

The Studio for Southern California History launches “Common Ground” to recover the histories of the former Ambassador Hotel site and its neighborhood.

Los Angeles, CA – Wednesday, March 2, 2011

The Studio for Southern California History (Studio) announces a new community history project: *Common Ground: the Histories of the Ambassador Hotel's Neighborhood*. In collaboration with the Honors College at California State University Los Angeles and the New Open World Academy—the school at the former Ambassador Hotel site. The Studio is organizing a series of activities designed to gather and share stories connected with the former Ambassador Hotel and its neighborhood: a five-block radius with Hobart on the West, Olympic to the South, Shatto to the East and 2nd Street to the North— all sections of the 90005 zip code and is also known as ‘Wilshire Center.’

Common Ground will illustrate vast change over time in Los Angeles by highlighting the Ambassador Hotel neighborhood’s social history. For many people the Ambassador was an icon of the city, from its opening in 1921 until its demolition in 2006 to make way for the Robert F. Kennedy Community Schools Complex. For over twenty-five years, many people battled to save the hotel, to preserve the personal memories it represented. But less attention has been paid to a different kind of icon and monument to memories of Los Angeles: the community surrounding the site of the Ambassador. The personal histories associated with the Ambassador Hotel itself created a barrage of distress letters and preservation efforts to save it over the last twenty-five years. While the Ambassador Hotel may rightfully hold a place in historical memory for various political and cultural events, the history of its neighborhood provides an even more pluralistic vision of Los Angeles’ history.

The Studio invites those interested in sharing their histories in two ways. The public may call the Studio if they are interested in scheduling an interview between now and July 1, 2011 to share their experiences of the Ambassador Hotel. The Studio will be hosting three monthly collection days on April 2, May 7, and June 4 from noon – 4:00 pm for individuals wishing to loan photographs or ephemera to be digitized and included in the project. Short interviews will be conducted on Collection Days.

The Studio for Southern California History is a nonprofit organization dedicated to critically chronicling and disseminating the region’s social history in order to foster sense of place. In addition to projects like *Common Ground*, the Studio sponsors walking tours, exhibits and maintains an extensive reference library.

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