

Memorandum

To: Cultural Heritage Commission
Community Development Department

Date: 01/08/2020

From: Jan Ostashay, Principal OAC

Re: GOLDEN SHIELD RECOGNITION PROGRAM: Research Findings, Plaque Narratives, Plaque Placement Recommendations

Overview

At the request of the City of Beverly Hills Community Development Department, Planning Division, Ostashay & Associates Consulting (OAC) has conducted background research on three proposed Golden Shield nominees selected by the Landmark Nomination Subcommittee of the City's Cultural Heritage Commission, as reviewed on December 4, 2019. The following information provides a summarized historical context of each historic site, potential narrative text for the commemorative plaques, and recommended placement locations of the plaques.

Background Information

On December 4, 2019, the Landmark Nomination Subcommittee of the City's Cultural Heritage Commission, consisting of Chair Furie and Commissioner Corman, met to discuss selections for the Golden Shield recognition program. The selected nominees by the Subcommittee included the following three sites: 1) Nate 'n Al Delicatessen, at its original location of 414 North Beverly Drive; 2) Geary's Beverly Hills boutique, originally located at 357 North Beverly Drive (and relocated to 351 North Beverly Drive-altered); and 3) the former Gershwin Residence at 1019 North Roxbury Drive (demolished).

Site Information

Nate 'n Al Delicatessen

Nate 'n Al Delicatessen is situated within the City's Commercial Triangle area along the east side of North Beverly Drive between Santa Monica Boulevard and Brighton Way. Occupying a narrow lot that measures 50 feet by 150 feet, the one-story commercial building was built in 1922 by then owner Harvey Lamb of Los Angeles. Constructed of masonry it was designed with three separate storefronts (412, 414, 416 North Beverly Drive) by the architectural firm of Berger-Morlan Company. The building initially featured a rectangular plan, flat roof with parapet, and recessed entries flanked by large display windows set on bulkheads. The early city directories listed the occupants of the building as an ice cream shop, plumbing shop, and dry cleaners.

In 1938, Wendell W. Fish, a noted typographer in Los Angeles, obtained a permit from the City of Beverly Hills to modify the existing storefront and interior of 414 North Beverly Drive for use as a delicatessen. As part of the remodel work the front façade was re-designed with elements of the Streamline Moderne style, which was popular at the time. Only a few years later, the business was

sold to Al Mendelson and Nate Rimer who established a delicatessen there called Nate 'n Al Delicatessen in 1945. Al and Nate met in Detroit and moved west to Southern California to open their own deli. Sandwiched between two other shop units the delicatessen had room for only 30 customers. With business booming and to keep up with the trends of the time the storefront was remodeled again in 1952. In need of expanding the building was totally remodeled and an addition was built onto the rear of the structure in 1964. As part of this work, the three individual shop units were combined to create one large space for the restaurant. The front façade was also altered again into a non-descript vernacular storefront that included stucco, a flat roof canopy, aluminum framed entry door, and banks of aluminum framed tinted windows.

Historically, the deli was not only popular with the local residents, but with the clientele from the entertainment industry. It has been in continuous operation at its North Beverly Drive location since its founding in 1945, where it has been a consistent and popular mainstay of Hollywood producers, writers, directors, and stars. The Nate n' Al Delicatessen also represents the rise of the Jewish population in Los Angeles in the 1940s and the restaurant rapidly became a gathering place for the Jewish community. Nate 'n Al (1945) is the third oldest Jewish deli in the Los Angeles area following Greenblatt's in Hollywood (1926) and Canter's in the Fairfax District (1931, current location since 1953). Nate 'n Al's (as it is commonly called) has served generations of the Los Angeles area's Jewish population as an important place to connect with Jewish heritage, traditions, and cuisine. The restaurant is significant not only as a longstanding business in the community, but also for its historic and continuing associations with the entertainment industry and with the Jewish community of Beverly Hills and beyond. Nate eventually left the business, though Al continued to operate the delicatessen with his family. Nate 'n Al Delicatessen was operated by Mendelson's grandsons Mark and David until recently. It will continue operation under the same name, but will be relocated to 443 North Canon Drive.



Original storefront location of Nat 'n Al, 1947



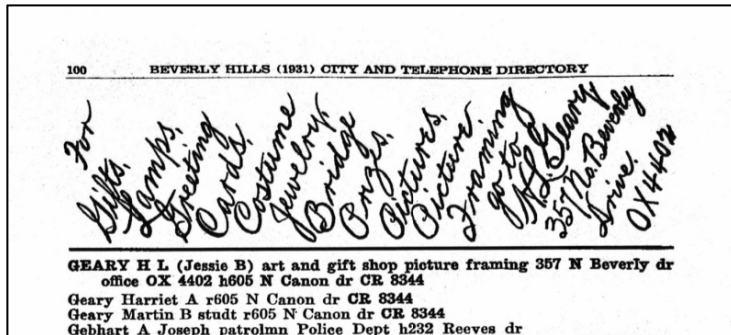
Current location

Recommended Plaque Placement Location: suggested in the sidewalk in front of the entry door to the original restaurant location at 414 North Beverly Drive.

Geary's Beverly Hills

Geary's Beverly Hills first opened its doors in 1930 at 357 North Beverly Drive. That building was an ornate Spanish Colonial Revival style structure designed by notable architect Harry E. Werner and built in 1925 (now altered). Named after its founder, Harry Logan Geary, the shop operated as a small neighborhood specialty store called the H.L. Geary Art & Gift Shop where art supplies and picture framing services were offered as well as distinctive items such as fine dinnerware, tableware, and unique housewarming gifts were sold. By the late 1930s, the store, now called Geary's, had grown substantially and was occupying the Art Deco style building next door at 351 North Beverly Drive, where the business is currently located today (though the building façade has been remodeled).

Doctor Harry Logan Geary (1877-1954) was a graduate of Northwestern University in 1905 and practiced dentistry in the Pacific Northwest before moving to Beverly Hills in 1929. Before graduation he prospected for gold in the Yukon and served as purser aboard a ship that sailed between Seattle and Alaska. H.L. Geary, a former President of the Beverly Hills Chamber of Commerce retired in 1945. In 1953, Geary sold the business to the Meyer family. Fred Meyer, a prominent local businessman who owned several upscale concessions in several nearby department stores created a new business plan for Geary's creating a unique store of tableware lines, silver, china, glass, and home accessories and gift items from around the world to the exclusion of all else. Fred, along with his wife Ruth, revamped and expanded the showroom to include an ever-growing assortment of exclusive, luxury merchandise for entertaining thereby solidifying Geary's Beverly Hills flagship store as a true institution of the city. In the following decades, Fred and Ruth's son Bruce oversaw the further expansion of the landmark business by providing a successful mail order business with Geary's signature brand of luxury available nationwide. While the façade of the building has undergone change over the years, the standard for uncompromising service and unrivaled selection of luxury gifts that define Geary's remains the same.



City Directory Advertisement and Listing, 1931

Geary's at 351 North Beverly Drive, c1938



Recommended Plaque Placement Location: suggested in the sidewalk in front of the entry door to the retail store at 351 North Beverly Drive.

Gershwin Residence

The former residence at 1019 North Roxbury Drive was built in 1928, in the Spanish Colonial Revival style by noted architect Don Uhl. The home was built for silent film star Monte Blue at an estimated value of \$40,000. In 1934, Russ Columbo, a talented singer and musician who died young of an accidental gun shot, rented the residence. The home was soon afterward rented by noted music composers and lyricists, George and Ira Gershwin in 1936. They had moved to Southern California to write the score for the movie "Shall We Dance," starring Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers, and needed a home to work from that was close to the studios. While living at the North Roxbury Drive home, George and his brother Ira wrote such immortal songs as "They Can't Take That Away From Me," "Shall We Dance," "Our Love Is Here to Stay," and "A Foggy Day in London Town." The famous duo lived and worked at the home, with Ira and his wife Leonore (Lee) living in one wing of the house and George in the other. George unexpectedly fell ill and died in 1937, at the age of 38, subsequently Ira and his wife Lee bought the house next door at 1021 North Roxbury Drive and lived there for the rest of their lives (that house was demolished in 2013). Ira died in 1983 at the age of 86 and Leonore passed in 2002.

The big band singer and actress Ginny Simms bought the 1019 North Roxbury Drive residence in the early 1940s, and sold it in 1953 to Jose Ferrer and Rosemary Clooney who were married then. The couple later divorced, but Ms. Clooney remained in the home and lived there until her death in 2002 at the age of 74. The home was demolished in 2005, and a new house built on the site. The Gershwin Residence, although no longer extant, is worthy of honor as a culturally significant site in the City where significant achievements were produced in American musical history.



Aerial view, 1937

1019 N. Roxbury Drive (1928), prior to demolition in 2005



Recommended Placement Location: suggested location in the sidewalk along the frontage of the lot (centered) at 1019 North Roxbury Drive (installation coordinated with the current property owner).