



Los Angeles City HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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L.A.'s First Freeway

By John E. Fisher

The growth of Los Angeles during the 20th Century was defined in large part by the automobile, so it should come as no surprise that the first freeway built in the western United States was in Los Angeles: the Arroyo Seco Parkway, often known as the Pasadena Freeway or, as locals often call it, “the 110.” The story of the Arroyo Seco Parkway is illustrative of the never-ending challenge facing the city to alleviate traffic congestion.

The following article is an excerpt from *Transportation Topics and Tales: Milestones in Transportation History in Southern California*, by John E. Fisher, former Assistant General Manager for the City of Los Angeles Department of Transportation.

In 1922, the business and civic leaders of the City undertook several initiatives to recommend solutions to the serious traffic circulation problems plaguing the city. They pooled their resources and hired the most esteemed experts of the day to address traffic congestion. The plan was titled the Major Traffic Street Plan.

Broadway was the gateway to the City from the north but was so crowded that an alternate route was planned. In fact, the intersection of Broadway and 7th Street was documented to be the busiest intersection in the world in 1924. That bypass route would be a widening, and extension and realignment of Figueroa Street northwesterly of 2nd Street. Later, that undertaking would become the beginning of the Arroyo Seco Parkway and ultimately the metropolitan freeway system.

A roadway was envisioned along the Arroyo Seco as early as 1895, although motor vehicles were not envisioned yet. In 1924, the Major Street Traffic Plan proposed a parkway and the concept was approved by voters that same year. During the next few years, the Avenue 26, Avenue 43 and Avenue 60 decorative bridges were designed by the City to span the riverbed



Rose Queen Sally Stanton, Governor Culbert L. Olson and other dignitaries at the dedication of the Arroyo Seco Parkway, 1940

Los Angeles Public Library Photo Collection (Herald Examiner Collection)

and a future 80-foot divided highway. However, delays ensued, and the roadway remained no more than a plan, due to the lack of funds during the Great Depression and controversies regarding the building of a roadway through park land.

Perhaps the delay was fortuitous, for a new concept in roadway design was emerging. For several

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President’s Message Happy Holidays Everyone!

December, 2020

I have to confess, when the Coronavirus pandemic first hit I never believed we would still be dealing with it in December. I can only offer my condolences to anyone who has lost a loved one, or who has suffered from the virus, as well as to those who have suffered economically from the shutdown. Let us all do our part to stop the spread and hopefully we will return to normal early in the coming new year.

I am happy that our society has begun to provide more content to our members via webinars. I hope you have been able to enjoy them!

This year we made an open announcement to our members soliciting candidates for a position on our board of directors. We received a rather enthusiastic response and have filled all of the vacancies on the board and were able to present a full slate of candidates for election. I would like to welcome our newly appointed board members, Donna Friess, Jared Nigro, Vivian Escalante, and

returning board member Michael Holland. We may solicit volunteers again in the future but there is no need to wait for the call, please reach out to myself or to our Vice President and Chair of the Nominating Committee, Charley Mims, at any time and let us know of your interests so we can keep you in mind.

Given the risks associated with large gatherings we have not held our annual meeting of the membership this year but we do look forward to getting together again with the members in 2021. We are working on returning to holding the Marie Northrop Lecture Series and other in person events, including our annual gala, just as soon such events can be conducted safely.

I wish you and your families all the best during the holidays. Take care and thank you for your ongoing support.

Todd Gaydowski, President

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years, the Long Island and New York areas had limited access routes in pastoral areas that they called parkways, built by Robert Moses. In 1929, the first cloverleaf interchange of two major roads was built in Woodbridge, New Jersey. In 1933, Chicago opened a portion of Lake Shore Drive, which featured grade separations and interchange ramps. Shortly thereafter, engineers began reading about Germany's autobahns.

Closer to home, Ramona Boulevard (now the alignment of the beginning of the San Bernardino Freeway) had been constructed in 1935 as an "airline" route with numerous grade separations between Mission Road and Atlantic Boulevard. Finally, the Automobile Club of Southern California released a report in 1937 which showed the futility of building more at-grade roadways and recommended a new system of "motorways." Borrowing from these models, an enhanced highway design was prepared for the roadway incorporating the concepts of total grade separation, no local property access, the division of travel paths and "inlets and outlets," the terms, at that time for on-ramps and

off-ramps. All that was needed was a complete funding package.

With the completion of the Figueroa Street bridge over the Los Angeles River in 1937 and, shortly thereafter, the availability of W.P.A. and P.W.A. federal funds, the stage was set to build a parkway. A couple of weeks after a severe flood devastated parts of Southern California, a groundbreaking ceremony was held on March 23, 1938 for a flood control channel and the parkway. The parkway would provide a direct connection between Broadway (now Arroyo Parkway) at Glenarm Street in Pasadena with Figueroa Street at Avenue 22 in Los Angeles.

The words, "arroyo seco," mean "dry riverbed" in Spanish. Indeed, the wash—that extends ten and a half miles from a point north of the Rose Bowl to the Los Angeles River—still lies dry most of the year. However, prior to 1940 flood waters from winter storms would gather momentum on the steep slopes of the mountains and damage downstream properties. During these times the arroyo was anything but seco.

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The Figueroa Street Tunnel during construction of the Arroyo Seco freeway through Elysian Park, circa 1941

Los Angeles Public Library Photo Collection (Herald Examiner Collection)

L.A.'s FIRST FREEWAY, *continued from page 3*

The work began in stages and was undertaken by both the City and the State Division of Highways (now Caltrans). The City designed and managed the construction of the flood control channel and designed the freeway lighting, while the Division of Highways managed the construction of the parkway. The first segment was opened on January 4, 1939 and the entire segment of the original Arroyo Seco Parkway was completed on December 30, 1940, just in time for Tournament of Roses crowds. It was hailed as the first freeway in the West.

Construction would continue for another 13 years on the segment to the south which mostly involved the conversion of the Figueroa Street bypass roadway (the one with the four tunnels) to a freeway. A new north-westerly roadway through the Elysian Hills between Avenue 22 and Castelar Street (now Hill Street) was built parallel to the bypass roadway in 1943. Upon its completion, Figueroa Street was converted to the northbound lanes of the Arroyo Seco Parkway and the new 1943 roadway was converted to the southbound lanes. In 1948, a median was installed along Figueroa Street between Hill Street and Alpine Street in order to convert it to parkway standards. In conjunction with the median, the Arroyo Seco Parkway was extended southerly to Sunset Boulevard on an alignment independent and westerly of Figueroa Street. Finally, in 1953 the highway was extended through the entire length of the four-level interchange to connect with

the Harbor, Hollywood and Santa Ana Parkways.

With the completion of the 1953 project, the Arroyo Seco Parkway no longer was an extension of Figueroa Street and not just an isolated parkway drive. Rather, it was a link of an emerging "freeway system." The term, freeway, began to be used since most of the new limited-access highways were to be constructed in developed areas, rather than in park-like settings. Also, by this time, a new naming system for freeways was being adopted. The emerging freeways extending from Downtown would be named in a standard fashion after the satellite destinations to which they connected. These names would include the Hollywood, San Bernardino, Santa Ana, Pomona, Long Beach, Harbor, and Santa Monica Freeways. Accordingly, the Arroyo Seco Parkway, which had a poetic and genteel name, became officially known as the Pasadena Freeway.

For those persons who enjoyed the scenic drive through Highland Park and who noticed the decorative bridges, ornamental bridge lighting, park land, hills and riverbed, it remained a parkway. In 2010, context-sensitive improvements, including decorative walls and street lights, were installed to address traffic safety. Concurrent with the improvements, the first freeway in the West was officially rechristened, the Arroyo Seco Parkway.

The Arroyo Seco Parkway is designated a State Scenic Highway, National Civil Engineering Landmark, and National Scenic Byway and was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2011. ♦

MEMBER NEWS

LACHS Member Jane Gilman Publishes New Book *Inside Hancock Park*

Who was G. Allan Hancock? Who were the leading architects of houses in the neighborhood? How did the streets like McCadden Place get their names? Where did the nation's wealthiest Indian direct traffic?

These are among the questions answered in the book *Inside Hancock Park*. The book introduces the reader to the area's rich history, its pioneers, its classic homes and to its founder who developed the land from bean fields and oil wells into an enclave of homes in the middle of an urban metropolis.

The 100-plus pages also cover notable characters, celebrities, architects and community leaders. Its

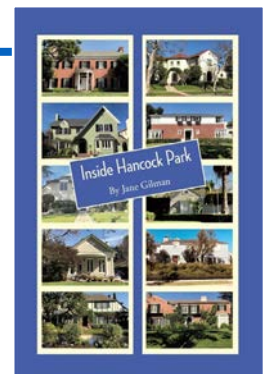
pages tell of the challenges the residents have faced to maintain the area's integrity.

Author Jane Gilman has been reporting on the Hancock Park area for more than 50 years as editor/publisher of the *Larchmont Chronicle* newspaper.

The book is available at Chevalier's Books, 126 N Larchmont Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90004. •

<https://www.chevaliersbooks.com/jane-gilman>

You can also order it on <https://www.amazon.com> ♦



2020 LACHS Student Scholarship Awards

In early 2019, the LACHS Board approved a program to award scholarships to outstanding history graduate students at local universities and colleges. The Board recognizes the critical value of the study and analysis of history to our democracy and seeks to encourage outstanding students in the field.

The 2020 Scholarship awardees are:

- **Abigail Calderon Garcia** (Cal State University Los Angeles)
- **Anthony Peña** (Cal State University Northridge)
- **Gavin Evans** (Cal State University Northridge)
- **Jocelyn Aguilera** (Cal State University Long Beach)
- **Moisés Ponce-Zepeda** (Cal State University Los Angeles)
- **Samantha Gelera** (Cal State University Long Beach)

On December 5, 2020 three of the 2020 scholarship winners presented their papers in a LACHS webinar.

Video of the December 5 presentations are on the LACHS website: <https://www.lacityhistory.org/blog>

The other three awardees will be presenting their papers via webinar in early 2021. Please check our website for updates. All of the above papers are presented in full on the LACHS website: <https://www.lacityhistory.org/scholarship>

We hope that LACHS members who wish to support the program will donate additional funds to the program. Please note that 100% of all donations will go to students.

Following are selected excerpts from the papers that were presented on December 5, 2020. ♦

Eradicating History or Embracing Change

by Abigail Calderon Garcia

Following are excerpts from “Eradicating History or Embracing Change: The Debate About Renaming Streets to Cesar E. Chavez Ave. in East Los Angeles in the 1990s”

In East Los Angeles during 1994, the Jewish Historical Society of Southern California and the concerned citizens of Sunset Boulevard circulated petitions to halt the name change of Brooklyn, Macy, and a portion of Sunset to Cesar E. Chavez Avenue that had been initiated by the City Council. The idea that history itself could be erased was a prominent point of contention along with potential economic hardships that would be acquired by small businesses in the affected areas. Nevertheless, supporters in the community and the City Council insisted it was crucial to properly honor Cesar Chavez and provide a “positive role model” to the existing Latino population. Street names play a significant role in the way residents understand their local histories; this is especially the case in Boyle Heights, a multiethnic neighborhood in East Los Angeles.

On April 23, 1993, one of the most acclaimed civil rights leaders in the United States, Cesar E. Chavez,

died. Two weeks after his death, Gloria Molina, member of the Board of Supervisors, initiated the process to rename Brooklyn Avenue, a portion of Sunset Boulevard, and Macy Street to Avenida Cesar Chavez. This prompted members and merchants of Sunset Boulevard and Brooklyn Avenue alongside the Jewish Historical Society, the Chinatown Community Advisory Committee, and the Chinese Chamber of Commerce to protest the decision through petitions and letters. The idea that history itself could be erased was a prominent point of contention along with potential economic hardships that would be acquired by small businesses in the affected areas.

Originally Boyle Heights was created as a suburban escape from downtown Los Angeles. However, city zoning laws in 1908 imposed on the west side of Los Angeles classified it as a residential area whereas the east side of Los Angeles was classified as industri-

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ERADICATING HISTORY, *continued from page 5*

al. Incoming immigrants and minorities were barred from the west side, thereby many settled in the east and south side. Boyle Heights' geographical positioning was perfect as it allowed for close access to work opportunities. The zoning laws of 1908 caused the ethnic composition of Boyle Heights to change dramatically, resulting in a multiethnic neighborhood.

By the early 1990s the demographics of Boyle Heights had shifted from being a mix of ethnicities to being predominantly Hispanic. The Los Angeles Almanac reports using U.S. census data that in 1990 the total population of Boyle Heights was approximately 90,778 people of which 85,447 were Hispanic. When citing the justification for the name change one of the main reasons was that Brooklyn Avenue represented the Jewish community and since the majority had moved to the Westside it was only appropriate to change the name to one that recognized the current Hispanic community. The Jewish Historical Society and residents stated that this neglected neglects to acknowledge the neighborhood's rich history.

Brooklyn Ave was never meant for the Jewish community as the application to the Cultural Heritage Commission depicted it. This is not to say that the Jewish community did not have ties and history

to the avenue but rather that the name itself did not represent the Jewish community. The name Brooklyn came from a land company. Andrew Boyle, one of the first "white" residents, purchased a lot of the land and used it to plant vineyards. Andrew Boyle's son-in-law William Workman made numerous attempts as mayor and council member of Los Angeles to give the land the necessary infrastructure to grow its population and transition from a rural location to an ideal suburb. William Workman and Brooklyn Land and Building Company made large investments to brand the area a suburban escape from the busy city. They wanted to make Boyle Heights a mythic landscape that would be known for its beauty and tranquility as exemplified second street's residential properties that are Queen Anne and Victorina style homes. These developments were aimed at attracting Anglo-Americans who desired a suburban lifestyle. These developments along with various street names changes such as Brooklyn, Michigan, St. Louis, Cincinnati, and Chicago were in place to attract people from the east coast by making the new landscape feel familiar. The vision was short lived because of an economic downturn.

Ultimately both Brooklyn Avenue and a portion of Sunset Boulevard became the new Cesar E. Chavez Avenue. However, even today many shops in Boyle Heights still pay homage to Brooklyn Avenue. It is crucial to understand the politics and community intricacies behind commemoration, for they reveal both the vulnerabilities and the intercommunity dynamism that exists in marginalized communities. This project highlights the politics involved in erecting commemorative memorials in Boyle Heights. While seemingly innocuous, the name change of Brooklyn Avenue reveals the complexity of local and intra- and inter-community politics as well as the active and fluid reimaginations of history. This process demonstrates that history does not merely happen but is also invented and deployed by interested parties and stakeholders. ♦



Portion of a mural of Our Lady of Guadalupe in the 2200 block of East Cesar E. Chavez Avenue in the Boyle Heights neighborhood of Los Angeles.
Los Angeles Public Library Photo Collection (Gary Leonard Collection)

Unapologetically Left

by **Moisés Ponce-Zepeda**

Following are excerpts from “Unapologetically Left: Temple-Beaudry Community Activism 1970–1990”

“We went to the Health Department and asked them to send somebody to inspect the houses. The inspector told me the Athletic Club didn’t want the houses inspected. In fact, one of the houses they tore down was in better condition than my house. They don’t care if people find a place or have money. They want to put them out.”
—Chata Piña, United Neighbors Temple Beaudry spokesperson

Landlords forced Chata Piña and her family to move four times from different apartments in the Temple-Beaudry community blocks from Downtown L.A.’s developing skyline between 1960 and 1981. Her experiences inspired her to seek training in developing grassroots resistance to urban development. She organized the United Neighbors Temple-Beaudry (UNTB), a group primarily led by women demonstrating the intersectionality of urban planning, immigrant housing rights, and community activism.

In 1974 the Los Angeles City Council and California Redevelopment Agency (CRA) approved the construction of a windowless nine-story Bank of America data center. The project would displace 500 working-class community members living in low-income housing at the intersection of the Hollywood and Harbor Freeways. The UNTB successfully organized and won relocation costs and support services for

displaced tenants. The ranks of UNTB continued to grow over the following decades under the principle that corporate redevelopment posed an ongoing threat to tenants’ rights.

Speculative real estate investment targeting low-income communities such as Temple Beaudry between the 1970s and ‘80s reflects trends in the greater Los Angeles housing market. Aging housing stock at low rental rates was neglected by landlords and designated for redevelopment

California became a destination for a massive influx of immigrants between 1970 and 1980; 1,868,000 immigrants made the state their home according to census data. During this period, California also faced deindustrialization of the heavy industry with Chrysler closing its plants in 1971, GM shuttering in 1982, and Firestone leaving the region in 1980; these plants

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For more information and comments and queries, please visit <https://www.lacityhistory.org/>

UNAPOLOGETICALLY LEFT, *continued from page 7*

featured Southern California union jobs, pensions, and representation for semi-skilled labor in the area. The closure of these plants left a vacuum in labor leadership that extended throughout the region, limiting traditional community organizational means. Job elimination also placed an influx of low skilled unemployed workers in direct competition with immigrants for limited positions in the Los Angeles economy

The mostly immigrant community of Temple-Beaudry had limited buying power and found themselves at a disadvantage when competing for low-income housing. The 1970 census reported that the Temple-Beaudry community had a 94% “Spanish” population, \$58.00 monthly median rent, 94% occupancy rate with only 3.5% of the units registered as owner-occupied and 12% lacking some or all plumbing features; 66% of occupants had moved into their unit within five years of the census and mean family income was \$3028.00 with 21% of families living below the poverty level. Spanish speaking community members were even more vulnerable without access to social safety net features such as welfare and fair housing advocacy due to lack of translation services. Mayor Tom Bradley’s Blue Ribbon Housing Commission in 1988 noted a severe city-wide low-income housing shortage, receiving national attention as mentioned in the Washington Post in the same year.

The Bunker Hill redevelopment project, arguably the most profitable and expensive of the period, demolished high-density white pensioner apartment buildings to construct a series of corporate skyscrapers. These projects demonstrate the CRA’s strategy of razing low-income communities to replace them with more profitable occupants. A notable exception to this strategy was the establishment of Skid Row as a nonprofit district. The CRA opted to preserve the high-density housing stock in this area to establish homeless shelters and services concentrated in one locale. This action also allowed the CRA to count each of the homeless shelter beds as individual low-income housing units constructed and preserved, vastly inflating the actual number of units available to working families. Downtown and its periphery development were guided by the CRA and its efforts to establish a lucrative urban core.

The urban redevelopment plans of the 1950s to the



Residents of the Temple-Beaudry neighborhood protest relocation plan by Yong Management Corp., 1981
Los Angeles Public Library Photo Collection (Herald Examiner Collection)

present have sought to eliminate low-income housing in favor of lucrative corporate space. The community could have benefitted from efforts to maintain the property by landlords. However, redevelopment

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News from the Los Angeles City Archives

by Michael Holland



The Los Angeles City Archives has been a beneficiary of the Los Angeles City Historical Society for many years and continues to research and preserve the history of the Los Angeles city government. This is a brief summary of our recent efforts.

Before the pandemic closed our office on March 19th, there had been some developments at the Los Angeles City Archives. Here are a few highlights . . .

It is to be expected that the COVID pandemic has affected the research options at the city archives in the waning weeks of the year 2020. However, we are attempting to assist those researchers who are reaching out to us via email.

If you viewed the webinar with the first three presenters of the LACHS Scholarships, both Moisés Ponce-Zepeda and Abigail Calderon Garcia used city archive resources during their research period BEFORE we closed due to COVID.

The Temple Urban Renewal film Ponce-Zepeda included was part of our 2016 digitization project and is included in our online collection at USC Digital Library for fair use. We also have in the vault transcripts of some of the public meetings and other official resources.

Calderon Garcia referenced an official city Council File for some of her presentation as well. There is an ongoing project to digitize those council files not already available online. Online files date from 1996 to the present. We have every reason to believe that this work will continue even with the current budget crisis

facing the city as a whole.

Although there have been other research being conducted with the assistance of the LACA, there is nothing at this time to report. Should there be a need for some information from the archive, feel free to reach out to archivist Michael Holland at michael.holland@lacity.org. In addition, many of our finding aids and resources are available online at <https://clerk.lacity.org/city-archives-and-records-center> including our digital archive vault containing the City Council minutes from 1850 to 1979 for your review.

We hope to be adding more information to the site and search engine in 2021. We look forward to the day when we can do the open house tours and Marie Northrop lecture series although there may a webinar version next year. Stay tuned to the LACHS Facebook page and your newsletters for upcoming events and news from the archive.

Stay Safe and see you in 2021. ♦

MICHAEL HOLLAND is Los Angeles City Archivist and a board member of the Los Angeles City Historical Society.

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funding ignored this necessity in favor of demolition. Property hoarders such as those in the Temple-Beaudry community acted in cooperation with the real estate market and profitability demands. Designating communities as slums and targets for redevelopment was a crucial first step in understanding poverty symptoms. However, further study needs to follow up on mechanisms to assist the poor where they are instead of moving them from region to region away

from expensive real estate. Elected officials' concern for future tax revenue cannot be the only deciding factor in redevelopment. Analysis of voting records and the composition of oversight boards offers inroads to networking corporate influence in housing policy. The study of tenant organization and resistance to political forces is integral to understanding the experience of those on the margins of society and gaining more insight as to how economic practices translate to lived experience. ♦

We Don't Need the English!

by Jocelyn Isabel Aguilera

The following is an excerpt from "We Don't Need the English!: Transforming and Reconstructing Punk Politics into Chicana Punk Social Activism 1977–1989"

On June 23, 2019, punk vocalist Alicia Armendariz Velasquez organized the unveiling of Dolores Huerta Square throughout East Los Angeles's 1st street. Supporting the unveiling event, local punk band Trap Girl, Xicana post-punk band ELLA, and Armendariz Velasquez's group The Alice Bag Band played in honor of Dolores Huerta who had co-founded United Farm Workers and coined the phrase, "Si, Se Puede." With a feeling of empowerment in the air, Armendariz captured the spirit of Huerta's ongoing work at the unveiling, melodically screaming, "You say justice is colorblind. I know you're lying. White justice doesn't work for me!!!"

The significance of the unveiling brings attention to the often-overlooked civil rights leader Huerta. But it also reveals how Chicana punk rockers or Chicana punkeras led to an East Los Angeles plaza being named in honor of Dolores Huerta. Since the beginning of punk around the mid-1970s in England, the subculture's foundation adopted a political conscience, DIY aesthetic, and the releasing of teenage angst through fast-tempo music.

The Los Angeles punk scene emerged in two different places: East Los Angeles and Hollywood. East Los Angeles' underground setting attracted the presence of Mexican American youth who demonstrated their love for punk music, and at the same time, it reflected a different level of cultural awareness based on the music and fashion. The essay "Soy Punkera, Y Que?" by Michelle Habell-Pallan notes how young Chicanas identified with "the practice of rasquache, a Chicana/o cultural practice of 'making do' with limited

resources and punk's critique of the status quo-of poverty, sexuality, class inequality, and war-spoke directly to working-class." Chicanas' cultural identities naturally became embedded in punk. Although the majority of Chicanas became concentrated in the East LA scene, many Mexican American youth participated in the Hollywood scene, which consisted of more diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

As Chicanas witnessed the school system as an engine of cultural conformity, punk added a new outlet for creativity and revolt for young Chicanas. Alicia Armendariz Velasquez's participation and punk expression during the late 1970s developed through the different events in her life, most notably the challenges of being a Spanish speaker in a linguistically suppressive school. Although Los Angeles public schools were officially desegre-



Alice Bag performs at Club Lingerie, 1984
Photo courtesy of Women in LA Punk Archives

gated in 1945, many Los Angeles schools continued to face de facto segregation. The Los Angeles Unified School District placement of students in schools based on geography coupled with patterns of segregated housing, "produced a large number of racially and ethnically unbalanced schools." Conversely, numerous white teachers continued to reflect racially discriminatory attitudes towards Mexican American students in East Los Angeles schools. Several teachers enforced a "No Spanish rule" that was part of a broader cultural-ly assimilationist approach. Although the student body of these schools was predominantly Mexican American, white Anglo teachers in East Los Angeles schools (who did not speak the language), saw Spanish as a

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The Rise and Decline of the Oddest Night Club on the Sunset Strip

by Abraham Hoffman

Over a span of many decades, night clubs and restaurants have come and gone on the Sunset Strip, replaced by other venues taking the risk of becoming passe to a fickle clientele. Some have lasted for years, but one in particular is noted for its arrival and disappearance in less than two years. The Whisky A Go-Go, the Unicorn, and other coffeehouses and night clubs have had their heyday, but the most egregious example of over-hyping and short duration would have to be the Stratford-on-Sunset teenage night club.

Located at 8428 Sunset Boulevard, on the site where the Café Renaissance coffeehouse had earlier come and gone, Stratford-on-Sunset proclaimed its imminent arrival on the Sunset Strip with fliers

announcing what would be “America’s largest teen-age Supper-Club!” Co-founder Gerald F. Lambert, a security officer employed by the State of California, announced, “We felt that teenagers should have ‘the run’ of their own full-scale nightclub—a glamorous exciting ‘junior millionaire’s club’ where they could meet new friends, mingle with celebrities, and enjoy great food and drink—all at the most nominal prices in town.”

Lambert and his co-founder, Ed Fontaine, a New York record company executive, envisioned an “Elizabethan Castle” that would offer, besides the restaurant, such amenities as a heated swimming pool, tennis courts, and a miniature golf course on the property.

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deficit and barrier towards become a “true American citizen,” thus using punishments to discourage speaking Spanish.

As a kindergartener at Eastman Avenue School in 1963, Armendariz Velasquez’s experience reflects the assimilation process as her teacher punished Spanish speaking in the classroom. Armendariz Velasquez’s recalls, “Children at the bookshelf would sometimes whisper to each other in English without so much as a glance from Miss Gibbons, but woe unto those of us who spoke Spanish, because she would keep us from recess if she caught us whispering to each other at the bookshelf.” Entering the US education system as a Spanish speaker, Armendariz Velasquez did not speak English and became reprimanded for speaking Spanish. Many of her educators could not pronounce “Alicia” and ultimately changed her name to “Alice” (later influencing her stage name Alice Bag). Reflecting on her experiences as an adult, Armendariz Velasquez notes, “I was being colonized within my own country, but I was too young to realize it.”

The feeling of otherness and discrimination by the dominant culture affected many Chicanas, thus shaping cultural identities and later reconfiguring the construction of punk ideologies. Despite the feeling of

“othering” based on race, Armendariz Velasquez used this marginalization to strengthen her cultural identity. As Armendariz Velasquez reached high school in the early 1970s, she became more aware of her cultural identity and the discrimination against Mexican Americans. On August 29, 1970, the National Chicano Moratorium Committee Against the Vietnam War, also known as The Chicano Moratorium, organized a massive protest—held a few blocks from Armendariz Velasquez’s home. As one of the most significant demonstrations during the Chicano Movement of the early 1960s and 1970s, the gathering brought together 25,000 Mexican Americans in efforts to bring attention to the disproportionately large number of Latino soldiers who were being killed in Vietnam. However, the protest ended with the Los Angeles police department storming the peaceful protest with spraying tear-gas, arresting many, and murdering three Chicanos. Armendariz Velasquez remembers that “the deadly outcome led to my identification as ‘other’ and also made me acutely aware that this ‘other’ was perceived as undesirable and had powerful and dangerous enemies.” Gaining a new awareness of the issues in her community, Armendariz Velasquez’s story regarding race relations became a common trend in Chicana punkeras’ ideologies and eventually brought these experiences to the punk scene. ♦

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They claimed that movie stars, producers, civic leaders, and teenagers all expressed enthusiasm for the project, which would cost \$150,000 for the renovation and reconstruction of the existing building. It would be “a real club complete with memberships, regularly elected teenage officers, and by-laws.”

Construction began in July 1964, with the owners boasting that the work would be done “by a full slate of teenage draftsmen, carpenters, electricians, plasterers, plumbers, and engineers,” though the hype likely didn’t mention that the work would actually be done by adults, except maybe for the “teenage draftsmen.”

On Friday December 18, the nightclub opened for business, welcoming guests between 18 and 25 years of age, a requirement that soon lowered the age of admittance to 16. Two weeks later, on January 1, 1965, Stratford-on-Sunset officially opened for “members only,” though their guests were also welcomed. So were non-members “only when accompanied by a member,” a somewhat confusing if repetitive qualification for entry.

The two-story building featured a “ceiling-high Gold Elizabethan fireplace,” a subterranean “dungeon room,” and a “Shakespearean ice cream lounge.” Besides the ice cream, food included “Shakespearean pizza,” sandwiches, soft drinks pastries, and nightly specialties “to delight the eye and stun the stomach.”

The owners also promised to inaugurate the first teenage credit card system in the United States. At that time most credit cards were specific in their market, such as Diner’s Club and American Express; Bank of America’s BankAmericard (later renamed Visa) had been introduced in 1958 as the first general purpose credit card. The Castle owners promised, “Have fun every night at STRATFOR—and just say ‘Charge it, please.’”

Stratford-on-Sunset’s goal for 1965 was 10,000 teenage members. There would be celebrity nights, dance contests with cash prizes, radio and television broadcasts, and disc jockey events. A big-name band was promised with “TEN TOP BANDS” and “Twenty of your favorite vocalists, free record giveaways and—best of all—after-school record hops with special dinners at only \$1.00!” The place would be open Tuesday to Saturday from 7 pm. to 2 a.m.

Hoopla aside, at least one celebrity group, the Byrds, did make an appearance at the Castle. Sad to

say, however, that the swimming pool, tennis courts, and miniature golf course never made it past the drawing boards. Fontaine and Lambert failed to define clearly what they expected from a teenage supper club, variously calling it a “night club” and a “cabaret.” The early 1960s featured the creation of two other private clubs, one on La Cienega Boulevard and the other on Franklin Avenue. The first of these, the Millionaire’s Club, soon went bankrupt because the people involved couldn’t pay the bills. The other club, the Magic Castle, has been carefully managed and has become a Hollywood landmark.

Just who were the “teenage millionaires” advertised by Lambert and Fontaine likely never appeared after all, how many teenage millionaires, even in Los Angeles, could there be? Likewise, the idea of a credit card for teenagers failed, since few in the early 1960s would have had no employment credit record that qualified them for a credit card.

In the end, Stratford-on-Sunset proved a colossal failure. It remains to be said that teenagers might not have been interested in going to a supper club with an Elizabethan England theme and waiters and waitresses wearing Elizabethan costumes. Pizza and ice cream didn’t sound very Shakespearean, much less Elizabethan. And if it was a supper club for teenagers, why did it specify an upper age limit of 25? Another detail that apparently the owners didn’t figure on was keeping the place open until 2 a.m, long past the hour when teenagers were supposed to be doing homework on school nights. Having opened with great fanfare, the Stratford-on-Sunset folded before the year ended.

As a young adult in my early 20s, I visited Stratford-on-Sunset several times, usually with my friend Ed Kaufman, a young man with an ebullient personality that made friends easily. A large man in weight as well, he decided on one occasion to sample the featured “Tempest sundae,” a concoction of eighteen scoops of vanilla ice cream that would be “FREE to anyone who can eat it ALL!”

It took Ed an hour to get it all down, but he did. As a reward he didn’t have to pay for it, and as an added bonus he was served another helping of the Tempest sundae. Ed said he’d had enough and invited me to try it. Three scoops, and I was done.

And so, it seems, was the Stratford-on-Sunset, the building eventually to be razed and replaced by a commercial building. ♦

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Construction of the Hyperion-Glendale Viaduct, looking towards bridge from Riverside Drive, showing houses in foreground and Griffith Park in background (ca. 1928)
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