“upon the moral views of the judge or jury . . .”71 “The aims of the struggle for homosexual rights, and the tactics employed, bear a close analogy to the continuing struggle for civil rights waged by blacks, women, and other minorities.”72

This slow but inexorable movement reached its apotheosis in the California Supreme Court’s decision recognizing a state constitutional right to gay marriage.

California has repudiated past practices and policies that were based on a once common viewpoint that denigrated the general character and morals of gay individuals, and at one time even characterized homosexuality as a mental illness rather than as simply one of the numerous variables of our common and diverse humanity. This state’s current policies and conduct regarding homosexuality recognize that gay individuals are entitled to the same legal rights and the same respect and dignity afforded all other individuals . . . .73

What the California Supreme Court made possible in 2008 had been advocated in ONE’s gay marriage issue 55 years earlier. If the struggles by sexual minorities to gain equal rights have a historical locus, the likeliest candidate is the parking lot on South Hill Street in downtown L.A. ✪

Bob Wolfe, an appellate attorney, is a board member of the Calif. Supreme Court Historical Society, Public Counsel, the L.A. Metro Community Advisory Council and Hillel at UCLA. He most recently authored “California’s Early Battle with ‘Birtherism’: D.W. Griffith, the NAACP, the Ku Klux Klan and the Courts,” (Fall/Winter 2021) CSCHS Review, 2–13. Bob occasionally leads legal history walking tours of downtown L.A.

2. www.dropbox.com/s/dg5lyzlg5a7gf9e/LawWalk-PershingSquare-2022-07.08.mp4?

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Blanchard Hall, 232 S. Hill Street, 1910. (Public domain)

DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES today is thick with the glass and steel towers typical of other urban centers. But look closely and you might also find stories of buildings now gone.

Bob Wolfe, appellate attorney and CSCHS Board member, is also an architectural archeologist, unearthing and illuminating the role of those lost buildings in L.A.’s legal history. Although Blanchard Hall (right) no longer stands, from 1953 to 1962 it housed the offices of ONE Magazine, which, as Bob documents, was the subject of a 1958 U.S. Supreme Court summary disposition regarded as pivotal to the eventual legal recognition of gay rights.

Bob discovered ONE’s story as he put together the most recent in his series of legal history “walking tours.” For two decades, Bob has led Public Counsel’s staff, volunteers and board members around downtown Los Angeles. Last year’s tour, online, focused on cases that originated in the buildings surrounding downtown’s Pershing Square.

In October, Public Counsel, the nation’s largest provider of pro bono legal services, recognized Bob’s work with one of its Pro Bono Awards. “Bob has crafted deeply researched CLE trainings and walking tours,” the group noted, “specifically designed to educate the legal community about important geographical sites and events in Los Angeles that are linked to our city’s history of racism and evolving system of justice.”

— Molly Selvin, CSCHS Review Editor

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The Keeper of Los Angeles’ Lost Buildings

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