

CITY LANDMARK ASSESSMENT & EVALUATION REPORT



January 2015

“CELLULOID” MONUMENT

Triangular Median at Olympic Boulevard, South Beverly Drive, and Beverwil Drive
City of Beverly Hills, CA 90212

Prepared for:

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APN: N/A

INTRODUCTION

This landmark assessment and evaluation report, completed by Ostashay & Associates Consulting for the City of Beverly Hills, documents and evaluates the local significance and landmark eligibility of the marble and bronze monument known as “Celluloid” located in the triangular median at the intersection of Olympic Boulevard, South Beverly Drive, and Beverwil Drive in the City of Beverly Hills.

Included in the report is a discussion of the survey methodology used, a summarized description of the subject property and its integrity, a brief contextual history of the monument and its associated sculptor, a review of the local landmark criteria considered in the evaluation process, a formal evaluation of the property for local significance, photographs, and applicable supporting materials.

METHODOLOGY

The landmark assessment was conducted by Jan Ostashay, Principal, and Peter Moruzzi, Architectural Historian, of Ostashay & Associates Consulting. In order to identify and evaluate the subject property as a potential local landmark, an intensive-level survey was conducted. The assessment included a review of the National Register of Historic Places (National Register) and its annual updates, the California Register of Historical Resources (California Register), and the California Historic Resources Inventory list maintained by the State Office of Historic Preservation (OHP) in order to determine if any previous evaluations or survey assessments of the monument had been performed.

For this current landmark assessment a site inspection was conducted to document the monument’s existing condition and assist in evaluating it for historical significance. The City of Beverly Hills landmark criteria were employed to evaluate the local significance of the site and its eligibility for landmark designation. In addition, the following tasks were performed for the study:

- Searched records of the National Register, California Register, and OHP Historic Resources Inventory.
- Conducted a field inspection of the monument and immediate area.

- Conducted site-specific archival background research on the subject property utilizing Sanborn fire insurance maps, newspaper articles, and historical photographs.
- Reviewed and analyzed ordinances, statutes, regulations, bulletins, and technical materials relating to federal, state, and local historic preservation, designation assessment procedures, and related programs.
- Evaluated the potential historic resource based upon criteria established by the City of Beverly Hills and utilized the OHP survey methodology for conducting survey assessments.

FINDINGS

The marble and bronze “Celluloid” monument located on a small triangular parcel at the intersection of Olympic Boulevard, South Beverly Drive, and Beverwil Drive appears to satisfy the City’s criteria for designation as a local Landmark as required in Section 10-3-3212 of the Historic Preservation Ordinance (BHMC 10-3-3212 (A)(B)(C)). This property satisfies the mandates of subsection A., which requires that at least two of the six “significance” criteria be met.

Upon conclusion of the assessment, the subject property appears to meet three of the “significance” criteria: criterion A.1, A.3, and A.4. It also meets the requirements of subsection 10-3-3212(B), which requires that: “a property retains integrity from its period of significance,” and subsection 10-3-3212(C), which requires that: “a property has historic value.”

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The monument is situated on a small triangular landscaped plot of land at the intersection of Olympic Boulevard, South Beverly Drive, and Beverwil Drive. The plot of land is not officially recognized by the Los Angeles County Tax Assessor as a formal parcel and, therefore, has no assessor parcel number or legal description. The piece of land is a wedge shape island median set between the convergence of three busy streets and measures roughly 40 feet by 80 feet by 65 feet. The site is curbed and is surrounded on all sides by paved streets. The monument was designed by noted sculptor Merrell Gage and dedicated on March 8, 1960.

The “Celluloid” monument has not been previously evaluated or recorded as part of the City’s past survey efforts. It was, however, addressed briefly in the historic context developed as part the 1985-1986 historic resources city-wide survey final report.

PROPERTY DESCRIPTION AND CONSTRUCTION HISTORY

Description. The commemorative monument consists of a 22-foot black marble and bronze sculpture set atop a round concrete pad surrounded by a flowerbed. It sits on a raised triangular shaped island median at the intersection of three major streets – Olympic Boulevard, South Beverly and Beverwill drives. The island is surrounded by a concrete curb and landscaped with a manicured green lawn at the south end of which is a circular flowerbed within a concrete rim. Centering the flowerbed is a round concrete pad with a short paved path on its south end

that leads to the east-west sidewalk that crosses South Beverly and Beverwill drives at Olympic Boulevard. Five tall contemporary type metal light pole/traffic signals are positioned at various points on the island median. A metal traffic switch box and low cylindrical vent are also located in the lawn west of the sculpture.

The towering sculpture is tiered with a square black marble base topped by a black marble octagonal center portion upon which a five-foot tall bronze figure in relief is attached to each of the eight sides. The figures depicted are individuals who were once associated with the motion picture industry. A tall, narrow bronze spear rises from the center of the octagon around which a spiraling bronze replica of a strip of motion picture film ascends. Crowning the spear is a multi-pointed star originally plated in 14-karat gold.¹

The representation of each bronze figure corresponds with a movie with which they were associated as denoted in the inscription. As such, the bronze relief figure of Douglas Fairbanks has him with long hair and wearing a swashbuckling costume associated with "The Iron Mask" in which he starred. On the angled black marble base at each individual's feet is inscribed the person's signature in script; the name of the film is capitalized. The eight individuals and their associated motion pictures depicted are Tom Mix in the 1926 film "Hard Boiled," Harold Lloyd in the comedy "Why Worry" (1923), Fred Niblo director of "Ben-Hur: A Tale of the Christ" (1925), Rudolph Valentino in the 1921 drama "The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse," Mary Pickford in the romance film "Tess of the Storm Country" (1922), Douglas Fairbanks in the adventure film "The Iron Mask" (1929), Will Rogers in the 1930 comedy "Lightnin'," and Conrad Nagel in the 1928 drama "Glorious Betsy."

Inscribed on the south side of the monument's square marble base is the commemorative statement that reads "In tribute to those celebrities of the motion picture industry who worked so valiantly for the preservation of Beverly Hills as a separate municipality - erected 1959." A bronze plaque embedded in the concrete in front of the main inscription is dedicated "To mayor David Tannenbaum whose understanding and cooperation made this tribute possible. My eternal gratitude . . . Corinne Griffith" Miss Griffith's name is her actual signature.

Embedded in the concrete below the Tannenbaum dedication plaque is a much larger rectangular bronze plaque of "Participants." Topping the list is the "City Council of Beverly Hills" and the names of Mayor George W. Davis and four other councilmembers. Below this is a list of 59 individuals and other entities that participated in the monument project in some way, most likely as financial contributors. Names such as Jack Benny, Sybil Brand, the Chamber of Commerce, two local newspapers, Beverly Wilshire Health Club, Gibraltar Savings & Loan Association, interior designer William Haines, L.B. Mayer, Buddy Rogers, United Homeowners of Beverly Hills, and Wil Wright's Ice Cream, Ltd. all included on this name recognition plaque.

On the same bronze plaque directly below the list of 59, the members of the "Committee" are identified, which refers to the Committee for Honoring Motion Picture Stars, the organization that conceived of and organized the funding for the monument.² The plaque lists Miss Corinne

¹ LAPL, Los Angeles Herald-Examiner Collection. Description of photograph of the monument's dedication on March 8, 1960.

² Los Angeles Times, "Beverly Hills' Tribute to Stars Seeks Funds: Appeal to Meet Cost of...," September 23, 1958. p.

Griffith, Chairman, and the other committee members: Mrs. Al Hart, Harold Lloyd, Mrs. Henry Perren, Mary Pickford, George Seaton, Ivan Traught, and Merrell Gage, the sculptor.

Centered where it is on an island around which daily pass thousands of cars, the subject monument is as prominent and highly visible as when it first appeared at that location in 1960.

Building Permit History. No building permits or other files for the subject monument were located at the City.

As relates to integrity, the subject monument appears intact and unaltered. A review of historic photographs in comparison with current conditions reveals that the marble and bronze sculpture has not been altered. The bronze bas-relief representations of the eight motion picture honorees attached to the octagonal black marble center portion appear unaltered such that its original design, materials and workmanship have been retained. In addition, the two bronze plaques embedded in concrete at the base of the monument appear unaltered. The subject property remains in its original location on a landscaped triangular median between Olympic Boulevard, South Beverly and Beverwil drives. As a result, the sculpture retains the appearance and feeling of the tall, imposing monument that it was in 1960 upon its dedication.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Beverly Hills. The early settlement and development of Beverly Hills began on what was called Rancho Rodeo de las Aguas. This land was originally claimed by Mexican settlers Maria Rita Valdez and her husband Vicente Valdez around 1822. Aptly named The Ranch of the Gathering of the Waters, the swamps or “cienegas” that characterize the natural landscape were created by rain run off flowing out of Coldwater and Benedict Canyons. Vegetable farming, sheep herding, bee keeping and the raising of walnut trees were the primary agricultural activities within the rancho lands during the latter half of the nineteenth century. Several attempts at subdividing and establishing communities on the ranch lands were attempted during the 1860s and 1880s, but ended in failure.³

In 1906, the Amalgamated Oil Company reorganized as the Rodeo Land and Water Company. Burton Green played a leading role in formulating the plans for a garden city, located between Whittier Drive on the west, Doheny Drive on the east, Wilshire Boulevard on the south, and the foothills above Sunset Boulevard to the north.⁴ The syndicate hired notable California park planner, Wilbur F. Cook, Jr., to plan the new community. Cook had worked with landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted prior to moving to Oakland in 1905 to establish his own firm. Comprised of “Beverly” in the commercial triangle between Santa Monica and Wilshire boulevards and “Beverly Hills” north of Santa Monica Boulevard, the new community was one of the earliest planned communities in southern California.

In 1914, concern over establishment of a secure water system and the desire to improve the local school system prompted incorporation of the City of Beverly Hills. The original boundaries

B1.

³ *Beverly Hills Historic Resources Survey 1985-1986, p. 5.*

⁴ *Ibid, pp. 8-9.*

of the City were much the same as they are today, except for the area south of Wilshire Boulevard, annexed in 1915, and Trousdale Estates, annexed in 1955. Most of the City was open land at the time of incorporation with development scattered around Canon Drive, Beverly Drive, Crescent Drive, and the downtown triangle.⁵

Among the first to build a large house in Beverly Hills were the owners of the Robinson's department store chain, Harry and Virginia Robinson in 1912. It was located north of Sunset Boulevard behind the Beverly Hills Hotel. Another notable who erected a mansion in the City in the mid-1910s was King Gillette, the razor magnate. He would later sell his house to silent film star Gloria Swanson. But it was the decision by the movie star couple Douglas Fairbanks and Mary Pickford to establish their luxurious compound, Pickfair, in Beverly Hills in 1920 that brought the film community to the city in earnest. Around that time the young silent film star Corinne Griffith moved to Beverly Hills – the same Corinne Griffith who would shepherd the subject monument into fruition some 35 years later.

Other prominent film and radio stars who moved to Beverly Hills in the 1920s were Will Rogers, Harold Lloyd, Rudolph Valentino, Charles Chaplin, Theda Bara, Clara Bow, Tom Mix, Wallace Beery, Buster Keaton, and movie moguls Louis B. Mayer of MGM, Universal's Carl Laemmle, and Thomas H. Ince.⁶

Battle Against Annexation. Less than 10 years after incorporation, in 1923, the citizens of Beverly Hills had to decide whether to remain independent or be annexed by the adjacent City of Los Angeles. As with many other small cities in the region at this time, access to a consistent water supply was of paramount importance such that annexation to Los Angeles, with its abundance of water from its own aqueduct, seemed the best option. Beverly Hills Utility Company, a subsidiary of the Rodeo Land and Water Company, sourced its dwindling water supply from shallow wells in Coldwater Canyon and favored annexation. Also supporting annexation to Los Angeles for reasons related to the shrinking water supply was the Realty Board of Beverly Hills.⁷ A special election to be held in April 1923 was called to decide the issue.⁸

Opposing annexation were members of the movie industry who had recently moved to Beverly Hills.⁹ The final vote was 489 to 326 in favor of independence.¹⁰ Reporting on the controversy, the *Los Angeles Times* stated:

Of the 1056 registered voters in Beverly Hills, the total vote cast yesterday amounted to 815, said to be the largest vote ever recorded in a single Los Angeles county precinct. The defeat of the Beverly Hills annexation plan closed the bitterest political battle ever fought in that community. It was said to be a battle of the real estate interests that sponsored the annexation idea, against

⁵ *Ibid*, p. 11.

⁶ Wanamaker, Marc. "Beverly Hills: 1930-2005," San Francisco: Arcadia Publishing, 2006. p.85.

⁷ *Los Angeles Times*, "Women's Clubs Hit by Realtor," December 10, 1922. p. II5.

⁸ *Los Angeles Times*, "Annexation Is Rejected by Beverly," April 25, 1923. p. II1.

⁹ *Ibid*.

¹⁰ *Ibid*.

the motion picture people who have chosen Beverly Hills as their home, and other residents.¹¹

The victory forced the Beverly Hills Utility Company to sell, which led to the development of Beverly Hills' own well and water system.¹²

“Celluloid,” Commemorative Monument. Thirty-five years after the City reaffirmed its independence, a group called the Committee for Honoring Motion Picture Stars offered to erect a monument celebrating the efforts of eight celebrities identified as key members of the community involved in the annexation fight. They were Will Rogers, Mary Pickford, Fred Niblo, Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., Harold Lloyd, Conrad Nagle, Rudolph Valentino and Tom Mix. Leading the campaign to recognize these Beverly Hills pioneers was former silent film star, author, businesswoman, and local resident Corinne Griffith who was the committee's chairman. Miss Griffith stated that these individuals campaigned vigorously for independence and contributed much time to the cause.¹³

In 1958, Griffith presented a model of the proposed monument to the press.¹⁴ She appealed to the good citizens of Beverly Hills for assistance in funding the \$30,000 22-foot high marble and bronze tribute designed by renowned sculptor Merrell Gage. It would be located in a triangular median between Olympic Boulevard, South Beverly Drive, and Beverwil Drive donated by the City.¹⁵ An article in the *Los Angeles Times* documenting the fundraising event noted,

[The] highlight of the campaign will be a premiere Nov. 6 at the Fox Beverly Theater of the Hugo Haas production 'Stars in the Back Yard,' in which Miss Griffith appears. Proceeds will go toward the project fund. Miss Griffith explained that the eight motion picture figures to honored 'rang doorbells' and gave unceasingly of their time to maintain Beverly Hills as an independent city in the heart of the metropolis.¹⁶

Contributing to the fund was the City of Beverly Hills with a \$15,000 donation and \$5,000 from Miss Griffith's committee. Although the year 1959 is engraved in the monument, it was not unveiled to the public until March 8, 1960.¹⁷

David Tannenbaum of whom Corinne Griffith references in the bronze dedication plaque was Mayor of Beverly Hills in 1952-53 and 1956-57.¹⁸ As one of its leading citizens, the Beverly Hills

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Stein, Gail. *Archivist, Historical Collection of Beverly Hills Public Library*

¹³ *Los Angeles Times*, "Beverly Hills' Tribute to Stars Seeks Funds: Appeal to Meet Cost of...", September 23, 1958. p. B24.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Los Angeles Times*, "Beverly Hills' Tribute to Stars Seeks Funds: Appeal to Meet Cost of...", September 23, 1958. p. B24.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Los Angeles Times*, "Bas-Relief Honors Stars Helping City," February 28, 1960. p. WS8

¹⁸ *Los Angeles Times*, "Ex-Mayor Tannenbaum of Beverly Hills Dies," October 5, 1957. p. B1

Chamber of Commerce had chosen him Man of the Year in 1954.¹⁹ Based upon Griffith's dedication, he was undoubtedly an important supporter of the creation and installation of the sculpture in the City. On October 4, 1957, two years before the sculpture was installed, David Tannenbaum died.

The only activity that current research finds the Committee for Honoring Motion Picture Stars associated with is the subject monument that it sponsored in Beverly Hills. Interestingly, of the eight committee members, two were included on the marble and bronze tribute – Harold Lloyd and Mary Pickford – and another member, artist Merrell Gage, was commissioned to sculpt the monument. Therefore, it can be surmised that the Committee was established solely for the realization of the subject sculpture after which the Committee was most likely disbanded.

At the dedication ceremony held on March 8, 1960 a *Los Angeles Herald-Examiner* photograph shows Corinne Griffith with three of the eight movie stars depicted on the sculpture: Conrad Nagel, Mary Pickford, and Harold Lloyd.

As relates to the sculpture being given the name "Celluloid," as it is commonly referred to today, at the time of its creation and dedication no reference was uncovered mentioning that appellation. Its title, however, can be assumed given in tribute to the eight individuals recognized at the base of the sculpture all of whom were associated with the motion picture, industry and the medium upon which their work was created: celluloid.

Corinne Griffith (1894-1979). Corinne Griffith was the Chairman of the Committee for Honoring Motion Picture Stars and the force behind the creation and funding of the subject monument in the late 1950s. Griffith was born in Texarkana, Texas in 1894, making her way to Los Angeles in her early 20s where she began her screen career at the Vitagraph studios in 1916. By the 1920s, she was with First National Pictures studios where she became a major film star. It was during this period that Griffith moved to Beverly Hills and began decades of involvement as civic booster and philanthropist.

In 1929, Griffith was nominated for an Academy Award for her role in the film "The Divine Lady." Unfortunately, because Griffith's voice did not lend itself to sound motion pictures she retired from acting in 1932. In later years, Griffith was highly successful in her new career as an author, publishing 11 books including several best sellers. She also was a major real estate investor with properties in Los Angeles and Beverly Hills. Perhaps the commercial properties with which she was most associated were the "Four Corners" buildings at Beverly Drive and Charleville in Beverly Hills that she owned.²⁰ Corinne Griffith remained a longtime resident of Beverly Hills, passing away in 1979 at age 84.²¹

Robert Merrell Gage, Sculptor. Robert Merrell Gage (or Merrell Gage, as he was commonly known) was born in 1892 in Topeka, Kansas. After graduating from Washburn University in that city, his art education took him to New York where he studied at the Art Students League and the Robert Henri School of Art.²² From 1914 to 1916 and again from 1921 to 1923, Gage served

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Wanamaker, Marc. "Beverly Hills: 1930-2005," San Francisco: Arcadia Publishing, 2006. p.46.

²¹ *Los Angeles Herald-Examiner* collection, Los Angeles Public Library. 1960. Photo LAPL00049869

²² *Smithsonian Archives of American Art, Merrell Gage papers, 1911-1982.*

as an apprentice to Gutzon Borglum who would go on to be the sculptor of Mt. Rushmore. Working from his studio in Topeka, Gage's first public commission was for a statue of Abraham Lincoln in 1916 that now resides on the grounds of the Kansas State Capitol. Lincoln would become the major subject of Gage's career as a sculptor for decades to come.

Between 1915 and 1921, Gage intermittently taught at Washburn College in Kansas and the Kansas City Art Institute. Then, in 1924, Gage and his wife Marian – who was a noted painter – relocated to Los Angeles where he built a studio at his home in Santa Monica Canyon. One year later, in 1925, Gage was appointed professor of sculpture at the University of Southern California (USC) where he remained until 1958, having been named head of the department. It was during these last few years at USC that Gage worked on the subject monument that would be dedicated in early 1960 in Beverly Hills.

Over the decades, Merrell Gage sculpted likenesses of Abraham Lincoln in many stages of the president's life. Indeed, Gage achieved fame from his ability to publicly sculpt the profound changes in Lincoln's face from the toll the Civil War exacted on the president's visage while narrating the story of Lincoln's life. A documentary film from 1955 titled "The Face of Lincoln" starred Gage as he demonstrated this process for the camera in real time. The film won an Academy Award for Best Live Action Short Film in 1956. Those familiar with Gage's sculptures of Lincoln would recognize the artist's unique style, particularly in the lifelike representation of the human face for which Gage was especially known. This would be demonstrated in how the faces of the eight motion picture celebrities were represented in bas-relief on the subject monument.

Gage executed numerous commissions throughout the United States, including a police memorial in Kansas City, Missouri; a bust of Sherman Minton at the Indiana Statehouse; and a Pioneer Mother Memorial on the Kansas State Capitol grounds. Gage served on the sculpture commission for the 1932 Summer Olympics in Los Angeles. In downtown Los Angeles he sculpted the facades of the noted Edison Building (1931) and Los Angeles Times Building (1935), and the head of Abraham Lincoln at 110 Grand Avenue. For the City of Beverly Hills, Gage designed the sculpture at the top of the much beloved electric fountain in Beverly Gardens at the corner of Santa Monica and Wilshire boulevards in 1931, and the subject marble and bronze monument "Celluloid" completed in 1959.

Douglas Fairbanks, Sr., Actor.²³ Born Douglas Elton Thomas Ullman in Denver, Colorado he took the last name Fairbanks after his parents divorce when he was a child. Fairbanks (1883-1939) arrived in New York in 1900, where he took comedic and dramatic roles on Broadway, attracting the attention of D.W. Griffith who cast the actor in the movie "The Lamb" in 1915. Fairbanks quickly became a popular leading man, known for his charm, good nature, athletic prowess and physique. In 1919, he teamed up with D.W. Griffith, Charles Chaplin and Mary Pickford to launch the independent studio United Artists. After divorcing their respective spouses, Fairbanks and Pickford married in 1920, moving into the mansion that they named Pickfair. The house became the site of numerous soirees and celebrations, which were

<http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/merrell-gage-papers-6606>.

²³ Adapted from "Douglas Fairbanks Sr.," *The Biography.com website*, 2014,
<http://www.biography.com/people/douglas-fairbanks-sr-9290911>

attended by many celebrities and leading figures in film. Fairbanks often played swashbuckling heroes in his films, including Zorro in 1920's "The Mark of Zorro." Other well-regarded films in which he starred were "The Three Musketeers" (1921), "The Thief of Bagdad" (1924), and "The Black Pirate" (1926). Fairbanks and Pickford were the leading film star residents of Beverly Hills to participate in the City's anti-annexation fight of 1923. As relates to the subject monument, the role in which he is depicted is d'Artagnan (of Three Musketeers fame) in the 1929 part-silent, part-sound movie "The Iron Mask."

Mary Pickford, Actress.²⁴ Mary Pickford (1892-1979) was a legendary silent film actress who was known as "America's sweetheart." Born Gladys Mary Smith in Toronto, Canada, she began performing at the age of five. After moving to New York to work on Broadway she took the stage name Mary Pickford. She was discovered by film director D.W. Griffith in 1909, moving to California with Griffith's film company the following year where she became an international star, beloved for her beauty and charm. Two of her most popular silent films were made in 1917, "Poor Little Rich Girl" and "Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm." In 1919, she formed a partnership with Charles Chaplin, D.W. Griffith, and Douglas Fairbanks, Sr. in establishing the United Artists film company. She married Fairbanks in 1920, moving into the vast estate that he had purchased in Beverly Hills the previous year that they named Pickfair. Fans adored the pairing and the couple was known to host fabulous events at their home. Pickfair was the catalyst that made Beverly Hills fashionable with the Hollywood crowd, quickly attracting some of the industry's most famous names that commissioned houses there including those depicted on the subject monument. Together, Pickford and Fairbanks led the successful anti-annexation effort in 1923. Pickford's role of Tess in "Tess of the Storm Country" was a 1922 remake of a 1914 melodrama that she had previously starred in. It is the actress in this role that is depicted in bas-relief on the subject monument.

Will Rogers, Actor. In 1923, when Will Rogers (1879-1935) became involved with the fight for Beverly Hills' independence, he was already a famous vaudeville performer, silent film star, and humorist. The previous year, the *New York Times* began syndicating his weekly newspaper column, which would appear in periodicals throughout the United States for over a decade. Will Rogers was born in Oklahoma, becoming a cowboy circus performer before moving on to the Vaudeville circuit with his roping act. He joined Florenz Ziegfeld's "Midnight Frolic" with his act in 1915. Rogers appeared in his first silent film in 1918, quickly becoming a star. He moved to Beverly Hills in 1922 and remained a resident until 1928 when he relocated to his ranch in Pacific Palisades. For his devotion to the City, Will Rogers was deemed "Honorary Mayor of Beverly Hills" from 1926 to 1928. The advent of the talkies and the dominance of radio made Rogers one of the country's most popular personalities in the 1930s. During his weekly Sunday radio show Rogers commented on all aspects of American culture and politics but with a wit that endeared him to millions. Rogers died in 1935 in an airplane crash in Alaska at the height of his popularity and fame. Sunset Park in Beverly Hills was renamed Will Rogers Memorial Park in his honor in 1952. The sound movie chosen to represent Will Rogers' career on the subject monument was the 1930 comedy "Lightnin'" about Lightnin' Bill Jones, a lazy, slow-witted,

²⁴ Adapted from "Mary Pickford." *The Biography.com website, 2014, <http://www.biography.com/people/mary-pickford-9440298>*

ne'er-do-well.²⁵

Tom Mix, Actor.²⁶ Tom Mix (1880-1940) has been called the original cowboy actor, having helped define the genre with the hundreds of Western movies he starred in, wrote or directed between 1905 and 1935. At various times he was under contract with Selig, Fox, Film Booking Office, Universal and Mascot Pictures. Mix made over 280 movies of which only nine were sound feature films.²⁷ His movies were famous for quick action and daredevil stunts that Tom performed himself. Mix was one of the early motion picture stars to move to Beverly Hills after Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks established their Pickfair estate in 1919. Mix died in an automobile accident in 1940. The cowboy film identified with Tom Mix on the subject monument is "Hardboil." Unfortunately, the name of the 1926 silent movie referenced is actually "Hard Boiled."²⁸

Harold Lloyd, Actor.²⁹ Along with Buster Keaton and Charlie Chaplin, Harold Lloyd (1893-1971) was one of the most popular comedians of the silent film era known as "The King of Daredevil Comedy." He is best known for his eyeglass-wearing character who typically was involved in thrill sequences and extended chase scenes. One of the most famous film still photos of all time is Lloyd hanging from the hands of a clock over Broadway in downtown Los Angeles from the film "Safety Last!" (1923). Born in Nebraska, Lloyd arrived in Hollywood in 1913 with his father. He soon joined Hal Roach's new film studio and by 1917 Keaton had invented his signature character – a resourceful, success-seeking go-getter with round glasses, a straw hat, and an unkempt suit. During the 1920s, Keaton left Roach's studio, becoming an independent producer of many well-regarded films such as "Girl Shy" (1924), "The Freshman" (1925), and "Speedy" (1928). Harold Lloyd was one of the film stars who joined the opposition to the annexation of Beverly Hills by Los Angeles in 1923. From 1926 to 1929, "Greenacres," Keaton's 44-room mansion and estate arose in the City. He died at the residence in 1971, which was subsequently listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Representing the actor on the subject monument was Lloyd's bespectacled character from the 1923 Hal Roach film "Why Worry?"

Fred Niblo, Director and Actor.³⁰ Fred Niblo (1874-1948) entered films in 1917, after two decades as a touring actor in vaudeville and one-time manager of the Four Cohans (he married Josephine Cohan, the sister of George M. Cohan). He appeared in two early Australian silent films in 1916, which effectively marked his screen debut. After that, he worked for Thomas H. Ince from 1917, as producer-director, many of his films starring his second wife, Australian actress Enid Bennett. Niblo joined Paramount under a three-year contract from 1918 to 1921, and then settled at MGM (1923-1931). During this period his chief claim to fame rests on directing the 1925 epic "Ben-Hur: A Tale of the Christ," filmed in Italy (though completed in California) at the (then) staggering cost of \$4 million. Niblo was brought in by Louis B.

²⁵ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lightnin%27_%28play%29

²⁶ *Oklahoma Historical Society, Tom Mix Museum. Adapted from introductory paragraph.*
<http://www.okhistory.org/sites/tommix.php>

²⁷ <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0594291/>

²⁸ <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0016948/>

²⁹ <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/episodes/harold-lloyd/about-harold-lloyd/647/>

³⁰ http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0629243/bio?ref_=nm_ov_bio_sm

Mayer after the production ran into financial difficulties, and he not only rescued it but made it into one of the biggest blockbusters of the decade. However, it was second-unit director B. Reeves Eason who deserves the credit for the famous chariot race in the film. In 1926 Niblo replaced Swedish director Mauritz Stiller, who had a disagreement with producer Irving Thalberg, on Greta Garbo's "The Temptress" (1926). This, alongside the films "Camille" (1926) and "The Mysterious Lady" (1928), were his last successes. His career failed to survive the transition to sound and even a stint in England could not resuscitate it. After a few small parts as an actor, Niblo slipped quietly into relative obscurity in 1943. On the subject monument, it is as the director of "Ben-Hur" that Fred Niblo is depicted in bas-relief bronze for his efforts at maintaining the independence of Beverly Hills in 1923.³¹

Conrad Nagel, Actor.³² Conrad Nagel (1897-1970) was born in Keokuk, Iowa in 1897 into a musical family. He began acting in theater by 1914, and in films by 1918. Suave and sophisticated, handsome Conrad became a popular star of many drawing room and historical dramas and romantic comedies. His first film production on the West Coast was "The Fighting Chance", opposite Anna Q. Nilsson. He made an impression in popular silent films of the time, such as "What Every Woman Knows," (1921), "Fool's Paradise" (1921), and "Bella Donna" (1923), opposite Pola Negri. With the advent of sound Conrad's career continued unabated. Conrad continued making a presence in films until the 1950's, gradually doing more and more character roles as he aged. However, he apparently inspired the animosity of Louis B. Mayer when he helped to establish the Screen Actors' Guild. Thereafter the quality of the parts given to him began to suffer, but Conrad kept working in films, on radio, on Broadway and later on television. Conrad was co-founder and past president of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, and one of the creators of the Oscars. As an actor, the silent film for which Nagel was represented on the subject monument was "Glorious Betsy" (1928). Nagel resided in Beverly Hills in the early 1920s and was one of the silent film stars who fought for Beverly Hills' continued independence.³³

Rudolph Valentino, Actor.³⁴ Rudolph Valentino (1895-1926) was an Italian born silent film star who was idolized as the "Great Lover" of the 1920s. He immigrated to the United States in 1913, holding various jobs for the next several years including as a dancer in vaudeville. Arriving in Hollywood in 1918, Valentino would have small roles in movies until his role as Julio in "The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse" (1921) made him a star. It was also the film representing Valentino on the subject monument. As a silent film star, Rudolph Valentino was given romantic roles in such classic movies as "The Sheik" (1921), "Blood and Sand" (1922), and "The Eagle" (1925). He starred in "The Son of the Sheik" in 1926, and then, at the age of 31, died suddenly from peritonitis while in New York City. His death and subsequent funeral was a media sensation that attracted interest worldwide. Although Valentino was never a formal resident of Beverly Hills he was recognized as having contributed significant time, effort, and resources to the City's fight for independence in 1923.

³¹ 1920 United States Federal Census

³² <http://www.goldensilents.com/stars/conradnagel.html>

³³ Wanamaker, Marc. "Early Beverly Hills," San Francisco: Arcadia Publishing, 2005.

³⁴ Adapted from Rudolph Valentino biography, <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0884388/bio>

EVALUATION OF HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

Evaluation Criteria. In analyzing the historical significance of the subject property, criteria for designation under the City's local landmark program was considered. Additionally, consideration of historical integrity and the State Office of Historic Preservation (OHP) survey methodology was used to survey and assess the relative significance of the property.

City of Beverly Hills Landmark Criteria. The City's Historic Preservation Ordinance (Municipal Code Title 10 Chapter 3 Article 32; BHMC 10-3-32) authorizes the Cultural Heritage Commission (CHC) to recommend the nomination of properties as local landmarks to the City Council. The Council may designate local landmarks and historic districts by the procedures outlined in the ordinance.

The Preservation Ordinance also establishes criteria and the process for evaluating and designating properties as potential local landmarks. Under the City's criteria a property must be more than 45 years old, unless it possesses exceptional significance; retain sufficient historical integrity to physically illustrate its significance; and satisfy significance criteria.

To be eligible for local designation as a historic landmark, properties must satisfy the following criteria:

- A. The property meets at least two of the following (significance) criteria:
 1. Is identified with important events in the main currents of national, state, or local history, or directly exemplifies or manifests significant contributions to the broad social, political, cultural, economic, recreational, or architectural history of the Nation, State, City, or community;
 2. Is directly associated with the lives of Significant Persons important to national, state, City or local history;
 3. Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a style, type, period, or method of construction;
 4. Represents a notable work of a person included on the City's List of Master Architects or possesses high artistic or aesthetic value;
 5. Has yielded or has the potential to yield, information important in the prehistory or history of the Nation, State, City or community;
 6. Is listed or has been formally determined eligible by the National Park Service for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, or is listed or has been formally determined eligible by the State Historical Resources Commission for listing on the California Register of Historical Resources.
- B. The property retains integrity from its period of significance. The proposed landmark retains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, and association. Integrity shall be judged with reference to the particular significance criteria specified above.
- C. The property has historic value. The proposed landmark is of significant architectural value to the community, beyond its simple market value and its designation as a landmark is

reasonable, appropriate, and necessary to promote protect, and further the goals and purposes of the City’s historic preservation ordinance.

California Office of Historic Preservation Survey Methodology. The evaluation instructions and classification system prescribed by the California Office of Historic Preservation (OHP) in its publication Instructions for Recording Historical Resources provide a three-digit evaluation rating code for use in classifying potential historic resources. The first digit indicates one of the following general evaluation categories for use in conducting cultural resources surveys:

1. Property listed in the National Register or the California Register;
2. Property determined eligible for listing in the National Register or the California Register;
3. Property appears eligible for the National Register or the California Register through a survey evaluation;
4. Property appears eligible for the National Register or the California Register through other evaluation;
5. Property recognized as historically significant by local government;
6. Property not eligible for any listing or designation; and
7. Property not evaluated for the National Register or California Register or needs re-evaluation.

The second digit of the evaluation status code is a letter code indicating whether the resource is separately eligible (S), eligible as part of a district (D), or both (B). The third digit is a number that is used to further specify significance and refine the relationship of the property to the National Register and/or California Register. Under this evaluation system, categories 1 through 4 pertain to various levels of National Register and/or California Register eligibility. The California Register, however, may also include surveyed resources with evaluation rating codes through level 5. In addition, properties found ineligible for listing in the National Register, California Register, or for designation under a local ordinance are given an evaluation status code of 6.

Historical Integrity. “Integrity is the ability of a property to convey its significance.” In addition to meeting the criteria of significance, a property must have integrity. Integrity is the authenticity of a property’s physical identity clearly indicated by the retention of characteristics that existed during the property’s period of significance. Properties eligible for local landmark designation must meet at least two of the local landmark designation criteria and retain enough of their historic character or appearance to be recognizable as historical resources and to convey the reasons for their historical significance.

Both the National Register of Historic Places and the California Register of Historical Resources recognize the seven aspects of qualities that, in various combinations, define integrity. To retain historic integrity a property should possess several, and usually most, of these seven aspects. Thus, the retention of the specific aspects of integrity is paramount for a property to convey its significance. The seven qualities that define integrity are location, design, setting,

materials, workmanship, feeling and association. The seven qualities or aspects of historical integrity are defined as follows:

- Location is the place where the historic property was constructed or the place where the historic event occurred.
- Design is the combination of elements that create the form, plan, space, structure, and style of a property.
- Setting is the physical environment of a historic property.
- Materials are the physical elements that were combined or deposited during a particular period of time and in a particular pattern or configuration to form a historic property.
- Workmanship is the physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture or people during any given period in history or prehistory.
- Feeling is a property's expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time.
- Association is the direct link between an important historic event or person and a historic property.

Application of City Landmark (Significance) Criteria. In summary, based on current research and the above assessment the commemorative monument entitled "Celluliod" appears to meet the necessary City of Beverly Hills Landmark criteria.

The property was evaluated according to statutory criteria, as follows:

- A. The property meets at least two of the following criteria (BHMC 10-3-3212(A)).

BHMC 10-3-3212(A)(1) *The property is identified with important events in the main currents of national, state, or local history, or directly exemplifies or manifests significant contributions to the broad social, political, cultural, economic, recreational, or architectural history of the Nation, State, City, or community.*

The subject property, a marble and bronze monument popularly known as "Celluloid," is an important marker honoring eight members of the motion picture industry who were identified as leaders in Beverly Hills' successful 1923 battle against annexation by the City of Los Angeles. The eight whose likenesses were rendered in bronze bas-relief were Tom Mix, Will Rogers, Douglas Fairbanks, Mary Pickford, Rudolph Valentino, Harold Lloyd, Fred Niblo and Conrad Nagle. Each was depicted in the outfit or costume associated with the motion picture for which they were represented on the monument. The campaign to produce and fund the sculpture was coordinated by a committee of leading local citizens, including silent film stars and monument honorees Harold Lloyd and Mary Pickford, and led by chairman Corinne Griffith. Ms. Griffith was a former movie star, author, and Beverly Hills businesswoman whose charismatic leadership resulted in the realization of the monument that was dedicated in 1960 on a triangular median at a major intersection in the City. The sculpture was the work of

renowned artist Merrell Gage, who had previously designed the sculpture at the top of the much-loved electric fountain on the corner of Santa Monica and Wilshire boulevards within the landmarked cultural landscape called Beverly Gardens Park. As a result, the monument itself directly exemplifies the significant contributions of these individuals to the broad political history of the City of Beverly Hills. It has also come to symbolize an important time in the community's history and is a physical reminder of the enduring contributions valued by the generation that erected the monument. From an artistic perspective, it also physically manifests as aspect of the City's cultural and artistic heritage in its design, materials, composition, artistry, and sculptor. Therefore, upon review and consideration the subject property appears to satisfy this criterion.

BHMC 10-3-3212(A)(2) *The property is directly associated with the lives of Significant Persons important to national, state, City or local history.*

The subject monument is indirectly associated with eight significant members of the early motion picture film industry who were important to the history and development of Beverly Hills. Most were formal residents of the City who were honored in 1959 for their efforts at maintaining the independence of Beverly Hills during the annexation battle with Los Angeles in 1923. Nevertheless, the property is not directly associated with these individuals because the sculpture was created specifically as a monument to their efforts - five of who were already deceased (Fairbanks, Mix, Nagel, Rogers and Valentino). Of the three living honorees, Harold Lloyd and Mary Pickford were directly involved with the sculpture's creation but only as members of the Committee for Honoring Motion Picture Stars that sponsored the monument. Therefore, the subject property does not appear to meet this criterion.

BHMC 10-3-3212(A)(3) *The property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a style, type, period, or method of construction.*

The subject property embodies the distinctive characteristics of the work of renowned sculptor Merrell Gage. In particular, the artist was known for his faithful representations of the human face as demonstrated in the many likenesses of Abraham Lincoln Gage sculpted throughout the artist's life. Each of the eight members of the movie industry represented in bronze bas-relief on the subject marble monument – particularly their three dimensional-appearing faces – is rendered in Gage's distinctive style and method of design and assembly (construction). As a result, the subject property satisfies this criterion.

BHMC 10-3-3212(A)(4) *The property represents a notable work of a person included on the City's List of Master Architects or possesses high artistic or aesthetic value.*

The sculptor of the commemorative monument "Celluloid," Merrell Gage, is not included in the City's List of Master Architects. Therefore, the subject property fails to meet this criterion associated with a master architect.

The property, however, does appear to satisfy this criterion under artistic and aesthetic value. The monument appears to fully express a particular concept of design which is evident in its overall artistic expression, materials, composition, form, and method of assembly.

BHMC 10-3-3212(A)(5) *The property has yielded or has the potential to yield, information important in the prehistory or history of the Nation, State, City or community.*

The subject property does not appear to satisfy this criterion.

BHMC 10-3-3212(A)(6) *The property is listed or has been formally determined eligible by the National Park Service for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, or is listed or has been formally determined eligible by the State Historical Resources Commission for listing on the California Register of Historical Resources.*

The monument is not currently listed on the National Register of Historic Places or the California Register of Historical Resources, nor has it been formally determined eligible for listing on the National Register or the California Register. It, therefore, does not satisfy this criterion.

B. The property retains integrity from its Period of Significance (BHMC 10-3-3212(B)).

The period of significance for the subject property is 1959-1960, when the commemorative monument was completed and dedicated at its current location. In comparing historic photographs with current conditions, the marble and bronze sculpture appears not to have experienced any loss of historic or physical integrity. Specifically, the subject sculpture retains integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. Additionally, the monument is at its original location and setting in the landscaped triangular median between Olympic Boulevard, South Beverly and Beverwil drives. Further, the sculpture looks and feels as it did in 1960 when dedicated at a public ceremony attended by three of the honorees as numerous local dignitaries.

C. The property has Historic Value (BHMC 10-3-3212 (C)).

Because of the subject property's historic and artistic merit, aesthetic values, and association with key members of the motion picture industry important to the independence of Beverly Hills, the site is considered to have significant historic value to the local community. Therefore, the property appears to satisfy this criterion.

Character-defining Features. Every historic property is unique, with its own identity and its own distinguishing character. A property's form and detailing are important in defining its visual historic character and significance. It is a property's tangible features or elements that embody its significance for association with specific historical events, important personages, or distinctive architecture and it is those tangible elements; therefore, that should be retained and preserved.

Character refers to all those visual aspects and physical features that comprise the appearance of every historic property. According to *National Park Service Brief 17, Architectural Character: Identifying the Visual Aspects of Historic Buildings as an Aid to Preserving Their Character*, character-defining features include the overall shape of a property (building, structure, etc.), its material, craftsmanship, decorative details, interior spaces and features (as applicable), as well as the various aspects of its site and immediate environment (form, configuration and

orientation).

The *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties* defines historic character by the form and detailing of materials, such as masonry, wood, stucco, plaster, terra cotta, metal, etc.; specific features, such as roofs, porches, windows and window elements, moldings, staircases, chimneys, driveways, garages, landscape and hardscape elements, etc.; as well as spatial relationships between buildings, structures, and features; room configurations; and archaic structural and mechanical systems. Identifying those features or elements that give a historic property visual character and which should be taken into account and preserved to the maximum extent possible is important in order for the property to maintain its historical significance.

The key features associated with the subject property that are visible and evident include, but are not limited to its form, scale, proportion, orientation, height, materials, shape, width, and general design scheme; and those physical attributes that define the property's type, style, assembly, artistry, and aesthetic value (a tall marble and bronze monument located in a prominent location rendered in the distinctive style of sculptor Merrell Gage).

CONCLUSION

The monument sculpture called "Celluloid" appears to satisfy the City of Beverly Hill's criteria for designation as a local Landmark, as required in the City's Historic Preservation Ordinance (BHMC Section 10-3-3212). It also meets the age, value, and integrity requirements of the Ordinance, and satisfies three of the six Significance criteria (a landmark is only required to meet two). As discussed herein, the site meets Criterion 1 (association with important events), Criterion 3 (embodiment of a particular architectural style), and Criterion 4 (possesses high artistic and aesthetic value). As a result, "Celluloid" the sculpture is recommended to be eligible for listing as a City of Beverly Hills Landmark.

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APPENDIX

VICINITY MAP

LOCATION MAP

AERIAL LOCATION MAP

TAX ASSESSOR MAP

EPHEMERAL MATERIAL

PHOTOGRAPHS

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