

community connection

An Update

Oakridge Estate: The House That Barbara Stanwyck Built

Victoria Wilson, Author of "A Life of Barbara Stanwyck" at Oakridge on February 8th

By Wayne Adelstein

Ever since the city purchased the Oakridge Estate in 2009, which was designated in 1990 as a Los Angeles Historic Cultural Landmark (now managed by the L.A. City Recreation and Parks Department), *Community Connection* has kept its readers informed about the progress on the historic preservation project. Another milestone is being reached, though not related to the actual rehabilitation of the property.



The Stanwyck house during construction in early 1937

Community volunteers have dedicated their time and resources to the restoration of the house with the goal of "bringing it back to life" and in the process have become versed in its history and that of surrounding properties which were nationally recognized as premier horse breeding and training centers. Yet, not as much is known about iconic actress Barbara Stanwyck, for whom the house was built in 1937 and who was passionate about Thoroughbreds. That will soon change.

A milestone in the evolution of the restoration of Oakridge, while not directly related to bricks and mortar rehabilitation, will be a special event sponsored by the Friends of Oakridge on February 8th. Barbara Stanwyck will attend in the persona of author Victoria Wilson who has spent 15 years researching Stanwyck, and has authored "A Life of Barbara Stanwyck Steel-True 1907-1940 Vol I."

Wilson will introduce attendees to Stanwyck's rich, complex life and her extraordinary movie career spanning four decades, and her love of the thoroughbred breeding ranch, Marwyck, that she owned and operated with her agent and neighbors, Zeppo and Marion Marx from 1937 - 1941.

As for the status of the restoration project. It's in progress. Physical changes are already apparent says former L.A. city councilmember Greig Smith through whose efforts the property was acquired by the City. To date, a portion of the old landscaping has been removed, the park area (about 8 acres) will be graded and construction of the new park is expected to begin sometime this year. The park will feature a children's play area, a hiking and jogging trail, an outdoor classroom, a large meadow and a water element. As for the house itself, rehabilitation is in progress with partial reconstruction having been completed on the ground floor.

When completed, the facility will be available to the community for weddings, corporate and other gatherings.

The entrance will be relocated and a 40 space parking lot will be developed, with handicapped parking available closer to the house. Discussions are also in progress to utilize the softball field parking lot directly across the street and plans are to ultimately secure a traffic light to assure safe crossing of Devonshire Street, said Smith.



The house as it appears today.

The lecture and book signing event, which is open to the public includes Docent directed glimpses of the first floor of the house; displays of historic photographs with history of the house and ranch; and, the author's lecture followed by a book signing. Light refreshments will be served. Off-site parking and shuttle service will be provided.

The cost to attend is \$30. Feel free to bring your cameras.

Space is limited, so register as soon as possible either online at www.theoakridgeestate.org. - Click on Event Button - PayPal, or by Calling (818) 739-0292.