

Sawtelle's Golden Age of Dingbat Apartments and the Gentrification of old Sawtelle

Dingbats are Boxy, two story apartment buildings with overhangs on front parking. **During the late 1950s and 1960s, Sawtelle saw the building frenzy of Dingbats and other styled two story apartments throughout its streets, identified as Sawtelle's Golden Age of Dingbat apartments.** Dingbats typify the Los Angeles City building architecture and Construction at its worst, California historian Leonard Pitto once declared. But what Mr. Pitto did not tell you, was the **motive** for gentrifying the family home community of Sawtelle with Dingbats.

In today's modern day Sawtelle, we see a community, far from the old fashioned family community of yesterday that has **gone with the wind**, beginning with the gentrification of old Sawtelle leading the charge, beginning in the late 1950s to present, we find the City of Los Angeles sanctioned redevelopment, called under the guise of "Sawtelle urban renewal projects to clean up the small shacks and slums" by players with **big money** along with those small Sawtelle property owners jumping on the bandwagon. **"Were here to make money aren't we, who cares what the Dingbats look like or if we flood the community with Apartments, Condos or Industrial structures in the small cramped community,"** which resulted in destroying the old Family social foundation, unbeknown to the public, our society has fallen into the elite's plans. What elite and what Plans? If the unveiling has not been revealed to you, I will leave it there.

By 1940, West Los Angeles would have approximately 94% of its residents living in single family houses. The small, simple designed and inexpensive wood framed Bungalows existed during the bygone days. With a single-family dwelling, the owner of the home owned both the house and the land it sat on. The Sawtelle Social district changed from a family structured community with its local businesses and social organizations, where just about everyone owned their own house and property to a community with single disconnected apartment and condo servants who pay out money, monthly to their Lords, to stay afloat.

The City of Los Angeles and it's new zoning and building regulations, found the property owners sitting on Gold Mines. **"Demolish the small old single family houses!, full steam ahead and erect them two story dingbats!"** In the late 1950s a one bedroom apartment would rent for approximately \$80.00 a month. Because the cost of living was low at the time, \$80.00 was a considerable amount of money for a rental. Today, that Dingbat Apartment in Sawtelle could rent for about \$2,500.00 a month easy and going up every year. **"Why tear down the ugly Dingbat today, after all, we are here to make money aren't we?"** The rich in this city don't work for money. WHY? Because **our money** is their treasure chest, filled with high Los Angeles Westside city rents, from apartments, housing, condos, high inflation and through the roof taxes. Let's face it, the nature of Sawtelle has been turned into a money making enterprise, no longer a family community. No wonder we see more homelessness, perversion, mental illness and drugs on the streets.

By the 1950s and 1960s many and I say many old wood framed single family houses were demolished in a frenzy and replaced with coveted dingbat two story Apartments and other various two story styled apartments. At that time, the early 50s and 60s, two stories was the limit. Build them as wide as you want, but no more than two stories. Today, it's eight stories for the large structures, tomorrow it could be 100 stories. the surviving single family bungalows are a housing rarity that some search for to move in, when relocating in Los Angeles, for an artistic quaint touch. The gutting out and fixing up the old bungalows is an art in itself.

With the City of Los Angeles helping to contribute to the social mental illness, homelessness and Drug infested streets by bringing about these apartment zoned and condo communities, with renters, frequently moving in and out of the area contributing to a new society order where "They" in the end, control us, herding us in their apartments and condos as we are just monetary numbers who dish out a monthly payment, no longer owning our own house and the property. We have become servants to who knows who or from what powerful organization or from what country for that matter. Our dignity and self-worth has been stolen from us, we don't even know it, **gone with the wind**. "Their" plans have succeeded. Sorry, but anytime you rent or lease, you are a servant to their wishes, they are in **control**, they can raise the amount you pay, evict you, force you to meet their demands they make on their property. They own, you don't. Past family court battles by the "little guy" against "Big Money" in this corrupt City have lost out to gentrification.

The risk of "just cause" or "no fault" evictions can happen to the renter because landlords want to renovate a unit when actually they want to put their units back on the market for higher rent (Money rules). The **Landlords** have you by the Huevos, they can report you to credit reporting agencies if your rent payment is late or should you refuse to pay due to lack of repairs and if you choose to move out, new landlords will see your dinged credit rating as a liability and refuse to rent to you.

At 1505 Butler avenue just north of Santa Monica Boulevard in Sawtelle (West Los Angeles), we see a Dingbat apartment with exterior entryways and stairways having no security gates for typically designed Dingbats. As you can see, the unit overhangs the three narrow parking spaces. If an alley existed, the additional parking spaces would be in the back. There is also additional parking on the cement slabbing in front and to the right of the stairway. Unsightly Oil stains would be visible in the parking area. Many Dingbats were adorned with an identifying name, artistic symbol or address on the front. This unit has an oblong square symbol painted white. This Apartment was built in 1958. I am amazed that this structure ever obtained a building permit, especially in earthquake prone Southern California. Even in a non-Earthquake zone, the engineering support using three metal circular poles should have not passed inspection. Some of These Dingbat style carports fell flat to the ground in the Northridge Earthquake. The same Apartment was retrofitted some years later with an additional H-Beam Steel support to prevent collapsing during the next big Earthquake.

From 1957 to 1960, in just three years, **386 old residential** wood framed bungalows with a total of **446 bedrooms** along with 297 garages were torn down and demolished in the Sawtelle area. They were replaced with **192** mainly two story Dingbat Apartments for a total of **1,486 Bedrooms in the Apartments**. Source: House & Home 1960 Vol 18, Issue 3, Building and Construction.

The City of Los Angeles in the 1950s and 1960s was instrumental in rezoning properties in Sawtelle for the demolition of many, of Sawtelle's original old properties with its single family bungalows and rift raft wood framed housing structures, to the delight of Investors, Developers and Property Owners, often referred to as "Gentrification", selling out the small hometown communities to gentrification.

Designated sections of Sawtelle were identified as "blighted or slums" and construction costs were supported by the federal government's FHA mortgage loans. The slum areas were the consequence of poorly constructed houses in the Sawtelle area as mentioned in other articles. The blighted areas of old Sawtelle were owned or rented out to low income people and minorities, who were desperate for housing during the 1930s, 1940s and early 1950s. The massive construction of "two story Dingbat Apartments" along with two story Apartment structures transformed old Sawtelle into an Apartment Community. I can hear the redevelopers and property owners with their new Dingbat apartments crying out the old Gold rush cry from "There's Gold in them there Hills" to "**There's Gold in them there Dingbats**". Many two story apartment buildings were constructed in the 1950s and 60s that were not specifically in the Dingbat Style, nevertheless they were also part of the two story apartment gentrification of old Sawtelle. Let's not forget the new Commercial developments that wiped out a number of small family houses.

True, about 30 percent of old Sawtelle today is still hanging on to their single Family dwellings and property. But family court battles against "Big Money" have lost to gentrification.

The Dingbats featured Apartments for the younger generation, no longer living with their parents seeking privacy, benefiting young marrieds and single students attending UCLA. They added to the population increase and traffic surge in the community and began **transforming Sawtelle where Families and the elderly were dominant to a younger single generation community**. The old Family structured community with its social organizations and personal businesses faded away.

Brentwood California (the area that was known as "Westgate" with its small residential lots) was also "victim" to gentrification because of the blighted Westgate area near the Soldier's Home at that time. Take a drive along Barrington avenue north of Wilshire Boulevard. You see nothing but Apartments up to San Vicente Boulevard in that general area, to attest that if houses in that area had been beautifully developed on spacious land, as in other parts of beautiful upper class Brentwood California, they would have survived to this day.

Today, I have been informed that the dictatorial actions of Los Angeles City Mayor Karen Bass with her **Executive Directive 1** wants to build 44 affordable housing units, 4 stories high on just two special zoned residential properties with absolutely NO parking for the units, in the historical community of Sawtelle. The units would lease for those making \$80,000. to \$100,000. a year. Who, making eighty to one hundred thousand dollars a year would lease an apartment with no parking? The normal construction city requirements would be thrown out the window to allow the developers to buy in expensive Sawtelle and build at a profit.

It appears that the elimination of cars is on the agenda for the future. This reduces pollution, traffic congestion and costly automobiles, forcing people to depend on government transportation, metro rails, city buses even work at home and go "Green". After all, the inflating costs of automobiles, gasoline, car insurance versus walking down sidewalks, contributing to healthy living, using e-scooters, e-bikes, backpacks, city Metro Rails, City buses and Uber are now the way to go, who needs cars?