

# All About Oakridge



A Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument  
Former Residence of Barbara Stanwyck and Jack Oakie

## Landscape Improvements Continue

Recent visitors to Oakridge have been treated to the beauty of a new backyard landscape! California Live Oak and Pepper trees now punctuate planter beds filled with dwarf bottlebrush, lavender, rosemary and lantana. Tall Birds of Paradise greet guests as they gaze out the foyer bay window toward the swimming pool. A decomposed granite pathway ensures easy access for future outdoor events. Friends is grateful to our supporters and the private donor who contributed so generously to make this wonderful transformation possible. Take a stroll and see for yourself while attending one of our events! Information is available on our website: [www.theoakridgeestate.org](http://www.theoakridgeestate.org).



## A Ride on the Wild Side

Following the screening of his documentary, *Wild Bill: Hollywood Maverick*, Bill Wellman, Jr., son of legendary film director, William Wellman, entertained a packed audience with memories of growing up in his star-studded Brentwood neighborhood



during the 1940s. A group favorite was Bill's tale of The Moraga Spit and Polish Club, Hollywood's first all-star motorcycle "gang".

Members of the exclusive club included the most celebrated talent both on and off the Hollywood screen: directors William Wellman, Victor Fleming and Howard Hawks as well as actors Clark Gable, Robert Taylor, Van Johnson, Keenan Wynn, Ward Bond and Andy Devine. Wives Dottie Wellman, Slim Hawks and Doogie Devine often rode alongside their husbands. Zeppo and Marion Marx also belonged and Barbara Stanwyck was occasionally spotted riding tandem with Taylor. Other notable members included stunt man Carey Loftin, aviation pioneer Bill Lear, P-51 Mustang test pilot Vance Breeze and aircraft manufacturer Al Menasco.

During World War II, when gas rationing curtailed the adventures of yachting and flying, those with a penchant for speed turned to motorcycling. The group took their name from Fleming's Moraga Drive, Bel Air ranch address. They would meet on Sunday mornings at a club member's home, spend an hour or so polishing their machines and then take off in their leather gear for a couple of hours of cruising through the hills off Mulholland Drive and down into the San Fernando Valley. The celebrities kept this private club a secret from their studio bosses. No wonder – a favorite game involved playing tag at speeds of up to 90 mph. Not exactly a pursuit Mr. Mayer or Mr. Warner would tolerate from such bankable talent!

Pictured above is Barbara Stanwyck and Robert Taylor

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## [Not Your Ordinary Bathrooms](#)

The bathrooms at the Oakridge Estate could be considered a designer's dream, even

today. Architect Paul R. Williams incorporated innovative bathroom design using multiple shower heads and a clean, sleek white color palette. The master bathroom was created to Barbara Stanwyck's specifications to fulfill her life-long dream of bathing in a bathtub crafted of onyx. A fan magazine at the time reported Barbara strictly maintained a nightly ritual of first bathing in the tub scented with gardenia oil and bath crystals before going downstairs for dinner.



It was Oakridge's eight bathrooms that appealed to Jack Oakie when purchasing the home. His wife Victoria Horne Oakie wrote in her book *Life With Jack Oakie* that Jack's desire for multiple bathrooms dated back to his three years in Vaudeville where there were large casts and very few bathrooms backstage: "In Vaudeville, it was always the acrobats that took the bathrooms." A favorite of guests visiting Oakridge is the wallpaper of Can-Can Dancers in the small bathroom adjacent to the Trophy Room.



Docents are often asked what are the white glass tiles on the walls in the bathrooms? The answer is Vitrolite. Starting in the 1920s, it was advertised as the material of choice because "the sparkling clean whiteness of Vitrolite counters and table tops is a standing invitation to tarry. Its delightfully cool, bright surface is just the place to serve palatable drinks and dainties. It keeps clean— nothing stains it and it just wears and wears..." The new vitreous marble product called Vitrolite was produced by The Vitrolite Company from 1908-1935 and then by Libbey-Owens-Ford from 1935-1947. Since vitreous marble is glass, it's a non-porous

substance that does not harbor bacteria, so it was used extensively in bathrooms and kitchens as a substitute for marble counter tops, table tops, and restroom partitions.

The downside of the product was that it was very fragile and broke easily. As cheaper and more durable substances began to be manufactured, Vitrolite was discontinued in the United States in 1947. It is surprising that the Vitrolite tiles at Oakridge have received limited damage. Vitrolite, when used for internal and external tiling and façades of buildings is often associated with the streamlining of the Art Deco and Art Moderne movements of the 1920s and 1930s that epitomized the ultramodern look. Vitrolite could also be readily retrofitted to existing buildings as part of efforts to "Modernize Main Street" during the Great Depression era.

If you are a first time or returning visitor to the Oakridge Estate, please take a little extra time to appreciate the design and materials that were used to create the beautiful bathrooms.

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### Visitors Step Back in Time at Oakridge

During the last three months there have been over 500 visitors to the Oakridge Estate through public and group docent led tours. Also, Friends of Oakridge was pleased to host and provide a tour for the relatives of architect Robert Finkelhor.



**The Classic Car Club of America** arrived at the Oakridge Estate in style with a few cars dating back to the early days of the residence. Eager to see the house, 40 members came from as far away as Dana Point and as close as the San Fernando Valley. Pictured above is a 1941 Cadillac convertible sedan, 1 of 400 manufactured, owned and



**The Art Deco Society of Los Angeles (ADSLA)** is a non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation and awareness of Art Deco as a major influence on the 20th century and beyond. The Oakridge Estate was a perfect location for 80 members to visit



photographed by John Milliken. One could just picture Barbara Stanwyck exiting her home and being driven off in grand style in a now classic car.

and tour this 1937 Paul R. Williams home. Pictured above is Nicole Marsak, ADSLA member, in the Mural Room.

**Note: During the hot summer months of July and August, the Oakridge Estate will be closed for public and group tours. Tours will resume in September 2019.**

## **Horses at Oakridge Estate Park**

On Saturday, June 15, 2019, horses returned to the property previously known as Marwyck Ranch. Community members were excited to meet the **City of Los Angeles Park Rangers Mounted Unit** who brought along two horses, Trigger (brown) and Sherman (white/grey), to the Oakridge Estate Park. The Park Rangers gave an educational talk about the horses and the children were given an opportunity to pet the horses and feed them carrots. Pat LoPresti organized the event to inform the community of the rich Thoroughbred breeding and training history of the property. For more information about Marwyck Ranch, please visit our website [www.theoakridgeestate.org](http://www.theoakridgeestate.org).



Photo courtesy: © Shel Mosk Photography [www.shelmosk.com](http://www.shelmosk.com).



### **Would You Like to Volunteer at Oakridge?**

The Friends of Oakridge is an all-volunteer, non-profit organization and we are always looking for enthusiastic people to join us. We offer our volunteers a unique opportunity to

utilize their skills, interests, and enthusiasm. Our volunteer team is comprised of individuals from a variety of professions, all sharing a common interest in the history of the Oakridge Estate. Volunteer opportunities include tour docents, event volunteers, social media, community outreach, and research. Volunteers are provided with training and are matched with assignments based on their availability and interests. Please visit our website to complete a Volunteer Application. An organization member will contact you soon and we look forward to meeting you.



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