Downtown Long Beach’s East Village Arts District has gained more recognition among the culturally curious from LA and other points in Southern California, but its identity as a fertile ground for the arts was established a century ago. During Long Beach Heritage’s monthly East Village Walking Tour, participants will learn all about the origins of the District and the many ways it reflects the development and evolution of the City of Long Beach.

The East Village tour is one of four regular walking tours hosted by Long Beach Heritage. It coincides with the popular Second Saturday Art Walk and is the perfect appetizer for a night spent taking in the amenities of the East Village Arts
“We find that most people who take the tour are long-time Long Beach residents who have grown up around the buildings but don’t know their rich histories,” said Sam Dragga, tour guide and Vice President of Education for Long Beach Heritage.

The East Village is a living dictionary of architectural styles. “There are few spots on the planet where all these styles live side by side,” said Steve Gillis-Moore, a loquacious and well-informed Long Beach Heritage docent. Gillis-Moore obviously takes great pleasure in discussing the variety of East Village building styles: Mid-Century Modern, Italian Revival, Art Deco, Chateau, Prairie, Streamline Moderne and more.

The East Village’s identity as an arts center was ordained many decades ago; In the early 1900s, the first movie studio headquartered in California—The California Motion Picture Manufacturing Company—stood near the corner of 7th Street and Alamitos Avenue, where the Museum of Latin American Art is now.

On the southwest side of the District, expatriate James Savery returned to the USA from Paris after World War I and established the Wayside Art Colony near the corner of Atlantic Avenue and First Street. The Colony nurtured the creative efforts of sculptors, glass blowers, musicians, painters, dancers and weavers. It could be said that the Wayside Art Colony set the stage for today’s thriving East Village creative energy.

The tour starts at 3pm on the second Saturday of each month at the Cooper Arms Building. Guests will stroll the East Village streets, learning about how events in Long Beach history such as the 1920s oil boom and the 1933 earthquake are reflected in the Village’s architectural style. The tour ends at the top of the Lafayette Complex, where tour-takers will get a bird’s-
eye view of the District before partaking of the Second Saturday Art Walk’s artistic and musical offerings.

For more information about the East Village Walking Tour on February 8, please visit the Long Beach Heritage website: www.lbheritage.org