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SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CHAPTER

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# NEWS

2005  
may | june



Photo: John Ellis

P.O. Box 56478, Sherman Oaks, CA 91413, 800.9SAHSCC, www.sahscc.org

## Harwell Hamilton Harris X Two

SAH/SCC Lecture and Tour  
Saturday, May 14th

Join the SAH/SCC Saturday, May 14th, from 2PM to 5PM, for an in-depth experience of two of Harwell Hamilton Harris' early houses. In addition to touring the homes, there will be guest speakers shedding light on Harris' work. The cost for this event, which was organized by SAH/SCC Life Member (and former board president) Ted Wells and SAH/SCC Board Member John Ellis, is \$35 for SAH/SCC members, and \$45 for non-members. Because Harris' houses are best experienced in a small group, ticket availability is very limited. We suggest purchasing tickets early for this tour; see order form on the last page.

The afternoon starts at the Pumphrey House in Santa Monica Canyon, where tour members will enjoy a garden lecture about Harris and his work. After touring the Pumphrey House, guests will take a quick shuttle ride to the house Harris designed for famed publisher John Entenza. Both houses have been sensitively restored, with minor and appropriate alterations, and show how Harris' houses adapt to contemporary living nearly seventy years after their creation. Architect Michael Folonis, who did the renovations for both houses, will share his insights on Harris' work and the challenges of restoring these classic homes.

The Pumphrey House, built in 1939, has long bands of narrow horizontal wood siding at its balconies and fascia, showing the influence of Frank Lloyd Wright. Unlike Wright's houses of the same period, however, the Pumphrey house has an elegant simplicity and lightness, and is more freshly modern. The two-level house is sited to one side of the property, with a long wall of glass doors opening to a large south-facing garden.

The Entenza House was designed in 1937 for the editor and publisher of *Arts and Architecture* magazine. The house is exceptional in Harris' body of work. With a curving carport, exterior metal stair, and tubular railings, the house recalls both Streamline Moderne and International Style architecture. Entenza's magazine championed all that was new in the arts, with a special emphasis on emerging modernist architecture in Southern California. Entenza's most lasting contribution was his sponsorship of the Case Study Houses project.

Harris has long been recognized as an important regionalist architect in California, and his place in the history of American Modernism has only recently begun to be explored. He started his creative life as a sculptor and was inspired by Wright's grasp of the movement between nature and the house. Harris expanded on the work of architects, such as Henry and Charles Greene, who were interested in creating sculpture on a monumental, yet human, scale. The single-family house, and its democratic roots, held great appeal to Harris, and his finest works show his sensitivity to neo-Japanese influences and the tranquility a house can provide in a modern world.



Photos: John Ellis



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# SAH/SCC

## President's Letter

As we go to press, the world's attention is focused on the Vatican, and many of us have been "virtual" visitors to St. Peter's Basilica during the past few weeks.

As architecture, St. Peter's is certainly one of the most significant buildings in Western civilization, although connoisseurs of architectural history agree that its design is a bit of a mess. With major contributions by Bramante, Michelangelo, della Porta, Maderno, and Bernini, the building is an assemblage of different pieces. Some are quite brilliant, but ultimately these fragments do not hold together as a coherent whole.

Its power comes simply from its size. The writer who conveyed this fact most powerfully was Mark Twain. As we inhabit the building from afar, I'm reminded of Twain's description of St. Peter's, and I thought I'd share some of it with you. The following passages are from Innocents Abroad (1869):

"Of course we have been to the monster Church of St. Peter..."

"When we reached the door and stood fairly within the church, it was impossible to comprehend that it was a very large building. I had to cipher a comprehension of it. I had to ransack my memory for some more similes. St. Peter's is bulky. Its height and size would represent two of the Washington Capitol set one on top of the other—if the Capitol were wider, or two blocks and a half of ordinary buildings set one on top of the other. St. Peter's was that large, but it could and would not look so. The trouble was that everything in it and about it was on such a scale of uniform vastness that there were no contrasts to judge by—none but the people, and I had not noticed them. They were insects. The statues of children holding vases of holy water were immense, according to the tables of figures, but so was everything else around them. The mosaic pictures in the dome were huge, and were made of thousands and thousands of cubes of glass as large as the end of my little finger, but those pictures looked smooth, and gaudy of color, and in good proportion to the dome. Evidently they would not answer to measure by. Away down toward the far end of the church (I thought it was really clear at the far end, but discovered afterward that it was in the center, under the dome) stood the thing they call the baldachino—a great bronze pyramidal framework like that which upholds a mosquito bar. It only looked like a considerably magnified bedstead—nothing more. Yet I knew it was a good deal more than half as high as Niagara Falls..."

"But the people attracted my attention after a while. To stand in the door of St. Peter's and look at men down toward its further extremity, two blocks away, has a diminishing effect on them; surrounded by the prodigious pictures and statues, and lost in the vast spaces, they look very much smaller than they would if they stood two blocks away in the open air. I averaged a man as he passed me and watched him as he drifted far down by the baldachino and beyond—watched him dwindle to an insignificant school-boy, and then, in the midst of the silent throng of human pygmies gliding about him, I lost him... While we stood on the floor one of the workmen swung loose from that gallery at the end of a long rope. I had not supposed before that a man could look so much like a spider. He was insignificant in size, and his rope seemed only a thread. Seeing that he took up so little space, I could believe the story then that ten thousand troops went to St. Peter's once to hear mass, and their commanding officer came afterwards and, not finding them, supposed they had not yet arrived. But they were in the church, nevertheless—they were in one of the transepts."

One of architectural history's great and overlooked voices: Mark Twain.

Tony Denzer



Tour and Event Information: 1.800.9SAHSCC; info@sahscc.org

SAH/SCC NEWS is published bi-monthly by the Society of Architectural Historians / Southern California Chapter. Subscription is a benefit of membership and provides members with one of the most comprehensive calendars of architectural events in Southern California and advance notice of exclusive SAH/SCC architectural events and tours.

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Information and ads for the newsletter should be sent three weeks before the issue date.

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Please send all ad materials, notices of events, exhibitions and news to the attention of the editor:

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## Temples and Crafts of South India

SAH National Tour  
 December 28th, 2005, to  
 January 18th, 2006



Join national SAH members for an exotic odyssey that will highlight the most important monuments and sites in Southern India, from December 28th, 2005, to January 18th, 2006.

The tour has been conceived and planned by architect and SAH/SCC Life Member Stephen Harby, who will accompany the group throughout the itinerary, along with tour leader A. Srivatsan. An architect and professor at Anna University of Madras, Srivatsan is a specialist in south Indian Hindu temples and is intimately familiar with the regions that will be explored. Teaching design in an architecture school, he is also completely conversant with contemporary architectural theory and preservation issues.

The tour will lead members through the Indian states of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, home to some of the world's most significant Hindu temples. The area also boasts many workshops where stone, wood, bronze, and textiles are still being handcrafted in the same manner of centuries past. Tour-goers will experience traditional Indian temples, dating from the Fourth century to the 1600s, along with architecture by the British and French colonists of the 18th and 19th centuries.

The tour is open only to members of the SAH. The cost is \$7,175 per person based on a double occupancy room. For more information, contact Stephen Harby at 310.450.8239 or www.stephenharby.com.



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# Under the Stars: Southern California Retro Slide Show

SAH/SCC  
Featured Event  
Thursday,  
June 16th



Charles Phoenix in Chinatown  
Photo: Chris Haston

On Thursday, June 16th, at 8:30PM, SAH/SCC members are invited to take a trip back in time during a live performance by Charles Phoenix at the Ford Amphitheatre. SAH/SCC is going as a group, thus extending a 15% discount to our members. SAH/SCC tickets are \$21 each, and must be sent into SAH/SCC by May 26th. See back page for order form.

Charles Phoenix reinvents the classic living-room slide show in the open air and beautiful surroundings of the historic Ford Amphitheatre (1931). In a highly acclaimed presentation, he provides insightful and often hilarious commentary on his vast collection of color slides from the 1940s, '50s, and '60s.

Exuding the innocence and enthusiasm of mid-century California culture, these vivid slides offer a peak into the private lives of the amateur photographers who shot them, as well as a grand view of the places and events that have defined Southern California. Experience the one and only flight of the Spruce Goose and the end of the Queen Mary's final voyage. See the famous landmarks of Hollywood's "golden era" and go behind the scenes on the set of *The Ten Commandments*. Relive suburbia and experience the excitement of Knott's Berry Farm, Pacific Ocean Park, Marineland, Santa's Village, and Disneyland all over again. It's all part of a night "Under the Stars."

From the kitsch to the classic, Charles Phoenix is an expert in the world of mid-century design and American culture. As a humorist, "histo-tainer," archivist and author, he has become a popular personality known for his retro slide shows, field trip tours, and books, which include *Southern Californialand: Mid-Century Culture in Kodachrome* (2004, Angel City Press), *God Bless Americana: A Retro Vacation Slide Show Tour of the USA* (2002, Graphic Arts Center Publishing Company), and *Southern California in the '50s: Sun, Fun and Fantasy* (2001, Angel City Press).

SAH/SCC-member tickets MUST be purchased through SAH/SCC for the discount. The Ford Amphitheatre is located at 2580 Cahuenga Blvd. in Hollywood. Parking is \$5. Tickets will be held at the door.



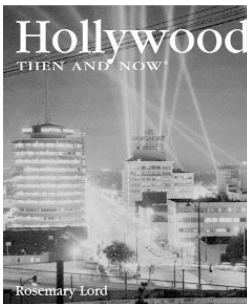
Muscle Beach, Santa Monica, 1957.



Newport Balboa Savings, Newport Beach, 1963.



Tomorrowland, Disneyland, 1967.



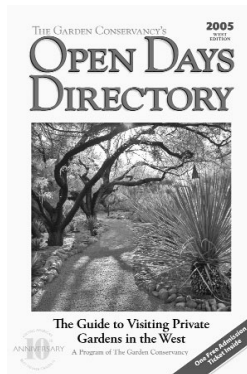
### Hollywood Then & Now

by Rosemary Lord.

This richly-illustrated book traces Hollywood's development from a sunny agricultural haven to a bustling film mecca. With more than 70 classic "then" photos and 70 full-color "now" photos, Lord matches early images from Hollywood's golden age with specially commissioned contemporary images to trace the changes brought by a century of expansion.

Detailed texts and captions explain the history of Tinseltown's most famous people and places, including Charlie Chaplin, Jean Harlow, the Hollywood Sign, Graumann's Chinese Theatre, the Pig'n Whistle café, and the Coconut Grove nightclub. From "Before the Movies," when Harvey and Daeida Wilcox advertised Hollywood as a perpetually sunny escape, to the present and its proliferation of nightclubs, malls, and movie stars that rise as "The Magic Continues," the book's chapters follow Hollywood's historic progression toward maturity as an urban city.

Lord depicts both the glorious preservations of monuments, such as the Hollywood Bowl and the Egyptian Theatre (both restored by Hodgetts + Fung Design and Architecture), and the glaring absences, where parking lots and strip malls stand on the grounds of the former DeLongpre House, Garden of Allah, and the Brown Derby in this thorough and unblinking history.  
*Thunder Bay Press; hardcover, 160 pages; \$17.98.*



### Open Days Directory:

#### The Guide to Visiting Private Gardens in the West

This directory lists the nearly 400 enticing private gardens across the western United States that will be open to the public during the Garden Conservancy's "Open Days" programs in spring 2005. Gardens are listed by location and include many in San Diego, Pasadena, Los Angeles, Brentwood, Pacific Palisades, and Santa Monica. Each listing provides a detailed description of the garden's plants and designers, along with directions to the garden. Check the SAH/SCC Calendar for events in these areas.

For garden enthusiasts who cannot attend the Conservancy's "Open Days," the directory includes an extensive listing of public gardens. With admission hours, addresses, contact information, and directions, readers can arrange a tour on their own time.

*The Garden Conservancy; soft cover; 95 pages; \$5.  
www.gardenconservancy.org/opendays.*



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**SAH/SCC publications order form**

For those of you who missed out on recent SAH/SCC tours, or would like more information for your reference, here's an opportunity to get your hands on the publications printed especially for SAH/SCC events. Don't let another chance pass you by.

- Edward A. Killingsworth: Setting a Modern Standard:** 20-page booklet on Killingsworth's Long Beach work, featuring photos by Julius Shulman and Marvin Rand \_\_\_\_\_ at \$9 each
- Rodney Walker: The Ojai Years:** trifold black-and-white brochure featuring Walker's important residences in Ojai, with pictures and article by historian David Mason \_\_\_\_\_ at \$5 each
- Beyond the Bauhaus:** 32-page illustrated booklet with plans, photos, and essays based on Boston tour \_\_\_\_\_ at \$10 each
- Soriano: Man of Steel:** 12-page illustrated booklet with article by Neil Jackson \_\_\_\_\_ at \$10 each
- Palm Springs Postcards:** seven postcards of homes visited on "Shelter Under the Sun" Tour, photographed by John Ellis \_\_\_\_\_ at \$10
- Avenel Homes:** two-fold, two-color brochure from "Ain on Avenel" Tour \_\_\_\_\_ at \$2 each
- The Historic and Modern Spirit of Ventura:** 20-page guide. \_\_\_\_\_ at \$10 each
- Modernism for the Masses:** three-fold brochure with inserts of detailed floorplans of Eichler homes visited on the tour to Orange County. \_\_\_\_\_ at \$10 each
- Cool Pools:** Booklet and cassette tape from "Reflections on Water: Cool Pools Along Sunset Boulevard." \_\_\_\_\_ at \$10 each members  
\_\_\_\_\_ at \$15 each non-members
- Sarasota:** 26-page, full-color brochure of works by Sarasota school architects from "On Parallel Lines: The Sarasota Modern Movement 1948-1966." \_\_\_\_\_ at \$10 each
- Reconsidering Lloyd Wright:** 21-page, four color booklet from "Reconsidering Lloyd Wright House Tour." \_\_\_\_\_ at \$10 each
- Union Station and MTA Transit Center:** A two-fold map for a self-guided walking tour including historical facts and photos. \_\_\_\_\_ at \$2 each

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\_\_\_\_\_ non-member ticket(s) at \$45 each = \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Under the Stars: Southern California Retro Slide Show** — June 16th  
**TICKETS DEADLINE – MAY 26th**  
\_\_\_\_\_ member ticket(s) at \$21 each = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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- \$20 Student** (with copy of current I.D.)
- \$100 Patron** (up to 2 names at same address)
- \$500 Life Member** (one time contribution)
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