

Los Angeles Department of City Planning

RECOMMENDATION REPORT

CULTURAL HERITAGE COMMISSION

**CASE NO.: CHC-2011-2619-HCM
ENV-2011-2620-CE**

HEARING DATE: October 20, 2011
TIME: 10:00 AM
PLACE: City Hall, Room 1010
200 N. Spring Street
Los Angeles, CA
90012

Location: 2233 ½ W. Sunset Blvd
Council District: 13
Community Plan Area: Silver Lake-Echo Park-
Elysian Valley
Area Planning Commission: East Los Angeles
Neighborhood Council: Great Echo Park Elysian
Legal Description: Lot 3 of Tract 3862

PROJECT: Historic-Cultural Monument Application for the
2233 ½ W. SUNSET BLVD. HOME

REQUEST: Declare the property a Historic-Cultural Monument

APPLICANT: Rory Mitchell
OWNER: 1562 Lemoyne St.
Los Angeles, CA 90026

OWNER: 2225 Sunset LLC & E.D. Flores Corp
9440 Santa Monica Blvd., Suite 401
Beverly Hills, CA 90210

RECOMMENDATION **That the Cultural Heritage Commission:**

1. **NOT take the property under consideration** as a Historic-Cultural Monument per Los Angeles Administrative Code Chapter 9, Division 22, Article 1, Section 22.171.10 because the application and accompanying photo documentation do not suggest the submittal warrants further investigation.
2. **Adopt** the report findings.

MICHAEL J. LOGRANDE
Director of Planning

[SIGNED ORIGINAL IN FILE]

Ken Bernstein, AICP, Manager
Office of Historic Resources

[SIGNED ORIGINAL IN FILE]

Lambert M. Giessinger, Preservation Architect
Office of Historic Resources

Prepared by:
[SIGNED ORIGINAL IN FILE]

Edgar Garcia, Preservation Planner
Office of Historic Resources

Attachments: Historic-Cultural Monument Application

SUMMARY

Built in 1904 and located in the Silver Lake area, this one-story single-family residential building exhibits character-defining features of the Victorian vernacular style. The subject building is rectangular in plan situated at the rear of a sloping parcel fronting Sunset Blvd. The side-gabled roof has one off-center steeply pitched side-gabled dormer window. The main entrance is located off-center and flanked by a simple porch supported by wood posts. Two windows flank the entryway. The exterior is wood board and batten. The dormer window is sheathed in shingles. Windows are white vinyl windows. The subject building is surrounded by trees and shrubbery.

The subject building has no identified architect or builder. The construction date of 1904 is estimated. The subject building appears to have been built by Stefan Zacsek, an immigrant from Hungary. His daughter, Anna Zacsek (1896-1973), appears to have lived at the subject building between the ages of 6 and 14. Anna Zacsek, changing her name to Olga Grey, would go on to have a long and varied career as a silent movie actress, theater director, and civil rights attorney.

Alterations to the subject property include porch, door, and window replacement.

CRITERIA

The criterion is the Cultural Heritage Ordinance which defines a historical or cultural monument as any site (including significant trees or other plant life located thereon) building or structure of particular historic or cultural significance to the City of Los Angeles, such as historic structures or sites in which the broad cultural, economic, or social history of the nation, State or community is reflected or exemplified, or which are identified with historic personages or with important events in the main currents of national, State or local history or which embody the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type specimen, inherently valuable for a study of a period style or method of construction, or a notable work of a master builder, designer or architect whose individual genius influenced his age.

DISCUSSION

The applicant argues that the subject building meets one of the HCM criteria, for association with a potential historic personage. The productive life of Anna Zacsek as researched by the applicant does appear to reveal a noteworthy figure with a varied career in the fields of cinema, theater, and civil rights law. However, it is uncertain whether her contributions to each field enable her to rise to the level of a historic personage under the Cultural Heritage Ordinance criteria. Nonetheless, the subject building itself is only associated with Zacsek's very early life, from the ages of 6-14, and therefore cannot be sufficiently associated with her productive life. (Zacsek appears to have later purchased and lived at 211 Muirfield Street, a contributor to the Hancock Park Preservation Overlay Zone. This property may potentially be better associated with the productive years of her life.)

The subject building also appears to have some integrity issues stemming from alterations. Even should the building have been sufficiently associated with the productive life of Anna Zacsek, the alterations would have rendered the subject building unable to sufficiently convey its association with a historic personage under the Cultural Heritage Ordinance's criteria.

As part of a mixed-use replacement project (CPC-2009-3488-DB-SPR/ENV-2009-3489-MND), the subject building would be demolished along with other buildings and structures immediately

adjacent to the subject property. As part of the Department of City Planning's environmental review process on this project, Kaplan Chen Kaplan a Historic Resources Evaluation Report (December 6, 2010) for buildings located on 2223-2233 Sunset Blvd & 216-218 Elsinore Street. On December 14, 2010, the Office of Historic Resources submitted comments concurring with the report finding that family members of Hungarian actress Anna Zacsek (1896-1973) associated with the subject site were not historically significant personages.

On January 14, 2011, Kaplan Chen Kaplan submitted a second report responding to concerns and comments by the Office of Historic Resources. OHR staff concurred with the report's finding that the subject building was not individually eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, the California Register of Historical Resources, Historic Preservation Overlay Zone, or local designation. OHR staff also determined that the subject properties impacted by the proposed project do not appear to be eligible for listing as contributors to a potential district and that there does not appear to be a grouping of buildings that constituted a historic district. OHR also reiterated its concurrence with the finding that family members of Hungarian actress Anna Zacsek (1896-1973) associated with the subject site are not historically significant personages.

On April 14, 2011, the City Planning Commission adopted the Mitigated Negative Declaration for the proposed project.

FINDINGS

Based on the facts set forth in the summary and application, the Cultural Heritage Commission determines that the property is not significant enough to warrant further investigation as a potential Historic-Cultural Monument.

The Anna Zacsek Cottage



2233 ½ Sunset Boulevard

Prepared by Rory Mitchell
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HISTORIC-CULTURAL MONUMENT APPLICATION

The Anna Zacsek Cottage was built in 1904. Anna Zacsek was important to the development of Los Angeles for the following reasons:

- As a silent film actress she worked with DW Griffith in “Birth of a Nation” and “Intolerance”
- As a theatre director she directed the first play for African-Americans in the history of Los Angeles Theater and helped to introduce modernist stagecraft to Los Angeles.
- As a civil rights lawyer she fought for minorities and women, including pivotal figures in the “Sleepy Lagoon Murder” trial and the Pedro Gonzalez Trial.
- This cottage shows what is possible for an immigrant family to achieve in Los Angeles.

Identification:

1. Name of proposed monument:

The Anna Zacsek Cottage

2. Street Address

2233 ½ Sunset Blvd, Rear House
Los Angeles, Ca. 90026
CD - 13

3. Assessor’s Parcel No.

5402 - 031 - 003

4. Complete Legal Description

Tract : No. 3862
Block : (Formerly Washington Heights
Block 4)
Lot: 3
Arb No: None.

5. Range of Addresses on Property

2233 1/2, 2233 1/4, 2233, 2235 Sunset

6. Present Owner

2225 Sunset LLC & E.D. Flores Corp.
9440 Santa Monica Blvd. Suite 305
Beverly Hills, Ca. 90210

Ownership: Private

7. Present Use: Single Family Original Use: Single Family

DESCRIPTION

8. Achitectural Style :

Vernacular Cottage w/ Queen Anne Influences

9. Physical Description of the Site or Structure:

The Anna Zacek Cottage is a 1-story, side-gabled, vernacular cottage with Queen Anne influences located at the rear of a parcel fronting on Sunset Boulevard. The wood-shingled roof features a prominent narrow-gabled dormer with overhang -- the defining feature of the cottage. Like many buildings in Echo Park, major alterations include aluminum windows, a non-original front door, vertical siding and a new front porch.

The Anna Zacek cottage is sited across from another Queen Anne influenced cottage built c. 1898 at the rear of the adjacent parcel.

10. Construction Date: 1904 (Estimated)

11. Architect, Designer or Engineer : Unknown

12. Contractor or Other Builder : Unknown

13. Dates of Enclosed Photographs : March 2011

14. Condition: Deteriorated

15. Alterations: Aluminum windows, non-original front door, vertical siding, new front porch.

16. Threats to site: Private Development, Condominiums.

17. The structure is on its original site.

SIGNIFICANCE

The Anna Zacsek Cottage was built in 1904 by Stefan Zacsek, an immigrant from Hungary. His daughter Anna Zacsek would become a silent film star, trail-blazing modernist theatre director and pioneering woman defense lawyer who made national headlines in her fight for equal rights for minorities and women. Through her association with both the beginnings of the entertainment industry and the tradition of activism associated with "Red Hill," she not only embodies the history of Echo Park but also helped to shape the history of Los Angeles and the state.

In the publicists' version of Anna's story she was "Olga Grey," an actress born in Hungary who visited DW Griffith's Studio with her father one day at 17 years old and showed up the next to work as an extra in "Birth of a Nation." The real story of Anna Zacsek is that of a Los Angeles-bred young woman who takes on the role of Eastern European Femme Fatale before taking on societies' prejudices and City Hall in due turn.

Anna was born in New York City in 1897. Her parents had emigrated from Hungary in 1892, and in 1900 her father was working as a janitor. Anna was five or six years old when they moved to Los Angeles. In 1903 Stefan Zacsek shows up at an address on Casco Street (near the current intersection of Alvarado and Temple.)

In 1904, the same year the still unpaved Sunset Boulevard was completed, the Zacsoks moved into the cottage at what was then 2231 Sunset Blvd, now 2233 ½.

Anna Zacsek lived here from roughly ages 6 to 14. During that time the silent film studios arrived around the corner in Edendale and she began to study music and acting. She attended the Los Angeles Conservatory of Music, the predecessor to CalARTS, and performed at the Majestic Theatre in downtown Los Angeles.

Her father built two new houses in front of 2231 Sunset Blvd, and in 1912 they moved into 2237 Sunset, where they would live for 3 years before Anna moved out on her own and her parents moved down the street to 1488 Sunset. Still, her childhood home stayed in the family and the 1920 Census shows Stefan Zacsek residing at 2231 Sunset Blvd, a reminder of their humble beginnings in Los

Angeles.

DW Griffith selected Anna to become a featured extra in "Birth of a Nation" and he would give her a real role as Mary Magdalene in "Intolerance." Anthony Slide's "Silent Players" says of Anna that "the greatest of Vamps is the least known, and she is Olga Grey, the only major DW Griffith trained Vamp. In 1922, she would direct "Africanus" the first dramatic play to feature African-Americans in the history of Los Angeles Theater.

Anna Zacsek became friends with the photographer Edward Weston, sitting for a portrait in 1919, and would later befriend the architect Rudolph Schindler.

Anna represented Schindler in his business dealings and his divorce and Schindler designed a beach house for her that incorporated specifics at her request, including a porch that bears similarities to the front porches on 2231 Sunset Blvd and 2237 Sunset Blvd in its pediment and square support columns.

Anna Zacsek passed the California bar in 1932. In 1934 she would defend Pedro J Gonzalez, one of the first Spanish speaking radio announcers. His popularity amongst Hispanics concerned Los Angeles City officials who found a young woman to falsify rape charges and send Gonzalez away to San Quentin for 50 years. In July of 1935, in Anna Zacsek's office, Gonzalez's accuser admitted to Anna that she had lied. The judge refused to accept the new testimony and Pedro Gonzalez would remain imprisoned until 1940 when he was deported.

In 1942 Anna Zacsek represented Henry Leyvas, the alleged gang leader in "The Sleepy Lagoon Murders." During the trial Anna wanted to take the witness stand to testify that when she arrived at the police station she found Henry Leyvas "handcuffed to a chair" and "barely conscious, smeared with his own blood." The Judge in the case refused to allow her testimony and the boys were convicted of murder.

Anna Zacsek would continue to fight for equal rights through the 1950s and 1960's, defending abortionists, prison reformers and a 13-year-old Mexican American boy accused of murdering his brother. She served as the president of the Southern California Woman Lawyers Association and entertained the National Association of Woman Lawyers at her Schindler Beach House and at her estate in Hancock Park at 211 Muirfield Road, formerly the residence of Howard Hughes.

That the little girl who grew up in this ramshackle cottage perched above Sunset Blvd would go on to own the home of Howard Hughes and a beach house designed by Rudolf Schindler is a tale of the history of Los Angeles to inspire every successive wave of immigration. Her fight for justice and equal rights is a

source of pride to the multicultural community of Echo Park and her legacy of tolerance should serve as a shining example for Los Angeles, the state of California, and the Nation.

19. SOURCES :

Los Angeles Times

Los Angeles Record

The Crisis -- Official Magazine of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

Edward Weston's Daybook Volume II: California

Judith Sheines "Rudolph Schindler"

"Murder at Sleepy Lagoon" Eduardo Obregon Pagan

The Schindler Collection : University Art Museum of Santa Barbara

Pedro J Gonzalez Papers -- UCLA Center for Chicano Studies

Carey McWilliams -- Fools Paradise, A Carey McWilliams Reader

Silent Players -- Biographical and Autobiographical Study of 100 Silent Film Actors and Actresses -- Anthony Slide

Women Lawyer's Journal -- Published by National Association of Women Lawyers

"The Social Significance of Modern Drama" Emma Goldman. Boston: Richard G Badger, 1914.

20. DATE FORM PREPARED 4/28/2011

PREPARER'S NAME :

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QUOTES FROM LEADING SCHOLARS REGARDS ANNA ZACSEK'S HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

Dr. Eduardo Pagan, Bob Stump Endowed Professor of History at Arizona State University, author of "Murder at the Sleepy Lagoon: Zoot Suits, Race and Riot in Wartime L.A." and co-host of the PBS series "History Detectives" :

"Zacsek's historic significance is found in her careers, first as an actress in early movies then later as one of the few female attorneys in Los Angeles. As an attorney, she often took on unpopular cases and represented people who had difficulty in finding proper representation. She was ahead of her time. She often faced discrimination but she nonetheless persevered, and through her determination pioneered the law profession for the many women who would follow after her."

Dr. Catherine Ramirez, Associate Professor, Department of American Studies, University of California, Santa Cruz and author of "The Woman in the Zoot Suit: Gender, Nationalism and the Cultural Politics of Memory:"

"Anna Zacsek is a fascinating and understudied individual."

"Anna Zacsek played a significant and singular role in the Sleepy Lagoon case, particularly as the only female attorney in the courtroom."

Dr. Paul Espinosa, filmmaker and professor at the School of Transborder Studies at Arizona State University:

"Anna Zacsek played an important role in a number of major civil rights cases prior to the civil rights movement as we know it today. Her untiring dedication to a number of high visibility Mexican American defendants, including Pedro J. Gonzalez and Henry Leyvas, made a significant difference in their cases."

ANNA ZACSEK'S CHILDHOOD AT 2231 SUNSET BLVD



Photograph of Anna Zacsek by Edward Weston, 1919. c. University of Arizona

The story of Anna Zacsek can only be fully appreciated when one stands in front of the ramshackle cottage at 2231 Sunset Blvd (now 2233 1/2) her childhood home from roughly ages 6 to 13.

Although much of Anna's childhood at 2231 Sunset Blvd is a mystery, what we do know about her schooling, her neighbors and the neighborhood of Echo Park at the time suggests the formative experiences that laid the groundwork for what she would accomplish later in life, both as an actress and director in theatre and films, as well as a pioneering woman civil rights lawyer.

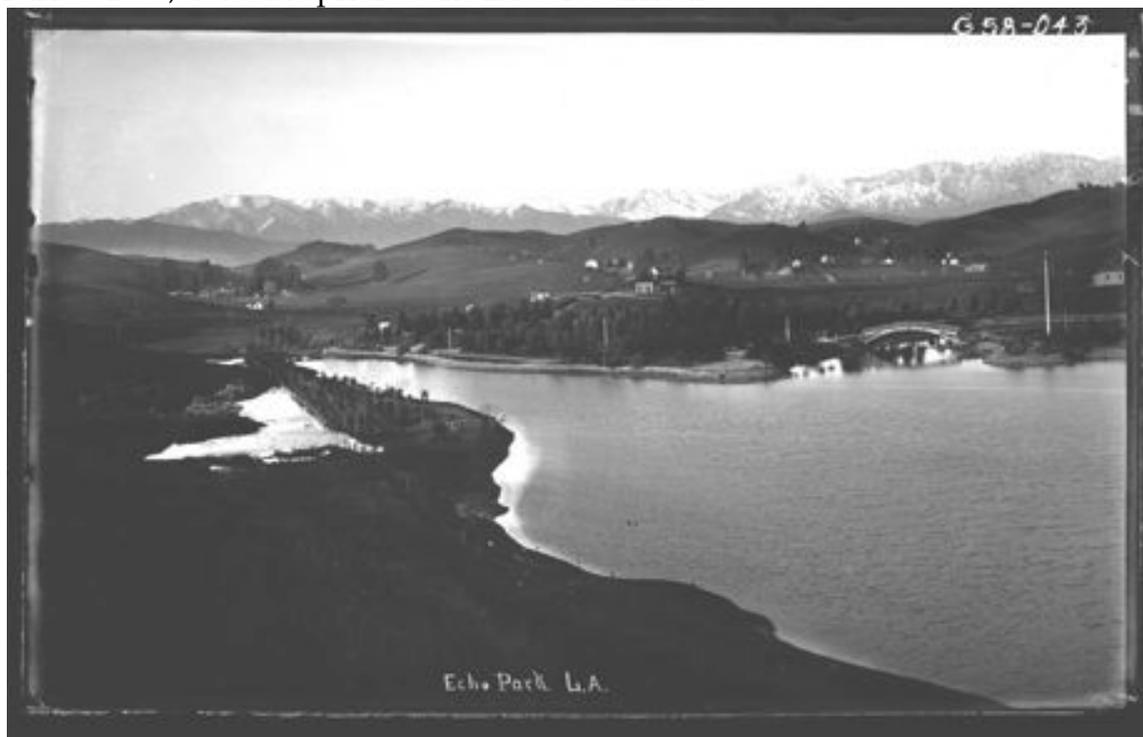
For readers who do not have a vision of their own childhood home and the way that home has informed their lives and careers the importance of the childhood home is considered by Dr. Jerry Burger , the author of "Returning Home: Reconnecting with our Childhoods." In an article derived from his research he writes, "Although we develop emotional attachments to places throughout our lifetimes, the vast majority of people who make a trip to see a former home select a place they lived in during their elementary school years (around 5 to 12 years old.) ... We recognize that one's home is a part of personal identity for many people; i.e., an extension of their self. And it is during these early years that

children develop a sense of self independent of their families. Homes also are almost always the place where children spend the largest part of their time, as well as the location for many of their most emotional experiences.”

Anna began her life as a performer during her childhood at 2231 Sunset Blvd while studying at the Los Angeles Conservatory of Music, the predecessor to CalArts, and as an actress under the tutelage of Frank Egan at the Egan Institute for Dramatic Arts, likely one of the first schools for acting in Los Angeles. The first time her name appeared in the paper, the Los Angeles Herald, as “Annie Zacsek” in 1908, it was to announce that she had made the Honor Roll at the Los Angeles Conservatory of Music. In 1910, her name appeared in the paper again alongside her younger brother, Stefan Jr. when they performed a scene from “If I were King” at the Majestic Theater on Broadway and 9th.

According to the reverse directory in the 1904 Los Angeles City Directory, the Zacsek’s house at 2231 Sunset Blvd would have been the last house on Sunset Blvd until a traveler reached Hollywood, placing it on the outskirts of the city of Los Angeles. 1904 was also the year that the still unpaved Sunset Boulevard was celebrated with a parade. In 1909, The Selig-Polyscope Film Company would build the first permanent movie studio in Los Angeles over the hill on Allesandro Blvd.

This view northwest over the lake gives an idea as to the rural nature of Echo Park c. 1895, a decade prior to the Zacsek’s arrival.

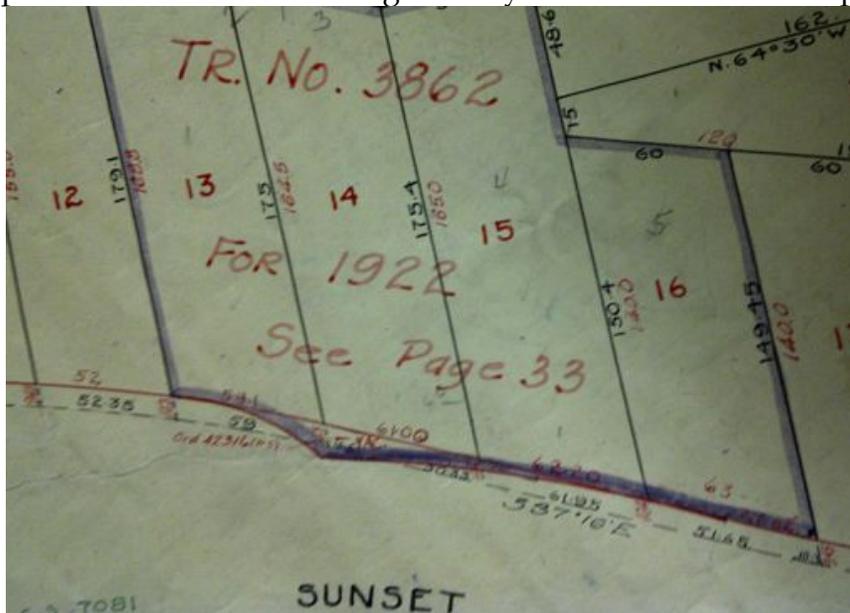


Photograph by WH Fletcher in the California State Library.

Then, as now, Echo Park was a multicultural neighborhood. Another immigrant from Eastern Europe was Stephen K. Szymanowski, the author of “The Searchers” and a scholar who was an influential figure in Anna’s childhood. Though Szymanowski lived at 2016 Sunset, the 1910 Census finds him at the Zacsek’s house at 2231 Sunset and the plot of “The Searchers” centers on a crusading defense lawyer in Los Angeles. He also lectured on the plight of women in Russia and advised that the Czar would eventually fall due to the great inequality in Russia. In the context of Anna’s later career as a defense attorney fighting for civil rights, Szymanowski’s presence in Echo Park and in the Zacsek household cannot be overlooked.

(Note: Although the Zacsks appear in newspapers and the City Directory for 1910 and 1911 at 2231 Sunset Blvd, they seem to have escaped the notice of the 1910 Census taker.)

An ability to work within the system for justice is also seen in Stefan Zacsek’s petitions before the Los Angeles City Council to correct the path of Sunset Blvd.



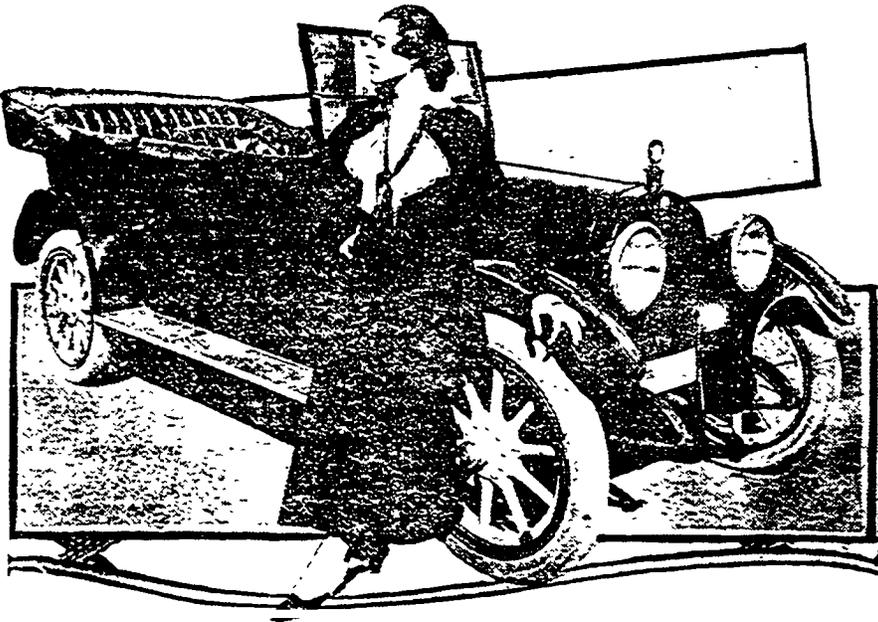
The path of Sunset corrected. (LA County Assessor’s Mapbooks)

Anna Zacsek’s childhood at 2231 Sunset Blvd would have instilled the value of art, education and a belief in justice that would carry through her life’s work. Her childhood as the daughter of immigrants in a neighborhood of immigrants would have given Anna a practical understanding of the hardships and prejudice faced by immigrants and minorities. The example of her elders showed her the value of democracy and how the justice system could help in overcoming the hardship and the prejudice.

ANNA ZACSEK'S FILM CAREER

As noted in the main application, DW Griffith was the man responsible for Anna Zacsek's film career. Griffith opened the world's eyes to the artistic possibilities of the new medium and Anna Zacsek's association with DW Griffith, though she began as a featured extra, should not be undervalued.

At the height of her silent film career in 1917, Anna Zacsek, or "Olga Grey" was well known enough to appear in the automobile ad below.



The old and the new.

The old 1910 Lexington shown here has traveled 200,000 miles, including several trips across the continent, and it's still going, too. Eugene Martin is shown with pencil and paper figuring out the mileage of the veteran. Below is one of the new Lexingtons with Olga Gray, who takes the part of the vampire in plays produced by the Famous Players, at the wheel. The Minute Man six, it is claimed by Mr. Martin, is making a big hit everywhere.

The caption explains "Below is one of the new Lexingtons with Olga Gray, who takes the part of the vampire in plays produced by the Famous Players."

ANNA ZACSEK AND LOS ANGELES THEATRE

MONNA VANNA" SOON.
Los Angeles Times (1886-1922); Feb 27, 1921;
ProQuest Historical Newspapers Los Angeles Times (1881 - 1987)
pg. III16

Will Portray Maeterlinck Heroine.



Olga Gray Zacsek,
Who is to appear in series of matinees, at which "Monna Vanna" will be
presented, at Little Theater.

As film roles dried up, Anna returned to the theatrical mentor of her childhood, Frank Egan at The Little Theatre, performing in Ibsen's "Rosmerholm" and then "Hedda Gabler." During this time, Frank Egan's Little Theatre, under the patronage of Aline Barnsdall, was working to introduce modernist stagecraft to Los Angeles Theatre. It was at the Little Theatre that Norman Bel Geddes moved the lights out from behind the proscenium and into the audience, shining down on the performers from an angle of 45' and attached them to a dimmer board, the setup still found in theatres today.

Anticipation of Anna Zacsek's starring turn in Maeterlinck's "Monna Vanna" at The Little Theatre in 1921 caused the Los Angeles Times to gush "We're really an Art Center at last! For are we not going to produce a Maeterlinck play with Max Reinhardt trimmings?" This same article goes on at length to describe Anna Zacsek and it is worth reprinting.

suggest perspective will be used.

Olga Grey Zaczek is to be the star of "Monna Vanna." She is the dark-eyed volatile, fascinating young siren, who used to be Olga Grey in pictures, but who flashed suddenly meteor-like across our vision a few months ago at the Little Theater, when she created a sensation in Ibsen's "Rosmersholm," and later as the heroine of "Hedda Gabler."

This play, Mr. Egan tells me, was the most successful from a box-office standpoint he had ever housed at the Little Theater, aside from Maude Fulton's "Humming Bird." I used the word "had" advisedly, inasmuch as it looks as though "Penrod" will run all spring and summer.

BURNE-JONES TYPE.

She has a sort of slender, Burne-Jones brunette beauty, has Miss Zaczek, that is oddly striking anywhere, and which is especially attractive on the stage. Having seen her, you'll not forget her. Her personality is vivid, but odd. Alive every minute, her brilliant black eyes miss nothing.

At moments, especially when she talks about her work, she has some harmless little affectations—perhaps the result of subconscious promptings from the old days of her early acting experiences when she believed that great actresses never stopped acting even off the stage.

But when she forgets all about the actress part, knows you well, and can manage to forget her Hungarian ancestors, these small affectations drop like a garment, and she is just a delightful, human, companionable American girl with a big sense of humor and the keenest and most eager powers of observation.

She's impatient of delay, when she sets about doing anything, is Miss Zaczek, and when things go wrong she gets right in herself, in the good old American way, and makes things hum.

For instance, when the opening of "Hedda Gabler" seemed about to be postponed, due to some of the scenery not being ready, she promptly parked her ancestors and her mannerisms, bought a pot of paint, put on an old apron, and stayed up all night to help paint the scenery. And it was ready, too.

Miss Zaczek takes an active interest in everything, both in and out of her profession, believing all is in the way of equipment that comes to the actress's net. She seeks experiences and knowledge outside of her own field. And that's why, instead of going to the Mardi Gras ball at the Ambassador last week, she accompanied a physician friend to a hospital where a delicate operation was to be performed, stayed through it, and remained with the patient for forty-eight hours without once lying down to rest.

It wasn't mere idle curiosity that prompted her, nor mere idle observation, for previously she had spent much time reading along medical and psychopathic lines, believing that such knowledge is endlessly helpful to insight into life.

Up in San Francisco she went

(Continued on Fifteenth Page.)

ART PLAY IS IN REHEARSAL.

(Continued from Thirteenth Page.)

once and dwelt in Chinatown with a missionary woman friend for a fortnight, and at another time she added a detective in unravelling a crime mystery. While in New York a few years ago, she lived in Greenwich Village, absorbing atmosphere.

But back of this young player's seemingly meteoric success are several years of hard, gruelling work and heart-breaking professional experiences. She had studied music and art, and had fitted herself as a concert pianiste, when curiosity led her one day, about six years ago, over to the Griffith studio, where D. W. Griffith was putting on "The Birth of a Nation."

She was sitting on the bench with some other extra girls, when Mr. Griffith himself came to call them to work, and, attracted by Miss Zaczek's vivid personality, asked her if she would like to work. She did, and registered so well she was given the "bit" of the leading lady on the stage in the theater scene in which Lincoln is killed.

She stepped right into leads, and afterward played with Triangle, but she got the New York fever, went back there, met Nazimova, who kindly advised her, took her to dinner, lunch and the theater, and was a great and real source of inspiration to the little unknown western girl.

But all her hopes for the theatrical engagement she had longed for fell through, and when a picture engage-

ment also failed, she became so disheartened that she came home and took a position as governess.

IBSEN AMBITION.

Nevertheless, to be bitten by the acting or writing, bug makes one quite hopeless for anything else, and though she was very happy with the children, somehow away back in her heart she had never quite given up hope.

I met her at a house party about that time, and she told me that some day she meant to play Ibsen. I patted her on the back, but smiled a bit to myself, too, even though I felt then her genius and personality.

But when her chance came, she made good! That's the beautiful part about it.

On meeting Reginald Poel, who was engaged by Frank Egan to put on plays at the Little Theater, he at once believed in her, and it was in her first stage venture, Ibsen's "When We Dead Awaken," that she showed what her talent really was made of. Then she did "Rosmersholm" and "Hedda Gabler," but it appears that in "Monna Vanna" her brilliancy will find even more congenial atmosphere.

Such great faith has Frank Egan in Miss Zaczek, that he means to send that young woman to New York in a series of Ibsen matinees.

Another interesting personality who will appear in "Monna Vanna" is Arthur Carew, who was formerly well known on the stage in the East, and who has of late made a name for himself in pictures. Mr. Carew is an Armenian, who received his early education at an American school in Marzovan, Armenia, and who fled with his family to this country when he was 12 years old.

"Monna Vanna" by Maeterlinck had been banned in Europe for its portrayal of "the new woman" which Emma Goldman thrilled to a dozen years later in "The Social Significance of Modern Drama" saying that it gave "a wonderful picture of the new woman... who has emancipated herself from her narrow outlook upon life...in proportion as she learns to become race-conscious, does she become a factor in the reconstruction of society, valuable to herself, her children, and to the race."

Anna Zacek was this "new woman." Her next theatre production and directorial debut, "Africanus" by Eloise Bibb Thompson, dealt explicitly with race. Thompson's play concerned "the efforts of a faction of the Bantus, a race of colored people in Southwest Africa to induce the colored people of this land to come to their land and help free their brothers."

The L.A. Times cheered Anna's production: "for the first time in the history of this city's theatricals a drama of the colored people, for the colored people, by a colored writer, was given last night." However, despite the paper's praise for the historical significance of the event, the importance of the play itself was lost. The review continued "as a matter of fact, the drama does not present a theme vital either to the white people or to the colored people... This can only be a subject of academic interest to nine-tenths of the colored people here, I should think."

"The Crisis," the official magazine of the NAACP rejoiced "The success of New York Negroes on the stage has been duplicated recently in Los Angeles by the production of "Africanus." The Crisis went on to quote the LA Record saying that "in stage settings Miss Zacek has struck a note entirely new to Los Angeles" echoing a point made by the LA Times prior to opening that "the local audiences will see futuristic scenery employed for the first time." The "futuristic scenery" incorporated the principles of Cubism in forming the symbolic, non-representational stage settings which, along with the new lighting techniques deployed by Bel Geddes, were two of the principles of modern stagecraft set forth by Edward Gordon Craig in his 1911 "On the Art of the Theatre."

Anna Zacek continued to perform in Los Angeles theatre for the rest of the 20's, forming "The Actor's Theatre" with Boris Karloff and in 1928 performing "The Idiot" by Dostoevsky. This production is notable for the stage sets designed by Rudolph Schindler and marks the beginning of a life long friendship and professional collaboration between Anna and Rudolph.

ANNA ZACSEK AND THE FIGHT FOR CIVIL RIGHTS



A few years after her production of "The Idiot," Anna Zacsek found herself at dinner with Oscar Collins, a friend and the chief trial lawyer for the Pacific Electric. She mentioned the exhaustion and difficulties associated with running a theatre company and acting 6 nights a week. Oscar Collins recommended that she study law.

Anna Zacsek enrolled at Loyola Law University, and in 1932 passed the California Bar Exam. Her first prominent client would be the Spanish-speaking radio announcer and recording star Pedro J. Gonzalez.

According to Dr. Paul Espinosa, the filmmaker behind "Ballad of an Unsung Hero" who also appears in a short film about Pedro Gonzalez now showing at the new Plaza De Cultura y Artes in Los Angeles, the influence of Pedro Gonzalez aroused the fears of Los Angeles City Officials. The final straw apparently came one morning when Gonzalez announced a work call for able-bodied men. A crowd of Mexican-Americans bearing picks and shovels showed up at the Plaza that morning and L.A. City Officials began their campaign to get Gonzalez off the airwaves.

After a failed attempt to revoke Gonzalez' broadcast license, City Officials found a young woman who had been involved with Gonzalez to claim that he had raped her. In 1934, the jury sent Gonzalez away to San Quentin for 50 years.

In 1935, in Anna Zacsek's office, the accuser recanted her testimony to Anna and signed a sworn affidavit that she had perjured herself under the threat of reform school by city officials. The judge in the case refused to accept the affidavit, and Pedro Gonzalez was forced to languish in San Quentin until 1940, at which point Anna finally succeeded in winning his release, though only on the condition that he would be deported.

Correspondence between Anna Zacsek and Governor Olson's office in regards to Gonzalez' upcoming parole hearing reveals the stonewalling and obstruction on behalf of the Governor that Anna encountered and overcame in her quest for Gonzalez's freedom. Interestingly, Stanley Mosk, namesake of the Los Angeles Superior Court building played an important role in finally securing Anna Zacsek's audience with the Governor. As a freshly minted lawyer and Olson's executive secretary at the time, Mosk was responsible for the Governor's correspondence. At the end of official correspondence from the Governor explaining why he would be unable to meet with Anna at any point, Mr. Mosk would include helpful postscripts informing Anna to "try Friday morning' and other directives that were helpful to Anna's successful navigation of Gonzalez's defense.

As Pedro Gonzalez was the most popular Spanish-speaking recording star of his day there was much disagreement as to the methods of his defense and scores of defense committees sprung up across the southwest. If there were any question as to how Pedro Gonzalez himself felt towards Anna, it is removed by a small handwritten note, in the shaky hand of an old man, in his papers held at the Chicano Studies Center at UCLA. A line pointing to Anna Zacsek's name and the words "mi abogada; muy buena": "My lawyer; very good."

ANNA ZACSEK AND THE SLEEPY LAGOON MURDERS

Anna Zacsek would continue her fight to defend the underdog in 1942 when she represented Henry Leyvas, the alleged gang leader in the Sleepy Lagoon Murders. This trial was a precursor to the Zoot Suit riots of 1943 and the subject of Luis Valdez's "Zoot Suit" starring Edward James Olmos. Interestingly, Anna Zacsek is nowhere to be found in "Zoot Suit" despite her prominence in the trial.

Throughout the trial itself, Anna Zacsek was subject to a certain paternalism from the Judge, and disregard by her fellow lawyers including Ben Margolin.

Margolin referred to her as “One of those big hat woman lawyers. A real phony.”

It seems likely that Anna’s background as an actress probably predisposed people towards not taking her seriously. It also seems likely that she was aware of this and used it to her advantage. Her private correspondence, whether it regards Pedro Gonzalez or Rudolph Schindlers business dealings reveal a highly intelligent, very practical woman with the keen psychological insight into human nature that talented actors often possess.

When Anna Zacsek’s life is viewed in its entirety, it is clear that she believed passionately in the causes that she fought for and was anything but “a real phony.”

Dr. Catherine Ramirez, author of “The Woman in the Zoot Suit: Gender, Nationalism, and the Cultural Politics of Memory” and Associate Professor of American Studies at UC Santa Cruz has said that Anna Zacsek is a **“Fascinating and understudied individual”** and went on to say that **“Anna Zacsek played a significant and singular role in the Sleepy Lagoon case, particularly as the only female attorney in the courtroom.”**

Dr. Eduardo Pagan, author of “The Murders at Sleepy Lagoon” as well as a featured personality on PBS’ “History Detectives” told me that **“Zacsek's historic significance is found in her careers, first as an actress in early movies then later as one of the few female attorneys in Los Angeles. As an attorney, she often took on unpopular cases and represented people who had difficulty in finding proper representation. She was ahead of her time. She often faced discrimination but she nonetheless persevered, and through her determination pioneered the law profession for the many women who would follow after her.”**

ANNA ZACSEK, EDDIE ALVAREZ, ABORTIONISTS

After the Henry Leyvas case and the Sleepy Lagoon Murders, Anna Zacsek would go on to represent the men involved in the portion of the actual Zoot Suit Riots that took place at the Venice Pier and later she would defend Eddie Alvarez, a 13 year old accused of killing his 19 year old brother.



Anna Zacsek, Eddie Alvarez and his Sister. Photos from USC Digital Library.

At the trial, Eddie's sister would testify that their deceased brother was developmentally disabled, incredibly strong when angry and had attacked their mother. Eddie stepped between his mother and his enraged brother, took a pocketknife and stabbed his brother. Although Eddie would eventually be found to have acted in self-defense, the triumph was dulled by the fact that Eddie's mother was not alive to see her young son declared innocent, as she died of a heart attack shortly after Eddie was arrested and charged with murder.

In 1951, Anna Zacsek won freedom for Dr. Adolph Selby a 48 year old chiropractor who had been accused of performing an abortion, at the time an illegal operation, on a 15 year old girl.

These are just a selection of the more prominent cases that Anna Zacsek took on. But the clear through line of her narrative is that of a woman who fought for what she believed in, time and again opposing the ugly prejudices of her day.

ANNA ZACSEK, RUDOLPH SCHINDLER AND EDWARD WESTON

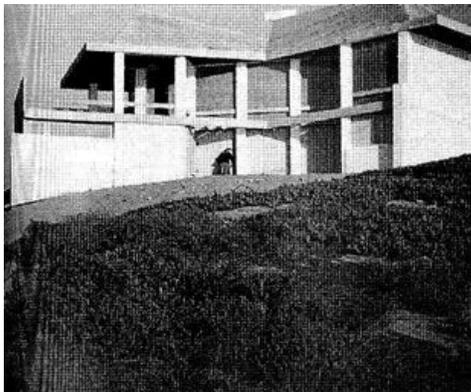
A page from Edward Weston's Daybook that describes an evening with Anna.

January 29. Through Harriet,—Alma Zaesek sent me tickets to *The Idiot*, in which she and Reginald Pole took the leads. I thought Alma showed a mature conception, compared to those Ibsen days of, I guess, ten years ago. Both she and Reginald were excellent, though the cast was weak in some parts.

After, Alma joined us; Harriet, Sam and myself, to supper and an evening of dancing and reminiscing at the Freeman home. (The house is by Frank Lloyd Wright; a fine conception except for the insistent pattern on cement blocks which weakens by over-ornamentation.) Alma can cook as well as act. Some of her idolaters should see her in kitchen array! I teased Alma, remembering the day years ago when she posed in the nude: a modest virgin who insisted on covering herself at certain points with a towel after each negative, and quite hampering my way of seeing the critical moment.

Harriet dances well: if she were smaller—in bulk—she would be ideal for me. We danced many times to exquisite Spanish tangos.

The production of "*The Idiot*" that he is referring to would have had sets designed by Rudolph Schindler. In a letter from Schindler to Anna on 1/16/1928, a year before he applied for his architect's license in Los Angeles, he lays forth their agreement that the cost for the settings will be borne by Anna's Theatre Company, and that Schindler will receive 15% of the profits of the production.

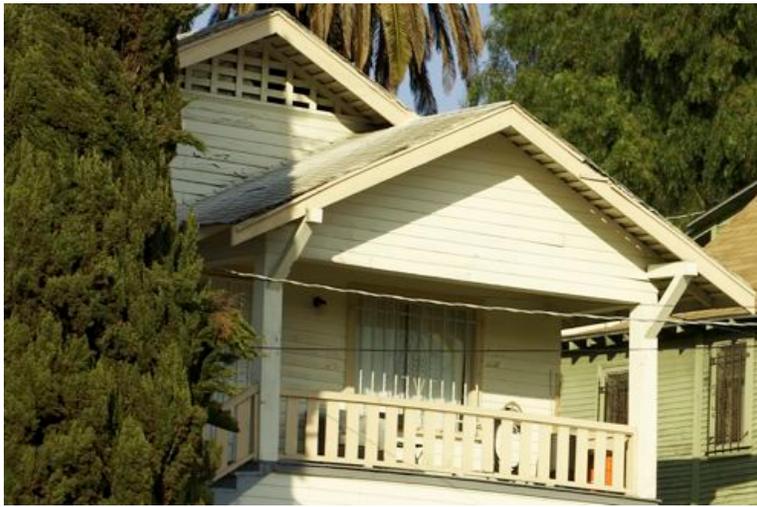


Photos of Zacsek Beach House designed by Rudolph Schindler property of University Art Museum at UCSB, NOT FOR PUBLICATION.

In addition to representing Schindler in his business dealings and in his divorce from his wife, Anna Zacsek also contracted with Rudolph to design a beach house for her in Playa Del Rey. Anna seems to have been highly involved in the

design of the house; their correspondence in regard to the house begins with a letter from Anna to Schindler saying, "Please wait on my plans for the house until I can come over with my photographs so that you may see what sort of things I desire."

The construction of the house itself was filled with a spirited and oft-contentious battle of wills between two strong headed Eastern Europeans. They traded letters 30 items long detailing every aspect of the house from the design of the structure itself to a decorative frog that Schindler had confiscated from the house. Anna requested that Schindler return the frog to which he responded that it was "in very bad taste and I protest (its) use in a building of my design."



The square columns and pediment of the porch appear to be Schindler's interpretation of the front porches on the Arts & Crafts houses built by Anna's father at 2237 and 2231 Sunset Blvd. The absence of this porch in Schindler's initial designs for Anna's house suggests that this was one of the elements Anna desired.

THE ANNA ZASCEK COTTAGE AND LOS ANGELES HISTORIC-CULTURAL MONUMENTS, ESPECIALLY THOSE ASSOCIATED WITH HISTORICALLY SIGNIFICANT WOMEN

At the time of this writing, there are nearly 1000 Historic-Cultural Monuments in the City of Los Angeles. Many of these monuments are gender neutral but the majority of them commemorate the contributions of men. An informal survey reveals 22 monuments that commemorate women, exclusive of those monuments that are named for a husband-wife or a family.

Of these 22, 7 of the monuments are for "Women" in general, Woman's Clubs, Temperance Unions and YWCA's.

Of the remaining 15 HCM that bear a Woman's name, only 8 of those names returned Historical Significance in a Google search, suggesting that 7 of these 15 monuments are monuments primarily because of their Architectural Significance.

The Eight Historic-Cultural Monuments in the City of Los Angeles that bear a Woman's name, and the historical-significance associated with those names:

HCM #133. Minnie Hill Palmer Residence -- Famous for continuing the tradition of early Pioneer living/homesteading through the 1960's.

HCM #302 Amelia Earhart Library, North Hollywood -- Pioneering Female Aviatrix who lived in Toluca Lake, adjacent to North Hollywood.

HCM #791 Betty Hill House -- Westside Homeowners Association, Republican Study Club, NAACP Los Angeles Branch, Dunbar Hotel, wife of Buffalo Soldier

HCM #794 Carolyn Bumiller-Hickey House -- Society Woman, Prominent Divorcee.

HCM #798 Mary Smith House - Unknown, possibly the house of Civil Rights Activist Mary Louise Smith

HCM #824 Mary E Stilson House -- Designed by Arthur Benton, built in 1906 for the widow of the original subdivider of Angelino Heights.

HCM #879 Louise Pratt House -- Real Estate Developer and Philanthropist

HCM #963 Linda Scott House -- Arizona, Hassayampa Society (society for Arizonan's outside of Arizona) 1st Arizona Woman's Deputy as deputized by her husband, the Sheriff.

CONCLUSION

That the young woman, the daughter of a janitor who grew up in this ramshackle cottage:



Would one day own a beach house designed by Rudolph Schindler, her parents old home in Echo Park, and the former estate of Howard Hughes in Hancock Park pictured below:



And that she achieved all of these hallmarks of success while defending progressive values and fighting for the poor and underrepresented in some of the most egregious abuses of power in the history of Los Angeles is a remarkable and inspiring tale of what an immigrant family could achieve only in Los Angeles.

PERMITS

The only existing permit for 2231 Sunset Blvd, Rear House.

2235 SUNSET PARCEL
PLANS and SPECIFICATIONS and
other data must also be filed.

WARD 2

BOARD OF PUBLIC WORKS
DEPARTMENT OF BUILDINGS

Application to Alter, Repair or Demolish

Application is hereby made to the Board of Public Works (Chief Inspector of Buildings) of the City of Los Angeles, for the approval of the detailed statement of specifications herewith submitted for the alteration, repair or demolition of the building herein described. All provisions of the Building Ordinances shall be complied with in the alteration, repair or demolition of said building, whether specified herein or not.

(Room Here) Stefan Quack
Los Angeles, Cal. APR 17 1911 1911

E 37 2 # CITY ASSESSOR: Please Verify

REMOVED FROM		REMOVED TO	
Lot	Block	Lot	Block
<u>14</u>	<u>4</u>		
Tract <u>Washington Heights</u>			
Book <u>8</u>	Page <u>14</u>	F. R. Page <u>3</u>	Book Page F. R. Page

TAKE TO ROOM NO. 6 FIRST FLOOR

TAKE TO ROOM NO. 34 THIRD FLOOR

CITY ENGINEER: Please Verify Street Number

From No. 2231 Sunset Blvd (Rear) To No. 2235

- Owner's name Stefan Quack
- Owner's address 2231 Sunset Boulevard
- Architect's name _____
- Contractor's name _____
- Contractor's address _____
- Estimate cost of Proposed Improvements, \$ 65
- Purpose of the building Update Plans
- Class of building _____ No. of rooms at present _____
- No. of stories in height 2 Size of present building 12' x 18'
- Size of new addition 5'6" x 12'
- Material of foundation _____ Size Footing _____ Size of wall _____
- Size of exterior studs X Interior studs X
- Size of mud sills 2 X 6 Bearing studs X
- Size of first floor joist 2 X 6 Second floor joist X

15. STATE ON FOLLOWING LINES JUST WHAT YOU WANT TO DO:-

*Outside room for toilet
Board up & down*

PERMIT NO. 3143 ✓ Date APR 17 1911 1911

(11) ENTER CLERK

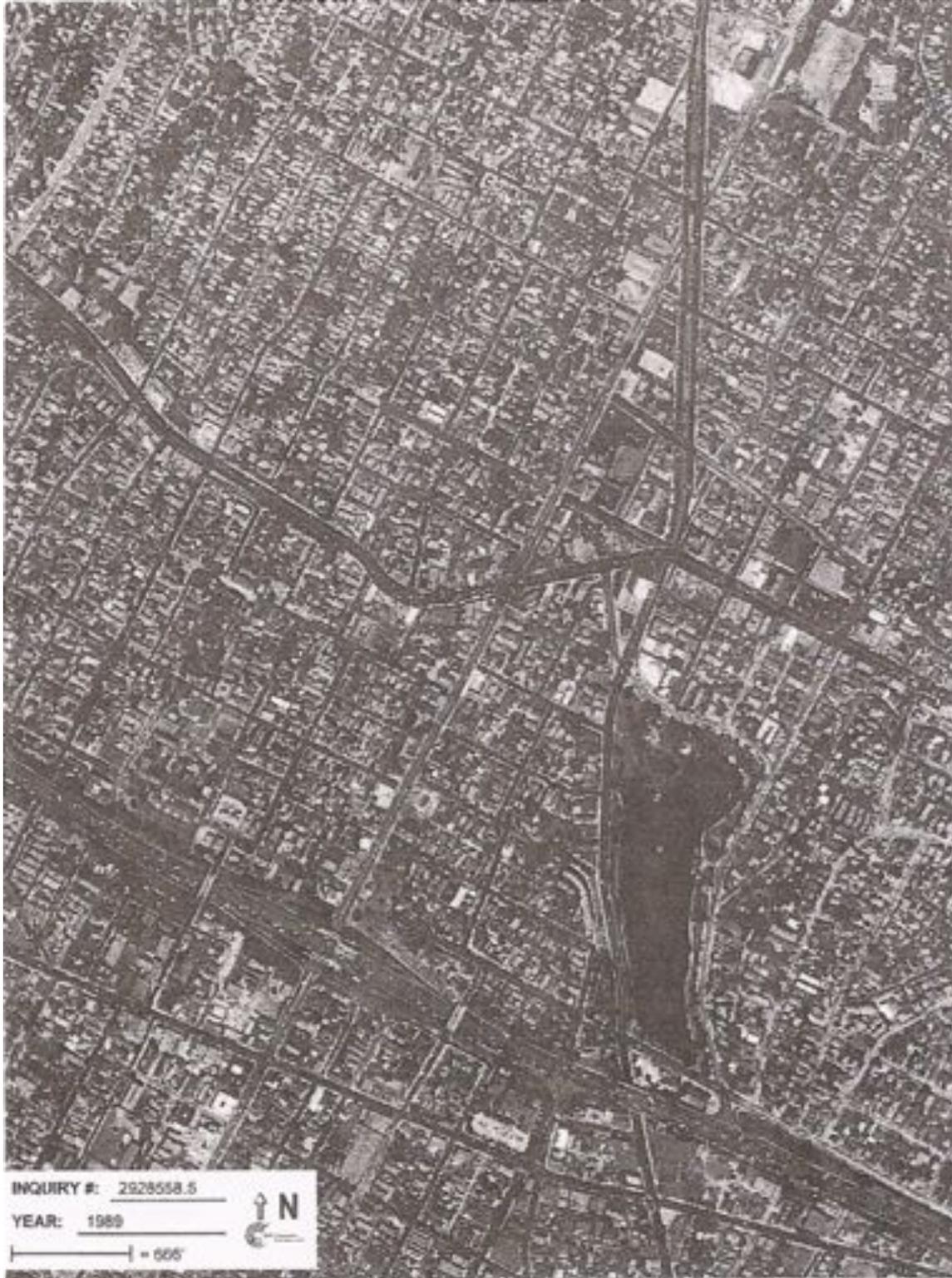
AERIAL PHOTOS



Aerial Photo, 1927



Aerial Photo, 1956



Aerial Photo 1989

SANBORN MAPS



Sanborn Map, 1906

Expanded view of 1906 Sanborn Map. The Anna Zacsek Cottage is the building in the rear on the parcel labeled 2231.



