



## **BROADWAY THEATRE AND COMMERCIAL DISTRICT TOUR**

The Broadway Reference Manual was compiled in 2002 by Anne Laskey, Los Angeles Conservancy Program Coordinator, with assistance from Ed Kelsey and contributions from Ted Gooding, Eric Lynxwiler, Lanna Pian, Tony Valdez, and Don Weggeman.

The manual is based on the 1992 version compiled by Sandra Levis.

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## A BRIEF HISTORY OF LOS ANGELES

On September 4, 1781, a group of 44 settlers founded *El Pueblo de la Reyna de Los Angeles* (The Town of the Queen of Angels). The governor of California made generous grants of ranch land to retired soldiers, and soon the flourishing colony was divided into mission, pueblo and rancho, with the city center centered around the Plaza (where Olvera Street is today).

Following the Mexican War of Independence from Spain (1810-1821), California was made a territory of the new Republic. During Mexican rule, from 1821 to 1847, the main trade was in hides, tallow, wine, and brandy.

During the Mexican-American War (1846-1848), Captain John C. Frémont claimed the pueblo for the United States. The Capitulation of Cahuenga was signed in 1847, effectively ending the fighting in Southern California. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hildalgo of 1848 ended the war, which resulted in Mexico ceding what became the American Southwest to the United States. California received statehood in 1850, the first of the southwest territories to do so.

The introduction of an American cash economy to replace the barter economy of the Mexican era forced the rancheros to mortgage their land to obtain money. By 1865, four-fifths of the ranchos were in American hands.

Los Angeles grew slowly until the railroads came west, and people and goods more easily reached the area.

- In 1869, the Central Pacific and the Union Pacific completed the transcontinental railroad from Omaha to Sacramento. Although the line didn't reach to Los Angeles, it still had an effect on immigration to the area.
- In 1876 the line from San Francisco to Los Angeles was completed by the Southern Pacific, which triggered a small land boom.
- In 1885, the Santa Fe completed its Los Angeles link of the transcontinental railroad, breaking the Southern Pacific monopoly. Railroad fares all over the country dropped to ridiculously low prices (during a fare war in March 1885, the Santa Fe did a one-day promotion advertising a \$1 ticket from Los Angeles to Kansas City).
- In 1905 the Union Pacific arrived in Los Angeles, making Los Angeles the western terminus of three major transcontinental railroads.

A land boom followed the coming of the railroad, fed by the huge tracts of available land, cheap transportation, and hordes of Midwesterners eager to retire from snowy winters. Outrageous promotion by the railroads and boosterism by local promoters encouraged migration.

Between 1880 and 1896 Los Angeles experienced astronomical growth, growing from a population of 11,090 to 97,382 in just sixteen years. By 1889, the boom had subsided, but Los Angeles had become a major city.

Between 1890 and 1915, Los Angeles' infrastructure was vastly improved: a public transportation system was created, oil was discovered, and the harbor was enhanced. In 1913, water was brought 250

miles from the Owens Valley via a massive aqueduct, enabling further growth. In 1915, the San Fernando Valley joined the city of Los Angeles, more than doubling the city's size.

The wave of immigration to Los Angeles between 1920 and 1940 was the largest internal migration in the history of the United States. The Depression did nothing to abate this flow, as unemployed workers flocked to Los Angeles looking for opportunity. New industry enriched the economy. Airplanes, clothing, and tires joined oil, movies, and citriculture as Los Angeles products.

As of 2010, the City of Los Angeles covered 469 square miles, and is considered the second most populous city in the United States (after New York). Los Angeles County encompasses over 4000 square miles and included 88 different incorporated cities.

### **POPULATION, CITY OF LOS ANGELES**

1850        1,610    *California becomes a state*

1860        4,385

*1969: Transcontinental railroad completed to Sacramento*

1870        5,728

*1876: Southern Pacific link from San Francisco to Los Angeles completed*

1880        11,183

*1885: Santa Fe link to transcontinental railroad completed 1885*

1890        50,395

1900        102,479

*1905: Union Pacific comes to Los Angeles*

1910        310,198

1920        576,673

1930        1,238,048

1940        1,504,277

1950        1,970,358

1960        2,481,595

1970        2,811,801

1990        3,485,390

2010        3,792,621

## **BROADWAY THEATRE AND COMMERCIAL DISTRICT**

### **THEATRES**

Broadway, between Third and Ninth Streets, is the first and largest Historic Theatre District to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The district received this designation in 1979 (increased to include additional blocks in 2002) because it contains a variety of theatre types – vaudeville houses, legitimate theatres, and movie palaces – illustrating the evolution of popular entertainment during the first third of the 20th century. Although nickelodeons were at one time located on Broadway, none of this type of theatre remains. Furthermore, these theatres reflect the vitality of Los Angeles as it developed into the nation's film capital, embodying the imagination and prosperity of the city's pre-Depression years.

### **COMMERCIAL AND RETAIL**

Sixty structures have been identified in the Broadway Theater and Commercial District as contributing to the historic nature of the district. Of these sixty, only twelve are theatres, which leaves forty-eight historic non-theatre buildings along this seven-block stretch.

Broadway has a long and storied commercial history. The Bradbury Building (1893), is the oldest remaining commercial building in the heart of downtown, attesting to the street's prominence over a century ago. In the early 1900s, Los Angeles' main financial district was developing to the east on Spring Street. Simultaneously, Broadway was becoming a different kind of commercial district, lined with retail and entertainment venues as well as office buildings. Indeed, several of the theatres (including the Million Dollar, Orpheum, and State), were built with integrated office buildings as part of their design.

Dozens of stores called Broadway home, including major retailers Ville de Paris, Broadway (named for the street), J.W. Robinson's, Hamburgers (later May Co.), Mullen & Bluett, Eastern Columbia, Desmonds, Silverwoods, and Barker Brothers. The list goes on and on, running the gambit from upscale Bullock's to discount fashion house Swelldom to the five-and-dime Woolworths. Many retailers moved from one Broadway address to another as they traded up to bigger and more opulent facilities. And as in any shopping district, as stores changed owners or went out of business new retailers took their place, so one building would likely have had a succession of different retailers over the years.

With so many shoppers and movie-goers, Broadway and its cross streets boasted numerous cafeterias such as Clifton's, Schaber's, and Finney's. In addition, many of the large department store had café's and tea rooms.

Moving all of these people from one place to another was what was reportedly as the largest interurban railway system in the world. The Pacific Electric's Red Cars, along with LA Railway's Yellow Cars, carried passengers throughout the metropolitan area on nearly 1500 miles of track. Photographs from the 1920s and 1930 show a nearly gridlocked Broadway, filled with trolleys, cars, and masses of people.

## **THEATRE ARCHITECTURE**

The Broadway theatres were created by prominent architects and designers employed in the ever-escalating competition among theatre operators to attract a sensation-seeking audience. Theatre owners, wanting to attract patrons, commissioned buildings that were total environments in themselves, equaling or surpassing the romance and fantasy of the movies themselves. Ticket booths, lobbies, auditoriums, staircases, sidewalks, and restrooms were all styled to satisfy the most active imagination. Decorative elements borrowed from a wide range of cultures and historic periods came together in fantastic combinations that prompted one critic to complain that “no more pitiful degradation of an art” had ever occurred than the “prostitution of architecture” in movie theatres. “Taste and beauty,” he concluded, “were abased to the lowest degree.” But the public responded otherwise, flocking to theatres on Broadway and around the nation, where, for the price of admission, they were transported into a world of enchantment.

## **LOS ANGELES THEATRE DISTRICTS OVER THE YEARS**

The first theatre district in Los Angeles was focused around the Merced Theatre (1870). Located at the old Plaza (now El Pueblo), the Merced hosted itinerant troupes visiting the pueblo.

The boom years of the 1880s caused the city to expand southward, creating the next significant theatre district along Main Street. This area featured several “Opera Houses,” none of which remain. Many of these opera houses later turned into venues for burlesque.

In approximately 1910, nickelodeons and vaudeville theatres began to appear on Broadway, drawing business even further away from the old Plaza, into the new downtown. The opening of Sid Grauman's opulent theatre (now known as the Million Dollar) on Broadway in 1918 established the street as a venue for motion pictures, and helped cement Broadway's reputation as the city's third principal theatre district. By 1931, Broadway contained twelve major theatres with a combined audience capacity of 17,000. This was one of the largest concentrations of movie palaces in the world at the time, comparable to the legitimate/movie theatre district around Broadway and Times Square in New York City.

Construction of the Chinese, Egyptian, El Capitan, and Pantages theatres on Hollywood Boulevard in the 1920s marked the beginning of an new Los Angeles theatre district, eventually resulting in the emergence of Hollywood as the city's first-run movie district, although business continued to be strong along Broadway until after World War II. As the city changed, audiences preferred Hollywood for movie-going during the 1960s and 1970s. Westwood also enjoyed popularity at this time.

In the early 1960s, concurrent with the growing dominance of Hollywood as the movie-going destination, many of the Broadway theatres switched to Spanish language films and programming. Several of the theatres, such as the Million Dollar, became famous for appearances by the top stars of Mexican cinema and entertainment.

By the 1980s, suburban development and cinema multi-plexes further drained movie goers from downtown. The Broadway theatres began to close as movie venues. On New Years Eve 2000, the last two regularly operating movie houses on Broadway, the Orpheum and the Palace, closed their doors to the public. All the theatres in the district now operate as rental houses, or have been converted to other uses.

## **ADAPTIVE REUSE and PRESERVATION**

American society and culture is constantly evolving. Urban areas grow and decline, and (with luck and good planning), find life again in revitalization. From one decade to the next there are changes in aesthetics (taste and design), but also in demographics, transportation, communication, and many other things that change people's behavioral patterns and preferences. If patterns change enough, then certain kinds of buildings or public spaces become underutilized or even obsolete.

Historic buildings are particularly vulnerable to demolition when they lose their tenants or change owners. Economics drive development, and in many cases an older building may not be considered as marketable as a newly constructed one. As much as a developer may appreciate the historic significance of a building, it has to make financial sense for them to preserve it.

The rehabilitation and restoration of historic structures for use other than its original purpose (known as "adaptive reuse"), can help to balance the conservation of the past with development and economic stimulation. Adaptive reuse, when done following the rehabilitation standards of the Secretary of the Interior, preserves the building's important architectural features, while meeting the needs and expectations of the developer. Along Broadway, indeed all over downtown, former offices and department stores are being given new life as apartments and condominiums, hotels, and artists lofts.

Buildings with large open spaces (such as movie palaces – or churches, warehouses, supermarkets, etc.) pose particularly difficult challenges to finding a new use when the original is not economically viable anymore. Creative programming for performance venues, civic engagement, and thinking outside the box about adaptive reuse projects, will help ensure that historic structures like the Broadway theatres, are vital parts of the community on into the future.

One of the programs that is encouraging the preservation and adaptive reuse of Broadway is a public/private partnership spearheaded by Councilmember José Huizar known as Bring Back Broadway.

## **BRINGING BACK BROADWAY**

On January 28, 2008, Los Angeles Conservancy Executive Director Linda Dishman joined Councilmember José Huizar, Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, downtown property owners, and other stakeholders at the Los Angeles Theatre on Broadway.

The occasion was the announcement of *Bringing Back Broadway*, an effort spearheaded by Huizar to harness the momentum of downtown's ongoing revitalization into the long-awaited renaissance of the historic Broadway theatre district.

While Broadway has long been a vibrant Latino shopping district, the historic theatres and spaces above the ground floor in many buildings have sat vacant and underused for decades.

The Conservancy has worked for more than twenty years to foster the renewal of these spaces, from raising awareness of historic theatres through our Last Remaining Seats series to a host of efforts in our proactive Broadway Initiative, including historic design guidelines, small business workshops, and more than a million dollars in façade rehabilitation and design grants.

Building on these and many other efforts over the years by the downtown community, *Bringing Back Broadway* forms a public-private partnership between the City of Los Angeles and Broadway property owners. It creates specific, mutual agreements by both the public and private sectors to share responsibility for the district's revitalization. This series of "linked agreements," as well as its unprecedented level of collaboration and momentum, set this initiative apart from past attempts at reviving Broadway.

For the initial phase of the initiative, Councilmember Huizar has identified more than \$16.5 million in city, state, and federal resources to help fund public infrastructure improvements such as streetscape design, property for a new parking facility, and the next steps in exploring the revival of the streetcar system downtown.

The city will also provide business incentives, which could include streamlined permit processes and/or tax relief, for using Broadway for entertainment, retail, and cultural purposes. Property owners have committed to invest more than \$20 million in capital improvements such as lighting, restoration and rehabilitation of historic structures, business improvement activities, and technical upgrades.

Together, these efforts seek to enhance Broadway's existing vitality with entertainment, dining, cultural, and retail options for current patrons, new downtown residents, and visitors alike. *Bringing Back Broadway* envisions a revitalized corridor to complement and connect new large-scale downtown development projects, such as L.A. Live and the Grand Avenue Project.

*Bringing Back Broadway* is overseen by a broad and diverse group of Trustees, including a representative from the Conservancy. The Trustees will help refine the plan and oversee its implementation.

For more information about *Bringing Back Broadway*, visit [\*\*www.bringingbackbroadway.com\*\*](http://www.bringingbackbroadway.com).



## **DEMOLISHED THEATRES AROUND PERSHING SQUARE**

**BILTMORE THEATRE** (Fifth and Grand, site now occupied by Biltmore Tower)  
Schultze and Weaver, 1924 (demolished 1964)

The Biltmore Theatre was designed by Schultze and Weaver and cost an estimated one million dollars to build. In keeping with the overall design of the Biltmore Hotel (also designed by Schultze and Weaver, 1923), it was in the Spanish and Italian Renaissance style with mixed brick, carved stone and terra cotta. The 1,700-seat theatre opened in 1924 with Will Rogers emceeding the ceremony. The theatre spotlighted such entertainers as Lunt and Fontaine, Henry Fonda, Ann Miller, and Mae West throughout the years. It was demolished in 1964.

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**METROPOLITAN aka Paramount**  
(NE 6th and Hill, site now occupied by International Jewelry Center)  
William Lee Woollett, 1923 (demolished 1962)

This grand 3,350-seat motion picture palace, the largest in the city, was a composite of many exotic architectural styles: Islamic, Hindu, Moorish, Spanish, etc. Originally opened in 1923 as the Metropolitan Theatre and leased by Sid Grauman, the theatre was taken over by Paramount in 1925 and renamed Paramount in 1929. The building had its main entrance on 6th Street with a separate entrance on Hill and another extending over to Broadway, the heart of the theatre district.

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**PHILHARMONIC AUDITORIUM BUILDING aka Temple Auditorium** (NE 5th and Olive, now a parking lot)  
Charles F. Whittlesey, 1906 (demolished 1985)

At the turn of the century, this site was home to Hazards Pavilion, a meeting facility and concert hall where Enrico Caruso once sang and William Jennings Bryan spoke. In 1906, Temple Baptist Church built a 2300-seat auditorium and adjacent office tower on the site. The exterior was decorated with sinuous organic motifs reminiscent of the work of Chicago architect Louis Sullivan. At the time it was constructed, this was the largest reinforced concrete building in the state. The church met there for Sunday services and rented the auditorium at other times.

Billy Clune, a pioneer Los Angeles film exhibitor, was the first to run movies in the Auditorium Building's theatre, calling it Clune's Theatre Beautiful. The Los Angeles Philharmonic was headquartered in the auditorium from 1920 until 1965 when the Music Center was completed. The Civic Light Opera opened its first season at the Philharmonic in 1938. That same year, the facade was completely remodeled in the Moderne style. Among the many celebrities to have performed on the stage are Stravinsky, Nijinsky, Pavlova, the Ballet Russ, opera singer Amelita Galli-Curci, George Gershwin, Jack Benny, Fatty Arbuckle, and Booker T. Washington.

The building was demolished in 1985 for a project that never materialized. The site is still vacant.

**BROADWAY BLOCK-BY-BLOCK**  
Revised 2013, Los Angeles Conservancy

**400 BLOCK**

**EAST SIDE**

**WEST SIDE**

S = Store, R = Residential Conversion

**452-460 S. Broadway (*Chester Williams Bldg.*)**

Curlett & Beelman, 1926

12-story building with ornamental ironwork and a glazed cotta façade designed to look like cut stone. The building's rounded corner and lack of an overhanging cornice marks the style as transitional from Beaux-Arts to Art Deco.

**R** - In 2012 is undergoing \$15 million conversion to 88 apartments.

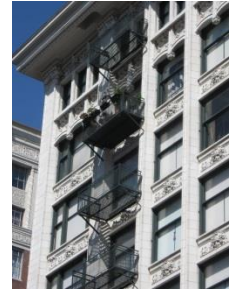


**449-457 S. Broadway (*Metropolitan*)**

Parkinson & Bergstrom, 1913

Art Nouveau-style terra cotta decoration distinguishes this office building. The Los Angeles Public Library was located on the 7th-10th floors (1913-1926).

**R** - Converted to 88 residential units in 2011, known as the Metropolitan.



## 500 BLOCK

### EAST SIDE

### WEST SIDE

S = Store, R = Residential Conversion

#### **508 S. Broadway (*Jewelry Trades Bldg.*)**

Morgan, Walls, and Morgan,  
1912

8-story Romanesque design  
with terra-cotta facade and  
ornamentation including  
arched windows and a heavy  
cornice.



\* \* \* \*

#### **510 S. Broadway (*Johnson Bldg.*)**

R.B. Young, 1905

5-story brick building with  
pressed-brick façade with  
bands of windows. Note the  
curved corners of the 2nd floor  
windows.



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#### **518 S. Broadway ROXIE THEATRE**

J. M. Cooper Co., 1931  
(see full entry)



\* \* \* \*

#### **528 S. Broadway CLUNE'S BROADWAY**

Alfred F. Rosenheim,  
1910  
(see full entry)



\* \* \*

#### **534 S. Broadway PANTAGES**

Morgan and Walls, 1910  
(see full entry)



### **501-515 S. Broadway (SB Grand)**

A.E. Curlett, 1927

11-story brick-clad structure with classical terra cotta ornamentation (note the steer skulls, a motif known a “bucrane.”

*S - Home of Walker’s Department Store, also known as the Fifth Street Store. Later Milliron’s, then Ohrbach’s.*

*R - Converted into 280 apartments in 2006 named the SB Grand.*



\* \* \* \*

### **517-519 S. Broadway (Rennick Bldg.)**

Architect Unknown, 1902

Narrow six-story brick structure in the Italian Renaissance Revival style.

*S - High end millinery store Maxime’s was here until 1939.*



\* \* \* \*

### **533 S. Broadway (Reed’s)**

Philip Barker, 1931

2-story retail building clad in white marble.

The distinctive facade featuring a prominent intaglio (engraved design) was illegally altered in 2011, demolishing the artwork. Note terrazzo.

*S - Built for Lerner’s, a women’s apparel store, also home to Grayson’s department store, and later Reed’s Jewelers.*



\* \* \* \*

### **500 Block EAST SIDE CON’T**

#### **540 S. Broadway BROADWAY SPRING ARCADE**

Kenneth McDonald and Maurice Couchot, 1924

(see full entry)



\* \* \* \*

#### **558 S. Broadway (Silverwoods)**

Walker and Eisen, 1920

A five-story building with ornate Beaux Arts terra-cotta details and a corner tower.

*S - Home of Silverwoods, an upscale men’s store (haberdashery).*



## **500 Block WEST SIDE CON'T**

### **537 S. Broadway (*Hartfields*)**

Walker & Eisen, 1931

6-story building with elaborate Art Deco metalwork that was recently restored.

*S – Women's clothing retailer Hartfields was located here.*



\* \* \* \*

### **549-553 S. Broadway (*Metropolitan Annex*)**

Architect Unknown, 1923

6-story beaux-Arts building with Gothic elements. Stenciling of



eyeglasses still visible on the windows (no information).

\* \* \* \*

### **559 S. Broadway (*aka Sun Drug*)**

Pierpont & Davis, 1920

3-story retail building in the Italian Renaissance Revival style features an elaborate glazed terra cotta façade. “The Sun Drug Co. Bldg” in terra cotta tile at the top.

*S – Swelldom, a mid-price women's clothing store was located here for many years. Live models would model clothing through the large second-story windows.*

## 600 BLOCK

### EAST SIDE

S = Store, R = Residential Conversion

#### **600 S. Broadway WALTER P. STORY BUILDING**

Morgan & Walls, 1909  
(see full entry)



\* \* \* \*

#### **614 S. Broadway (*Desmond's*)**

A. C. Martin, 1924

Ornate six-story Spanish Baroque commercial building with orange-brown terra-cotta facade with blue highlights  
*S – built for Desmond's, upscale men's store.*



\* \* \* \*

#### **618-22 S. Broadway (*Schaber's/Broadway Cafeteria*)**

Charles F. Plummer, 1928

A two-story Spanish Colonial style facade with a terra-cotta and wrought iron facade. Severely damaged by the 1992 riots it had also been partitioned for retail. It is now being converted back into a cafeteria.



\* \* \* \*

#### **630 S. Broadway ORPHEUM / PALACE**

G. Albert Lansburgh  
(see full entry)



\* \* \* \*

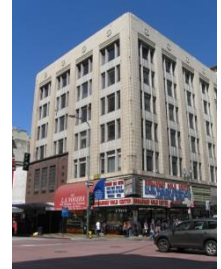
### WEST SIDE

#### **601-605 S. Broadway (*Jeweler's Wholesale Bldg.*)**

Architect Unknown, 1906

6-story office building, originally in the Beaux Arts style, had a moderne makeover in the early 1930s.

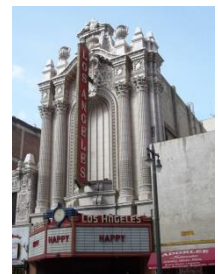
*S – Zukor's "famous for dresses" had a store in the building and the elaborate granite façade (circa 1940) remains.*



\* \* \* \*

#### **615 S. Broadway LOS ANGELES THEATRE**

S. Charles Lee & S. Tilden Norton, 1931  
(see full entry)



\* \* \* \*

#### **639-659 S. Broadway BULLOCK'S/ST. VINCENT'S GALLERIA**

Seventh Street and Broadway  
(see full entry)





## **600 Block EAST SIDE CON'T**

### **640 S. Broadway (Forrester Bldg..)**

Charles F. Whittlesey, 1907

Elaborate decoration in the gothic style covers the top portion of the 8-story building (note: the name Forrester below the cornice).



*S – Original location of mega-grocer Young's Market, the Innes Shoe Company moved here in 1924. Very successful, one of Innes' claims to fame is they made the shoes that were turned into the ruby slippers in the Wizard of Oz.*

\* \* \* \*

### **644 S. Broadway (Joseph Carr Bldg.)**

R.B. Young, 1908

An 8-story Beaux-Arts structure with a heavily decorated façade. A modern covering extends across lower four floors.



*S – the first tenant was the California Furniture Co.*

\* \* \* \*

648 S. Broadway

### **CLIFTON'S "BROOKDALE**

Building: R. B. Young, 1904  
(see full entry)



## 700 BLOCK

### EAST SIDE

#### **710-712 S. Broadway**

*(Yorkshire)*

Parkinson & Bergstrom, 1909

6-story building with façade of pressed brick and terra cotta with tile in the Italian Renaissance Revival style.



\* \* \* \*

#### **744 S. Broadway**

**MOROSCO THEATRE**

Morgan, Walls & Morgan;

Interior by Alfred F.

Rosenheim, 1913

(see full entry)



\* \* \* \*

#### **750-756 S. Broadway (Chapman)**

Ernest McConnell, 1911

*L.A. Historic Cultural Monument # 899*

13-story, concrete Beaux Arts commercial building with Ionic columns defining the base, and a heavy cornice at the top.

It was commissioned by Charles Clarke Chapman, an important citrus industry figure who promoted Valencia oranges and came to be known as the “father of the Valencia industry”

**R** - Renovated into 168 apartments in 2007 named *The Chapman*.



### WEST SIDE

#### **703 S. Broadway**

**STATE THEATRE**

Weeks and Day, 1921

(see full entry)

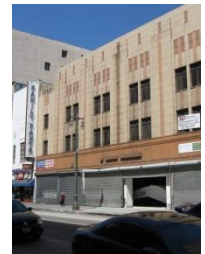


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#### **719-727 S. Broadway (Woolworth's)**

Weeks and Day, 1920

Designed by the architects who did the State Theatre, this building's original facade was of the same red brick as that theatre. In 1941 it was remodeled in the Modern style that was being used across the country by Woolworth's  
*S - Woolworth's, soon to open as a Ross*

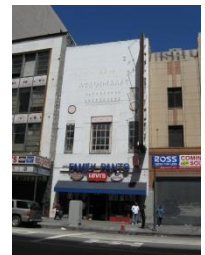


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#### **731-733 Broadway (Cheney Block)**

Architect Unknown, 1913

3-story building. The Greek revival marble façade is from a remodel circa late 1930s.

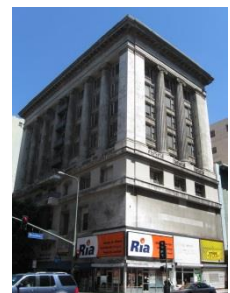


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#### **757-761 S. Broadway (Merritt Bldg.)**

Reid and Reid, 1914

A Beaux Arts structure with four story Ionic columns defining the top floors, designed by the firm responsible for the Hotel Del Coronado. Originally the bottom three floors were separated by belt courses, and had the same window pattern as the “temple” above. They were remodeled in 1957 by Millard Sheets when Home Savings moved into the building. *S – Also was home to the Vogue Company clothing Store.*





## 800 BLOCK

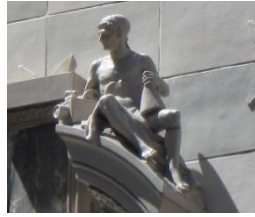
### EAST SIDE

### WEST SIDE

S = Store, R = Residential Conversion

#### **802 S. Broadway TOWER THEATRE**

S. Charles Lee, 1927  
(see full entry)



\* \* \* \*

#### **806-808 S. Broadway (*Singer Bldg.*)**

Meyer & Holler, 1922

7-story building in understated Italian Renaissance style.

*S* – Singer sewing machine showroom on first floor. Ghost sign still visible on side of building.



\* \* \* \*

#### **812 S. Broadway QUINN'S RIALTO THEATRE**

Oliver P. Dennis, 1917;  
theatre remodeled by  
William L. Woollett, 1923  
(see full entry)



\* \* \* \*

#### **814 S. Broadway (*Wurlitzer Bldg.*)**

Walker and Eisen, 1923

A 12-story polychrome terra-cotta building. Among the decorations are musical instruments and red medallions bearing the names of famous composers.

*S* – Housed showrooms for the Rudolph Wurlitzer Company (maker of organs as well as other musical instruments).



\* \* \* \*

#### **801-835 S. Broadway (*Hamburger's Department Store*)**

Alfred F. Rosenheim, 1906

This enormous Beaux Arts structure clad in white glazed terra-cotta with Classical/Renaissance Revival ornamentation covers nearly half the block and once boasted it was the largest department store on the Pacific Coast. Medallions on the original



portion of the structure have an "H" for Hamburger, whereas medallions on the southern portion (a 1929 addition) are blank.

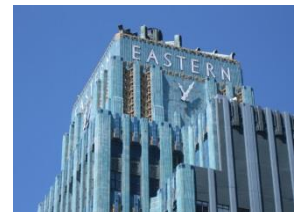
Founded in 1881 as "The People's Store," A. Hamburger and Sons eventually became known as Hamburgers, and then became the May Co. when the May family took it over. The May Co remained in this location until the early 1990s.

It was here that Sadie Marks (aka Mary Livingstone) worked as a salesgirl while being courted by Jack Benny when he performed across the street at the Orpheum.

\* \* \* \*

#### **849 S. Broadway EASTERN COLUMBIA BUILDING**

Claud Beelman,  
1930  
(see full entry)



## **800 Block EAST SIDE CON'T**

### **830-834 S. Broadway (*Platt Bldg.*)**

Walker & Eisen, 1927

12-story Gothic Revival structure by the architects of the Fine Arts Bldg., with nearly all its original ornamentation intact.

*S - Platt Music Company was located here, one of several music-related stores on the block in the 1920s.*



\* \* \* \*

### **842 S. Broadway**

#### **ORPHEUM THEATRE**

G. Albert Lansburgh,  
1926

(see full entry)



\* \* \* \*

### **850 S. Broadway (*9th and Broadway Bldg.*)**

Claud Beelman, 1929

A tan terra-cotta Zigzag Moderne (Art Deco) office building with grapevine motifs in low relief ornamentation. The small lobby has been restored and features an unusual decorative ceiling and original elevator doors.



**EAST SIDE**

**900 BLOCK**

**WEST SIDE**

**901 S. Broadway (*Blackstone's Dept Store*)**

John Parkinson, 1918

*L.A. Historic Cultural Monument # 765*

6-story commercial building in the Classical Revival style. The ground floor was remodeled the Moderne style in 1939 by Morgan Walls and Clements when the store was sold to the Famous Department Store Co.

***R** - Converted into 82 apartment units approximately 2009*

***S** – Built for the department store Blackstone's.*



\* \* \* \*

**933 S. Broadway  
UNITED ARTISTS  
THEATRE**

Walker and Eisen, office building; C. Howard Crane, interior, 1927 (see full entry)



**ROXIE** (518 S. Broadway)

Architect: J. M. Cooper Co.

Opened: November 25, 1931

Original seating: 1600

Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument #526

**ABOUT THE ARCHITECT:** John M. Cooper is known to have designed only one other theatre, the Wilshire, in Santa Monica, which is now divided into a multiplex.

**EXTERIOR:** A three-story steel-reinforced concrete building in the Art Deco style known as Zigzag Moderne. The symmetrical facade is comprised of three sections, with the tallest centered above the theatre entrance, topped by a vertical rooftop sign to emphasize height. Façade features such as the stepped roofline rising to central tower, open grillwork, and chevrons are all hallmarks of Art Deco styling, which emphasizes vertical thrust and stylized geometric forms. The Roxie is the only Art Deco theatre on Broadway, although many were built elsewhere, such as the Wilvern (1931, Morgan, Walls, and Clements) and the Pantages Hollywood (1929, B. Marcus Pritica).

The entryway has a terrazzo sunburst -- a popular early Art Deco motif. The name "Roxie" is part of the terrazzo design. At one time, the entrance featured a maroon and grey ticket booth flanked by serpentine walls. These features, which were characteristic of the later Streamline Moderne style, were removed when the foyer and lobby were converted to retail use.

**INTERIOR:** The auditorium's long, narrow configuration was designed to make maximum use of amplified sound. Although designed for film presentation, not stage shows, the theatre was equipped with a small stage (10' deep), fly space, and full rigging, making it one of the last film houses constructed in Los Angeles with a working stage. The 60' clear-span balcony is cantilevered over the rear half of the auditorium, extending far beyond the lobby wall to the projection booth, which is located adjacent to the face of the building. The underside of the poured-concrete balcony was left exposed, using the structural form for decorative effect.

Nearly all the ornamentation in the auditorium is concentrated around the proscenium. Further decoration was deemed not necessary or economical, since as a movie house with five shows a day the auditorium lights would seldom be on at full. Decorative grilles with geometric patterns conceal speaker enclosures and chambers for organ pipes. Above the stage, the plaster proscenium is designed to look like layers of curtains being raised. In addition to the molded patterns around the proscenium, there were decorative stencils on the auditorium ceiling and side walls.

**HISTORY & ANECDOTES:** The Roxie was built for independent exhibitors G. A. Metzger and Harry Sreer on the site of the much smaller Quinn's Superba (1910). The Roxie turned out to be the last theatre built on Broadway. By 1931 Hollywood had already started to usurp Broadway as L.A.'s principal theatre district.

The lobby was converted to retail use in the late 1980s. The auditorium remains intact, but in disrepair due to disuse and water damage.

## **CLUNE'S BROADWAY** (528 S. Broadway)

Also known as: Cameo (1924 – present)

Architect: Alfred F. Rosenheim

Opened: October 10, 1910

Original seating: 900

Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument #524

**ABOUT THE ARCHITECT:** Born in St. Louis, Missouri, Alfred Foist Rosenheim arrived in Los Angeles in 1903 after graduating from MIT. He is best known for his designs of the original Hamburger Department Store, later known as the May Company, at 8th and Broadway (1907); the Second Church of Christ Scientist on Adams near Hoover (1905-10); and the Hellman Building on Spring Street (1903). He also designed many other public buildings and private residences, among them the Pompeii Room addition of the E. L. Doheny House on Chester Place and his own home on Westchester Place. Rosenheim was the first president of the Los Angeles chapter of the AIA.

### **EXTERIOR:**

The simple neo-classical two-story facade features three vertical bays, the center of which is topped by a rounded pediment. The cornice is made of cast iron, which was a popular building material in the later part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century through the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The original entrance was also originally arched, although it is now obscured by the marquee. Storefronts were placed on either side of the entrance (then as now), and the second story was used for offices.

The original large electric signboard and clock (see tour brochure for photo) were later replaced with 24-sheet billboard, which is still in place. The current marquee, circa 1942, is the third that has been on the building. The original, of steel and copper, was most likely replaced in the '20s when Clune sold the theatre.

**INTERIOR:** While many movie theatres from the teens were little more than converted dance halls or shops, Clune's Broadway was designed specifically as a "picture playhouse." An article published prior to the opening states that Clune's "will be one of the most elaborate playhouses of its kind in the country. The proscenium opening, which will be 21' x 28' in dimensions, will permit the exhibition of pictures much larger than ordinary."

The main lobby was ornately treated in white marble and stucco with a vaulted ceiling. This decorative ceiling is now hidden by a dropped ceiling. The marble of the lobby was later covered over by tile and terrazzo in one of the many remodels over the theatre's long history.

The auditorium measures 57' x 100' and was designed to seat 900. Rectangular in shape (similar to the earlier nickelodeons and not unlike today's cineplexes), the auditorium is devoid of elaborate ornamentation, but has an airy, elegant atmosphere somewhat reminiscent of a ball room. The beamed and paneled ceiling features a leaded glass lunette that is still in existence, although it is now painted over. The side walls are punctuated by square pilasters, each with a "C" for "Clune's" inscribed on the capital.

## **HISTORY & ANECDOTES:**

The theatre was originally operated by William H. “Billy” Clune, an entrepreneur who produced his own films. One of the most successful motion picture men of his day, Clune arrived in Los Angeles in 1887. A savvy real estate investment provided him with the capital to enter the motion picture exhibition business, and as early as 1907 he was operating storefront theatres. In 1910 Clune added Clune’s Broadway to his growing number of theatres and real estate holdings. He eventually owned or operated five theatres, including Clune’s Auditorium, also known as the Philharmonic Building at Fifth and Olive Streets (1906, demolished 1985).

The development of film exhibition was only one of Clune’s contributions to the motion picture industry. He was a financial backer of D. W. Griffith’s *Birth of a Nation*, principal stockholder in a company that manufactured and developed motion picture cameras, and owner of one of the most active studios in early Hollywood, Clune’s Studio. (The Clune Studio facility is now Raleigh Studios on Melrose Avenue across from Paramount.) Clune retired from the theatrical business and sold all of his theatres in 1924.

Clune’s Broadway was sold in 1924 to the Bertha Building Company, owned by H. L. Gumbiner (who would later build the Los Angeles theatre). At this time the theatre was renamed the Cameo and underwent the first of several remodels, which included the replacement of the rooftop sign and the original marquee. Gumbiner also moved his company offices into second floor of the building, where they remained through the 1970s.

Until its closure in 1991, this was the oldest continuously operating movie theatre in California. When the theatre closed, the lobby was turned into retail space and the auditorium used for storage.

**PANTAGES** (534 S. Broadway)

Also known as: Dalton's (1925 - 28), Arcade (1928 – present)

Architect: Morgan & Walls (Octavius Morgan & J. A. Walls)

Opened: September 26, 1910

Original seating: 1,400

Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument # 525 (1991)

**ABOUT THE ARCHITECTS:** Morgan and Walls is part of the lineage of the oldest architectural firm in Los Angeles. In 1874 Octavius Morgan joined with Ezra Kysor, who designed the Pico House (1868), Merced Theatre (1869), and St. Vibiana's Cathedral (1876), to form a partnership under the name of Kysor and Morgan. After Kysor's retirement in 1889, Morgan took on J. A. Walls as a partner and the firm became known as Morgan and Walls. By 1923 the firm was known as Morgan, Walls and Clements, with Stiles O. Clements as the principal designer. The firm was still active in 1985 as Clements and Clements.

Some of the many local projects by Morgan and Walls include the I. N. Van Nuys Building at 7th and Spring (1911) and the Bank of Italy at Seventh and Olive (1922). Projects with Clements include the Belasco Theatre (1926), El Capitan Building (1926), Mayan Theatre (1927), Richfield Building (1928, demolished), Wiltern/Pellisier Building (1930), the Samson/Uniroyal Tire Company (now The Citadel) in City of Commerce.

**EXTERIOR:** The Pantages building has seven stories (a three-story auditorium topped by four floors of office space) in the Beaux Arts style. The first two floors are visually divided from the five stories above by a decorative sheet metal belt cornice, painted to look like stone. Four eagles rest along the belt cornice, on which the name Pantages can still be seen. The belt cornice is supported by four pilasters topped with Corinthian capitals. These pilasters also divide the front into three bays, the center for the theatre entrance, the flanking bays for storefronts. Another belt cornice separates the sixth floor from the seventh, which is faced with eight narrow arched windows and topped by ornamentation and an overhanging cornice. Aside from the marquee, which is a newer addition, little has changed on the exterior of the building. The terrazzo sunburst in sidewalk dates from a 1938 remodel by S. Charles Lee.

**INTERIOR:** The outer foyer (now retail space) was remodeled by S. Charles Lee in 1938 in the Moderne style. Lee's foyer featured side walls with a zig zag design and lowered the ceiling, covering up and partially destroying a dome and murals that were part of a 1920s remodel when the theatre became Dalton's Broadway. Despite these several remodels, portions of the original 1911 plaster walls and suspended ceiling still exist. As was typical of the earlier theatres, the box office was built into the foyer. The 1938 addition of a stand-alone box office was destroyed in a 1988 car accident, at which time the walls were covered in dark brown tile.

The tall, narrow auditorium, similar to English music halls of same period, originally seated 1,400 and later was remodeled to seat about 850. The auditorium features a cast-plaster ceiling in a basket-weave pattern above a double proscenium arch. The first arch, directly framing the stage, has a wide band of ornamentation, while the second proscenium (farther back in the orchestra section and visible mainly from the balcony) has a thinner band surrounding it, topped by

ornamentation that features musical instruments including a violin and banjo. Side boxes originally flanked the walls between the first and second proscenia.

The building also features a large basement that runs from the front sidewalk to the back alley. The front portion of the basement originally housed a restaurant, while the rest of the considerable space was used for support service for the theatre. The upper floors were occupied by offices of doctors, dentists, and other professionals.

**HISTORY & ANECDOTES:** This theatre was the first in Los Angeles leased to the famous Pantages vaudeville circuit. Its founder, Alexander Pantages, began his career producing variety shows for miners in the Yukon during Klondike Gold Rush. He later opened a theatre in Seattle, and eventually controlled the largest privately owned vaudeville circuit in the world. Although generally considered not to be in the same class as the Orpheum circuit (which was not privately owned) Pantages's staying power and success attested to the owner's business sense. His decline came with a rape charge in 1929.

This theatre was built for Pantages by William Garland, an Irish immigrant and retired railroad entrepreneur turned real estate developer who was at one time a director of the Security Trust and Savings Bank. The decision to establish a theatre on Broadway helped promote development of the area as a theatre district, although it was already a popular shopping district.

Opening night at the Pantages featured Dan the drunken canine, in "A Hot Time in Dogville." Among the other performers on the bill was Sophie Tucker on her first West Coast tour. Stan Laurel played the Pantages in 1919.

In 1925, the Pantages was sold to the Dalton brothers, who also owned and operated a burlesque theatre on Main Street. In 1928 the Daltons changed the theatre name to the Arcade to relate it to the popular Broadway Spring Arcade Building (1924). In 1938 the building was acquired by producers Metzger and Srere.

The lobby was converted to retail use in 1993.



**BROADWAY-SPRING ARCADE BUILDING** 540 S. Broadway  
Kenneth McDonald and Maurice Couchot, 1924

**ABOUT THE ARCHITECTS:** Kenneth McDonald was the son of a San Francisco architect. Among his designs in Southern California is the Spanish Colonial Revival-style Glendale Train Station (1922). He also designed the old Western Costume Building downtown (1923), the Villa Leon (a Beaux Arts mansion in Malibu on a cliff overlooking the entrance to the Getty Museum, 1926), and the Memorial Rotunda for the Valhalla Memorial Park in Burbank (1925).

**FEATURES OF BUILDING EXTERIOR:** The Arcade Building is two twelve-story towers connected by a skylit three-level arcade which runs from Spring to Broadway at the ground level. Intricate Spanish Baroque terra cotta arches, 26 feet high and twelve feet across, rise over both street entrances to the arcade. Thin twisted and beaded columns shape the delicate arches that traverse the basement level, pierced by the wider arches of the entranceways. The central stories are covered with terra cotta modeled in imitation of rusticated stonework; the attic level features Doric columns, Baroque swags, and a scalloped cornice.

**FEATURES OF BUILDING INTERIOR:** The arcade measures 826 feet by 26 feet and originally housed 61 shops. It is covered with a glass-roofed skylight in the style of arcades in Europe. The Venetian-style bridge which spans the center of the arcade was a later addition.

**HISTORY AND ANECDOTES:** In 1883, part of this site was used by the Board of Education for the Spring Street Elementary School. Later, the middle section of the lot was occupied by Mercantile Place, a small alley lined with retail shops which, by 1924, had been an L.A. landmark for more than 40 years. A competition was held to find a suitable design that would provide office space as well as maintain the storefronts and ambience of Mercantile Place. The winning architects were awarded \$60,000 for their plans, beating out other notable participants such as Weeks and Day, G. Albert Lansburgh, and Curlett and Beelman.

The winners were chosen for the flexibility of the plan, breadth of scheme, and character of the arcade. The street level features large glass display windows for retail. The office tower portion on Spring Street was meant to cater to bankers, brokers, and financial agents while the Broadway portion was used by various manufacturing agents and physicians.

Over 2,000 businessmen were invited to the building's opening. They were entertained by three orchestras provided by Sid Grauman, a vaudeville show, and dancing in the arcade.

In 2002 work began on converting the office towers to 142 loft-style apartments (for rental, market rate) and refurbishing the shopping arcade. The project stalled for many years, with work resuming in 2009 and opening in 2011.

**THE DUTCH CHOCOLATE SHOP** (also known as Finney's Cafeteria)

217 w. 6th Street

Building date and architect unknown

Interior: Plummer & Feil, 1914

Los Angeles Cultural-Historic Monument #137

**ABOUT THE BUILDING:** The building itself predates the Chocolate Shop (still researching exact date/architect).

**ABOUT THE TILE DESIGNER:** One of the premier artisans of the Southern California Arts & Crafts movement, Ernest Batchelder (1875-1957), was born in New Hampshire and educated in Boston, first came to Southern California in 1901 to teach at Throop Polytechnic Institute, now Cal Tech. He began producing tile in 1910, but his studio closed in 1932, a victim of the Depression. One of his most elaborate installations is the Fine Arts Building (1927) on 7<sup>th</sup> Street.

**ABOUT THE INTERIOR:** The current interior dates from a 1914 remodel, when a restaurant known as The Dutch Chocolate Shop opened. Designed by Plummer & Feil, the interior resembles a German *bierstube* (a beer hall or pub) with arches and vaults. It is completely faced with tiles by Ernest Batchelder. The project was the largest project produced from the single kiln in Batchelder's Pasadena studio. There are tile murals of fanciful scenes of Dutch life, reportedly designed by Batchelder's assistant Anne Hartnett. One of the panels shows a store with the sign "Batchelder Studio," (LOCATION?) and Batchelder's initials are signed on the flank of a ox (that panel is about ¾ of the way back along the right wall). Sculpted tile figures of Dutch children blowing bubbles grace the archway.

Note that the dark brown of the tiles is due to an unintentional darkening of the glaze over many years. The tiles are being cleaned and restored, which will brighten up their appearance.

**HISTORY AND ANECDOTES:** The building was leased in late 1913 by the Chocolate Shop Corporation (which consisted of E.C. Quinby, son P.W. Quinby and W.M. Petitfils) and work began to renovate the ground floor into 'one of the finest confectionary shops on the Coast' (renovation of the ground floor was estimated at \$40,000 in 1913, which would be about \$850,000 today). The three upper floors were to be changed into lofts. This become the fourth location in the Chocolate Shop chain (two others with also in downtown Los Angeles, while one was in Pasadena), though it was the only location to be appointed with dazzling Batchelder tile.

Along with chocolates and the usual soda fountain confections, the Chocolate Shop locations also served lunch and dinner. This particular location served specials such as Filet of Sole a l'Orly and Saratoga Chips (aka fried fish and potato chips) and fried Belgian hare with chasseur sauce.

Although the Chocolate Shop was not a success, the site was operated as Finney's Cafeteria from 1947 until the late 1980s. For many years, the site was used as stalls for swap meet booths, the expansive grotto space was divided up. The current owners are in the process of renovating the space to serve again as a café and special events venue, while restoring the historic features.

**WALTER P. STORY BUILDING** (now Broadway Jewelry Plaza)

600 S. Broadway

Morgan & Walls, 1909

**ABOUT THE ARCHITECTS:** See Pantages/Arcade Theatre page 18.

**EXTERIOR:** An 11-story building in the beaux-arts style, it was declared “structurally perfect” and “as near fireproof as a building can be made” when reviewed by the Los Angeles Times, Aug. 4, 1909. Originally the first three stories and the basement were designed for retail purposes; the upper seven floors were for offices. Walter P. Story and his wife lived in the penthouse.

The ground floors have been remodeled at least twice, in 1934 and 1967.

**INTERIOR:** (*note: NO PHOTOS ALLOWED INSIDE*). The small but exceptionally beautiful lobby is clad in lightly-veined white marble. To the rear of the lobby is a compact marble staircase with wide banisters and enormous newel posts that sweeps up two stories. Above the stair is a Tiffany-style stained glass skylight.

**HISTORY AND ANECDOTES:** Nelson Story, a successful Montana cattleman (he was the first to drive cattle along the Bozeman Trail from Texas to Montana), bought the lot upon which this building stands in 1895 for \$48,000. In 1897, when his son Walter Perry Story was fourteen years old, his father gave him the land as a gift. In 1908, Walter borrowed half of the approximately one million dollar construction cost from his father and financed the remainder from local banks. Walter P. Story was to become a successful businessman and civic leader, and Major General with the California National Guard.

The upscale clothing store Mullen and Bluett occupied the building from 1910 through the 1960s.

The building now houses offices and jewelry businesses. The elaborate marble lobby is often used for film shoots.

**ORPHEUM / PALACE** (630 S. Broadway)

Also known as: Orpheum (1911 - 26), Broadway Palace (1926 - 33), Fox Palace (1933 - 7),  
News Palace (1940s), Palace (1940s – present)

Architect: G. Albert Lansburgh

Opened: June 26, 1911

Seating: originally 2,200, now 1100

Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument # 449 (1989)

**ABOUT THE ARCHITECT:** Born in Panama in 1878 to Jewish parents, G. (Gustave) Albert Lansburgh moved with his widowed mother and brother to San Francisco in 1882. He studied architecture at U.C. Berkeley and worked summers for architect Bernard Maybeck. A wealthy Jewish businessman became his patron, sponsoring Lansburgh's study at the Ecole de Beaux Arts in Paris, where he graduated with highest honors, even winning a medal from the Society of French Architects his final year, for a drawing of a projected new temple in San Francisco. Returning to San Francisco, he opened his own office in 1908, and shortly became was one of the principal theatre designers in the west. In addition to commissions in Chicago, Kansas City, St. Louis, and New Orleans, his works included the Warner Bros. Theatre Bldg. in Hollywood (1927) and the interiors of the local Wiltern (1930) and El Capitan (1926) theatres. He designed many theatres for the Orpheum circuit, including this one and the 1926 Orpheum down the street.

As a side note, Lansburgh's brother Simon was house counsel for the Orpheum Theatre and Realty Company, later becoming the president of the Orpheum Company (1920).

**EXTERIOR:** The building is steel-reinforced concrete. The facade is designed in the Italian Renaissance style, loosely modeled after 16<sup>th</sup> century Venetian palazzos, with upper-story bays combining two round-headed windows with one fully round window under single arch (a motif that appeared in Venice and Florence during early Renaissance). Multi-colored terra-cotta swags, flowers, fairies and theatrical masks illustrate the spirit of entertainment. The elaborate swags on each end of the facade, directly below the cornice, once contained the word "Orpheum." At the center of the swag is a smiling head of a horned devil and a medallion featuring musical instruments.

The four colored terra-cotta panels at the second story depict the muses of vaudeville: Comedy, Dance, Song, and Music. This was the first multi-colored façade to be erected in Los Angeles, and one of the first in the West. The tiles are also unusual because of the method of firing: the colors were produced in a single burning, while formerly multi-colored tiles would require several separate firings. A façade cleaning in 2007 revealed the extraordinary beauty and color of the terracotta.

The sculptor who created the panels was Domingo Mora. Born in Barcelona, he did considerable work in South America before coming to the United States in 1880. His work also appeared on the old Metropolitan Opera House in New York City. Mora died before finishing the panels for the Palace, which were completed by his son Jo. Jo later sculpted the heroic figures on the exterior of the Million Dollar Theatre, and became an important artist in his own right.

There are two large light fixtures above the entrance which feature a figure holding up a glass globe, topped by a fairy. The original marquee was glass and wrought iron, with a graceful curve. The current marquee, with its extravagant neon, was added in 1937.

**FOYER:** The foyer decoration has changed several times over the years. Originally the foyer floor was mosaic tile (some of which still can be seen around the outer edges), and elaborate lunettes of carved marble decorated the top half of the walls, just below the vaulted ceiling. When the theatre changed hands in 1926, the marble carvings were removed, the ceiling was painted with murals, and the mosaic on the floor was replaced with marble (note the crystallized fossils in the black marble), all in order to give the lobby a less “old-fashioned” feeling. (The marble was later covered over by indoor-outdoor carpeting, and only rediscovered in 2001 when the carpet was removed.) Elaborate bronze railings in front of the windows looking down from the ladies lounge have long since disappeared.

The entrance look changed again right after the end of WWII, when Fox West Coast theatres did make-overs on all their L.A. theatres. These remodels were mostly in the Streamline Moderne style, favored by Fox president Charles Skouras. The box office and the gold mirrors in the foyer both date from this period. The 40s remodel also added modern poster cases on the walls. When these were removed years later the original bronze cases were found intact behind them.

## **INTERIOR:**

**LOBBY:** The small interior lobby was designed at a time when patrons did not loiter there before the show or during intermission. Originally only curtains separated the auditorium from the lobby. The present lobby dates from the 1940s renovation, when a permanent concession stand was added, which extended into the auditorium as far as the center two pillars under the balcony. At this time the dropped ceiling was added, and the lights replaced with Deco-inspired fixtures.

**MEN’S LOUNGE:** The men’s room in the basement extends under the sidewalk in front of the theatre, with glass blocks in the sidewalk as a skylight. The basement also contained a men’s smoking room, or lounge, complete with paneled walls and an ornate carved fireplace at the far end. The fireplace was recently rediscovered behind a false wall.

**WOMEN’S LOUNGE:** Located on the mezzanine, the women’s lounge was originally elegantly appointed with antique furniture and a carved fountain. The lounge also featured a balcony that overlooked the entrance lobby, so women could “await their escorts and still be completely out of the way of the throng.” There are still full-length windows that open up from the lounge to the foyer, but the balcony rail is no longer there.

**AUDITORIUM:** The interior decoration is French in derivation. The proscenium and the facades of the balconies and boxes were once covered with intricate plaster designs tinted with gold, and the walls were stenciled with floral designs in rose and ivory. Draperies of deep blue trimmed in gold added to the feeling of luxury. Three coves in the ceiling still contain the original paintings depicting Renaissance minstrels and maidens.

Of particular note when the theatre opened was the unusual lighting design, which featured concealed lights and reflectors hidden in the domes and the ceiling giving a diffuse and gentle glow

to the ceiling. On the front underside of each balcony, long rows of exposed bulbs provided illumination. In later years the bulbs were covered with etched glass panels.

The auditorium was designed for excellent acoustics in pre-amplified age: reportedly, patrons were never more than 85 feet from the stage, even in most remote seats. Two balconies, stacked vertically, and 39 side-boxes gave the theatre an original seating capacity of 2,000+. The Palace is of the last existing theatres in Los Angeles with balconies supported by pillars. (At the time of its construction in 1911 the technology of horizontal support beams spanning the entire balcony did not exist.)

The second balcony, called the gallery, was accessed only via an outdoor staircase and had a separate lobby on the south side of the theatre, as well as separate restrooms. It is not clear whether this was done for purposes of racial segregation or simply as a class distinction -- gallery seats were significantly cheaper, and gallery audiences often significantly more boisterous. The bottom half of the gallery had folding wooden seats, while the top half contained wooden benches. Now closed, the gallery houses the air conditioning equipment.

When the theatre was renamed the Palace in 1926, a Smith pipe organ was installed to accompany silent films. The organ pipes were located in the vestibules of the box seats. When sound pictures came in, the organ was dismantled and the box seats removed. The area was plastered and painted over with murals depicting pastoral scenes. These murals were done by Anthony Heinsbergen's studio, and have been identified as the work of Mexican artist Candelario Rivas, who worked for Heinsbergen at the time. As part of the remodel, the auditorium was painted a tan color, covering up the rose and ivory stenciling. As part of a 1940s remodel, enormous drapes were placed on the walls, covering the murals. These drapes were removed in 1986.

Although built for stage shows, the theatre was equipped with a projection booth in the back of the balcony to show the novelty "daylight pictures" as part of the vaudeville programs. The booth was later expanded out into the balcony.

The stage is approximately 40 feet wide and 30 feet deep, fairly standard for vaudeville which didn't require the stage space of a full theatre production. The 38-foot-high proscenium so even topmost seats would have an unobstructed view. The theatre was considered superior technically, with 79 sets of rigging lines to fly scenery, as compared to 40 at most other local theatres.

Little has changed backstage. The original lighting board, faced in marble with bronze hardware, was in use until the 2011 remodel. It was the last "live-front" lighting board in Los Angeles, meaning that the copper bars of the knife switches which carry the electrical current are exposed on the outside front of the board. To create more space at the stage level, the rigging for the scenery was originally controlled from a fly gallery, a platform 25 feet above the stage. Dressing rooms are located both beneath the stage and in two levels above stage right. Remains of the animal room for the non-human performers are still visible in the back corner of stage right.

**SYSTEMS:** Many safety features were included in theatre: 22 emergency exits, fireproof fabrics for curtains and sets, and an automatic sprinkler system fed from pressure tanks on the roof. The theatre was equipped with a heating and cooling system that forced air into the auditorium through

the floor and exhausted it through the roof. This forced air was driven over coolers or heated according to “thermostatic automatic regulators” in the auditorium.

**HISTORY & ANECDOTES:** The oldest remaining theatre in the United States built for the Orpheum Vaudeville Circuit, the Palace was built at a cost of \$350,000. It was the third Orpheum theatre in Los Angeles; the first was Child's (a.k.a. Grand) Opera House on Main St.(1884, demolished 1936), the second was on Spring Street between 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> (1888, demolished 1941). In 1926, Orpheum moved to its fourth and final L.A. home at 842 S. Broadway, also designed by G. Albert Lansburgh.

The Orpheum vaudeville circuit was founded in San Francisco in 1893, and was generally considered the highest class of the vaudeville circuits, with Pantages a step below in class and quality. The bills at the Orpheum generally consisted of eight acts, including a main headliner, the second headliner, second line comedy and song acts, a traveling dramatic company, and one or two animal or “dumb” acts. Here is a sampling of acts that played the Palace (when it was known as the New Orpheum): **1911:** Al Jolson, Leo Carrillo, the Jesse Lasky Company. **1912:** Ethel Barrymore, W.C. Fields, Schenck and Van, Joseph Jefferson, David Belasco’s Company. **1913:** Will Rogers, Lily Langtry, Sarah Bernhardt. **1914:** Eddie Foy and the Seven Little Foys. **1915:** Harry Houdini, the Marx Brothers, Nazimova. **1916:** Lillian Russell, Evelyn Nesbit, Wheeler and Woolsey, Fanny Brice, Eddie Cantor. **1917:** Fred and Adele Astaire. **1920:** Mae West, Bill “Bojangles” Robinson, Jack Benny. **1922:** Julian Eltinge, Sophie Tucker **1924:** Rin-tin-tin, the Cansinos (6-yr- old Rita Hayworth)

In 1926, the fourth and final Los Angeles Orpheum theatre was completed, and the circuit moved down the street to the new facilities. Now that movies were competition for vaudeville, a more magnificent theatre was seen as necessary to keep bringing the crowds coming back for the live performances. The old theatre was renamed the Broadway Palace and renovated to better exhibit films (enlarged projection booth and installation of an organ).

Fox West Coast Theatres (FWC) leased the property around 1930 and changed the name to the Fox Palace, which was later shortened to Palace (there was one other name change to News Palace when the theatre showed only newsreels for a period in the 1940s). FWC merged in 1935 to become Metropolitan Theatres, a company that still exhibits films today.

In 1944 Metropolitan bought the theatre and soon after funded the \$100,000 renovation of the theatre in the “Skouras” style. The Palace then once again became a first-run theatre, this time emphasizing exclusive bookings for an extended run. One of the most successful of these was “The Best Years of Our Lives,” which ran four months in 1947. Shortly thereafter, the theatre lost access to first-run films (due to a breakup between FWC and Metropolitan) and never regained its importance as a movie venue. It closed as a public venue at the end of 2000.

In 2011, in time for the theatre’s 100th anniversary, the Palace received a \$1 million renovation which restored water-damaged paint and plaster, recreated the original patterned wallpaper, restored missing decorative plaster moldings, renovated the seats, restored the wood-paneled lower lobby, added modern stage equipment, replaced the 1911 electrical system, replaced the outdated air conditioning, recreated the original carpeting, and doubled the capacity of the ladies' room.

**LOS ANGELES** (615 S. Broadway)

Architect: S. Charles Lee & S. Tilden Norton

Opened: January 30, 1931

Seating: originally 1,967, now 2050

Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument # 225 (1979)

**ABOUT THE ARCHITECT:** S. Charles Lee was one of the country's most prolific and innovative theatre architects, designing more than 300 theatres. Born Simeon Charles Levi in 1899, he studied architecture and art in Chicago and later worked as a draftsman for the Chicago firm Rapp and Rapp, noted for their grand theatre designs. Moving to L.A. in the 1920s, he designed many different kinds of buildings throughout his career. Best known for his theatre designs, he retired from architecture around 1950 and pursued a career as a developer. He died in 1990 at the age of 90.

Working with Lee on the Los Angeles was S. Tilden Norton, son of Isaac Norton (a downtown developer), whose estate owned the property on which the theatre was built. S. Tilden Norton is credited with serving as structural designer of the Los Angeles Theatre, with S. Charles Lee providing all the decorative flourishes. Tilden Norton's other projects included the William Fox Bldg. (1932). and the Wilshire Blvd. Temple (1929), where he was associate architect. His mother was Berta Greenbaum, was considered the first Jewish girl born in Los Angeles.

**EXTERIOR:** Architect S. Charles Lee's maxim "the show starts at the sidewalk" is very much in evidence at the Los Angeles. The theatre entrance is marked by a grand five-story terra-cotta facade, decorated with columns, urns, angels, and other baroque images. Flanking the entrance are two-story retail shop fronts with elaborate terra-cotta designs framing the second-story windows. The north retail facade has been plastered over, but the south side remains as it was originally. The street level was never ornamented.

The box office kiosk originally reached back to the entrance doors (there is now room to pass behind the box office). This alteration was done in the 1940s to provide access from outside (via a window) to a concession stand that was added in the front lobby. At this time a new marquee was installed and the foyer ceiling was changed from glass panels to the current metal sheeting.

In front of the entrance is a remarkable terrazzo sidewalk, designed to look like an Aubusson rug (Aubusson is a town in France famous for its weaving).

**INTERIOR:** The lobby is approximately 115 feet long and 40 feet wide, lined with massive Corinthian columns that rise several stories to an intricately coffered and domed ceiling. Beveled and arched mirrored panels between the columns help enhance the feeling of spaciousness and recall the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles. Almost every square inch of the lobby is decorated with baroque motifs, including urns, shells, flora, and, in each corner of lobby ceiling, delicately winged figures (angel/fairies). Inside the lobby, above the entrance, is an enormous sunburst, the symbol of Louis XIV, the Sun King (1638-1715). The walls and ceiling are painted shades of gold and ivory. Three enormous teardrop-shaped crystal chandeliers are placed in a line down the center of the hallway. The mirrors reflect and diffuse the light of the chandeliers, adding to the opulent and elegant atmosphere and creating the sense of an even larger space.



At the far end of the lobby a grand staircase leads to a small mezzanine where a three-tiered crystal and bronze fountain/chandelier is backed by a romantic mural of two sets of lovers at a masquerade party. The mural, like the later ones at the Palace, are by the Heinsbergen Studios and are attributed to Candelario Rivas. The fountain is flanked by enormous marble fish, which at one time squirted water, as did metal fish at the base of the fountain. Lining the halls leading to the auditorium entrances are frame-like moldings that were originally paneled with rose-colored silk.

The auditorium continues the French theme, as ornately as the lobby and in much the same manner. Elaborate plasterwork surrounds the proscenium, and a complicated pattern of drapes and curtains form a valance below the proscenium arch featuring the Great Seal of the city of Los Angeles at the center. An extraordinary decorative curtain depicts scenes from the court of Louis XIV in three dimensions, with appliquéd and painted figures wearing skirts of real fabric and wigs of braided wool. The curtain was designed by the B. F. Shearer Company, as were all the stage draperies, curtains, carpets, rugs, and wall coverings at the Los Angeles.

Seating capacity is approximately 2,000, arranged in a bowl-like shape in the orchestra level for clear sightlines. Seating was originally arranged in groups of only six across to a row, so no patron had to step past more than two people to reach an aisle.

The Los Angeles was built as a luxury theatre, with every patron amenity imaginable at the time. These included:

- A seat indicator featuring a lighted panel identifying the location of empty seats inside auditorium. Blue neon strips imbedded in aisle floors to provide a soft glow for patrons to access their seats in the dark.
- Above the loge, off the mezzanine, are two “crying rooms” for mothers with infants. Here they could follow the picture in a soundproof room, via speakers or headphones, without their babies disturbing other patrons. These rooms were also equipped with cigarette lighters.
- Behind the main stairs (where the snack bar is now) there was originally a second set of doors which led to the “promenade” (auditorium entrance lobby). A large mirror on the wall between the sets of doors showed a reflection of the main lounge two floors below, so patrons could see who was down there.
- Broadcasting rooms located on the lower mezzanine.
- A large (80'x40') lounge on the lower level, paneled in walnut with ceiling panels of etched glass. Built into north wall was a secondary screen, which allowed patrons in lounge to follow the progress of the picture in the auditorium upstairs. The picture was relayed by a series of prisms, akin to a periscope. At far end of lounge still remains the frosted glass entrance to a small cafe, which provided light snacks. Patrons ate only in the restaurant, never in the theatre.
- Ladies’ restroom features a powder room ringed in mirrors and outfitted with built-in vanity tables. The actual restroom consists of 16 toilet rooms, each faced with a different marble. When the Los Angeles opened, the ladies room was staffed by maids, manicurists, and a cosmetician.
- Next to the Ladies room was a staffed playroom for youngsters, designed to look like a circus tent with molded plaster ceiling and murals of animals (see brochure for photo).

**HISTORY & ANECDOTES:** About 1924, William Fox leased the land between Hill to Broadway from the Norton estate. He planned to build one of his 5,000 seat theatres (like San Francisco, Detroit, St. Louis and Atlanta). In the meantime he took over West Coast Theatres and then didn't really need a big new house downtown. His lease required that he begin construction by Jan. 1, 1930. Fox decided to build an office tower on the Hill Street side and a theatre and stores on the Broadway side. He kept the stores and the office building (The William Fox Building, 1930) and sub-leased the theatre site to independent film exhibitor H. L. Gumbiner.

The last of Broadway's great movie palaces, the Los Angeles was constructed at an estimated cost of two million dollars. Despite the onset of the Great Depression, Gumbiner was intent upon maintaining – and even exceeding – the lavish standards of Broadway's pre-Crash theatres. To achieve the desired effect, he turned to S. Charles Lee, who had designed the nearby Tower theatre for him in 1927.

Gumbiner reportedly toured some of the country's great movie palaces to get ideas for his new theatre. He was entranced by the Fox San Francisco and told Lee to design a theatre just like it. The Fox San Francisco (1929, demolished in 1963) was a masterpiece of movie palace architecture designed by architect Thomas Lamb. Done in the manner of Louis XIV (also referred to as French Baroque), there are enough parallels between the Fox San Francisco and the Los Angeles to consider the Los Angeles closely based on, if not an outright copy of, the earlier theatre. However, the Fox San Francisco seated 4600 people, so S. Charles Lee's challenge was to achieve the same level of spaciousness and luxury in a theatre on a site half the size of the Fox. One of the ways that Lee did this was through extraordinary detailing; whereas the ceilings at the Fox were painted to appear coffered, Lee was able to have three-dimensional coffering on the ceiling.

The Los Angeles was completed in record time, with the plans reportedly being drawn up in ten weeks and construction completed less than three months after that. Advertisements for the opening trumpet the Los Angeles as “theatre unusual” and highlight its many amenities.

The grand opening was on January 30, 1931, featuring Charlie Chaplin's *City Lights*, with Albert Einstein as the guest of honor. As guests arrived for premiere, they were booed for their ostentation by people in a Depression breadline across the street. (Stories that Chaplin helped finance the completion of the theatre have not been substantiated.)

Gumbiner lost the theatre to bankruptcy within a year. During WWII, this theatre primarily featured Fox and MGM productions and was a favorite of soldiers, who flocked to see Fox films starring Betty Grable, Alice Faye, and Carmen Miranda. During this period, the theatre was open around the clock except for two hours of cleaning between 6 and 8 a.m.

**CLIFTON'S BROOKDALE CAFETERIA** 648 S. Broadway

Building: R. B. Young, 1904

Restaurant interior: Plummer, Wurdeman, and Becket, 1935

**EXTERIOR:** As originally designed, the simplified Beaux Arts façade featured expansive display windows to showcase the wares of the original tenants, a music company and a furniture store.

In 1935, the building was remodeled for Clifton's "Brookdale" Cafeteria by the architecture firm of Plummer, Wurdeman, and Becket (Pan-Pacific Auditorium, 1935, as well as many other projects). The Beaux Arts façade was redesigned, with the lower portion evoking a rustic lodge. A colorful terrazzo sidewalk was installed depicting local landmarks, destinations, and industries.

In 1963, the façade was remodeled again. The entrance was recessed and adorned with turquoise and red mosaic glass tile, although the originally terrazzo sidewalk was left intact. An entrance canopy and neon blade sign were added, and nearly the entire façade covered by an aluminum grille. The grille was removed in 2012 as part of a major renovation and restoration.

**INTERIOR:** The 1935 cafeteria interior, designed by Plummer, Wurdeman, and Becket, was inspired by the Santa Cruz mountains where Clifford Clinton spent childhood summers, not far from the famous Brookdale Lodge.

Many original features in the main dining room remain intact, including the waterfall and meandering stream, the terraced dining sections set among mock redwood trees and stony crags, artist Einar Petersen's mural of a redwood forest, and the Little Chapel with its recorded parable.

**HISTORY AND ANECDOTES:** The building was constructed in 1904 and is now one of the oldest buildings remaining on Broadway. Originally leased to retail (a music company and a furniture store), a Boos Brothers cafeteria operated on the site from 1913 – 1935. Clifton's Brookdale opened in 1935. It was the second of ten Clifton's Cafeterias, once the region's largest cafeteria chain, and is now the only one remaining.

Founder Clifford E. Clinton grew up working in his father's Clinton Cafeteria chain in San Francisco. He came to Los Angeles in 1931 to start his own business, merging his first and last names into "Clifton's." He opened the original Clifton's Cafeteria on Olive Street, near 6th.

As a boy, Clifford had lived in China with his parents during their missionary service in the Salvation Army. The region's severe poverty and lack of food sparked his lifelong efforts to help the hungry. Clifford's cafeteria embodied his ideals, with mottos such as "Pay What You Wish" and "Dine Free Unless Delighted." With the nation in throes of the Great Depression, Clinton nearly went bankrupt honoring his principle of never turning away the hungry.

After more than seventy years in the founding family, Clifton's changed hands in 2010. The Clinton family will continue to own the building, acting as landlord to entrepreneur Andrew Meieran, who has assumed a forty-year master lease.

## **BULLOCK'S DOWNTOWN STORE (now known as St. Vincent's Jewelry Center)**

Seventh Street and Broadway

1906-1933, Parkinson & Bergstrom and others

**ABOUT THE ARCHITECTS:** **John Parkinson** began his career as a stair builder in Victorian-era England and ended it as the "Dean of Los Angeles Architects." Many of the buildings on Spring Street were designed by Parkinson, and his works also include City Hall (1928). **Edwin Bergstrom**, a native of Wisconsin, was in partnership with John Parkinson from 1905 to 1915, one of the most prolific periods in the firm's history. **Parkinson and Bergstrom** projects the LA Athletic Club (1911). After Bergstrom's departure, Parkinson's son Donald joined the firm and together with his father is responsible for such landmarks as Bullocks Wilshire (1928) and Union Station (1939).

**ARCHITECTURE:** Typical of some of the early department stores, Bullock's store started with a single structure (on the corner of Broadway, designed by Parkinson and Bergstrom, 1907), and expanded over time, incorporating two existing buildings on the block and building new structures to bridge the gaps. By 1933, Bullock's included the entire 7th Street frontage from Broadway to Hill Street, and much of the side street frontage as well, a total of seven buildings.

The buildings are all variations on the Beaux-Arts commercial style popular in the early 20th century. In 1934, Parkinson designed a unified system of storefronts and entries, and applied to all the buildings (new and pre-existing) a continuous 2-story facing of smooth, block-cut terra cotta panels.

**RETAIL HISTORY:** Arthur Letts, the entrepreneur behind the Broadway store (located at 4th and Broadway) was the driving force behind the new store, which was named for the Broadway's store manager, John Bullock. Bullock's specialized in high-end items and personalized service, and was very successful right from the beginning. Arthur Letts remained a silent partner in the business until his death in 1923.

When Bullock's first opened, the store was the largest in the area. Escalators were introduced for the convenience of shoppers, a first in Los Angeles. Visually, the building presented a modern image to the street, with both street sides boasting large display windows — an unusual feature for the time. Up on the roof, there was a garden, with swings, sandbox, and other diversions for the children of shoppers.

In 1983 Bullock's closed its doors at Seventh and Broadway. In 1985, the complex opened as St. Vincent's Galleria, part of the growing jewelry district.

**LOEW'S STATE** (703 S. Broadway)

Also known as: State (Loew's removed from marquee in 1955)

Architects: Weeks & Day

Opened: November 12, 1921

Seating: 2,450

Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument # 522 (1991)

**ABOUT THE ARCHITECT:** Based in San Francisco, the firm of (Charles) Weeks & (William) Day also designed the Mark Hopkins Hotel in San Francisco (1926), the State Library Building in Sacramento (1928) and the Fox Theatre (now Symphony Hall) in San Diego (1929). Charles Weeks was born and educated in Chicago, and also trained at the Ecole de Beaux Arts.

**EXTERIOR:** The State theatre building is a twelve-story reinforced concrete building with a brick veneer and terra-cotta detailing. It is one of the largest brick-clad structures in Los Angeles (lot is 160' x 169'). The light pink terra-cotta and red brick are very distinctive, even more so after the complete exterior cleaning that the building received in 2001, which wiped off eighty years of grime. Built in the Beaux Arts style, the building has terra-cotta ornamentation on the bottom floors, brick cladding for the next nine floors, capped by a highly ornamented attic level. Terra-cotta bricks cast to look like carved stone are set in wide bands vertically up the sides of the facade. Situated on a corner, the building has two nearly identical facades, one facing 7<sup>th</sup> Street and one facing Broadway. The building is curved at the corner, so that the building is ultimately centered on the intersection, rather than either street. Since building codes did not allow construction above the theatre auditorium, the office portion is only a shallow L-shape, with the theatre auditorium occupying most of the lot.

There were originally two main entrances to the theatre, one on Broadway and one on Seventh Street. At the time, building codes required that the main exit from the building be in line with the auditorium (which would be Seventh Street). The owners wanted an entrance on Broadway, so the theatre was designed with two entrances. (The code was amended in 1926 when the Orpheum was built, allowing the exit to be perpendicular to the back of the auditorium.). The entrance on Broadway was given its current Greco-Roman design in 1936.

Originally, there were three vertical "blade" signs on the building: one on Broadway, one on Seventh Street, and one on the curved corner. All three signs have been removed. The facade at one time was also decorated with a neon strip which formed a stairstep from the top of the corner tower to the far ends of each side of the building, just above the second floor. Looking at the building from the corner, the neon formed a pyramid.

**INTERIOR:** Designed to look like the interior of a Spanish castle, the lobby and auditorium feature elaborate plaster ceilings painted to resemble wood, then stenciled and aged. The plaster walls of the lobby were painted and aged to look like the stonework of an ancient castle.

The theatre has a very wide auditorium and one large balcony for a total seating capacity of 2,450. The width gives the auditorium a square appearance, reinforced by the geometric pattern on the ornate ceiling which features a star within an octagon within a square, surrounded by a border of smaller squares and rectangles. Inside the octagon the ceiling is not solid: the design is done as grillwork with inset glass panels. The auditorium was originally lit completely with

recessed and hidden lights, both from the cove surrounding the central ceiling element and lights shining through the glass in the ceiling. However, within a few years a large chandelier was added in the center of the auditorium ceiling.

The side boxes (one on each side), and proscenium arch are intricately detailed with Spanish-styled designs, although the symmetrical and repetitive nature of the ornamentation seems to have more in common with classical Beaux Arts preferences than with Medieval Spanish architecture. In a niche at the center of the ornamentation above the proscenium is a Buddha-like figure which is called a “billiken.” Patented by Florence Pretz of Kansas City, Missouri in 1908, the billiken has a pointed head, big ears, a pot belly, and is seated with large bare feet sticking out. Immensely popular for a short time in the early teens, the billiken was manufactured in various forms (such as bank, statuette, doll), with the slogan “The God of Things as They Ought to Be” inscribed at the base. The billiken is remembered today as the team mascot of Saint Louis University. The figure is currently hidden behind a temporary screen.

The side walls of the auditorium are very restrained in their decoration, with no ornamentation beyond that on walkways supported by arches that lead from the balcony forward to fire exits, and two false windows high up near the ceiling.

The original 3-manual Moller pipe organ was replaced by a 3-manual, 13-rank Wurlitzer in 1925 which has since been removed.

**HISTORY & ANECDOTES:** This theatre originated as part of the vast entertainment empire founded by New Yorker Marcus Loew, who formed Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer in 1924. Loew had a particular genius for prime real estate: Loew’s State is located at one of downtown’s busiest intersections, where many of the major streetcar lines once converged bringing business right to the doorstep. Because of its strategic location (and the constant supply of MGM films), this was for many years Broadway’s most profitable theatre.

The grand opening was Nov. 12, 1921, featuring vaudeville and the film “A Trip to Paradise” starring Bert Lytell. Like other theatres in the Loew’s chain, the State offered both film and vaudeville, with performances enhanced by the theatre’s own orchestra and chorus line. Here the famous brother-and-sister vaudeville team, Fanchon & Marco, established their reputation and developed their popular “Ideas,” which were stage revues planned around a particular theme. Seldom related to the film being shown, the Ideas could be packaged with its costumes, performers, and scenery and move from town to town regardless of the film being shown. Fanchon & Marco produced their Ideas at the State from 1924 – 1933, when they left to take over the Paramount Theatre on Hill Street. In 1929, Judy Garland (known at the time as Frances Gumm) appeared at the State as a member of the Meglan Kiddie Revue.

The management of the State was handled from the beginning by Fox West Coast Theatres. Loew’s had only one theatre in town, so it didn’t make sense to create the whole infrastructure to run it. In the late thirties and early forties, FWC “modernized” and remodeled virtually all their theatres in the Streamline Moderne style favored by Fox President Charles Skouras. In 1936 S. Charles Lee was retained to produce plans for a sweeping renovation of the State, but the job was ultimately awarded to Fox’s regular architect, Clarence Balch. Balch changed very little in the auditorium, apart from the draperies, and changes elsewhere were minimal. At this time the

Seventh Street entrance was closed, and the marquee removed. Balch also gave the Broadway entrance foyer a new ceiling with a Greco-Roman design.

The State became a first-run Spanish-language theatre (managed by Metropolitan Theatres) in 1963. Except for a period in the 1970s when popular “blaxsploitation” films were screened, the State continued to show Spanish Language movies, as well as movies with Spanish subtitles, up until it closed in the late 1990s.

The Universal Church of Christ has been holding Spanish-language services in the theatre since the mid 2000s. In 2005 the church replaced the organ grilles with stained glass panels.

**MOROSCO** (744 S. Broadway)

Also known as: President (1928-9), Newsreel (1930-46), Globe (1947 – Present)

Architects: Morgan, Walls & Morgan; Interior by Alfred F. Rosenheim

Opened: January 6, 1913

Original seating: 1,450

**ARCHITECTS:** Morgan, Walls, & Morgan: see Pantages/Arcade entry, page 18.  
Alfred Rosenheim: see Clune's Broadway, page 16.

**EXTERIOR:** A typical eleven-story Beaux Arts office building, the facade is faced with glazed brick and terra-cotta ornament. A belt course above the third story features mask-like faces, and the top two stories have two-story tall columns rising to a large overhanging cornice. The street level has been completely remodeled, although "Morosco" can still be seen behind the marquee, and "Garland Building" is still visible over the entry to the building. The marquee, with its namesake globe, dates from the 1940s when the theatre was an all newsreel venue.

**INTERIOR:** In 1987 the auditorium was converted to retail space by pouring concrete to level out the sloped auditorium floor (an irreversible alteration). However, balconies and marble staircases remain in place, and ornate plasterwork garlands, cherubs and theatrical masks remain on walls. The leveling of the floor brings the side boxes much nearer the ground than they were originally, giving a close-up view of their ornamentation.

**HISTORY & ANECDOTES:** The theatre originally opened as the Los Angeles base of theatrical producer Oliver Morosco, who rose to fame with theatrical hits like *Peg o' My Heart* (the play, not the song), which premiered in L.A. in 1912 starring Laurette Taylor; and *Canary Cottage*, which gave Eddie Cantor his big break (in New York, 1916). Born Oliver Mitchell, his family was abandoned by the father and young Oliver made money for his mother and sister by performing on the street (at one time he was the top man in a human pyramid). He was taken under the wing of circus and opera impresario Walter Morosco, and later took his name. Oliver's lucrative career of producing and writing was punctuated by personal and family troubles, and he died a pauper at age 70 after being run down by a streetcar.

Morosco's first venture in Los Angeles was the Majestic Theatre (1908, demolished 1935) located next to the Hamburger Department store, and financed by the Hamburgers. The eight-story Majestic building housed (among other things) performing arts classes.

When the Morosco was built, Broadway was dominated by vaudeville houses, and full-scale dramatic productions were rare. The theatre's first production was "The Fortune Hunter" by Winchell Smith. It was advertised that the theatre had extra large seats for overweight patrons.

In 1928 producer Henry Duffy leased the house and renamed it the President. In 1930 Fox West Coast took over and made it into a newsreel theatre. It was renamed the Globe in 1947. Later, it served as a showcase for Spanish-language films until closing in the late 1980s. The lobby area was converted to retail space in 1987, and the auditorium houses a nightclub.



**TOWER** (802 S. Broadway)  
Architect: S. Charles Lee  
Opened: October 12, 1927  
Original seating: 900  
Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument # 450 (1989)

**ABOUT THE ARCHITECT:** See entry on the Los Angeles., page 26.

**EXTERIOR:** The Tower is five-story reinforced concrete and terra-cotta building, with an exterior in a modified French Renaissance style. By obtaining more than 30 variances from the city building codes, Lee managed to build a 900-seat theatre, plus retail space, on a narrow 50' x 150' lot previously occupied by the Garrick Theatre which seated only 650.

So that the theatre would not be dwarfed by the surrounding structures, Lee designed an 85-foot tower at its corner. The tower originally had a small dome at the top, which was removed following the 1971 Sylmar earthquake.

Eleven blind, or false, windows line second story along 8th Street (black terra-cotta substituting for glass). Six of the windows are topped by sculptures classical figures: a discreetly draped male with camera and megaphone paired with a scantily clad female with beads and a mirror. These “windows” flank three larger false windows topped with rounded pediments and covered with golden Spanish grilles. A third window design anchors each end. Above the level of the window is a row of narrow Romanesque arches.

Lining the roof on the Eighth Street side are large terra-cotta sign frames, created for commercial advertising (not necessarily movie posters). In addition to generating more income for the property, they add height and grace to the building.

On the Broadway facade another row of Romanesque arches hides air-conditioning ducts. The row of arches culminates with an ornamental urn topped with a sculpted torch in a richly decorated niche. Both the Broadway and the Eighth Street facades are clad with terra-cotta set in an interesting pattern resembling quilting. The terra-cotta was manufactured by N. Clark & Sons of Los Angeles.

Above the modern marquee (which replaced the ornate wrought-iron original) is a grand arch, which contains a stained glass window depicting celluloid strips draped like garlands around a shield. Not very visible from the exterior, the enormous window was designed to be viewed from inside the lobby.

Retail storefronts line 8th Street at ground level. This was an important part of the design, which allowed the site to generate additional revenue while drawing shoppers to the theatre.

**INTERIOR:** The relatively small lobby feels deceptively large and grand because of the two-story ceiling, sweeping grand staircase, and marble columns. An enormous chandelier adds to the elegance. A mezzanine wraps around the sides of the lobby, providing views of the window, chandelier, and incoming patrons.

The auditorium is long and narrow, seating 900. The high ceiling and deeply recessed balcony were designed to give a feeling of spaciousness to the relatively small auditorium. A double proscenium (much like that at the Pantages/Arcade) was used to focus the long and narrow auditorium toward the screen.

There are no side boxes, although walkways extending from the balcony forward to exits make it appear as if there are, as do the false boxes on each side under the organ chambers. The organ chambers are hidden behind ornate plaster grillwork that covers the dome between the two proscenias. The organ did not remain installed at the Tower very long; it was moved down the street to the newly built Los Angeles in 1931.

Elaborate decoration originally covered every part of the ceiling and walls. The large oval dome that dominates the ceiling originally contained a mural of clouds and angels by Anthony Heinsbergen. The smaller domes at the rear of the balcony and between the proscenias also contained murals. The original murals, as well as elaborate stenciling covering the walls, has since been painted over. The mural currently in the dome over the proscenium probably dates from the 1940s.

The method of air conditioning and heating the theatre was years ahead of its time. Instead of pumping air through the floor and exhausting it through the roof, Lee reversed the process, pumping it in through the ceiling and exhausting it under the seats. This is now the standard method of air-conditioning, although at the time only the Paramount in New York used a similar system.

Like the Los Angeles, the Tower once featured amenities like a large paneled lounge with a marble fireplace and beamed ceiling, a children's playroom, and restrooms decorated with marble.

**HISTORY & ANECDOTES:** At the time that exhibitor H. L. Gumbiner was looking to develop a parcel of land at 8<sup>th</sup> and Broadway, S. Charles Lee was a 26-year-old architect looking to make a name for himself. What Gumbiner wanted seemed nearly impossible to other architects: a 900-seat theatre – and streetside shops – on a 50' by 150' lot that had previously held a 650-seat theatre. In order to secure the commission for the Tower, Lee reportedly invested his life's savings (about \$5,000) to throw a cocktail party to which he invited H. L. Gumbiner so that he could pitch his design idea. Lee even offered to do the designs on spec: if Gumbiner didn't like them, he didn't have to pay for them. Lee went on to become one of the world's preeminent theatre designers.

Budgeted at over \$750,000, the theatre opened October 12, 1927, with a showing of "The Gingham Girl," starring George Arthur and Lois Wilson.

Opening the same year as the landmark talkie, *The Jazz Singer*, the Tower was the first downtown theatre built to accommodate talking pictures, both Vitaphone and Movietone systems. (*Note that The Jazz Singer did not premiere at the Tower as is often mentioned. It premiered at the Kinema and later moved to the Tower.*)

Although successful at first, the Tower was an independent exhibition house and found it hard to compete with theatres that belonged to the studios. Gumbiner decided that in order to compete he

needed a fancier theatre and commissioned Lee to build the Los Angeles. The Tower became a second-run and “B movie” house. In 1950 the format was radically changed to all newsreels, and the name was changed to the Newsreel Theatre. The theatre was very successful with this format for the next 15 years.

In 1965 Gumbiner’s daughter, Mrs. Randall, reassumed the lease. She had the theatre renovated, and reopened as a first-run theatre with the name Tower restored. Only marginally successful at best, the theatre closed again in the late 1980s.

**QUINN'S RIALTO** (812 S. Broadway)

Also known as: Rialto

Architect: Oliver P. Dennis, 1917; theatre remodeled by William L. Woollett, 1923

Opened: May 21, 1917

Original seating: 840

Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument #472 (marquee, box office, & original entry floor only)

**ABOUT THE ARCHITECTS:** Oliver P. Dennis frequently designed in the Beaux-Arts and American Colonial Revival styles. With his partner, Lyman Farwell, he designed the Chateausque "Magic Castle" in Hollywood.

William Woollett, born in New York in 1872, was the son and grandson of architects, and his son became an architect as well. He designed several theatres, including the interior of the Million Dollar (1918) and the interior of the Paramount on Sixth and Hill (1922, now demolished).

**EXTERIOR:** As originally built, Quinn's Rialto was a Greek Revival structure with a symmetrical facade that featured three sets of arched windows, the center of which was divided by Greek columns and topped by a triangular pediment (see visual aids photo). The current facade dates from a 1923 remodel by architect William Woollett which completely changed the look of the theatre both inside and out. In the remodel, the exterior was given a modified Georgian facade, whose sole ornamentation were two rectangular windows flanked by square fluted pilasters, and two smaller round windows. The swan-shaped termini that topped the pilasters have since been removed.

The dramatic marquee dates from the 1930s, and is one of the longest on Broadway. The marquee was landmarked in 1989. On the underside of the marquee are dozens of flower-shaped sockets for incandescent bulbs.

**INTERIOR:** For the 1923 remodel, William Woollett framed the proscenium with monumental columns, gave the side walls the look of ancient stonework, and recreated the famous Lion Gate of Mycenae over one of the forward exit doors. The ceiling was plaster beams painted to resemble wood. Sadly, none of these interior elements remain. All the plasterwork was removed in the 1970s for seismic reasons and all decorative painting and stencilwork have since been painted over.

**HISTORY & ANECDOTES:** The theatre was built for J. M. Quinn, an early motion-picture entrepreneur. It was one of the earliest theatres to have "stadium style seating," a raked auditorium with no balcony. The Rialto was leased by Sid Grauman in 1919. Grauman was famous for his pre-screening "prologues," or elaborate revues related in content to the theme of the feature film, frequently including appearances by the film's stars. One 1919 program at the Rialto included a performance of by the theatre orchestra and a fashion show of gowns worn in the feature film, "Male and Female," starring Gloria Swanson.

The theatre was remodeled again in the late 30s/early 40s with a streamlined look, and again in 1954 to accommodate Cinemascope. In 1970 the auditorium was gutted and the lobby area turned into retail space.

As of 2013, the space was being remodeled for Urban Outfitters store.

**ORPHEUM** (842 S. Broadway)

Architects: G. Albert Lansburgh  
Opened: February 15, 1926  
Seating: originally 2,190, now 2000  
(no Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument designation)

**ABOUT THE ARCHITECTS:** G. Albert Lansburgh: See entry for the 1911 Orpheum (Palace).

**EXTERIOR:** The Orpheum's exterior has a Beaux Arts division of façade with classical ornament. At roofline, winged creatures hold up the cornice. The electric roof sign spells out "Orpheum" in trademark backhand script. Although only one-sided now, the sign was originally double faced (reading "Orpheum" on both the front and the back), and contained the word "vaudeville" underneath. The vertical ("blade") sign on the façade is either the second or third for the theatre. Recently refurbished, it was re-lit entirely in neon rather than historically accurate neon and incandescent bulbs. The marquee is an early 1940s addition, replacing the original one of wrought iron.

As with the other theatres downtown that have office buildings as part of their complexes, the twelve-story Orpheum Building (now apartments) is a fairly narrow structure that rises only above the foyer and lobby area, not directly above the auditorium.

The entrance foyer features a vaulted ceiling with monochromatic paintings – looking almost like cameos – set in geometric patterns on the ceiling and along the tops of the walls. The chandeliers that once hung in the foyer have long since disappeared. The brass ticket booth was created by splicing together the two ticket windows that were originally located against the wall, to one side of main entrance. The polished brass doors are original.

**INTERIOR:** As at Lansburgh's earlier Orpheum theatre (now the Palace), the interior decoration is essentially French, although carried out far more elaborately in this later theatre. Lansburgh described the decoration in the auditorium as "Francois Premier," referring to the reign of French King Francis I, who was crowned King in 1515 and essentially ushered in the French Renaissance. (Note the "Fs" in the painted decoration in the auditorium.) The dragon was an emblem associated with Francis I, and Lansburgh utilized dragons in decorations throughout the theatre (note the bronze dragons on the newel posts at the foot of the stairs to the mezzanine). [NB: the French Renaissance in architecture should not be confused with so-called Renaissance Revival styling, which refers to the Italian Renaissance and is much more restrained than the later French version.]

The long, narrow two-story lobby is clad with marble for the first story, above which is painted plaster. The plaster is fashioned into false windows that were originally draped with curtains. The plaster was painted yellow/brown in the 1940s to match the color of the marble below – which was the same yellow/brown until recent cleaning restored its whiteness. The lobby was also originally richly furnished with antiques and paintings in the French manner, and fitted with elaborate wall sconces. The floor lamps at the foot of the stairs are original, and feature bare-breasted fairies, while the lobby chandeliers sport similarly draped figures (referred to as "Abyssinian maidens"). Decorative sheet metal in the form of leaves was added to the

chandeliers in a 1945 remodel. An original panel of the fabric wall covering is at the top of the front staircase. The downstairs lounge is a richly paneled room with a marble fireplace and Spanish tile floor. It was designed as a lounge for both men and women, providing access to a men's "smoking room" and a women's "rest room."

Lansburgh designed an auditorium that was relatively wide (as opposed to long and narrow like the Tower or Los Angeles). Because of the shape of the lot, 138' x 148', this required that the auditorium be parallel to Broadway, entered via a long lobby. This design required an amendment to the city ordinance, which at the time required that theatre auditoriums be situated in line with the main exit/entrance to the street.

The French theme is lavishly carried out in the auditorium, with extensive use of gold leaf on the ceiling and walls. Because gold doesn't tarnish, the auditorium glistens as brightly today as it did in 1926. Details include vaulted arches on the side walls supporting a cove that serves to hide the bulbs that light the ceiling. Inside the arches are silk wall panels covered with lush brocade drapery to help the acoustics in the theatre (the silk was replaced with new material in the recent renovation, but the drapery was removed and not replaced). The two enormous chandeliers are original, although one was damaged in the 1940s when it crashed down into the balcony, and its original glass was replaced with bakelite. (No one was injured in the accident, which took place in the middle of the night. Evidently after lowering the chandeliers to clean them, one of the fixtures was not secured properly.) The six boxes (three on each side) sit atop fluted columns whose spreading capitals open like flowers.

The stage is 50' x 29', with a proscenium height of 30'. On either side of the stage are electric "enunciators" to display the names of the vaudeville acts. There were originally 23 dressing rooms on six floors (including the basement). The animal room (where the performing animals were kept) is still there on the east side of the stage, near the alley.

The theatre's 3/13 Wurlitzer organ is original, installed in 1928. It is the last remaining original in-theatre installation in Los Angeles County, and the only organ of its kind left on Broadway. This 3-manual 13-rank organ has metal and wood pipes that can simulate over 14,000 orchestral sounds, including tinkling bells. After the Orpheum ceased being a vaudeville house, the organ fell into disrepair. In 1979 the Los Angeles Theatre Organ Society (LATOS) began a 3 year project restoring the organ to working order. The group still maintains the instrument. A 14th rank was recently added to the organ, making it now officially a 3/14 Wurlitzer.

**HISTORY AND ANECDOTES:** The Orpheum was the fourth and final home of Orpheum circuit in Los Angeles. It replaced the 1911 Orpheum (now Palace). Although not much larger in capacity (Palace = 2,200 seats, Orpheum = 2,300 seats), the grand scale of the decorations was calculated to draw in crowds that might otherwise have opted to go to the movies. The cost of building was estimated at \$1.9 million in 1926.

Some of the greats who have performed here include: Eddie Cantor, Sophie Tucker, fan dancer Sally Rand, Will Rogers, Edgar Bergen & Charlie McCarthy, the Marx Brothers, Duke Ellington, Nat King Cole, and Count Basie. Ann Miller got her start here. Among the biggest single draws was an engagement by Lena Horne. More recent performers have included Little Richard, Aretha Franklin, and (in 2001) Jackson Browne.

Comedian Jack Benny courted his future bride between twice-daily performances at the Orpheum; crossing the street to the May Co. department store, where Sadie Marks worked as a salesgirl (she later changed her name to “Mary Livingstone,” the name of her character on Benny’s radio show).

This was the last two-a-day vaudeville house still operating in Los Angeles when it closed in late 1929. In 1930, Orpheum merged with the Keith vaudeville circuit and RCA (Radio Pictures) to form Radio-Keith-Orpheum, better known as RKO. RKO films were often shown here.

From 1933 until 1953, Sherrill Corwin, the founder of Metropolitan Theatres, produced stage shows between movies for Fox West Coast Theatres; at one time, patrons could see ten vaudeville acts and two feature films for 35 cents.

**RESTORATION:** In 1964 the Orpheum was purchased by Anjac Fashion Buildings, on New Year’s Eve 2000, the theatre closed its doors as a first-run movie house and for the next six months underwent a \$3 million renovation under the supervision of owner Steve Needleman of Anjac.

On the exterior, the Orpheum’s rooftop and vertical signs have been newly illuminated (the rooftop sign funded in part by the City of Los Angeles Cultural Affairs Department’s LUMENS neon-lighting project and the Friends of the Orpheum), and the marquee has been refurbished. New ticket windows have been installed in the forecourt, and the entrance foyer has had its finely detailed painting restored.

Seventy-five years of soot were cleaned off the marble in the lobby, turning the walls from a dull yellow to a gleaming white. New carpet has been installed, patterned after original Orpheum carpet. Non-original carpeting in the lower lounge was removed to reveal the Spanish tile floor. The grand wood doors to the auditorium have been restored. Inside the auditorium new lighting shines onto the long-shadowed gold leaf so that it glistens again. The acoustical fabric on the auditorium walls, which had faded and disintegrated over the years, was replaced.

Production capabilities have also been upgraded, with an all new electrical system, rigging, and surround-sound for film. Three floors of dressing rooms have been refurbished as well. Audience comfort has not been forgotten in this renovation, which includes new seats, a climate-controlled air conditioning system, and men’s and women’s restrooms that are three times their previous capacity.

The theatre now functions as a rental house and a movie location. The offices above were converted into 37 live/work loft-style apartments, opening in 2002

**EASTERN COLUMBIA BUILDING** 849 S. Broadway

1930, Claud Beelman

Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument #294, Listed in the National Register of Historic Places

**ABOUT THE ARCHITECT:** Claud Beelman was born in Ohio in 1884. The early phase of Beelman's career was his association with the architect Aleck Curlett, which began in 1921. The firm of Curlett and Beelman designed many buildings, among them the Barker Bros. Building (1925), and the Elks Lodge (1927) near MacArthur Park. Beelman designed many major buildings on his own throughout his long career including the emerald green Sun Realty Building on Hill Street (1931) and the modern Superior Oil Building (now Standard Hotel) (1955).

**ABOUT THE BUILDING:** The Eastern Columbia Building was the largest department store in Los Angeles at the time of its construction, and one of the largest buildings built in downtown until after WW II. It was constructed at a cost \$1.25 million, and opened on September 12, 1930 after just nine short months of construction.

**FEATURES OF BUILDING EXTERIOR:** This 13-story building is constructed of steel-reinforced concrete and rises to a height of 264 feet. That is 114 feet above the 150-foot height limit in place at the time. This was allowed because the additional height is unoccupied space: housing for systems, and then the decorative "crown" at the top. At the time of the building's construction, the concept of putting the systems in the attic rather than the basement was groundbreaking. The idea was hailed as cost-saving as well as safer.

The building's most defining feature is the glossy turquoise terra cotta cladding, trimmed with deep blue and gold terra cotta. The design has a strong verticality due to deeply recessed bands of paired metal-sash windows set between the fluted vertical piers. Recessed spandrels (the spacers under windows, between piers) feature copper plaques with a stylized plant motif.

When the building opened, the rooftop had a model bungalow and "space for recreation." During the recent condo conversion, a swimming pool, Jacuzzi, fireplace, and seating areas were installed. The sidewalks surrounding the Broadway and Ninth Street sides of the building are of multi-colored terrazzo laid in dynamic patterns of zigzags and chevrons.

The central main entrance has a recessed vestibule that rises two-stories. This vestibule is adorned with a spectacular terra cotta sunburst in blue and gold terra cotta. At the base of the sunburst, and just above the glass doors, is a narrow, cast-iron fascia. It is embossed with both the date of the building (1930) and the date the company was founded (1892).

The vestibule originally led to a pedestrian retail arcade through the center of the building. One side was occupied by the Columbia Outfitting Company, while the opposite side was occupied by the Eastern Outfitting Company. Each store was entered through separate doorways leading along the arcade thus allowing both companies to be individualized. A mezzanine level was open to the ground floor and ran the length of the arcade.

**FEATURES OF BUILDING INTERIOR:** Little original ornamentation has survived inside. The interior of the building was altered in 1956 to create more office space. The mezzanine level above the retail arcade was enclosed to become another floor. In the early 1980s, the building went



through another refurbishment and upgrade. In late 2004 work began on converting the building to apartments, completed in 2007.

**COMMERCIAL HISTORY:** Adolph Sieroty was born in 1876 in Poland where his family ran a small dry goods store. Along with his three brothers and three cousins, he emigrated to America in 1892 at the age of 16 and the family founded the Eastern Clock Company specializing in "hard goods" such as home furnishings and appliances. In 1894, Adolph moved to Southern California to establish a division of the family business. In 1907, the name was changed to the Eastern Outfitting Company, and adopted the motto "You furnish the girl and we will furnish the house." In 1912, Sieroty opened the Columbia Outfitting Company to sell "soft goods" such as clothing and accessories.

Despite the gloomy economic forecasts resulting from the stock market crash, Sieroty went ahead with plans to build a new headquarters for both of his companies. So on New Year's Eve 1929, Columbia moved into temporary quarters at the adjacent May Company to make way for demolition of the store located at Ninth and Broadway. At that time, Sieroty had 39 stores throughout the central Los Angeles area ranging from Huntington Park to Hollywood Boulevard.

Sieroty maintained the separate identities of his two companies, but now they could share the same general management, mutual services, and combined buying power which kept operating costs and prices low. Both companies offered their customers easy credit terms. Newspaper ads from the 1930s proclaimed -- "45 years of credit leadership on the Pacific Coast. Open a small payment account -- 90 days or more to pay." Sieroty felt that small payments adjusted to the customer's needs would equalize limited disposable income, giving customers a chance to raise living standards without overextending.

In 1956, Sieroty's son Julian closed the retail operation of the family business and switched their interests to real estate, and the store was converted to offices.

In 2004 Kor Group purchased the building for \$20 million, and work began to convert the Eastern Columbia to 140 luxury condominiums. The conversion was budgeted at \$30 million dollars, and opened to residents in March 2007.

**Movie History:** The famous clock scene from *Safety Last* was filmed at this location, although it was at a previous building – the film is 1923, and the current building opened in 1930. The first episode of the TV show *Moonlighting* (1985) featured an extended homage to the *Safety Last* scene using the Eastern Columbia building and clock. The building has been used as a location for many films, including *Inside Moves* (1980). Also, actor Johnny Depp currently owns several of the penthouses at the Eastern Columbia (although he is rarely there).

**UNITED ARTISTS** (933 S. Broadway)

Also known as: The Alameda (circa late 1950s), University Cathedral Church (1989 – current)

Architect: Walker and Eisen, office building; C. Howard Crane, theatre designer

Opened: December 26, 1927

Seating: 2,214

Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument # 523 (1991)

**ABOUT THE ARCHITECTS:** (Albert R.) Walker and (Percy A.) Eisen were both native Californians, born in the 1880s. Their partnership began in 1919 and lasted until 1941. A prolific firm, Walker and Eisen designed such notable buildings as the Fine Arts Building (1927) and the Oviatt Building (1925).

C. Howard Crane was the architect of theatre portion of the UA. He was a noted architect who designed more than 250 theatres across the country. This is only design on the west coast, as he did most of his work in the midwest.

**EXTERIOR:** The office tower, designed by Walker and Eisen, is a thirteen story, steel framed building, with a theatre behind it. The building's facade is clad in terra-cotta and cast stone. Overlaid with gothic-style tracery at the base and on the tower, the symmetrical design of the building is typical of early Art Deco styling, with evenly spaced piers of light beige terra-cotta separated by darker terra-cotta spandrels giving a vertical thrust to the design. The center bays rise an additional 50 feet to a set back tower of pressed metal (considered a roof "sign" by the city). In addition to giving the building distinctive height and a place to display the name of the building's tenant, the tower houses mechanical systems.

At ground level the facade is quite plain, comprised mainly of retail shop windows, with a small entrance to the office building at the center, and a larger theatre entrance at the south end. Above the first floor are two stories of gothic-inspired ornamentation, with a Hollywood twist: between double wide arched windows are column capitals that feature cameramen and musicians instead of the usual grotesques. Above the capitals, in niches patterned like those on gothic cathedrals, are statues of muses of the arts, instead of saints. Above the theatre entrance is a particularly grand arched window, several bays wide.

The current marquee was installed in the '30s, replacing the slightly smaller original. The neon "Jesus Saves" sign atop the auditorium visible from the rear of the building was added in 1991 (moved from the top of the Church of the Open Door on Hope Street.). A second Jesus Saves sign was removed from the roof in 2011.

**INTERIOR:** The foyer is very large and highly decorative, featuring a profusion of cast-plaster ornament rising more than two stories to a vaulted ceiling painted with murals to resemble stained-glass windows and tapestries. False balconies on the south wall echo the mezzanine balcony railings to the north. Huge mirrors (tinted gold) add spaciousness to the lobby. The floor is laid with random size quarry tile with decorative inserts.

Teak railings line the stairs to the basement, where the restroom are located. The brightly-colored tile in the men's lounge area and on stair risers is by Tropico, a subsidiary of Gladding,

McBean, and Co. Originally there was a private screening room in the basement, adjacent to the men's lounge.

The auditorium has the appearance of a grotto, heavily laden with plaster ornament. Fan-shaped ceiling brackets, which are a feature of the English Gothic style, are encrusted with ornament in the Spanish Gothic manner. The original color scheme was muted silver and gold. Along the side walls are pierced plaster work that were built to accommodate lighting equipment. The ceiling is decorated as an enormous sunburst, with the oval dome at the center tiled with mirrors and hung with thousands of crystal drops. The sides of the dome are encircled with angels. The theatre had the most elaborate lighting system of any in Los Angeles; color light sequences could be programmed from a 35 foot long switchboard; performers joked that a second curtain call would throw off the lighting changes for the rest of the day.

The side walls of upper balconies feature murals depicting the original UA founders - Mary Pickford, Douglas Fairbanks, Charlie Chaplin and D. W. Griffith - along with some of the other great stars of the era including Rudolph Valentino and John Barrymore. Handsome nudes on one mural are alleged to be members of the UA Board of Directors; demons on other side are reportedly caricatures of evil studio bosses. The murals are by Jose Rivas (son of Candelario Rivas who did murals and the Los Angeles and the Palace) through the Anthony Heinsbergen studio. Heinsbergen was born in Holland and established his reputation in L.A. by painting murals in Fremont Place mansions. His design firm was responsible for nearly 750 theatre interiors (including the Pantages Hollywood), and also murals at City Hall.

The proscenium arch is 32 feet high and 48 feet wide. Ornate organ grilles to the right and left of the proscenium originally housed pipes for the theatre's Wurlitzer (no longer there). The theatre was equipped for theatrical productions, but movies were always the priority, as indicated by motto on the original asbestos curtain: "The Picture's the Thing" (a play on Shakespeare's "The play's the thing" from "Hamlet"). The original curtain was later replaced by one from the Carthay Circle Theatre (now demolished) which was painted by Frank Tenney Johnson in 1926 and features "The Donner Party Crossing High Sierras."

**HISTORY AND ANECDOTES:** In 1919, director D. W. Griffith and screen stars Mary Pickford, Douglas Fairbanks and Charlie Chaplin broke from the studio system to form United Artists (UA), thus gaining complete control over the creation, production and distribution of their work. Seven years later (by which time Fairbanks and Pickford had married), the United Artists Theatre Circuit was formed to showcase first-run UA productions. This theatre was the flagship for UA's west-coast operations.

The Los Angeles United Artists theatre was one of three built in the Spanish Gothic style by C. Howard Crane; the other two are in Detroit (1928) and Chicago (building 1921, theater remodeled by Crane, 1927). The three theatres are very similar in design, and even utilized the some of the same molds for the plasterwork.

(NOTE: At this time, there is no evidence to support the story that Mary Pickford was particularly involved in the design of this theatre -- she does not mention it in her autobiography, nor is it listed in biographies of her. However, Mary was a particularly shrewd businesswoman she undoubtedly had an important part in the decision making process.)

The opening show at the United Artists was *My Best Girl*, starring Mary Pickford and Buddy Rogers. Rogers later became Pickford's second husband. General admission was 35 cents, but for the premiere, the cost was \$5.00.

The UA was built just a little too far from the Broadway district's hub at 7<sup>th</sup> Street to be consistently successful, and therefore changed hands many times over the years. UA ceased using it as their flagship theatre in 1932, only 5 years after it was built.

In 1956, \$200,000 was spent to install the new Todd-AO projection system for a screening of "Oklahoma." The entire mezzanine balcony was removed and part of the proscenium arch was eliminated to accommodate the larger screen. The picture and the process were a flop. The theatre was closed for almost ten years after that, reopening as the "Alameda" and featuring Spanish-Language films. At one time the lobby was turned into retail space and was occupied by a bakery. Sugary soot from the ovens coated the lobby ceiling.

The office building above was occupied for many years by Texaco, whose huge neon sign was mounted on the tower.

In 1989 the property was acquired by the University Cathedral Church of Dr. Gene Scott. It was completely refurbished, and has served as the headquarters of the church from that time until the church moved in 2011 (Dr. Scott died in 2005). In 2012 the building was sold, and conversion began to turn it into a boutique hotel.

**PANTAGES** (410 W Seventh Street)

Also known as: Warner Bros. Downtown Theatre (1929 – 1980)

Downtown Jewelry Exchange (1980s – current)

Architect: B(enjamin) Marcus Pritica

Opened: 1920

Original Seating: 2200

**ABOUT THE ARCHITECT:** B. Marcus Pritica was born in Scotland in 1881. He settled in Seattle in 1909, where he met Alexander Pantages, for whom he was to design many theatres. Known during his career as the Pacific Northwest's leading architect, Pritica designed over 150 theatres for four different theatre chains. His theatres in the Los Angeles area include the Hollywood Pantages (1929) and the Warner Grand (1931) in San Pedro.

**EXTERIOR:** A nine-story steel frame office block, the Pantages Downtown is a richly ornamented Beaux Arts structure, built to house a theatre and shops, with offices above. The white terra-cotta facade is exuberantly encrusted with classical details, including columns with vine decorations, mullions with fluted columns, and festooned spandrels. Situated at the intersection of Seventh and Hill, the theatre entrance faces the corner, at the base of a rounded tower crowned by a dome accented with large cartouches. Both the Hill Street and Seventh Street facades are equally lavish in their decoration, although the Seventh Street side has the additional attraction of beautifully modeled terra-cotta herms (posts topped with busts of divinities) at the second story. The rooflines on both Seventh and Hill have an ornamented cornice and parapet, visible on which is the inscription “Warner Bros. Downtown Bldg.” (changed from Pantages).

The current marquee is at least the theatre's third, and dates from the 1930s.

**INTERIOR:** Although converted to a Jewelry Mart in the late 1980s, much of the theatre's florid baroque ornamentation survives. There is elaborate plasterwork on the walls and ceilings of the former auditorium, balcony, and lobby. Original Corinthian columns flank the stage, which is framed by an elaborately decorated plasterwork proscenium. At the center of the proscenium, an enormous torch projects from a shield with cornucopias to either side. The elaborate coved auditorium ceiling features a mural of a sunburst surrounded by Egyptian, Oriental, Greek and Roman figures. The figures are still intact, although a modern chandelier obscures the sunburst.

The side boxes, one on each side of the proscenium, still retain their original ornamentation. To each side of the boxes doors are plasterwork torches, and above each box is frieze of musical instruments featuring a banjo and violin (much like the plasterwork at the Pantages/Arcade). The “WB” for Warner Bros. is worked into box's the cast iron railing.

**HISTORY:** The Pantages Downtown was the sixteenth theatre in the country built for the Pantages circuit.

Pantages sold the theatre to Warner Bros. in 1929 for a reported \$24 million, mostly in stock which shortly became worthless when the market crashed in October of that year.

It was around this same time that Alexander Pantages became involved in the scandal that contributed to his downfall. On August 9, 1929 a young woman named Eunice Pringle ran shrieking onto the mezzanine of the Pantages Downtown Theatre, screaming that Pantages had just raped her in a broom closet near his office on the second floor. In a sensational trial Pantages was found guilty and sentenced to fifty years in prison. His lawyer, Jerry Geisler (unknown at the time, but later famous as the “lawyer of the stars”) appealed the decision, which was overturned. In the subsequent trial the lawyer argued that that not only was the rape a physical impossibility as described by Eunice, the plaintiff was far from being sweet and innocent as was previously supposed, but had in fact conspired with her agent/teacher (and possibly lover) to compromise Pantages. It was later circulated that on her deathbed (at a young age and under suspicious circumstances), Eunice confessed that she had been put up to the stunt by Joe Kennedy who headed RKO and wanted to get his hands on the Pantages empire. A 2002 article in the LA Times Magazine debunked that as myth, proving that Eunice had lived to age 84, dying in San Diego in 1996, claiming at the last that she had indeed been raped by Pantages.

The theatre was converted into retail space as the Jewelry Exchange in the late 1980s.

## **MAJOR THEATRES OFF BROADWAY**

### **BELASCO** (1060 S. Hill Street)

Morgan, Walls & Clements, 1926

L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument #476

### **MAYAN** (1040 S. Hill Street)

Morgan, Walls & Clements, 1927

L. A. Historic-Cultural Monument #460

The Belasco and the Mayan theatres stand next to each other on the 1000 block of Hill Street. Designed by the venerable firm of Morgan, Walls, and Clements, the two structures were built nearly simultaneously, intended to form the nucleus of a new live theatre district. Oil magnate Edward L. Doheny, funded the Belasco, while developer F. N. Stowell financed the Mayan.

The Belasco, designed for non-musical live theatre, seated 1,100 with a wide but shallow balcony suspended over a large orchestra section. It has an overall Spanish Colonial Revival style yet is eclectic in its details, with Moorish, Italianate, and Gothic ornamental elements. The main focal point of the elegant interior is the decorated coved plaster ceiling, whose oval shape echoes that of the auditorium. Unique backlit stained-glass windows decorate walls above the balcony. The Belasco was recently renovated into an event/party space, re-opening in 2011.

The Mayan, with its exuberant and ornate Pre-Columbian Revival architecture, was intended to house musical theatre productions. Seating nearly 1,500, the auditorium is filled with exotic designs based on artifacts from Mayan, Incan, and other Meso-American civilizations. The carved-stone serpent heads, warrior priests, celestial symbols, and other decorative elements were designed by Francisco Cornejo. In 1989, the Mayan was converted into a successful nightclub, with nearly all of its glorious decoration kept intact.

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### **FRIDAY MORNING CLUB** (also known as Variety Arts Center) 940 S. Figueroa Street

Allison and Allison, 1924

Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument #196

Built for the Friday Morning Club, an influential women's organization, this five-story Italian Renaissance Revival-style building was designed by Allison and Allison. It originally included meeting rooms, a ballroom, library, and offices. A theatre was also included to provide rental income. The theatre, seating 900, features hand-painted and gold-leafed ceilings that are molded and coffered to look like wood. Columns along the side aisles and the balcony are painted with *faux* marble finishes. Most of the building's interior elements remain, including a Tiffany-designed Batchelder tile fireplace in the second-floor library.

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**HILLSTREET**, (Also known as RKO Hillstreet) (8th and Hill)  
G. Albert Lansburgh, 1922 (demolished 1965)

Originally seating 2,750, the Hillstreet was built by RKO as a film and vaudeville house. Beaux-arts in style, the building wrapped around the corner with sides on both 8<sup>th</sup> and Hill Streets, and the main entrance oriented to the corner, with a central tower; much like the design of the Pantages Downtown, built two years earlier (by another architect). However, the Hillstreet had an octagonal top to its tower, whereas the Pantages Downtown is topped by a dome.

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**LOS ANGELES THEATRE CENTER**, (514 S. Spring Street)  
(formerly Security Trust and Savings Bank)  
John Parkinson, 1916/ John Sergio Fisher, AIA & Associates, 1985

The Los Angeles Theatre Center opened in 1985. Five theatres, ranging in size from 99 to 500 seats are housed in a L-shaped structure, wrapped around the historic Security Trust and Savings Bank building, which was remodeled to serve as the common lobby for all the performance spaces. The new structure is stark and modern in style, contrasting with the Greek-revival Beaux-Arts style of the former bank. The bank's beautiful original skylight remains intact. The site is featured on the Conservancy's Downtown Renaissance tour.

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**TRINITY AUDITORIUM** (also known as Embassy Auditorium) 855 S. Grand Avenue  
Thornton Fitzhugh, Frank Krucker, and Harry Deckbar, 1914  
Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument #449

The elegant, Beaux Arts-style Trinity Auditorium building (also known as the Embassy Auditorium) was built in 1914, with offices, a hotel, and a theatre. Configured with a shallow balcony on three sides, the 1,600-seat auditorium has excellent acoustics and sight lines, and a unique stained-glass ceiling. The original venue of the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Trinity Auditorium hosted important classical and jazz artists, as well as the famous evangelist Aimee Semple McPherson. As a civic auditorium, the hall was the site of many important labor union meetings.

As of 2012, the building was undergoing conversion to a boutique hotel.



## GLOSSARY OF THEATRE TERMS

Courtesy of John Evan Miller

**ASBESTOS CURTAIN:** Also referred to as a “fire curtain” or “safety curtain.” A panel of fireproof material, which can be lowered to separate the backstage area from the auditorium in case of fire. Usually composed of asbestos, these "drops" are not really curtains at all, but are sheets made from asbestos fabric and often decoratively painted. Their use became mandatory in theatres with live stage productions after a disastrous fire at the Iroquois Theatre in Chicago December 30, 1903 claimed more than 800 lives, including many children. Safety codes in many cities, including Los Angeles, required that these curtains bearing the word “asbestos” be raised and lowered once a day in public view to reassure audiences of their (fire) safety.

**BALCONY SOFFITT:** The horizontal surface beneath a balcony. The soffitt was usually a drop ceiling designed to disguise the underside of an otherwise hollow structure, both for aesthetic reasons and to eliminate acoustical problems under the balcony. The soffitt was usually ornately decorated and frequently contained light coves, lunettes, and disguised air conditioning vents. Think of them as the grand-daddy of suspended acoustical ceilings in today's office buildings.

**BURLESQUE:** See Vaudeville.

**COVE LIGHTING:** Indirect lighting, usually concealed behind decorative moldings around the perimeter of lobby ceilings, in the auditorium, around the proscenium arch, organ screens, and light wells.

**FLY SPACE:** The vertical space above the top of the proscenium, used to accommodate vertical traveling curtains and scenery. Fly space is usually twice the height of the proscenium and extends the entire depth and width of the stage. This area is also referred to as a “stage house.” Also see GRID.

**FOYER:** The outdoor space separating the lobby from the sidewalk. This recessed outdoor entry, usually beneath a marquee, accommodates box offices and queuing space. Theatre foyers evolved as owners recognized that entry and exit routes could be narrower than the auditorium's width, and that frontage space could be gained for more profitable retail use by using a setback leading to a lobby behind the foyer.

**GRID:** The framework at the top of the fly space (stage house) used to suspend stage rigging. Usually composed of steel, it holds all cables, ropes, and pulleys used to raise and lower curtains, drops, lighting, and other stage equipment.

**KIOSK/TICKET BOOTH:** A free-standing enclosed box office used to collect admissions and dispense tickets. Generally located at the front and center of a theatre's entrance foyer, these "island box offices" are an endangered species because of the additional staffing costs and security risks associated with their use.

**LEGITIMATE THEATRE:** A term used to denote a theatre designed primarily for live stage productions rather than film or mixed film/stage programming. Older legitimate theatre architecture placed more emphasis on intimacy and the acoustics needed to accommodate the unamplified spoken word.

**LOBBY:** A public assembly area used to collect audiences awaiting the start of the next program.

**LOGE:** A premium-priced section featuring increased staff attendance or more advantageous access or visibility. In larger multi-level houses, either the first balcony or the front of the main balcony was designated as loge seating.

**LOUNGE:** Spaces adjacent to or below the lobby, designated for a variety of leisure activities for patrons during intermissions or while waiting for the next performance, i.e., restrooms, powder rooms, smoking rooms, ballrooms, crying rooms, playrooms, coffee shops, etc.

**LUNETTE OR DOME:** A recessed lighting well with cove lighting, usually on an auditorium or lobby ceiling, or beneath the balcony (soffitt). Many of these light wells were decorated with stenciled or trompe l'oeil surfaces and were designed to be illuminated by changing colored lighting circuits. Some were enclosed with leaded glass.

**MARQUEE:** The cantilevered canopy extending from the front of the theatre, above the entrance foyer. Marquees in Los Angeles after 1920 usually had letterboards used to advertise the current and coming attractions. As advertising media, they tended to receive facelifts when styles and advertising techniques changed. Most of the marquees in Los Angeles were converted from rectangular to trapezoidal configuration after S. Charles Lee patented the use of angled sideboards in 1935 to increase the length of viewing time for passing motorists. Portions of original marquees still exist beneath glass and sheet metal extensions installed between 1935 and 1949. Neon in all colors has long been the preferred lighting on these later marquees.

**MEZZANINE:** A lobby or lounge space above the first floor. In some theatres, the term has been used to refer to the lower part or the first few rows in a balcony.

**NICKELODEON:** A single-level auditorium designed to screen silent films with minimal orchestral accompaniment. Often converted from pre-existing retail storefronts, these "Plain Janes" were originally novelty outlets designed to run "two reels" (20 minute short subjects), newsreels, and other novelties before the advent of feature length pictures. The name Nickelodeon is a composite of the word nickel (the usual admission price) and Odeon (a prestigious English vaudeville palace chain), with the implied inference being that these theatres were "the poor man's palace."

**PIPE ORGAN:** Theatre pipe organs are often noted as being of a certain manual and rank, usually written as 3/13, for example.

**MANUAL** refers to the keyboard on an organ console used to activate notes played by the organist. Theatre pipe organ consoles ranged in size from 2 to 5 manuals. Various combinations of instruments could be accessed from each manual, giving the organist the ability to change registration by moving from manual to manual. The more elaborate "unit orchestra" organs such as the Wurlitzer, had "pre-set" couplers which enabled musicians to program combinations for each

manual in advance so they could make rapid fire changes in the instrumentation to accompany silent film action at the touch of a button.

**RANK** refers to the sets of pipes used to reproduce the sound of a type of instrument, such as woodwinds, brass, strings, etc. Most theatre pipe organs ranged from 6 to 39 ranks, depending upon the budget of the owner.

**PROLOGUE:** Musical productions designed to introduce a film program. Sid Grauman introduced prologues at the Million Dollar Theatre in 1918 which were staged costumed productions designed to compliment the theme of the feature attraction. Although originally conceived as enhancements for premiere engagements, they were later packaged to travel with films and some toured nationwide.

**PROSCENIUM ARCH:** The frame around the stage opening into an auditorium. Visually, the arch focuses the audience's attention on the entertainment presented on the stage or screen. Architecturally, the designers usually seized upon the opportunity to decorate the arch as an oversized architectural element.

**RISER:** Part of a system of theatre seating which uses “steps” serving as platforms to elevate seats from the front to the back of the theatre in order to provide unobstructed sightlines over the heads of other patrons.

**SNACK BAR:** Snack bars originated in small theatres, and expanded into larger downtown theatres only after the Depression depleted audiences and theatre owners found it necessary to create another source of revenue. In 1936 B. Marcus Priteca, the designer of many Pantages Theatres, designed a self-contained refrigerated unit on wheels that could be used during kiddie shows and matinees but could then be wheeled out of sight for weekend and evening performances when more sophisticated or “well heeled” patrons might be offended. Refreshment units were eventually enclosed behind stationary counters between 1937 and 1945, that in turn were replaced by specially designed glass and steel candy counters that still survive in many instances.

**STADIUM SEATING:** A seating configuration that elevates the rear portion of the auditorium seating on a steep riser system, thereby creating space beneath for the lobby and lounges at the rear of the auditorium. This device was used to make maximum use of space. It also created the sightlines of a balcony without the cost of a cantilever system.

**TERRAZZO:** A paving system featuring polychromatic designs achieved by embedding marble chips in different colors of grout, separated by brass edging strips. The surface is then ground smooth to a high-gloss finish using a large buffer machine. The resulting finish resembles marble or mosaic, but in highly florid color patterns. The most outstanding example of theatre terrazzo is the sidewalk and foyer paving at the Los Angeles Theatre. Clifton's Brookdale cafeteria at Sixth and Broadway is another outstanding example. Terrazzo sidewalks are not unique to Los Angeles, but were much more common in areas devoid of ice and snow because they can become slippery.

**TODD-AO:** A projection system developed by film producer Michael Todd (TODD) utilizing American Optical (AO) lenses. This was the forerunner of today's 70 millimeter systems. TODD-AO quadrupled the size of the 35 millimeter image projected by Cinemascope and Vistavision in order to increase clarity as well as the width of the image. The most successful film made with this

process was “Around the World in 80 Days,” which set a 3-1/2 year exclusive engagement record at the now demolished Carthay Circle Theatre. Other productions were not as successful, notably “Oklahoma,” which required installation of a curved screen at the United Artist Theatre downtown. To do this, the first balcony or “Golden Horseshoe” was removed to provide adequate sight lines for patrons seated at the rear of the orchestra seating section. (Michael Todd is also remembered as one of Elizabeth Taylor's husbands).

**TWENTY-FOUR SHEET:** A 24-sheet poster was an expanded version of the movie poster usually seen in attraction cases in the theatre lobby. One of the first successful outdoor lithography prints to be used, 24-sheets were mounted in billboard frames on theatre facades, side walls, and off-site along America's roadways. They derive the name from the fact that they were printed in 24 sections, each the size of attraction case posters, about 30 inches by 40 inches.

**TWO-A-DAY:** A schedule of vaudeville that permitted two complete performances, the first beginning at mid-afternoon to attract downtown shoppers, and an evening performance to attract strictly theatre crowds. The two-a-day concept on the Orpheum circuit died here in Los Angeles by 1935.

**VAUDEVILLE:** A live variety show consisting of “acts” which were not necessarily related in theme or format. Programs usually ranged from six to twelve acts, which were interspersed with film short subjects in later years. The Orpheum in San Francisco and B. F. Keith in Boston, simultaneously incorporated the first vaudeville circuits in 1893. They quickly became the first and most prestigious nationwide form of popular entertainment, attracting top names to culturally impoverished and remote places that would otherwise have been unable to amortize the costs of such expensive talent. Vaudeville's reign continued until the advent of radio networks and “talkies” in 1927. A slow decline eliminated all major vaudeville circuits by 1935, but individual vaudeville shows continued until the 1950s.

By contrast, BURLESQUE was a variation of vaudeville that also included suggestive themes among the acts. Generally considered “low brow” compared to vaudeville, burlesque was nevertheless a legitimate form of live entertainment until it degenerated into a strip-tease genre at the end of the vaudeville era.

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