

Culver Historical Highlights

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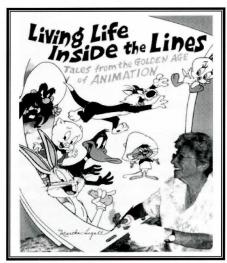
Spring 2005

C.C. HISTORICAL SOCIETY MARKS 25 YEARS!

HISTORIC PRESERVATION MONTH OF MAY KICKS OFF YEAR-LONG CELEBRATION

MARTHA SIGALL — CCHS MEMBER, HONORED ARTIST & AUTHOR TO SPEAK APR. 20

The April 19, 2005 General Meeting of the Culver City Historical Society will have as its guest speaker, longtime Society member Martha Sigall who will discuss her new book, Living Life Inside the Lines: Tales from the Golden Age of Animation.



With a career spanning more than 50 years, Martha has quite a tale to tell! This is "an insider's account of the wild and wacky teams that created cartoon classics for Warner Bros. and MGM Animation." (cont'd on page 6)

A LONG-HELD DREAM REALIZED IN 1980

There were many in Culver City who long understood and appreciated the unique and special qualities of our small but vital city. In 1979, a group came together, in the home of Mildred Kearney, to create an "official" organization to preserve and promote the fascinating and internationally important history of the City of Culver City.

It was in 1980 that the "Articles of Incorporation of Culver City Historical Society" were formally adopted and named this non-profit corporation as the "Culver City Historical Society."

The Articles of Incorporation begins:

"The purposes for which this corporation is formed are:

(a) The specific and primary purposes of this non-profit corporation shall be to bring together those people interested in history, and especially in the history of Culver City, California. Understanding the history of our community is basic to our democratic way of life, gives us a better understanding of our Sate and nation, and promotes a better appreciation of our American heritage.

The corporation's major function will be to discover and collect any material which may help to establish or illustrate the history of the area: its exploration, settlement, development, and activities in peace and in war; its progress in population, wealth, education, arts, science, agriculture, manufactures, trade, and transportation. It will collect printed material, such as histories, genealogies, biographies, descriptions, gazetteers, directories, newspapers, pamphlets, catalogs, circulars, handbills, programs and..... (cont'd on page 3)

~ APRIL 20TH GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING ~

Special Guest Speaker CARTOONIST MARTHA SIGALL

The Historical Society's Spring General Membership Meeting will be held on Wednesday, April 20th in the Lethbridge Garden Room at the Veterans Memorial Building, 4117 Overland Ave. at 7:00 pm.

A truly fascinating evening is in store with Society member and honored cartoonist, Martha Sigall as our special guest. Martha will talk about her new book, *Living Life Inside the Lines: Tales from the Golden Age of Animation* (see story above) and share her wonderful adventures in cartoonland! Be sure to come and bring your friends for an enjoyable evening.

The public is invited to enjoy the free program and students are encouraged to attend. For more information, please call (310) 287-3850.



Springtime has come at last and an historic winter seems finally over, leaving a record-breaking rainfall which caused millions of dollars of damage throughout Southern California. We too, here in Culver City, suffered damage to our beloved Culver Crest — along with hundreds of potholes in our streets. We know, however, that we will all prosper after this difficult time passes.

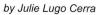
With our April quarterly General Meeting just a few weeks away, I'm delighted to announce that our guest speaker will be our own Martha Sigall. Martha has a new book coming out about her life as an animator for some of the major studios in Culver City and Hollywood. With more than 50 years of wonderful experiences to share, there is no doubt that Martha will give us a stimulating talk and no one should miss this exciting meeting!

May is National Historic Preservation Month, and the Society is very happy that the city will complete the marking of its historically significant buildings, more than ten years after the original ordinance was passed. We will be publishing a list of those building in the next newsletter as part of our year-long celebration of the Society's 25th Anniversary (*more on this soon*). Thank you, Culver City, for completing this long anticipated project.

Best regards,



Notes from Your City Historian





MAY IS HISTORIC PRESERVATION MONTH — AND WE HAVE A LOT TO CELEBRATE!

First, by May, all of the historic plaques should be placed on the Landmark and Significant designated structures in Culver City. The original historic survey took place in 1987, was published in final form in 1990, and the city council adopted the historic preservation ordinance and a list of historic structures in 1991. I am pleased that the Cultural Affairs Commission took charge of this project which will be a benefit to the owners and visitors to the various chosen structures.

"COLONNADE" TURNS 90

The well-known "colonnade" – the ceremonial entry to Sony Pictures Studios on Washington Boulevard – will be 90-years-old this year! It was the first structure built by Thomas Ince for his Culver City studio in 1915-16.

The city designated the formal, neoclassical, Beaux Arts architectural



MGM Colonnade c.1920s

style entryway with Landmark status. It retains most of its original integrity and was restored by Gensler and Associates in the 1990s. Pictured here, can you guess 1) why cars have not entered through this gate since 1941 and 2) are all of the columns original? (answers below)

OSCAR TRIBUTE TO ROGER MAYER

The 77th Academy Awards presented on February 27 was quite a show this year, and Culver City should have been especially proud when Martin Scorsese gave the Academy's prestigious Jean Hersholt Humanitarian Award to **Roger Mayer**, president of Turner Entertainment Co.

Mr. Mayer was the first recipient of our own Culver City Historical Society's Heart of Screenland Star Award. He has been a major influence in film preservation and his long history on the local MGM lot

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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 CCHS Newsletter is published quarterly

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Editor's Column

25 YEARS !!! How did the time fly by so fast?!

So many wonderful people have helped to make the Culver City Historical Society one of the most respected around – and our newsletter gets many kudos as well! We hope to highlight many of these folks as well as recall some of the important highlights of the last quarter century in the upcoming issues.

We're also introducing a new series, "Remembering..." – personal memories of times & places of our city's past.

A note of "Congratulations" to past president Don Rogers who is retiring as Director of CC Parks, Recreation and Community Services – enjoy!

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

included working with the city to provide for the continued use of historic signs.

Congratulations, Roger!

Upcoming: Look for a new walking tour starting from the Town Plaza. And watch the window of the Pacific 12 – there will be a new display soon.

And ... play a part in preservation!

Answers: 1) Cars became too wide to navigate the entryway. 2) All are the original columns but one which is a resin reproduction due to it being destroyed by an automobile accident!

REEL LIFE



BACKLOT FILM FESTIVAL DEBUTS IN CULVER CITY

The first **BACKLOT FILM FESTIVAL** celebrated "A Tribute to the Extraordinary Motion Pictures of 1939." This was a fitting debut for a film festival created to cultivate an appreciation of the rich heritage of the motion picture industry and to bring greater understanding of the debt current filmmaking owes to the earlier pioneers.

Held from December 16-19, 2004, the festival focused on helping to strengthen the growing film program at the West Los Angeles College with screenings in its 400-seat Fine Arts Theatre.

FIRST "THOMAS H. INCE AWARD" HONORS DANIEL M. SELZNICK

The Festival's first presentation of the



Ince Award honored noted film producer Daniel M. Selznick whose professional and personal history reaches well into the "Golden Age of Movies."

"Thomas

Daniel M. Selznick

Thomas Ince, one of the most important and influential figures in the history of the American film industry, introduced production procedures and quality of standards that set the model and helped mold the distinct image of Hollywood films to this day.

It was with the encouragement of real estate entrepreneur Harry Culver in 1915 that Ince constructed the first of two major motion picture studios in the new town of Culver City. These two studios (now Sony Pictures Entertainment and The Culver Studios) dominated the economic, cultural and civic life of Culver City as well as publicizing Culver City around the world.

The legacy of Thomas Ince is enormously important to the history of the development of the motion picture industry in the United States, the City of Los Angeles and in Culver City. It is most appropriate that the Backlot Film Festival should establish the Thomas H. Ince Award to honor those filmmakers who have made a contribution to the history of the film industry in Culver City, California.

It was a privilege to be the Director of the first BFF and I want to thank the many people who contributed to its philosophy,

Thomas H. Ince

working extremely hard to make its premiere a sound success, including CCHS members Marc Wanamaker, Mark Morris and Paul Pitti.

Perhaps the most important realization to come from all the planning and hard work that went into presenting the Backlot Film Festival was learning how perilously close we are to losing so many of our film classics. (John Kirk, Director of Tech Operations at MGM/UA told me that Samuel Goldwyn's widow destroyed all of his silent films because she felt they were outdated!)

Preservation is a difficult and expensive undertaking. It will be a primary goal of the future Backlot Film Festivals to address these problems and to encourage all who love to "go out to the movies" to help save them for future generations.

"Dream" (cont'd.)

We were very fortunate that Frank McCann was among that group in 1979 and that he took over the reins of the committee as the idea transitioned into the formal organization. When he became ill, he was very happy that Cathy Zermeno took the lead as the first Culver City Historical Society president.

A quarter of a century is a proud marker in an organization's history and the Society aims to make 2005 an especially banner year with special events and working toward getting greater involvement from the community as well as expanding the extremely popular and educational program, "Living History." So keep your eyes and ears open for public announcements – there's lots ahead!

REMEMBERING... "SepulvedalJefferson"

by Steve Rose

As a lifelong resident of Culver City and growing up in my parents' business, I want to share my memories of the Sepulveda/Jefferson area from my childhood.

At the corner of Sepulveda & Playa is where the Bert's Bar-B-Q first started. Bert Maddox and his wife Penny, who still lives in Culver City, opened the restaurant. Bert's was a small family-owned restaurant that later moved to the 5300 block of Sepulveda Blvd. which is now a hubcap store next to KFC — which used to be known as "Colonel Sander's Kentucky Fried Chicken" — which replaced an earlier (and much cheaper!) Mohawk Service Station.

Bert was the cook and Penny was one of the waitresses that served local CC residents along with numerous well-known folks such as Howard Hughes, William Shattner and many others. Bert's recipe was different then that of Stern's Bar-B-Q. It was not as sweet and their homemade coleslaw was crisp and tart — something that you cannot find anymore.

Just remembering my childhood.....

[Ed. Note: "Remembering" is a new occasional series of personal recollections by Culver City locals.]

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

APRIL 20: CCHS GENERAL MEETING

JULY 20: CCHS ANNUAL PICNIC

Aug. 22-28: FIESTA LA BALLONA

Aug. 23: CCHS FIESTA Downtown Walking Tours

Oct. 20: CCHS General Meeting

History is interim reports issued periodically. ~Anonymous

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Remember, <u>all</u> memberships were up for renewal in January, 2005. Please send your renewal *TODAY*!

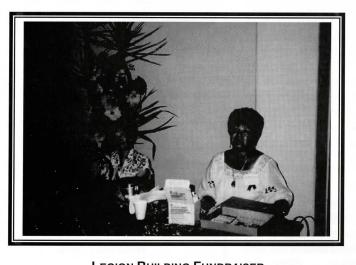
The Early Days



CCHS FIRST INSTALLATION, 1980

L-R: Marti Diviak, Rusty Kostick, Cathy Zermeno
(1st CCHS Pres.) being installed by Charles R. Lugo.

Courtesy: Cathy Zermeno.



Legion Building Fundraiser

L-R: Working are Jo Ellen Weaver and past CCHS Pres. Lupe Smith

Courtesy: Cathy Zermeno.

Any fool can make history, but it takes a genius to write it. ~ Oscar Wilde

.....



1981 CCHS FUNDRAISER AT THE CULVER STUDIOS

A "1917 picnic" theme and dressed for the beach: Steven Rose and Cathy Zermeno. Courtesy: Cathy Zermeno.



1981 CCHS Fundraiser AT THE CULVER STUDIOS

L-R: Cathy Zermeno and Mildred Kearney in "1917" costumes surrounded by "gentlemen." Courtesy: Cathy Zermeno.

CULVER CITY HISTORICAL SOCIETY'S DESIGNATED HISTORIC SITES

Historic Site # 1: City Hall

Historic Site # 2: The Hull Building

Historic Site # 3: St. Augustine's Church

Historic Site # 4: The Citizen Building

Historic Site # 5: The Legion Building

Historic Site # 6: Main Street

Historic Site # 7: The Culver Studios

Historic Site #8: The Lugo Ranch

Historic Site # 9: The Helms Building

Historic Site # 10: La Ballona School



LEGION BUILDING MARKING (SITE #5)

Courtesy: Julie Lugo Cerra.

WHAT WERE THEY THINKING?

by Sandy Burton

Looking through the dusty pages of *The Culver City News* dated November 24th, 1925, I was attracted to an article entitled "The People's Water Co."

It seems that the residents of Culver City, Palms and the nearby vicinity were using 1500 gallons per minute – one might wonder what the residents of Culver City alone are using in water consumption today – and it was a story!

Located at 3392 Motor Ave, The People's Water Co, existed when Culver City wasn't much more than a small, little-known barley field. Anticipating the increasing demand for water, the company drilled for additional wells and installed pipelines before additional capacity was necessary.

You see, this relatively unknown company was well ahead of its time – planning and anticipating the needs and possible emergencies of its customers and customers-to-be. According to R.M. Moore, the manager, many thousand feet of cast iron pipe were to be installed to provide water to the new subdivisions.

The People's Water Co served over 5000 residents within the area roughly bounded by the California Country Club on Cheviot Drive to the north, to Baldwin Hills on the south, and from Sawtelle Blvd. on the west over to the eastern city limits near La Brea Blvd.

Back then, the five pumps, each 300-feet deep, had the capacity to pump twice the required amount for its customers, amounting to about 3000 gallons a minute. The power to pump the water was purchased from the City of Los Angeles and The Edison Co. Three wells were located north of Palms at the top of the hill. The other two wells were located on Centney Street off Washington Blvd. The water company employed 25 people and sometimes as many as 75 when pipelines were being laid.

Although the dry spells of 1923 and 1924 reduced the water levels of the existing reservoirs, the needs of Culver City residents were met by boring new wells. And, by charging reasonable rates, water users wouldn't have to be stingy about watering their vegetable gardens! Later, the Colorado River would furnish a huge stream of water through the proposed All-American Canal.

In 1925, it's interesting to learn that the local businessmen were thinking ahead to provide the safe and abundant year-round water supply which would insure Culver City's future growth and development.

30TH ANNUAL CALIFORNIA PRESERVATION CONFERENCE ~ May 12-15, 2005

Riverside, CA (at the historic Riverside Mission Inn) ~ www.californiapreservation.org/calendar/html

BEYOND THE CITY LIMITS ...

by Martha Gunther

There is a world outside of Culver City and we hope to share information about other organizations and events of historical interest in the surrounding neighborhoods as often as possible.

Here are a few:

The Grier Musser Museum

The Grier Musser Museum is a beautifully restored Victorian house which features special holiday exhibits throughout the year. 403 South Bonnie Brae Street Los Angeles, CA 90057 (213) 413-1814 www.griermussermuseum.com

Historical Society of So. California

With the history of Los Angeles as a special interest, HSSC is the oldest historical society in California, founded in 1883. 200 East Avenue 43

Los Angeles, CA 90031 (323) 222-0546 www.socalhistory.org

Los Angeles City Historical Society

Devoted to the preservation and education of the original City of Los Angeles, the LACHS is the official "Friends of the City Archives" and works with the City Clerk, Records Management Division, to preserve and safeguard the records which document the city's growth.

P.O. Box 41046 Los Angeles, CA 90041 Tel: (213) 891-4600 www.lacityhistory.org

Los Angeles Conservancy

Thirteen tours of the LA area are scheduled for 2005. Also, check the online newsletter to learn of the top ten myths about historic preservation.

523 West Sixty Street, Suite 826 Los Angeles, CA 90014 213-623-2489

www.laconservancy.org

The Manhattan Beach Historical Society & Museum

Dedicated to preserve & promote the heritage of Manhattan Beach, the museum is housed in the historic 1905 Beach Cottage in Polliwog Park.

1601 Manhattan Beach Boulevard Manhattan Beach, CA 90266 www.geocities.com/history90266

Santa Monica Hist. Soc. Museum

Of special interest to members who spent any time in the Santa MonicalOcean Park area in years past. 1539 Euclid Street Santa Monica, CA 90404 (310) 395-2290 http://www.santamonicahistory.org

"Martha" (cont'd.)

The recipient of numerous awards for her own artistry, Martha worked with all the beloved classic cartoon characters -Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck, Tom & Jerry, Droopy Dawg, Beany & Cecil, Tweety and Porky Pig - along with the "madcap artists" who created them - Chuck Jones, Tex Avery, Bob Clampett, Frank Tashlin, Friz Freleng, William Hanna and Joseph Barbera, Bill Melendez and Ben (Bugs) Hardaway.

As a teenager. Martha became an apprentice painter working at the Leon Schlesinger studio, making \$12.75/week coloring animation cels that would introduce Bugs Bunny and Elmer Fudd to the world. She recalls her many amazing experiences with the Warner Bros. cartoon crew, working and laughing all day with the animators, partying all night with the Looney tunes gang on the bowling and baseball teams, and participating in weekend scavenger hunts. She was president of the in-house "Looney Tunes Club," cowrote the company gossip column and performed in the company's theatrical

After WWII, Martha joined MGM Animation (Tom & Jerry, Tex Avery) in Culver City as an assistant in the camera room and later freelanced her ink and paint services, creating art for many classic features, shorts, commercials and TV series, including Garfield, Peanuts and The Pink Panther.

This is an account of an exceptional woman who shares a rarely told story of what it was like to be part of a team of artists who were creating masterpieces of animation - as well as her extraordinary experiences of being a woman in a male-dominated industry, particularly during the war years when she was one of the first women camera operators in the industry!

Anyone who has ever met Martha Sigall can tell you just how extraordinary she is! So don't miss the April 19th meeting and hearing about her many "adventures" in cartoonland...

"LIVING HISTORY PROJECT" UPDATE ...

by Julie Lugo Cerra

The Society's "Living History Project." a result of president Steve Rose's promise to work with the schools, is in its third year - and it has been quite a learning experience!

We now have four scripts, written by Joan Jakubowski and Julie Lugo Cerra. They portray The Machado Brothers (Ygnacio and Agustin), Harry Culver giving his original 1913 speech at the California Club, and an interactive skit in which two students talk about our Native American predecessors, the Gabrielinos. Lastly, there is an "interview" with Pat Culver Battle about her father, our city founder, Harry Culver.

In the first two years the program visited third-grade classrooms where the children study local history. This vear. Dr. Diane Fiello, the CCUSD Superintendent Assistant Educational Services, has broadened our scope to include fourth-graders.

Culver High teacher Mrs. Drew Seymour has offered her support and her classroom in which we meet and We had so many volunteers this year that we have two "Gabrielino" teams, and the students themselves have made the scripts even more interactive through their great enthusiasm and talents!

The students completed the thirdgrade classroom visits in March and are scheduled to present for the fourth-graders in April. The bulk of our volunteers are students in the CCHS Academy of Visual and Performing Arts. We salute our volunteers for 2005: Samantha Silberman, Ali Sieke, Rezwan Kabir, Ashley Guerrero, Jazmyne Gholar, Rhea Jenkins, Andrea Santos and Alex Richardson.

Pictures in the next edition....

The Catalina Island Museum and Society

Museum celebrates the Island's rich cultural heritage, including famous Catalina Pottery and tile.

P.O. Box 366 Avalon, CA 90704 (310) 510-2414

http://www.catalina.com/museum.html

The Fowler Museum of Cultural History, UCLA

(310) 825-4361

http://www.fmch.ucla.edu/

Museum explores art and material culture primarily from Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and the Americas, past and present. P.O. Box 951549 Los Angeles, CA 90095

Museum Notes

by Robin Turner, Museum Chair

As many of you may know, we still do not yet have public access to the museum collections. Our industrious leader and president. Steve Rose, is working hard to iron out the kinks in getting our museum's new home "habitable." To insure proper safety and comfort codes. these things take time so we need to be patient - it will be well worth it!

We are, however, exhibiting some of the charming wood sculptures by Culver City artist Robert Gragg (1896-1984) in the CCHS display case at the eastside of the new downtown Pacific Culver Stadium 12 cinema complex. Come by and see these creative sculptures with subject matter spanning movie studio sets to life in general which Gragg created in his Culver City studio. We will be rotating several of his artistic pieces in this space during the next several months.

If you have suggestions for other exhibits that you would like to see in this exhibit space, please feel free to let me know. This display area is a wonderful preview of what's to come!

As always, thank you for your support and service - and we'll see you at the next general meeting on April 19th.

~ Robin

Susan Gregory Passes

Our friend and CCHS member, Susan Gregory, passed away in March. She was not only an avid gardener, but a real force in the CC Garden Club. In 1996, the City Council adopted as its third official city song, Susan's composition "Culver City, You're a Star." Our condolences go out to all of Susan's family and friends.

The Society would like to send our best wishes to our friends who are feeling under the weather: David Henderson. Lu Herrera, Anita Shapiro and Esther Tarn.

Thank you, all,

To all of our friends who sent cards and notes with condolences on the passing of our beloved son, Chris, we wish to thank you all from the bottom of our hearts. They've meant a great deal to us.

~ Cathy & George Zermeno

CULVER CREST HAS A LONG HISTORY

by Julie Lugo Cerra

The "Culver Crest" section of Culver City was annexed from Los Angeles County in the early 1950s. It was developed and built by Lou Crank and Ray J. Blanco.

Its area is considered to be the residential development above Overland Avenue to the north, beginning next to West Los Angeles College at Northgate Street to the east, with Ranch Road as the last street heading up the hill on the west. The developers' advertisements hailed its location as "Culver Crest in the beautiful Baldwin Hills overlooking the mountains and sea."

Lou Crank is credited with the development of the "upper hill" where you see evidence of the street names relating back to his family, such as Cranks Road and Esterina Way which was named for his wife Esther. (As an aside, Esther's brother was Tony Carnero, who owned and ran the gambling ship "Rex" off the coast of Santa Monica in the 1930s.)





Hilltop home of Youngworth, on top of what became Culver Crest - now part of Marvcrest Manor. (photo courtesy of Julie Lugo Cerra.)

Hillslide of Culver Crest, 2005. (photo courtesy of Tim Barker.)

Youngworth Road was named for Leo Youngworth who was an attorney in Los Angeles. He was the first to cut a trail to the top of the hill, where he leveled the site to build his home in about 1930. Little is known of Youngworth, except that bankruptcy forced him to sell the property in 1934.

There is a Youngworth Mansion located at the top of Culver Crest. It was given Landmark status from the city through its Historic Preservation ordinance adopted in 1990. Today, the Youngworth mansion is a part of Marycrest Manor, a health care facility owned by the Catholic Archdiocese of Los Angeles.

Tellefson Road was named for Michael Tellefson who served Culver City for more than 30 years in a variety of capacities, including City Attorney, CAO and councilmember. Tellefson wrote an "airtight" sewer contract with Los Angeles for the use of the Hyperion Water Treatment Plant, which protected Culver City's interest and is still the subject of studies in law schools. Tellefson was an advocate for recreational space as well, and his name appears on a park "in the flatlands."

Stephon Terrace was named for a 1930s councilmember and police commissioner. Stubbs Lane, a private road, led to the home of Helene Stubbs, one-time city clerk and her husband Charley who was our postmaster. Lugo Way was named for one of our founding members, Charles Lugo, who was 5th generation Californian.

There has been a great deal of concern for "the hill" with the recent mudslides due to the extraordinary amount of rain "sunny" Southern California has experienced this winter. Although reinforced for earlier slides, we hope that the homeowners will find a way to be safe in their homes once

Become a Member of the Culver City Historical Society Today! Join others in preserving the history of the "Heart of Screenland" and the efforts to create the Culver City Heritage Museum. We can't do it without you TYPES OF MEMBERSHIP		
Benefactor (\$1000) Corporate Sponsor (\$500) Patron Member (\$100) Family Lifetime Member (\$500) Family Member (\$25)	Business Member (\$50) Organization (\$15) Individual Lifetime Member (\$250) Individual Member (\$15) Youth Member (\$5)	
Name/Company:	Telephone:	
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Contact Person: Mailing Address:	Fax:	

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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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