

All About Oakridge



The Oakridge Estate is a Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument
Former Residence of Barbara Stanwyck and
Jack Oakie and Victoria Horne Oakie

***Friends is pleased to announce that the residence has reopened for tours
and events. Please check our website for current information***

www.theoakridgeestate.org

Oakridge Residence Receives Funding!

At their meeting on April 21, the City of Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks Board of Commissioners voted to approve \$800,000 in Quimby funds for building and outdoor improvements to the Oakridge Estate. Quimby funds are fees collected from local development projects that are set aside to preserve and improve parks and open space in the community.

The scope of work at Oakridge will address items that are in immediate need of attention as identified in a recently completed Historic Treatment Plan: repair of the home's exterior, entry gates and flagstone paths; upgrades to the residence's electrical, plumbing and security systems; ADA accessibility improvements, including the installation of an ADA restroom in the garage; improvements to the Mural Room involving mural conservation, insulation and climate control; installation of a new fire detection and notification system; and tree, landscaping and irrigation improvements that also extend to the tennis court fencing and walls.

Friends of Oakridge would like to express our appreciation to Council District 12, the Park Board of Commissioners, Executive staff, and the numerous branches and divisions within the Department of Recreation and Parks, as well as their contracted agencies, for collaborating to make this long-anticipated development a reality. Construction is expected to commence in Spring 2023. Please stay tuned for

Historic-Cultural Marker Erected at Oakridge Estate



Motorists driving past the Oakridge Estate on Devonshire Street will now notice a new Historic-Cultural Monument street sign standing near the curb between the Oakridge Estate Park and the gated driveway leading to the residence. The marker was placed through the efforts of Patricia LoPresti, former Friends of Oakridge Outreach Committee Chair and current Oakridge Estate Park community advocate. Pat was also responsible for the installation of the plaque detailing the history of the Oakridge Estate that greets visitors upon entering the Park grounds.

Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monuments are sites which have been designated by the Los Angeles Cultural Heritage Commission as worthy of preservation based on architectural, historic, and cultural criteria. Thanks to the efforts of Victoria Horne Oakie, the Oakridge Estate and grounds were declared HCM #484 in 1990. It is important to note that HCM status does not mean a building is protected forever. According to the City's Office of Historic Resources, "In Los Angeles, designation as a Historic-Cultural Monument does not guarantee that the building cannot be demolished, but it does allow the Commission to delay demolition in order to create opportunities for preservation solutions to emerge." It is directives such as these that should motivate our entire community to remain vigilant and rally behind the rehabilitation of our irreplaceable landmark, ensuring it remains a viable historic-cultural resource for generations to come.

A Bit of Barbara Returns to Marwyck

Friends of Oakridge is delighted to announce that a knotty pine china hutch formerly owned by Barbara Stanwyck has been donated by great-niece Kathleen Carr. The hutch is nearly identical to the one that originally occupied the Marwyck dining room and represents the first piece of furniture integral to creating the space as it existed during



Stanwyck's time at the residence. Ms. Carr also included eight English display plates, three of which date back to the Marwyck years.

Barbara's passion for collecting antiques, including vintage silver and period furniture, has been well documented. The new acquisition is a reproduction of a Welsh Dresser, a piece of traditional English kitchen furniture dating back to the 1600s consisting of drawers and cupboards in the lower part topped by a sideboard and open shelving on top. The massive piece exudes a welcoming presence in its new home in the dining room. Friends is very grateful for Ms. Carr's generosity and ongoing support.

The Enduring Legacy of Harriett Coray



Friends of Oakridge is pleased to announce the donation of a photo scrapbook, an oil painting and two Stanwyck jackets from the estate of Harriett Coray, Barbara's personal assistant of nearly 40 years. The items were gifted by Pamela Hardine, Ms. Coray's granddaughter.

During the 1930s, it was not uncommon for movie stars to employ "studio maids." Like the personal assistants of today, these "maids" were hired and paid by the actors themselves, so their responsibilities varied. Harriett Coray was a twenty-seven-year-old African American with fair skin, straight hair, and green eyes*. At the time she started working for Barbara, Harriett was living in a segregated neighborhood of Los Angeles. A close connection developed between the two women and Coray became not only Stanwyck's trusted assistant and household staff supervisor, but also her loyal friend, confidante, and protector. It was Harriett who gave Barbara the nickname of Missy which was then adopted by crew members on the film sets where Harriett was both a constant fixture and a respected presence.

Barbara treated Harriett more as a family member than an employee, gifting her with cars, furs, clothing, jewelry, and artwork. She also insisted Harriett receive equal treatment and lodging whenever the two traveled together, which wasn't always a given due to the social conventions of the time. As Stanwyck's career wound down, so did her relationship with Coray and the two eventually parted ways.

"My grandmother always told me that she wanted to make her mark in the world," commented Ms. Hardine. "At the time she made this statement I was very young and perplexed and thought, just go and

do it. Now that I have experienced life and the complexities of it, I understand the trials and tribulations she had to face to achieve this goal. What she will never see is that her time of endeavoring as one of the first African Americans in the movie industry has opened many doors to other African Americans thus, unknowingly, her pursuits were not in vain. She just never lived long enough to see it.”

*For additional background on Harriett Coray, please refer to Victoria Wilson’s biography, *A Life of Barbara Stanwyck: Steel-True 1907-1940*.



Volunteer Spotlight

Friends of Oakridge is fortunate to have a group of dedicated volunteers who make our tours and events possible. This Newsletter, we are pleased to introduce Penny Brocato, the welcoming host who greets guests at check-in.

How did you first learn about the Oakridge Estate?

About 12 years ago I attended a meeting at a friend’s church and one of the volunteers at Oakridge gave a presentation about the home and how they were raising funds to restore the property. He had a sign-up sheet for volunteers, and I immediately signed up.

What made you interested in volunteering and what do you enjoy the most?

The history of Oakridge was fascinating to me, and I enjoy volunteering. I love meeting the people who come to take the tours! They have such interesting stories about seeing the house and wondering about it for years and stories about encounters with the Oakies. I also like the others that volunteer at Oakridge. They all have such interesting lives and they’re so knowledgeable about the house. I learn something new every time I’m there.

What were you most surprised to learn about the Oakridge Estate?

Through learning about the house, I learned a lot about the San Fernando Valley, too. I grew up in Westchester and I moved to the Valley in 1983 so I didn’t know anything about Oakridge or the other famous homes here. I was fortunate enough to see Barbara Stanwyck at a premiere in Hollywood when I was in high school and then work with her on a *Charlie’s Angels* episode and I am always amazed to learn new details about her life.

What is your favorite room or place in the home?

I’m partial to the mural room. I love looking at the mural on the walls and trying to figure out where it originated. It’s so interesting and I

always find something new that I didn't see before.

What is your favorite event?

I enjoy all the tours, but the special guests are really fun, too! I like hearing their memories about Barbara Stanwyck and the Oakies. I also enjoyed working on the Zoom virtual events and getting to know the committee members better.

What other activities are you interested in outside of Oakridge?

I worked in the entertainment industry over 25 years, and I usually spend several days a week in the pool at the Motion Picture Hospital in Calabasas. It's still closed because of Covid so I spend a lot more time volunteering at my church. I help at events by cooking, sending out publicity, creating flyers, tickets and programs and greeting people and checking them in. I like fundraising and I organize the silent auction every year where we raise funds to help children locally and worldwide. I also enjoy baking, so I usually show up wherever I go with baked treats.



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