

BILTMORE HOTEL

(Now known as the Millennium Biltmore)

515 S. Olive Street

Schultze and Weaver, 1923

Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument #60

Listed on the National Register of Historic Places

When it opened to great fanfare in 1923, the Biltmore Hotel was the largest hotel west of Chicago. The firm of Schultze and Weaver, which was also responsible for New York's Waldorf Astoria Hotel and several other prominent downtown Los Angeles buildings, designed the Biltmore in the Beaux Arts style with Renaissance Revival touches. To this day, the Olive Street façade of the hotel remains one of Los Angeles' best examples of this type of architecture.

The hotel's grand meeting rooms are an opulent mixture of European styles including Renaissance, Baroque, Neoclassical and Moorish. Italian muralist Giovanni Smeraldi decorated many of the luxurious interior banquet rooms. The original lobby (now the "Rendezvous Court") contains a Moorish beamed ceiling and a giant Spanish baroque staircase leading to a 350-foot long galleria. Various ball rooms, each lavishly decorated, lead off the galleria.

The Biltmore has undergone several major renovations during the latter part of the 20th century. In the mid-1970s, architects Phyllis Lambert and Gene Summers reversed years of decay and neglect with a renovation that received a 1981 National Trust Honor Award. In 1984, new owners undertook an additional renovation and added an office tower to the site. At this time the reception area was moved to the Grand Avenue side of the building. Extensive mural restoration and repainting also took place at this point under the guidance of A.B. Heinsbergen, son of one of the building's original decorators.

Millennium Hotels purchased the property in 2000.

LOS ANGELES CENTRAL PUBLIC LIBRARY

630 W. Fifth Street

Bertram G. Goodhue and Carlton M. Winslow, 1926

(Addition: Hardy, Holzman and Pfeiffer, 1993)

Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument #46

Listed in the National Register of Historic Places

The last work of the major American architect Bertram G. Goodhue, the Central Library blends the past with the modern age. Its simple massed expanses of unadorned concrete and skyscraper-like profile herald modern architecture. At the same time, it alludes to ancient cultures including Egypt, Rome, Byzantium and various Islamic civilizations, as well as to Spanish Colonial and other revival styles.

Ornamental and symbolic artworks are integral to the library's design. The limestone sculptures on the building's exterior are by artist Lee Lawrie, and represent various disciplines and literary figures. The brilliantly colored tile pyramid at the building's summit features a sunburst and is topped by a hand-held torch symbolizing the light of knowledge.

The second floor of the Library includes a high-domed rotunda exploding with light and color. At the center of the dome is a stylized sunburst and an illuminated globe chandelier with the signs of the zodiac. On the surrounding walls, twelve murals painted by Dean Cornwall in 1933 depict the history of California.

The Library was proposed for demolition in the mid-1970s. Concerned citizens formed the Los Angeles Conservancy to save the Library and prevent similar crisis in the future through an on-going program to promote historic preservation. In 1983, after several years of public discussion and debate, the City Council directed the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) to preserve the Library.

Before restoration work could begin, however, two fires in 1986 destroyed portions of the library's vast collections and damaged many of the building's interior decorations. Despite this extensive damage, the CRA went ahead with a major rehabilitation and expansion plan for the Library. The firm of Hardy, Holzman and Pfeiffer served as the lead architects for this project, which included both a restoration of the original building and the addition of a new wing on the library's east side. In October 1993 - more than 15 years after the building was first threatened with demolition - the Library was re-opened in a grand community celebration.

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA EDISON COMPANY BUILDING

(Now known as One Bunker Hill)

601 W. 5th Street

James and David Allison, 1931

Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument #347

Originally the home of a utility company, the Southern California Edison Company Building was one of the first all-electrically heated and cooled buildings constructed in the western United States.

The fourteen-story, steel-framed building follows a classically inspired Art Deco design. The lower three stories are of solid limestone, while the upper stories and central tower are faced with buff-colored terra cotta. On the façade, the spandrels contain a cubic Art Deco pattern, repeated in the central tower, lobby floor and elevator ceilings. On the entry façade allegorical figures by sculptor Merrell Gage represent, light, power and hydroelectric energy.

In the two-story lobby, classical elements are treated with an Art Deco flavor. Below the 30-foot high coffered ceiling, the floor and walls are composed of at least 17 different types of marble. At the end of the lobby is a mural by Hugo Ballin entitled "The Apotheosis of Power."

The exterior greenhouse-like structures were added in the 1980s and the street-level shopping corridor in 1993.

ANGELS FLIGHT™ RAILWAY

Hill Street, between 3rd and 4th Street (originally on the Southwest corner of 3rd and Hill Streets)

Col. J.W. Eddy, builder, 1901

Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument #4

Angels Flight is one of Los Angeles' most enduring landmarks. Originally constructed in 1901, it was designed to carry passengers up and down the steep incline between downtown and Bunker Hill, then a fashionable residential district. Billed as the "shortest railroad in the world," Angels Flight is actually a funicular - its two cars, Olivet and Sinai, work in tandem and are connected to the same cable.

In 1969 Angels Flight was dismantled by the city to make way for the redevelopment of Bunker Hill. The funicular remained in storage for over two decades until a group of concerned citizens finally convinced the city that it should be rebuilt. In 1996, the restoration and reinstallation was complete, albeit at a new location a half-block south of the original.

The new Angels Flight contained 60% original material from its first life, which included the railcars, the station house, and the two end station arches. The total cost of restoration for the new Angels Flight was \$4.1 million, paid for by the CRA and the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA).

The funicular is now owned by the non-profit Angels Flight Railway Foundation. Currently, the cars are in storage while a new drive system is being installed.

GRAND CENTRAL MARKET

The Homer Laughlin Building (315 S. Broadway), 1897, John Parkinson
Laughlin Annex/Lyon Building (312 S. Hill Street), 1905, Harrison Albright,
Listed in the National Register of Historic Places

Central Market takes up the ground floor and basement of two adjacent buildings, one which fronts on Broadway, and the other on Hill Street. The one facing Broadway was the first constructed, built in 1897 by Homer Laughlin, founder of the Homer Laughlin China Company. One of downtown's oldest commercial structures in continuous use, this building was the city's first fireproofed and steel-reinforced structure.

In 1905 a second structure was built, extending the original building through to Hill Street. This building, known as Laughlin Annex/Lyon Building, was the work of Architect Harrison Albright and was the first reinforced concrete building erected in Southern California. The Ville de Paris Department Store, one of the city's largest and finest, was a major tenant of the enlarged structure. The department store relocated to Seventh Street in 1917.

The Grand Central Market opened in September 1917 and has been in continuous operation ever since. Central Market currently has over 50 individual vending stalls, each privately owned and operated.

In the 1990s the market was renovated as part of the Grand Central Square project, and vintage neon signs marking each stall were restored and new ones were created. At the same time a tile façade added in the 1960s was removed to reveal the second story windows, and many of the building's original Beaux Arts details were restored.

BRADBURY BUILDING

304 S. Broadway

George H. Wyman, 1893

Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument #6

Listed in the National Register of Historic Places

The Bradbury Building is the oldest commercial building remaining in the central city and one of Los Angeles' unique treasures. Behind its modest, mildly Romanesque exterior lies a magical light-filled Victorian court that rises almost 50 feet with open cage elevators, marble stairs and ornate iron railings.

The identity of the building's final architect is a subject of debate. Lewis Bradbury, a mining and real estate millionaire, commissioned Sumner Hunt to create a spectacular office building. Hunt turned in completed designs, but was replaced soon after by George H. Wyman, who supervised construction. According to Wyman's daughters, he was asked to take over because Bradbury felt that Wyman could understand his own vision for the building better than Hunt, although there is no evidence that Wyman changed the design. Wyman later designed other buildings in the Los Angeles area, but the Bradbury Building (if indeed it was designed by Wyman) was to be his only work of lasting significance, whereas Sumner Hunt went on to design many other notable buildings, including the Southwest Museum.

The building underwent complete restoration in the early 1990s as part of the Yellin Company's Grand Central Square project.

FARMERS AND MERCHANTS BANK

401 S. Main Street

Morgan and Walls, 1905

Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument #271

Listed on the National Register of Historic Places

Designed in the Classical Revival style, the Farmers and Merchants Bank remains one of Southern California's finest examples of the early "temples of finance" which were popular at the turn of the century. Its two-story facade, reminiscent of a Roman temple, is punctuated by an entrance framed with Corinthian columns topped by a large triangular pediments. Built in 1905, the bank was designed by the firm of Morgan and Walls.

The Farmers and Merchants Bank was the first incorporated bank in Los Angeles, founded in 1871 by Isaias W. Hellman, a successful merchant, real estate speculator and banker, and brother of Hermann W. Hellman. Isaias was to remain president of the bank till his death in 1920.

Much of the original banking room remains, including light fixtures, a central skylight, and the loggia with its Victorian-style railings. Operating as a bank until its closure in the late 80s, the building now functions primarily as a special events and banquet facility, and film location.

PALACE THEATRE

630 South Broadway

G. Albert Lansburgh, 1911

Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument #449

Listed on the National Register of Historic Places

Built in 1911 as the third home of the Orpheum vaudeville circuit in Los Angeles, this theater is now the oldest remaining original Orpheum theater in the country. The greatest singers, dancers, comedians, acrobats, and animal acts in vaudeville performed here for fifteen years, until the Orpheum moved to its fourth and final location at Ninth Street and Broadway in 1926.

G. Albert Lansburgh, who designed both the 1911 and 1926 Orpheum Theaters, was one of the principal theater designers in the west between 1909 and 1930. In addition to commissions in Chicago, Kansas City, St. Louis and New Orleans, his works included the Warner Bros. Theater Building in Hollywood (1927), and the interiors of the local Wiltern and El Capitan theaters.

Loosely styled after a Florentine early Renaissance palazzo, the façade features multicolored terra-cotta swags, flowers, fairies, and theatrical masks illustrating the spirit of entertainment. Four panels depicting the muses of vaudeville - Song, Dance, Music, and Drama - were sculpted by noted Spanish sculptor Domingo Mora. While the structure's exterior displays Italian influences, its interior decoration is distinctly French, with garland-draped columns and a color scheme of pale pastels.

The theatre currently operates as a rental facility for special events and location filming.

ORPHEUM THEATRE

842 South Broadway

G. Albert Lansburgh, 1926

Listed in the National Register of Historic Places

In 1926, this grand theater became the fourth and final home of the famed Orpheum vaudeville circuit in Los Angeles. As at his earlier Broadway Orpheum (now the Palace), architect G. Albert Lansburgh again employed a French theme inside the theater, this time executed in the full-blown grand manner. Polished brass doors, lush brocade drapery, silk wall panels, marble pilasters, and enormous chandeliers all contributed to an atmosphere reminiscent of the Paris Opera.

Throughout the years, the Orpheum has hosted some of the greatest entertainers in show business including Eddie Cantor, Sophie Tucker, Will Rogers, Jack Benny, Sally Rand, and Lena Horne.

The last of the great theater organs remaining on Broadway was installed at the Orpheum in 1928. This 13-rank, three-manual Wurlitzer organ has metal and wood pipes that can simulate more than 1,400 orchestral sounds. Now restored to working order, it is lovingly cared for by the Los Angeles Theater Organ Society.

In 2001 the Orpheum underwent a multi-million dollar rehabilitation under the supervision of owner Steve Needleman. The venue currently is a rental facility for special events and location filming.

EASTERN COLUMBIA BUILDING

849 S. Broadway

Claud Beelman, 1930

Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument #294

Listed in the National Register of Historic Places

The Eastern Columbia Building, designed by Claud Beelman, opened on September 12, 1930, after just nine short months of construction. It was built as the new headquarters of the Eastern Outfitting Company and the Columbia Outfitting Company, furniture and clothing stores. With the construction of this lavish structure, the companies could also boast one of the largest buildings constructed in downtown until after WWII.

Located in the Broadway Theater and Commercial District, the Eastern Columbia Building is thirteen stories high. It is built of steel reinforced concrete and clad in glossy turquoise terra cotta trimmed with deep blue and gold terra cotta.

The building's vertical emphasis is accentuated by deeply recessed bands of paired windows and spandrels with copper panels separated by vertical columns. The façade is decorated with a wealth of motifs - sunburst patterns, geometric shapes, zigzags, chevrons and stylized animal and plant forms. The building is capped with a four-sided clock tower emblazoned with the name Eastern in neon and crowned with a central smokestack surrounded by four stylized flying buttresses.

The sidewalks surrounding the Broadway and Ninth Street sides of the building are of multi-colored terrazzo laid in dynamic pattern of zigzags and chevrons. The central main entrance has a spectacular recessed two-story vestibule adorned with a blue and gold terra cotta sunburst. The vestibule originally led to a pedestrian retail arcade running through the center of the building.

This downtown landmark recently underwent a \$30 million conversion in 2006 into 140 luxury condominiums.

818 WEST SEVENTH STREET

(Formerly Barker Bros.)

818 W. 7th St.

Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument #356

Listed in the National Register of Historic Places

Formerly the downtown headquarters of Barker Brothers furniture store, the building was renovated for office use in 1985-86. The 1925 building, designed in the Renaissance Revival style by Curlett and Beelman, was said to have been inspired by the Strozzi Palace in Florence. The symmetrically developed twelve-story structure is faced in terra cotta and brick, with a monumental three-story round arched center entry. Inside there is a forty-foot-high lobby court with beamed and vaulted ceilings.

Originally shoppers could hear the sound of a pipe organ stationed in one of the mezzanine galleries. Pipe organs were also located in the interior decoration studio and in the 600 seat auditorium, where Barker Brothers held public lectures on home economics and decoration. The building also boasted an automatic telephone system, one of the few existing at that time.

FINE ARTS BUILDING

811 W. 7th Street

Walker and Eisen, 1927

Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument #125

The Fine Arts Building is a wonderfully detailed Romanesque Revival structure, unique in Los Angeles. Designed by Walker and Eisen, the twelve-story building features a two-story Spanish Renaissance "courtyard" lobby with a galleried mezzanine. The Fine Arts Building was originally intended to provide working areas for artisans, who could also display their wares in the bronze and glass showcased in the lobby.

The walls of the lobby are detailed in tile and terra cotta block designed to look like stone. The decorative work is by the famous Batchelder Studios. The figures representing Architecture, Painting, Textile Arts and Ceramics were executed under Ernest Batchelder's personal supervision at a cost of \$150,000. The original bronze figures throughout the foyer and corridor are by Burt Johnson.

The wealth of detail displayed in the lobby is also evident on the building's exterior. The main entry consists of a two-story Romanesque arch, decorated in terra cotta with griffins, gargoyles, birds, and flowers. Elsewhere on the façade are stylized fish, flute players, and assorted fantastic creatures.

Colossal reclining sculpted figures of Architecture (with a symbolic capital) and Sculpture (with a torso) designed by Burt Johnson, rest on a corbel table above the windows on the second and third levels. Higher on the façade are recessed marble spandrels with black diamond-shaped inlays. At the top, sculpted figures flank the arcaded central section, which is crowned by an arcaded pediment above an open gallery. The Fine Arts Building was restored and renovated in 1983 by developer Ratkovich and Bowers, and architect Brenda Levin.

OVIATT BUILDING

617 S. Olive Street

Walker & Eisen, 1927/28

Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument #195

Listed in the National Register of Historic Landmarks

This grand building was constructed as the headquarters of one of the most prestigious and expensive haberdasheries in the city, Alexander & Oviatt. The building housed the shop (now renovated as a dining establishment), rentable office space and a penthouse suite for owner James Oviatt.

During the early phases of construction of the Italian Romanesque styled building, Oviatt attended the 1925 Paris Exposition and decided to decorate his building in the new style. When the building was completed, the sheltered lobby forecourt contained over 30 tons of glass by designer Rene Lalique. While most of the glass as been lost or sold over the years, a few original pieces remain in the panels at the top of the lobby columns. Lalique also designed the mallechort elevator doors, mailboxes, and directories. The shop interior retains the elegant art deco fixtures, stair rails, and molded plaster ceiling panels.

Oviatt's ten-room penthouse was originally decorated by the Parisian design firm of Saddler et fils. The rooms featured burlled mahogany furniture and cabinets, parquet wood floors in geometric patterns, carved woodwork, imported fabrics and Lalique glass throughout.