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## An Icon is Born

*A brand new "vintage" building clock evokes old-fashioned values like independence and individuality which many say characterize the retail shops along Holly Street in Old Pasadena*



Kenneth Martino of Signs of Life works atop the Holly Building to install the vintage-style corner clock commissioned by landlord James Plotkin to anchor "The Shops on Holly" on February 1, 2010.

By **JAMES MACPHERSON**  
Published: Friday, February 5, 2010 | 8:57 AM

Ornate and authoritarian, public clocks on important buildings once were as commonplace as friendly personal service and hand-made merchandise.



To celebrate those old-fashioned values and highlight the unique shops along Holly Street, Old Pasadena landlord James Plotkin has commissioned and installed a brand-new but historically accurate corner clock at Holly Street and Fair Oaks Avenue.

Standing in the early morning chill last Monday, Plotkin excitedly watched a team of designers, crane operators, and electricians working to install the vintage-looking clock as traffic roared around them.

"I feel just great!" he exulted. "It's wonderful. Isn't it gorgeous?"

Plotkin had worked almost a year overseeing the design, manufacture, permitting and installation of the clock to draw attention to Holly Street, which he calls "the gateway to City Hall" and eagerly points out has been home to clever little shops with personality.

The clock rises above LuLa Mae, a 7-year-old shop which Plotkin says epitomizes the type of retail clustered along Holly Street.



James Plotkin with workman preparing the clock for installation.

Lula Mae owner Marci Toombs-Christensen says "Holly Street is a destination for shoppers who want to shop local and independent. It is a collection of businesses that have something different and special to offer. Shop independent, be independent!"

"We are re-anchoring Holly Street," Plotkin said, adding that he hopes shoppers will orient themselves to tell their friends to "meet me under the clock on Holly Street."

He refers to the area as the Shops on Holly, positioning the area as strikingly different from the corporate feel of the chain stores which line Colorado Boulevard.



Realtor Norman Sauve and Landlord James Plotkin watch while the clock is installed

Plotkin has been a prime mover in Old Pasadena all his adult life. A key landlord, he grew up in his grandfather's vacuum cleaner store once located on Raymond Avenue at Colorado Boulevard. He passionately recounts how local merchants in years past banded together to save Old Pasadena from demolition and to develop the area into a vibrant shopping and business community.

The clock was designed by Hunt Design, a Pasadena firm specializing in signage and exhibit design. It is colored in a vintage palette of olive and doeskin and it sports the phrase "1914 Holly Bldg".



A view of the brand new "antique" clock after it was hoisted into position.

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