

**PRESS CONTACTS:**

Press@TheWallis.org

Libby Huebner, 562.799.6055

Laura Stegman, 310.470.6321

**Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts  
Venue Background**

The Wallis' campus includes two distinct elegant buildings: the historic 1934 Italian Renaissance Revival style former Beverly Hills Post Office, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and the new contemporary 500-seat, state-of-the-art Bram Goldsmith Theater designed by award-winning architect Zoltan Pali of SPF:architects.

The adaptive re-use project named the Paula Kent Meehan Historic Building, originally designed by architect Ralph Flewelling, houses the beautiful marbled Jim and Eleanor Randall Grand Hall with vaulted ceilings encasing rare WPA fresco murals designed by muralist and painter Charles Kassler depicting the craftsmen who built the great public projects during the Depression era. These eight murals are one of only two sets of WPA frescos in the entire California Federal Building system still in existence.

Facing North Santa Monica Boulevard, the Marc and Eva Stern Arrival Motor Court, welcomes patrons who enter the Jim and Eleanor Randall Grand Hall, which is the main entrance for all theaters and campus activities. The Randall Grand Hall houses the front Reception Desk, Ticket Services (formerly the retail windows for the post office), and the Briskin Bar. The former loading dock of the post office has been transformed into GRoW @ The Wallis: A Space for Arts Education housing the Wells Family Education Courtyard, Education Department offices and three Classrooms for The Wallis' diverse educational programming.

In addition, the former mail sorting room of the post office has been adapted into the Lovelace Studio Theater, a 150-seat flexible space with a retractable seating unit for The Wallis' smaller productions, rehearsals and seasonal performing artist engagements in The Sorting Room's intimate nightclub setting. Adjacent to the Lovelace Studio Theater is the outdoor Promenade Terrace, with steps and ramps leading below to the Jamie Tisch Sculpture Garden and into the lobby of the Bram Goldsmith Theater with the indoor/outdoor Nicholl Bar.

More about The Wallis campus is here:

**[https://thewallis.org/wallis\\_venues.php](https://thewallis.org/wallis_venues.php)**

**and here:**

**<https://thewallis.org/theaters>**

(continued)

## THE HISTORIC BEVERLY HILLS POST OFFICE

Listed on the National Register of Historic Places and built in 1933, the historic Beverly Hills Post Office was constructed as a Work Projects Administration (WPA) project on the site of the former Pacific Electric Railway Station. The original architect was Ralph C. Flewelling, who worked in concert with Allison & Allison Architects. He received the architectural commission for the Italian Renaissance Revival style to complement the design of the adjacent City Hall. A graduate of MIT, Flewelling came to Los Angeles in 1920. Allison & Allison are best known for their designs for the Variety Arts Center (opened as the Friday Morning Club), the First Baptist Church of Los Angeles; and three well-known buildings on the University of California, Los Angeles – Royce Hall, Kerckhoff Hall, and Kaufman Hall.

Located inside the Jim and Eleanor Randall Grand Hall, near the vaulted ceiling, are eight Depression-era fresco murals painted by California artist Charles Kassler. These murals were funded by Franklin D. Roosevelt's Work Projects Administration (WPA) program and are one of the only two remaining sets of WPA frescos in the entire California Federal Building system.

Painted as homage to the WPA program, the six murals on the north and south walls depict laborers and artisans working on WPA projects, collecting their wages and purchasing groceries at an outdoor market with their families. Flanking these vignettes of everyday life are two additional Kassler frescos representing the history and future of the postal service, the Pony Express and Airmail.

Once the most famous post office in the country, the Beverly Hills Post Office began with a letter and a dream. This particular letter came at the hand of Beverly Hills' honorary Mayor and iconic American entertainer Will Rogers, who wrote the Secretary of the United States Treasury petitioning for a new post office for the city in 1933: "It seems you owe us \$250,000.00 to build a post office and they can't get the dough out of you."

The letter initiated a site tour by officials, which prompted the Federal Government to allocate \$300,000 for the project. The Post Office opened in 1934 and was dedicated in 1936 under the Franklin D. Roosevelt Administration.

Decades following its construction, the Beverly Hills Post Office took on a greater significance as the cornerstone of the City, becoming a vibrant architectural landmark. Famous citizens of Beverly Hills were spotted there daily, confirming that this was an extraordinary building in an extraordinary town. In recognition of its historic significance, the Beverly Hills Post Office was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1986.

Eventually, the post office services outgrew the building, and in 1998, the Postal Service declared the historic building a "surplus property." When postal operations moved to a new facility, a group of concerned community leaders appealed to the City in hopes of preserving the landmark. This group became the Beverly Hills Cultural Center Foundation, a nonprofit organization dedicated to the adaptive re-use of the historic post office as a dynamic cultural destination, continuing the building's long tradition of public use.

# # #

4/24/20