

A BRIEF CHRONOLOGICAL HISTORY OF KEY AUTRY ACTIONS AND THE FRIENDS OF THE SOUTHWEST MUSEUM COALITION'S RESPONSES, SINCE 2003

- In Dec, 2002, the merger of the Autry and the Southwest Museum (SWM) was announced. The SWM was still open, and the Coalition wanted to prove the viability of the SWM by working hard at publicity, hospitality at receptions, memberships and volunteer support. Our group put in valuable time and cash resources. The Autry's leadership held monthly meetings seeking ideas for the SWM and Casa de Adobe's future. The Coalition felt hopeful, but held its first meeting Thursday, Feb. 6, 2003 and a week later on Feb. 11, 2003, held its first public meeting at the SWM to protect the interests of the community and to ensure a viable full-functioning Museum and Casa De Adobe.
- The Autry-funded 2004 Brenda Levin Report reflected careful study of the SWM building and economic potential. The Coalition adopted the LEVIN REPORT, PLAN B (utilized later for the GARAVAGLIA DESIGN CONCEPT).
- In spite of the Levin Report's published findings (Levin was a nationally respected restoration architect) Director John Gray repeatedly denied the SWM's economic viability.
- In March, 2005, the Autry announced expansion plans in Griffith Park. The proposal ultimately was for a massive 210,000 square feet expansion to hold the SWM's collection. After two years of frequent smaller meetings, the Coalition's response was a massive meeting at Ramona Hall in March. The Coalition received strong support from the 400+ attendees.
- From November, 2005, through Spring, 2006, the Coalition entered into months-long confidential negotiations supervised by senior staff of newly-elected Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa (famous for his declaration at Ramona Hall before his election that the SWM would be closed over "my dead body"). These negotiations were unsuccessful.
- The resulting impasse resulted in 5 public meetings in June and July, 2006, organized by the City's Human Relations Commission. (Public comments and written submission showed 96% support for the Coalition's position.).
- In July, 2006, the Coalition held a well-publicized "funeral" for the Museum when Autry closed the galleries to the public.
- The Autry purported to study these submissions carefully and then, at a filled Franklin High School auditorium on September 19, 2006, presented their 2-ROOM "COMMUNITY CENTER" AT THE SWM INSTEAD OF A FULLY FUNCTIONING ACCREDITED MUSEUM. In response, the Coalition developed the GARAVAGLIA design concept incorporating (1) the Levin Plan B concept, (2) Autry's desired cultural/community center and (3) the Coalition's vision for a re-invigorated Southwest Museum all combined as a win-win solution. This was presented to all of the Coalition leaders in the Spring, 2007, but rejected by Autry.
- At a Coalition leader meeting called by newly re-elected Councilman Jose Huizar (held only two days after Huizar called the meeting) 56 out of 60 community leaders present supported the implementation of the Garavaglia design solution. (June, 13, 2007).
- A few months later in direct contradiction to the Coalition's position, in October, 2007, Huizar, Mayor Villaraigosa and John Gray called an invitation-only press conference to announce the formation of a "Southwest Society," ostensibly to raise money for the SWM and re-open it under Autry's 2006 vision rejected by the community. The Coalition was excluded. As a journalist Tom Topping gained entrance and exposed this secretative action in the Boulevard Sentinel. No financial contributions were ever reported raised by the "Southwest Society."
- Many of the general public reacted to the Autry/"Southwest Society's" plans by believing that the community/Autry disagreement was resolved and the SWM's future was assured.
- The next few months saw the Coalition continuing to keep the SWM before the public by "tabling" at events, parade participation, outreach to additional public groups, fundraisers, informational meetings and by expanding Neighborhood Council support to 10 Councils.
- In the meantime the Coalition quietly developed extensive research and reports including:
1. retaining a national museum economic expert, ConsultEcon, to conduct a peer review of the Levin Report, and
 2. submitting a 100- page complaint to the American Museums Association about the virtual closing of the SWM and other violations of the merger agreement.

3. Based on an analysis and report issued by accounting and legal expert Jack Siegel, a pro-bono attorney submitted a lengthy challenge to the State Accounting Board (SAB) of the Autry's accounting firm's claim that the Autry had an \$100 million endowment at the time of the merger rather than merely a promised gift of \$100 million in future years after the death of Mrs. Autry. (The Autry had less than the \$2 million in endowment at the time of merger. compared to the \$5 million of the SWM.) The accountant immediately retired after the submission of the challenge to the SAB and the Accounting Board closed the matter instead of taking any substantive action. The "accountant" immediately went to work for the Autry! Money is power and power talks to state bureaucracies.
4. We submitted a voluminous report to the California State Attorney's Office, shepherded by a San Francisco attorney and four Coalition members who went to San Francisco; the AG staff said that they did not want to get involved inspite of the extensive substantive evidence presented on lack of compliance with the Merger, and the fiduciary duties and responsibilities under the terms of the Merger agreement.

In June, 2008, the formal scoping and Environmental Impact Report (EIR) process for the Autry's proposed expansion plans at Griffith Park began. At every point in the process we intervened with extensive study, written reports, testimony, and public presence (as many stakeholders as possible) at public hearings. Especially notable was the Coalition's turnout (numbers) when we packed the City Council's chamber at the Board of Referred Powers meeting with more than 300 people opposed to the Autry's expansion project. All five (5) City Council members supported Councilmember Huizar's request and declared that there would be no approval of the requested expansion project at this meeting without a legally binding promise, in writing, that the SWM would be protected. The Autry leadership, along with its many lawyers, did not agree with this unanimous directive of the Councilpersons and stormed out of the City Council chambers unwilling to even commit to a two-room museum, much less than the fully functioning one sought by the Coalition. Autry retracted its Griffith Park expansion project application shortly thereafter and no City approvals were ever secured.

Then Mrs. Autry put up for sale her Los Angeles home for approximately \$6.8 million and at the same time the Autry announced the purchase of an industrial property in Burbank for a reported \$7.6 million. The Autry has moved most of the SWM collection either to the Griffith Park site, which it leases from the City for \$1 a year, or into the Burbank warehouse (no longer located in the City of Los Angeles). The original merger agreement permits the Autry to sell off Collection items from the SWM beginning June 30, 2013.

TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE

Will this be Autry's final solution — selling parts of the SWM collection and library in order to finance its own operations? Will the SWM be another "Barnes Museum" as documented in the movie "The Art of the Steal"?

The L.A. City Council approved in June, 2011, a "Working Committee" to try and solve the violations of the Merger Agreement problem between the Autry and the 70+ organizations that comprise the Friends Coalition. It took until September 18, 2012, for it to hold its first meeting. The Autry then refused to attend. It refused to attend all of the meetings held by the City Council's "Working Committee." On the May 21, 2013 runoff between the two candidates for City Council District 1, Mr. Gil Cedillo was elected. He is presently going to location after location within Council District 1 listening to the concerns of his constituency. In October his "listening tour" will be in Highland Park. His Highland Park office will be located at the corner of Avenue 56 and Figueroa Street.

But, TIME IS RAPIDLY PASSING.. The SWM's collection is almost entirely moved into the warehouse in Burbank. The oldest museum in L.A., the dream of Charles Lummis, is dying. Please help us save for Council District 1 and all of the communities of Northeast Los Angeles, a fully accredited fully functioning Museum. Two museum locations, sharing access to the 350,000+ artifacts of the SWM, can be sustained. Then Los Angeles would be truly blessed by two museums in two locations sharing an amazing collection of artifacts of First Nation peoples as well as the diversity of cultures and artifacts of the peoples of the entire Western Hemisphere.