



# EAGLE ROCK VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Fall, 2012

## Eagle Rock Modern?

**M**odernism slipped into Eagle Rock early when the Lowes family asked Frank Lloyd Wright to design their home. When Wright withdrew, having completed only sketches, Rudolph Schindler designed and built a home for the family on upper Ellenwood Drive in 1923. Its angular massing and strip windows contrasted with the prevailing Period Revival style. Ironically, the house's innovative plan and linear details had more in common with the Craftsman style of most of Eagle Rock's earlier houses.

Further construction waited for the end of the depression and war years. Richard Neutra's commission to design the Eagle Rock Recreation Center Clubhouse marked a peak in the city's receptivity to new architecture. The building was an expansion of the ideas explored by Neutra in his smaller residential structures. The steel post and beam pavilion allowed the gym walls to raise and the stage to open for performance into an outdoor space and a smaller meeting room. The strip windows and brick walls expressed a deceptively simple but powerful contemporary classicism.

Conrad Buff III grew up in the home of his parents, Conrad II, a painter and illustrator, and his author mother. He gradually remodeled the house (with help from Neutra on the street façade) as a series of open pavilions cascading down the hillside. He also built a glass-fronted studio for his father on the elevated slope at the rear of an adjoining property. Unfortunately, Buff had few clients in the Eagle Rock area despite running his practice out of this home. The house he built for Occidental drama professor Omar Paxson and his family, and another that we cannot locate, were probably his entire output here.

Although postwar homes built here were mostly variations on the popular ranch style, open plans and patio doors to private gardens were incorporated in the style. Several innovators worked in more overtly modern styles. John Luther hand-built his family home, and Oakley Norton designed a structurally inventive series of houses embellished with hand-crafted details.

The most unusual architect designed house in the '50s was Arthur Lavagnino's Real Studio, a concrete pavilion which

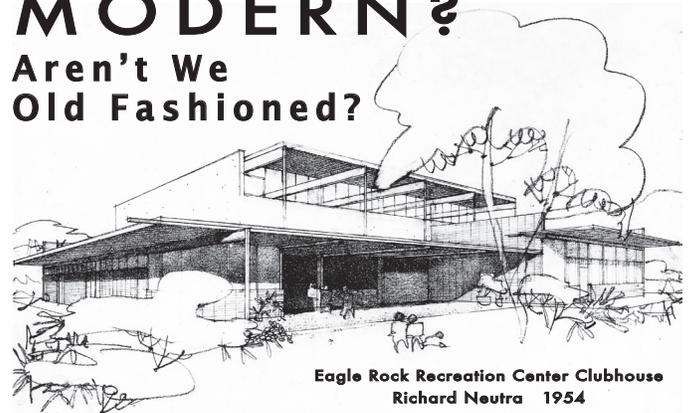
required the skills of the Pacific Bridge Company to construct. Jan de Swart embellished it with a woven texture of indoor and outdoor sculptures.

A few commercial structures were built in the roadside modernism of the California Federal Bank and Bob's restaurant. Modernism as a "style" was expressed in several boulevard facade remodels with varying results.

The architecture and style continued to be used in a small number of structures in more recent years adding variety and innovative design to our built environment. The legacy and ongoing importance of modernism in Eagle Rock will be explored in a slide presentation and discussion at the Eagle Rock Valley Historical Society's meeting 7:00 P.M. Tuesday, October 16 at the Center for the Arts, Eagle Rock, 2225 Colorado Blvd. Refreshments will be provided and all are welcome at no charge.

## EAGLE ROCK MODERN?

Aren't We  
Old Fashioned?



Eagle Rock Recreation Center Clubhouse  
Richard Neutra 1954

Eagle Rock Valley Historical Society  
Center for the Arts, Eagle Rock  
2225 Colorado Blvd.

Tuesday, October 16 7:00

Free and Open to All

visit our website: [eaglerockhistory.org](http://eaglerockhistory.org)

## Members and Friends

### And a Good Time was had...

Our Ice Cream Social capped this season at the Center for the Arts, Eagle Rock, July 29. The youth and energy of volunteers from the ERHS Key Club enhanced the event, serving our famous dollar-a-dip ice cream and floats. Auntie Em's sponsored our delicious array of toppings, and have already agreed to do so again next year; thanks! Folks danced to the rhythm of the ERHS Latin Jazz Band and the Fifth Friday Folk Band. Peter Breede demonstrated his hand cranked ipod for those too young to understand technology. The Western Educators, Shooters and Troopers staged an exciting auction in which a large part of Eagle Rock, including the Rock, was sold at auction to Prudent Beaudry. Our generous donors again made possible an exciting raffle. We thank Tritch Hardware, Colombo's, Super Copy, Colorado Wine Company, The Green Bean, READ Books, Trader Joe's, Spitz, Cory and Sarah Stargel, Karen Warren, and Maxine Tichenor for their gifts.

### "All I Know...."

Our joint efforts with Highland Park Heritage Trust and the Occidental College Library to digitize our archive of local newspapers will be emphasized in our appearances at the ER Music festival October 6th, and later this month on the 26th at the Archives Bazaar at USC Library. A video clip-reel will be shown featuring amazing and amusing items plucked from the headlines. The booths will be staffed from all three organizations. Come visit us and find out more.

### Dues are paid or overdue!

Thanks to all of our loyal members who have sustained us with their dues. We won't include a dues envelope with this issue. Instead we will send a separate invoice to those of you whom we haven't heard from this year. As our system is tied to the calendar year, those pesky envelopes will appear again in January.

### Surfs Up in January

Fred Guapo will reveal his love for the waves in a presentation based on his amazing collection of surfing magazines. He recently donated an almost-complete run of them to Pepperdine for their

surfing museum. Where did the popularization of this sport begin and how did young Angelinos join in this regional phenomenon? No wetsuits will be necessary for this immersion in azure waters.

### Women's Twentieth Century Club federal designation

The club has decided to pursue federal historic landmark designation for their remarkable clubhouse. Our Board member, Frank Parrello, and Christy McAvoy, well known preservation advocate, will aid their efforts. A recent search of the club safe has yielded the original construction contract with Edwards and Wildey and other important documents. Our reaserch in the archives and local newspapers are giving a broader picture of the club. Restoration efforts await further evaluation and funding.

The objectives of the Eagle Rock Valley Historical Society

- to preserve, clarify through research and to perpetuate the history of Eagle Rock Valley
- to make this history available to students, researchers, libraries and all interested persons
- to preserve and protect our local landmarks, especially the Eagle Rock

Membership is open to all who would further these objectives

Public Archive Hours 10 to 12 every Saturday  
at the Center for the Arts, Eagle Rock  
2225 Colorado Blvd. Eagle Rock CA 90041  
for information call 323-257-1357

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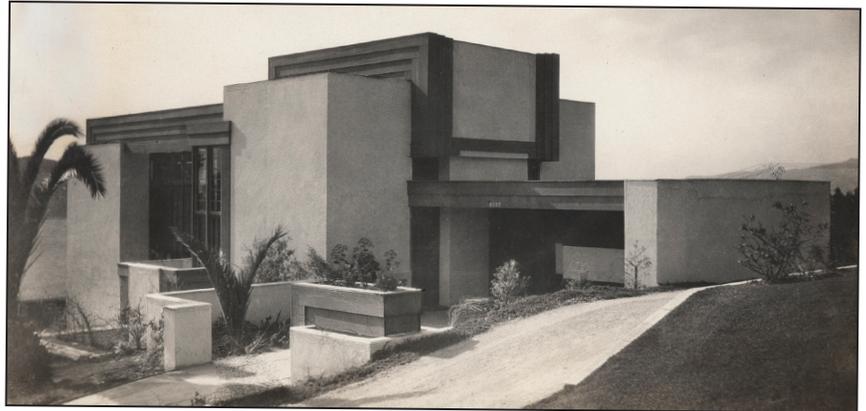
Visit our website at:  
[eaglerockhistory.org](http://eaglerockhistory.org)

Visit us at [eaglerockhistory.org](http://eaglerockhistory.org) or in person  
Saturdays 10 a.m. to noon at the CFAER

## Modernist Homes

### Modernist Masterpiece Demolished.

Rudolph M. Schindler built this house for the Lowes family at 5325 Ellenwood Drive in 1923, a remarkable contrast to the other houses on the street. Drawings exist by Frank Lloyd Wright for the project but Schindler designed this house in his own style. The upper end of this street was destroyed in 1969 for the 134 Freeway. (Courtesy of University of California Santa Barbara Art Museum, Photograph by Viroque Baker)



**The James Real Studio, 1959.** When he bought the Rock and 2 ½ acres of industrial zoned land from Francis Line in 1957, Real envisioned the construction of a laboratory for technological innovation. He built this studio first. Arthur Lavagnino designed the building, with sculptural elements by local artist Jan De Swart. The Pacific Bridge Co fabricated the innovative concrete roof design. The Studio has recently been declared a Historic Cultural Monument. (Courtesy of Henk Friezer, Photograph by Joe Friezer for Northeast Newspapers)

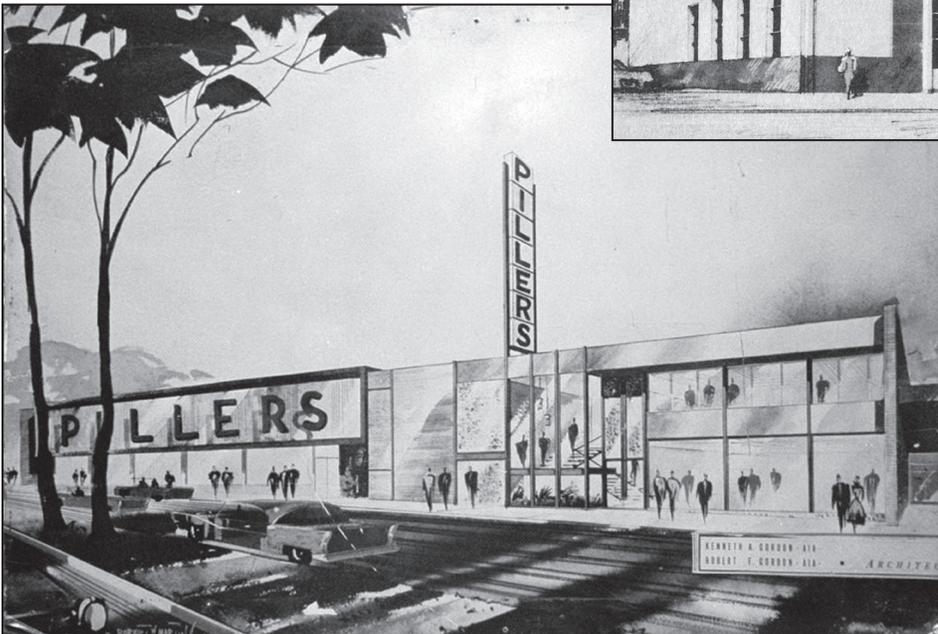
**The Norman Bilderback House.** Built in 1953 for Bilderback, then a director of design for the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, this was one of a series of homes built by Eugene Weston III and his partner, Douglas Byles. Weston's "designs are simple, elegant and to the scale of how many people desired to live, then and now," Keith York, an authority on Southern California modernism, told The Los Angeles Times in 2006.

After art dealer Scott Nadeau bought the hillside home in 2003, he compared it to a treehouse for the summer light that streams through both sides of the living room: "I kept thinking about this 28-year-old designer, Eugene Weston. God, how smart is this guy?" (Photograph by Eric Warren)



## Our Town, Our History

**“Gibson” house.** This home was probably built by Jim and Louise Gibson, friends of editor Warren’s parents. With its horizontal lines and plan, use of steel framing and skilled site placement, the house displays many of the characteristics of well-designed modernism. (Photograph by Eric Warren)



### ????? QUIZ ?????

What business was once behind each of these modernist facades?  
Reply to our Webmaster at [eaglerockhistory.org](http://eaglerockhistory.org)  
First correct answer gets bragging rights and a free ERVHS tee shirt.

# Eagle Rock Recreation Center Building

by Dion Neutra

“I think this was one of the most imaginative projects dad (Richard Neutra, ed) got involved with for that type of structure. He carried out here a number of ideas he’d developed for the community building at Chavez Ravine, the ill-fated housing project developed in the Neutra-Alexander office a few years earlier.

Included were such things as walls that lifted to open the game floor to the outside. At that time, hand-cranking was the best we could do. At the rear of the stage, there were doors opening to a spacious amphitheater to the north.

On the east side of the stage were other doors that gave out to the platform which served a multi-purpose community room. A strategically placed kitchen served this room as well as the main gymnasium space.

At some point I heard that demolition of this building was being considered by the city because rehabilitation and removal of asbestos were considered too expensive. Thru the intervention of our office and a community group (TERA, ed), the building was declared a City Historic Monument, and rehabilitation undertaken. I was not involved in

that first effort.

Some years later, in 2004, the city undertook another round of ‘improvements’. I was part of a team they assembled. Whereas a number of required replacements were achieved, many of the features such as the gratuitous east columns, the offensive enclosure of the director’s office and the omission of the pool out front of the amphitheater were not addressed because of budget considerations. Shortly after we finished our work, I was back to inspect. To my horror, I found most of the natural brick painted over (graffiti problems)! This was done without consultation with me or the Cultural Affairs Commission! What kind of system is this? The building cries out for more efforts to get it back closer to its pristine original expression.

When I look at our project now after nearly 60 years of service, I’m proud that it survives, but saddened at the failure of the Monument status to require much more and better interventions/ supervision to get it back closer to its original glory. This illustrates a weakness in this system; no funding to inspect regularly or to cure obvious wounds.”

(The above is excerpted from Dion’s forthcoming book “The Neutras: Then and Later”. The photographs are by Julius Shulman.)





at the Center for the Arts, Eagle Rock  
2225 Colorado Blvd.

**Eagle Rock Modern  
Aren't We Old Fashioned?  
Tuesday, October 16, 2012, 7:00**

**SURF'S UP!!!!!!  
LOCAL SURFER TELLS ALL  
TUESDAY, JANUARY 15, 2013, 7:00**

**CLANG, CLANG, GONE !  
WENT THE TROLLEY  
TUESDAY, APRIL 16, 2013, 7:00**

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone # \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Membership Category:

Individual \$20    Business \$35    **New**

Family \$25    Life \$300    **Renewal**

Will you help with the ongoing activities of the ERVHS ?

Yes    No

Archives    Newsletter    Oral history

Meetings    Fundraising    E-mail me

Publicity    Displays    to help

Other \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Clip and mail to : **ERVHS**  
**c/o Center for the Arts**  
**2225 Colorado Blvd.**  
**Eagle Rock, CA 90041**

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**The Member's Corner**



**Carmela Gomes**

"I came home to Highland Park," is how Carmela described her 1999 move after 24 years in Glendale and before that the east coast, where she was born in New Jersey and spent time in New York. A born teacher and leader, Carmela was trained at Montclair State College, eventually taught locally and continues to teach teachers about the history of the Arroyo every February. She advocates a "place-based education" revolution, promoting the importance of learning "who you are, where you are, and having stewardship of your community." Carmela couldn't embody that spirit more.

Acting as President of the Highland Park Heritage Trust for four years, being involved with the Highland Park Neighborhood council and Lummis Day, and most recently, being a showcased artist in an Arroyo Arts Collective exhibition, she has quickly put down deep roots in Northeast L.A. When President of HPHT, she met members of ERVHS, joined our organization, and is currently a key player in an important joint newspaper digitization project we have with the Oxy library.

Carmela appreciates the "genuine relationships" she has formed here and seeing firsthand what preservation can do for a community. "Do you grow when you retire or do you vegetate?" she asked of herself. Her actions speak louder than words: GROW. We are lucky to have you, Carmela!

-Katie Taylor