Farewell to the Iconic Sixth Street Bridge

BY ANNA SKLAR

The Sixth Street Bridge spanning the Los Angeles River has long been a symbol of the city. “No L.A. River bridge has more spectacular views of the downtown skyline than the 6th Street Bridge,” said Lewis MacAdams, noted Los Angeles poet, journalist and “godfather of the Los Angeles River.” “None,” he writes, “says L.A. more unmistakably. Scenes in Terminator 2 and Grease were shot at the bridge. Madonna, Kid Rock and Kanye West have featured it in videos. Dozens of car chases, hundreds of commercials and thousands of L.A. Marathon competitors have been framed in the bridge’s double steel arches.”

In one of those terrible quirks of fate, the 6th Street Bridge, largest and most celebrated of the river bridges, is the only river bridge built with concrete that suffers from alkali-silica reaction (ASR). In ASR, aggregates containing certain forms of silica will react with alkali hydroxide in concrete to form a gel that swells as it absorbs water from the surrounding cement paste or the environment. These gels can induce enough expansive pressure to damage concrete. Because of ASR, the bridge is scheduled for demolition and replacement beginning later this year.

Today, the bridge stands as a forlorn and graffiti-abused viaduct, no longer a glittering skyline beacon to the city. Completed in 1932, the 6th Street Bridge is a continued on page 3
President’s Message

Greetings Members:

I hope you and your families are enjoying the summer!

We have wrapped up our Marie Northrop Lectures for the year, but our events are continuing. Changes keep occurring on our board and as board members come and go we shuffle around our responsibilities on the board. I am happy to say that we are continuing to provide events for our members seamlessly, but all the changes make me realize we need to continue to recruit new board members and additional volunteers who wish to help out with our activities. We could use volunteers to staff our tables at public events, to assist with set up at the gala, and especially with unique skills like web design, merchandizing, graphic design, research or grant writing, or general writing. If any of you are interested in becoming more involved in the historical society please give me a call or an e-mail or contact any board member.

I hope you manage to take some time off this summer but rest assured that we are continuing to plan events into the fall and winter. Please think about visiting our table at the 10th Annual Archives Bazaar in the USC Doheny Memorial Library on Saturday, October 17th. And please continue to follow our web page and our Facebook page as we continue to expand our web and social media presence.

Our annual holiday gala will be a little early this year. We are planning a brunch in the Bullocks Wilshire building on Sunday, November 15th. There will be more information on that in the near future.

Thank you all for your ongoing support of the historical society and I look forward to seeing you at events and at the gala.

Sincerely,

Todd Gaydowski
President
streamline-moderne monolith of steel arches and concrete towers, and is 3600 feet long, forty-six feet wide, with forty-three spans. When dedicated in June 1933, the city gave the bridge a celebratory opening of pomp and circumstance. Dignitaries gave speeches, the Los Angeles Police Band played rousing music, flags fluttered in the breeze, and the crowd cheered as a small child snipped a ribbon of flowers to open the bridge.

There are ten “Monumental LA River Bridges.” They include 1st, 4th, 6th, and 7th Streets, as well as North Broadway, Main Street, North Spring Street, Olympic Street, Los Feliz Boulevard, and Washington Boulevard. With the exception of the North Broadway Bridge (1910), the nine other bridges were built between 1925 and 1932, often with Depression era funds, under the direction of the brilliant city bridge engineer, Merrill Butler. Except for the Los Feliz Boulevard Bridge, all are Los Angeles Cultural Historic Monuments and are listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

Butler is briefly noted in the various accolades about the river bridges, with the exception of a few structural engineers, historians, and conservation societies.

He is more than a vague memory to Clark Robins, LACHS board member, a forty-seven-year veteran of the Bureau of Engineering and retired head of the Structural Division, who recently gave me a tour of the bridge and remarked on its great heritage.

As we drove over the bridge, from the east end at Boyle Avenue and Whittier Boulevard, Clark pointed to the extraordinary vista of the city that can be viewed by visitors seeing the city for the first time. Many have noted that no other L.A. River bridge has more spectacular views of the downtown skyline.

“In 1924,” Clark said, “the city passed the Viaduct Bond Act and hired Merrill Butler as engineer of bridges to implement that same vision.” Butler served as the city’s lead engineer for bridges and structures from 1923 until 1961. He came on board to oversee the implementation of the city’s $2 million Viaduct Bond Act, and continued building bridges with bonds and federal public works funding.

“Each bridge,” Clark said, “was to serve as a gateway to a great city. Each of these bridges is unique,” he added, “but each is unique in its own way. There are different railings, different pylons, etched designs, and lighting fixtures.

“Merrill Butler did not call himself an architect, but he created great architecture and great art. He was a self-taught engineer, never having graduated from an engineering school. Few people know that Frank Lloyd Wright
was a civil engineer by formal training. But he created great architecture and is remembered as a great architect. I include Merrill Butler in that distinguished class.

“The 6th Street Bridge was the grand entrance to the city for people coming from the east,” he said. “People in those days foresaw a world-class city, and they wanted to build a world-class city so they built, you know, everything was grandiose, including the bridges.”

A pedestrian tunnel leads under the 6th Street Bridge, and Clark swiftly maneuvered his car down the ramp of the tunnel as I sat next to him, wondering a bit about our unusual approach to the river bed.

As we walked along the river bed we encountered a couple of unusual visitors, a pair of Egyptian Geese paying no attention to us as they meandered from the concrete slope to the ribbon of water provided by the Tillman Water Reclamation Plant in Van Nuys that now is the primary source of L.A. River water. The reclamation plant gives advanced treatment to approximately sixty million gallons of sewage a day.

Clark pointed out features of the 6th Street Bridge, as well as the unique 7th Street Bridge. “You can see original
bridge at grade,” he said, “so when they built the 6th Street Bridge, they wanted to raise all the bridges except Main Street. They decided that the 7th Street Bridge, originally designed for use by the Pacific Electric Railway, would support another bridge. It was really creative engineering, saved a lot of money. I don’t know of any other bridge where, instead of tearing out an old one, they added on a second bridge on top of the original one."

The original concrete bridge was built more than a hundred years ago in 1910, to replace an 1897 bridge washed out in flooding in 1899. The original bridge is an at-grade three-arched bridge. The 7th Street Bridge is not scheduled for demolition.

The Sixth Street Bridge is being demolished and replaced because, according to the city, ASR has made the bridge dangerously prone to collapse in the event of another major earthquake.

Clark said, “The giant pylons in between the two steel arches was one of the first things to go because of calcahyde silica reactions.” They were taken down in 1949. “It can’t be fixed,” he added. “Acidizing is very highly toxic and comes down in a curve. It never becomes zero, but does become more insignificant.” He added, “By now, to me the worst of it’s over.”

The city’s Public Works Department disagrees: “It is an irreversible chemical erosion,” said Department of Public Works spokeswoman Tonya Durrell in 2009. “We describe it as a pretty sick bridge, like a cancer.”

Repairs, however, have been made to the 6th Street Bridge. Following the San Francisco earthquake in 1989, Los Angeles voters approved Proposition G, a $376-million bond measure to repair more than 160 bridges, several libraries, fire stations and other city buildings including major damage to City Hall. While most of the money went to repairs of these buildings, including major retrofitting and repair of City Hall, many of the city’s bridges were retrofitted.

Clark said, “We retrofitted 125 bridges.” Initially, he added, “The city repaired the superstructure of the 6th Street Bridge—everything above the columns that hold up the bridge. We put in four massive caissons that would solve the longitudinal problem if the bridge tries to move toward L.A. or downtown.” Caissons are deep holes filled with reinforced concrete. These were ten feet wide by thirty feet deep. Eventually they solved the transverse problem with additional concrete infill. But the substructure problem was not fixed.

In 2004 Clark and his staff prepared a retrofit report for the 6th Street Bridge that offered two alternatives to solving the problem of the ASR. One alternative was to build a new bridge. The second was to repair the bridge. Clark was in favor of the second option, which he said would have cost between $30-40 million. He
recommended that “seventy-six columns of the bridge be
encased with 7/8-inch plates and 5/8-inch steel plates. All
exposed plates, channels, and bars would then be concealed
with a 6-inch layer of architectural mortar. All exterior
columns with light to moderate damage would also be
encased to account for future degradation due to ASR.”

The city took the first option. In 2012 the city opened
a competition for what would be the most prestigious
construction project in Los Angeles. Los Angeles architect
Michael Maltzan was the winner of the City’s interna-
tional design contest. The new bridge, known as “The
Ribbon of Light,” is a $428-million public works project
and is expected to open in 2019. The Sixth Street Viaduct
Replacement Project is the largest bridge project in the his-
tory of Los Angeles; and is being built with funding from
the Federal Highway Transportation Administration, and
CalTrans, as well as with funds from the city.

The response to the design of the new bridge appears
to have been almost exclusively positive. There have only
been a few critics of the new bridge, including former City
Councilman Tom LaBonge and Victoria Torres, who is a
member of the Boyle Heights Historical Society, and sat
on the 6th Street Viaduct community advisory committee.
She said she had hoped the new bridge would be similar
to the current one, but with modern technological design.

Some community residents are also worried that the new
bridge will cut off access to local businesses.

But it is clear that Mayor Garcetti and other city lead-
ers, L.A. River bloggers, and others believe the new bridge,
with its grand architectural features, will herald in a new
era for the City of Los Angeles.

Although Clark would not comment on the design of
the new bridge, he said, “I would have kept this bridge,
because we could have stabilized the problem of ASR.”

Egyptian Geese taking a stroll along the Los Angeles River.

7th st bridge and railroad arches, similar to construction photo with completed river spans: Sixth Street viaduct, view of river
spans, looking north from Los Angeles River bed, July 2, 1933.
Current view of 6th Street Bridge looking northwest.

HNTB’s winning design of the 6th Street Viaduct Replacement Project.
The 10th-annual Los Angeles Archives Bazaar, presented by L.A. as Subject will be held at the Doheny Memorial Library on the USC campus from 9 am. to 5 pm, Sunday October 17.

Last year, LACHS was well represented with several volunteers and a great photo display. Please contact Todd Gaydowski to volunteer for the Bazaar. Todd.gaydowski@lacity.org, 213-473-8449.

We will join more than 70 archives—from the Autry National Center of the American West and the Los Angeles Public Library to private collectors whose materials fill the gaps left in the region’s history.

In addition, the bazaar will feature an archives roadshow, where anyone can bring historic photos or documents from home they want scanned; panels featuring specialists discussing the monsters that lurk throughout Southern California and L.A.’s “magical” year of 1939; and a screening of Monomania L.A., a documentary sponsored by Cal Humanities and airing on KCET about the motives and passions of collectors.

USC is minutes from downtown Los Angeles and is easily accessible by major freeways and the Metro Expo line. Doheny Library is located in the center of campus, adjacent to Alumni Park and across from Bovard Auditorium, on Trousdale Avenue. For information regarding parking on campus, visit the Parking Services Website.

---

**BOOK REVIEW**


**BY ABRAHAM HOFFMAN**

When Chicano students walked out of East Los Angeles high schools in March 1968, protesting against the inferior education they said they were getting from incompetent, racist, and insensitive teachers, counselors, and administrators, the event received nationwide publicity. It also marked the beginnings of the urban Chicano civil rights movement, raising awareness that Cesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers union were only part of the unequal society in which Mexican Americans lived. Foremost among the leaders of the walkouts was Sal Castro, one of the few Mexican American teachers in the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) at the time. The walkouts caught the news media and local politicians off guard, but the event was not a spontaneous one. It arose from the growing concern and anger of Castro and Mexican American college students over the failure of the schools to provide quality educational opportunities to young Chicanos who were being relegated to a perpetual working-class status.

Mario T. Garcia, Chicano Studies professor at U.C. Santa Barbara and author of a number of books on Chicano civil rights leaders, worked with Castro for more than a decade in recording interviews with him to get his life story. Born in East L.A., Castro experienced first-hand discrimination from teachers who forbade him to speak Spanish and routinely expected Mexican American students to take non-academic tracks, with emphasis on vocation rather than college preparation. Fighting back, he attended Los Angeles City College and Los Angeles State College (now California State University, Los Angeles), and became a secondary school teacher. After a brief stint at a Pasadena junior high, Sal went to work at the LAUSD, first at Belmont High and then at Lincoln High. He became known—or notorious—for his outspokenness, urging his students to learn about their cultural heritage and to think beyond high school to a college education. Sal participated in the Chicano Youth Leadership
We Get Mail

By Anna Sklar

From a private investigator: “I am desperately looking for yearbooks from this school from 1950-1955. Do you happen to have them, or know who does? We are trying to verify that our client was a graduate of this school (1953). Any assistance you can provide would be greatly appreciated. Thanks in advance!” We couldn’t help, and let him know. Suggested he contact the school directly.

WWI: A few volunteers working on WWI memorials wrote asking for assistance in locating memorials to the war as well as to WWI aviator Clover Graeyers who died in 1918 in an airplane crash. There are a surprising number of such memorials in Los Angeles, including Memorial Library on Olympic Boulevard, the Memorial Coliseum, and the Victory Glendale Hyperion Bridge built in 1929 with a plaque dedicating the bridge as the “Victory” bridge. Clover Graeyers has a few places dedicated to him as well, including Graeyer’s Oak Park in Montecito Heights, at the corner of Figueroa and Marmion Way. Clover Field Airport was in existence from 1928 to 1939 at the current site of the Santa Monica Airport. Cloverfield Boulevard in Santa Monica, adjacent to the airport, was also named for Clover. It is the southern extension of 23rd Street in Santa Monica and is a widely used commuter street that eventually morphs into Walgrove as it enters the city of Los Angeles.

Inquiries from Media: We get frequent inquiries from reporters on deadline, from the smaller outlets to local PBS stations and, most recently TIME Magazine. Fortunately, I check our email daily, so am able to assist. Often they would like to interview an expert on L.A. history, and I almost always refer them to our resident historian, Abe Hoffman. If he’s unavailable, I can usually find another expert.

Conference at Camp Hess Kramer and became a counselor and mentor to Chicano students, helping to raise their self-esteem and inspire them to attend college.

Frustrated at the failure of the school district to motivate Chicano youth or to deal with the high dropout rate, Castro and some college students planned to stage non-violent demonstrations by walking out of classes. In the first week of March 1968, thousands of Chicano students walked out of Lincoln, Garfield, Roosevelt, and Belmont, and students at other Los Angeles schools also showed their sympathy by walking out. Although the walkouts—soon called “blowouts”—lasted only a few days, they made an impact on the school board, and the first steps were taken to create programs and policies that would improve conditions in the schools where Chicano students were the majority population.

In taking a leadership role, Castro paid a heavy price for opposing the educational status quo. Arrested along with a dozen other Mexican Americans on charges of conspiracy, Castro spent two years fighting the indictments until acquitted in court. Ostracized by many teachers, he was transferred out of the classroom, then from Lincoln to Belmont where he continued to motivate his students until he retired in 2003. In 2010 the LAUSD honored him by naming Belmont’s middle school after him. Times do change, but the wheels grind slowly.

Castro tells his story in salty language, frequently using Spanish epithets (translated into English for non-Spanish readers). He mellowed little over the years as he still passionately championed the importance of education, especially college education for Chicano students. Castro helped revitalize the Chicano Youth Leadership Conferences that continue to inspire students. Since his retirement, new issues have achieved center stage: demonization of teacher unions, loss of education electives because of severe budget cuts, and emphasis on teaching to pass standardized tests (to the detriment of actual learning of subject matter). The battles continue, but without Castro he died in 2013.

Some readers may question Mario Garcia’s taking the position of first author in the second author’s autobiography. He justifies this by noting that Castro did not write his autobiography; the book is the result of numerous taped interviews that had to be transcribed, with Garcia organizing and editing them into a chronological narrative. Garcia also provided numerous explanatory and source notes that identify people and create contexts. He also includes an Afterward appraising Castro’s career and an Appendix on books about the urban Chicano civil rights movement. The result is an important perspective on a major event in the history of Los Angeles schools and the reform efforts, however controversial, that needed to be made on behalf of Chicano students.

Abraham Hoffman teaches history at Los Angeles Valley College.
Early Chinese workers played a significant role—often under great duress—in the shaping of Los Angeles, California and the United States. Longtime city resident and historian Eugene Moy spoke to an appreciative audience gathered in downtown Central Library’s Mark Taper Auditorium on Sunday, June 7, 2015.

This was the third in a series of Marie Northrop Lectures cosponsored by the Los Angeles City Historical Society and the Richard J. Riordan Central Library’s history department. Moy’s presentation, “Bridging The Centuries: Chinese Americans and the Building of Los Angeles and California” provided an overview of 19th-century migrations of Chinese to the Americas, their involvement in early economic enterprises in the West, and their establishment of an initially small Los Angeles community that eventually became a major urban center.

Moy was born at the French Hospital in L.A.’s Chinatown. His grandfather and his great-uncle lived in the nearby single-room occupancy hotel above Little Joe’s Restaurant, once known as the Italian American Grocery. Moy attributed his passion for Chinatown history to his compelling interest in the multiculturalism inherent in L.A.’s formation. A former president of the Chinese Historical Society of Southern California, he currently is on the board of the Chinese American Museum.

The city’s first Chinatown had its beginnings in downtown’s historic El Pueblo district. “By the 1850s the oldest parts of L.A. became places where the newer immigrants could move in and live,” Moy said. It was in the Pueblo area where the oldest, cheapest housing was available.

“Many of the earliest Chinese businesses and residents occupied the Coronel Adobe, an old (adobe) house built by Antonio Coronel, scion of an early Californio family and alcalde (mayor) of Los Angeles at one time.”

Moy illustrated his lecture with old and contemporary photos as he chronicled the rich and colorful history of Chinese immigrants throughout California and the United States. It was a narrative marked with pride in hardworking Chinese Americans’ achievements and contributions, but also a sobering account of how the process of becoming American has been defined by blatant prejudice, racism and social devastation. Chinese Americans have faced social exclusion in almost every facet of U.S. society.

“The arrival of Chinese to work here in the U.S. resulted in a lot of discriminatory laws that prevented the men from reuniting with their families,” Moy explained. “They could go back to China, but oftentimes it was difficult to bring the families over.” As a result, their early environments were mostly male—filled with men who worked in fields, produce market, railroad construction or factories. Moy described early Chinatown communities as a typical sort of “workers camp … with a reputation as being a somewhat rough and unsavory place, but also the place to find the workers needed to wash the town’s clothes, cook the meals, plant and harvest the crops, and build the regional infrastructure”.

The Exclusion Act of 1882, signed by President Chester A. Arthur, halted Chinese immigration and naturalization for 10 years. Extended multiple times, the Act was not repealed until 1943. Moy described the 1882 Act as also a sobering account of how the process of becoming American has been defined by blatant prejudice, racism and social devastation. Chinese Americans have faced social exclusion in almost every facet of U.S. society.
just one of many federal, state, and local laws that “aimed to curtail Chinese encroachment into American society. These included unequal tax laws, land ownership prohibitions, and race restrictions on use or occupancy of property.” It was not until 2012 that the U.S. Congress passed both Senate and House resolutions, initiated by Rep. Judy Chu from the San Gabriel Valley, apologizing for Chinese exclusion.

Throughout the United States, the presence and actions of Chinese residents were controlled through a national immigration quota and marriage prohibitions (as, for example, the ban on interracial marriage). Full cultural integration and acceptance remains a problem to this day, Moy said—for despite Chinese American contributions in academia, business, athletics, and science, they still find themselves vulnerable to racial stereotypes and name-calling.

Moy said he believes it is important for Chinese Americans to know their city’s history because even today the city’s Chinese immigrant population is still changing. Los Angeles’ initial Chinese arrivals were predominantly Cantonese from the Guangdong province. In the last 30-plus years, many immigrants have come from Taiwan, Hong Kong, Vietnam, Cambodia, and mainland China. As descendants of early Cantonese speakers assimilate into the general national population, arriving immigrants from Asia and Southeast Asia speak Mandarin and other dialects as well as Cantonese. They have become a major presence in Chinatown and in suburban neighborhoods.

continued on page 12
Over the years, the actual site of Chinatown shifted several times. Its present location dates from the early 20th century, when half of the Old Chinatown community was evicted to make room for construction of Union Station, a passenger terminal for all of the major rail lines. The remaining half of Old Chinatown was vacated for the Hollywood-Santa Ana Freeway. Present-day Chinatown occupies a neighborhood that has seen a succession of immigrant settlers from Spain, Mexico, France, Italy, and now China and southeast Asia.

Eugene Moy described his own upbringing amidst the diversity of Los Angeles and how he believed the study of local and international history is essential to an understanding of the American experience. His insights on early California history provided a compelling view of Chinese immigrants’ significant contributions to the ongoing history of Los Angeles and California. He closed the session with a slide showing an iconic art sculpture on North Broadway, next to Chinatown, that is set as a backdrop to a parking lot flanked by the century-old St. Peter’s Italian Catholic Church and the Casa Italiana. He recited the very relevant (and un-credited) inscription mounted under the sculpture titled “The Immigrants”:

“The huddled masses came in pursuit of happiness, and staked out freedom’s claim. Their restless heirs push on mankind’s ancestral quest, for peace must yet be won.”

Marchessault Street in old Chinatown, Chop Suey rooftop signs and storefronts. Men holding planks of wood, gather under the steel framework for Union Station.

Parade for Sun Yat Sen, revolutionary leader and first president of the new Chinese Republic that he founded in 1911. Shortly after his death in Peking in 1925, residents of Chinatown mounted this celebratory parade in his honor.
A Walk and Talk Through Chinatown with Eugene Moy

By Sandi Hemmerlein

As a follow-up to his presentation at our Marie Northrop Lecture Series on June 7, historian Eugene Moy, of the Chinese Historical Society of Southern California, led LACHS members on a walking adventure through present day Chinatown on June 20.

We began our walk at the Chinese Historical Society of Southern California, which occupies two adjacent houses on a residential stretch of Bernard Street, just off of Broadway, across the 110 Freeway from Chavez Ravine at the site of the original Chinatown. The first Chinese settlers in Los Angeles, about 200 men, settled on Calle de los Negros between El Pueblo Plaza and Old Arcadia Street. Between the 1890s and 1910s, this area came to be known as Old Chinatown. It continued to grow, eventually taking up fifteen streets and alleys and included one hundred building units.

At Bernard Street, we could see one of Chinatown’s 16 historical markers along the “Angel’s Walk,” which points out areas and buildings of historical interest. It’s the greatest concentration of such markers in any given area of LA.

At a nearby overlook, we could look down and see the Los Angeles State Historic Park—an agricultural plot of land once known as “The Cornfield”—and the Broadway and Spring bridges across the LA River, an area of tremendous development that will soon see even more change.

As we ambled down Broadway, past the historic Phoenix Bakery (unfortunately not stopping for some strawberry and whipped cream cake), we paused at the Mandarin Plaza from 1972, a symbol of “New” Chinatown and the influx of new money into the area once immigration laws had been relaxed. The shopping center currently stands nearly vacant now, but it may be revitalized greatly when Andy Ricker opens an outpost of his famed Thai restaurant Pok Pok at the plaza.

As we swung through Old Chinatown’s Central Plaza (adjacent to the former site of Little Italy, now disappeared), Eugene pointed out General Lee’s, an Old Chinatown institution since 1878. A staple in “New Chinatown” as well, in the 1940s, David Lee, unfortunately, had to close the restaurant in 1985 because of a drop in patronage. It subsequently reopened under other names and other themes—most recently a bar and dance club called Mountain Bar—and has now returned to its original name, operating as a craft cocktail den.

We hoped to sneak a peek into Hop Louie (the former Golden Pagoda), an old school restaurant and bar that still serves traditional Chinese food, but upon rattling locked doors, Eugene explained the relaxed culture of Old Chinatown. They could open for business whenever they wanted—even late on a Saturday afternoon.

A branch of Cathay Bank—the first Chinese-American owned and operated bank in Southern California—was open and cool with air conditioning, so we took a shortcut through and admired the abacuses still used by banking customers.

Our final stop brought us into the Thien Hau Temple.
Chinese immigrants had arrived in Los Angeles as early as the 1850s and by the late 1920s had settled in Chinatown near the Plaza. LACHS members, who recently visited old Chinatown on a tour led by Eugene Moy, were able to explore the fairly large area south of the Plaza.

Unfortunately, during the 19th and early 20th centuries, anti-immigrant sentiment was widespread in the United States, especially against the Japanese and Chinese. In 1882 Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act that limited immigration of Chinese to the U.S. California adopted an even more restrictive law in 1913—The Alien Land Law prohibited Chinese and other “aliens ineligible for citizenship” from owning land in the state. Despite this, Chinese entrepreneurs built an opera theater, three temples, a newspaper, and a telephone exchange. In 1933, as plans were finalized for construction of Union Station, more than 3,000 Chinese who rented their homes and businesses were ordered to leave the area.

As early as 1918, the California Railroad Commission wanted Los Angeles to have one union station to replace the various railroad stations built by the Southern Pacific, the Union Pacific, and Santa Fe. The commission approved a plan for a union passenger terminal in 1920, but the railroads balked at the potential high cost of more than $450,000 to build the station. Following several years of protracted battle between the railroads and Los Angeles and voter approval in 1933 for a new union station, the railroads agreed to bear the cost of building Union Station on land—Chinatown—that had fortuitously been purchased by Southern Pacific in 1928. Shortly after voters approved construction of Union Station, SP transferred title to the land to a new Union Passenger Terminal Agency, formed by the consortium of the three railroads. The Chinese were given thirty days to leave and all were quickly evicted with the assistance of city officials. Within a few years, Chinese Americans built New Chinatown after a fund-raising campaign initiated by the Chinatown Project Association. The money was raised among the Chinese Americans without bank financing or loans. In June 1938 New Chinatown opened.

Union Station was completed and opened for service in 1939. ◆

continued from page 13

a Taoist place of worship where we could burn incense and give an offering to one of the holy shrines, as candles flickered and Chinese lanterns swayed in the breeze. It was hard to believe that this building, with its large pagoda façade, was once an Italian Baptist church. This is the second temple to occupy the space subsequently—this one having been dedicated in Spring 2006.

There was so much to learn and absorb about the present and past cultural traditions of Chinatown, we all knew that we must return to experience it again and again—and to become patrons of those restaurants and shops, and really experience it from the inside. There’s only so much you can experience by just walking through.

That being said, we couldn’t have asked for a better guide than Mr. Eugene Moy. Many thanks for his hospitality, and for joining us for a tasty lunch afterwards!

For more information on the Chinese Historical Society of Southern California, visit www.chssc.org. ◆
A previous article on the transcontinental railroads discussed Los Angeles’ struggle to be connected to the national railroad network. This first connection occurred in 1876 when the Southern Pacific Railroad line was extended southerly from San Francisco. Then in 1881 a second Southern Pacific line connected Los Angeles to the south and southwest United States. Finally in 1887, the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad became the third such connection and a competitor to Southern Pacific. That competition would henceforth be expressed by unique, and often exotic, passenger stations intended to attract patronage. But none of them would last as long as the one that replaced them all.

The first transcontinental rail station was the Southern Pacific’s River Station in 1876. It was located in the so-called “cornfield” — a nickname for the previously named brownfield, due to corn that leaked from trains and sprouted along the tracks — where the current Metro Gold Line tracks are today, parallel to and east of Broadway and north of the extension of Bishops Road. Being the first and only such station, it was rather plain and functional with a rustic redwood exterior. The Station had two stories with separate ladies’ and gentlemen’s reception and waiting rooms. Sometime later, Southern Pacific built a hotel and restaurants adjacent to the station.

When the Santa Fe Railroad arrived in Los Angeles in 1887, it is uncertain what station it used. It is known that there was a station built next to San Fernando Road possibly near Avenue 19 in 1887, also called the River Station. It was built of stone and brick. Although documents indicate that it was built by the Southern Pacific, in the often opaque documentation of history, it seems more likely that it might have been used by Santa Fe. It is unclear how long it served as a station.

Now that there was competition between the two railroads, Southern Pacific built a second, more attractive depot in 1888, known as the Arcade Station. Constructed near the intersection of 4th Street and Alameda Street, it was closer to the heart of the expanding city. It was a much larger wooden structure in the popular Victorian style, over 500 feet long with an arched roof 90 feet above the platforms. It was surrounded by gardens and landscaping and featured a Washingtonian fan palm at the entrance. It was certainly a
more welcoming station than the two River Stations.

Not to be outdone, Santa Fe built a new attractive station near the intersection of today’s 2nd Street and Santa Fe Avenue in 1893. It was known as the La Grande Station and was built with the more fireproof brownstone and brick. It looked exotic for its time and featured a large Moorish dome. It, too, featured lush gardens. Unlike most Santa Fe stations, it did not feature a full-service Harvey House restaurant, probably because it was the end of the line. However, in 1900, it did open a Harvey House lunch counter.

Finally, the Los Angeles Terminal Railway built a station just south of 1st Street and just east of the Los Angeles River. It was primarily a station to service regional travel between Downtown and Altadena and little is known about it. In 1905 it became part of the national network when it became part of the new Los Angeles and Salt Lake Railroad. In 1921 it became part of Union Pacific Railroad.

After a quarter century of service, Southern Pacific continued to upgrade its stations. In 1901 the original rustic wooden River Station was torn down and a new one was built nearby out of brick. It is uncertain how long this station continued to remain in service. As the 20th Century progressed, the Arcade Station, considered as quite attractive and commanding in 1888, was soon viewed as out-of-style and functionally inadequate. Thus, Southern proceeded to build a new station in 1914, known as Central Station.

As the name suggests, Central Station was located on Central Avenue at 5th Street, adjacent to the old Arcade Station. When Central Station opened, the Arcade Station closed and was demolished to accommodate new outdoor platforms. Central Station was the most impressive station to date. Designed by John Parkinson and George Bergstrom, in a classic Beaux-Arts style, it featured white stucco, Greek columns, fine interior woodwork, marble and elegant chandeliers. Also, it introduced umbrella-like train sheds so as not to entrap soot and smoke, as would happen with the arched roof of the Arcade Station.

To recap, by 1914 Los Angeles had witnessed seven stations. Four stations were by Southern Pacific, including the first River (demolished), the second River, the Arcade (demolished) and Central. Santa Fe possibly had a River Station (abandoned) and then the La Grande Station, while Union Pacific had a station of its own.

In 1924, the Union Pacific Station was destroyed by fire and its passenger operations were relocated to Southern’s Southern Pacific’s Central Station. The La Grande Station became vulnerable to Nature because the heavy brick and brownstone that protected it from fire made it more vulnerable to seismic tremors. During the 1933 Long Beach Earthquake it sustained serious damage. The Moorish dome was damaged beyond repair and was not replaced. However, the station remained open. At this point, there were three operating transcontinental rail services with just one full-service station (Central) and one damaged station (La Grande). Soon their days would be numbered.

During the period of first three decades of the 20th Century, there was growing discontent with the local, regional, and transcontinental rail lines sharing surface streets with pedestrians, horse-drawn carriages and the growing use of automobiles. This became all too apparent as large transcontinental trains proceeded at-grade along Alameda Street and Central Avenue to the Central Station terminal. In 1915, after several years of traffic conflicts, excessive traffic delay, and fatal collisions, discussions got underway regarding relocation of the tracks off of the surface streets.

These discussions led to the consideration of subways. However, they were considered to be too expensive to finance. The discussions then focused on elevated lines, similar to those in Chicago. They were considered unsightly and noisy, and this idea was discarded as well. Without a consensus and after a long court battle, the presidents
of the Southern Pacific, Union Pacific, and Santa Fe Rail roads were in a quandary. However, they finally found an improvement concept to which all could agree—a union of the stations. This concept would not affect those trolley and regional rail lines that used surface streets, but would relocate the heavy locomotives onto separate rights-of-way and grade separate them near downtown. The electorate overwhelmingly approved the plan in 1926.

It would be many more years until this commitment would become a reality. Finally, on May 3, 1939, Union Station made its grand debut. This day was one of the most celebrated in the history of the city and not only represented a consolidated station, but the culmination of seventy years of efforts to gain and then improve access to the national railroad network. The La Grande Station and Central Station ceased operation that same day. The La Grande Station was demolished shortly thereafter and Central Station was demolished in 1956.

No new major city railroad stations were built after the start of World War II, so Union Station became the last of the grand stations of the great era of railroad travel. It had a refreshing, attractive, informal style unseen elsewhere in any other major city in the country. It featured-mission revival architecture, streamline-moderne-interior-design elements, a fifty-foot-high ceiling, oak-cushioned chairs, giant chandeliers, beautiful woodwork, decorative, colorful tiles, two courtyards and a Harvey House restaurant. Soon, sixty-four passenger trains a day were arriving and departing Union Station with romantic names such as the Chief, Super Chief, Sunset Limited, Lark, Golden State, Desert Wind, and the City of Los Angeles.

When it opened, Union Station was a tangible representation of just how far Los Angeles had come from an isolated outpost of just five thousand people to a major city of 1.5 million. Union Station foretold the city’s promise and potential to eventually become the second largest city in the nation and an international center. Henceforth, Los Angeles would hold a very prominent position on the world map.

In contrast with its predecessors, Union Station has gotten better with age. The first River Station lasted twenty-five years (1876-1901), while the Arcade Station lasted twenty-six years (1888-1914). Central Station also served for twenty-five years (1914-1939), while the battered La Grande hung on for forty-six years (1893-1939). All of these once stylish and modern stations fell out of favor within one or two generations. But Union Station endured. It witnessed the golden age of transcontinental rail travel, weathered the transition to Amtrak and now has evolved to become the major West Coast rail hub for national, regional, and local rail services with more rail passengers than ever before. And at 76 years of age, with its historic features preserved, Union Station has never felt or looked better.
Springtime Greystone Mansion Tour

By Diane Kanner

In a city of great mansions, Beverly Hills’ Greystone wins the prize. “It is the best house south of San Simeon,” guide Steve Clark declared on May 6 when a group of LACHS members participated in his two-hour guided tour. The Edward Doheny Junior family who resided there for many years was able to ride horseback, swim, bowl, or imbibe from any number of hidden prohibition cabinets without leaving the grounds. Eighty servants, including four chauffeurs, cared for house, grounds and family.

But between the deaths of Edward Junior and his male secretary in a ground floor bedroom, and the family patriarch Edward Senior’s role in the Teapot Dome scandal, the lives of Doheny’s widow Lucy and her five children were scarred by emotional and sometimes physical hurt. A playmate of Lucy Junior fell from Lucy’s bedroom window and perished. “Their stepfather hated the Doheny kids,” Clark noted “and they were sent off to boarding school. Their mother and grandmother Estelle spent all their time trying to keep Senior out of jail and covering up the facts of the murders.” Author Raymond Chandler, who was a friend of the Beverly Hills police chief who led the homicide investigation, reworked the story into a book called The High Window.

Tour guide Clark, who has been a senior park ranger at Greystone for sixteen years, provided the scope of the Doheny saga for the group, beginning with Edward Doheny’s discovery of oil in 1892, that awakened Angelenos to the riches beneath their soil. Among the accumulation of real estate Doheny acquired was the 430 acres known as “Doheny Ranch” purchased in 1913. It was in this region that Edward Senior built Greystone over a period of three years for his son’s growing family. Santa Barbara sandstone was reinforced with concrete and rebar, creating walls nearly three-feet in thickness on the English manor-styled house. Architect Gordon S. Kaufmann oversaw construction from February 1927 until September 1928.

Greystone appears to be faring well. While fragile sandstone on garden paths has been worn away by time and use, the house has held up thanks to annual infusions of $1.5-2 million dollars by the City of Beverly Hills. Lucy Doheny herself was a questionable caretaker, having painted the majestic entry’s wood paneling in purple. The paint was removed but the porous wood has never been the same. Filming brings in welcome revenue. There Will be Blood, which was based on the Doheny oil story, was filmed in part there. By the time Lucy Doheny left the estate to downsize to a 27,000 square foot home in 1955, the 46,000 square foot Greystone was unsalable. It was too large and too traditionally designed for midcentury tastes—not to mention the purple paint. The Dohenys created revenue by subdividing a large parcel,
today’s “Trousdale Estates.” The City of Beverly Hills purchased the estate in 1965 to take advantage of the site’s capacity to store water underground and sold off all but 18 of the original 430 acres. The city leased Greystone to the American Film Institute from 1965 to 1982, but little was done in the way of repairs by the Institute. The AFI maintained its library there while holding international conferences. Students attended classes in film production and occasionally filmed some of their work there and completed post-production on their films, as well attending classes in film production.

It felt like the tour covered all that ground. Exiting the bowling alley for the billiard room, the group suddenly found themselves face to face with a bartender in a tuxedo who popped forward from one of the hidden speakeasies. “I was scared out of my wits,” Kay Tornborg said later. “This was one of the best house tours I have taken. Steve Clark seemed very interested in his subject despite having led the tour many times. It was a thoroughly entertaining afternoon.”

Left: Basement Bowling Alley in Greystone Mansion. Right, Greystone Grand Staircase.

YES! I would like to become a member of the Los Angeles City Historical Society.

Membership Application (Membership may also be submitted at www.lacityhistory.org)

Name __________________________________________________________________________________

Address __________________________________________________________________________________

City State Zip __________________________________________________________________________________

Phone __________________________________________________________________________________

E-mail Address ______________________________________________________________________________

Check your choice of membership:  
[ ] $85 Sustaining  
[ ] $50 Family/Dual  
[ ] $35 Active  
[ ] $25 Senior/Student  
[ ] $500 Life (Individual)

Membership Benefits Include:
• Lectures by historians and authors at the Richard J. Riordan Central Library’s Mark Taper Auditorium
• Field trips to historic sites
• Advance notification of special member programs
• Tour of the Los Angeles City Archives
• Quarterly LACHS Newsletter
• Membership on committees

Clip (or copy) and mail, together with your check to:
Los Angeles City Historical Society • P.O. Box 862311 • Los Angeles, CA 90086-2311
INSIDE THIS EDITION:

Farewell to the Iconic Sixth Street Bridge

Chinatown and Beyond

A Walk and Talk Through Chinatown with Eugene Moy

Transcontinental Rail Stations

Book Review: BLOWOUT!

Archives Bazaar is Coming

Springtime Greystone Mansion Tour