sparks, Class of '64, who put together a book of photos on the building of the High School's Robert Frost Auditorium (see the

Summer 2013 newsletter). Sparks had not seen his "student project" that documented the building of the auditorium since 1964, and it was wonderful to see his expression as he went through the book he compiled with the school's yearbook staff. We also have an architectural rendering of the structure as proposed. And thanks for our volunteers who give their time!



Above: Sister City Exchange Students in-Service.

Below: Former CC "Pickford Way" neighbors: Tom Pedersen and Mr. & Mrs. Drayton Marsh.



Special thanks to Laura Frakes, Library Manager of our Culver City Julian Dixon Library. As the library prepares to close for renovation and items are re-shuffled, we are becoming the beneficiary of many items to further preserve our local history. Thanks also to Lou Block who handed off some CC Rose Parade buttons from the 1980s – rarely seen!!!

### PREPARING FOR CC CENTENNIAL

In the works, look for upcoming displays that will bring various subjects into focus, such as Hispanic Heritage Month and the city's anniversary of incorporation (September 20, 1917) – and don't forget the Centennial coming up! ~ Julie

**CCHS ARCHIVES & RESOURCE CENTER (ARC)**  
Veterans Memorial Building • 4117 Overland Ave., Culver City, CA

**NOTE: Starting September 1, the ARC will be open  
the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Sundays, 1-3 pm and by appointment**  
Free admission. (Enter from parking lot behind the VMB.)

Mail: PO Box 3428, Culver City, CA 90231-3428  
Tel: (310) 253-6941 • Email: [info@CulverCityHistoricalSociety.org](mailto:info@CulverCityHistoricalSociety.org)  
Web: [www.CulverCityHistoricalSociety.org](http://www.CulverCityHistoricalSociety.org)



## Time to Renew or Become a Member of the Culver City Historical Society Today!

Join others in preserving the history of the "Heart of Screenland" and supporting the Culver City Historical Society Archives & Resource Center (ARC).

***We can't do it without YOU!***

### TYPES OF MEMBERSHIP

\_\_\_\_\_ Individual Member (\$20)  
\_\_\_\_\_ Family Member (\$30)  
\_\_\_\_\_ Youth Member (\$10)

\_\_\_\_\_ Individual Lifetime Member (\$300)  
\_\_\_\_\_ Family Lifetime Member (\$500)  
\_\_\_\_\_ Patron Member (\$100)  
\_\_\_\_\_ Benefactor (\$1000)

\_\_\_\_\_ Organization (\$15)  
\_\_\_\_\_ Business Member (\$50)  
\_\_\_\_\_ Corporate Sponsor (\$500)

Name/Company: \_\_\_\_\_ Contact Person: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: (Street) \_\_\_\_\_ (City) \_\_\_\_\_ (State/Zip) \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Please make checks payable to **Culver City Historical Society** and mail to

P.O. Box 3428, Culver City, CA 90231-3428. For further information, call (310) 253-6941 or email: [info@CulverCityHistoricalSociety.org](mailto:info@CulverCityHistoricalSociety.org).

*Contributions of both historic & social significance as well as monetary donations are encouraged, and the CCHS IRS tax exempt status may make such contributions tax deductible.*

### 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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Cantalini's Salerno Beach Rest. ... Lisa Schwab (310) 821-0018  
Cavanaugh Realtors ..... Dannie Cavanaugh (310) 837-7161  
Culver Center Flowers ..... Mike Eskridge (310) 839-2344  
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## Culver City Historical Society

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