

## THE JAIL THAT MODERN SCIENCE BUILT

Tuesday, January 19th. 7:09 P.M. Clear and cool in the city. Thirty preservationists convene on police headquarters for an architectural survey. First of it's kind...

Welcome to Parker Center. Since it's formal unveiling on September 12, 1955 The Los Angeles Police Department has operated out of this 8-story 407, 826 square foot high-rise one block from City Hall. The building was designed by Welton Becket Associates following a 1947 bond measure meant to unify police operations in one modern building. The associate architect was J.E. Staunton, additional collaborators included Maynard Woodard, director of design; Murray Erick and Paul E. Jeffers of Associated Structural Engineers; Ralph E. Phillips, Mechanical-Electrical engineers; Ford J. Twatts Company, and Morris Knudsen, Associated General Contractors; public space artwork by Benjamin Rosenthal and Joseph Young.

Parker Center is constructed of reinforced concrete with pre-cast concrete partitions. Columns are covered in glazed ceramic mosaics and 25,000 square feet of glass are set in rigid aluminum sash. Ceramic veneer from Gladding McBean cover the windowless wall areas. The east and west walls are protected from direct light by vertical aluminum louvers. A city in itself, Parker center operated it's own postal service, with several daily pickups and deliveries at city hall, county offices, courts, jails and all police stations. All offices were quickly reached by a maze of pneumatic tubes threaded into every division. Operators routed the capsules to any room by dialing their destination and inserting them into the tube.

William Henry Parker was born in Lead, South Dakota on June 21, 1902, the son of a miner. He came to Los Angeles in 1923 and took a job as an usher in a downtown theater. In 1927, he joined the Los Angeles Police Department, becoming chief of police August 2, 1950, a position he held the rest of his life. After attending Harvard, he enlisted in the US Army during World War II. Parker drafted the police and prison plan for the Normandy Invasion, and was subsequently awarded the Purple Heart. Frequently the center of controversy, Parker was often at odds with the F.B.I., and thwarted Nikita Khrushchev's visit to Disneyland in 1957. During his long career, Parker helped clean up city hall corruption and professionalized the department along the lines of a quasi-military organization. Although lauded nationally as an honest, efficient and effective police chief, he was nevertheless strongly criticized by minority communities, and accused of racial bigotry before and after the Watts riots of 1965. Parker suffered a heart attack and died the evening of Saturday, July 16, 1966. He was stricken during a standing ovation at a banquet in his honor at the Statler Hilton. That week he was memorialized at the cathedral of Saint Vibiana by a crowd of 1,500. On March 26, 1969 the former Police Administrative Facility was officially renamed Parker Center.

*"Within it's polished, hygienic laboratories and offices are facilities and equipment calculated to hearten the honest and stay the wayward" - Los Angeles Times*

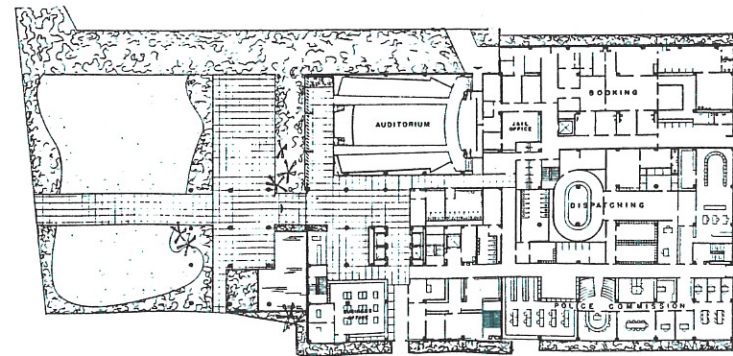
Original Department breakdown by Floor:

- 1-Business offices, Property (evidence) division, Communications, Traffic, Police Commission, 453-seat auditorium and booking jail.
- 2-Felon prison
- 3-Detective bureau, Robbery, Homicide, Auto theft, Bunco, Forgery and Vice.
- 4-Scientific Investigation division, including Photo, Chemistry, Criminological lab.
- 5-Personnel library, Internal Affairs and Medical records.
- 6-Chief's office, Traffic bureau, Supply division and Accounting.
- 7-Planning and Research division, Intelligence division
- 8-Employee cafeteria and lounge. Famous pushpin traffic maps.



*"Best law-enforcement facility in the world" - Popular Mechanics*

Welton David Becket, F.A.I.A., was born in Seattle, Washington on August 8, 1902. He studied architecture at the Fontainebleau School of Fine Arts in France and partnered with Walter Wurdeman in Los Angeles beginning in 1932. The Becket stamp is still widely recognizable on the Southern California landscape, from the Pan Pacific Auditorium to the Beverly Center, from early Public Housing projects in Compton to palatial estates for Hollywood stars of the 1930s. The firm's work includes such classics as Capitol Records, the Cinerama Dome, Santa Monica Civic Auditorium, the numerous Bullock's department stores (including Pasadena and Westwood), Los Angeles Memorial Sports Arena, the Music Center complex, the master plan for Century City and many buildings on the U.C.L.A. campus. Becket was a partner in the 1960 "Jet Age" expansion of the Los Angeles International Airport (including the famed spider-leg restaurant) and even partnered with Walt Disney Imagineering on several important buildings at the 1964 New York World's Fair, including the Ford pavilion and Pepsi-Cola's "It's a Small World." The Becket office practiced "total design." They provided not only the buildings but all the "display cases, tie racks, counters, door handles, wallpaper, even the plates in the buffet."



MAIN FLOOR PLAN  
WELTON BECKET FALA - J.E. STAUNTON AIA  
ARCHITECTS  
MADE IN 1957



*"A Shameless, soulless, faceless, raceless, gutless monstrosity that will live in infamy." - Harold Harby*

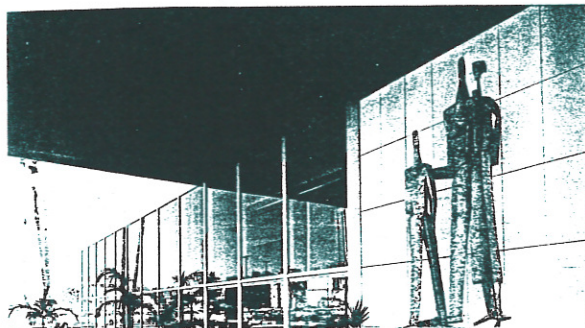
A native of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Joseph L. Young (b.1920) started out as a journalist but switched to painting at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. Young first became interested in mosaic while traveling in Italy on a mural painting fellowship in 1950. In Europe and South America, where the art has been handed down from father to son, mosaic has been much better known than in the United States. Originally interested in fresco painting, he became so fascinated that he stayed as a guest of the American Academy in Rome to study with a "mosaic family" of artisans.

The six ton, 6'x36' mural in the lobby serves as a partition which screens a bank of public telephones. The mural portrays in panoramic outline the architectural growth of Los Angeles including such icons as City Hall, Angels Flight and the Chinese Theater. The work represents a two-year effort by Young; personally cutting and hand setting over one-quarter million individual Italian glass stones (tesserae). Six tons of steel, copper, aluminum and glass were fused into a cantilevered monolithic mosaic panel that seems to float in air. At 436 square feet of surface, it was the largest mosaic mural of its kind executed in the United States at the time.

Other Young mosaics include: Don Boscoe Technical High School, Victor Gruen's Southdale Shopping Center in Minneapolis and Temple Emmanuel in Beverly Hills. Young won numerous awards throughout the country, and was a guest speaker at the 1956 A.I.A. convention and helped popularize mosaic with a book and film on the subject.

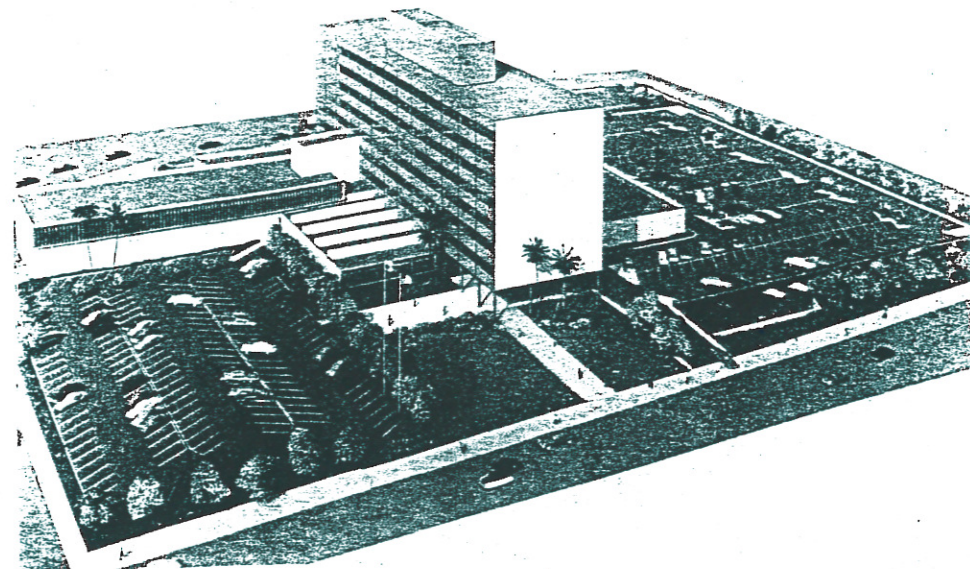
Bernard Rosenthal, born August 9, 1914 in Highland Park, IL. Studied at the University of Michigan and was a contemporary of Charles and Ray Eames at the Cranbrook Academy of Art in Michigan. His work has been exhibited at The Guggenheim, The Whitney, The Museum of Modern Art and at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem. His work on display includes a large cube at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, a bronze disk at the Rondo, New York Public Library, sculpture at the Illinois Museum of Science and Industry and the Strauss memorial at the U.S. Post Office in Nokomis, Illinois. Rosenthal again teamed with mosaic artist Joseph Young on the Temple Emmanuel project in Beverly Hills.

For Parker Center, Rosenthal was commissioned to construct what became a 14-foot sculpture entitled "Family Group." The semi-abstract welded bronze sculpture at the entrance represents a father, young boy, mother and a babe in arms, expressing the idea that the Police Department is dedicated to the protection of the family.



During construction, Los Angeles City Councilman Harold Harby condemned the \$10,000 artwork as a "Shameless, soulless, faceless, raceless, gutless monstrosity that will live in infamy." Harby went on to state "I think this is a spare hunk of bronze that Rosenthal had cluttering up his studio. He just rounded off the corners and unloaded it on the city for a fat price...these monstrosities could be duplicated by any 5-year-old child." Even as the sculpture was being installed, three councilmen demanded that the statue be scrapped and the bronze be recast into a tablet honoring local war dead. Meanwhile, a Philadelphia collector offered \$10,000 with the intention of giving it to Fairmont Park "What's the matter with Los Angeles?" he asked. The "Christian Nationalist Crusade" went so far as to picket the statue. Their placards demanded that it be "Sent to Russia." Nine local art authorities came to sculptor Rosenthal's defense, with the art departments of U.S.C. and U.C.L.A. calling the work "distinguished."

A 1999 bond measure calls for the demolition and replacement of Parker Center on the same site. In a moment, the results of that trial.



## POLICE FACILITIES BUILDING

LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

