

Historic Cultural Monument # 1039
the Tuna Cyn Det. Station Battle for Preservation.
By Lloyd Hitt, Bolton Hall Museum for Bicentennial Celebration

We have come a long way since 2006 when Paul Tsuneishi, a long time friend & I decided that we wanted the Tujunga WWII site to be remembered for what had happen there because of racism and fear. We also realized that the city of Los Angeles. within the city limits, had not recognized any site connected with the rounding up of Japanese, Germans, & Italians at the beginning of WWII and I don't think this was an accident.

When we approached the contractor for Snowball West, Mark Handel, in 2006 & 7, regarding a State Park Marker, we could never get an agreement only that a historic marker could be placed at his discretion and there was no agreement that the general public would be able to visit it. We still do not have an agreement with Snowball West.

It wasn't until 2012 when Councilman Richard Alarcon proposed the Tuna Canyon Detention Station for City Historic Monument status that I thought there was chance that we could make it happen.

I immediately supported Alarcon's motion because it was probably the only way we could secure a monument. We first met with the Plum Committee with no decision and later before the city's Cultural Heritage Commission for a resounding negative decision. Even with the help of Alarcon's Chief Deputy, Gerald Gubatan, who was an outstanding advocate for our cause, the CH Commission turned us down in favor of the developer. This did not come as a surprise but still it was disappointing. Even though this was a disappointment I thought that if Councilman Alarcon could muster up a majority vote in the Council chambers we could still win and we did.

Soon the site became Historic Cultural Monument # 1039 with the provision that our coalition would meet with the developer for 90 days and work out the details. In good faith we met with the planning dept., the developer, his architect and Fred Gaines his lawyer and we felt we were making progress right up to the very end when Fred Gaines announced that he was suing the City of LA to dissolve the monument status and that is where we are today, waiting for the court to make their decision.

Regardless of what happens we will continue to push for recognition for this historic site in a meaningful way. We continue to meet with Snowball West's architect, Janek Dombrowa, who has traveled back and forth to Texas meeting with Mr Hoberman of Snowball West to work something out.