



# EAGLE ROCK VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Fall, 2022

## Preserve The Last “House with Canopy” Style Oil Service Station in Los Angeles

It has been a very busy time for the ERVHS. The property at 1659 W. Colorado Blvd., owned by the Clairville family since 1947, sold this year. On this property is an important structure, not only to us in Eagle Rock and Los Angeles, but according to the National Park Service, possibly the nation as well.

In 1931, This building, built by Standard Oil Company in 1919, was purchased and moved from downtown by Eagle Rock resident Jay Risk to be used as an oil sales business on Colorado Blvd, then part of Route 66, between Vincent Ave. and Mt. Royal Dr.

Not unique in its day, many were built and distributed in the 1920's throughout the West to feed the country's rapidly growing need for auto service. Today this oil station is the oldest-known example left in Los Angeles.

The current owners have said they would like to see the structure saved but have it moved to another location.

However, on Saturday July 23rd they began dismantling the building without a permit. Large pieces of this small structure have been removed and are stacked in a pile of debris behind the building. After work was halted by LA Building and Safety, a demolition permit was applied for. The ERVHS, helped by a generous donor, was able to hire a consultant to write a Historical Cultural Monument application to stay demolition and provide an essential layer of protection and recognition of this important historical structure.

**\*\*\*PLEASE JOIN US IN OUR EFFORTS TO SAVE THIS BUILDING IN EAGLE ROCK!!!\*\*\***

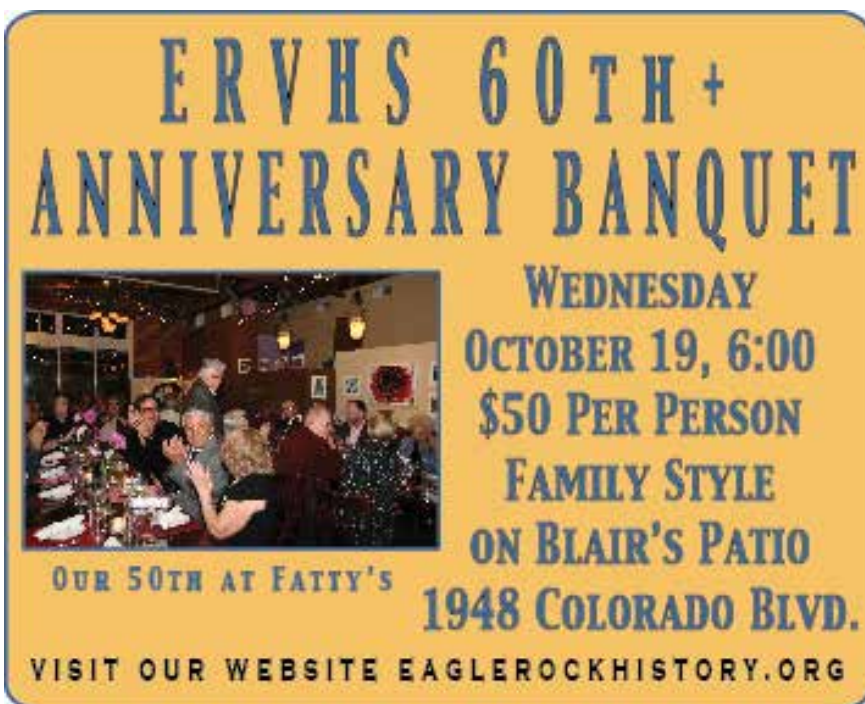
An email blast reporting how you can help support the HCM nomination will be coming very soon.

### Attend our 60th+ Anniversary Banquet

We have been chomping at the bit to celebrate our 60th+ anniversary, not a feat to be overlooked! As an all-volunteer non-profit organization, the ERVHS continues on into the 21st century with our work cut out for us more than ever!

You are invited to celebrate our 60th+ on Blair's Restaurant patio (1948 Colorado Blvd.) on Wednesday, October 19th at 6:00pm. A family-style dinner, non-alcoholic drinks, dessert, and tip will all be included. Details coming soon via email on how to reserve, so please be on the lookout for our communications. We can't wait to see you in PERSON at long last!

To receive our email blasts or reserve for the banquet, please write: [webmaster@eaglerockhistory.org](mailto:webmaster@eaglerockhistory.org).



**ERVHS 60TH+ ANNIVERSARY BANQUET**  
**WEDNESDAY**  
**OCTOBER 19, 6:00**  
**\$50 PER PERSON**  
**FAMILY STYLE**  
**ON BLAIR'S PATIO**  
**1948 COLORADO BLVD.**  
OUR 50TH AT FATTY'S  
VISIT OUR WEBSITE [EAGLEROCKHISTORY.ORG](http://EAGLEROCKHISTORY.ORG)

# Hello, Eagle Rock!

## Thank you, ERVHS Members, for your continued support.

As described on our front page, the ERVHS is working hard to preserve a unique piece of important history of our neighborhood. We were working with the developer when they started removing/dismantling the building without a permit. We believe that the little building needed some support from the neighborhood that it has called home for over ninety years, so we stepped up our game.

### Historic Cultural Monument status

The status of Historic Cultural Monument (HCM) is a city provided support and protection for historic and/or cultural structures/properties that need the wider eyes of the city for protection.

### Why is it significant?

From the HCM application, "It is a rare surviving example of a type of groundbreaking and influential construction and form that became the standard for service stations from the early development of service stations." The HCM application further states "Starting in 1914, Standard Oil of California pioneered this design as the standardization of the service station. By the mid-1920s there were thousands of these Standard Oil stations in the western United States. The form, which became known as "House with Canopy," was copied by other oil suppliers to distribute their products throughout the country. It represents the early era (1914-1930s) of service station design in general, and more specifically, it reflects the corporate design associated with Standard Oil of California, pioneering design standardization that served as part of its larger branding program."

It may be difficult to believe, but what we think of as "gas stations" or "service stations" didn't really exist for the first couple of decades that automobiles existed! Drivers of these early "horseless carriages" would buy their gasoline at hardware stores and gas-selling mechanics – with pumps next to the road. Standard Oil of California created this "House with Canopy" style building with a covered area to enhance the gasoline purchase experience.

While there were eventually many of them here in car-centric Los Angeles, only one remains in its original form – the one at 1659 Colorado Blvd!

### Route 66 Connection

The highway that connected Chicago with Los An-

geles, U.S. Highway 66 (AKA Route 66), was redirected through Eagle Rock (Colorado Blvd then Eagle Rock Blvd) during the 1930s while other portions of the highway were constructed. During our investigations, we have uncovered many more references to support this fact, including from the US Dept. of the Interior which has thorough records of Route 66. This would place this little station along the famed highway during an important period.

In our last issue, I promised more techniques for searching the California Digital Newspaper Collection – that'll have to wait until next issue!

That's all for now – I hope to see you at our Anniversary Banquet on Wednesday October 19th!

-David Dellinger



QR CODE

Scan to access our website with your phone.

### The objectives of the Eagle Rock Valley Historical Society

- to preserve, clarify through research and to perpetuate the history of Eagle Rock Valley
- to make this history available to students, researchers, libraries and all interested persons
- to preserve and protect our local landmarks, especially the Eagle Rock

Membership is open to all who would further these objectives

Public Archive Hours 10 to 12 every Saturday at the Center for the Arts, Eagle Rock 2225 Colorado Blvd. Eagle Rock CA 90041 for information call 323-257-1357

This journal is published quarterly by The Eagle Rock Valley Historical Society Editor, Eric Warren Layout, David Mc Nutt Contributors, Katie Taylor, David Dellinger

Visit our website at: [eaglerockhistory.org](http://eaglerockhistory.org)

## The Oldest Service Station in Los Angeles

Survey LA, a comprehensive survey of historic structures throughout the city, described the building thus “One exceptional example is a modest service station building dating from 1919. Originally constructed on: Spring Street in Downtown Los Angeles, and moved to its current location on Colorado Boulevard in 1931, this property appears to be the oldest remaining service station building in the city.”



The station at 1659 Colorado Boulevard as it stood in 1998, photographed as part of a survey of the commercial buildings in 1998. (Eric Warren-ERVHS)



The condition of the building in 2021 at the time of the property’s sale with the Clairville building on the adjoining lot at 1655. (Chrisnet photo)



The current condition of the building. Having decided that they wished the building to be removed the new owners, contracted with a developer to remove and possibly re-use the building. Based on his personal judgment, the developer began an unpermitted and ill-advised effort to dismantle the building. At present the doors have been removed to another location and the window frames are piled behind the building. (Katie Taylor-ERVHS)

## Our Town, Our History



The station and the adjoining buildings photographed as part of a survey of commercial buildings on Colorado in 1988. (Eric Warren-ERVHS)



### The Building's History

J M. Risk is listed as the owner on the 1931 building moving permit. He purchased the building from Standard Oil of California and moved it to its current location at 1659 W. Colorado Blvd., a mile and a half from his home. When he moved the service station to Eagle Rock, the entire north side of the block was undeveloped. As there were no buildings on the block, the service station could operate as it was designed to: cars could pull up under the canopy, get served, and then pull out onto Colorado Blvd. The lots on either side of the property remained undeveloped until 1949.

Clyde A. Brown advertised the station starting in April 1932, shortly after it was moved to Eagle Rock. Mr. Brown is also listed as running the station in the Los Angeles directory from 1932-1933.

William R. Sykes ran the service station starting in 1938. Mr. Sykes manufactured and sold Travel-Eze trailers as well as installing "Lecos". Lecos were advertised as a mechanical marvel that could give you 40 mpg. Additionally, William Sykes offered to re-silver the reflectors in your car's headlights.

In late January 1939 Ernest B. Ames, a local rancher, opened the

Stop & Shop fruit and vegetable market at the building.

Sometime around 1947 George Clairville purchased the Jay Risk Standard Oil Co. Service Station and used it as an office for his plumbing company. In 1949 Mr. Clairville built a modern office and home next door at 1655 W. Colorado Blvd. Over the following decades, the Clairville family expanded the building at 1655 W. Colorado Blvd., but left the building untouched. In February 2022, the Clairville family, sold both 1659 and 1655 W. Colorado Blvd to Paradigm Collaboration LLC.

**MOTORISTS**  
are Taking Advantage of This Opportunity to

**Save On Motor Oils**

Use the Coupon — It's Worth Money  
**ALL OUR OILS ARE GUARANTEED**

<p>Best Western Heavy</p> <p><b>Qt. 5c</b></p> <p>5 Gal. for 85c</p>	<p>100% Paraffine Base Eastern Motor Oil Medium or Heavy</p> <p><b>Qt. 10c</b></p> <p>5 Gal. for \$1.75</p>
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**BEST 100% PENNSYLVANIA MOTOR OIL**  
Special at 15c Quart  
-----  
COUPON—Good for 15c  
-----  
on 5 gallons of our 100% Paraffine Base Eastern Motor Oils.  
Name \_\_\_\_\_

Ad for the new oil service station in the Eagle Rock Advertiser, 5/6/1932.

### George Clairville, Plumbing 1655 Colorado Boulevard Clinton 6-5556

Before settling into the plumbing business in the Eagle Rock area thirteen years ago, George Clairville made sure that he was bringing the maximum know-how in plumbing service. A man with a clear purpose, he ranged the western areas (as far away as Bethel, Alaska) in search of the best techniques in plumbing installation and repair. As journeyman plumber he worked for many of the large firms in Los Angeles and Pasadena and before that he grew up in the trade with his father who established the tradition thirty five years ago.

Choosing Eagle Rock as the scene of his first business venture, George augmented his skill with the fine plumbing equipment, bent on giving Eagle Rock the finest plumbing service that could be obtained. Why did he choose Eagle Rock? "A quiet neighborhood, well established, yet with a strong prospect for growth. It was a desirable blend of old quality homes and new modern ones," he explains. George has never regretted his choice.

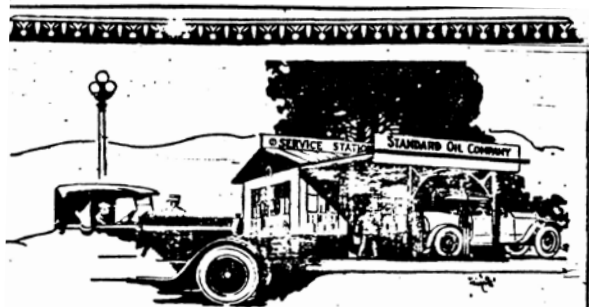
As evidence of his business success, George is in the process now of doubling the size of his present building, erecting a warehouse and work area in the rear of the front building and further plans to construct store and office buildings on adjoining property. He has faith in Eagle Rock's future.

George has taken an active interest in community life. He is active in church and YMCA work. His sons are his hobby whom he joins in various sports, YMCA and Indian guide projects. Off-hours George likes to work with his hands on his various construction projects, a builder whose greatest satisfaction is helping Eagle Rock grow.

Ad for Clairville Plumbing which appeared in the Eagle Rock Sentinel's 50th anniversary edition in 1960.

## A Source of Pride in Modernity

This rendering of a forward-looking modern service station appeared in the Standard Oil Bulletin illustrating the pride taken in this style of station by the giant oil company. It gives clues to the look of a restored building. (Standard Oil Bulletin April 1922 p265)



### Back of the Service of Standard Oil

Back of the service, expert and courteous, which our representative will offer you when you visit our new Service Station, corner Rowland avenue and Colorado Blvd., there is an organization. Our salesmen know that the unrivaled resources and equipment of this Company have established standards of quality in the manufacture of oil products which are not likely to be surpassed.

Deeper than that, however, is the spirit of Standard Oil, born of friendly co-operation among the individuals of the Company, intelligent leadership, and genuine personal interest in their work.

In this spirit, Standard Oil goods are produced and Standard Oil service rendered. In this spirit we want to serve you in our new Service Station, corner Rowland Avenue and Colorado Boulevard.

STANDARD OIL COMPANY  
(California)



## Also in Eagle Rock

Interestingly a very similar Standard Station was built at 2223 Colorado (on the corner of Rowland Avenue opposite the library) in 1923. This illustration with Eagle Rock's characteristic downtown street light appeared in the Eagle Rock Sentinel. (2/15/1923)

An ad for Grobaty's Service Station, note the price for lubrication. (Eagle Rock Sentinel 11/16/1928)

WHEN GROBATY GREASES YOUR CAR  
IT STAYS GREASED  
75c and Up  
STANDARD OIL PRODUCTS 100%

# Grobaty's Service Station

Colorado and Rockland  
NEXT TO LIBRARY



at the Center for the Arts, Eagle Rock  
2225 Colorado Blvd. Eagle Rock CA, 90041

**ERVHS ANNIVERSARY BANQUET  
CELEBRATING 60+ HISTORIC YEARS**

**WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 19, 6:00**

**L.A. Historical Cultural Monuments  
Introduction and Workshop**

**Tuesday, February 18, 2023 7:00**

**? JOCK PETERS: MASTER DESIGNER  
WITH AUTHOR CHRISTOPHER LONG**

**TUESDAY, APRIL 21, 2023 7:00**

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone # \_\_\_\_\_  
E-mail \_\_\_\_\_  
Membership Category:  
 Individual \$20    Business \$35    **New**  
 Family \$25    Life \$300    **Renewal**  
Will you help with the ongoing activities of the ERVHS ?  
 Yes    No  
 Archives    Newsletter    Oral history  
 Meetings    Fundraising    E-mail me  
 Publicity    Displays    to help  
Other \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Clip and mail to : **ERVHS**  
**c/o Center for the Arts**  
**2225 Colorado Blvd.**  
**Eagle Rock, CA 90041**  
Date \_\_\_\_\_

### Member's Corner

#### Dr. Julie Tanaka



The newest Member of the ERVHS and also a new member of our community. Julie can be found on Occidental College's campus as the new Director of Special Collections & College Archives. This is not the longest title she has held in her long and prestigious career! Born and raised in San Jose when there was farmland within reach, she stayed for her undergraduate degree at San Jose State but has been on the move ever since. Her academic career led her to UC Irvine, UC Berkeley, and the University of Washington. Her career in libraries has led her to work at Notre Dame, Arizona State, and now at Occidental College. She is almost 5 months- strong living here.

She is almost 5 months- strong living here.

I asked her about her first impressions of Eagle Rock. "I got the impression (the community) is a tight knit group interested in Eagle Rock's history and being part of it." She is excited to explore her new surroundings and interact ever more with the incredible students on campus. She also has already observed that Eagle Rock is a "wonderful little community with deep roots that they aren't willing to let go of." I want to give a shout out to Julie's friend (whoever you are, thank you!) who told her about the library position at Occidental. Looking forward to seeing you around town, Julie!

—Katie Taylor