HISTORICAL SOCIETIES MEET AT “L.A. AS SUBJECT” CONFERENCE

On Saturday, October 25, 2008, CCHS President Stu Freeman attended the 3rd Annual L.A. Archives Bazaar at the USC-Davidson Conference Center in downtown Los Angeles. He was joined by CCHS members Julie Lugo Cerra, Louise Coffey-Webb, Karen Coyle, Hope Parrish, Judy Stangler and Fred Yglesias.

Offering a wealth of resources for exploring Los Angeles history, the annual Archives Bazaar is organized by L.A. as Subject, an alliance of research archives, libraries, and collections dedicated to preserving the rich history of the Los Angeles region. (cont’d. pg 7)

Pleasing ATTEND!
CULVER CITY CULTURAL AFFAIRS
TOWN HALL MEETING

The Cultural Affairs staff will present an overview of the accomplishments of 2008 and the proposed work plan for 2009. The staff report will also include information regarding the City’s Historic Preservation Program in light of projects for the coming year. The Commission will then open the Town Hall for individuals to speak.

CITY HALL
Tuesday, January 13, 2009 - 7 pm
Website: www.culvercity.org

ROZAIRE & BELOUS 1950 STUDY CITED

The USPS letter mentioned a study done in 1950 by Rozaire & Belous, and the Society was able to augment some of their information. This study is particularly significant to our Society as Dr. Charles Rozaire, one of its authors is a well-respected archeologist and anthropologist and a retired UCLA professor, who was raised in Culver City – and who is a member of the Culver City Historical Society.

A copy of the Rozaire/Belous study was furnished to the Society by another archeologist member, and our first Archives Chair, Robin Turner. The USPS letter (cont’d. pg 6)

CC GATEWAY STATION POST OFFICE FUTURE UNCERTAIN

The Culver City Historical Society was one of the organizations copied on a letter from the U.S. Postal Service to Milford Wayne Donaldson, California’s State Historic Preservation Officer, regarding the future plans for the CC Gateway Station Post Office on Culver Blvd.

Interestingly, Mr. Donaldson was the architect hired by the CC Redevelopment Agency, responsible for the fine restoration of the Ivy Substation, a building which was placed on the National Register through the efforts of one of our members, David Cameron.) On behalf of the Society, CCHS President Stu Freeman responded to the letter which advised of the intent to sell the Gateway Station Post Office.

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~ JANUARY 21, 2009: GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING ~

Special Guests: The Parrish Family
Three Generations of Film Property Masters and Culver City Neighbors

The Culver City Historical Society’s Winter General Membership Meeting will be held on Wednesday, January 21, 2009 at 7:00 pm in the Multi-Purpose Room at the Veterans Memorial Building, 4117 Overland Avenue. Please park and enter from the rear of the building, and a brief tour of the CCHS ARC will be offered following the meeting.

Our guest speakers will be Dennis, Wilma (Willy), and Hope Parrish whose family has lived in Culver City since the late 1920s, when family friend Clark Gable encouraged Grandpa Jim Parrish to come out to California from Akron, OH, to be in the “movies!” Their family story parallels the development of Culver City on many levels.

The public is invited to enjoy the free program and students are encouraged to attend. Refreshments will be served following the program (remember: no food allowed in the ARC). For more information, please call the Society at (310) 253-6941 or email us at info@CulverCityHistoricalSociety.org.
January will mark the beginning of the third year of the Culver City Historical Society’s Archives & Resource Center (ARC), housed in the Veterans Memorial Building complex (on the corner of Overland Ave. & Culver Blvd.).

We are very proud of the progress that we have made and grateful for the many compliments that you have so generously given us when you have visited the ARC. If you have not yet visited the Center, please put it on your 2009 to-do list. I’m sure that you will be happy that you did!

Beginning in December, we will be displaying terrific color photos of the beautiful floats that Culver City entered in the world-renowned Pasadena Rose Parades back in the 1980s. We also have a photo of the 1940 entry (see the “ARC Update” column, pg. 7). These photos are really something special and they reflect a part of our city’s wonderful film history, such as the float commemorating the classic comedy team of Laurel & Hardy.

Remember, this is your city’s archives so please come visit, come do research and come have a good time – we promise you’ll find some fascinating treasures and historic memorabilia!

Wishing you and yours a happy, healthy holiday season and a great New Year – and thank you again for your continuing support!

Sincerely,

Notes from Your City Historian
by Julie Lugo Cerra

A GREAT 2009 AHEAD!

This new year of 2009 is going to be filled with celebrations!

First, it marks the 70th Anniversary of several 1939 classic films. Do you remember the beautiful stamps to commemorate some of those films? In 1990, The Culver Studios hosted an event in Culver City for which the CC Post Office even arranged a local cancellation! (see photo below)

Also, it marks the 90th Anniversary of the opening of Thomas Ince’s second studio, currently The Culver Studios (at 9336 Washington Blvd.), and The Hal Roach Studios – known as the “laugh factory to the world” – which was further east on Washington Blvd. and now remembered with an historical marker at the corner of National Blvd. placed by the Sons of the Desert (The International Laurel & Hardy Society).

The Academy of Motion Pictures Art and Sciences will be hosting another great film series in 2009. Randy Haberkamp, Program Director of the Academy Foundation, tells us it will start in the spring. The ten-film series will feature 1939 film releases, including The Wizard of Oz and Gone With the Wind, which will bookend the event.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION OBJECTIVES

Historic Preservation is front and center…..and concern is warranted. We will let you know when the proposed new Historic Preservation Ordinance will go to Council and the RFP (Request for Proposal) for a new historic survey.

We marked the Legion Building as Historic Site #65 in 1985, and it is a part of the property that Brotman Medical Center wishes to sell. It holds “significant” historic status in Culver City.

Another structure in potential jeopardy is the 1940 Gateway Station Post Office (see story on pg. 1).

Steve Rose (’64) and I enjoyed opening up the ARC for the Culver High School Class of ’63 Reunion (and other classes thereabouts!) last October 18th. Dan Bloom (’63) has built a screen for us to separate the display area from our workspace. Stop by and see what we are doing with it . . . .a timeline in progress! Thanks, Danny!

Note: The Los Angeles Conservancy has again given the City of Culver City a “B-” rating on their Historic Preservation Report Card . . . !
CULVER CITY’S MERALTA THEATRE

The traveling female duo of ‘The large’ Pearl Merrill and ‘The Tiny’ Laura Peralta performed as “Ella Fant and Miss Kito” on the vaudeville circuit for many years, accumulating enough money to build their own theatre at 9632 Culver Boulevard, Culver City.

FILM PREVIEWS LEADS TO FIRST-RUN RELEASES

The Meralta’s opening premiere show included an appearance by Will Rogers, a new Thomas Ince film and an Our Gang comedy (which had all the kids leaping through their on-screen likeness when the projectionist stopped the film!). The duo then began to book other vaudeville acts at the new theatre, and the first was a review titled Half A Dollar Bill with Sherwood Wertz at the organ.

By 1927, the theatre was being used by local studios as a preview house for motion pictures and civic events. On May 27, 1927, MGM Studios hosted their sales convention in Los Angeles and arranged for their guests to see Lon Chaney’s latest film, The Unknown. By 1928, MGM was using the theatre not just for its premieres, but also for its general releases such as Beatrice Fairfax’s The Lovelorn starring Sally O’Neil and Molly O’Day (see photo). And, by 1929, the theatre was being used on its “dark days” for Christian Science lectures.

On January 20, 1935, the Los Angeles Times announced that “The Meralta Theatre, at 9628 Culver Boulevard will be remodeled at a cost of $10,000, according to architect C. A. Balch.” The newly-remodeled theatre joined the Fox West Coast Theatre chain and began to show first run films.

In 1938, a typical film program included such fare as Holiday starring Katharine Hepburn and Cary Grant, Three Comrades starring Robert Taylor and Franchot Tone, and The Saint in New York with Louis Hayward.

1940S: WAR-THEMED FILMS

During World War II, the theatre was screening war-themed films such as Fighting Cheyenne and Noel Coward’s In Which We Serve. Five Graves To Cairo, starring Erich Von Stroheim, screened in August of 1943.

On August 10th, the Los Angeles Times reported: “Unscheduled Performance! Fire, which is believed to have started in a theater lobby, early yesterday, swept through a Culver City building housing a theatre [Meralta] and small shops at an estimated loss of $100,000.” The devastated theatre was moved to the Culver Auditorium the following year until a new building could be built. Sometime around the end of 1945, a new theatre was built on the original site.

A NEW ERA

After Pearl Merrill’s death in 1961, Laura Peralta Brackett remained in her apartment over the theatre, constructed so she could watch the films from a special room. At this time, The Grass Is Greener, starring Cary Grant opened at the theatre.

In 1969, the theatre was hosting studio previews and fundraiser parties for local schools and colleges. During the 1970s, the theatre suffered some vandalism and became run-down.

On February 24, 1983, the Los Angeles Times announced that “Culver Rebuilds … $4 Million Dollar Plaza on the old Meralta Theatre site is the first major development in Culver City in many years.” On June 3, 1984, the new Meralta Office Plaza (a Spanish-style office complex at 9696 Culver Blvd.) opened and was the first major public development in over two decades.
2008 began with an Installation-Dinner on January 16th of the Society’s 11th president, Stu Freeman.

Stu and his family have lived in the Culver City area since the mid-1920s. It was held in the historic Hull Building – the Society’s Historic Site#2 – which has been in the Freeman family for more than 60 years. The event was catered by the site’s new restaurant, Akasha. (Akasha’s formal opening received rave reviews from all the critics in the area and is now one of downtown’s foremost restaurants!)

The CC Historical Society had a prominent presence at the first “LA Heritage Day” on March 2nd at the Heritage Square located off the Pasadena (#110) Freeway, along with Historical Societies and Museums from all over Southern California who presented information on their communities and Los Angeles’ Heritage. This special event was the first time LA’s diverse historical communities were brought together to preserve and share the past. Special kudos go to our new Parliamentarian, Karen Coyle, who went among the crowds and brought many over to the CCHS table – she was a great Society rep!

May was again designated as the national “Historic Preservation Month” and the Society hosted a “kick-off” gathering at the Culver Hotel on May 2, followed by our popular “Walking Tours” on May 10th during the annual downtown Car Show.

We lost a city landmark with the closing of Stellar Hardware in the Spring, but fond memories remain.

On May 25th and 30th, the Society conducted “history tours” of the ARC for four Culver 3rd-grade classes with “rubbings” of plaques, and also walking tours of downtown Culver City for El Marino students. They loved it!

The Society hosted a mini-conference of the Associated Historical Societies of Los Angeles County at the ARC on July 12th. City Historian Julie Lugo Cerra spoke to the group on issues of preservation and how the ARC has developed. Danny Munoz, AHSLAC President and a CCHS Life Member, presented the Society with a gift of books for the ARC’s reference.
In early July, the Society hosted visitors from Culver City’s Sister City of Lethbridge, Canada as part of their city-wide excursion.

The annual “Picnic in the Park” on July 16th had its usual fun atmosphere along with the General Business Meeting. Brief tours of the developing ARC facilities were a part of this year’s event.

August “Fiesta time” in the city is always great fun and this year, the Society welcomed swarms of visitors from the community and from afar. The ARC really shined and all of our guests were impressed with our many treasures!

“Home Movie Day” has become a national event and our sister organization “across the street,” the Mayme A. Clayton Library and Museum, was the local host for our area this year on October 18th. Several of our great volunteers helped out at the Clayton site and also at the ARC – it was a very full day!

A notable addition to the Society this year was the wonderfully gifted computer master, Winston Gieseke. Winston has been setting up invaluable programs for our many archival needs and is developing our website. He is a prize!

We introduced a new and extremely popular item to the CCHS gift list: The CCHS Umbrella with scenes of historic Culver City sites. At $40 each, these umbrellas have been flying off the shelf! Be sure to stop by and pick one up for yourself and your friends and family.

July 5, 2008: Sister City visitors from Lethbridge, Canada, toured the ARC as part of their city-wide excursion.

“Picnic in the Park” with CCHS members (L-R) Chuck Hand, Judy Stangler, Ross Hawkins and Martha Sigall.

Fred Yglesias (center) and Karen Coyle (R) volunteer for “Home Movie Day.”

Winston Gieseke performing his magic.

The new CCHS Umbrella!

MARK YOUR CALENDAR
JAN. 21ST:  CCHS WINTER GENERAL MEETING
APR. 15TH:  CCHS SPRING GENERAL MEETING
JUL. 15TH:  CCHS SUMMER “PICNIC IN THE PARK” & GENERAL MEETING
AUG.:  FESTA LA BALLONA
OCT. 21ST:  CCHS FALL GENERAL MEETING

For more information on any of these events, please contact the CCHS: info@CulverCityHistoricalSociety.org or Tel: 310.253.6941.

2009 ARC Volunteer Dates
1st & 3rd Saturdays, 1-3 pm
Call to confirm dates: 310.253.6941
Jan. 3  Jan. 17  Feb. 7
Feb. 21  Mar. 7  Mar. 21
Apr. 4  Apr. 18  May 2
May 16  Jun. 6  Jun. 20
“Gateway” (cont’d.)

Noted that an independent study done this millennium, found the structure worthy of National Register status.

A GEORGE SAMERJAN LOBBY MURAL

Although Culver City’s Historic Preservation ordinance has focused on the outside of structures, there is some interesting history within the building as well. There was a congressional office off the lobby and over the entrance to that office is a 1941 mural by George Samerjan.

From an internet search, it appears that Samerjan was born in Boston in 1915. He is listed as faculty at Occidental College in Los Angeles in 1940. He served as a documentary artist for the U.S. Air Force in the Arctic and other locations and he worked for the Los Angeles Times as an art director. He also taught art at New York University for 25 years.

Samerjan is credited with the design of three U.S. postage stamps, commemorating the Arctic, the Erie Canal and Adlai Stevenson. Samerjan’s other post office murals included one in Maywood, CA which was destroyed, and one in Calexico, Mexico.

The mural in the Gateway Station is titled “Studio Lot.” It is a twelve foot by ten foot mural depicting empty movie sets on an MGM back lot.

Culver City’s Community Development Department is aware of the property’s availability and is looking for a good use for this historic structure. The CC Historical Society copied its comment letter to the City to keep Cultural Affairs and Community Development in the loop as plans for this unique building move forward.

~ 6 ~

- Thank You for your membership:
  ~ Phil Tangalakis: Patron level

- Thank You for your donation:
  ~ The Rufus Harrington Family: MGM stills and clippings
  ~ Fred Yglesia: MGM Auction catalogs
  ~ Douglas Newton: Label-maker
  ~ Culver City Woman’s Club: $100
  ~ Bonnie Hileman: 2 Dress Forms
An ARC Update …

by Martha & Sol Sigall
Vice President, Archives

SYMANTEC DONATION FROM FOX HILLS DEVELOPMENT SITE

Thanks to our former ARC chair Robin Turner, we have a display of archeological finds from the Fox Hills site of the Symantec development. Robin facilitated the donation of 40 boxes of cataloged items. You can view examples of these items on display now. They include a selection of bottles, ceramic pieces, and even a Giant Pacific Oyster Shell!

CC ROSE PARADE FLOATS

Did you know that Culver City entered its first float in the Pasadena Rose Parade in 1925? And subsequently, we had floats in the thirties, forties, 1950 and again in the 1980s. The most recent were efforts by the Culver City Visitors and Convention Bureau as the Culver City Tournament of Roses Association. Drop by the ARC to see a sampling of vintage photos.

MGM STILLS ADDED TO ARC COLLECTION

Special thanks to our members, Bill and Madelyn Hahn, for arranging for a donation from the Rufus Harrington family. Mr. Harrington, a local resident, worked in the MGM art department and he was also active in American Legion Post #46, using his artistic expertise to design band uniforms for the Legion. The collection includes 42 stills, including photos from The Wizard of Oz, Billy the Kid, Lassie Come Home, Northwest Passage, Blossoms in the Dust among others.

ARC UPCOMING EVENTS

We now have a wonderful new standing screen to separate the display area from our workspace which was made by Dan Bloom, Culver High Class of '63. We also will use it to show Culver City history via a graphic timeline.

Beginning January, 2009, we will have ongoing showings of our historic DVD and VHS collection. These include a 1925 tour of MGM Studios, "Local History Legends and Lore," and much more.

Come join us – and bring your friends! We are open the first and third Saturdays of the month from 1-3 pm and by appointment. The CC Historical Archives & Resource Center (ARC) is located at 4117 Overland Ave., Culver City, CA 90230. Tel: 310.253.6941. Entry is from rear parking lot of the Veterans Memorial Building.

~ Martha & Sol

“L.A.” (cont’d.)

Hosted by the USC Libraries and building on the USC Libraries’ commitment to preserving Southern California and Los Angeles history, L.A. as Subject is developing a variety of new resources to support L.A.-area historical collections and strengthen the involvement of local communities. It aims to raise public interest in local history while providing opportunities for educators, community archivists, librarians, and historians to share ideas and help one another preserve the L.A. region’s diverse cultural heritage.

L.A. as Subject is working to increase the visibility of local archives and improve access to them for students, researchers, K-12 educators, and everyone else with a stake in Southern California history. L.A. as Subject promotes tools and mentoring to help its members with everything from preserving and cataloging materials in their collections to fundraising and public outreach.

It was an extraordinary array of organizations and societies – public and private, well-known and little-known, broad and boutique presentations, along with educational Panels, author discussions and film screenings. It was a truly enlightening and valuable opportunity!

And … the Culver City Historical Society has now become an active member in L.A. as Subject and plans to have a prominent presence at next year’s event!
Become a Member of the Culver City Historical Society Today!

Join others in preserving the history of the “Heart of Screenland” and to support the Culver City Historical Society Archives & Resource Center (ARC).

We can’t do it without YOU!

**TYPES OF MEMBERSHIP**

- _____ Benefactor ($1000)
- _____ Organization ($15)
- _____ Family Member ($25)
- _____ Youth Member ($5)
- _____ Corporate Sponsor ($500)
- _____ Business Member ($50)
- _____ Individual Lifetime Member ($250)
- _____ Family Lifetime Member ($500)
- _____ Patron Member ($100)
- _____ Individual Member ($15)

Name/Company: _________________________________________  
Contact Person: ____________________________________

Mailing Address: (Street)______________________________ (City) __________________________ (State/Zip) _________________

Telephone: ____________________  Fax: ______________________  Email: _________________________________________

Please make checks payable to The 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.

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.

- Alliance Bank ………………………………… Curtis Reis (310) 410-9281  
- Brundo Interiors ………………… Richard Ross Brundo (310) 391-1888  
- Byco, Inc. ……………………………… John Byers (949) 645-2251  
- 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  
- Culver Hotel, The ……………… Douglas Newton (310) 838-7963  
- Culver Studios, The ………………… (310) 202-1234  
- Dave Blair Plumbing …………….. (310) 397-9493  
- Robert L Duitsman, Attorney At Law …………………………………… (310) 645-6223  
- Flanigan Farms ………………… Patsy Flanigan (310) 836-8437  
- Freeman Properties ………… Stuart Freeman (310) 839-7593  
- Fresh Paint ………….…………… Josetta Sbeglia (310) 558-9355  
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- Flanigan Farms ………………… Patsy Flanigan (310) 836-8437  
- Freeman Properties ………… Stuart Freeman (310) 839-7593  
- Fresh Paint ………….…………… Josetta Sbeglia (310) 558-9355  
- JLF Appraisal Services ……………………..… JFL Forman (310) 837-7455  
- Marcus Accounting Services ……………………..… (310) 397-4696  
- Martin B. Retting, Inc. ……………………..… Robert Retting (310) 837-2412  
- Petrelli’s Restaurant ……………………..… George Petrelli (310) 398-9777  
- Roll ‘n Rye Restaurant ……………………..… Rita Zide (310) 390-3497  
- Santa Maria Barbecue Co. …………..… James Rodrigues (310) 842-8169  
- Carol Schwab, CC City Attorney ……………………..… (310) 253-5660  
- Sony Pictures Entertainment….………..…... Kristin Cavanaugh (310) 244-4000

**Culver City Historical Society**

PO Box 3428 • Culver City, CA • 90231-3428