

CULTURAL HERITAGE DESIGNATION
THE GARBUTT-HATHAWAY ESTATE
SOUTHEAST CORNER OF THE LAKE

In 1850, California was admitted to the Union as a State and ownership of the original Spanish Land Grant of four square leagues was passed to the City of Los Angeles. Between 1850 and 1890 the Mayors of the City either sold or gave away most of these original Pueblo Lands as "donation lots", one of which was the Garbutt-Hathaway Estate of 35 acres.

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The first recorded deed for this property was in 1868 to Mr. Witzel. Mr. Ozro W. Childs, an early benefactor to the City, owned the land before 1890. Arriving in Los Angeles in 1850, he was instrumental in constructing the first aqueduct for the City and received in payment all the land between Sixth and 11th Streets and Figueroa and Main Streets. The value of this land is now in excess of the cost to build the Panama Canal. Mr. Childs built the first significant opera house on his land, for the City in 1883, donated land for St. Vincent's College (Bullocks is there today), and operated the first botanical garden and landscape nursery in the City. Mr. Donagan, who is better known for having owned the "castle" on Bunker Hill around 1893, subsequently owned the Estate.

The movie industry moved to this area in the early 1900's and had its true beginning here with the Paramount-Lasky Players, Mack Sennett Studios and others. The homes of Theda Bara, Mable Norman, Tom Mix, Antonio Moreno and many others still exist in this area.

The existing three large homes atop the wooded summit were built by the Garbutt and Hathaway families in the early 1920's. The home at the highest point of the hill was built of concrete, using a continuous pour method--including the roof. It has plate glass windows set in solid bronze frames, doors of two inch solid teak, marble floors and many other beautiful and exciting qualities. The landscaping was rich and extensive and many unique plants still thrive there. The other buildings are beautiful. The lights that shine through the trees from the top of the hill at night are part of many residents lives.

As you remember, discussion of the unique value of this site, its value to the Silver Lake Community and the City of Los Angeles and its future use as a cultural/historical site has been discussed extensively. Members of the Board have been researching specific uses the land and buildings might serve. Original ideas focused on use of the buildings as an historical repository of the works by the many well known architects of the area: Schindler, Lautner, Ain, Neutra, Soriano and others. In addition, a collection of early silent film artifacts could be housed here. The Garbutt mansion was built to last forever.

Additional research this year has opened up the idea of the use of the building(s) and grounds as a place for a horticulture program for students and adults. Part of the hill could be a controlled "open space". We are continuing to investigate ways to prevent this unique site from ending its days at the end of a wrecking ball, being decapitated and denuded by a bulldozer. We have presented our desires to the Cultural Heritage Board of the City of Los Angeles.

NOTE: If any members have information of an historical nature on the Silver Lake area, please write the Association.

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