

News Advisory



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Office of Historic Preservation to Present Eleven Awards for Excellence in Historic Preservation

- WHO:** Office of Historic Preservation
- WHAT:** Presentation of the Governor's Historic Preservation Awards for excellence in historic preservation
- WHEN:** 1:00 p.m. on Friday, November 21, 2008
- WHERE:** Leland Stanford State Historic Park (Ballroom)
800 N Street (8th and N streets)
Sacramento

California State Parks' Office of Historic Preservation (OHP) has presented the Governor's Historic Preservation Awards since 1986, when the program was established by Gov. George Deukmejian. Since their inception, the awards have differed from other preservation award programs in two important respects: They emphasize involvement by community groups and recognize a broad array of preservation activities, from building rehabilitation, to archaeology, to interpretation, to preservation planning. These two characteristics form the mission statement for the OHP program. The awards exist to give praise to the hundreds of groups and local agencies performing varying types of important preservation work throughout the state, usually without even a modicum of the recognition they deserve.

This year, OHP will present awards to 11 groups throughout California:

- **Antioch Historical Society & Museum for Riverview Union High School Building, Contra Costa County.** This award is given to the Antioch Historical Society for its preservation of the historical Riverview Union High School Building and for its reuse as a historical museum. The building was constructed in 1908 to jointly serve the communities of Antioch and Pittsburg, in what was then rural Contra Costa County. By the 1920s, both communities had built their own schools and the building was abandoned as a school. The handsome and well-built schoolhouse was reused for various purposes: as the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation headquarters during construction of the Central Valley Project; as a corporate office; and as headquarters for the local fire district. Abandoned in 1994, the building was turned over to the Historical Society in 1999. Drawing upon fundraisers



and volunteer labor, the society put the building back in usable condition and was responsible for creating and maintaining museum displays at the facility. This project illustrates the role that historical society volunteers play in communities throughout the State, rescuing buildings and artifacts and passing on their knowledge of history to subsequent generations.

- **Historical Society of the Upper Mojave Desert for Restoration of Historic World War II USO Building, Kern County.** This award recognizes a grassroots effort by members of the Historical Society of the Upper Mojave Desert and the people of Ridgecrest in rehabilitating and reusing an abandoned World War II USO building. When the Navy established a test facility at Ridgecrest in 1943—a facility now called China Lake—the small town had a population of about 100. Thousands of uniformed and civilian personnel flooded into this remote desert area, overwhelming the services of this little town. To provide for the recreational needs of the newcomers, the Navy built this large structure, which Kern County residents maintain is the only extant, unmodified USO building in California. After the war, ownership of the building was transferred from the Navy to the county, and then to the City of Ridgecrest. It remained unused and in bad repair for many decades. The Historical Society offered to repair the building if the city deeded it to the group upon completion of the rehabilitation. Drawing upon the community for financial support, the Society raised nearly \$200,000 in cash or in-kind donations, completed the rehabilitation to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards, and took possession of the beautifully-restored building in 2007. This project illustrates the power of volunteer efforts to preserve historically important buildings and the power of memory: the USO was and is a powerful symbol in Ridgecrest, a predominantly military town.
- **San Francisco Department of Public Works, San Francisco Public Library, Friends of the San Francisco Library, Friends of Noe Valley, and Carey & Co, Noe Valley Library Rehabilitation, City and County of San Francisco.** This award recognizes the sensitive rehabilitation of the Noe Valley Carnegie Library. Noe Valley is such a distinct neighborhood in San Francisco that the building was called the Noe Valley Branch Library when it was built in 1916. Designed by prominent San Francisco architect John Reid, Jr., the rehabilitation included seismic, mechanical, electrical, and accessibility upgrades and the installation of wiring and wi-fi for enhanced computer usage. All work conforms with Secretary of the Interior's Standards; standard one encourages reuse with a similar or compatible use. Nothing could be more compatible than to continue using the structure as a library for its second century of service. The rehabilitation illustrates a key fact about historic preservation: the best rehabilitation work is invisible to the general public. The wonderfully restored Noe Valley library looks today almost exactly as it did in 1916.

- **Los Encinos State Historic Park for Historic Wall Treatment & Interpretation at the de la Osa Adobe, Los Angeles County.** This award is given to the staff of Los Encinos State Historic Park for their work in restoring and interpreting historical wall treatments at the de la Osa Adobe. The adobe, one of several historic buildings at Los Encinos Park, was badly damaged in the 1994 Northridge earthquake. The plaster on the dining room wall was damaged in many places. Fortuitously, this damage exposed layers of historic paint, hidden beneath generations of more recent paint. The surprise was that the walls had once been hand-painted to resemble marble. Parks interpreters theorize that this wall treatment dates to a period in which the building was owned by the Garnier family, French immigrants who helped transform this plain *sala* into a refined French *salon*. Portion of the *faux* marble were exposed and the entire room arrangement recreated through interpretive panels, which show how the room likely looked during the Garnier period of ownership. This award recognizes the innovative interpretive work State Parks staff used in making the best of a natural calamity and understanding the layers of ethnic diversity that have characterized California history from the Spanish Mexican era forward.
- **City of Woodland for Explore Historic Woodland Guidebook, Yolo County.** For the last 20 years, the residents of Woodland have shown off their wonderful historic resources in an event called “Stroll Through History.” At the annual event, hundreds of visitors are invited to walk the streets of historic neighborhoods, inspecting dozens of buildings from the outside and select buildings that are part of a home tour. The Explore Historic Woodland Guidebook was pieced together by the staff of the City of Woodland, and compiles information about nearly 400 buildings highlighted in Stroll Through History tours. The book is distinctive in three ways: it is incredibly inclusive, includes detailed information about the families who lived in each of the home, and is built around the walking tours from which it was derived, allowing the reader to “stroll through history” any time.
- **Save Clover Valley Organization for Saving Clover Valley, Placer County.** This award recognizes the nearly decade-long efforts of the Save Clover Valley Organization to stop or limit development of a small valley rich in prehistoric archaeological resources. A dedicated group of volunteers worked tirelessly, creating ingenious public information tools, including a 45 minute documentary, an active Web site, newspaper editorial board meetings, and other media-related outreach. Although it was unable to stop the project completely, the campaign did decrease the density of the home development and helped preserve most of the archaeological sites under the ownership of a Native American tribe. The project illustrates the role community groups can play in local land use decisions, provided the volunteer group is dedicated, patient, and focused on the task at hand.

- **San Diego State University for WPA-Era Mural Restoration and Relocation, San Diego County.** This award recognizes the extraordinary efforts of various people and organizations at San Diego State University who came together to preserve a piece of campus history thought to be lost. When the current campus was built in the early 1930s, Work Projects Administration artist, Genevieve Breco, painted a Social Realism mural on the ground floor of Hardy Tower, the school's original library. The mural depicts delivery of NRA Relief packages to starving families. During the 1950s, the mural was partially destroyed, but most was hidden behind a drop ceiling, where it was discovered by maintenance staff replacing ceiling tiles. The conservator, Nathan Zakheim, peeled the mural off its original surface, using the "stappo" system. The mural was conserved and missing pieces recreated, relying upon photographs of the original installation. The restored mural was re-installed in the lobby of the modern campus library. The project illustrates the importance of good stewardship among the many public college campuses in California, which collectively maintain some of the finest art and architecture in the state.
- **City of Los Angeles Department of City Planning for Historic Homeowner Education Program.** Through its Historic Preservation Overlay Zone (HPOZ) program, the City of Los Angeles has created 22 historic districts that include more than 1,400 buildings, nearly all of them residential. These districts are largely self-governing, with neighborhood councils approving rehabilitation plans for historic buildings. To educate homeowners and these neighborhood councils, the Planning Department produced a series of guidelines for dealing with the most common rehabilitation issues: paint methods and colors; window repair and replacement; repair of wooden siding. These guidelines are outlined in four-page pamphlets to illustrate common "do's" and "don'ts" in the maintenance of historic homes. The project illustrates the practical approach the City of Los Angeles has taken in empowering these neighborhood councils. These "how to" guides help ensure decisions will be based upon sound preservation principles.
- **City of Fresno for Hotel Fresno Rehabilitation Feasibility Study, Fresno County.** This award recognizes the extraordinary efforts by the City of Fresno to demonstrate economic viability for a downtown landmark the City does not own, but which could figure importantly in the economic revitalization of downtown. The Hotel Fresno was in many respects the grandest building in Fresno as recently as 1962, when this picture of Richard Nixon was taken. It deteriorated into almost unimaginably bad condition before purchase by the current owner. The City of Fresno commissioned a study by McCandless & Associates to determine whether rehabilitation would be economically feasible. The study provides stabilization schemes and probable reuse strategies for the building, as either a hotel or low-income apartments. Cost estimates and structural strategies are included for both options. The study exemplifies forward

thinking on the part of the City of Fresno that will pave the way for future private-sector rehabilitation.

- **Mount Washington Homeowners Alliance for The Mount Washington Voices Project: Voices of an Urban Oasis, Los Angeles County.** This award recognizes an impressive effort to gather and record the stories of Mount Washington, a unique hillside community in Los Angeles County. The project was proposed and implemented by the Mount Washington Homeowners' Alliance, funded by the California Council for the Humanities as part of its "California Stories" program. Although only a few miles from downtown, the area was largely uninhabited until the early 20th century. The Voices of an Urban Oasis Project captured the "stories" of the region, focusing on the natural environment, the built environment, and the cultural environment of this unique part of Los Angeles. Stories about the 1909 Mount Washington Hotel, used by the Self-Realization Fellowship since the 1920s; the Southwest Museum of Charles Lummis, which since 1912 has been a nationally significant museum of the American Indian; the literary and scientific "Arroyo Culture," that was centered on this area; and the survival of a naturalistic lifestyle only miles from the high-rises of downtown. The project is an excellent example of how capturing stories captures a sense of place, a prelude to effective historic preservation.
- **San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park, National Park Service Rehabilitation of Schooner C. A. Thayer, San Francisco County.** This award recognizes a massive effort by the National Park Service and its contractors to bring back to life the National Historic Landmark lumber schooner *C. A. Thayer*. The ship was built in Fairhaven, California, an unincorporated Humboldt County community south of Samoa, near Eureka. The schooner, 168 feet long and 36 feet wide, was used to haul lumber from Humboldt County to other markets, chiefly San Francisco. By the 1930s, the ship was part of a fishing fleet in Alaska, and was then refitted as a barge by the Army during World War II. Bought by California State Parks in 1957, the *Thayer* was transferred to the National Park Service in the 1970s. By 2004, the ship had buckled so badly that many feared the ship would be lost unless fundamental rehabilitation was undertaken. NPS dry-docked the schooner in an abandoned hangar at Naval Air Station Alameda, where work consumed three years and tens of millions of dollars. Restoration now essentially complete, the *Thayer* has been returned to Hyde Street pier for public viewing. The project illustrates the care and integrity of the National Park Service and recalls the importance of the state's maritime history.

More information about the Office of Historic Preservation is available at www.ohp.parks.ca.gov

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