



President's Message

Dear Members and Friends,

It is spring, and the Historical Society has many exciting events and activities planned. As the days grow longer and the flowers bloom, we invite you to join us in exploring our community's rich history through engaging talks, guided tours, and special gatherings. It is also time to renew your 2025 membership! We hope everyone will join us for another exciting year, and we warmly welcome new members. As a member, you'll receive email notifications about upcoming events and *The Grapevine* delivered to your mailbox or email. Renew or sign up by returning the little blue envelope today or by going to our website sanmarinohistoricalsociety.org and click on "membership" link found on the left side of the page.

Last month many of you joined us for our first speaker event of the year, featuring historian and urban hiker Bob Inman. Bob took us on a journey through time, exploring the rich history and architecture of our neighboring community of Altadena through the unique lens of urban hiking. These gatherings offer a wonderful chance to connect with neighbors, enjoy some delicious treats, and discover something new together. Thank you to everyone who attended - we can't wait to see you at the next one on May 19th featuring Nathan Marsak.

Thank you to Mayor Shepherd Romey and Nicole Tibbet for using our archives to gather research for Women's History month. If you would like to see the videos about women in the city's past as they are being unveiled, visit the city's website or our Facebook page.

We thank you for your continued support in helping us keep the mission of the Historical Society alive. Hope to see everyone on a tour, speaker event, or in the archives at the Thurnher House.

Sincerely,
Christa Lakon
President

The Grapevine

Published by the San Marino Historical Society
Spring 2025

SAN MARINO HISTORICAL SOCIETY
PROUDLY PRESENTS

LOS ANGELES
BEFORE THE FREEWAYS

by
NATHAN MARSAK



Author Nathan Marsak

Nathan Marsak studied under the eminent historian of Los Angeles, Reyner Banham, at University of California, Santa Cruz, and completed his graduate work with noted Sullivan/Wright scholar Narciso Menocal at University of Wisconsin, Madison. He worked on the curatorial staff of Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art and served as historian for the LAPD Museum archives. He is also the author of *Bunker Hill Los Angeles* and *Los Angeles Neon*.

Monday, May 19, 2025
7:00 - 8:00 P.M.

San Marino Community Center
1800 Huntington Drive, San Marino
Public is welcome, admission is free
Doors open at 6:30 P.M.

Kindly RSVP to info@sanmarinohistoricalsociety.org

**SAN MARINO HISTORICAL SOCIETY
EXECUTIVE OFFICERS and
MEMBERS OF THE BOARD**

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Benjamin Salvaty	2008
Ave Marie Bortz	2008
John Morris	2010
Judith Carter	2014
John Ryan	2017
Isaac Hung	2019

The board is delighted to welcome our new tax preparer, **Charlotte Edginton** - a resident and longtime Historical Society member. Charlotte is retired from a career with the IRS and has been teaching courses at UCLA extension. We are incredibly grateful to her for accepting our request without hesitation. Thank you, Charlotte, for your generous support and dedication to our community.

From the Archives

We were closed for the first part of the year due to the park closure while the city cleaned up damage from the winds. We're happy to share that we're back to our archiving work on Tuesdays between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. If you would like to drop in to explore the archives or dive into a special area of interest or research, please let us know.

Members' Tours

In November, members were treated to a docent-led tour of the **Michael White Adobe**. Special thanks to **Fred Sohl** for arranging the event and to architect and historian **Bill Ellinger** for leading the tour. **Upcoming tours:** historic tour of **The Langham Hotel on April 5th**. We are limited to 20 spaces, with a group of 10 at 1:30 and another at 2:30. The cost will be \$15. **San Gabriel Cemetery Tour on October 11th** guided by LA Sheriff Crime Analyst, Joe Walker. The cost will be \$15. Members will be receiving email notifications for registration.

Honorees

In March, we were honored to join in celebrating residents **Al and Sue Boegh**, recipients of Rotary's prestigious Paul Harris Award. The Historical Society is deeply grateful for their invaluable contributions to the City and our organization. As longtime members, Al and Sue have generously shared their expertise and steadfast support, enriching the Society in countless ways. We extend our heartfelt congratulations and appreciation to them both.

Centennial Homes Project

This project was first proposed by member **Boyd Smith**, who grew up on Roanoke Road, just south of The Colonial Kitchen. We loved the idea and are excited to celebrate our city's homes as they reach their 100th birthday. If your house is turning 100, please email us a photo and the address. Members will receive a special yard sign to honor their historic home.

*For Centennial Home entries
or other inquiries,
please contact us at*

San Marino Historical Society
PO BOX 80222
San Marino, CA 91118-8222

(626) 304-9375

or email us at
info@sanmarinohistoricalsociety.org

SHOWCASE HOUSE of DESIGN

from trial run to annual tradition, it all began in San Marino

By Billie Youngblood-Knolle

*Reprinted from The Grapevine 2005
In memory of Billie Youngblood-Knolle*

In 1965 an energetic, young group of women called the Junior Philharmonic were looking for a new demanding fund-raising activity to test their talents. Prior effects included Monte Carlo gambling nights, Carnival and even a special evening at the Green Hotel, but none were impressive in raising desired funds for the Los Angeles Philharmonic.

Inspiration for a different venture came from members who just had visited something new called a "showcase house" in northern California. Curious, they learned that the local charity finds an outstanding residence, convinces prominent local designers to volunteer their time and opens the rejuvenated house to the public for a limited time. Recognizing the possibilities, the Pasadena Junior Philharmonic Committee bought the idea with enthusiasm. Christy Fox, legendary LA Times Society Editor applauded the Junior Phils: "at last there's an original, creative idea in making money for charity, it belongs to a bright young group of women on the east side of our town."

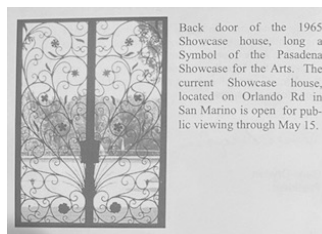
San Marino resident, the late Nancy Payne, presided over the meeting that launched the group's first showcase in '65. Joan Stewart Anawalt *volunteered* to chair the event. But many other members who were up for the one event a year resigned, according to Rary Simmons, because they realized this would be a demanding year round effort. And they are right! Rary, as historians know, was the first female mayor of San Marino. She typifies the strong leadership provided to Showcase House of Design by this city's women. During the first five pioneering, learn-as-you-go-years of Showcase House all 5 presidents were from San Marino; Payne, Mary Lou Boone (of the Huntington Library Boone Gallery), Beverly Smith, Bobbie Galpin and Barbara Maxwell (Maxwell was the first woman member of the School Board, also this year's Rotary Paul Harris award designee).

An empty house on Park Place in San Marino, situated on two acres, was the Italian villa setting for Showcase's debut. The original owner, Mr. Thompson, being the oldest living alumnus of Occidental College, had willed the estate to his Alma Mater after his death in 1963. Benefit chair Anawalt had connections with Remy Chatain, head of the Resources Council. Together they enlisted 16 designers to participate. No construction changes were made to the property nor any landscaping attempted. However, Simmons knew the groundskeeper at Santa Anita Racetrack, Ray Rogers. He offered the pansies and cyclamen plants in the outside to Showcase if they would come and dig them up. Dig they did, and planted them too, to brighten the exterior. Among the diggers were Gene Dryden the San Marino Historical president, and his wife, Ann.

The organization's silver anniversary brochure described the early success: "Pasadena Showcase House of Design was successful from the very beginning. With hard work from the committee and community support and enthusiasm, more that \$15,000 was raised that first year and approximately 7,500 visitors attended. Admission to the first house was 75 cents which included coffee and cookies." Last year, the charities' 40th Anniversary, 50,000 visitors helped raise over \$1 million in 25 days. A full restaurant replaced the committee-prepared lunches of early years and a Market Place with carefully selected vendors expanded the Art sales area begun in 1970. The sales tax from both these areas, plus the vendors business licenses now required goes directly to the host city, this year back to the birthing city of San Marino.

How are the Showcase Houses found? By starting early, explains the group's archivist, former president, benefit chair and San Marino resident Fran Biles. The search is already underway for the 2006 Showcase. The requirements? A house valued in the millions plus, over 10,000 square feet with a swimming pool - or space for one - and preferably with a tennis court to be tented for Market Place. The suggestions come from Realtors, interior designers, architects and quite often from the owners themselves.

Members' husbands continue to play an active role with two pre-opening work weekends at the house, plus a post-showing clean-up. Sue Boegh, now an associate member but an active in the hands-on days in the 70's recalls, "We even brought the money home each day, stuffing it under the bed until a breather provided time for deposit!" When her CPA husband, Al, learned of this he volunteered to do the accounting. Other husband volunteers took care of insurance, contracts and other legal matters. Today's membership includes professional women with all these skills, some retirees and all dedicated volunteers. Benefit Chair Mireya Jones, 1980, reports that was the first year Showcase ever had a budget! However, the same casual cash procedure prevailed. "Our ticket money could have gone up in smoke" Jones explains, "because we stashed the cash-filled paper bags in our oven...but we were too tired to cook after staffing all day...so it was safe."



Back door of the 1965 Showcase house, long a symbol of the Pasadena Showcase for the Arts. The current Showcase house, located on Orlando Rd in San Marino is open for public viewing through May 15.

Back door of the 1965 Showcase House, long a symbol of the Pasadena Showcase for the Arts.

The First Showcase House



(continued from page 3)

By the way, that under age 40 requirement went by the boards years ago. Today, dedicated worker bees of all ages make up the membership and provisional class. Several served as paid staffers, enjoyed the stimulating environment and signed on. Many mother and daughters exist among the active, associate and intermediate membership. Benefit committee teams working so closely together often result in lifetime friendships.

In 2000, during Anne Rothenberg's presidency, the Junior Philharmonic Committee changed its name to the Pasadena Showcase House for the Arts (PSHA) to broaden the scope of giving as well as identifying the fund source, The Showcase, for the music outreach giving. Continuing PSHA programs for children include the Music Mobile, introduced in 1971. This traveling music education program brings the magic of the symphony orchestra to third graders (over 100,000 to date) throughout the San Gabriel Valley, including past stops at Valentine and Carver schools. Fourth graders attend Showcases' Youth Concerts presented by the Los Angeles Philharmonic, for the past two years performed in the new Walt Disney Concert Hall. Showcase donations are in excess of \$11 million to the Los Angeles Philharmonic including \$1 million to the construction of Disney Hall. PSHA's president, this year Doris Christy, sits on the LA Phils Board. Every fall PSHA holds an instrumental competition for talented Southern California musicians, ages 16 to 24, who attend prestigious music schools such as USC Thornton School of Music and Julliard. The 20th annual competition held in 2004 had more than 70 applicants who performed for a jury of Los Angeles Philharmonic musicians.

A Gift and Grants program, begun in 1990 with \$10,000 to give more back to the communities from which Showcase draws, had grown to \$800,000 last year. These grants are awarded to schools, symphonic association and other nonprofit organizations in support of musically oriented programs including underwriting of concerts. Summer concerts at the Old Mill are among PSHA's

Grants. The California Philharmonic Orchestra, headquartered in San Marino, with their summer concerts at the Arboretum, is another among 50 other local recipients. Last fall, when a San Marino home was selected as this year's fundraising location, a \$10,000 grant was made to the new San Marino Library.

San Marino must be proud that nine of the 41 Showcase Houses have been located in our city including the 2005 Showcase on Orlando Road, opening on April 17th and continuing through May 15. Designed by Wallace Neff, it's a must see.

*We hope you've enjoyed this article from our 2005 edition of **The Grapevine** about the history of the Showcase House.*

This spring, The Showcase House will be celebrating its 60th year.

HISTORICAL SOCIETY CALENDAR 2025

April 5, 2025 docent-led tour for our members of the Langham Hotel. Groups up to 10 people Start times 1:30 and 2:30

April 6, 2025 Sunday 12-3 pm, Thurnher House, docent-led tours with John Morris and John Ryan

April 25, 2025 City of San Marino's 112th Birthday

May 4, 2025 Sunday 12-3 pm, Thurnher House, docent-led tours with John Morris and John Ryan

May 18, 2025 Sunday 12-3 pm, Thurnher House, docent-led tours with John Morris and John Ryan

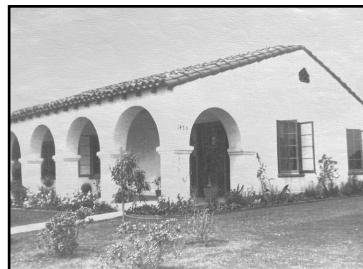
May 19, 2025 Monday 7:00 pm, San Marino Historical Society Presentation, Nathan Marsak, San Marino Community Center, 1800 Huntington Drive, San Marino

June 1, 2025 Sunday 12-3 pm Thurnher House, docent-led tours with John Morris and John Ryan

June 15, 2025 Sunday 12-3 pm Thurnher House, docent-led tours with John Morris and John

July 20, 2025 Sunday 12-3 pm Thurnher House, docent-led tours with John Morris and John Ryan

August 3, 2025 Sunday 12-3 pm Thurnher House, docent-led tours with John Morris and John Ryan



The historic Thurnher House built as the home for the city's first park superintendent and his family in 1929.

The San Marino Historical Society's 2025 SMHS History Award Scholarship recipient will be featured in our 2025 Fall edition of *The Grapevine*.