



EXPLORING CHINATOWN

Past and Present



LOS ANGELES
CONSERVANCY

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WEDGED BETWEEN

Elysian Park to the north, downtown to the south, and Lincoln Heights and Echo Park to the east and west, Los Angeles' Chinatown spans a little less than a mile. Along with iconic symbols of classical East Asia—tiled roofs, red lanterns, and wishing wells—exists the history of one of Los Angeles' oldest neighborhoods.

The streets and parcels that formed the community's center were plotted in L.A.'s first official city survey in 1849, one year before California became a state. No other area of the city, except downtown, was mapped out before this location. Photographs taken in the mid- to late nineteenth century show modest houses surrounded by wooden fences, separating wide lots from their neighbors and the dusty road. It is an image in sharp contrast to the current urban landscape, though certain remnants remain: the forty-seven-acre "cornfields" just north of Broadway, used for agriculture until the end of the nineteenth century, still conjure images of the farms that once stood there.

With such a long history of urban settlement comes an elaborate history of the settlers themselves. The neighborhood's roll call of immigrant inhabitants is diverse, overlapping, and complex. The first ethnic enclave to establish itself in the area was from northern Mexico. Los Angeles' first barrio, dubbed Sonoratown, dates to the 1850s. These immigrants, many of whom hailed from Sonora, had been drawn to California during the Gold Rush. Those who chose to stay in Los Angeles found a sense of community, if not prosperity, in the shacks and adobes of Sonoratown.

As Los Angeles grew, so did the disparities between the burgeoning city and Sonoratown, where discrimination toward its inhabitants kept it segregated and rough. It was known as a place for gambling, prostitution, cockfighting, and other sport: periodicals note the location of a bullfighting ring between what is now North Broadway and North Hill Streets during the 1860s.

Officials turned a blind eye to the majority of these activities, preferring them to happen in non-Anglo neighborhoods. This lack of pressure from outside authorities on the goings-on of Sonoratown, dubious or otherwise, afforded those most vulnerable to discrimination a relative peace. Sonoratown became a magnet for other immigrants. French, Italian, Croatian, German, and other European settlers set up shop in the neighborhood.





They established schools, churches, businesses, and hospitals, some of which still stand and operate today. For decades, much of the area was known as Little Italy. That name, like Sonoratown before it, would change in the twentieth century with a new influx of immigrants: the Chinese.

CHINATOWN, *Los Angeles*



What is now known as Chinatown wasn't the first in Los Angeles. The first permanent settlement of Chinese immigrants centered around El Pueblo de Los Angeles, the city's birthplace. Most of these residents were miners and laborers, men from the Guangdong province who had traveled to California in search of better opportunities. Many found employment working on the railroads.

From the outset, Chinese Americans faced discrimination on a systemic level, evidenced by the jobs they were allowed to have, the places they were allowed to live, and the spates of violence their community endured from others. Still, Chinese immigrants continued to settle and prosper in Los Angeles. This first Chinatown became a thriving hub of Chinese residences and businesses complete with schools, temples,



theatres, and restaurants. But the denial by city officials of public services to the Chinese, such as sewer systems, paved roads, and electricity, created a health risk. A proposal to raze the neighborhood in favor of a new railway terminal to be built on its site was issued in 1913; over the next decade, anti-Chinese sentiment and excitement for Union Station led to the neighborhood's ultimate destruction. At the time of what is now known as Historic Chinatown's condemnation in the 1930s, there were close to 3,000 Chinese Americans living in Los Angeles, most of whom faced displacement.

Today's Chinatown was born as a destination as well as a community. Its founders envisioned a place that would serve and protect local Chinese American residents, as well as draw visitors to partake of its unique offerings. For many tourists, Chinatown's cuisine was the biggest draw.

In its earliest days, New Chinatown enticed tourists hungry for westernized Asian specialties with its Chop Suey houses. Over time, these restaurants were eclipsed in popularity by massive dim sum palaces including Empress Pavilion, Golden Dragon, and Ocean Seafood. When Chinese American migration to the San Gabriel Valley began in the 1970s, many of these restaurants moved with them. The ones that stayed struggled to keep afloat through decades of economic decline.

In recent years, Chinatown has attracted new business and development that has brought new visitors to the area. An influx of art galleries, along with young, trendy eateries, offer new

options alongside Chinatown's established shopping and dining institutions. The Little Jewel of New Orleans, a deli and grocery, opened in 2014, following Pan-Asian hotspot Chego's lead. Burgerlord—a hipster's fast food dream—and Pok Pok, a Thai restaurant hailing from Portland's alternative food scene, have also taken up residence. These and other destinations attract foodhounds back to an area many crossed off their lists years ago. Yet they're also fueling the interest of young people who might be persuaded to live in New Chinatown, revitalizing an aging population with new energy and stability.





King Hing Theatre

647 N. Spring Street
1962, Gilbert L. Leong

The 375-seat King Hing Theatre, originally named the Sing Lee Theatre, opened in 1962. It was designed by Gilbert L. Leong, a native Angeleno and the first Chinese American to graduate from the USC School of Architecture. The theatre was a popular destination for the community, helping to make Spring Street a thriving local hub between the 1950s and the 1970s. The King Hing Theatre showed Chinese-

language films and hosted live performances, including Chinese operas. It stopped operating in 2001.

Chinese American Museum

425 N. Los Angeles Street
Sanchez Building/ca. 1898
Garnier Building/1890, A. M. Edelman
Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument #64
as part of Plaza Park. Listed in the National Register of Historic Places as part of the Los Angeles Plaza Historic District

Once considered the unofficial center of Chinese Americans living in Los Angeles, the Garnier Building was leased by its owner, Basque immigrant Philippe Garnier, to Chinese American merchants beginning in 1890. The building housed a myriad of enterprises, from shops to schools to churches. It also held many of Chinatown's advocacy organizations, which provided services denied elsewhere to most residents (such as health-care and educational programs) and fought racial legislation and discrimination. These organizations included the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association, which relocated to Broadway in 1951 (see page 7).

One of the few surviving structures of Historic Chinatown, the Garnier Building is now home to the Chinese American Museum, which hosts numerous events and exhibits. One exhibit includes a recreation of the Sun Wing Wo General Store and Herb Shop, which operated out of the Garnier Building in the 1890s.



Philippe The Original

1001 N. Alameda Street
1895, R. B. Young

Philippe's is one of the oldest continuously operating restaurants in Los Angeles, as well as one of the most beloved. French immigrant Philippe Mathieu founded the café in 1908 a few blocks south of its present location, in an area then known as Frenchtown. Displaced for construction of the Hollywood Freeway, Philippe's has served its legendary French Dipped sandwiches at the corner of Alameda and Ord Streets since 1951.



759 N. Spring Street

circa 1894

Built at the end of the nineteenth century, this three-story brick warehouse building has been many things over the years, including a furniture warehouse, a Salvation Army-run mission, and a beauty supply store. Years of alterations left little intact of the original design, yet a current renovation of the building for mixed-use has uncovered some long-hidden original elements.



The untitled 2014 mural on the south side of the building is by the Portuguese artist Vhils. The mural is not painted: it was created by chipping away stucco to expose the brick underneath.

Garibaldi Building

Northeast corner of Broadway and Ord Street
1906, R. B. Young

Covington Building

Southeast corner of Broadway and Ord Street
1913, Hudson & Munsell

The Garibaldi and Covington buildings, located in the heart of what was once Little Italy, are among the last intact commercial buildings associated with Italian ownership in the neighborhood.

The Garibaldi Building housed S. Peluffo & Sons grocery for many years. Italian immigrant Stephen Peluffo was one of the city's first wholesale grocers and also owned a winery. The Covington Building likewise catered to businesses owned by Italian immigrants. Both buildings had apartments on their second floors.





Cathay Bank

777 N. Broadway

1966, Eugene Kinn Choy & Associates

Cathay Bank was born of necessity: in 1962, Chinese Americans in Los Angeles faced discrimination by financial institutions and businesses that often denied them loans and other banking services. Founded by prominent businessmen in the Chinatown community, Cathay Bank was the first Chinese American bank in California and the first to specifically address the needs of the growing Chinese American population. Its commitment to equality is reflected in its motto: An Open Door for All. Cathay Bank has since opened branches throughout the nation and the world.

Cathay Bank was designed by Eugene Kinn Choy. A graduate of USC's School of Architecture, Choy became the second Chinese American to join the American Institute of Architects. Other buildings of Choy's in Chinatown include Broadway's Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (CCBA) and the Jin Hing Jewelry Store on Bamboo Lane. Like the CCBA, Cathay Bank is a hallmark of Modern design combined with traditional Chinese architectural elements. Choy's use of the International Style of Modern architecture is augmented by the four Chinese characters running vertically down the front facade of the building, while the roof evokes the classical wood roofing of Chinese structures. Choy specifically incorporated these details to honor the request of Cathay's founders, who wanted the bank's design to reflect their cultural heritage. The convergence of traditional Chinese custom and modern innovation seen in Choy's work is an apt reflection of the Chinatown community.

THE ARCHITECTURE OF CHINATOWN

Curved roofs with upturned rooflines, vibrant colors, lodge pole columns, exotic (to Western sensibilities) ornamentation, and a generally linear structural massing all exemplify the architecture of Los Angeles' Chinatown.

Most of the "traditional Chinese" buildings in Chinatown date from the late 1930s and early 1940s. They essentially reinterpret what the architects (both European American and Chinese American) believed would appeal to a largely American clientele. Neon lighting, for example, a technology of the Art Deco era of the 1920s and 1930s, found a home in Chinatown as it did elsewhere in the city.

Heavily symbolic ornamentation is everywhere, from roof ridges to doorways.

Dragons

symbolize the emperor. Fish and crab signify prosperity and wealth; the crane, long life; tigers, courage and strength; the butterfly, love; phoenixes, opportunity, good luck, and good fortune. Evil spirits cannot cross water, so even water features, as pleasing and aesthetic as they are, provide a function.

Tiled roofs and ridgelines mimic the natural patterns of bamboo. Upturned eaves repel evil spirits, returning their bad energy back to the sky. Yellow and gold—the colors of royalty and immortality, and red—signify good luck and happiness. Many banks and businesses use the colors green and blue, signifying health, prosperity, and longevity. Support columns and bracing, evident in buildings and gateways, reference the wooden, lodge pole, nail-free construction techniques refined over centuries. And as with the traditional palaces, temples, and residences of China, most traditional Chinatown buildings are low-rise.



Bank of America

850 N. Broadway

1972, Gilbert L. Leong and Richard Layne Tom

The first major national bank to move to Chinatown, Bank of America decided to open a branch there only after watching the success of Chinese American-owned banks such as Cathay and East West Bank. Architect Gilbert L. Leong incorporated classical Chinese architecture into the Modern structure through features such as an imported jade-green tile roof. In addition to Bank of America, Leong built many iconic structures in his childhood neighborhood, including East West Bank (where he served as a founding director), the Kong Chow Family Association and Temple (931 N. Broadway), and the Chinese United Methodist Church (825 N. Hill Street).



Pacific Alliance Medical Center

531 W. College Street
Originally the French Hospital
1916, W. S. Garrett
1926 remodel, Armand Monaco
1964 remodel and expansion, R. C. Nielsen

Constructed by the French Society, the French Hospital was founded in 1869. It offered healthcare and medical services to French American citizens and newly arrived French immigrants, as well as to the greater community regardless

of nationality, race, religion, or gender. Now known as the Pacific Alliance Medical Center (PAMC), it is the second-oldest hospital in Los Angeles. Still on its original site, PAMC has been remodeled several times, most recently in the 1960s. Vestiges of its 1926 renovation by Armand Monaco can be seen at its southwest corner. A more visible sign of the hospital's history is the statue of Joan of Arc at the corner of Hill and College Streets, a reminder of the French community's presence in the neighborhood's early days.

Thien Hau Temple

756 Yale Street
2005

Thien Hau Temple was built by the Camau Association of America, a benevolent association that serves immigrants from Vietnam along with other East Asian populations. A Taoist temple, Thien Hau Temple is dedicated to Mazu, the goddess of the sea and patron saint to sailors and fishermen. Many residents of Chinatown came from communities in southeastern coastal areas of China, which, along with Vietnam, have strong ties to the ocean. Other shrines in the Thien Hau Temple are dedicated to the warrior Guan Yu and earth god Fu De.

Chinatown saw waves of immigrants from Taiwan and Hong Kong after the repeal of the Alien Quota Act in 1965. After the Vietnam War, a flood of Indochinese refugees including Vietnamese of Chinese origin as well as ethnic Vietnamese, Cambodian, Laotian, and Thai immigrants arrived, growing Chinatown's population and diversity. Today, the culture of Chinatown is a more inclusively Asian one, as seen in institutions such as Thien Hau Temple, where people from multiple backgrounds come to pray.



Castelar Street Elementary School

840 Yale Street
1923
1977 addition, Eugene Kinn Choy & Associates

Founded in 1882, Castelar School originally consisted of a four-room building in which four teachers (including the principal) taught 300 to 400 children. As the second-oldest school in the Los Angeles Unified School District, Castelar has undergone several transformations. After the original schoolhouse burned down, the school expanded into two different structures, one built in 1904 (which was damaged beyond repair in the 1971 Sylmar earthquake) and the other in 1923. In 1977, a major remodel added several other structures to the 1923 site.

Castelar is unique in many ways: ever committed to serving its students, it was the first in the district to hire staff that could teach in English, Spanish, and Cantonese. Now it boasts an immersive language program in Mandarin and enrolls roughly 650 students.

Just inside one of the main entrances are two murals, one painted in 1977 by Leo Politi, a beloved children's book author and illustrator. The second mural adjacent to it, titled "Light of Asia," was jointly created by sixth-grade students and artist Glenna Boltuch Avila. A third mural, on the exterior wall facing College Street, was done in 1991 by Chinese artist Shiyan Zhang. Its title, "The Party at Lan T'ing," describes the scene: Wang Xizhi, a famous poet and calligrapher, celebrating his birthday with thirty-two guests. Mirrors, jewels, and eggshell were incorporated into the painting as textured embellishment.



St. Anthony's Croatian Catholic Church

712 N. Grand Avenue
1910, A. C. Martin

A large influx of Croatians began arriving in Los Angeles at the turn of the twentieth century. Propelled west by the economic and political unrest in Croatia, they were lured to Los Angeles by the construction jobs available in the city's booming downtown.

Settling in the present-day Chinatown neighborhood, they founded St. Anthony's Croatian Catholic Church in 1910. Few Croatian Americans reside in Chinatown today, yet St. Anthony's maintains an active role in the Croatian American community.





Metro Gold Line Chinatown Station

901 N. Spring Street
2003, Gensler

The Metro Gold Line Chinatown stop is one of three stations designated as “landmark” stops by Metro (in addition to Southwest Museum and Memorial Park). Similar to many buildings in

Chinatown, the stop embraces familiar Asian architectural elements and colors. Artist Chusien Chang integrated ancient Chinese tenets into the design of the station, such as the yin and yang, the Ba Gua, and feng shui. Below the elevated platform on the north side of the station are benches adorned with symbols. Together with those on two other benches on the platform, these symbols represent the four major groups of immigrants who settled Chinatown. Meso-Americans are represented by a Mayan figure; Italians, by a ring of grapes circling a picture of Casa Italiana. The seal of St. Anthony’s Croatian Catholic Church and the Croatian flag symbolize the Croatian community, and the Chinese symbol of longevity commemorates the Chinese. The Metro stop’s South Plaza is dominated by a replica of a Yong Bell, given to Los Angeles by its Sister City, Guangzhou.

Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association

925 N. Broadway
1951, Eugene Kinn Choy & Associates

Formally organized in 1890, the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (CCBA) was based out of the Garnier Building in Historic Chinatown (see page 4). The organization was formed to promote and protect Chinese Americans on both political and social fronts. It continues to pursue this mission today, representing nearly thirty family and district associations.

The CCBA relocated to its current home, designed by Eugene Kinn Choy, in 1951. This unique civic structure exemplifies the East Eclectic style of many buildings commissioned by New Chinatown businesses and institutions.



Site of Little Joe’s Restaurant

900 N. Broadway
1888, B. J. Reeves
1963/1972 remodels, O’Leary & Terasawa

In 1928, Little Joe’s Italian American Restaurant was established on the corner of Broadway and College Street. It occupied an 1888 building that had once been a grocery. The business remained in the Nuccio family, second-generation owners of the original grocery, until its closure in 1998. Several years later, the building was demolished. Now, the site is home to the Blossom Plaza project, a \$100 million residential-retail complex that includes townhouse-style apartments as well as affordable housing units. The appealing five-story buildings were inspired by Chinese architecture and herald a revived interest in the neighborhood.

Tin Bo Inc.

841 N. Broadway

One of many excellent herb stores in Chinatown, Tin Bo carries a wide selection of teas and herbs, including what are considered the “big three” health supplements in Chinese medicine: ginseng, reishi mushroom, and deer antler. They are believed to improve energy levels, body function, and longevity. Chinese medicine and apothecaries such as Tin Bo were a part of Chinatown from its earliest days: Chinese companies imported specialty herbs for their workers, and Chinese groceries often stocked medicinal ingredients alongside food items.





West Gate (Hill Street) and East Gate (Broadway)

1938 (West Gate), 1939 (East Gate), Webster & Wilson

Two of the most iconic structures in Chinatown are the welcome gates leading to the Central Plaza on either end of Gin Ling Way. The West Gate (on Hill Street) was erected in 1938 as part of the initial development of the Central Plaza. Its traditional design included 150-year-old camphor wood from China. The Chinese characters translate to “Cooperate to Achieve.”

The equally elaborate East Gate (facing Broadway) was dedicated on the one-year anniversary of the Plaza. Commissioned by Y. C. Hong in honor of his mother, it is known as the Gate of Maternal Virtues.

The gates were designated as Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monuments #825 (West Gate) and #826 (East Gate) in 2005, following a nomination submitted by the Los Angeles Conservancy.

Central Plaza

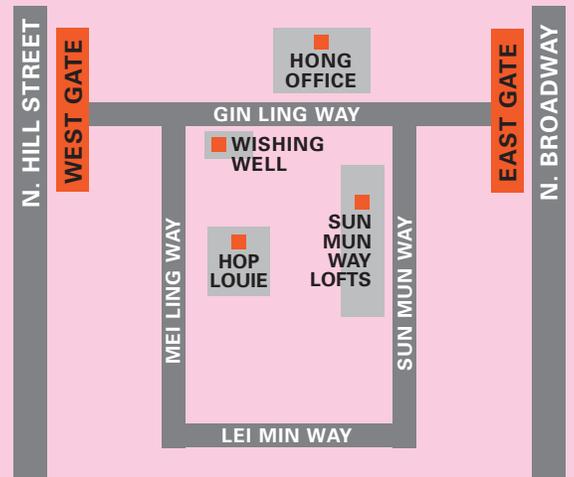
950 N. Broadway
1938, Webster & Wilson

The heart of the neighborhood, Central Plaza was the site of New Chinatown’s official opening on June 25, 1938. There was certainly cause to celebrate that day: New Chinatown represented the Herculean efforts of civic leaders to create a commercial center that was planned, owned, and operated by Chinese Americans.

After Historic Chinatown was declared condemned in 1931, what was then the fourth-largest Chinese community in the U.S. found itself without a home.

The New Chinatown development was galvanized in large part by businessman Peter SooHoo, who founded the Los Angeles Chinatown Project Association in 1937. Using funds from twenty-five Chinese American investors, the Association formed a corporation to buy land and develop New Chinatown.

The concept of New Chinatown as an idyllic destination complete with gateways and wishing wells was intentional. These features, along with the East Asian Eclectic architecture



Sun Mun Way Lofts

949 Sun Mun Way
1939, Webster & Wilson

The Sun Mun Way building is one of the earliest structures in New Chinatown’s Central Plaza pedestrian hub. It is best remembered for housing the restaurant Rice Bowl and Madame Wong’s, a hotspot for legendary punk bands in the 1970s and ’80s such as Oingo Boingo, X, and The Germs. After the club closed in 1985, the building fell into decline over the next two decades. It was purchased in 2003 by owners who restored and rehabilitated the building, earning a Los Angeles Conservancy Preservation Award in 2007.





of many buildings, played heavily into a romanticized stereotype of Asian people and Asian culture. This romanticism was done so deliberately, in order to encourage tourism and strengthen Chinatown's businesses and economy.

SooHoo and the Association hired architects Erle Webster and Adrian Wilson to create a plan for a pedestrian village that would serve as a central hub for commerce and sightseeing. The clients sought to dispel notions of Chinatown as a dark, dingy underworld and instead celebrate its culture and progress. The buildings around the Central Plaza were designed with shops on the first level and living space above. Brightly painted facades and clay-tiled roofs gave a welcoming charm to the neighborhood.

Today, Central Plaza serves much the same purpose as it did then: shops and businesses are still owned by many of the original founding families, and the neon lights added shortly after the buildings' completion create a festival feeling at night. Among statues of historic heroes, such as the first president of the Republic of China, Dr. Sun Yat-sen, and action star Bruce Lee, the Plaza serves as a monument to the collective achievements of Los Angeles' Chinese American community.

Chinatown Wishing Well

1939, Liu Hong Kay

Also known as the Seven Star Cavern, this fanciful "wishing well" has been a fixture of the Central Plaza since its beginning. The well was created by

Liu Hong Kay, who worked with Chinese artisans. The concrete structure is a miniature representation of the Seven Star Cave in China. Buddha and other good-luck figurines mark spots where coins tossed into tin cups will earn the wisher such benefits as "Good Luck," "Vacation," and "Lotto Win." The structure was once brightly painted, though the colors no longer remain on the faux rocks.



Y. C. Hong Office Building

445 N. Gin Ling Way
1939, Webster & Wilson

Carved brackets and rafter tails, Chinese-influenced ornamentation, and a neon silhouette make this building a prime example of the East Asian Eclectic style exemplified in New Chinatown's Central Plaza. Yet the upstairs offices of lawyer You Chung Hong make it truly special.

The son of a Chinese immigrant who worked on the railroads, Hong was the first Chinese American to pass the California Bar exam in 1923 and to graduate from USC's law school. He specialized in immigration law and devoted his career to Chinese American civil rights, which led him to testify before the U.S. Senate and to appear before the U.S. Supreme Court. Hong worked on thousands of immigration cases, always championing the Chinese American population he served. An active member of the community outside of his professional career, Hong contributed greatly to New Chinatown. He served as one of its founders and commissioned multiple buildings on Gin Ling Way, including his office building.



Hop Louie Restaurant

950 Mei Ling Way
1941

Once known as the Golden Pagoda Restaurant, Hop Louie is perhaps best known for its shape: a five-tiered pagoda. One of the significant East Asian Eclectic structures in the Central Plaza, the Hop Louie pagoda is as much a symbol of New Chinatown as the venerable bar inside. The stairwell walls are hung with pictures of celebrity diners.





West Plaza

Hill Street, between Bernard and College Street
1948

Located across Hill Street from the Central Plaza, the West Plaza was developed after World War II and opened in 1948. The design of the complex features Chinese elements, such as green tile roofs with upturned eaves, and a wishing well. The overall aesthetic of the West Plaza is more modern in style and more subdued in decoration than Central Plaza. It was intended to cater to the neighborhood rather than to tourists. Its grocers, printshops, and family associations reflected this focus, as opposed to the jewelry and curio shops more common in the Central Plaza.

The pedestrian streets of the West Plaza, Chung King Court and Chung King Road, were never as busy as those of the Central Plaza. In recent years, this quieter area has attracted numerous artists and galleries, with openings and public events adding new vibrancy to the area.



Phoenix Bakery

969 N. Broadway
1977, Gilbert L. Leong

The Phoenix Bakery opened on New Chinatown's Central Plaza in 1938. It originally supplied the community with Chinese pastries that were difficult to come by in the U.S. The logo of a boy hiding a pastry box behind his back was created in the 1940s by Tyrus Wong, who also painted the Central Plaza's dragon mural: the

logo was modeled after one of the children in the extended family of bakery owner Fung Chow Chan. With more business than it could now manage, the bakery opened its current location in 1977. Still owned and operated by third-generation Chans, the Phoenix Bakery continues to produce hundreds of its trademark whipped cream and fresh strawberry cakes every week.

Mandarin Plaza

970 N. Broadway
1972, Hai C. Tan

With an entrance capped by a massive gold ingot symbolizing wealth and prosperity, Mandarin Plaza



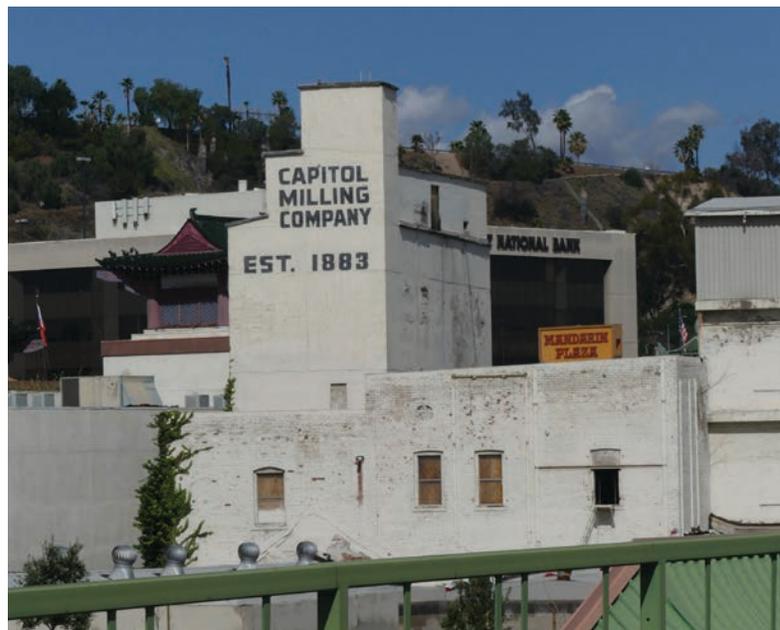
is hard to miss. The relaxation of immigration laws in the 1960s brought a flood of new residents and money into Chinatown. As the first major commercial center built in the neighborhood since the 1950s, Mandarin Plaza signified that change. A plaque with its founders' names appears near the plaza's gateway. As the site of the popular new restaurant Pok Pok, Mandarin Plaza still heralds Chinatown's potential for commercial growth.

Capitol Milling Company

1231 N. Spring Street
1855

1884 addition, Kysor & Morgan
1889 addition, Kysor, Morgan & Walls

Despite the clearly legible "Est. 1883" painted on the side of Capitol Milling Company's building, parts of the brick structure have been standing for much longer. The brick mill produced flour from 1855 until 1998, when the company was sold and the building acquired by San Antonio Winery. Capitol Milling harkens back to the agricultural industry that once flourished in the area. Los Angeles was still a rough Mexican outpost of approximately 800 people when water from the ditch that provided early settlers with water, the Zanja Madre, powered Capitol Milling's water wheel. The company (known first as Eagle Mill, then as Deming Mill) would eventually be named Capitol Milling by owners Jacob Lowe and Herman Levi, German American Jews who purchased the mill in 1883. Capitol Milling stayed in the Levi family until its closure in 1998, making it the longest-running family-owned business in Los Angeles.





Chinatown Heritage and Visitors Center

411 and 415 Bernard Street
1886 and 1892

These two working-class homes harken back to Los Angeles' early development. The one-story frame cottages are rare surviving examples of the type of residences that once made up the neighborhood. Distinctive features such as roofs with shallow eaves, decorated gables, simple porches, and wood clapboard siding exemplify the Queen Anne Style of the late nineteenth century. The homes were built by Alsatian immigrant Philip Fritz, a carpenter for the Bridges and Buildings Department of the Southern Pacific Railroad. Fritz family members lived in the homes as recently as 1992. Currently owned by the Chinese Historical Society of Southern California, the buildings house a research collection, bookstore, artifacts, and displays related to local and national Chinese and Asian American history.



St. Peter's Italian Catholic Church

1039 N. Broadway
1947, Armand Monaco

Established in 1904, St. Peter's Italian Catholic Church originally occupied a small structure on North Spring Street. It moved to its present site on North Broadway in 1915, within the heart of what was then Little Italy. A fire destroyed the stone chapel in 1944 and the current church was completed in 1947. Architect Armand Monaco designed it to recall the Romanesque parish churches of Central Italy. Although Italian Americans are now dispersed throughout Los Angeles County, the church and the adjacent Casa Italiana remain an important part of the community.



Gee How Oak Tin Association

421 Bernard Street
1949, Eugene Kinn Choy & Associates

In the nineteenth century, Chinese men in Los Angeles created a number of family associations to provide support, protection, and social ties within the community. With discriminatory immigration laws severely limiting Chinese women's ability to immigrate, the associations offered meals, healthcare, and camaraderie for immigrant men working in a strange new country.

Formed around surnames identifying common lineage, family associations offered new immigrants assistance with job placement, housing, English lessons, financial counsel, and funeral services. They also offered the opportunity to connect

with fellow countrymen through activities ranging from mahjong games to charity work.

The Gee How Oak Tin Association is one of approximately forty family associations in L.A.'s Chinatown that continue to serve the local population as well as new arrivals from China and Southeast Asia. Inside the Association building's common room hangs a picture of the ancestor believed to be the common link to the various families that make up Gee How Oak Tin: the Chans, Chens, Chins, Trans, Woos, and Yuens. Photos documenting multiple generations of these families ring the walls. Gee How Oak Tin (meaning "Most Filial") is an international organization, and, according to its members, one of the largest in the United States. The L.A. Chinatown chapter comprises 400 to 500 members—including women, who were officially allowed to join more than a decade ago.





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**CHINESE
AMERICAN
MUSEUM**