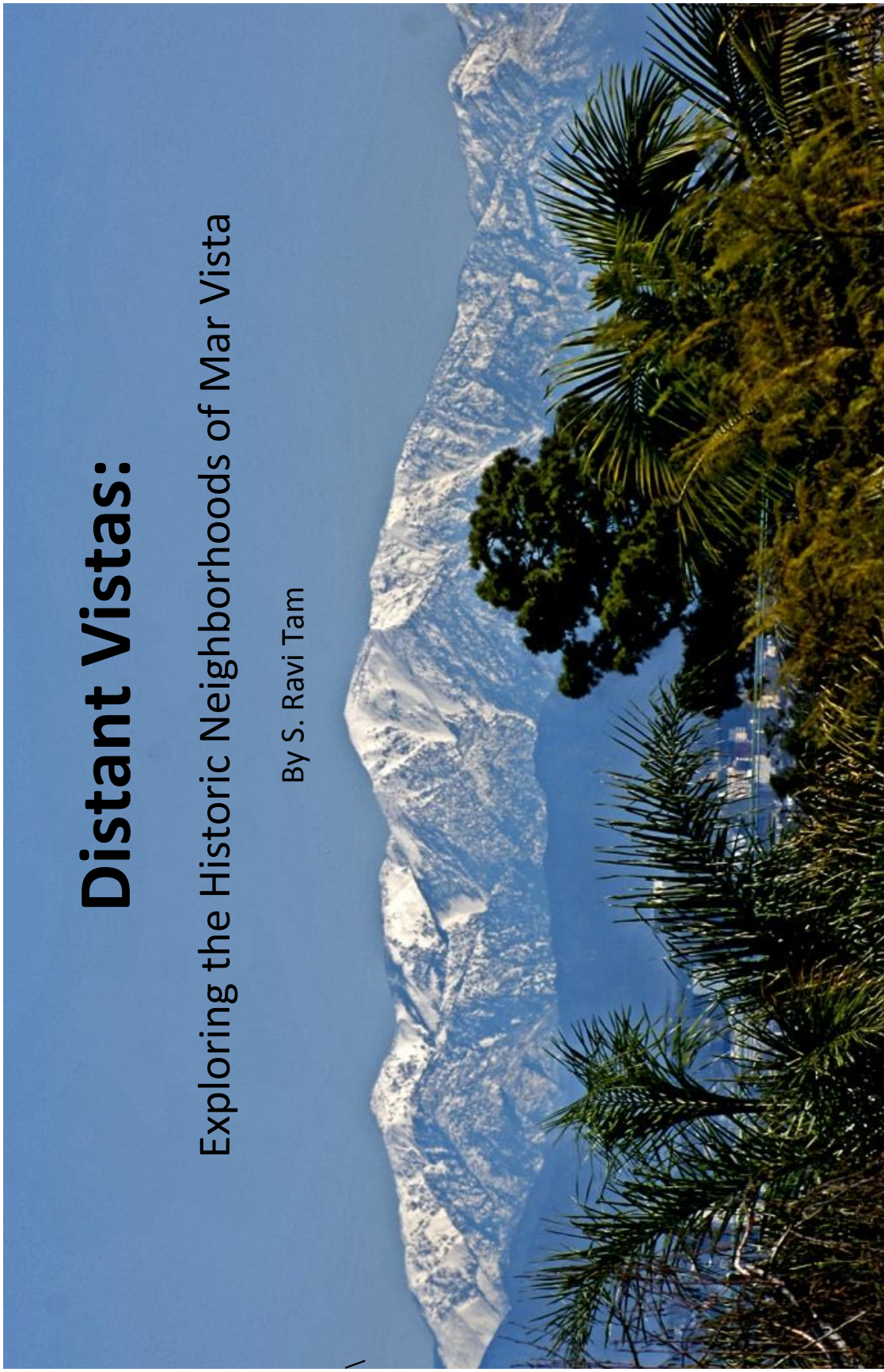


Distant Vistas:

Exploring the Historic Neighborhoods of Mar Vista

By S. Ravi Tam



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Exploring the Historic
Neighborhoods of Mar Vista

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A special word of thanks must be paid to community activist and Mar Vista Historical Society member Linda Guagliano, whose research on Mar Vista film locations was used for this book.

Kathleen Smith, another member of the Mar Vista Historical Society, shared with me her voluminous research, and independent researcher Alex King, who has lived virtually his entire life in Mar Vista, also provided information used here.

Mar Vista-born architect Greg Flewin created the excellent color maps used in this book; Chris McKinnon, formerly of the Mar Vista Community Council, and Ruth Gordon of the Santa Monica History Museum, generously helped with the photos.

The chapter "Gregory Ain: Mar Vista Goes Modernique" owes much to the detailed, award-winning website www.marvistatract.org, created by Hans Adamson. Anyone interested in Ain or the historic Mar Vista neighborhood he designed can do no better than to start with this website.

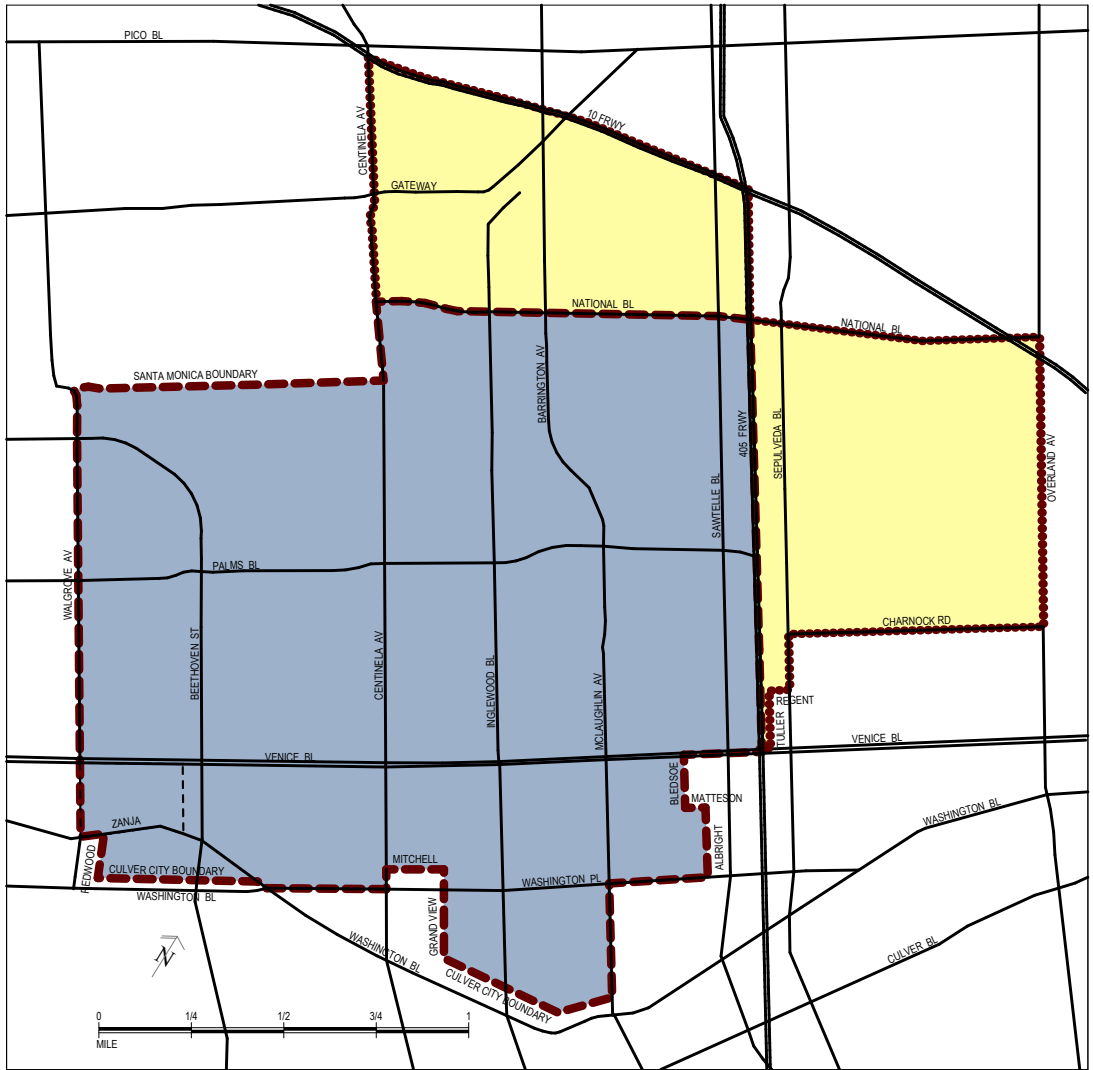
Every one of the other core members of the Society also contributed information used herein. They are: Joanne Beierle, Nadine Gallegos, Dorothy Garven, Cicely Golden, Hal Golden, Liz Gottlieb, Nancy Howell, Joan LoPear, Marie Wallace, and Jeanette Young. My thanks and appreciation goes out to all of them.

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As the docent for the walking tours offered by the Mar Vista Historical Society, I picked up additional information from many of the tour-goers, some of whom have lived in the area for decades. The details they provided, for which I am grateful, would have otherwise remained part of the mystery.

S. R. T.

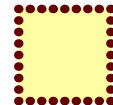
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MAR VISTA BOUNDARIES



MAR VISTA GEOGRAPHIC BOUNDARY



EXTENDED JURISDICTION OF THE MAR VISTA COMMUNITY COUNCIL

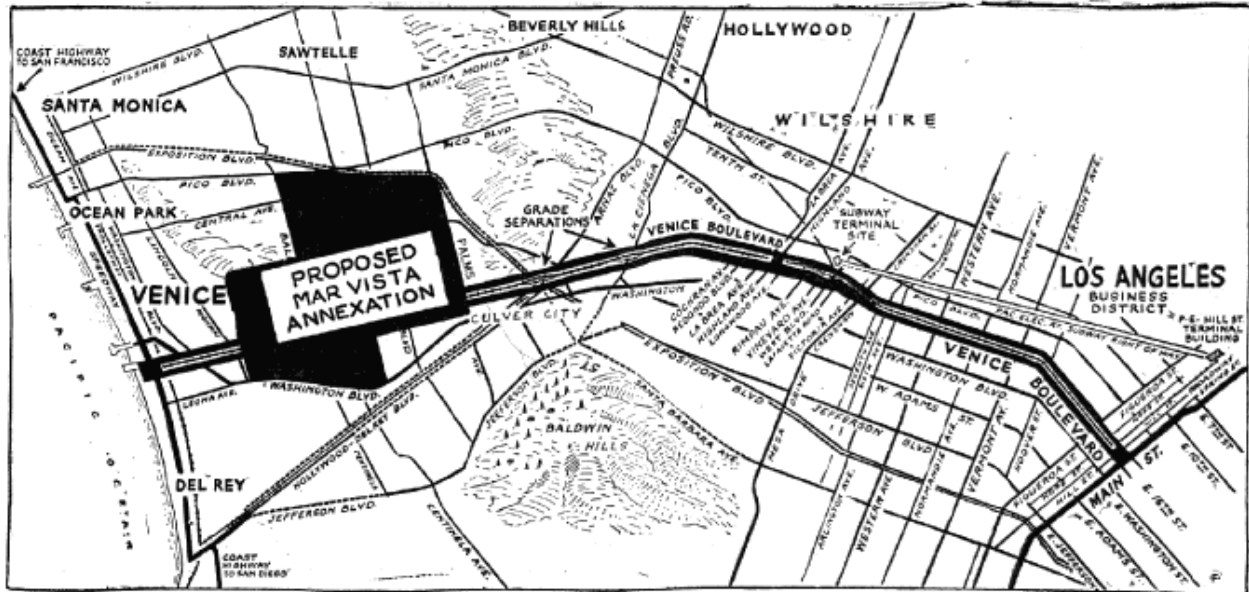
Preface

This book grew out of three walking tours developed for the Mar Vista Historical Society. When these tours were first made known to the residents of the community, the most common response was: “I didn’t know Mar Vista *had* a history.” And from a cursory look at the mostly undistinguished post-WWII tract homes, unremarkable apartment buildings, and ordinary-looking commercial establishments that make up the greater part of the district, one can readily understand such a reaction. Even more disquieting was the response from people living *outside* the Santa Monica bay area, who generally had never heard of Mar Vista or, if they had, could form no concrete notion as to its whereabouts or even its precise nature (“is it a beach north of Malibu?”; “a city in Orange County near Laguna Nigel?”).

Mar Vista, then, is a residential enclave of Los Angeles surrounded by the more celebrated communities of Santa Monica, Culver City, Venice, and Palms. While not as well-known as its neighbors, Mar Vista has been from the beginning renowned for two things: its magnificent hilltop vistas and its excellent climate. Regarding the panorama from the top of Mar Vista Hill, the Venice *Vanguard* in March 1925, when the surrounding area was still largely unpopulated, believed it to be “one of the finest views in all Southern California.” On clear days the gray-blue expanse of the Pacific Ocean – the sight that inspired the name for the community – can be seen to the west from Marina Del Rey to Pacific Palisades. To the south the gentle rise of the Baldwin Hills, the outcrop of Ladera Heights, and the bluffs of Del Rey are vividly evident. The Santa Monica Mountains dominate the view to the north and northeast; from the latter direction the Hollywood Sign is visible. The eastern prospect presents the distant range of the San Gabriel’s and views of Mount Baldy and Mount Wilson.

The first reference to Mar Vista’s weather seems to be a highfalutin 1914 Los Angeles *Times* article that said, “What every resident of this section boasts about is the climate. So pronounced and emphatic are the local people on this point that the stranger is convinced that the climate here is more than good.” Because of its proximity to the sea and “the peculiar formation of the hills” the weather is “more equable than Los Angeles”, and always “a soft and balmy zephyr steals across the country direct from the Pacific with all its fresh-made virtues.” The 1921 book “Climate and Health” concurs: “It [Mar Vista’s weather] is neither invariably hot nor permanently cold. It has frequent moderate weather changes. It is neither monotonously arid and cloudless, nor always dull and rainy.” In summing up, author H. R. Ward pronounced Mar Vista’s climate “salubrious”. Equally effusive were the first advertisements of the original Chamber of Commerce, which insisted that Mar Vista had “the perfect Southern California beach climate” that is “never hot and always delightfully cool at night”.

More problematic is the question of the exact boundaries of Mar Vista. Since the community was never an independent incorporated city this issue cannot be resolved by referring to an official map. There are several *unofficial* maps and other sources – but none of them quite agree with one another. Sometimes the entire 2,800 acres of unincorporated land in Ballona Valley between Venice and Culver City was referred to as Mar Vista. The current Mar Vista Community Council’s map of the district includes territory east of the 405 Freeway extending all the way to Overland Avenue – terrain historically associated with the community of Palms. But on September 18, 1926, four days before the vote that would annex Mar Vista to Los Angeles took place, the *Vanguard* published a map of the

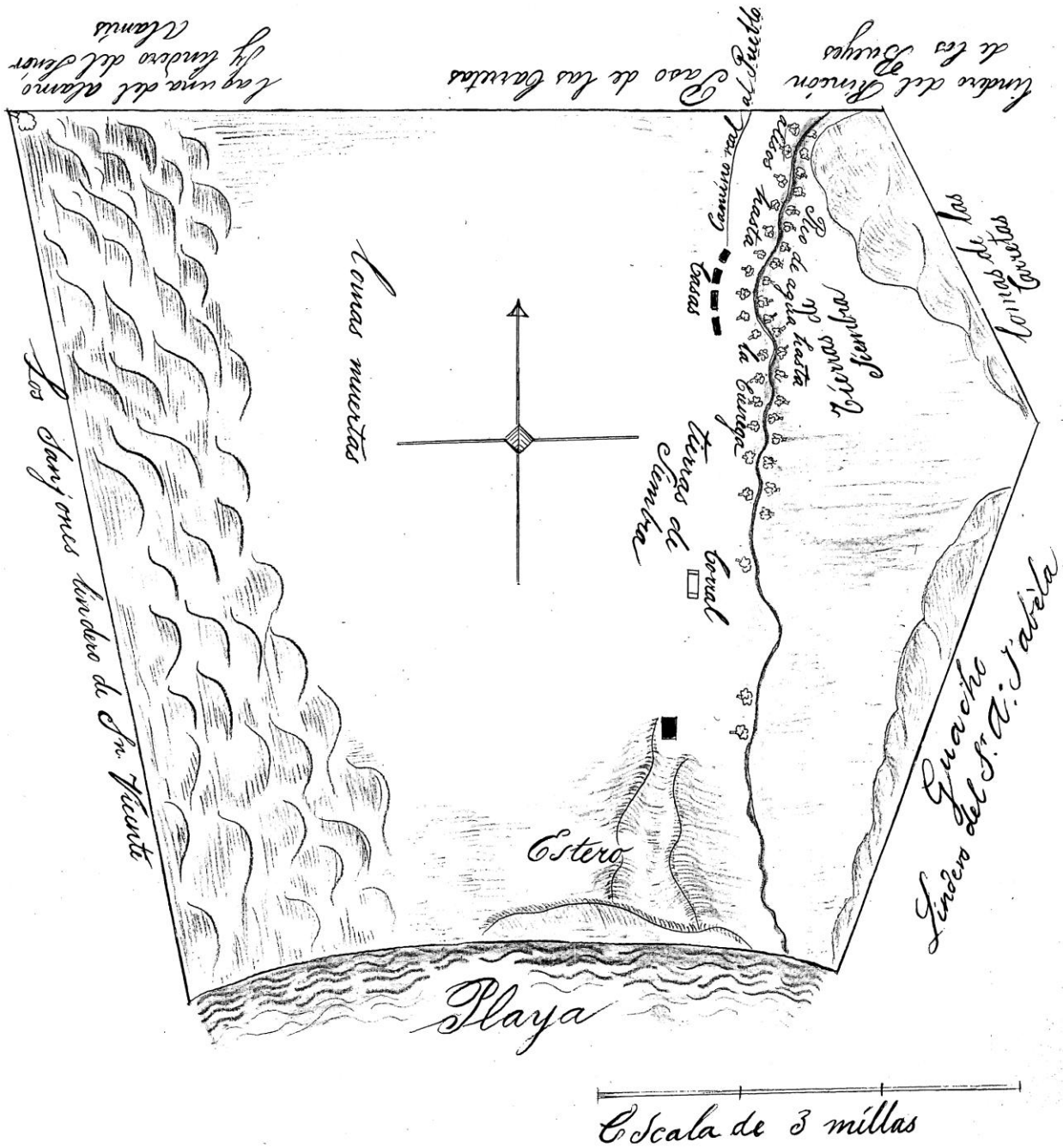


The boundaries of Mar Vista in 1926, just before the annexation of the community to Los Angeles.

“proposed Mar Vista Annexation” region that is remarkably similar to the one used by the Community Council. As late as October 19, 1933, the *Vanguard* was still calling Overland the eastern boundary of Mar Vista; but this same article claimed that the western limit went no farther than Beethoven Street, even though every other source grants that distinction to Walgrove Avenue. A zoning map of Mar Vista drawn up by the L. A. Board of Commissioners in 1936, which the *Vanguard* reported about but did not reproduce, affirms Walgrove as the western boundary but sets the eastern border at Kelton Avenue, about half way between Overland and Sepulveda.

Mar Vista’s southern boundary was the most capricious. Ballona Creek, Jefferson Boulevard, and Braddock Drive were all referred to as the south-most limit of the community in newspaper articles and by various members of the Mar Vista Chamber of Commerce as late as the 1970s – even though the territory lying between the creek and Washington Boulevard was simultaneously known as Barnes City for much of that time. When the community’s regional post office became part of the Los Angeles postal system in 1954, Culver Boulevard was designated as the boundary. In a 1958 *Vanguard* article about Mar Vista street improvements, Washington Boulevard was cited as the border. Washington became the “official” boundary in 1968 when the L. A. City Council voted unanimously on a re-districting ordinance that transferred the southern half of what had been called Mar Vista from the 11th to the 6th District. This book will make use of the boundaries established by the Los Angeles *Times* Mapping L. A. project, based on the 2000 U. S. Census Bureau: National Boulevard to the north, Walgrove Avenue to the west, Washington Boulevard to the south, and the 405 Freeway to the east.

The oldest sections of Mar Vista are all located within the boundaries of even the least generous maps of the region. They have existed now for more than a century, and the vintage homes in them can be considered historic landmarks. Learning of them, and of the people who built them and lived in them over the years, one can piece together the history of Mar Vista. This book is your guide to that history.



This is a facsimile of the rough map, or *diseño*, of Rancho La Ballona, also known at the time as el Paso de las Carretas (wagon pass), drawn up in 1839. Ballona Creek runs from top to bottom on the right, and in the middle left is lomas muertas - dead hills - the first historic reference to Mar Vista. The road at the top leading to the casas, just left of the creek, is el Camino real al Pueblo, the forerunner of Washington Boulevard. The estero at the bottom is today Marina del Rey.

Mar Vista Before 1900: A Brief History

Rancho La Ballona

Central Mar Vista is smack in the middle of what was once a vast Spanish land grant called Rancho La Ballona. Situated on the Pacific coast about twelve miles from downtown Los Angeles, the Ballona Valley was primarily pasture land bounded by lomas (hills) to the north, barrancas (deep gullies) to the northwest, guachos (steep bluffs) to the south, and ciénegas (marsh lands) to the southeast. The southeasterly region was endowed with arable land made fertile by Ballona Creek, which flowed to the sea through the estero (estuary). During the winter rains, when flood waters could spread beyond present-day Lincoln Boulevard, the estero was referred to either as the lagoon or the inner bay.

The original inhabitants of Ballona Valley were Tongva Indians. These stolid people fished, hunted deer, water fowl, and other small game, and gathered wild berries, roots, seeds, and grub. They lived in simple thatched huts along Ballona Creek not much differently than their Upper Paleolithic



Agustín Machado, 1794-1865

antecedents. Within a generation of the founding of the Pueblo Nuestra Señora la Reyna de Los Angeles de Porciúncula in 1781, the Tongva were driven from their land by townsmen with cattle to feed and guns to persuade. Any natives that remained tilled and toiled for their Spanish-speaking subjugators.

By 1820 pueblo dwellers Agustín Machado and his brother Ygnacio, together with Felipe Talamantes and his son Tomás, had secured grazing rights in the valley. Agustín Machado would become the partner most responsible for the day to day operations of the land. He was born at the Santa Barbara mission in 1794, and moved to the pueblo de Los Angeles with his family at the age of three. According to Machado lore, the boundaries of the rancho-to-be were determined by the distance Agustín, the best horseman of the group, could circumnavigate from sunup to sundown. At dawn on the appointed day – after some practice runs – he spurred inland from the beach near Playa Del Rey about five miles, turned north at a sandstone boulder, banked northwest at a big pile of rocks a mile and a quarter off, turned seaward at a cottonwood tree marked with hatchet cuts some four miles yon, wheeled southeast at the surf, and tethered his tuckered steed in the long shadows of the setting sun, having corralled nearly 14,000 acres. The copulation of cattle as an enterprise in Ballona was soon mounted.

The origin of the word Ballona is a matter of debate. Some historians think it derives from the Spanish word ballena, whale. Others believe it stems from the Spanish port city of Bayona, the ancestral home of the Talamantes family. And there are those who insist it is a Californio corruption of the English word bay. A case has been made for each theory, but each case has its critics. The point will probably remain forever moot.

Although Mexico achieved its independence from Spain by 1822, the four Ballona rancheros continued their activities as though nothing had happened. In time sheep and horses noshed alongside the cows and steers that stocked the rancho, while more and more pasture land gave way to the cultivation of beans, corn, peas, wheat, and fruit trees. As non-owners who were merely permitted to work the property, the Machados and Talamantes' lived in neighboring lands or the pueblo until 1839, when they sought clear title to Rancho La Ballona from the Mexican government. This required a *diseño*, or rough map, of the rancho to be tendered. Near the center of this sketch is the first known historic reference to Mar Vista, a region designated "lomas muertas" - dead hills – the apex of which is the present-day intersection of Palms and Grand View boulevards. The title was granted with a condition: the grantees must build homes on the rancho and permanently settle there. Agustín built his adobe farmhouse near present-day Overland Avenue and Jefferson Boulevard. Ranch operations expanded to include dairy, tallow, hide, white wine, and dried beef production; horses and cattle were sold by the head. Agustín Machado became one of the pueblo's most prosperous citizens.



In 1834 Agustín's brother Ygnacio Machado built the Centinela Adobe, pictured above, on the near-by Rancho Aguaje de la Centinela. It is one of only 43 extant 19th Century adobes in Los Angeles County. Ygnacio wasn't as ambitious as his brother: in 1844 he swapped his adobe and rancho for a keg of whiskey and a modest home in the Pueblo de Los Angeles. The Centinela Adobe is maintained by the Historical Society of the Centinela Valley and is open for tours on Sundays.

With the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hildago in 1848 that officially ended the Mexican War, Machado and Talamantes found themselves farming on U. S. soil. Yankee immigrants, drawn to California with the discovery of gold that same year, began settling in the pueblo and casting envious glances at the sprawling ranchos that surrounded early Los Angeles. Although the treaty guaranteed the existing Mexican land holders the right to retain their property, the Land Act of March 3, 1851 was formed to ensure that they didn't. A Board of Commissioners was set up in San Francisco and the rancheros were obliged to travel this great distance, at their own expense, to prove the validity of their land titles. Since most of them were cash poor, many lost their land in part or in full paying the various legal fees, taxes, and service charges that government officials and lawyers are so clever at contriving. The disintegration of the California ranchos was under way.

The four owners of Rancho La Ballona began the formal proceedings to obtain legal U. S. title to their own land in 1852. By the time clear title was granted in 1873 all four were dead and the property was carved up beyond recognition. The breakup of the rancho was set in motion when Tomás Talamantes borrowed \$1,500 from Benjamin D. Wilson and William T. B. Sanford in 1854 against his undivided quarter interest in Ballona. When Talamantes defaulted on the loan, Wilson and Sanford took legal action and the court ordered a public auction of Tomás' share in 1855. Wilson's \$2,000 bid prevailed and netted him 3,480 acres of the rancho. In 1859 Wilson sold these acres to John Sanford, James T. Young, and John D. Young for \$4,500. The other three quarters of the rancho belonging to the Machados and the heirs of Felipe Talamantes, who died in 1856, were, or soon would be, in the hands of the children, grandchildren, and the outsiders to whom these descendants sold, or would sell, parcels.

Until 1868, however, the rancho's 14,000 acres were still undivided land held in common by the various owners. When in 1865 John D. Young filed a petition with the District Court to gain clear title to his 1,733 acre allotment, the fragmentation of Rancho La Ballona began in earnest. It took a court-appointed surveyor over two years to divvy the land equitably among its thirty-two claimants. Complicating matters was the fact that four different types of land were distinguished: first class land was prime farm land near Ballona Creek; second class land was land arable without water, dry farming land; third class land was pasture land, the terrain upon which Mar Vista would be built; fourth class land was tide land, including beach property - and to cattlemen and farmers what could be more worthless than beach property? The allotment of each claimant had to include a proportional share of each class of land. When the court handed down its final judgment in 1868 the rancho had been pieced into 64 parcels of widely different shapes and sizes. Forty-seven years after its creation, Rancho La Ballona ceased to exist.

The Yanqui Pioneers of Ballona Valley

Benjamin D. Wilson had, with William T. B. Sanford, loaned Tomás Talamantes the \$1,500 that led to the breakup of Rancho La Ballona. Born in Tennessee in 1811 and orphaned at a young age, Wilson migrated to Santa Fe in the 1820s and trapped furs for a living. In 1841 he trekked to California by wagon train over the Old Spanish Trail, and just two years later had the wherewithal to buy 6,642 acres of Rancho Jurupa in Riverside County. The following year he married the daughter of Don Yorba, the owner of Rancho Santa Ana, and received a chunk of that rancho as a wedding present. After the Mexican War, in which Don Benito, as he was now called, served with the United States Army, he became an early alcalde, or mayor, of Los Angeles. He later acquired the 128-acre Lake Vineyard Ranch, now San Marino and part of Pasadena, and Rancho San Pascual, which today encompasses South Pasadena, Altadena, and northern Alhambra. Wilson died in 1878; Mount Wilson is named for him.

Kentucky-born William T. B. Sanford, the other Yank to whom Tomás Talamantes became indebted, was another rugged frontiersman who came to California across the Great Plains. A postmaster of early Los Angeles, Sanford gave Phineas Banning, the founder of Wilmington and the “father of the Port of Los Angeles”, his first job in California, clerking in his San Pedro store. In 1855 William drove thirty tons of freight for Banning in a fifteen-strong wagon train through the West Cajón Valley into Utah, an unprecedented expedition from Los Angeles that opened up trade with Salt Lake City. The trail he blazed over the mountaintop became known as “Sanford’s Pass”. In 1863, at the age of 49, Sanford was killed aboard the steamer *Ada Hancock* when its boiler exploded. Twenty-five other passengers perished in the accident, but his brother-in-law Banning survived.



Benjamin David Wilson, aka Don Benito.

In 1859 Don Benito Wilson sold his quarter interest of Rancho La Ballona to William’s brother, John Sanford, and two other men. John and William established the Sanford family ranch near Ballona Creek. According to the *L. A. Times*, this “first white family” in Ballona Valley was harassed by “half-wild halfbreed Mexicans” who rustled their cattle and cut off the feet of their hogs. The Sanfords were obliged to harvest their first crops armed with guns. John Sanford was murdered in 1863 by a stranger to whom he offered a ride in his buggy. The culprit, a notorious outlaw named Wilkins, shot John in the back with his own pistol. Wilkins was tracked down in Santa Barbara, brought back to Los Angeles, and hanged.

A third Sanford brother named Cyrus was one day attacked by three “desperados” while returning to the family ranch. These men had earlier roped a settler named Rains and dragged him to death behind their horses before tossing his corpse into a cactus bed. Cyrus killed two of his assailants and wounded the third. During his salad days Cyrus was worth \$100,000 but by 1886 had lost his wealth through a series of law suits and, despondent over this financial debacle, shot himself in the head. The Sanfords incurred the above incidents in Ballona during the years that *Los Angeles Times*

rancho chronicler E. Palmer Connor termed "The Halcyon Days". One wonders what his idea of commotion would look like.

One of Cyrus' sons, George Addison Sanford, was deeded 912 acres of Rancho La Ballona from his uncle John in 1861, when he was a child of six. George's allotment of third class pasture land would encompass the first two subdivisions in Mar Vista and the community's first business district. He spent his entire life on the Sanford ranch, located southwest of Inglewood Boulevard between Culver and Jefferson boulevards to McConnell Avenue in Del Rey. Ballona Creek flowed through the property and every year George flooded his pastures with a log dam, to the consternation of the neighboring ranchers. In 1906 the Machados et al petitioned the Los Angeles Board of Supervisors to force Sanford to break up his dam, as its runoff was ruining their crops and turning a county road from Playa Del Rey into a bog. Sanford told them to move the road, as the dam had been established before the Civil War. George was 85 when he died in 1941. Sanford Street, which runs along the south bank of Ballona Creek between Inglewood and McConnell, is the only memorial in Ballona Valley of this pioneer family and their ranch. Weir Street, a block-long road just east of Inglewood where Sanford Street ends, commemorates George's dam.

The other two men to whom Benjamin Wilson sold his quarter interest in Ballona in 1859 were James T. Young and his seventeen-year-old son John. Virtually nothing is known of James Young prior to this purchase other than he hailed from Kentucky, took a wife from the Bluegrass State, was living in Missouri in 1842 when his son was born, and moved to California circa 1854. The Young's share of the Rancho amounted to one-sixth of Ballona Valley. In September 1859 James bought a small adobe from Rafael Machado, a son of Agustín, and settled in Ballona to produce wine and cultivate fruit trees. He died before the 1868 final partition decree was handed down. His share of the Rancho was split between his widow Elenda, after whom Elenda Street in Culver City is named, and his son John, who with this inheritance owned just under 1/8 of Rancho La Ballona.

It was John D. Young who filed the petition in the District Court that resulted in the fragmentation of Ballona Rancho in 1868. John lived the life of a wealthy rancher by steadily selling his acreage piecemeal. He entered his trotters and "roadsters" in horse racing events. He participated in civic life by representing Ballona Township as a delegate to the Democratic County Convention, and as an occasional member of a Grand Jury. Young's 1,092-acre allotment of third class pasture land ran from Pico to Washington between Inglewood and Sepulveda boulevards and encompassed about a third of modern Mar Vista. He spent the last thirty years of his life in a townhouse on Figueroa Street in downtown Los Angeles; he died in 1915 at the age of 73.

Anderson Rose was another Yankee pioneer who owned an allotment of Rancho La Ballona at the time of the partition decree of 1868. Rose was just sixteen when he made the perilous trek from his native Missouri to Northern California in 1852, a journey that involved fending off Indian attacks. He settled initially in El Dorado County, a fitting destination for a man in search of gold, and took up mining activities. In the 1860s he moved south to the Los Angeles area and in September 1867 purchased a half interest of Elenda Young's 819-acre allotment of Rancho La Ballona. Rose acquired thousands of additional acres in and around Ballona and elsewhere over the years. He bred cattle and draft horses,

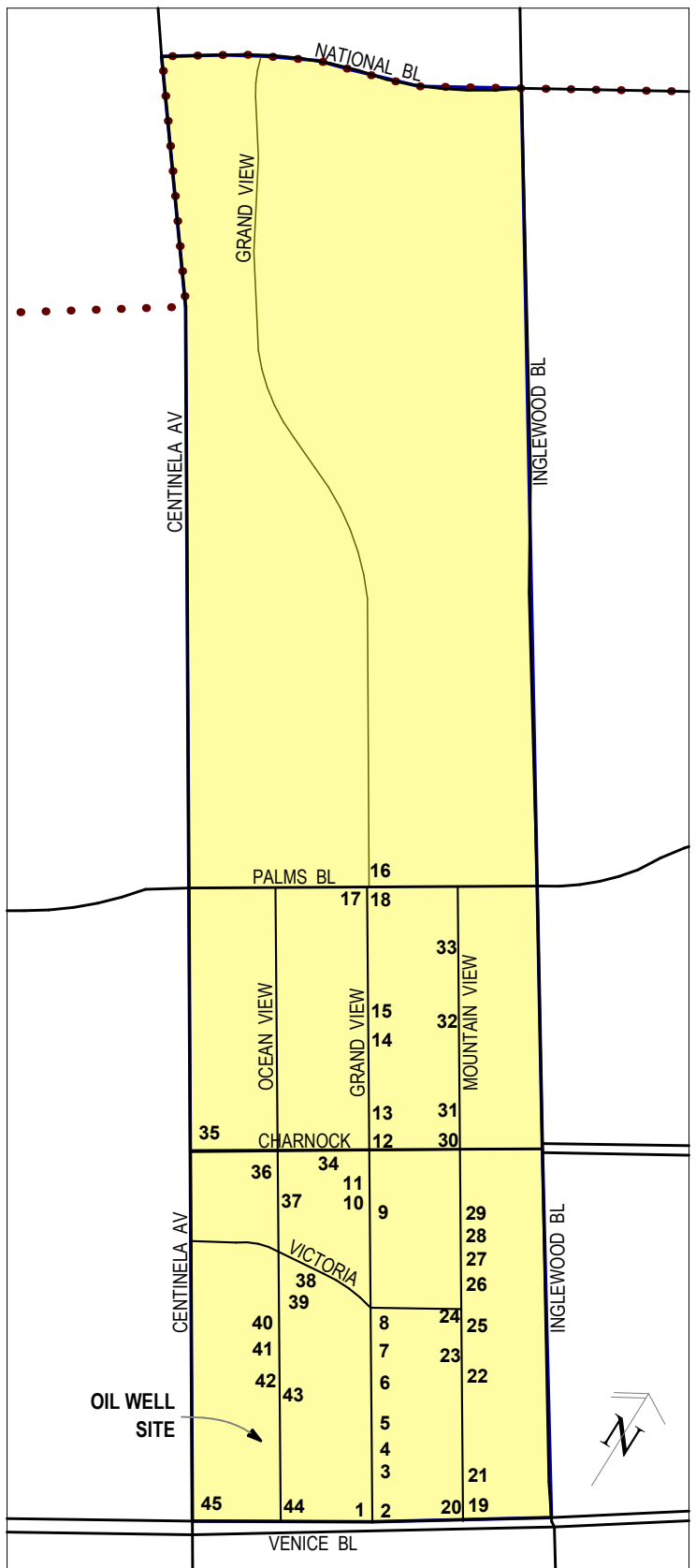
raised lima beans, sugar beets, walnuts, and other cash crops, and operated a dairy that produced cheese, butter, and, according to the *Outlook*, “the best milk tasted in Santa Monica”. He lived on a ranch in Palms for many years; his son-in-law was William Dexter Curtis, the son of Joseph Curtis, one of the three founders of the Palms community. Anderson Rose died in 1902, aged 66. Rose Avenue is named after him.

Though he was not an original claimant to a Rancho Ballona allotment, John J. Charnock’s vast landholdings would also figure in the history of Mar Vista. Charnock was born in England in 1827, moved to Canada at 14 with his family, and prospered as a lumberman in Wisconsin and Minnesota. He moved to Nevada around 1870 to restore his health and became a sheep rancher. His immense range lands – over 100 miles long and 30 miles wide – nourished 20,000 head of sheep at the peak of his Nevada operations. He began investing his considerable wealth in California land in the mid-1870s. Besides hundreds of acres in Ballona Valley, Charnock also owned land in Riverside, San Diego, and downtown Los Angeles. Curiously for a man with so much property, he spent most of his California life in a small house in Palms. He was 81 years old in 1909, the year he died.

Samuel Cripe didn’t have a claim to an original Rancho allotment either, nor was he as land-rich as the other early Yankee settlers, but the roughly 335 Ballona acres he did acquire in 1881 would figure in four historic Mar Vista neighborhoods. Born in 1831, this Indiana Hoosier moved to Santa Monica in 1878 and opened a meat market on Third Street. On his Mar Vista land Cripe cultivated oats, barley, black berries, corn (100 bushels to the acre), string beans, and Irish potatoes. In the late 1880s he built a kiln and began manufacturing bricks on five acres of clay-rich Santa Monica land in what was one of that city’s first industries. His pressed bricks were regarded by experts as among the best made in the county and were used in the 1888 Soldier’s Home in Sawtelle, today the site of the Veteran’s Administration. He died in 1917 at the age of 86.

The land that these men acquired, cleared, fenced, plowed, cultivated, reaped, and settled would in time become the modern communities of Palms, Culver City, Venice, Del Rey, Marina Del Rey, Playa Del Rey, and Mar Vista.

1. Grand View Arch
2. 12125 Venice Blvd
3. 3760 Grand View Blvd
4. 3754 Grand View Blvd
5. 3750 Grand View Blvd
6. 3734 Grand View Blvd
7. 3716 Grand View Blvd
8. 3710 Grand View Blvd
9. 3638 Grand View Blvd
10. 3627 Grand View Blvd
11. 3623 Grand View Blvd
12. 3590 Grand View Blvd
13. 3582 Grand View Blvd
14. 3548/3554 Grand View Blvd
15. 3532 Grand View Blvd
16. 3480 Grand View Blvd
17. 3501 Grand View Blvd
18. 3504/3508/3516 Grand View Blvd
19. 12035 Venice Blvd
20. 12101-12115 Venice Blvd
21. 3772/3774 Mountain View Ave
22. 3734 Mountain View Ave
23. 3709 Mountain View Ave
24. 3701 Mountain View Ave
25. 3708 Mountain View Ave
26. 3664 Mountain View Ave
27. 3658 Mountain View Ave
28. 3638 Mountain View Ave
29. 3628 Mountain View Ave
30. 3599 Mountain View Ave
31. 3581 Mountain View Ave
32. 3545/3539 Mountain View Ave
33. 3521 Mountain View Ave
34. 12214 Charnock Road
35. 3588/3580/3576/3572 Centinela Ave
36. 3609 Ocean View Ave
37. 3616 Ocean View Ave
38. 12224 Victoria Ave
39. 3676/3700 Ocean View Ave
40. 3677 Ocean View Ave
41. 3707 Ocean View Ave
42. 3737 Ocean View Ave
43. 3746 Ocean View Ave
44. 12257 Venice Blvd
45. 12335 Venice Blvd



OCEAN PARK HEIGHTS

Ocean Park Heights: The Birthplace of Mar Vista

Modern, suburban Mar Vista dates from the early 1900s, but the evolution of the large Ballona ranches into the single-family residential lots of today was a gradual process and vestiges of ranch life in the area would persist well into the 20th Century. It's difficult today to conceive how rural much of present-day Mar Vista was until fairly recently, but consider the following. Blacksmith shop was still an elective at Venice High School in the 1930s. A good third of modern Mar Vista acreage was still devoted to agriculture until the mid-1940s, primarily lima beans and celery. Up to the early-50s local poultry farms still sold live chickens to housewives, to be killed and dressed at home for the evening meal. Horse ownership in some parts of Mar Vista was not uncommon until the mid-60s. There were patches of undeveloped land in Mar Vista used by hunters as late as 1972: the Los Angeles *Times* reported of an ordinance that year "regulating the discharge of firearms and bows and arrows" that local residents sought to extend "to include the Malibu and Mar Vista areas". Ducks, geese, chickens and roosters were still pecking in the backyards of many Mar Vista homes in the 1980s and 90s.

The pivotal event that sparked the transformation of Ballona Valley from farms to tract homes occurred in 1902, when the Los Angeles Pacific railroad constructed a line down the middle of modern-day Venice Boulevard that connected downtown Los Angeles to the sea at Ocean Park. One of the stops along this route was near the intersection of present-day Centinela Avenue and Venice Boulevard, a junction almost exactly in the dead center of the old rancho. These crossroads would be the focal point of the initial phase of subdivision in Mar Vista.

The first residential neighborhood at this junction was called Ocean Park Heights. Its 196 acres were recorded on July 6, 1904, a full year before Venice of America opened to the public. The land was once a portion of George Addison Sanford's allotment of third class pasture land. Anderson Rose farmed the land from the 1880s to his death in 1902. His widow Annie sold it to a syndicate of investors in 1904 that included Alexander R. Fraser, the former partner of Abbot Kinney in the development of Ocean Park; Dana Burks, the first mayor of Ocean Park; and Dr. J. A. Stanwood, the first president of the Venice Chamber of Commerce and the man after whom Stanwood Avenue is named. The tract was bounded on the west by Centinela Avenue, the north by National Boulevard, and the east by Inglewood Boulevard. The southern boundary initially stopped at Victoria Avenue, but on August 29 another 40 acres were added which extended the tract southward to Venice Boulevard. Called the Ocean Park Heights Addition, miner/real estate broker Albert W. Davis bought this parcel. Any corrals, bunk houses, or other ranch trappings that must have existed on Rose's land were cleared away in preparation for the fine homes that were expected to appear.

The subdivision was named after the city of Ocean Park, a popular resort community just south of Santa Monica. Grand View Boulevard, the tract's lone north/south road, was built extra wide at 100 feet, which allowed horse-drawn carriages, mule teams, and ox carts to make sweeping U-turns. The lots varied in size and shape due to the irregular contours of Victoria Avenue and the curve of Grand View north of Palms. The largest were over an acre, and though the lots did a brisk business no homes were built right off.



A Pacific Electric Red Car heading west, circa 1949. This transportation line was essential to the development of Mar Vista and Culver City. The photo was taken just east of Centinela Avenue, looking east. The Condie Photo Studio can be seen at the right center; the building, at 12312 Venice Boulevard, still exists and is today an annex of A Kid's Place preschool.

In 1905 the tract was sold to an entity called the Ocean Park Heights Land and Water Company, the president of which was Alexander R. Fraser. He reconfigured the tract by building Mountain View and Ocean View avenues, which reduced the size of the lots to about half their original area. Despite this replat the first house would not appear until the following year, and home construction would remain sluggish until the 1920s. The subdivision was sold several times to various investors during the first two decades of its existence. Among them were Robert Conrad Gillis, a director of the Pacific Electric railroad and one-time owner of the Santa Monica *Evening Outlook* newspaper; and safety razor magnate King C. Gillette, who bought the tract in 1911.

Although Ocean Park Heights was intended as an upscale residential neighborhood, it was a rural neighborhood in farm country: among the “express conditions” cited in the original deeds were, “no barn, out house, corral, or chicken yard shall be erected...nearer than 100 feet from the said street line”. The owners of the tract didn’t want any shacks in their subdivision: “any dwelling house erected

or placed on said property shall cost not less than \$2,000”, a pretty penny in 1904. And the residents were to be upright, responsible citizens: “the selling of intoxicating liquors” was “absolutely prohibited”.

Even though the name Ocean Park Heights was assigned solely to this first neighborhood, the term was subsequently applied to all successive residential tracts that arose in the area regardless of their individual names. This community of contiguous subdivisions eventually spread west to Walgrove Avenue, east to Sawtelle Boulevard, south to Washington Boulevard, and north to National Boulevard.

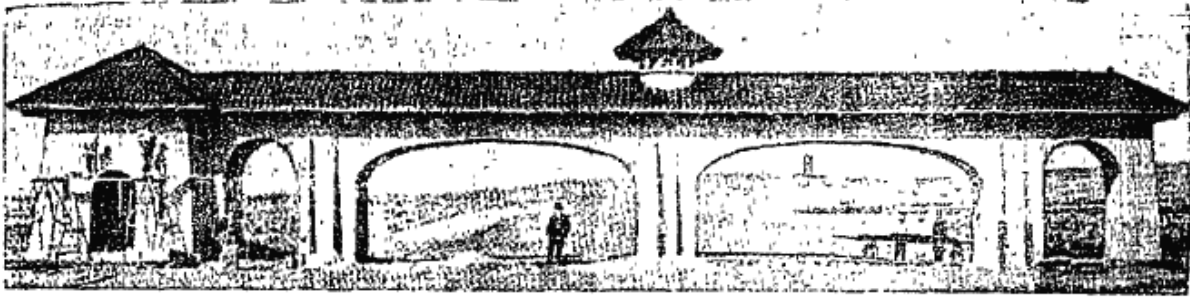
The Heights was never an independent city but merely a territory in the County of Los Angeles. An attempt at incorporation *did* take place in February 1916, organized by “a small band of ambitious ones”. A meeting was held at a general store at the corner of Venice and Centinela and the issue was put to a vote. Four residents were in favor of creating a new city; they were stopped by the nine who voted nay. The identity of the thirteen people who voted was not disclosed by the Venice *Daily Vanguard*. Opponents of incorporation felt that a move to city status would inevitably lead to higher taxes. Despite the claim by proponents that they would keep fighting, no other serious effort to incorporate was ever carried out.

In October 1924 a Chamber of Commerce was formed by local businessmen after a regional post office had been sanctioned for the community. Because Ocean Park had its own post office, it was quickly decided to change the name of Ocean Park Heights to avoid any confusion that might result from two communities so close in proximity so similarly called. Juanita Romero, a pioneer resident of Ocean Park Heights, proposed Mar Vista. The name was derived from a new subdivision located two blocks west of the Chamber’s headquarters called Mar Vista Park. Chamber conferees liked the name because it was distinct from any other community in the area, because “sea view” was literally appropriate from even a short distance up Mar Vista Hill, and because it evoked a bygone time when the region was part of New Spain. The formal adoption of the new name took place during a celebration held on December 20, 1924.

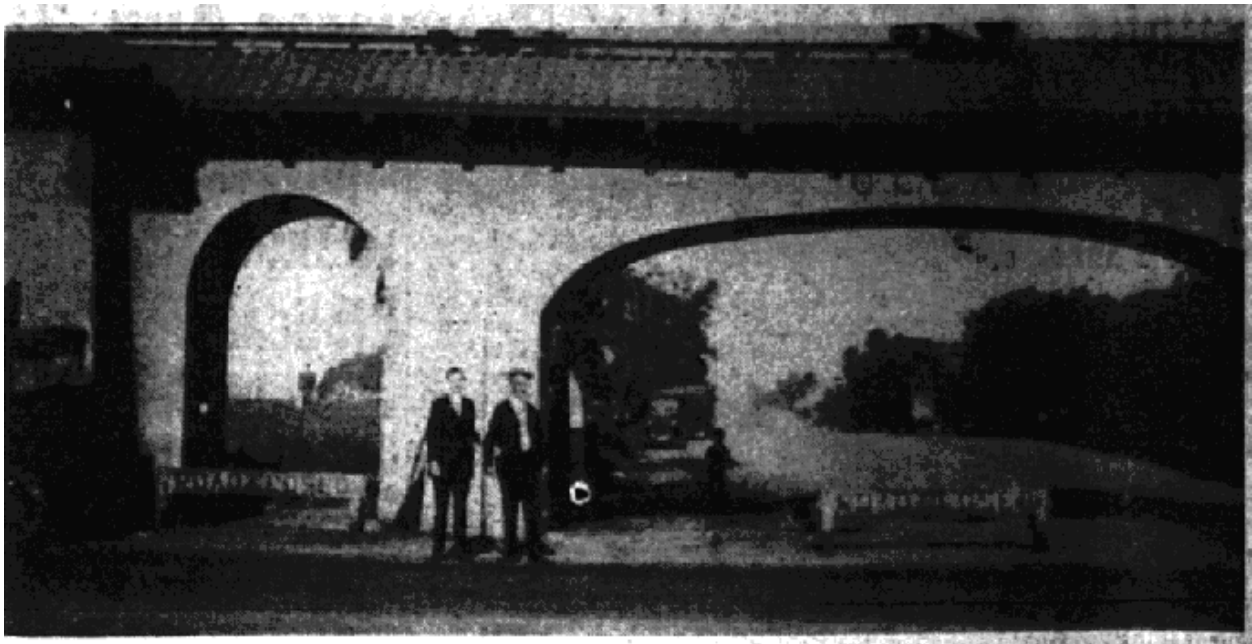
Exploring Historic Ocean Park Heights

Corner of Grand View and Venice Blvds (1)

In October 1904 the owners of the tract constructed a “Spanish Mission-style depot” at the base of Grand View, on the north side of Venice, as an attention-getting real estate gimmick. The imposing double-arched structure spanned the entire breadth of Grand View and was illuminated at night. It had two smaller archways over each sidewalk and a small realty office tacked onto the west end. The words OCEAN PARK HEIGHTS ran over the broad arches of the structure that became a de facto station for the Pacific Electric railroad.



The Grand View arch, looking north towards Mar Vista Hill, just after it was completed in 1904. The original water tank for the tract can be seen through the right-hand archway on the hilltop. The photo below is the only known close up picture of the arch, taken in 1922, two years before it was razed.



This landmark served as an eye-catching gateway to the neighborhood for twenty years and lent the steadily spreading community its name. Then in July 1924 the County of Los Angeles decided to widen Venice Boulevard and surveyors discovered that the archway projected too far into the proposed right-of-way. The arch was torn down in November 1924; the razing was justified with claims that the depot was causing auto accidents. The archway was replaced for a time with a large electric sign festooned from two telephone poles at Grand View and Venice spelling out the new name of the community - MAR VISTA - in large capital letters. In 1940 the city of Los Angeles installed one of the first traffic signals in Mar Vista at what the *Vanguard* called "the dangerous intersection of Venice and Grand View".



This electric sign replaced the arch for a time. The photo was taken from Venice "Boulevard" just west of Grand View, looking east. The long row of telephone poles at the right paralleled the Pacific Electric railroad tracks and provided electricity for the trains.

In December 1924 the first gas station in the community - the Mar Vista Service Station and Garage - opened near the northwest corner of Grand View and Venice, today the site of Grand View Liquor and Grand View Cleaners. During WWII it was converted into an airplane parts factory, then in 1948 it reopened as a Hancock gas station. Later in the 1950s it was called Mar Vista Auto Service, and by the 1960s it was a Shell station. Mar Vista Shell Service was in business here until 1973.

Located next to the station, directly on the corner where Yum Yum Donuts does business today, was the first known restaurant in Mar Vista. Opened in the mid-20s as the Rustic Inn, in the late 40s and early 50s it was called Sweeny's Café and, from 1953-1973, Bob's Café and Cocktail Lounge. In 1974 the gas station and restaurant were torn down and replaced by the current mini-mall.



This service station, the first in Mar Vista, was completed during the last week of December in 1924. It was torn down fifty years later and replaced by a mini-mall. The photo is believed to have been taken in the early 1960s.

12125 Venice Blvd (2)

Opened in 1961 as the Mar Vista Bowl, the AMF Mar Vista Lanes was designed by the firm of Arment and Davis. Eldon Davis is renowned for several iconic Googie-style buildings in L. A., including Pann's Restaurant (northwest corner of La Tijera and La Cienega boulevards), Johnie's Coffee Shop (northwest corner of Fairfax and Wilshire boulevards), and the Norm's Restaurant at 470 N. La Cienega Blvd. The exterior of this building is virtually Googie-less now that the original "space needle" sign that shot up thirty feet from the southwest corner of the roof has been removed. Arment and Davis concentrated their efforts on the interior, which boasted an innovative acoustic design to reduce noise levels, and a Tiki Bar cocktail lounge that was inspired by the 1958 best-seller *Aku-Aku: The Secret of Easter Island*. Unfortunately, the bar has been remodeled along thoroughly uninspiring lines, and the last trace of the Easter Island motif is the wooden figure holding up the southwest corner of the building. The exterior wall facing Venice Boulevard east of the restaurant puts one in mind of the textile block constructions of Frank Lloyd Wright, and cleverly utilizes the X's and O's of a bowling alley scorecard. When he was a kid, Darby Crash, lead singer of the legendary L. A. punk band The Germs, bowled here.

From 1919 to 1959 a large two-story wood-framed house stood on this site, the home of an eccentric real estate man named Logan Camp. Many residents who were children in Mar Vista during the 1950s remember Camp's place as a spooky ramshackle ghost house whose yard was overgrown with weeds and whose interior was always dark, prompting the rumor that the place had never been wired for electricity.



The Mar Vista Bowl as it appeared in 1961. The Makai Lounge in the "Tahitian Room" featured Charlie Ross at the piano bar. The tiki statue at the corner is not visible in this photo, but it's still there guarding the entrance to the coffee shop. There were originally three of the six-foot wooden statues, but two of them were stolen not long after the bowling alley opened – if they still exist they're probably rotting away in some garage or watching over a backyard swimming pool by the barbecue.

Venice Blvd

The main east-west artery of Mar Vista was laid out in 1902 as an unpaved right-of-way that paralleled the Los Angeles Pacific railroad on both sides of the tracks. The thoroughway had various names at different points along its course: it was called Electric Avenue where it passed through Ocean Park Heights; from Walgrove Avenue to the beach it was named Virginia Avenue; and at Palms it was known as Front Street. It was also called Pico west of La Brea in the days before Pico extended to the west side. In 1912 it was dubbed Venice Boulevard and paved for the first time, from Inglewood Boulevard west to the city of Venice, varying in width from 27 to 40 feet. Each side of the street was treated as a separate roadway: auto traffic traveled in both directions on both sides of the tracks.

In 1924 the County decided to broaden Venice into a 60-foot wide boulevard on each side and to extend it to downtown L. A. as a means of relieving traffic congestion on Washington Boulevard. By this time eleven miles of the fourteen-mile route were open to through traffic, although not all eleven miles were paved. The new boulevard hooked up with 16th Street at Crenshaw, and in 1926 16th Street was renamed Venice. This widening project was carried out in phases and wasn't completed on both sides until May 18, 1938, when the final short segment between Redondo Boulevard and Cochran Avenue was paved on the south side.

On March 1, 1949, the Pacific Electric Company filed a formal application to replace rail service on the Venice Short Line with "motor coaches". The famous Red Cars made their last run down Venice Boulevard on September 18, 1950. The task of removing the 2,550 gross tons of steel that made up the rails commenced in April 1951 and was completed by September. On December 17, 1951, one-way traffic was inaugurated on the boulevard and Venice became a divided four-lane highway - two lanes wide in each direction.



With the enthusiastic approval of Mar Vista merchants, the 60-foot wide center strip of the former railway was okayed for parking. Less enthusiastic was the response of city officials to the problem of car abandonment in the center strip away from commercial areas: people parking their old clunkers in the middle of the right-of-way and leaving them to their rusty fates. By 1954 this practice had become so acute that certain stretches of Venice were veritable junkyards.

When Venice became a State Highway on September 15, 1961, center strip parking became more restricted. In June 1965 the city inaugurated the Venice Boulevard Improvement Project, the task of widening the street to four lanes on each side (one for curb parking) from the center outwards, leaving only a landscaped median with left-turn bays in the center as a token of the Red Cars that once served the community. The “new” Venice Boulevard officially opened on August 8, 1966, to the chagrin of Mar Vista business owners who reported a 25% drop in business from the loss of the center strip parking.



MAR VISTA COMPLETES PARKING STRIP—Mar Vista Merchants and professional men raised \$2200 to create a level convenient parking area for the business district along the center strip of Venice Boulevard, thus providing parking space for more than 500 cars in the three blocks between Centinela Avenue and Inglewood Boulevard. After the area was plowed up and

leveled, it was graveled and oiled. Business and professional men raised the money by assessment under direction of a committee from the Mar Vista Chamber of Commerce, headed by Mrs. Berniece Burns. Other members of the committee are William Brand, I. Carlos, William Painter and Fraser Lovett.—(Star-News-Vanguard Photo).

This photo was taken in 1953 from the south side of Venice Boulevard across the street from Ocean View Avenue looking east toward Grand View. The Mar Vista Commercial and Savings Bank sign can be seen at the upper left corner; today this is the site of Timewarp Music, 12257 Venice. The small white building near the top center is the Mar Vista Service Station when it was a Hancock gas station (note the round Hancock sign in front of the station). The Mrs. Berniece (sic) Burns, mentioned in the photo's caption above, of 3616 Ocean View, was Treasurer of the local Chamber of Commerce for 13 years.

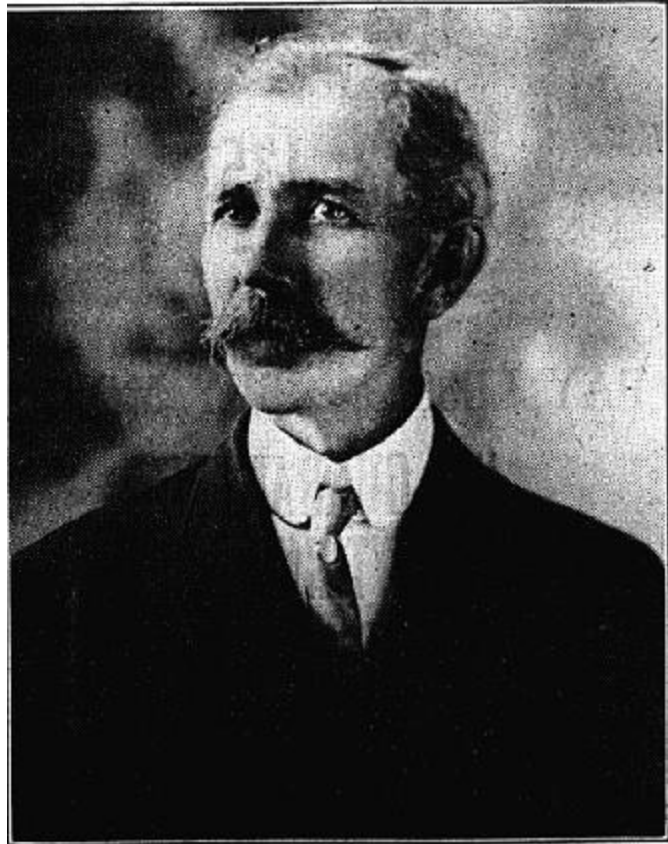
In late 1968 the Venice Boulevard Beautification Program was launched. This project involved the actual landscaping of the median, the replacement of ugly utility poles from the north side of Venice with underground cables, the installation of modern street lights in the median, the widening of the sidewalks, and the planting of trees along the new sidewalks. The Mar Vista link of this work was completed in August 1969.

3760 Grand View Blvd (3)

This spacious two-story Tudor-Craftsman house was built in 1908. It has decorative half-timber detailing, multiple-pane windows and a matching carriage house at the rear of the driveway that has been converted into a garage. An interesting feature of this home can be found in the kitchen, where a small square section of the wall has been cut out and covered with glass, permitting a view of the original electrical wiring – apparatus so archaic that Edison might have installed it personally.

In 1914 educator Cree T. Work bought the house. Work became the first principal of Venice Union Polytechnic High School on July 25, 1911, when the original school was housed in the old Kinney bath house on the lagoon at Windward Avenue. In 1914 he oversaw the transition to the new school at Venice and Walgrove. Work was in charge of Venice High for six years. He sold his home on Grand View in 1921 and eventually moved to Pacific Palisades. He died in 1949 at age 82.

The house then began a long association with the film industry, much of which was located in nearby Culver City. During the 1920 census a casting director rented this house. In the 1940s and 50s screenwriter Guy Trosper lived here. Trosper wrote such screenplays as *The Birdman of Alcatraz*, *Jailhouse Rock*, and *The Pride of St. Louis*; the latter script earned him an Oscar nomination. The current owner is writer/director/producer Rupert Hitzig, who bought the house in the mid-80s. Among the films Hitzig produced are *Electra Glide in Blue*, *Wolfen*, and *Jaws 3-D*.



PROF. CREE T. WORK
Principal Venice Union Polytechnic High School

Work, whose mustache Nietzsche may have envied, never lived in his Ocean Park Heights home but used it as rental property.

3754 Grand View Blvd (4)

If this elegant modernist post-and-beam beach house seems out of place in Ocean Park Heights, it is. Originally built in 1962 at 8534 Vista Del Mar overlooking the ocean at Playa Del Rey, it was moved here in 1971 due to the westward expansion of Los Angeles International Airport. The home was designed by the award-winning firm of Young and Remington. These architects first came to prominence in the early 1960s with their “House of Living Light”, a model home notable for its inventive use of natural lighting, and the expansive use of glass in the front of this home certainly embraces this

aesthetic. During the early 1990s Sioux artist Randy Lee White owned the house. White's Native American artwork can be seen at the National Museum of American Art in Washington, D. C.

3750 Grand View Blvd (5)

The open king post roof truss is the most salient feature of this fine Craftsman home. Built in 1916 by "bread king" George H. Barnes of the Meek-Barnes Baking Company, the house also has hand-hewn shingle siding, wooden door and window surrounds, river rock porch post supports, and an integrated river rock planter. Known to the oldest residents of the neighborhood as the "speakeasy house", this place has long been rumored to have sold illegal hooch during Prohibition. And a Los Angeles *Times* article headed "Dry Officers Raid Home" from March 28, 1923, provides supporting evidence for the tale. "County prohibition investigators yesterday believed they had found the principal source of a variety of high-priced liquors...in a raid on the home of F. J. Murphy in the residential section of Ocean Park Heights..." The article goes on to explain the modus operandi of the operation: a customer would drive up to the curb and the lights in the house would go out. The booze would be set on the porch, the money exchanged, and the customer would transfer the juice to the car.

The problem is, George Barnes still owned the house in 1923. On the other hand, Barnes owned several homes besides this one and no one named F. J. Murphy ever owned a house anywhere in Ocean Park Heights. This opens up the possibility that Murphy rented the home from Barnes in 1923. Certain it is that Murphy lived somewhere in the neighborhood in 1923, rented rather than owned his house, and was busted for selling "the finest grade of bonded stuff". Equally certain is the consistency with which the house has been cited as the "speakeasy" house by the old-timers.

3734 Grand View Blvd (6)

This remarkable dwelling was the second house built in Ocean Park Heights and is the oldest extant home constructed in Mar Vista. Erected in 1905-06 by a wealthy Pasadena widow named Aurilla Kempton, it has several points of interest, the most prominent being the Gothic-looking river rock entrance arch. The front of the house is dominated by two large gables with belcast eaves, notched rafter tails, and six latticed windows. It sits on a river rock base into which are set lunette wagon wheel windows, which echo the curve of the semi-circular arch that they flank. The same veteran residents that identify 3750 Grand View as the "speakeasy house" insist that this home was a house – of ill repute. Although there is no known documentary evidence to support this assertion, the fact that every room in the second floor was partitioned into a profusion of bedrooms and each one furnished with a sink lends credence to the tale; and no bordello was ever gaudier than this imposing "painted lady".

The second owner of the house was Florence C. Thorbus, a stage actress with "the manner of a grand dame" who trod the boards in the early 1900s as Miss Florence Morrison. Thorbus was the eldest daughter of Mrs. Gertrude Driggs, a notorious forger whose scandalous activities first raised eyebrows

and the circulation of local newspapers in 1902 (for more on Driggs see the introduction to the Oval chapter).

When the house was purchased in 1995 by the current owners, Lewis and Bonnie Stout, it was dilapidated almost beyond repair. Just prior to renovating their home a film company rented the house, and with the help of some Hollywood magic turned the place into 1313 Mockingbird Lane for the 1996 made-for-television movie *Here Come the Munsters*. It has appeared in many other TV shows, commercials, and films, including *Phat Girlz* in 2006. Lewis Stout is a retired director. In the 1980s he worked on the hit TV show *Baywatch*.



3734 Grand View as it appeared in the 1996 film *Here Come the Munsters*.

The walled-in 1928 Spanish Colonial Revival house across the street at 3727 Grand View is the home of producer Jake Rose, the man who gave the world *Orgazmo*, doubtless the greatest Mormon missionary-turns-porn-star-superhero film ever made.

3716 Grand View Blvd (7)

In 1904 Albert Wilson Davis bought from Annie Rose all the land south of Victoria that became known as the Ocean Park Heights Addition, and sold its parcels independently of the Ocean Park Heights Land and Water Company, which owned everything in the tract north of Victoria. A son of Wisconsin, Davis was a co-owner of the Viznaga gold mine, a money pit in Mexico that kept his pockets filled with pay dirt for years. He began investing his mining profits in Los Angeles real estate in the early 1880s, and in 1905-06 built a big house at this location on what was originally a two-acre estate. Named 'Dreamwold', it was the first house constructed in the tract and twenty years later was still being called "one of the most beautiful homes in the valley" by the local chamber of commerce. A. W. Davis died in 1912, leaving his net worth to his widow Mary, including a dozen unsold lots in Ocean Park Heights. Mary lived in Dreamwold until her death in 1937. The Davis house was torn down in the 1950s.

3710 Grand View Blvd (8)

The antique electric street light on the southeast corner of Victoria and Grand View is one of only two remaining lamp posts that lined Grand View Boulevard nearly a hundred years ago (the other is across the street in front of 3627 Grand View). They were paid for and installed privately by the residents themselves in 1914. Mrs. A. W. Davis led the community effort to have the "electroliers" installed, and the issue was decided by a vote in the first local election in Ocean Park Heights, held on December 16, 1913. Unlike today's automated street lights these lamps were turned on at night by the individual home owners, as we do porch lights today, and turned back off in the morning.

Victoria Avenue was originally named Rose Avenue after Anderson Rose, the farmer, dairyman and cattleman on whose land Ocean Park Heights was developed.

3638 Grand View Blvd (9)

This large Craftsman house was built in 1911 by attorney John L. Fleming. It has an outcrop on the right side of the house, a bay window on the left, and above this a fancy balconet. Also on the left side can be seen traces of a now-missing chimney that was felled by the 1994 Northridge earthquake. An original stained glass window adorns the back wall of the front room.



JUDGE JOHN L. FLEMING
President, Judge of Superior
Court, Department 14

Fleming was quite an operator; he owned three gas stations in Mar Vista, all on the north side of Venice between Inglewood and Wasatch, plus several other commercial lots.

The Judge was no stranger to controversy himself. In 1931 he resigned as bank president during a receivership scandal. And charges of professional impropriety were leveled against him several times during his 19 years on the bench. In 1933 he was recalled from office for improper influence on a trial involving Pauline Starke, another Hollywood silent starlet.

Born in Downey in 1876, Fleming began practicing law in 1900 and became a Los Angeles Superior Court judge in 1914. He was appointed advisory counsel to the original Mar Vista Chamber of Commerce in October 1924, and two months later opened the first gas station in the area, the Mar Vista Service Station and Garage, near the northwest corner of Venice and Grand View. He became president of the Mar Vista State Bank in 1927, the first financial institution established in the community. The bank was located in the Stohl Building, which still exists at the northwest corner of Venice Boulevard and Colonial Avenue.

In 1923 Judge Fleming tried a divorce case involving legendary silent screen star Barbara La Marr, the most scandalous actress of her time. During an age when a divorce could brand a woman scarlet, Barbara went through five husbands before her drug-induced death at age 29. This Hollywood jezebel seems to have broken up a few marriages as well: in the divorce proceedings in which she appeared before Fleming she was “the other woman”.



Judge Fleming got kicked off the bench when he messed with Pauline Starke.

3627 Grand View Blvd (10)

A retired lawyer from Indiana named George Carter bought this property the day after Christmas 1906. The following year he sold the northern half of his lot, now 3623 Grand View, and by 1908 had completed this roomy four-square shingle-clad house on the southern half. In 1913 a man name Sam Owen lived here. He was the subject of two L. A. *Times* articles that year when he became the victim of a Hollywood real estate agent who tried to swindle him out of his home. Owen, then 70 years old, supplied some courtroom drama when he suffered a mental lapse that “robbed him of speech and erased his memory” as he was called forth to testify. He later recovered his mental faculties and won the right to keep his house. His attorney in the matter was his neighbor across the street, John L. Fleming.

3623 Grand View Blvd (11)

This large two-story dwelling has a covered porch, a port-cochere, a gabled lantern, and a beautifully landscaped yard. On the front door is a plaque with the date 1900 inscribed. According to a former owner, who lived here in the mid-60s, the home was built that year and is the oldest in Mar Vista. But the Ocean Park Heights tract wasn't laid out until 1904, the same year Grand View Boulevard was graded. The map books and deed records tell a different story. The lot was originally the northern half of a half-acre parcel that was partitioned in 1907. The house was built in 1907-08, the same year as its neighbor to the south, and is holding up very well.

The charming red house two doors north at 3611 Grand View was built in 1922 by Clinton Byrd Olds, the general passenger agent for the Southern Pacific Railroad. Olds was the second-vice president of the original Mar Vista Chamber of Commerce.

3590 Grand View Blvd (12)

The land now occupied by St. Bede's Episcopal Church was for over forty years a bucolic 3/4 of an acre first cultivated by Canadian John Eager. In 1944 an electrician from Kansas named Leonard “Don” Dodson and his wife Mable bought the place. They lived in a small cottage built by Eager amid trees bearing avocados, peaches, and apples, and the sectioned plots of an extensive vegetable garden. In 1947 Dodson built a barn on the corner at Charnock which became home to his horse Pee-Wee. Though Don worked at nearby Douglas Aircraft he was a cowboy at heart and taught local kids how to saddle, mount, and ride. He used to let the neighborhood tykes ride Pee-Wee around the block for a dime – and if they didn't have a dime they could shovel manure for their ride.

In 1965 the Dodsons decided to sell their property to the Episcopal Church. This news was greeted with alarm by neighbors, who feared such a move would create excessive traffic and open up the area to apartment zoning. The opposition was ultimately defeated and the church has been dispensing spiritual guidance since 1967.

3582 Grand View Blvd (13)

This quaint 400 square foot house was built in 1928 by a 70-year-old Illinois gal named Mae Drinkwater, who bought the land way back in 1906. In 1944 it was purchased by Victor and Mary Phillips. When the Dodsons next door sought to sell their land to the Episcopal Church, the Phillips' consented and offered the front half of their property to the church for a parking lot with the proviso that they be allowed to finish their lives in their tiny house. Victor Phillips died here in 1978. When Mary passed on in 1993 she was 94 and had lived in her 20' X 20' home for forty-nine years. Their house is now a rental unit owned by the church.

3548/3554 Grand View Blvd (14)

In 1922 John K. Scammell and his wife Harriet bought a small house at 3554 Grand View on a half-acre lot that today bears these two large modern homes. The Scammell's were immigrants from Canada; John was trained as a civil engineer and Harriet was a school teacher. In 1924 Mr. Scammell was elected secretary of the first Mar Vista Chamber of Commerce, and three years later was made a director of that organization. In 1925 he became the first postmaster of the Mar Vista post office, a position he held for four years. In 1926 Scammell divided his lot, sold the house at 3554, and built himself a new home on the 3548 side of the property. That house was razed in 1992 to make way for the Spanish-style McMansion we see here today. His original home at 3554 was torn down in 1980.

3532 Grand View Blvd (15)

This three-quarter acre compound has served as an artist colony for 70 years. The small wood-framed house at 3532 was the first residence on the site, built in 1921. Screenwriter Lorraine Noble bought the property in 1931 and a few years later began building the other units that now number eleven. She rented these units to fellow writers and other creative people. Noble was the script girl for MGM director Sam Wood in the 1930s and 40s, and in that capacity worked on such screen plays as *A Night at the Opera* and *A Day at the Races*, two of the Marx Brother's better vehicles, and *Goodbye Mr. Chips*, *The Pride of the Yankees*, and *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. In 1936 she edited a textbook entitled "Four-Star Scripts: Actual Shooting Scripts and How They Are Written".

The colony continued to thrive after the compound was sold in 1976 to artist Helen Taylor Sheats. Besides her neo-fauvist paintings, this remarkable woman was also an architect. In 1932 she designed, built, and lived in an avant-garde house made of steel cubes that still exists – and is still admired – in Madison, Wisconsin, her home town. After moving to Los Angeles she became associated with architect John Lautner, from whom she commissioned the Sheats (L'Horizon) Apartments in 1949, a futuristic eight-unit apartment building in Westwood with no common walls. (Unit four of this building, which still stands, was a trysting place for Gary Cooper during his affair with Patricia Neal).

The most famous artist to live in the colony was Masami Teraoka, a Japanese-born painter whose work hangs in the Tate Modern, London; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; and locally at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Recent residents of the colony include recording artist Angel Travis (CD: "The Woman in Me"), storyboard artist Janet Kusnick (*Kill Bill Vol. 2*, *The Italian Job*), Gumbo Brothers guitarist Johann Stein (CD: "Funky Freedom"), bass player Peter Marshall (played with Santana), and writer Robert Elliott.

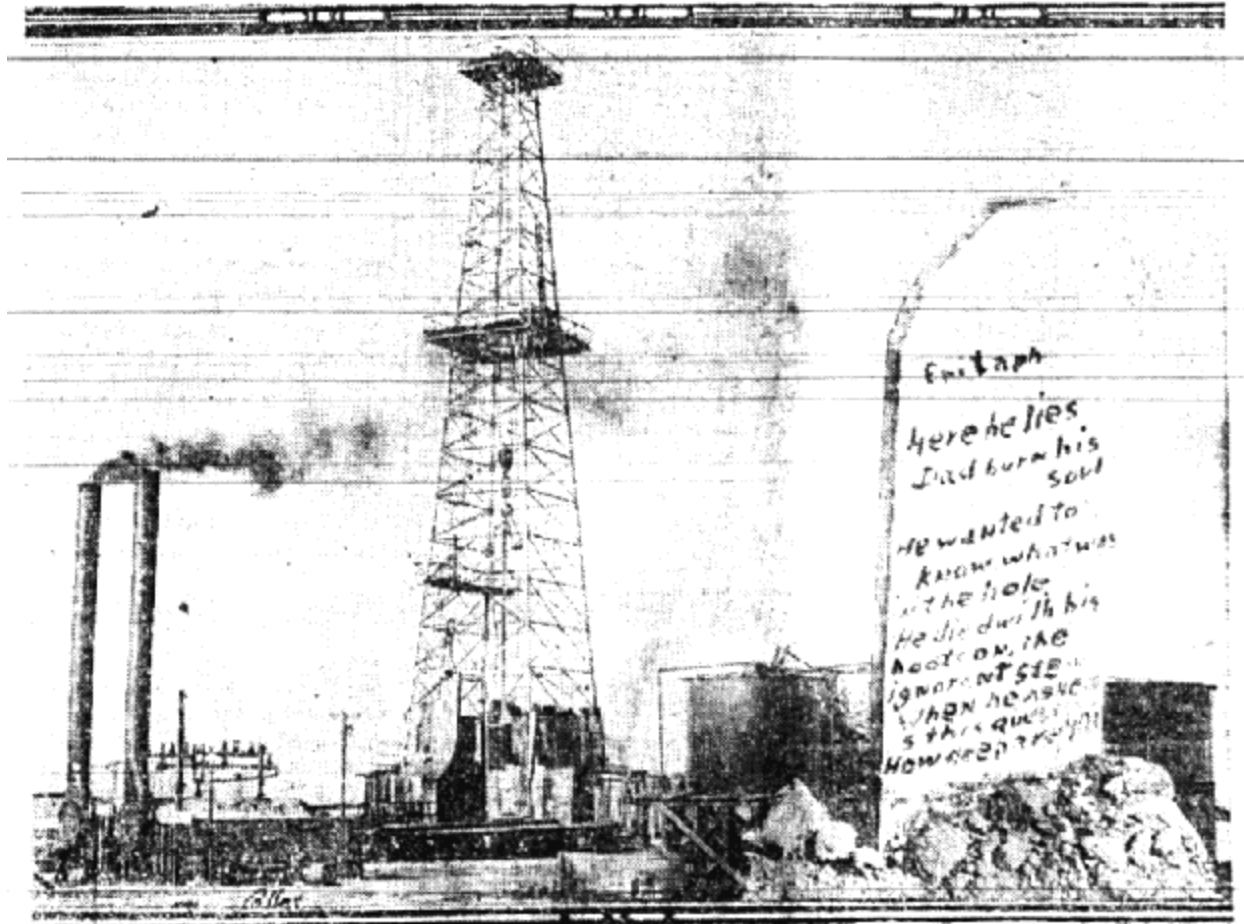
3480 Grand View Blvd (16)

Even though the Ocean Park Heights tract extended north to National Boulevard, virtually all residential development north of Palms took place during the post-war building boom of the latter 1940s. Until then, about three-quarters of this undeveloped land, called by some locals as "the moors", was planted with lima beans and held as a single parcel by various owners. In 1920 Raymond L. Haight bought the acreage. Haight was related on his father's side to Henry H. Haight, the governor of California from 1867 to 1871. Raymond was a successful lawyer who was appointed City Attorney of Venice in 1925. He served as the State Corporation Commissioner in 1930, was charged with and acquitted of bribery in 1933, ran for Governor in 1934 on the Progressive Party ticket, and became a Police Commissioner in 1938. He was fifty years old when he died in 1947.

Attorney Gurney E. Newlin purchased the parcel from Haight in 1924. This civic-minded fellow was the Chairman of the Los Angeles chapter of the Red Cross, President of the Los Angeles Grand Opera Association, and a president of the American Bar Association. Newlin was also a director of Union Oil and bought his Ocean Park Heights land shortly before that company decided to drill for black gold in the area. In February 1925 Union built a wildcat oil well with a 120-foot tall derrick on the northeast corner lot of Palms and Grand View. Named Newlin No. 1, the well "spudded" – began drilling for oil – on February 17 and continued its search for Texas tea around the clock for five months. The project was abandoned in July after reaching a depth of 5,878 feet with no tangible results.

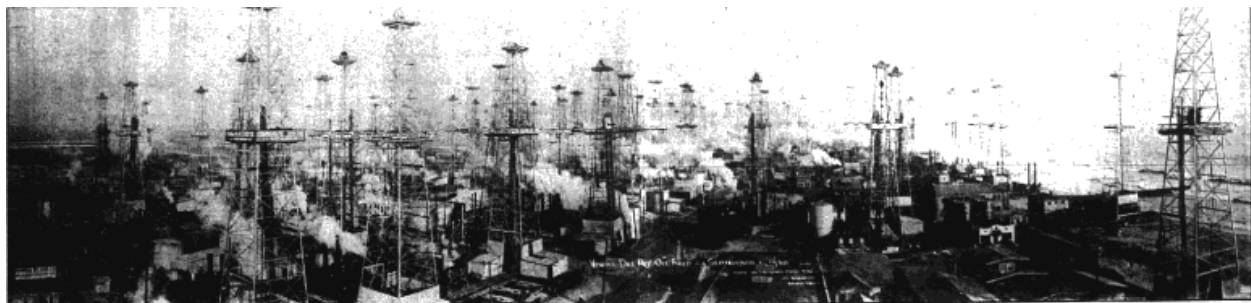
Had the company struck oil here the history of Mar Vista would have been vastly different. During the five months of drilling home construction in the area came to a standstill, as no one wanted to build a house next to an oil district. And an oil district would have been inevitable, as the example of Venice demonstrates: a year after oil was discovered there in December 1929, 137 oil wells were pumping out 46,000 barrels of crude a day. Clover Field, now the Santa Monica Municipal Airport, would have been abandoned too – a headline from the *Venice Evening Vanguard* tells why: "If oil comes in, aviation goes out; derricks and planes don't mix".

Oil Is Expected Hourly to Gush From New Well Being Drilled at Mar Vista



The tall structure in the above picture is the 120-foot derrick built by the Union Oil Company where the first oil well in Mar Vista is now being drilled. Three shifts are working night and day in an effort to get down to the oil sands in a hurry. Drilling started February 17. The insert is a "tombstone" with the following epitaph: "Here he lies, dadburn his soul. He wanted to know what was in the hole. He died with his boots on, the ignorant stew, when he asked us this question, 'How deep are you?'"

Below is the Venice Oil Field, 1930; this could have been Mar Vista's fate had the oil well above struck a gusher.



A few days after Union Oil announced it was folding up Mar Vista experienced a real estate boom. “Realty prices are steadily soaring”, declared the *Vanguard*. “Mar Vista almost had oil wells thrust upon it” the paper went on, pointing out that Union Oil had tried “to make one of the most naturally beautiful districts in this state a mere center of oil wells. Building, which had been almost suspended ever since the mild oil scare, has suddenly become brisker than ever”.

Over thirty years later another effort to turn Mar Vista into an oil district was attempted. In 1957 a Los Angeles *Times* story headlined, “Black Gold Fever Sweeps Mar Vista”, reported that property owners in the community were signing oil leases at the rate of 40 per day. In 1961 the City Planning Commission gave their tentative approval to the Continental Oil Company to form three oil districts in Mar Vista totaling 397 acres. In February 1962 Texaco began drilling for oil in the second – and last - oil well built in Mar Vista, located next to the present-day Mitsuya Market near the northeast corner of Venice Boulevard and Centinela Avenue. Texaco abandoned the well after two months of fruitless drilling.

3501 Grand View Blvd (17)

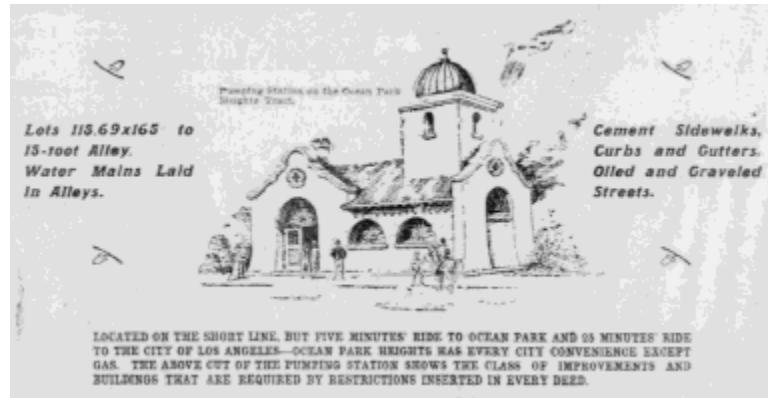
Newlin No. 1 was “one of the most closely watched California wildcats”. One of the people watching the closest was George Getty, who bought the lot on the southwest corner of Palms and Grand View, just across the street. George was the oilman father of J. Paul Getty, destined to become one of the world’s wealthiest men. Getty Sr. was sitting on his land while Union Oil was spending its time and money drilling for petroleum. Had Union found any oil, Getty would have doubtless built his own derricks. But Union folded up instead so he never bothered to drill. The Getty family owned this corner lot until the mid-1940s.

Getty wasn’t the only oilman keeping tabs on Newlin No. 1. Multi-millionaire Ralph B. Lloyd, the “father of the Ventura oil field”, bought the adjacent lot at the southeast corner of Ocean View and Palms the mid-20s. Like his neighbor-competitor Getty, Lloyd never sank a dime into his property but sat on it waiting in hope for Union to strike oil. He held on to the land until 1945.

Etched in the sidewalk in front of the house at 3501 Grand View is the logo of the Z-Boys. The Zephyr skateboarding team consisted of local kids from the Venice, Santa Monica, and Mar Vista areas. During the extended drought of the mid-1970s these guys began skating in swimming pools that were no longer filled with water – or they would empty the pools themselves with a portable gas-powered pump. Their swooping, air-launching acrobatics were publicized in national skateboarding magazines and became the first step in the evolution of modern vertical skateboarding. One of their proving grounds was the asphalt-banked playground of nearby Mar Vista Elementary school. Their story was told in the 2002 documentary *Dogtown and Z-Boys*, written and directed by one-time Ocean Park Heights resident Stacy Peralta.

3504/3508/3516 Grand View Blvd (18)

The first structure of any significance built in Ocean Park Heights was erected on the southeast corner of Palms and Grand View: a large water tank. Completed in the summer of 1904 by the Ocean Park Heights Water Company, this reservoir was filled with well water by a small pumping station and distributed throughout the neighborhood via gravity-fed feeder lines.



The fancy pump house of the Ocean Park Heights Water Co. was built in 1905. The exact location of the structure is not known, but presumably it was near the tank at the southeast corner of Grand View and Palms. It was probably torn down in 1929 in preparation for the large reservoir that replaced the old tank.

The pumping station was enclosed in a structure designed to look like a miniature Spanish Mission church, complete with domed tower. In the uncomplicated early days of the last century, residents of Ballona Valley who didn't have their own wells got their water from private water companies like this one. For some obscure reason water rates were regulated by the State Railroad Commission.

In 1929 the Southern California Water Company constructed a giant 2.2 million gallon-capacity reservoir on this corner. It provided water not only to Mar Vista but had pipes extending to the beach in Venice. One of these underground lines burst in 1954, causing a 60 X 20 foot section of Palms Boulevard, at Meier Avenue, to cave in. The water gushed down Palms for three hours, flooding the street for a mile. In 1985 the tank itself sprung a leak at an estimated rate of 1000 gallons a minute. The water poured down the alley between Grand View and Mountain View and was diverted by the fire department at Charnock west onto Grand View, where it flowed to Venice Boulevard and on to storm drains. The tank was repaired and used until 1989, then abandoned for a few years before finally being demolished. The three McMansions at 3504, 3508, and 3516 Grand View were all built on the reservoir site in 2001-2004.

Palms Boulevard was originally named Ocean Park Avenue; it became Palms in 1956.

12035 Venice Blvd (19)

On July 4, 1907, a private residence was started on this lot and purchased in 1917 by character actor H. Milton Ross. Coincidentally, 1917 was also the year Ross appeared in his first feature film, a western shot at Triangle Film Corporation, the historic Culver City studio built by Thomas H. Ince in 1915. In 1921 the studio was known as Goldwyn Pictures; Ross made films with Will Rogers and Lon Chaney at Goldwyn that year. The studio became Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer in 1924.



Mr. PG Burgers was originally the site of the 1907 home of actor H. Milton Ross. Today the restaurant is called Sunny Grill.

The following year Ross made the first of two films he would shoot at MGM, both starring blonde beauty Claire Windsor. Herbert Milton Ross had just one starring role during his single decade on screen, a melodrama made at a poverty row studio called Pacific Film Company. The conversion to talking pictures ended his film career. He left his wife and two kids and moved to northern California; in 1930 he was working as a ranch hand on a fruit farm in Santa Clara. His wife sold their home in 1932 after the death of their son, a 23-year-old newspaper photographer. In 1962 the Ross house was torn down and the site became a parking lot for the medical building next door. The current building opened for business as Mr. PG Burger in 1983, and has been Sunny Grill since 2001.

12101-12115 Venice Blvd (20)

This commercial building was built in 1948. The corner space at 12101 was originally a real estate office occupied by Lloyd Pollard, a one-time president of the Culver City Realty Board and, from 1949 to 1951, the Mar Vista Chamber of Commerce. In March 1958 a telephone pole came crashing through the front door of Pollard's office. It seems a 21-year-old woman, just learning to drive, lost control of her car while making a right turn onto Mountain View and smacked into the intrusive lumber.



This photo was taken from the inside of 12101 Venice not long after a car crashed into it. A telephone pole was struck first; it is resting on top of the car and projects about four feet into the entranceway. No one was injured in the affair. At the top left across the street is the house and white picket fence of actor H. Milton Ross; today it is the site of Sunny Grill Restaurant.

Next door at 12103 was the site of Mar Vista Radio Service, owned and operated by Horace Hamacher, a former news writer from radio station WOW of Omaha. Hamacher was an electronics technician during WWII, and after moving to Mar Vista in 1948 decided he preferred repairing radios to writing copy. By 1950 "Ham" was also providing sales and repair service for TVs, and referred to himself in local ads as Ham the Television Man. In the late 50s he began specializing in Zenith TVs and offering an early version of a remote control called Space Command ("Tune your TV from your easy chair"). In 1967 he became Ham the Zenith Man, the self-proclaimed "largest exclusive Zenith dealer in California". Ham passed away in 1982; his business carried on in this building until 1994. His rundown metal "Ham the Zenith Man" sign is still perched atop the roof of his former establishment.

3772/3774 Mountain View Ave (21)

These two small identical courtyard bungalows were built in 1928. During the early 1930s William "Billy" Brand, then the manager of the Hillcrest Country Club, rented the house at 3772. In 1950 Brand was elected first-vice president of the Mar Vista Chamber of Commerce. He opened Brand's Restaurant three years later on the southeast corner of Inglewood and Venice boulevards. Brand's was considered for many years one of the finest eateries in Ballona Valley. Billy was also one of the financiers of the Mar Vista Bowl on Grand View and Venice.

3734 Mountain View Ave (22)

The home at this address was built in 1939 by Charles Gordon, a technical writer employed at the Santa Monica Douglas Aircraft plant. Around 6:00 PM in November 1946 Gordon was driving east on the south side of Venice Boulevard with his pregnant wife and four-year-old child. He turned left at the Inglewood crossing to go home, and as he drove over the railroad tracks a speeding Pacific Electric train also going east slammed into his car. Gordon's auto was dragged over 400 feet and hit three utility poles before finally coming to a stop. He was less than two blocks from his driveway at the time of the impact that killed him and his family. Four years later the Venice Short Line train would no longer be operating.

Across the street at 3749 Mountain View is the 1922 house built by George McLaughlin, a pioneer Mar Vista farmer whose family name was used for McLaughlin Avenue.

3709 Mountain View Ave (23)

This late Victorian cottage was built in 1906 on land that was originally part of the Albert W. Davis estate. The house has belcast eaves, curved rafter ends, and flairs at the bottom of both the second floor and the porch. The front of the house has a bay window on the left and a dormer window above. A shed dormer opens onto a small porch at the south side of the house. The differentiated siding – shingles on the second floor, narrow clapboards on the first – was a common element of Victorian and early Craftsman architecture. It was purchased in 1909 by Frank L. Clark, a hydraulic engineer from New York who managed the pumping plant of the Ocean Park Heights Water Company until 1912. His son Glen was a milkman whose route included this very neighborhood.

The colorful home next door at 3717 Mountain View was also built on the former Davis estate. Dating from 1908, it has the look of a mountain cabin, an impression heightened by the huge pine tree in the front yard.

3701 Mountain View Av (24)

This house, at least in its original manifestation as a small bungalow, was built in 1912 by Civil War veteran Joseph D. Halbert of Pennsylvania. Known as “the sage of Ocean Park Heights”, Joe became a realtor after moving to California and opened a real estate office in the Grand View Boulevard arch. Halbert and his wife celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary on April 25, 1925 in this house; they had married two and a half weeks after Lee surrendered to Grant. Halbert died in his home in February 1934 at the age of 93.

3708 Mountain View Ave (25)

Actor Tim Considine has lived in this 1948 house since 1995. Tim played Spin on the old *Mickey Mouse Club* serial *Spin and Marty*, and was Buzz Miller in the 1959 Disney version of *The Shaggy Dog*. He played Fred MacMurray’s oldest boy in the 1960s sitcom *My Three Sons* and made guest appearances on such other popular television shows as *Bonanza*, *Gunsmoke*, and *The Fugitive*. His biggest hits on the big screen were the slaps he took from George C. Scott as the shell-shocked soldier in *Patton*.



Actor Tim Considine

In the early 1950s another actor lived across the street in the corner house at 3671 Mountain View. Bradley Mora began performing with the Meglin Kiddies troupe at the age of four and made his first screen appearance at six as Little Jake Oakley in *Annie Get Your Gun*. A cute little four-eyed doofus who resembled Froggy from the *Little Rascals*, he also appeared with Tim Considine as Louie on the *Spin and Marty* show. Mora’s screen career was over by the time he reached his early 20s.

Since 2000 restaurateur Raphael Lunetta has lived this 1947 house. Lunetta is the chef and owner of JiRaffe restaurant in Santa Monica.

3664 Mountain View Ave (26)

This is an interesting example of a Craftsman home made of brick. Built circa 1912, it features a hipped roof of Italian Renaissance tiling capped with decorative antefixes, a white wooden pediment, and stout fitted beams supporting the porch and porte-cochere. The brick window surrounds, with a rowlock course below, soldier bricks above, and a flanking row of headers next to another row of stretchers, was a fairly standard arrangement. The beautiful stained-glass window on the north side of the house is original. The almost identical house next door at 3670 Mountain View was much smarter before the large addition on the south of the house was built. Reputedly, both homes were constructed by a prospector who struck it rich in the Yukon gold rush of 1897. If true, it's nice to know that somebody came back with more money than they left with.

You can get a great look at this house, inside and out, upstairs and down, throughout the 1982 slasher movie *Slumber Party Massacre*. Most of the mayhem depicted in the film was committed here.

3658 Mountain View Ave (27)

This pretty Craftsman home was built circa 1914. The lower floor is clad with alternating narrow and wide clapboarding in contrast to the shingle siding above. The enclosed entranceway leads to the front door, which is framed by hinged sidelights that open inward like doors. The stone vase planters on either side of the walkway are original. In 1907 Freeman G. Teed bought the lot on which this home sits. Teed was the Los Angeles City Auditor from 1886-1888. He was promoted to City Clerk in 1889, the year he got mixed up in a notorious sweetheart deal in which a sewer was to be built on land owned by Ocean Park Heights' own Anderson Rose, at an outrageous price to the tax payers and to the great profit of Rose. The contract was supposed to be submitted to and signed off by the mayor, but was instead endorsed through the back door by Teed. The underhanded deal was exposed and the contract nullified. Teed survived this scandal to become president of the Los Angeles City Council from 1892-94. He died in 1916, two years after this house was built.

You can see the interior of this house, and the exterior when it was still painted light brown, in the film *Slumber Party Massacre*.

3638 Mountain View Ave (28)

This Pepto-Bismol shaded streamline residence replaced a house that had stood here over 60 years. From the late 1970s to the early 80s it was the home of director/producer Robert Greenwald. Greenwald was the staff director of the Mark Taper Forum before moving to television producing such made-for-TV movies as *The Desperate Miles* (Stacy Keach, Sr.), *Escape From Bogen County* (Jaclyn Smith), and *The Burning Bed* (Farrah Fawcett). His television work garnered 25 Emmy nominations. During the last decade Greenwald made several politically charged documentaries like *Outfoxed: Rupert*

Murdoch's War on Journalism and *Wal-Mart: The High Cost of Low Prices*. In 2002 he was named producer of the year by the American Film Institute.

The original home on this site was built in 1915 by John Lane, a car salesman for the Detroit Electric Auto Company, an outfit that sold "Runabouts, Victorias, and Coupes" powered by "Philadelphia Storage Batteries". Lane had an ongoing feud with his neighbor to the east on Inglewood Boulevard, a rancher named Kelso. It seems that Lane allowed his chickens and other farm critters to roam free, and they often strayed onto Kelso's one-and-a-half acre spread. In 1922 Lane sued Kelso for killing his bulldog Buster and a rooster valued at \$35, with chopped meat treated with gopher poison. He lost the case because Kelso had set the tainted bait well onto his own property. Kelso expressed regret about Buster but not the rooster, because Lane's fowls had been "playing havoc" with the roots of his avocado trees.

3628 Mountain View Ave (29)

During the latter half of the 1930s through the 1940s this house was the residence of character actress Esther Dale. Esther began her career as a soprano singing with the New York Philharmonic and the Boston Symphony orchestras. She appeared on Broadway in many plays, including the title role in "Carrie Nation" with a young Jimmy Stewart. She moved to Hollywood in 1935 and over the next quarter century played character roles in over 100 films. A dark-haired, dumpy woman with a flinty exterior, she excelled as sharp-tongued dowagers, bossy servants, and brutal prison matrons. She acted with such major stars as Humphrey Bogart, Spencer Tracy, and Cary Grant; among her directors were Alfred Hitchcock, William Wyler, and Howard Hawks. Esther died in 1961 at the age of 75. The small house at the back of this lot was built in 1915.



Character actress Esther Dale.

3599 Mountain View Ave (30)

At the northwest corner of Mountain View Avenue and Charnock Road is this charming 1950 house. Cinematographer Charles F. Wheeler lived here in the late 1970s. Wheeler started his movie career as a camera operator on films like *Inherit the Wind* and *It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World*. He became a director of photography in the 60s. Among his better known films are *Judgment at Nuremberg*, *Duel at Diablo*, and *Tora! Tora! Tora!* He was nominated for an Oscar for the latter picture.

Since 1997 it has been the home of actor/director David Gautreaux. A veteran of stage, television, and the big screen, Gautreaux had roles in *The Hearse*, *Troop Beverly Hills*, and *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*. His involvement with the latter film has kept him in demand at Trekkie conventions. He keeps busy today directing local stage productions.

In 1913 “one of the most pretentious homes on Mountain View Avenue” (*Vanguard*) was built on this half-acre site. The double-wide bungalow had parallel gable roofs, an interior courtyard, a reception room, and a library. It was put up for sale by a Beaufort B. Paddock in 1917 for \$3,500, and a wealthy 26-year-old divorcée from Ohio named Marie Briggs “Peggy” Cole snapped up the place. She



Peggy Cole, intended murder victim.

added a tennis court to the property, a profusion of shrubs and flowers, and a dog kennel in the rear which housed her wolf hounds and “Rags”, a trained movie dog she bought from Cecil B. DeMille. Two years later the “elaborately furnished” house would be the scene of a bizarre suicide and attempted murder. The buxom Ms. Cole had been keeping house with one Lewis Penoyer Ramsay, a ne’er-do-well from a wealthy Louisiana family whose excessive drinking and irresponsible behavior had cost him an allowance controlled by his disapproving mother. By early 1919 Peggy and Lewis were engaged, but in April she called off the marriage because of Ramsay’s broken promises to stay sober. Ramsay’s desperate attempts to win Peggy back with love letters and phone calls woed rather than wooed his intended and were rebuffed. When he finally realized that his dream of wedding a rich woman and living on her money was not to be, his better judgment deserted him. He showed up at her dimly-lit home around 3:00 AM on a Friday and broke into the house through a rear window. As he entered the home he saw a murky figure run into the bathroom. When his entreaties to gain access to the loo were ignored he

fired five rounds through the door. But instead of exacting revenge on the fem he felt had done him wrong, he shot instead the live-in maid, Theresa Hoover, who had heard his housebreaking and had fled for cover. Ramsay scooped up the wounded domestic, laid her on the living room couch, and warned her not to attempt to escape. He nipped whiskey and periodically took pot shots at the pictures and

bric-a-brac that decorated the walls, and even shot the legs off the baby grand piano while waiting for Peggy to return. He kept up this insane vigil for nearly three days, during which time he refused to give bandages, food, or even water to Hoover. Finally on Sunday around noon, despairing of seeing Peggy, he sat on the edge of the couch, shot himself in the head, and fell dead next to the maid, who, weakened but still alive, crawled to a window to yell for help. An hour later someone finally heard her and called the police.

THIS BEAUTIFUL BUNGALOW



At Ocean Park Heights—For Sale

One of the most attractive spots in Southern California, on the Venice Short Line, within two miles of Venice Restricted district. Clear view of the mountains, city and sea; 4 rooms and bath, strictly modern, gas, electric lights, cellar and good garage. Lot 115x165. Fine lawn, beautifully improved with flowers, fruit trees and shrubbery. For quick sale, FURNISHED \$4000. UNFURNISHED \$3500. Clear. Cash or terms. Phone Broadway 4340, Home A3411. B. B. Poddeok, Owner, Ocean Park Heights.

3581 Mountain View in 1917, just before Peggy Cole bought the property.

Peggy had gone to the mountains in Lake Arrowhead precisely to avoid the persistent Ramsay, a decision that speaks well for her intuition. The most amazing aspect of this incident is that Theresa survived, despite catching pneumonia and two slugs that penetrated her right lung. Peggy lived in her ivy-covered bungalow until 1935. It fell into disrepair over the ensuing years and was razed in 1964. The lot was divided in half length-wise and two flag lots were created out of the rear portion. The ranch house in front was built in 1964. The interesting modernist home in the right rear lot dates from 2004. Peggy settled in Anaheim and died there in 1975 at the age of 83.

3545/3539 Mountain View Ave (32)

These two homes sit on what in 1923 was still a single half-acre lot. That was the year J. Warren Miller, a life insurance agent from Kansas, built the first home on this site. In October 1924 the Mar Vista Chamber of Commerce was founded and Miller was elected president. He was re-elected the following year and was voted president of the Associated Chambers of Commerce of La Ballona Valley when that body was formed in 1926. Miller lost his house to foreclosure in 1934. In the 1950s it was torn down and the lot divided in half. The home at 3545 Mountain View dates from 1957; the one at 3539 was built in 1970.

3521 Mountain View Ave (33)

The twisted Corinthian columns that flank the front door, and the ornate plaster lunette fringed with classic egg-and-dart detailing above the door, are just two of the decorative flourishes that distinguish this two-story Mediterranean-style home. This plaster work, and the textured finish of the vaulted ceilings inside the house, is reputedly the work of imported Italian artisans. The sea-horse shutters at the second-floor windows are replicas of the originals. In the back yard is a pretty fountain and lily pond.

Carl H. Von Breton built this stately mansion in 1925. An optometrist from Germany, he was elected a director of the original Mar Vista Chamber of Commerce in 1924. When the socially prominent Von Breton's lived here this property was known for its lavish gardens, amid which many a charity luncheon and bridge party were hosted. Today two coastal redwood trees can be seen on either side of the still-extensive grounds.

From 1942 to 1963 this was the home of C. Garland Briden, an actor in the silent days at Universal studio. Briden made his first films in the mid-teens then disappeared from the screen when talking pictures took over. Not long after his death a big truck from 20th Century-Fox pulled up to the house and workmen began filling it with wig-topped plaster heads. It seems that Briden had switched to the makeup department as a wig maker after the microphone put an end to his acting career.

In the 1970s another German bought the house, a brawny guy whose overbearing Teutonic personality was complemented by the Italian suits, rattlesnake cowboy boots, and stiff Stetson he wore. "Jerry" (I'll call him) ran a slick used Mercedes-Benz operation called Telex-Benz, "a new way of buying your next Mercedes-Benz at great savings" (*Times*). New indeed: potential customers would call Telex-Benz and describe the year, model, color, and equipment of the car they wanted. Agents around the country would pour over local classified ads, and when they found a Benz that matched the description of the desired car would communicate with Jerry via a telex machine. He would then drive to, say, Atlanta, and buy the car, paying half in cash and the other half with a rubber check. An accompanying trailer truck would then spirit the auto out of the state and on to L. A. The customer would get his great savings, Jerry would pocket a nice profit, and the former owner of the car would be left stuck and steaming. This gray market shyster ran Telex-Benz four years before the law caught up with him.

The 1932 house next door at 3515 Mountain View was the home of Floyd Clothier for forty years. Clothier, a superintendent with the Department of Water and Power, was, from 1934 to 1937, the seventh president of the Mar Vista Chamber of Commerce.

12214 Charnock Road (34)

This pretty house is a striking example of the Pueblo Revival architecture that began appearing in the American Southwest around 1905. Built in the late 1980s, the home has the stucco covered battered walls, rounded corners, flat roofs, protruding *vegas* (roof beams), and projecting metal-lined

canales (water spouts) that characterize this style. The woodwork around the front porch, windows, garage, and gates is especially nice, as are the various species of cacti incorporated in the landscaping.

Centinela Ave

Centinela is one of the oldest streets in Mar Vista. It appeared on the 1868 Rancho La Ballona partition map simply as Road No. 2, and by the 1880s was called Ballona Road No. 2, to distinguish it from Ballona Road No. 1, the original name for Sawtelle Boulevard. Like Ogden Nash's three-L lama, there never was a Ballona Road No. 3.

3588/3580/3576/3572 Centinela Ave (35)

In 1911 Los Angeles pioneer Thomas Romero and his Castilian bride Juanita settled on a one-acre farm on the site of these four apartment buildings. Romero was born near the Olvera Street plaza in 1871 and baptized at the San Gabriel mission. When still a teenager he fought fires under Tom Strohn, the first chief of the L. A. fire department. In 1892 Romero went to work for the Los Angeles Postal Service as a mailman and eventually became superintendent of carriers. Two years after his death in 1922 local businessmen formed a Chamber of Commerce. One of the initial items on their agenda was to come up with a new name for their community. It was Romero's widow, at one of the Chamber's first meetings, who suggested Mar Vista. This name probably came to Juanita from the real estate subdivision that had begun development across the street from her house the year before – Mar Vista Park. As the woman who named the community, Juanita can justly be called the Mother of Mar Vista. She owned her home until 1930. It was razed in 1952 and replaced by the apartment building at 3580 Centinela.

3609 Ocean View Ave (36)

Champion skateboarder Stacy Peralta grew up in this 1947 house. A member of the legendary Zephyr skateboard team, the mid-70s exploits of Stacy and fellow Z-Boys Jay Adams and Tony Alva, zooming around the curved contours and lip tops of empty swimming pools, provided the impetus for modern extreme skateboarding. Voted the nation's number one skateboarder in 1979, Peralta appeared as himself in the 1976 film *Freewheelin'* and directed the critically acclaimed documentaries *Riding Giants* and *Dogtown and Z-Boys*. His perky mother still lives here.



Stacey Peralta at Mar Vista Elementary

The deep-set bungalow across the street at 3610 Ocean View was built in 1916 by carpenter John W. Burrows of 3737 Ocean View. The fellow who lived here in 1936, also a carpenter, MGM employee Walter R. Deaton, “met almost instant death in the spectacular crash of a speeding Pacific Electric train” (*Times*). Deaton was riding in a car driven by a co-worker who “apparently failed to see the crossing wig-wag signal. The impact of the collision hurled both men to their deaths while the automobile was littered along the right of way for 300 feet”.

3616 Ocean View Ave (37)

This attractive Craftsman house was built in 1907 by a 35-year-old Norwegian woman named Hilda C. Hanson. In 1919 dentist Ralph E. Burns purchased the home. Burns was elected a director of the Mar Vista Chamber of Commerce and in 1927 became that body’s second-vice president. In 1931 Burns got some unwanted publicity when a gas station attendant named Longfellow sued him for alienation of affections. It seems that Mrs. Longfellow had gone to the doctor’s office with a lady friend to keep a dental appointment. The friend dared the gray-haired tooth yanker to kiss Mrs. Longfellow. Perhaps thinking that she wanted her cavity filled, Burns took up the gauntlet with a smooch. Mrs. Longfellow objected; Mr. Longfellow sued; and the suit was dismissed.

The dentist’s second wife, businesswoman Bernice Burns, was a local couturière for 22 years as the owner of the Mar Vista Dress Shoppe at 12300 Venice Boulevard, opened in 1940. She was active in the community and served as treasurer of the Mar Vista Chamber of Commerce from 1948 to 1961.

Ballerina Rosemary Valaire bought the house in 1967. This toe dancer was a soloist with Britain’s Royal Ballet from 1946 to 1954, after which she became a coach for the American Ballet Theater working with, among others, Mikhail Baryshnikov. She co-founded the Westside School of Ballet in Santa Monica in 1967 where she taught classical ballet for thirty years. Rosemary died at her home at the age of 68 in 1999. The house was extensively remodeled in 2001: the porte-cochere and the portion of the house just behind it are all new, as is the entire bottom floor. During the renovation the upper story of the house was shored up while the lower floor was rebuilt, and is the only original part of the house that remains.

12224 Victoria Ave (38)

In 1914 this was the site of a farm house surrounded by nearly an acre of land. In 1919 the spread was purchased by a divorcée named Sadie Schwartz, who during the 1920 census listed her occupation as a “playwright for motion pictures”. No screen credits exist for a Sadie Schwartz. However, it was not unusual in the silent era for screenwriters and other “behind the scenes” studio employees to ply their trade uncredited, especially women. Sadie augmented any money she may have made from her movie work and her farm by rooming two boarders. She remarried and lived here until



Milo Ventimiglia

1952. In the early 60s Sadie’s house was torn down, her land was split into three lots, and three new homes were erected.

Since 2001 actor Milo Ventimiglia has lived in the house at 12224 Victoria, built in 1962 on the site of Sadie’s old farm house. Milo played bad boy heartthrob Jess Mariano on *The Gilmore Girls* and co-starred as Peter Petrelli on *Heroes*. On the big screen he was Sylvester Stalone’s son in the 2006 film *Rocky Balboa*.

3676/3700 Ocean View Ave (39)

These two McMansions occupy a half-acre site that a hundred years ago held a single modest residence built in 1911.

On December 20, 1912, an artisan named Andrew Walter Scott bought the house. Scott was a chemist and glass blower who learned the knack of shaping fancy glass gewgaws from his father, who picked up the art in England. Andrew was considered a master craftsman by his peers and was the avowed “originator of the spun glass sailboat” – evidently the *ne plus ultra* of glass blowing. He plied his trade for many years at a concession booth on Abbot Kinney’s amusement pier in Venice until the pier burned down a few days before Christmas in 1920. Scott then put his knowledge of chemistry to practical use by brewing bootleg booze in an outbuilding on his property. On June 20, 1922, dry agents raided his place and confiscated two 25-gallon copper stills, twenty-one 50-gallon barrels of mash, and 20 gallons of whiskey.

The police had hit the jack pot: Scott’s operation was nothing less than “the distributing point for practically all illicit liquor sold in the bay area” (*Vanguard*). His partner, also arrested at the scene, sold the hooch at a parking lot next to the Race Thru the Clouds roller coaster in Venice. The street value of the haul was estimated at a whopping \$50,000. The coils used in the jungle juice apparatus were made of blown glass crafted by Scott, who declared that his whiskey was as good as any outlawed store-bought liquor. Despite his arrest, conviction, and sentence, Scott managed to hang on to his house and the “pile” of money he made selling moonshine, and went back to making gimcracks for tourists in Venice after his release from prison.

Andrew lived in his Mar Vista home until his death in 1944. His wife Melandia, who had also been arrested in the booze bust, was 86 and still residing here when she died in 1959. The Scott house was torn down in 1993, their lot was divided in half, and the two huge



Scott moved his hootch at Race Thru the Clouds.

homes we see here today were erected. The one at 3700 Ocean View was owned by jazz guitarist and composer Thom Rotella for a few years in the late 1990s.

3677 Ocean View Ave (40)

This shingle-clad five-room bungalow was built on a half-acre lot in 1911. A wooden elliptical arch spans the porch, attended by smaller semicircular arches at each end. Atop the roof is a large shed ventilator dormer adorned with decorative knee braces, and embellishing the left side of the house is a cut away bay window. The first owner was Hudson Burr Sabin, a man of civic affairs who was voted to the Venice School Board not long after moving here from Illinois in 1911. Sabin was active in the Mar Vista Chamber of Commerce and became a director of the organization. It was Sabin, in fact, who on May 17, 1926, chaired the Chamber meeting at which the resolution to annex Mar Vista to Los Angeles was approved. He was still living here when he died in 1942.

3707 Ocean View Ave (41)

A retired lawyer from Illinois named Joseph Ebersol built this house in 1908. When his son-in-law H. B. Sabin visited him two years later Sabin liked the area so much he relocated to Ocean Park Heights and built the house next door. The Ebersol home has two engaging features: an elaborate pair of windows, transom above and latticed on the sides, each with its own roof, and the distinctive eyebrow vent dormer, a popular architectural roofing flourish in the early 20th century.

Documentary film maker David Lebrun bought the house in 1999, cut down a stand of trees that grew on the south side of the property, and in 2002 erected the modern modular home there, now 3711 Ocean View. Lebrun writes, produces, directs, and edits his own films. In 2008 *Cracking the Maya Code*, his documentary about the archeological deciphering of the Mayan temple carvings, appeared on *Nova*.

3737 Ocean View Ave (42)

41-year-old English house carpenter John Burrows purchased the lot here in June 1906, and by the following year completed construction of this house. The distinctive gable above his front door, with its belcast eaves and jigsaw-notched bargeboard, is clad with shingles in contrast to the narrow clapboard siding of the house proper. Equally handsome is the detailing of the front door surround. Pergolas cover both ends of the wooden porch and a bay window juts out of the south wall.

By the 1920s Burrows was utilizing his carpentry skills building sets at a movie studio in Culver City. Besides his woodwork he was a well-known breeder of canaries and a member of the United Bird Fanciers of Los Angeles. His house served as a meeting place for this group of avianphiles, and at such soirees Burrows would show off his "golden-voiced, fancy canaries".

The man who bought the home from Burrows in 1922, Fred W. Wharfield, was another canary breeder and Bird Fancier associate. A retired farmer from Wisconsin, Wharfield held a “canary bird picnic” here in 1924, an affair that was snidely mentioned by the L. A. *Times* and which Burrows, who had moved to Culver City, no doubt attended.

The lots next door at 3735-3733 Ocean View were from 1925 to 1934 the property of Fred A. Church, a co-owner of the “Big Dipper” rollercoaster that stood at the entrance to the Venice Amusement Pier. The Big Dipper was reputedly the largest coaster in the world when it opened in May 1920. It survived the fire that destroyed the pier – and with it Andrew W. Scott’s glass blowing concession – seven months later.

3746 Ocean View Ave (43)

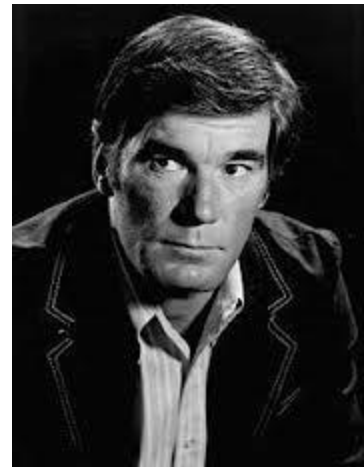
The low-pitch of the roof and the massive porch columns are the two most prominent features of this 1913 bungalow. Erminio and Ana Di Lecce bought the house at auction for \$3,982.80 cash in 1918. Erminio was an orchestra musician from Italy who immigrated to America in 1903. He played cornet under conductor Manfredi Chiaffarelli, the band leader Abbot Kinney imported from Italy to provide classical music in the old Venice Pavilion. Di Lecce and his wife lived here nearly 45 years.

Actor Mitch Ryan (right) bought the place in 1999. Ryan had leading roles on television programs like *Dark Shadows* and *General Hospital*, and played Greg’s father on the sitcom *Dharma and Greg*. On the big screen Mitch supported Lee Marvin and Jack Palance in *Monte Walsh*, Clint Eastwood in *Magnum Force*, and Mel Gibson in *Lethal Weapon*.

The 1923 house next door at 3752 Ocean View was for many years the home of Charles M. Gorham, the third postmaster of Mar Vista. Gorham headed the local post office from 1935 to 1953.

12257 Venice Blvd (44)

The first financial institution established in the community, the Mar Vista State Bank, set up shop in 1927 in the Stohl Building at 12503 Venice Boulevard, two blocks west. When that corporation relocated to Venice in 1928 Mar Vista was without a local bank for over two decades. The need for another depository was finally met when the Mar Vista Commercial and Savings Bank opened at the 12257 space of a sleek new seven-store commercial building built in 1952 at the northeast corner of Venice and Ocean View. In October 1956 the institution became Fidelity Bank. Five years later a dope with more nerve than brains tried to rob the bank with an unloaded pellet gun; he was caught a block away and



Mitch Ryan

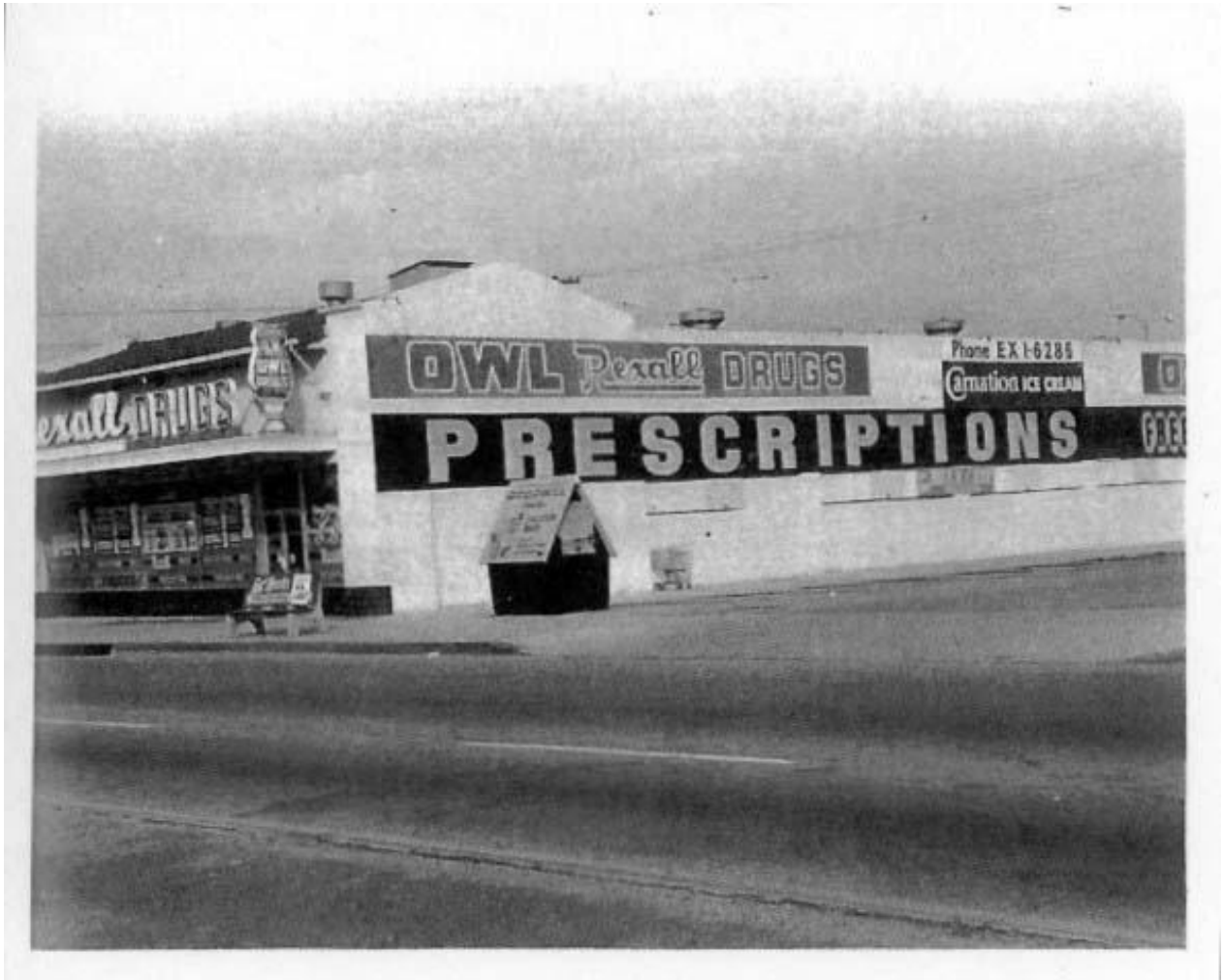
sentenced to 20 years in prison. In 1965 Fidelity moved two blocks away into a new building at 12420 Venice Boulevard. In 2009, after stints as a television shop and an auto supply store, 12257 became Timewarp Music. The old bank vault has been converted into a recording studio.

12335 Venice Blvd (45)

For much of the first quarter of the twentieth century the southern half of the mini mall at the northeast corner of Venice and Centinela was a two-acre farm run by Eugene L. Weaver, a former coffee dealer from Mississippi. Weaver bought the land in 1906 and built an eight-room farm house on Venice at Ocean View Avenue. By 1916 he was operating a general merchandise store at the corner of Venice and Centinela, today the site of the Chase Bank, where one could buy farm implements, feed, hay, and gasoline by the can. Called the Roseboro Department Store, it was the first known commercial enterprise in Ocean Park Heights and a place where important community matters were discussed. When the attempt to incorporate Ocean Park Heights as an independent city took place in 1916, the vote that decided the matter took place in Weaver's store. Eugene farmed his spread until 1928.

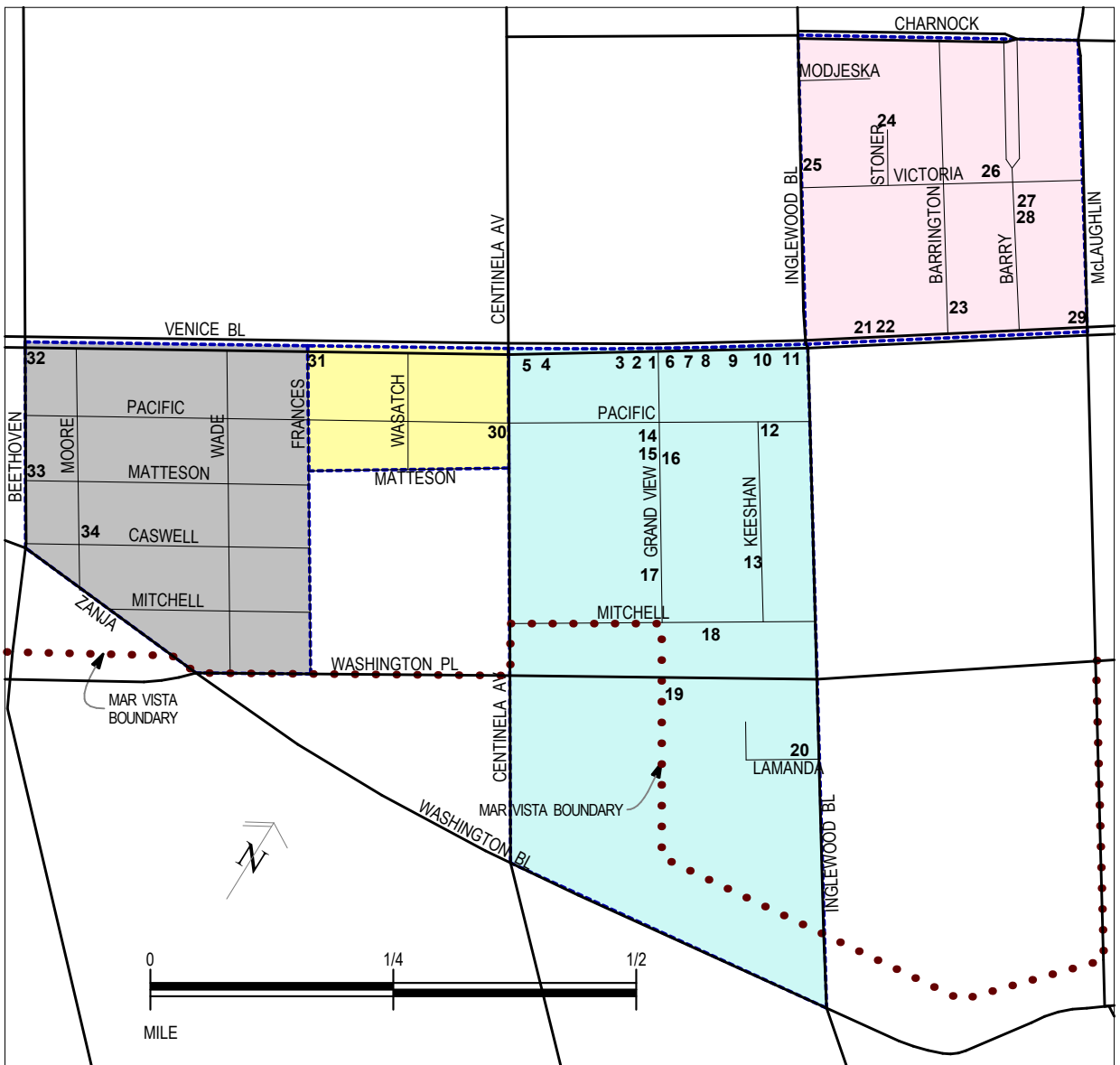


In 1941 a small Safeway grocery store (above) was built on the site of the former Roseboro Department Store. A few years later a couple of enterprising yeggs cut through the store's roof, entered the building through the air conditioning system, dragged the safe into the sound-proof walk-in refrigerator to blow it open, and escaped with 900 clams. In 1952 burglars – perhaps even the same guys – chiseled the replacement safe from its cement encasement, transported the strongbox to an isolated location, and withdrew a large amount of dough. On December 18, 1957, Safeway opened a much larger store where CVS does business today. In 1959 the original store on the corner was converted into an Owl Rexall Drug Store. In 1974 the old Safeway building was torn down and replaced by the current structure, which has been a home to several banks ever since.



A Rexall Drug store did business in this building on the former site of Eugene Weaver's general store for fifteen years. The building was razed in 1974 and replaced by a bank.

In January 1962, not far from the site of Weaver's old farm house, Texaco started work on an oil well, "the towering derrick" of which, promised the *Venice Vanguard*, "will be the tallest structure in down town Mar Vista". The well spudded in early February in the face of determined opposition from an ad hoc Mar Vista Anti-oil Drilling Committee. Petitions from 762 residents opposed to the drilling were filed and a stiff legal battle was anticipated, but the wildcat's yield was apparently disappointing: well operations were abandoned on April 9, and ten days later Texaco unexpectedly withdrew its drilling application. The deserted oil well loomed over "down town Mar Vista" for a year or so before being dismantled. The only remaining trace of the oil well - the second one erected in Mar Vista, and the last - is a capped-off pipe on the north side of the wall next to the loading dock of the Mitsuwa Market, near the northeast corner of the mini-mall.



RANCHO DEL MAR



ROSEBORO VILLA



EAST OCEAN PARK



EAST OCEAN PARK VILLA

THE FIRST WAVE

Map Key

- | | | |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. 12200 Venice Blvd | 13. 3844 Keeshen Dr | 25. 3672 Inglewood Blvd |
| 2. 12210 Venice Blvd | 14. 3847 Grand View Blvd | 26. 11818 Victoria Ave |
| 3. 12218/12220 Venice Blvd | 15. 3871 Grand View Blvd | 27. 3714 Barry Ave |
| 4. 12310 Venice Blvd | 16. 3900 Grand View Blvd | 28. 3718 Barry Ave |
| 5. 12320 Venice Blvd | 17. 3951 Grand View Blvd | 29. 11701 Venice Blvd |
| 6. 3826 Grand View Blvd | 18. 12014-12128 Mitchell Ave | 30. 12400 Pacific Ave |
| 7. 12120 Venice Blvd | 19. 12130 Washington Pl | 31. 3810 Wade St |
| 8. 12112 Venice Blvd | 20. 12015 Lamanda St | 32. 12822-12820 Venice Blvd |
| 9. 12108-12110 Venice Blvd | 21. 11929 Venice Blvd | 33. 3858 Beethoven St |
| 10. 12034 Venice Blvd | 22. 11923 Venice Blvd | 34. 3910 Moore St |
| 11. 12006 Venice Blvd | 23. 3744 Barrington Ave | |
| 12. 3931 Keeshen Dr | 24. 3640 Stoner Ave | |

The First Wave

Ocean Park Heights was recorded with the city of Los Angeles in July 1904. Within six months another four residential subdivisions sprang up around the junction of Centinela and Venice to form the core of early Mar Vista. Named East Ocean Park, East Ocean Park Villa, Roseboro, and Rancho Del Mar, they were all promoted for their “superb view of the mountains and the ocean” – even though you couldn’t see the latter from anywhere but the upper branches of a tall tree. Their proximity to the beach (“only five minutes from the ocean”) and downtown Los Angeles (“25 minutes from 4th and Broadway”) were also touted, and each claimed to have the best lots money could buy (“rich, loamy soil”; “a more beautiful townsite cannot be found in Southern California”; “absolutely the best piece of property in that section”). Despite such ballyhoo, residential development in these neighborhoods, like that of their predecessor Ocean Park Heights, would be slow to materialize and wouldn’t really take off until the 1920s. Regrettably, precious few vintage structures have endured in these subdivisions, but among the handful that did are some of the most visually striking or historically significant in Mar Vista.

East Ocean Park

On December 7, 1904, the southern-most 135 acres of George A. Sanford’s Rancho La Ballona pasture land was transformed into the second residential neighborhood in Mar Vista. Called East Ocean Park, it was located south of Venice Boulevard opposite Ocean Park Heights and ran to Washington Boulevard between Centinela Avenue and Inglewood Boulevard. Prior to his death in 1902 the land had belonged to Anderson Rose, who grew walnuts on a 22-acre orchard planted in 1893, and, on the other 100-plus acres, lima beans. The tract was purchased by a syndicate of real estate developers and subdivided into large town lots along Venice Boulevard, with two rows of half-acre lots behind them, followed by 100 one-acre lots “affording accommodation of fruit trees, alfalfa, vegetables, and a horse, cow and poultry” (*Times*). This prospect, and the “deep black loam soil” and “abundant supply of water” attracted the farmers who were among its first settlers.

Not all of them settled peaceably. During the war years of 1914-18 a battle was waged in East Ocean Park between two crusty old chicken ranchers named William L. York and Grayson Lewis. York, a New Hampshire Yankee, established a two-acre poultry yard in 1912 at the northwest corner of Inglewood and Washington boulevards, now the site of Kaiser Permanente. A year later the Missouri-bred Lewis bought a one-acre spread right next door - today the Kaiser Permanente parking lot - and began selling his own eggs and fryers. In February 1916 York was sentenced to the County jail for assaulting his unwelcomed rival, but was granted probation. Four months later Lewis’ cat ‘Sandy’ wondered onto York’s property and “made love to ‘Sassbox’, a handsome young Maltese” owned by York. “Enraged at such a demonstration of affection”, York threw a bottle at the amorous feline and crippled it. He also publicly disparaged the quality of Lewis’ chickens so persistently that Grayson’s business was crippled as well. This escapade sent York to the hoosegow. After his release the ornery Lewis got even by erecting a 45-foot sign on Washington Boulevard “advising the public not to trade with” York. Dandered up, the tetchy poultry man again resorted to fisticuffs, breaking Lewis’ nose with

a punch and sending his false teeth flying with a kick to the head. Lewis was 61 at the time, ten years older than his belligerent business competitor. A \$15,000 law suit put an end to the overt aggression, if not the enmity, of the opposing hen mongers. The mulish Lewis ultimately outlasted his foe, staying put on his ranch until his death in 1933. York had sold out six years earlier and moved to Palms, where he worked as a carpenter. (The man who bought York's ranch was an inventor named Max Witkower. In 1945 Witkower took out two patents on "nursing" brassieres; presumably he had no difficulty finding volunteers to test his innovations).

With two dairies, at least three nurseries, and large plots planted with barley and celery, much of East Ocean Park remained agrarian for the first half of the 20th century - but no less subject to violence. On April 25, 1936, an incident right out of Dos Passos occurred at "a celery field at Grand View Boulevard, between Washington Place and Venice Boulevard." A group of about 300 "irate" celery workers, picketing poor wages (there were getting 25¢ and hour and wanted 40¢), suddenly attacked some 30 "peaceful workers in a celery field" – workers who had been hired to replace the strikers – and "routed" them by "hurling crates, clubs, rocks, clods, and other missiles." Headlines from the *Times* heralded: "Tear Gas Bombs Rout 300 Strike Rioters" and "Officers of Red Squad Injured...by Mob." But after "a pitched battle" in which law officers were obliged to "lay down a tear gas barrage", law and order – and no doubt poor wages – prevailed.

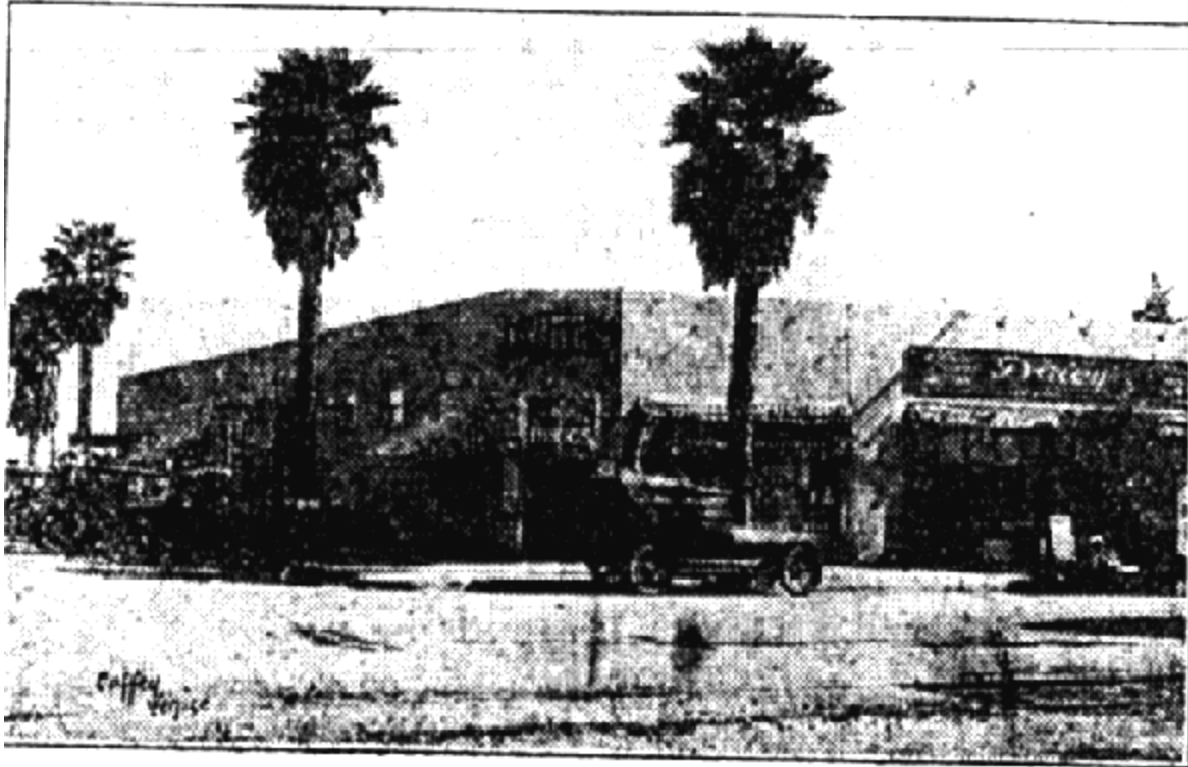
In October 1925 some 25% of East Ocean Park acreage was swallowed up by Culver City through the backroom political machinations known as the Walnut Park Annexation (for more details of this impudent chicanery see the Odds and Ends chapter). All of the land south of Mitchell Avenue between Grand View and Centinela was transferred to Culver City, as well as the southern-most 80 yards of the tract between Grand View and Inglewood. Within the bounds of this ill-gotten land can be found the Wildwood School (formerly Betsy Ross Elementary School) and, south of Washington Place, two wretched trailer parks crammed with ramshackle single-wide mobile homes. Virtually all of the architecture located in this region is, when not mediocre, abominable.

Exploring Historic East Ocean Park

12200 Venice Blvd (1)

The Busby Building may be the single most historic structure in Mar Vista. Begun in late 1923 by Culver City merchant/druggist Louis Claude Busby, it was the first major commercial building in the community when it opened in 1924 and provided the impetus for the business block that developed on the south side of Venice between Inglewood and Centinela that endures to the present day. The Busby Building served as the headquarters for the original Mar Vista Chamber of Commerce. Busby was elected treasurer of the organization and it was in his building that the decision to change the name of Ocean Park Heights to Mar Vista was carried.

The edifice was also the site of the Mar Vista Drug Store, the first pharmacy in the community, owned and operated by L. C. Busby. In November 1927 a pill pusher from Scotland named John "Doc"



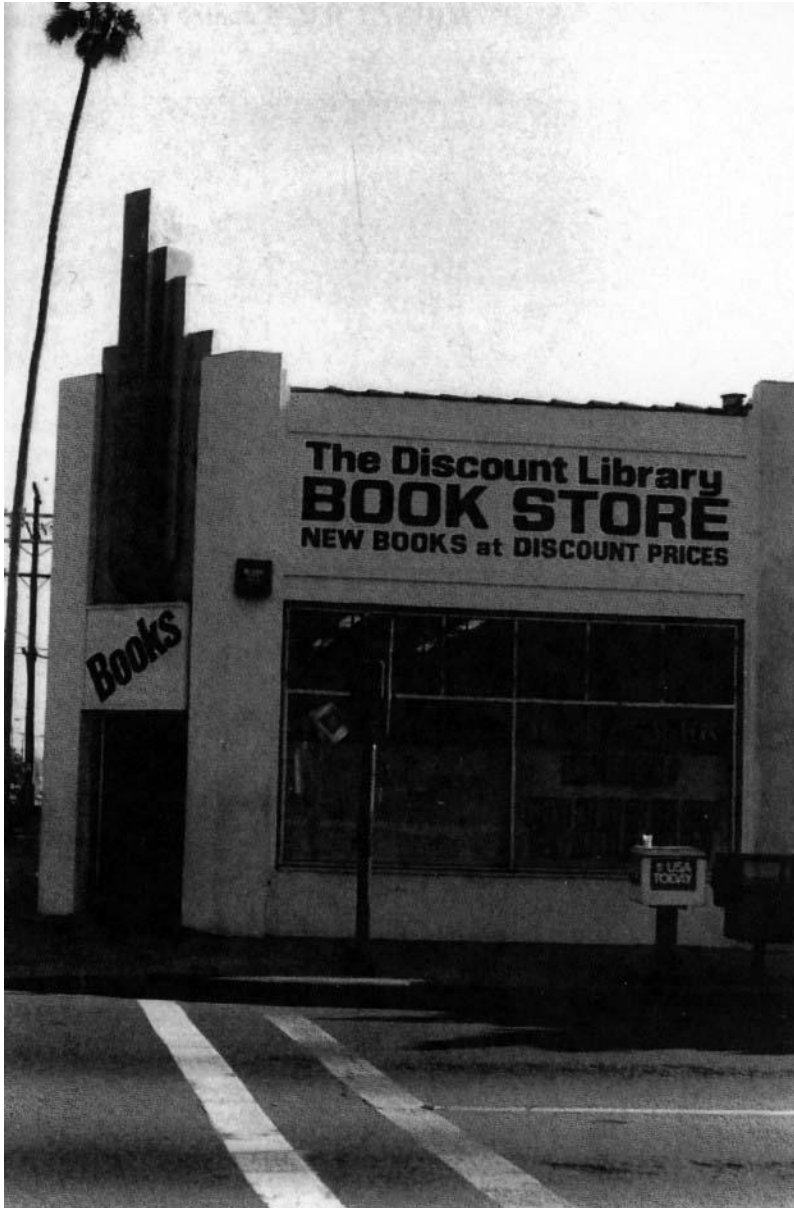
BUSBY BUILDING, GRANDVIEW AND VENICE BLVD.

In 1925, the year this photo was taken, the Busby Building was the business center. The drug store is in the corner space, Daley's grocery store is to the right. Around the corner on Grand View is the post office. The Pacific Electric tracks can be seen in the foreground. The Busby Building obtained its current Streamline Moderne look when it was remodeled in 1939.

Fraser bought the store. "Doc" was known for mixing his own prescriptions; he ran Fraser Pharmacy until his death in 1943. For the next thirty-two years it was known as the Mar Vista Drug Co. During the 40s and 50s the drug store was a hangout for local teenagers, who thumbed through comic books and slurped milk shakes at the soda fountain. In 1975 it became a bookstore called The Discount Library, which remained in business until 1993. After several years as a sleazy video store specializing in porn the Busby was revived with a contemporary edge in 2009 when Floyd's Barber Shop moved in.

In the western half of the Busby at 12204/12206 Venice was Mar Vista's first franchise grocery store, Daley's, an early Los Angeles market chain. From 1939 to 1976 the space was a discount store called Ralph's 5 and 10 Cent Store. The following year it became the Council Thrift Shop run by the National Council of Jewish Women, whose local headquarters are now located at 12120 Venice Blvd.

There are four business spaces on the Grand View side of the Busby Building too. In 1925 one of them housed Thomas & Condie, recalled by long-term residents as "the first department store in Mar Vista", where one could purchase dry goods, appliances, and furnishings. On February 14, 1925, the first Mar Vista branch of the post office began collecting mail, dispensing stamps, and issuing money orders at 3807 Grand View, today the site of Aby Party Rentals. John K. Scammell, the secretary of the Chamber of Commerce, was the first postmaster. On October 8, 1927, the new post office was relieved of \$90 by a thief who entered the front door with a passkey and deftly extracted the money from its



The Busby Building, 1984; today it's Floyd's Barber Shop.

blocked” and which offered “French Dry Cleaning” – oo-la-la! In June 2010 it began offering French food as La Petite Crêperier restaurant.

Sy's Barber Shop was located at 3811 Grand View, a six-seat hair cuttery that became Bill's Barber Shop in the late 1940s. In 1968 a Greek immigrant named James P. Argyropoulos moved into this space and opened a small shoe repair store. In 1973 the ambitious cobbler bought the Busby Building and founded Cherokee Group, a shoe store that expanded to sportswear in the 1980s. When Argyropoulos resigned as chairman in 1988 the Cherokee Group was worth over 100 million dollars.

safeguarded repository: a cigar box lying on a table. The Busby remained the site of the Mar Vista post office until July 1929, when it moved a few doors west to 12220 Venice.

Scammell took on the added responsibility of overseeing the first Mar Vista library, which moved in his post office in 1927. The library here was one of two tiny sub-stations of the Los Angeles public library system in the community. The other was located in the home of Florence Dibble, Mar Vista's first librarian, who then resided at 12425 Gilmore Avenue in what is today considered Del Rey. When Scammell lost his position as postmaster in 1929 he transferred the library across the street to a building at 12117 Venice Boulevard, today the site of the bowling alley parking lot.

Next door at 3809 Grand View was a laundry called Johnson Cleaners, an establishment where one could get “hats cleaned and

In the 1930s and early 40s another shoe repair store was located next door at 3813 Grand View, the Mar Vista Shoe Shop run by James A. Lee, a director of the Mar Vista Chamber of Commerce. Today it's the 98¢ Discount Store.

12210 Venice Blvd (2)

This PWA Moderne building dates from 1939 and was from that time until 1948 the site of Van's Market, a 43-store grocery chain. In 1941 the owner of Van's, one Otto Schienman, was robbed of \$168 by "the paper sack bandits", a couple of dumb stickup men who used paper sacks to carry off their booty and who were caught two days after the Van's job.



The Sunfair Market was the third grocery store to move into this building. It opened here in 1955 and lasted just two years.

In 1948 the place became the Penny Market ("shopping at Penny's makes cents"), another small grocery chain. Ernie's Quality Meats, the butcher shop on the premises, offered fresh dressed rabbits for 39¢ a pound and "colored" fowl for fricassee or stewing. Marshall's TV and Hi-Fi moved into the building in 1957 and stayed until the mid-60s. In 1973 Dick's True Value Hardware store opened here. In 1996 Dick's moved next door to 12216; that building dates from 1982.

12218/12220 Venice Blvd (3)

Texan Dewitt T. Caspary built this Spanish Colonial Revival business building in 1925. Like most two-story commercial buildings of the day, the upper floor was arranged for apartment rentals while the ground floor was reserved for small businesses. The rental units in this building were known as the Mar Vista Apartments. Caspary was the first vice president of the Mar Vista Chamber of Commerce; he was voted to the post in October 1924 and re-elected three successive years.

In July 1929 the Mar Vista Post Office moved to the 12220 side of the Caspary Building, today the site of the Lab Bicycle Shop. In 1941 the post office was advanced from third class to second class status, a distinction earned by collecting more than \$8,000 in annual receipts. It progressed to a first class office in 1948 by doing over \$40,000 worth of business, a jump in revenue brought about by the post-WWII population explosion that more than doubled the number of Mar Vista inhabitants. Despite this high-sounding status, the post office here was described by the *Vanguard* in 1948 as “a dark, drab, dismal cramped hole”.

Mrs. Clarence Chaney was the postal clerk during this time. During the late 1940s her husband ran Chaney’s Café at 12421 Venice Boulevard in a building that no longer exists, an eatery with a piano bar (“with plenty of draft beer”) where one could get a “regular dinner complete” for 85¢-90¢, or a more munificent pork chop, steak, or turkey dinner for \$1.10-\$1.50. Chaney’s offered entertainment every Friday and Saturday night until midnight. It was also the first known sports bar in Mar Vista, as an ad from the 1948 *Vanguard* indicates: “You Betcha....We have TELEVISION! Come on over and watch the Fights, Wrestling Matches and Ball Games.” On March 22, 1948, the folksy *Vanguard* column “Mar Vista Chatter” reported, “Big news at the post office”: Mrs. Chaney’s cat had kittens among the mail bags.

Until 1954 the Mar Vista post office was a regional station that did not provide carrier service: only people who rented post office boxes got their mail delivered here, and they would have to show up personally to collect it. Those who had no post office box got their mail delivered by letter carriers from the Palms, Culver City, or Venice post offices - if they were fortunate enough to live in outlying areas of the community. Otherwise they would have to pick up their mail from one of those outposts. In 1953 the post office moved to its third locality at 12106 (now 12108) Venice Boulevard, today the eastern half of the Petville Animal Hospital.

Next door at the 12218 side of the Caspary Building was, during the late 1920s, where the Venice Knit Shop did business. Here one could buy yarn and get knitting lessons from Mrs. Bess Post, the daughter of a movie studio costume designer. In 1948 the 12218 space became the site of Mar Vista Blind and Floor Covering. Conspicuously displayed in owner Frank Marco’s store was a 10-foot strip of “gorgeous cerise-colored linoleum” he obtained from the dressing room of actor Robert Taylor. But Marco’s proudest boast was the asphalt tile job he did at the home of actor Dean Stockwell.

12310 Venice Blvd (4)

The Busby Building may be more historic, but no Mar Vista commercial building has a more colorful past than Sam Johnson's Bookshop. Built in 1950 specifically as the new home for the library, Mar Vista's first full branch of the Los Angeles public library was formally dedicated on August 7 of that year. A Mrs. Dorothy Shipman was the head librarian; hours of operation were 1PM to 9PM, Monday through Friday. As small as this building seems today as the site for a library, it was considered twice as large as necessary when it first opened with 5,000 volumes. By the time it moved to its current location (although not its current building) at the southwest corner of Venice and Inglewood in 1962, it was bulging with over 12,000 books and hadn't an extra square inch of space.



Built in 1950, the library is now Sam Johnson's Bookshop.

After the library moved, 12310 Venice became a café called The Cove Room. In 1968 food service and the word "Room" were dropped, and for a decade The Cove flourished as a tavern. This establishment remained in business until 1979, when the vice squad shut the place down because of a shed in back that offered adult entertainment to its male clients. During the 1980s the building was home to The Tennessee Savings and Beer Co., a biker bar and the unofficial clubhouse of a Venice motorcycle gang called The Heathens. A Los Angeles *Times* article from 1984 reported of a customer who had been shot five times and deposited in the dumpster in back, and called the joint "a hotbed of illicit narcotics and explosives". An undercover cop was able to purchase \$800 worth of drugs and illegal weapons in one week, so laidback was this enterprise, yet somehow it managed to remain open through 1989. It went from booze back to books in 1990 as Sam Johnson's, purveyor of volumes rare and used.

12320 Venice Blvd (5)

Robinson Beautilities is an interesting example of the building-as-billboard concept. Constructed in 1952-53, it was for fifteen years a retail store called Rich's Furniture and Appliance. In 1968 it became the repository of beauty shop supplies, cosmetics, wigs, and costumes it remains to this day. The store acquired many of its costumes from nearby motion picture and television studios – the luxurious robe worn by Richard Burton in *The Taming of the Shrew* was once offered for sale here. Jim Carey, Magic Johnson, and Brittany Spears are just three of the many celebrities who have made purchases in this one-of-a-kind emporium.

Around the corner at 3838 Centinela was, in the early 1950s, a Union Oil Service station. It then became the site of a donut shop before becoming a pizzeria called Bruno's Inn. By 1969 Bruno's had expanded into a fine Italian ristorante with a vaulted ceiling, stained-glass window, marble columns, and faux-classic sculptures (reputedly acquired by auction from the 1959 MGM epic *Ben Hur*); it was the grandest restaurant in Mar Vista for thirty years. In 2000 the place was turned into a church of the Vineyard Christian Fellowship, but the new owners kept the gaudy Romanesque interior of the former Bruno's intact. There is still a coffee shop and outdoor patio open to the general public.

3826 Grand View Blvd (6)

Mar Vista's first modern super market opened for business on this corner in 1939. Besides groceries, produce, canned goods, and liquor, Arnold's Super Ranch Market had a bakery, a delicatessen counter, and a butcher shop that featured Cliff and Bob's Quality Meats. Located in a specially-built mezzanine floor fronting Grand View was a beauty salon. The enterprise was owned by Nate Arnold and run by his son Allen. Nate first ventured into the grocery business in 1912. In 1937 he built the first Arnold's Ranch Market at the northeast corner of Zanja Street and Lincoln Boulevard, today the Lincoln Liquor Locker. Groundbreaking for the Mar Vista store took place on August 3, 1939, and the \$15,000 market where "the finest quality will be sold at CUT RATE PRICES" held its grand opening on October 20.



Arnold's in 1946. Notice the traffic signal at lower right, which uses lights as well as pop up signs.

In September 1947 Arnold's was renamed the Mar Vista Food Center - same store, different owners - then two years later the grocery department closed for remodeling. On December 15, 1949 the place reopened as The Mar Vista Market with the slogan "Designed with *you* in mind". Painted on

the store front along Venice Boulevard was the market's trademark, a peppy little sailor with the face of Howdy Doody named the "Little Skipper", whose likeness also appeared on all the store's newspaper ads. Also new was a 15,000 square foot paved parking lot with a startling innovation: individual parking spaces marked with painted white lines.

The Mar Vista Market remained a local landmark just over fifty years before losing its lease in 2000. The post office moved here in 2004, right across the street from where it had started 79 years earlier.

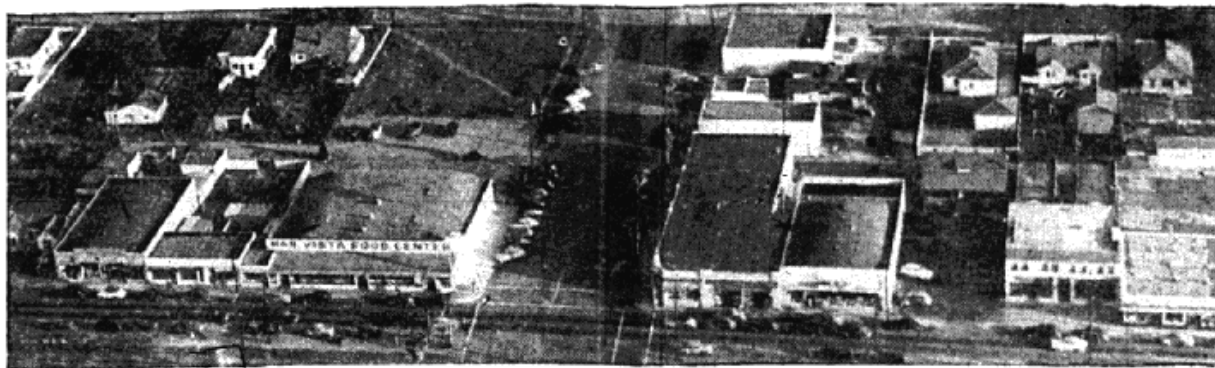
12120 Venice Blvd (7)

This building was completed in the summer of 1946 and opened as Whitely's Hardware store "in the heart of fast-growing, progressive Mar Vista." Ernie Whitely had been a sound engineer at MGM before going into the hardware business in 1942 next door at 12122, in a building that was subsequently torn down to make way for the current post office parking lot.



Whitely's Hardware Store, 12120 Venice Boulevard, not long after opening in 1946. Today it is a thrift shop for the National Council of Jewish Women.

Ernie was elected president of the Mar Vista Chamber of Commerce for a single term in 1947. Besides nuts and bolts one could buy appliances, television sets, Sherman-Williams paint ("your local paint service center"), phonographs, the latest Hit Parade platters, and – steer manure. When Whitely sold out in 1958 the place became Mar Vista Hardware until 1965. From 1969 to 2002 it was it was a thrift shop called Gateway's. Since 2003 it has been the Council Thrift Shop.



—Air View Shot of the Corner of Grandview and Venice Blvd.—

The Mar Vista business center circa 1948; we are looking at the south side of Venice Boulevard. Starting at the far left we have Whitely's Hardware Store; the next building, which no longer exists, housed Lorraine's Dress Shop and Marina's Circus Shop; the Mar Vista Food Center on the corner is now a parking lot. On the other side of Grand View is the Busby Building, the site of the Mar Vista Drug Store and Ralph's Five and Dime Store; next door was Penny Market; the next lot was vacant until 1982 and was used for parking (today it's the site of Dick's True Value Hardware Store); next is the Caspary Building, in 1948 the home to Mar Vista Blind and Floor Covering and the Post Office. The Alice Bakery and Jeanette's Dry Goods were located in the last building; today one can nosh there at the Venice Grind and Earl's Gourmet Grub.

12112 Venice Blvd (8)

In May 1952 the Mar Vista Outlet Department Store opened in the east end of this then-new double unit commercial building. The *Vanguard* ran an article extolling the store's "large stocks of merchandise and prices which astound visitors". The entire community was astounded five months later when the manager, a sharpie named Harold Shapiro, skipped town with one of his clerks, a young gal named Lillian Doyle, leaving a long trail of bad checks in his wake. He also bilked customers who had paid in advance for advertised merchandise that never materialized.

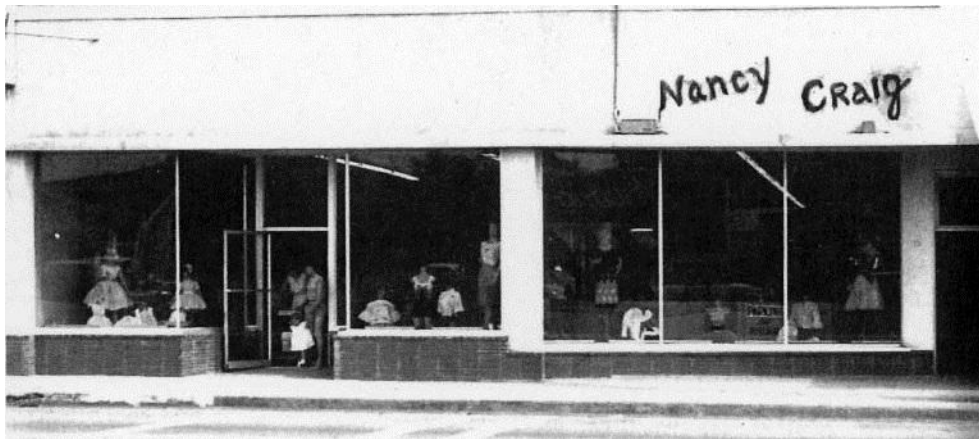
In June 1954 an Owl Rexall Drug Store moved into the entire building. It boasted a 40-foot lunch counter with 19 stools and four upholstered booths. In 1959 the drug store relocated to the northeast corner of Venice and Centinela, now a Chase Bank. Today the old department store is the home of Kirby's Pet Depot.

12108 Venice Blvd (9)

This commercial structure was built in 1953 as two separate business spaces. On September 30, 1953, the Mar Vista Post office moved into the east side. This, the third site of the local post office, had twice the space of the old office at 12220 Venice. On October 16, 1954, what had been a small community depot became an official station of the Los Angeles Post Office system, designated as postal zone L. A. 66. Shortly afterwards Mar Vista residents finally started getting mail delivery service from their own post office. Mar Vista Station 66 would remain here until April 1958, when it moved to 3847 Grand View.



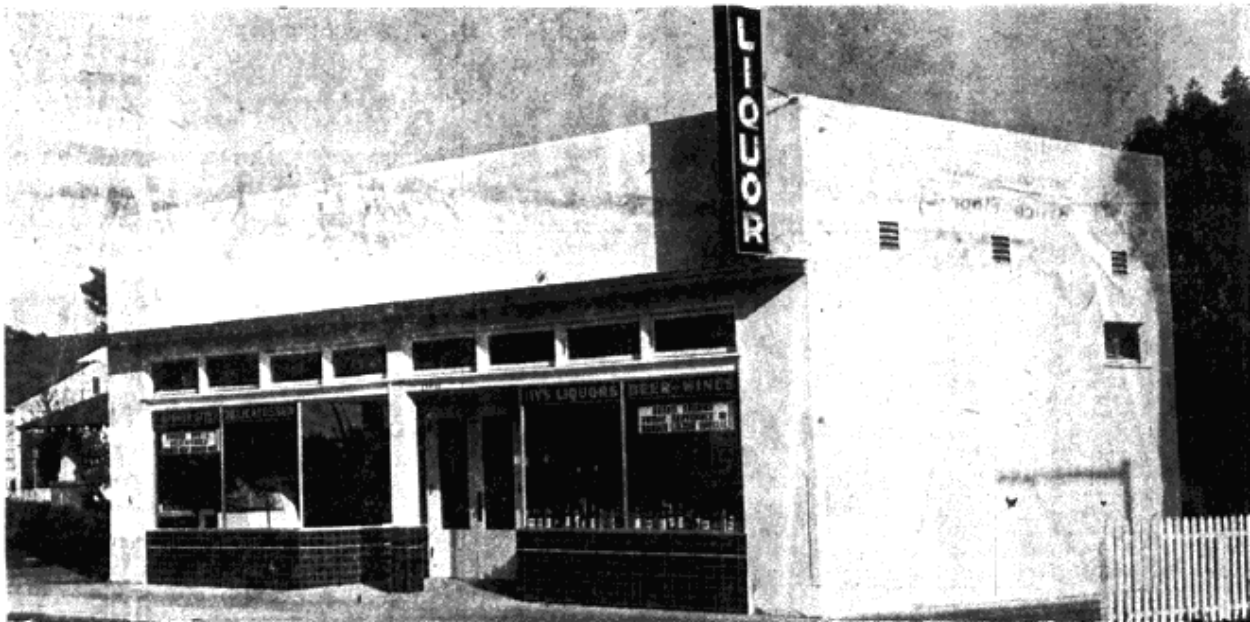
The Mar Vista Post Office moved into this then-new two-space building in 1953 and stayed five years. In 1954 Nancy Craig moved into the space next door, and in 1958 took over both spaces and remodeled. Today both spaces make up the Petville Animal Hospital.



In early 1954 Nancy Craig, a chic women's fashion shop, moved into the western space. When the post office moved in 1958, Nancy Craig took over the entire building before going out of business in 1980. Since 1991 the two spaces have been united as Petville Animal Hospital.

12034 Venice Blvd (10)

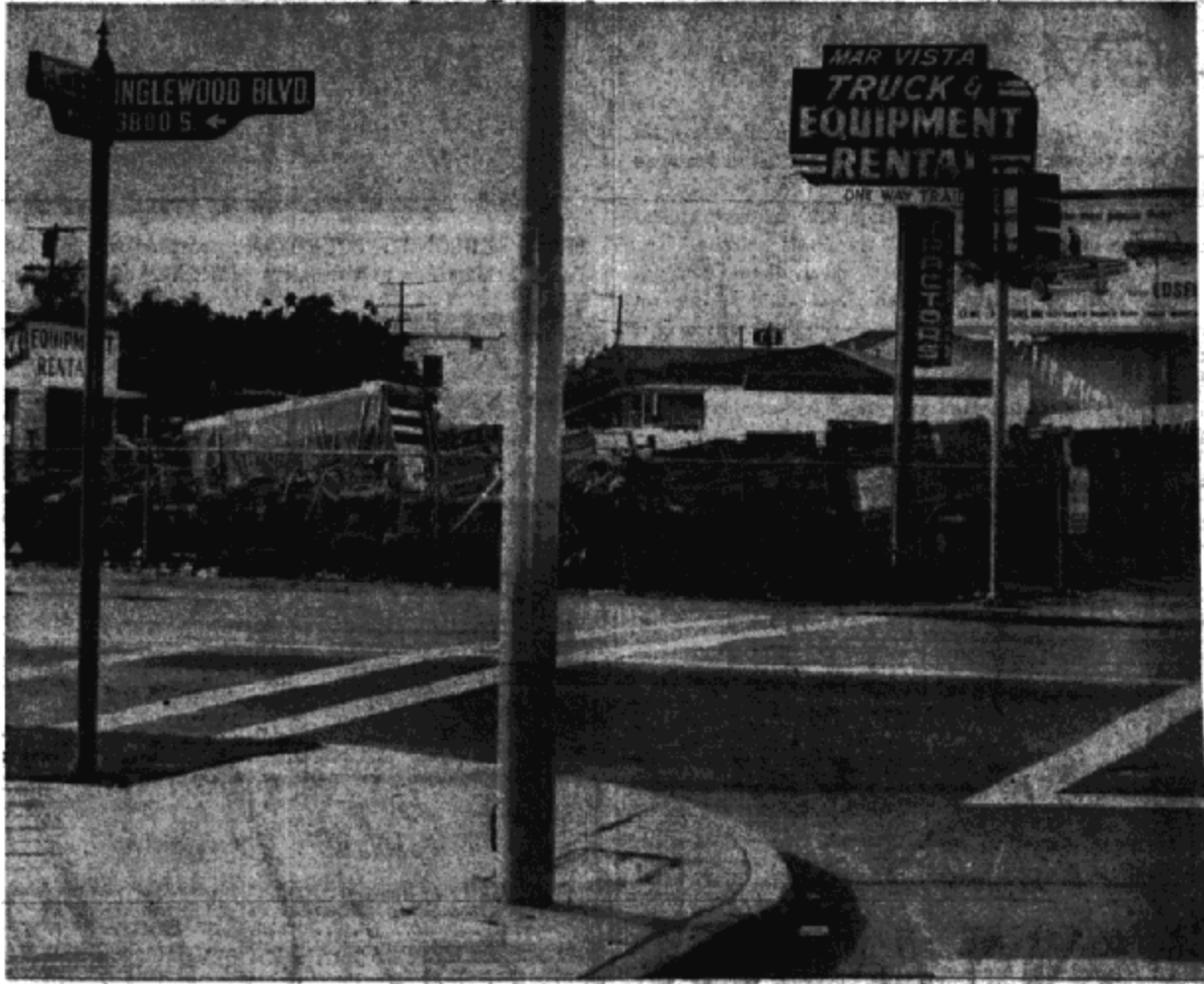
In 1947 this building was a men's clothing store called Kamil's, where Mar Vista gentlemen could buy everything from underwear and socks to dress shirts, sport coats, and shoes. From 1948 to 1971 it was a liquor store and kosher deli called Newman's; booze continued to be peddled here for another 16 years as Vista Liquor. In 2009 the building's tiled front and alcove entranceway were removed, the walls stuccoed, and the remodeled building opened as The Curious Palette restaurant.



Newman's Liquor and Kosher-Style Delicatessen, 12034 Venice Boulevard

12006 Venice Blvd (11)

During most of the 1950s Murray's Mar Vista Truck and Equipment Rental did business on this corner lot. In July 1960 the city of Los Angeles bought the property for the home of Mar Vista's first "permanent" library. Groundbreaking ceremonies took place on May 22, 1961, and the new \$214,869 library was dedicated on March 13, 1962. Seven months later the building suffered smoke damage from a burning brand stuffed into an overnight book drop by a Halloween prankster. A thorough cleaning was required to remove the soot that had permeated the entire facility.



The Mar Vista Truck & Equipment Rental property, just before it was torn down to make way for the library, shown below in an artist's rendering before construction.

Next door at 12020 Venice was a house built in 1933 by a woman named Cora Bradley Lloyd. Cora had become the local librarian in 1932, three years after the library moved from the Busby Building to the Fairfield Building at 12117 Venice. The library was still a sub-station opened one afternoon a week when Ms. Lloyd first took charge of the book shelves. In 1938 it was upgraded to full station status and open nine hours a week. Early in 1949 it evolved into a sub-branch and on December 5, 1949, it became a full branch of the L. A. Public Library with an inventory of some 5,000 volumes.

Cora died in her house in 1950 less than three months before the library moved into the building now occupied by Sam Johnson's Bookstore. The Fairfield Building was torn down in 1961 to make way for the bowling alley parking lot.



For a few years after her death Cora's old house was used to sell doo-dads as the Mar Vista Gift Shop. In 1955 it became the Mar Vista Nursery School. Little tykes learned their ABC's there until 1990. In July 2001 the library next door closed down preparatory to being razed for a new, larger facility. Cora's house was torn down too and the lot on which it was built became part of the expanded Mar Vista Library that opened on March 6, 2003. Presumably, Mrs. Lloyd would have approved of this arrangement.

Keeshen Dr

Keeshan Drive is a block-long road that runs south from Pacific to Mitchell avenues. In 1916 this street and the homes that flank it, as well as the parallel row of apartment buildings on Inglewood, did not exist. Rather, this land was a ten-acre farm owned by John H. Montgomery, a 48-year-old planter from England who immigrated to the U. S. in 1895. Montgomery farmed this land until 1922, when he sold the spread to the Santa Monica Dairy Company, which a year later sold it to a man named Keeshen. That gentleman tore down Montgomery's farmhouse, subdivided his furrowed fields into 90 residential lots and, along Inglewood, 45 town lots, and laid out a 50-foot-wide street which he named after himself.

Montgomery relocated to a rented house at 12101 Pacific Avenue, a stone's throw from his old farm. In 1927 he was found dead by a neighbor, slumped over his kitchen table clutching a half-emptied bottle of gin, "apparently a victim of gas or poison liquor" (*Times*). Investigators found two other empty bottles of bootleg booze on the table and learned that he had gone on a week-long drunk, but they also found a gas jet partly opened. The mystery was cleared up when the coroner determined the cause of death as heart failure aggravated by excessive alcoholism. The house at 12101 Pacific, built in 1922, was torn down in 1961 and replaced by the apartment building there today.

3931 Keeshen Dr (12)

This modest home was the first house built on Keeshen Drive. It was constructed in early 1925 by Joseph A. Bolton, a 70-year-old retired "Free Methodist" clergyman from Ohio. After his wife died Bolton sold the house to his daughter and son-in-law and lived with them until his own death.

The residence next door at 3933 is obscured by a luxuriant growth of beautiful landscaping. It is the oldest house on Keeshen Drive, built in 1920 at 314 N. Normandie and moved here in 1929. The vacated home site at 314 N. Normandie became a used car lot.

Across the street and a few doors down at 3952 is the home of Charles Lawrence Keeshen himself. A mortgage broker from Cedar Rapids, Iowa, Keeshen became a real estate developer in 1923 when he bought and subdivided John Montgomery's old farm. He built this house in 1927, but lost it five years later from financial setbacks triggered by the '29 stock market crash. He relocated to the San Fernando Valley, where he died in 1958 at age 71.

3844 Keeshen Dr (13)

This pretty 1925 Craftsman home was built by Mary Campion, a 41-year-old single woman, and Evelyn O'Brien, her 24-year-old unmarried niece. By 1930 Mary had moved on and Evelyn, a stenographer in a law office, was renting rooms in her house to four people, two of whom were identified as boarders and the other two as lodgers. Apparently, the lodgers had to cook their own meals or eat out. This is one of the few homes built on Keeshen Drive in the 1920s that was not a Spanish hacienda.

In 1956 Henry and Hazel Goethals bought the house. On March 14, 1962, Mrs. Goethals' 6 1/2-year-old granddaughter Ginger checked out the first book from the new Mar Vista library, which had been dedicated the day before.

3847 Grand View Blvd (14)

This building debuted on April 28, 1958 as the Mar Vista Post Office. Built in what the *Vanguard* called "the new 'tilt up' concrete slab method", the 6,000 square foot building was the fourth location of the community's post office. In 1963 the United States Post Office Department inaugurated the Zone Improvement Program, and the ZIP code was born. Instead of addressing local mail to Mar Vista Station 66, correspondents were now obliged to learn a new six-digit number: 90066. The 9 designated the state of California, the first zero represented the local subdivision of the state, the second zero indicated the local "sectional center", and the two sixes directed the mail to the post office in Mar Vista. The post office was located here until 1987, when it moved a block south to 3865 Grand View. It transferred to its current facility at 3826 Grand View in 2004.

3871 Grand View Blvd (15)

This commercial building, today the home of the Grand View Fine Art Studios, was, in the 1970s, the site of the Mar Vista Alternative School. How alternative was it? One of the teachers enlightening local kids here was 1960s Berkeley Free Speech activist Mario Savio. During the time he taught at the school Savio wrote an article published in the *Los Angeles Times* in which he interpreted the LAPD's handling of the shootout with the "Symbionese Liberation Army" as evidence of "the onset of a police state". It's hard to find such level-headed, objective educators.



Mar Vista school teacher Mario Savio.

3900 Grand View (16)

This pert, perfectly symmetrical wood-framed house is graced with a colonnaded portico covering a porch with a simple square post balustrade and wooden window and door surrounds. A small second story with a gable roof rises from the center of the pyramidal hipped roof of the main building. This house was erected in 1921 by Belgian émigré Jean B. Mellaerts and is the oldest surviving structure built in East Ocean Park.

Grand View Blvd., Ocean Park Heights.



Jean B. Mellaert's house at 3900 Grand View, 1922. The house looks virtually identical today.

Mellaerts came to this country in 1919 and was working as a waiter when he borrowed the money to build his house. He soon Americanized his name to John, and in 1926 as Johnny Mellarts formed a partnership with nightclub impresario Frank Sebastian. Mellaerts worked as the assistant manager of Sebastian's Cotton Club, a popular Culver City night spot at the corner of National and Washington boulevards. Carolyn Snowden and her Creole Cuties provided entertainment at the Cotton Club in the early days; eventually the Mills Brothers, Bing Crosby, Louis Armstrong, and Duke Ellington headlined there. In 1927 Sebastian and Mellaerts outgrew the 400-seat capacity of the original building and moved their operation to the Green Mill next door, a night club that occupied an entire city block. Besides jazz the Cotton Club offered bootleg gin that was discreetly delivered on the floor next to a table leg in a brown paper bag, and, in the back room, gambling. It became the biggest, gaudiest club on Washington Boulevard, the drag where you could also find Fatty Arbuckle's Plantation Club, the Wayside Inn, the Club Royale, and the Club Alabam.



Shown above is a scene of Frank Sebastian's Cotton Club on Washington boulevard, in Culver City. The Cotton Club employs scores of persons and has an exceptionally large annual payroll.

Mellearts and Sebastian dissolved their partnership in 1928, and by 1938 the Cotton Club was under new ownership. It went through several name changes over the years, including Casa Mañana, Meadowbrook Gardens, the Mardi Gras, and finally Zucca's Opera House. This Culver City landmark was destroyed by fire on February 20, 1950. Mellaerts had sold his house on Grand View in 1925; he died in 1958 at the age of 82. Since 2007 Mellaerts old home has been the office of Bucks Boys Productions, a music, advertising, television, and film production company.

Next door at 3680 Grand View is Stock Building Supply, the oldest continuously run business in Mar Vista. Opened in May 1924 as Alley Bros. Lumber Co., it became the Wilberg/Swartz Lumber Co. two years later. The business was for several decades known as the Mar Vista Lumber Co. In 1998 it became the Terry Lumber Company; it acquired its current name in 2001.

3951 Grand View Blvd (17)

In 1914 a Dutch couple named Henry and Fenna Mandemaker left their native Holland to start a new life in America. They settled in Mar Vista in 1922, bought two acres of land fronting Grand View, and established a family dairy farm. The Holland Dairy manufactured grade A raw milk, cream, buttermilk, cottage cheese, and butter. By 1930 the Mandemaker's dairy had so many cows that they employed two boarders who rented rooms in their home as milkers.

In April 1945 their son Luke, a private 1st Class in the Marine Corps, died during the invasion of Iwo Jima. The local American Legion Mandemaker Post 689 was named in his honor. In the late 40s their daughter Elsie worked as a soda jerk at the Mar Vista Drug store in the Busby Building.

In 1951 the City of Los Angeles purchased their property plus eight additional surrounding acres, leveled one of the last lingering remnants of rustic farm life in East Ocean Park, and built Grand View Boulevard Elementary School where the cows of Holland Dairy had grazed for 29 years. The timing couldn't have been better for Henry, who turned 60 that year, just the right age for retirement. He moved to 3757 Stewart Avenue less than a mile away and was still residing there when he died in 1978 at the age of 87. His wife Fenna moved to the city of Orange. She was 89 when she died in 1985.

Grand View Elementary was rushed into service on December 9, 1953, to relieve the overcrowded conditions at the other local grade schools; 690 pupils were enrolled. The principal was an unmarried schoolmarm named Ella Helder. Her clerk, Miss Ola Mae Frierson, was one of the first known African-Americans to be employed in Mar Vista in a professional capacity. Formal dedication of the school took place on May 5, 1954.



Holland Dairy, 3951 Grand View Boulevard.

12014-12128 Mitchell Ave (18)

In 1928 the Sherman Investment Company bought the 12 lots at these addresses and built the first tract homes ever constructed in Mar Vista. Erected by a single developer from a common blueprint, they were all 28' X 45' in area, 19' high, single-story, single-family English Cottage dwellings with steeply pitched roofs, wing walls, and brick chimneys. Behind each home was a detached 20' X 18' garage with a steep gable roof 17' tall. They cost the builder \$3,500 to construct, plus an extra \$270 for the garages. Some had cedar shingle roofs while others were topped with tile. A couple of these homes (12032 and 12036 Mitchell) were oriented 90 degrees clockwise to break up the cookie cutter sameness of the streetscape. Most of them have been remodeled or augmented over the years: 12018 Mitchell was turned into a small Spanish hacienda and 12032 Mitchell added a castle entrance tower and a large addition in the rear. The one at 12106 Mitchell has undergone the fewest alterations over the years.

The prettiest of them is the one at 12036; in the early 1930s Albert E. Coles, Jr., the son of a former mayor of Venice, was renting this house. In 1947 a 45-year-old married woman named Elsie Blake lived in the one at 12114. She was arrested for contributing to the delinquency of a minor when she was caught *in flagrante delicto* with a teenaged Venice boy.

Washington Pl

Washington Place was originally a fifty foot wide right-of-way owned by the Los Angeles, Ocean Park, and Santa Monica Railroad. In 1927 the strip was widened to 100 feet between Tilden Avenue and Zanja Street to become Washington Place. This project inadvertently turned the annexation of Mar Vista to Los Angeles from a routine technical procedure into a six-month nail-biter. After the community voted to join L. A. on September 22, 1926, city officials expected the process to be completed by early November. But the certificate of annexation was held up because prior to the election the County of Los Angeles had begun condemnation proceedings to acquire the right-of-way for Washington Place, proceedings that would have to start all over if the land was suddenly transferred from the County to the City. Delay after delay was encountered, resulting in the frayed nerves of Mar Vista civic leaders who feared some technicality would over-turn the vote. A *Vanguard* article published on January 7, 1927, seemed reassuring: "The Mar Vista annexation should take place on February 16, regardless of the status of the Washington Place condemnation". But that date passed and the issue was still unresolved. When the annexation was postponed again on February 27 due to the death of the County treasurer, Mar Vista Chamber of Commerce leaders were at the breaking point. But three days later the annexation was finally official, and on March 1 Mar Vista became the 70th territory to join Los Angeles.

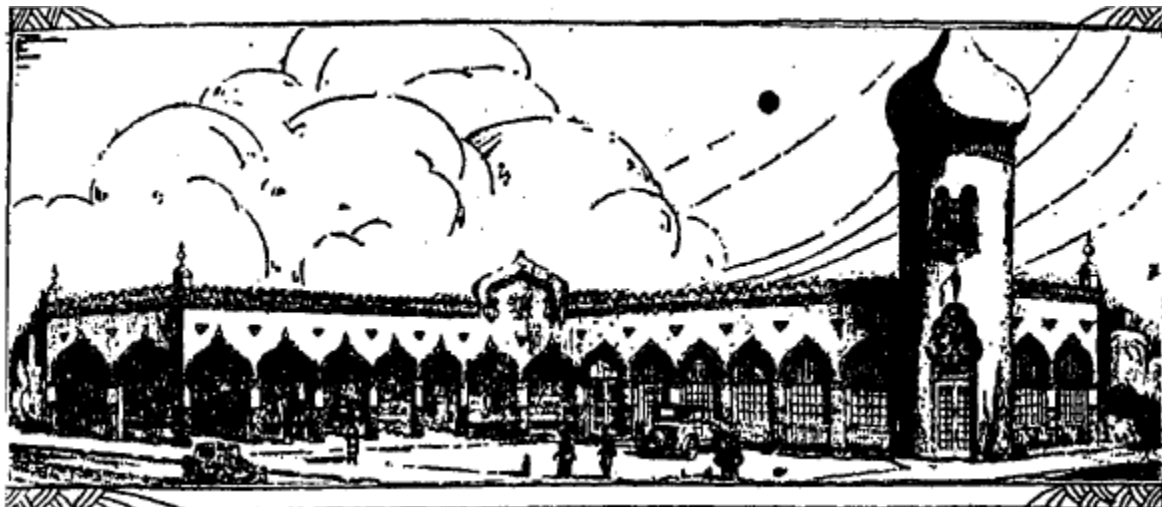
12130 Washington Pl (19)

This is the most architecturally interesting of the industrial buildings in East Ocean Park. Built in 1991 as a studio for photographer Michael Ruppert, it was designed by Ted Tokio Tanaka, the architect

who also created the LAX Gateway project, those tall, multicolored pylons on Century Boulevard that are supposed to evoke Stonehenge.

In 1965 a small commercial building housing Mar Vista Electronics was located on this site. A past employee of this firm, Sidney A. McMurdo, was arrested in April 1965 for rigging a crude bomb from a cigarette lighter and leaving it in a vacant lot next to the electronics store. A 7-year-old kid found the gadget, struck the flint, and lost three fingers when the booby trap exploded in his hand. When questioned by police, workers at Mar Vista Electronics told them about the disgruntled McMurdo and his threat to burn down the store or bomb it. When a search of his house uncovered explosives and “other physical evidence” the 56-year-old McMurdo was charged with attempted murder, mayhem, and assault with a deadly weapon. But after a seven-month trial he was found not guilty. The evidence found in his home was explained away as material used in his work as a powder man for the movie industry.

Across the street at 12137 Washington Place the most fanciful structure ever erected in Mar Vista went up at the northeast corner of Grand View and Washington Place. Built in 1929 on four lots with an aggregate area of 11,000 square feet, the Persian Market and Café looked like something out of an Arabian Nights tale. Its most salient feature was the forty-foot tall onion domed tower that could be seen for blocks, but the zigzag roof line and ogee-arched entrance ways also drew the onlooker’s attention. In the 1940s the building became Carpenter’s Furniture Mart, where one could also buy major appliances, lamps, and carpeting. In 1967 it was turned into an automotive showroom, and three years later it was called Washington Brake Service. This one-of-a-kind landmark was demolished to make way for the horribly ordinary Grand View Plaza minimart, which has been desecrating this location since 1985.



This exotic building adorned the corner of Washington Pl. and Grand View for over fifty years.



Grand View Boulevard, looking south from Venice Boulevard (foreground), 1948. The Mar Vista Lumber Company is the long building in the exact center of the photo. The hot houses of the Nishi Nursery can be seen just above the lumber company. The Holland Dairy is directly across the street from the nursery; today it is the site of Grand View Boulevard Elementary School. Back on the east side of Grand View, farther south, is the white tower of the Persia Market on Washington Place. At the northwest corner of Venice and Grand View at the bottom center is Sweeny's Café, now the site of Yum-Yum Donuts. The building just to the west is the Mar Vista Auto Service, the first gas station in the community; both buildings were razed in 1974. On the northeast corner is the two-story farm house of Logan Camp, which was torn down circa 1960 to make way for the Mar Vista Bowl. Next door to Camp's house, at the extreme left edge of the photo, can be seen a corner of the Fairfield Building, which housed the library from 1929 to 1950; it was torn down in 1961 for the bowling alley parking lot.

12015 Lamanda St (20)

In 1874 a 22-year-old farmer from England named Austin Johnson immigrated to America. He married an English woman, settled in Michigan, and raised three kids. The Johnsons moved to California

in 1909, purchased four acres in East Ocean Park, built a modest home on Grand View, and began farming the land. In March 1915 Austin's young son William was tilling a field when one of the three horses pulling his plow fell over. William spotted a cable lying on the ground and, thinking it had tangled and tripped the nag, reached down to remove it. The cable was a heavily-charged electrical wire and the young man was electrocuted. The line belonged to Southern California Edison and had fallen down during a recent storm; the death was ruled accidental. Austin Johnson sold his farm five years later to a family from Wisconsin named Munson.

The Munson's rented the farm to a Japanese couple, Harukichi and Matsu Utsuki, who had established a nursery next door in 1918. The Utsukis rented their Mar Vista lands because they were Issei – first generation immigrants – and therefore subject to the 1913 Alien Land Law which rendered them ineligible to own real property. Although they were Buddhists who could speak only Japanese, their five children, all born in California and therefore Nisei – second generation - were raised as Americans, even down to their Christian religion. Itzumi, the oldest boy, was a star quarterback at Venice High School. The 1938 Gondoliers' football squad was undefeated with "Zoomie" leading them until hopes of a perfect season were quashed by the defending champions from Fairfax High. Itzumi and his brother Tamotsu helped out on the nursery driving the trucks while the three girls carried out paper work with the office skills they learned: typing, stenography, and clerking. In 1937 the Munson's sold the land to the Utsuki's. The deed had to be granted to the two oldest kids, girls Mie and Fumi, who, even though minors were American citizens.

Then misfortune struck the family. On New Year's Eve 1940 Harukichi was hit by a car and died of a fractured skull. Eleven months later Pearl Harbor was attacked by Imperial Japan, and a week later the West Coast of the United States was declared a theater of war. Anti-Japanese sentiment quickly infected the country and festered to such a boil that on February 19, 1942, President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 (coincidentally, one zero less than the current 90066 Mar Vista zip code), authorizing the displacement and internment of Japanese Americans living on the Pacific Coast. Aliens of enemy nations 14 years or older had to appear in person to register at their local post office, where they were fingerprinted and issued a certificate of identification.

In March the Utsuki's and over 200 other Japanese owners of farms, nurseries, and cut flower shops had to register their businesses with the Wartime Civil Control Administration as a preliminary step toward yielding their property up to the U. S. Government. This land – approximately 2,200 acres – was then turned over to "American" farmers to be worked for the duration of the war. In May the Utsuki family were rounded up and "assisted in their evacuation plans", i.e., sent to the local Civil Control Center at 923 Venice Boulevard. (This long two-story brick building at the northwest corner of Lincoln and Venice boulevards, built in 1925, still exists.) From here they were shipped to Camp Posten in the Colorado River Relocation Center near Parker, Arizona, and assigned a "family number": 24111, and given individual "camp numbers": 31 through 35. As the only non-citizen, mother Matsu was also given an "alien registration number": 4194691.



Killer and Mar Vista resident David Duval

The Utsuki's were actually "lucky". Izumi and his brother successfully applied to leave the camp and moved to Chicago in September 1943. Such applications could be granted if a "detainee" had relatives or a job waiting for them back east. The rest of the family soon followed. The Utsuki's eventually returned to California after the war. In 1954 they sold the better part of their former nursery to a developer. The land was subdivided into 25 large lots on which apartment houses were built around an L-shaped street called Lamanda, located off Inglewood Boulevard just south of Washington Place.

A fellow named David Duvall lived in a unit at 12015 Lamanda. In 1962 he was arrested there for killing one man and beating seven others in a series of armed robberies. Duvall was 23 when he was convicted of first degree murder, one year older than Izumi Utsuki had been when he was incarcerated for being Japanese, and one year older than Austin Johnson's son had been when he was electrocuted some fifty years earlier plowing the land nearby. The arresting officer in the Duvall case was: Detective Sergeant J. L. Austin.

Another Japanese family named Nishi operated a large nursery across the street from the Holland Dairy (see photo page 66). The Nishi Nursery, established in 1924, grew celery and gardenias. After the celery harvest the cows of the neighboring dairy would be sent over to graze on the leftover stalks and roots and to fertilize the field for the next planting. Like the Utsukis, the Nishi family bought their land through their American-born daughters Kyoko and Myoko: the girls were six and five in 1933 when they became the legal owners of their parent's nursery. The family was also relocated during the war and, after hostilities ended, returned to their Mar Vista land. The Nishi Nursery endured until the early 1980s; today it is the site of the Grand View Terrace Apartments.

Washington Blvd

Washington Boulevard was the first public road in Ballona Valley. Its forerunner was a horse and cattle trail used by pueblo dwellers like Agustín Machado and Felipe Talamantes to get to the coast. By 1839 it was called Camino Real de Pueblo. It became Washington Street in 1855, named after the first U. S. president. When the roadway was first surveyed in 1874 it continued to follow the irregular contours of the zanja, or irrigation ditch, it had originally paralleled. The zanja, fed by Ballona Creek, was used by early Ballona Valley ranchers and is the reason Washington is so crooked after it veers west between La Brea and Fairfax. With the founding of the East Ocean Park and Rancho Del Mar tracts Washington Boulevard became established as the southern boundary of subdivided Ocean Park Heights.

In 1925 this historic road underwent a repaving project known as the Greater Washington Boulevard initiative that transformed it from a 60-foot wide street to a 100-foot wide boulevard.

Until the 1930s Washington was the only thoroughfare connecting Los Angeles to the Santa Monica bay district that was paved along its entire course. In 1917 an enterprising Palms farmer turned this situation into a financial windfall during the rainy season by deliberately stalling a hay wagon on Washington, forcing drivers of autos to go around it. If not careful they could get stuck in a thick mud patch and have to pay the clodhopper \$3.50 to haul them out with his old-fashioned horse power.

East Ocean Park Villa

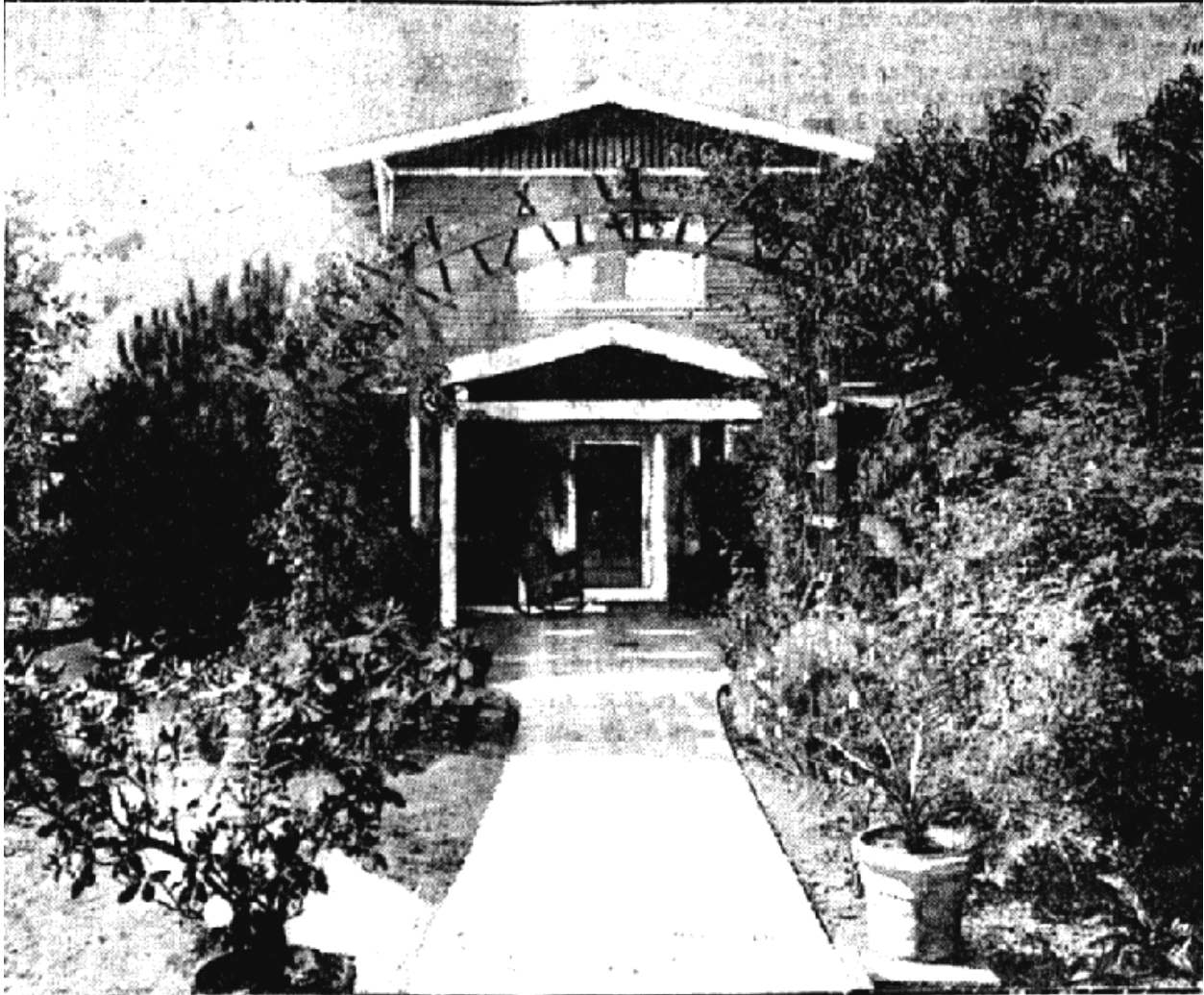
Six days after East Ocean Park was recorded, the third Mar Vista neighborhood opened to the public as East Ocean Park Villa. Abutting Ocean Park Heights at Inglewood Boulevard, this fifty-acre tract ran east between Venice and Charnock Road to McLaughlin Avenue. The tract was part of a 300-acre parcel bought by John J. Charnock in 1881. In 1904 it was purchased and subdivided by three real estate developers and a lima bean farmer from France named Revolon. The square-shaped parcel was quartered by a north/south street called Hillcrest Boulevard and an east/west street named Bungalow Avenue. These roads would eventually acquire their current names, Barrington and Victoria avenues, respectively. The lots were farm-sized pieces of land: the smallest were over three-quarters of an acre, the largest well over an acre and a half.

Early in 1906 the eastern half of the tract was re-subdivided into small residential lots and another north-south road was built called Josephine Place. Josephine became St. Regis Place before finally settling into Barry Avenue. The new tract was dubbed Hill Crest.

Exploring Historic East Ocean Park Villa/Hill Crest

11929 Venice Blvd (21)

In 1919 real estate investor F. Albert Wey built one of the most opulent estates ever constructed in Mar Vista. Known as Casa Del Mar, the main dwelling was a ten-room two-story Queen Anne home situated on nearly two acres of gorgeously landscaped grounds. The interior was lavishly decorated in mahogany, Circassian walnut, and ivory finishes. Babylonian acacia, French dahlias, and African marigolds were among the 1500 plants that thicketed the front yard through which a rose-covered arbor pierced to the front door. Behind the house, amid a grove of eucalyptus trees, were pens stocked with 500 chickens, a dozen turkeys, goats, rabbits, geese, and pigs. A smokehouse, servant's quarters, and an office building complemented this "gentleman's ranch". Drug store owner Alexander Rolland bought the place in December 1919 and the following September put the estate up for auction. Antique dealers, horticulturalists, and ranchers were especially recommended to direct their "particular attention" to the event.



The front entrance to Casa del Mar, 1920. The foliage obscures what was considered one of the finest homes in Mar Vista.

Three weeks after being gutted of its grandeur Rolland sold the mansion to his sister-in-law, Lordonda Rolland, who leased it to a pair of innkeepers who turned it into a roadhouse. The main building lodged a reception room, café, and dance hall; twenty guest bungalows were built around the estate. As the unincorporated Ocean Park Heights was beyond the city limits of Culver City, Venice, and Los Angeles, “Casa Del Mar Hotel” was perfectly situated to supply jazz-age entertainment to bay area merrymakers. In the summer of 1921 the proprietors of the nightspot were arrested for “operating a disorderly house” – a common euphemism for prostitution. Three days later a mysterious fire broke out in the main building after the guests had retired to their bungalows, destroying the mansion. The property had been insured for \$100,000 only four months earlier. Lordonda’s chauffeur was arrested for arson but later released due to insufficient evidence.

In January 1922 she sold what was left of the estate to four local businessmen, who built the Casa Del Mar Hospital on the property. The former hotel bungalows were used for patients, two per

unit, until the main building was completed on April 18 at a cost of \$100,000. At the end of 1923 the facility was converted into a health school, and soon after was transformed into a private sanitarium. In 1926 former Ziegfeld Follies headliner Emma Carus checked into the place after suffering a nervous breakdown. She died there a few months later, just after a woman named Zella Russell hanged herself with a silk stocking in one of the rooms. Casa del Mar stayed in business as a sanitarium until 1972. Two years later it was torn down and replaced by the Colonial House apartments that occupy the site today.

11923 Venice Blvd (22)

This two-story shingle-clad house was built in 1911 by F. Albert Wey, the same fellow who would build Casa del Mar next door eight years later. It is the oldest home built in East Ocean Park Villa still standing.

In 1948 it was converted from a single-family residence into a two-family duplex. That year a fellow named James Sweeney moved into the 11925 side. James was the owner-operator of Sweeney's Café, an eatery located at the northwest corner of Grand View and Venice, today the site of Yum-Yum Donuts. Opened in 1948, Sweeney's specialized in sea food and served cocktails. On weekends one could hear the Tel-Tone Trio in the cocktail lounge, a jazz combo that featured Venice High School alumni Connie Jones on bass and Bill Horton on piano. Jones had previously played with the Tommy Dorsey band. The drummer, a New Yorker named Frank O'Vannin, had played with Harry James. Sweeney's wife Lorraine was an entrepreneur too: in 1947 she opened a swanky women's apparel shop called Lorraine's at 12122 Venice Boulevard. She not only sold clothes but made them as well and even modeled them in ads that appeared in the *Vanguard*. Lorraine sold her store in 1948 after becoming Mrs. Sweeney.



An early independent woman, Lorraine designed, made, and modeled her own clothes and sold them in her own shop.

In the 1950s and 60s two other multiple-family dwellings were built on the property here, making this one of the most crowded lots in the tract.

3744 Barrington Ave (23)

This beautiful late-Victorian home is brimming with Queen Anne detailing and is one of the most architecturally impressive dwellings in Mar Vista. The house was reputedly built in Pasadena in 1908 and moved to this site in the mid-1920s.



Otis and Harry Weymouth

In 1952 a hard luck family named Weymouth was renting the house. On March 7 a heavy rainstorm hit Mar Vista and Otis Weymouth, age 8, and his 7-year old brother Harry disappeared. Their 5-year old brother Emery had last seen them playing on a raft in Mar Vista Creek two blocks from home. When the rain stopped four days later laborers at work on the new Peerless subdivision east of McLaughlin discovered the two boys in a sodden sewer ditch, dead. Less than a month earlier 3-year old Jacqueline Weymouth had climbed onto her parent's dresser to get at a box of matches. The little girl burned to death when her dress caught

fire.

After forty years as a private residence the house was converted into a Unitarian Church and Sunday school in 1966. By the mid-90s it was being used as a counseling center owned by the Unitarian Society of West Los Angeles.

3640 Stoner Ave (24)

This cul-de-sac and the tract homes in it were built for an average cost of \$11,500 in 1953. A large bird house is attached to the roof of 3656 Stoner. Bird houses were a common feature of post-war tract ranch houses and were intended to lend a rustic feel to the home.

MGM dancer/choreographer Jack Regas was the first owner of the house at 3640 Stoner. Regas began his professional career as a dancer on Broadway and appeared on screen in the film musicals of Fred Astaire, Judy Garland, Gene Kelly, and Marilyn Monroe. In the late 50s he switched to choreography for television and feature films working with such stars as Elvis Presley, Debbie Reynolds, and Loretta Young. Regas owned this house until 1956.

Inglewood Blvd

North of Venice Boulevard, Inglewood was known as Burkshire Avenue when the Ocean Park Heights tract opened in 1904, named after Dana Burk, the first mayor of Ocean Park and one of the "capitalists" who subdivided the neighborhood. Even today Burkshire retains its old name north of National Blvd.

3672 Inglewood Blvd (25)

This striking 4,000 square foot ode to 21st Century Modernism came into existence in 2006. The structure looks more like a museum than a single-family residence and seems sorely out of place in this century-old neighborhood.

Modjeska Pl

In 1910 a Polish immigrant named Ralph Modjeski bought three acres at the northwestern corner of East Ocean Park Villa. Ralph was the most eminent bridge builder of his generation. Among the three dozen bridges he designed is the Quebec Bridge that spans the St. Lawrence River; finished in 1917 it is still the longest cantilever bridge in the world. Modjeski died in his Los Angeles home in 1940 at 79. In 1946 a short street running east from Inglewood just south of Charnock Road was built to form a cul-de-sac. Called Modjeska Place, it is named for Ralph's mother, the celebrated actress Helena Modjeska.

11818 Victoria Ave (26)

The modest three-room gable-roofed clapboard house visible from the street was built in 1928 by Henry C. Mulvaney. Before he became a house carpenter Henry was working for the National Ice Company in 1897 when he met with "a peculiar accident" - his right pinky was sliced off when it became wedged between two heavy cakes of ice. Reading the L. A. *Times* news item of his mishap today reveals how primitive medical procedures were over 100 years ago and how insensitive newspaper reporters could be: "The hand was badly bruised and the Receiving Hospital doctors had a deal of trouble forcing it back into its original shape. Mulvaney will be a cripple for some time to come." Henry lived here until his death in 1959. Just how long he was a cripple is not known. His 640 square foot cabin was augmented in 1980 by the large addition attached at the rear.

Barry Ave

The homes on Barry Avenue are all part of a 1906 re-subdivision of East Ocean Park Villa called Hill Crest. The avenue was named for Civil War general P. H. Barry, who spent the last decade of his life as governor of the National Soldier's Home in Sawtelle. The decorative median between Charnock and Victoria did not originally exist. It was created in the late 20s by shaving ten feet of frontage from the lots that flank it.

3714 Barry Ave (27)

This small 1926 cottage was the home of stage actor Adolph Stoye from 1939 until his death in 1968; the rear of the house was enlarged significantly in the mid-1970s. The German-born Stoye trod the boards in small roles for fifty years. When he wasn't performing this self-proclaimed "famous European vocal master and producer" offered voice courses that undertook the "correction of misplaced voices" and the "restoring of lost ones." With Professor Stoye's guidance your voice could achieve "flexibility" and "easy high notes" with "no cramps" and "no nervousness". However, not just anyone could enroll in the artiste's classes: a "voice test only by appointment" was required first.

3718 Barry Ave (28)

The original home at this address was built in 1927 by a hillbilly from Kentucky named Thomas A. Christian. Soon after settling in his new digs, which neighbors described as a “chicken coop”, he began feuding with his neighbor across the street at 3715 Barry, a fellow named Walter Galloway. Hostilities came to a head in August 1927 when Naomi Christian, age 9, swapped a bag of jelly beans for a toy red wagon belonging to 6-year-old Donald Galloway. When Mrs. Galloway discovered how her kid had been duped she angrily confronted Mrs. Christian and slapped her. When Mr. Galloway heard what had happened he marched across the street and started throwing punches at Mr. Christian, but was subdued by neighbors. The next day the Galloway’s set off in their auto to pick up their kids at the nearby Westward Ho golf course when they spotted Christian on the sidewalk. Walt pulled over to settle the dispute and his nemesis stepped onto the running board of the car and shot Galloway with a gun he had borrowed “for protection”. Mrs. Galloway drove her wounded husband to a hospital where he died three days later. The “red wagon murderer” was sentenced to 1 to 10 years in San Quentin but served less than three: by 1930 he was already back at home on Barry working as a carpenter.

Although it may seem like the Christian’s got off easy they both endured dismal fates. In March 1943 Thomas, though only 68, was diagnosed with senile dementia and institutionalized. Edna suffered from psychotic episodes and died of a stroke in April. Her husband followed her to the grave in August, felled by a heart attack. Their shack was replaced by the home here today in 1988.

11701 Venice Blvd (29)

The Department of Water and Power Distributing Station No. 59 is a nice example of the PWA Moderne architecture that came into vogue in the mid-1930s. The idea of PWA Moderne was to emulate classical Greek temples in a simplified, inexpensive manner, achieved here with the evenly-spaced pilasters that stand in for fluted columns. The electrical distribution station opened in July 1955 on an undeveloped three-quarter acre parcel.

Roseboro Villa

Originally a portion of the 182 acres of third-class pasture land allotted to Francisco and Dolores Machado, Roseboro Villa is a long, narrow 20-acre parcel on the south side of Venice Boulevard running from Centinela west to Francis Avenue. Its southern boundary extends to the rear limits of the dwellings on the south side of Pacific Avenue. Railroad executive and real estate investor George C. Lemcke subdivided the tract, which was recorded on January 5, 1905, a mere three weeks after East Ocean Park Villa came into being. The name Roseboro may derive from the middle name of Alexander Rosborough Fraser, the one-time business partner of Abbott Kinney and the founder of Ocean Park. Fraser once owned the Ocean Park Heights tract, and the area around Centinela and Venice Boulevard was often referred to as Roseboro during the early 1900s.

The Pacific Electric stop on Venice Boulevard near Centinela Avenue was originally called the Roseboro Station. By 1913 the depot had been renamed Mar Vista, possibly because it was from here that the engineer of a west-bound Short Line train, seated high in the cab, could first catch sight of the ocean. The sign board for this station was probably the first time the words Mar Vista appeared in the community that would eventually adopt the term as its name.

With just a few exceptions all the early residences in Roseboro Villa have been replaced by architecturally undistinguished apartment buildings. These multiple unit structures began appearing in the late 1940s, with the majority erected in the early 1960s.

Exploring Historic Roseboro Villa

12400 Pacific Ave (30)

This farm house, the oldest structure remaining in Roseboro, was built in 1907 by Rudolph Swinney, a sodbuster from Missouri who migrated to the bay area in 1892. Rudi lived here until 1920 then moved to a house in Venice on Rialto Avenue. He died near Somis, California, just outside of Oxnard, in 1931, when a jack rabbit darted from some brush on the side of the road and spooked the team of horses pulling his wagon. The 69-year-old Mar Vista pioneer was thrown to the ground and fractured his skull. According to the *Vanguard*, which carried a report of his death, Swinney was the first rancher “in this section” to plant lima beans on a large scale, the crop destined to become a mainstay of Ballona Valley farmers through the mid-1940s. Lima beans were threshed in late September and harvested by the second week of October. A good crop like the one in 1914 could yield thirty 80-pound sacks per acre. At 5¢ a pound, each acre planted with lima beans could fetch \$120. One could have bought a lot in Roseboro Villa and built a fine home on it with the profits earned from a hundred-acre field devoted to lima beans.

Swinney sold his house to German-born Francis J. Hefele, a farmer and “pioneer Santa Monica Bay resident” who in time became the vice-president of the First National Bank of Venice. A year later the house was purchased by Jim Cripe, the man who in 1905 converted twenty acres of his farmland into the Venice View Heights subdivision (see the Mormon Hill chapter). Cripe lived here with his son George until 1945. He died in Inglewood in 1951, age 83.

3810 Wade St (31)

In 1914 a remarkable woman named Eugenia D. Porter purchased the lot on which this apartment building now occupies and supervised the construction of an apartment house of her own design. Several years earlier Mrs. Porter had been sewing a dress for her daughter when she was struck with the idea to become a builder. She taught herself architectural drafting and the preparation of blue prints, hired a contractor, and took personal charge of the project. The result was The Eugenia, a small

apartment house in Venice. Another of her projects was a \$70,000 brick apartment house called The Stevens, named after her father, W. B. Stevens, the man who, according to Mrs. Porter, “discovered the famous twenty-mule team borax mines” (*Times*).



Mrs. Eugenie D. Porter and daughter.

In the 1920s Mrs. Porter’s apartment building was converted into the Mar Vista Sanitarium. In 1936 the owners of that institution relocated to 3966 Marcasel (see the Oval chapter). Porter’s apartment building was torn down in 1962 and replaced by the structure here today.

Rancho Del Mar

Four days after the Roseboro Villa tract entered the tax rolls an 80-acre Nevada-shaped ranch abutting it on the west was recorded as Rancho Del Mar. In the late 1800s it was still owned by Samuel Cripe, who grew alfalfa, corn, beans, peas, berries, and fruit on the land. In 1902 Cripe sold the property for \$12,000 to a group of walnut growers, who in 1904 resold it to a woman named Mary L. Kathan. It was this lady who named all the interior streets in the tract: Matteson, Caswell, Mitchell, Wade, and Moore. There is no certainty as to the identity of the people who inspired these names. Wade may have been the president of the Prudential Investment Company and Moore could have been Dr. Albert W. Moore or City Councilman Edward E. Moore; or they could have been Ms. Kathan's cats. In 1905 Rancho Del Mar was divided into twenty-five 1.5 and 2.5 acre lots for the asking price of \$650 per acre. The tract was subdivided again in June 1906 into the residential lots it retains to this day and renamed Del Mar. This neighborhood extended Mar Vista's westward reach to what would eventually be called Beethoven Street.



This display ad for the Del Mar tract was published in 1905. Note that Venice Boulevard is called "Pico" Blvd. The Short Line street acquired the name Venice in 1912, but continued to be referred to as Pico occasionally, even in newspaper articles, until the early 1920s.

Over 95% of the original dwellings erected in Rancho Del Mar have been torn down and replaced by perfunctory apartment buildings. Three or four of them can be viewed without weeping.

Exploring Historic Rancho Del Mar

12822/12824 Venice Blvd (32)

From 1912 to 1921 the lot on the southeast corner of Venice and Beethoven was owned by George R. Diven, a doctor who began practicing medicine in Hollywood in 1910. Among the famous patients he treated over the years were Charlie Chaplin, Douglas Fairbanks, Mary Pickford, and Fatty



The barber shop originally occupied the corner space; today it's the House of Thai Taste Restaurant.

Arbuckle. Another less-famous actress Dr. Diven attended was Virginia Rappe, the woman Arbuckle was accused of sexually assaulting and whose death resulted in the scandal that destroyed the comic's career. Diven, in fact, testified for the prosecution at Arbuckle's first trial. The doctor died at his office near Hollywood and Vine in 1960 at the age of 84.

The building here dates from 1956, the year Jess Gamboa opened a combination barber/beauty shop. In 1974 the Texas native moved his barber shop into the beauty shop space at the 12822 and converted the corner spot to an eatery, Gamboa's Gas House. After several name changes, including Joe's Burger and Taco House, Kitchen Kuma, and Werner's Submarine, the current House of Thai Taste restaurant

settled here in 1995. Steve, one of Gamboa's sons, has been cutting hair here since 1970 and is the current proprietor. Jess' Barber Shop is Mar Vista's oldest continuously-run business with the original name in the original building.

3858 Beethoven St (33)

Eighty years ago homes like this 1929 Spanish Colonial Revival house were widespread in Rancho Del Mar; today they are a rarity in this neighborhood. In 1913 the lot on which this house sits was part of a 1.5 acre parcel purchased by Ad Wolgast, the lightweight champion of the world from 1910 to 1912. Born Adolph Wolgast in Cadillac, Michigan, in 1888, Ad won his crown by defeating legendary pugilist "Battling" Nelson in the 40th round of an epic, brutal encounter. In the most famous of his twenty-two title defenses Ad landed a body shot against Joe Rivers just as Rivers connected with his own left hook. The simultaneous blows resulted in a "double knockout" with both fighters hitting the canvas. Ad struggled to his feet first to win the match. The "Michigan Wildcat" lost his belt when Willie Ritchie was declared the winner on a foul in the 16th round of their title fight. Wolgast, who owned another four lots of Rancho Del Mar near the corner of Wade and Matteson, was worth \$250,000 in his heyday. He died in 1955 at 67 broke, blind, and punch drunk in a Camarillo mental ward.

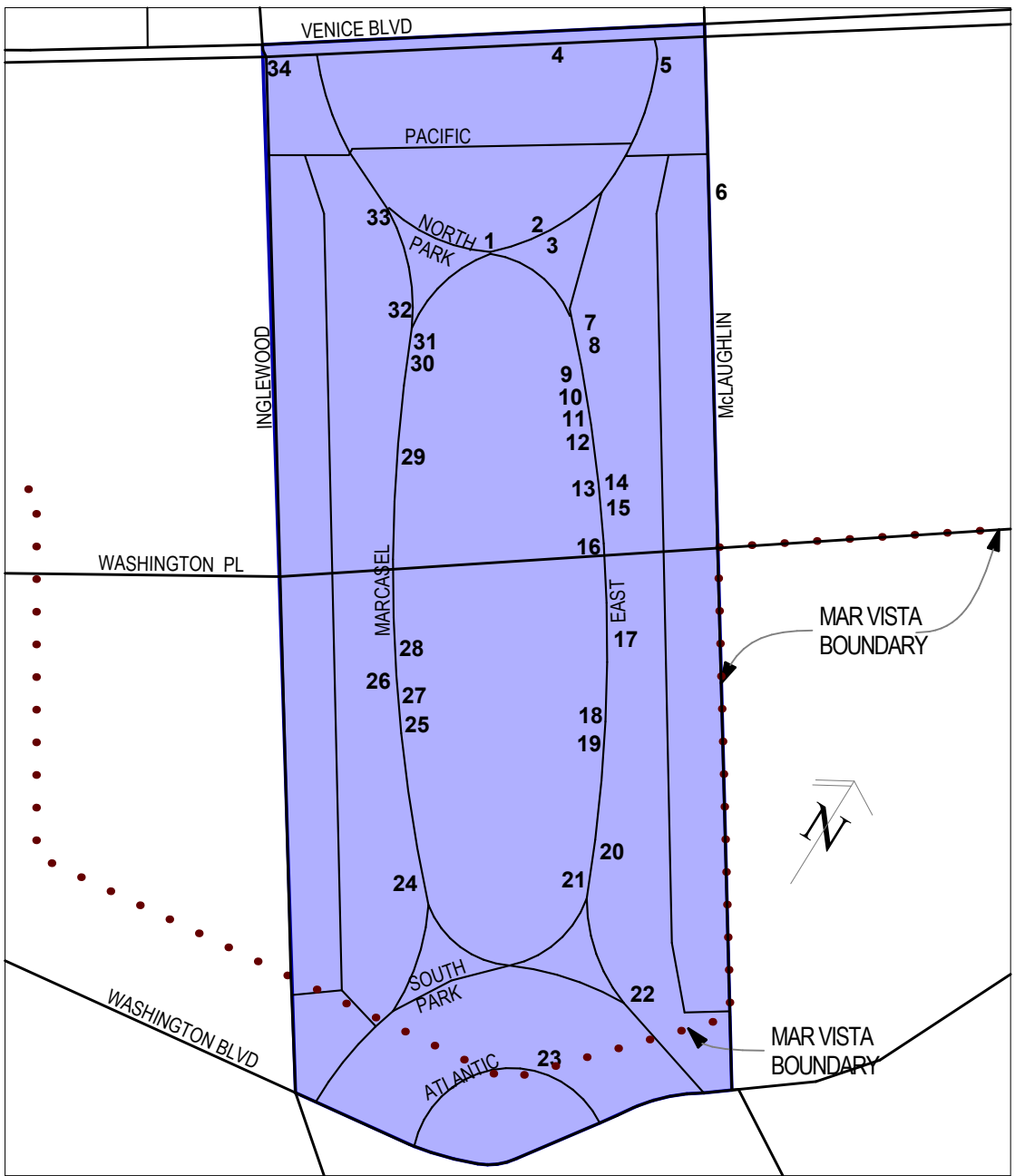
3910 Moore St (34)

This address, today the site of a four-unit condominium, was in the 1930s the home of a family in the grocery business named Conrad. Robert Conrad was a local boy who went to Machado grade school and graduated as an honor student from Venice High. In February 1941 he joined the U. S. Navy and received his basic training in San Diego. In August he shipped out to Honolulu. On December 7 the

19-year-old Conrad became the first known Mar Vista to die in World War II when he was killed during the sneak attack on Pearl Harbor.

Besides the four historic tracts already covered in this chapter, one other neighborhood can be considered as part of the “First Wave” of residential subdivision in Mar Vista: Venice View Heights. Located just west of Centinela about a quarter of a mile north of Venice Boulevard, it was recorded in October 1905. But as it is inextricably tied to the parcel of land abutting it to the south, and as the first home wasn’t built there until 1923, Venice View Heights will be considered in the Mormon Hill chapter.

After the dust from this initial surge of subdivision settled it would be another six years before the next residential tract would appear in Mar Vista.

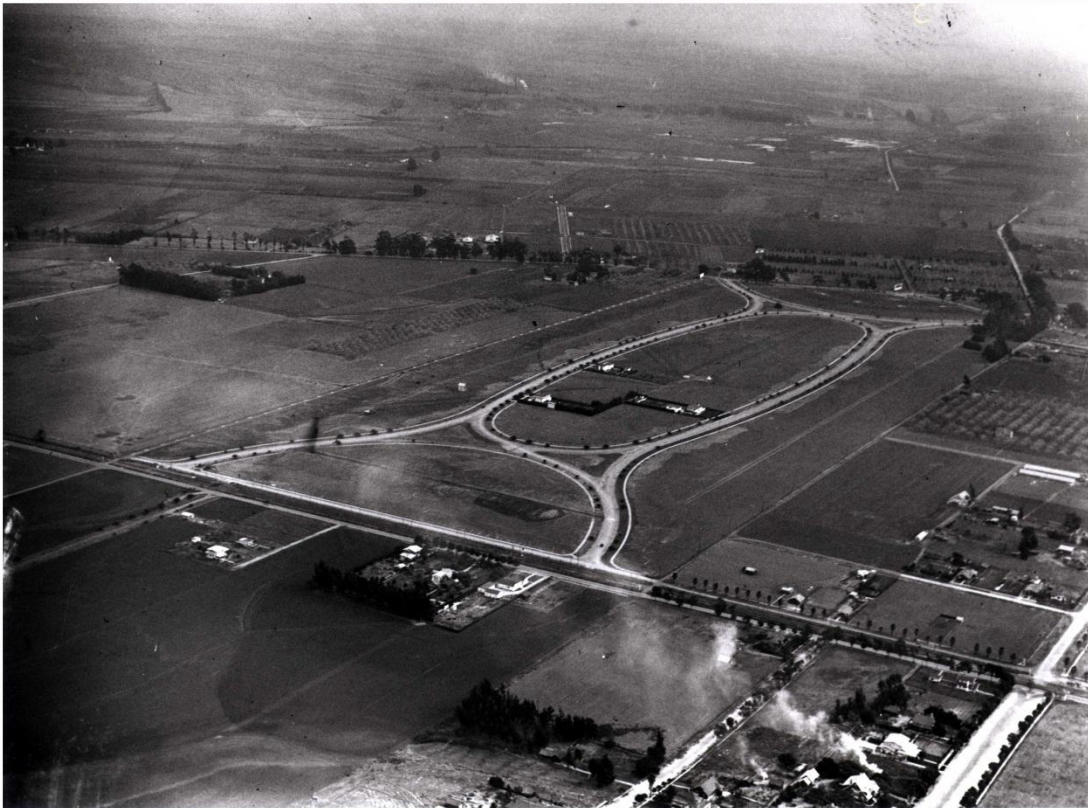


THE OVAL

- | | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. 11837 North Park Ave | 13. 3979 East Blvd | 25. 4068 Marcaseel Ave |
| 2. 11825 North Park Ave | 14. 3976 East Blvd | 26. 4057 Marcaseel Ave |
| 3. 11820 North Park Ave | 15. 3980 East Blvd | 27. 4056 Marcaseel Ave |
| 4. 11840 Venice Blvd | 16. 3995 East Blvd | 28. 4040 Marcaseel Ave |
| 5. 3825 McLaughlin Ave | 17. 4040 East Blvd | 29. 3966 Marcaseel Ave |
| 6. 3871 McLaughlin Ave | 18. 4065 East Blvd | 30. 3940 Marcaseel Ave |
| 7. 3920 East Blvd | 19. 4103 East Blvd | 31. 3930 Marcaseel Ave |
| 8. 3928 East Blvd | 20. 4124 East Blvd | 32. 3911 Marcaseel Ave |
| 9. 3951 East Blvd | 21. 4201 East Blvd | 33. 3869 Marcaseel Ave |
| 10. 3957 East Blvd | 22. 4240 East Blvd | 34. 11970 Venice Blvd |
| 11. 3961 East Blvd | 23. 11831 Atlantic Ave | |
| 12. 3967 East Blvd | 24. 4151 Marcaseel Ave | |

The Oval: The Beverly Hills of Mar Vista

Perhaps no neighborhood in Mar Vista has generated as many rumors as the oval-shaped tract formed by East Boulevard and Marcasel Avenue. Known popularly as the Oval, it is thought to have been built as a race track where cars, bicycles, horses, dogs, or even camels banked around its curves and sped down its straight-aways in pursuit of the finish line. Another series of anecdotes links the Oval with silent screen comedian Roscoe "Fatty" Arbuckle. The erstwhile Keystone star is believed to have owned a lot, a home, a sanitarium, several lots, several homes, or the entire tract; or to have used the Oval as an exercise track for his stable of race horses. Here's another one: nearby MGM (now Sony) Studio built the tract as a housing development for its employees, or built a sanitarium to dry out its alcoholic contract players on the sly. Have you heard the one about William Randolph Hearst using the interior of the Oval as a landing strip for his private plane? How about the Oval being used to house the wild animals of a traveling circus? As persistent and appealing as some of these rumors may be, none of them have been able to hold up under close scrutiny. But who needs rumors when the truth about the Oval is even more interesting?



This photo of Palm Place was taken sometime between 1921 and 1922, looking south, revealing the rural nature of the area. The three large homesteads in the interior of the oval were all converted to sanitariums in 1925. Venice Boulevard runs diagonally from left to right in the lower part of the picture. Casa del Mar sanitarium can be seen in the large square-shaped property on the north side of Venice nearest Marcasel. The Grand View arch is barely visible near the lower right corner.

The land encompassed by McLaughlin Avenue and Venice, Inglewood, and Washington boulevards was a 137-acre ranch owned by John J. Charnock, the wealthy, landed Ballona pioneer who bought the property in 1881. Less than two months before he died in February 1909, Charnock deeded this ranch, by then planted with lima beans, to his niece, Lillian Charnock Price. From the deed we learn that the property was fenced and contained unspecified "buildings", all of which would soon disappear without even a photographic trace. Whatever immediate plans Lillian may have had for the land were interrupted by the intrigues of the notorious Mrs. Gertrude Driggs, a woman characterized by the Los Angeles *Times* as "the Queen of Counterfeiters" and "the Priestess of high and crooked finance".

By means of a will determined to be a forgery, Mrs. Driggs had caused a sensation seven years earlier when she attempted to get hold of the assets of a wealthy man named Hill, who died intestate. This case, and its attendant series of "startling new developments", provided scandalous copy for *Times* readers for over a year. It ended with Driggs narrowly avoiding prison and incurring a \$500 fine. As may have been predicted for a woman so unscrupulous, Mrs. Driggs then ventured into real estate. A few days after Charnock died the audacious Mrs. Driggs resurfaced and laid claim to his 137-acre ranch with a deed that was, during another notorious trial, deemed a forgery. Gertrude was sentenced to five years in San Quentin and spent two years behind bars before a

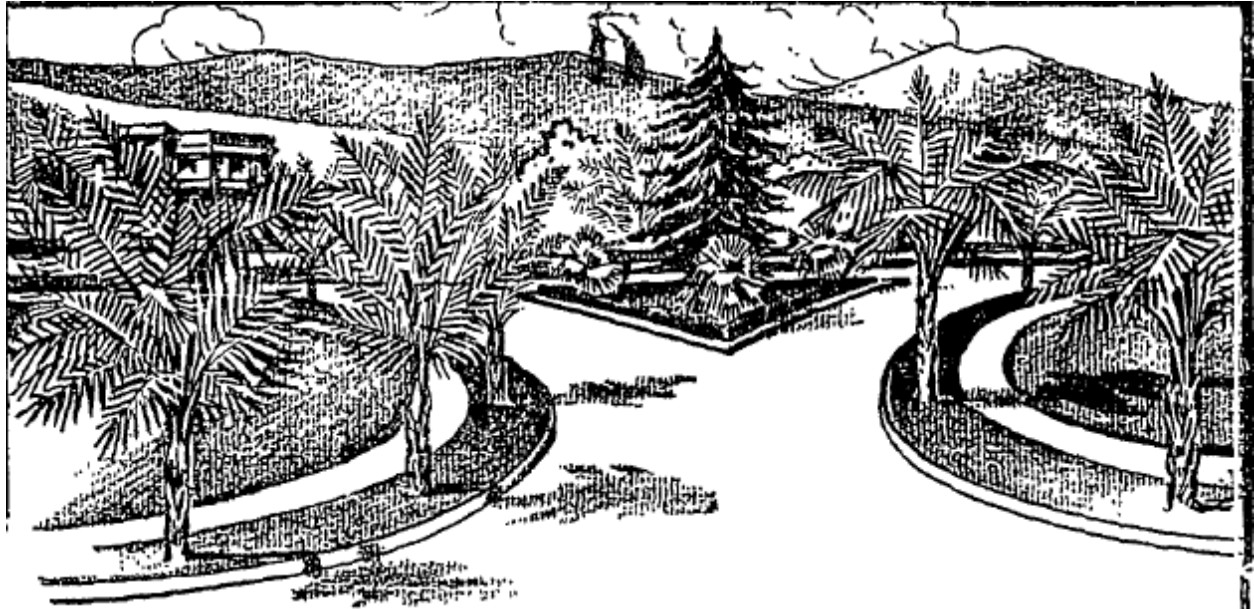
Christmas pardon set her free in 1911. Then the "handsome, white-haired widow" whose "sangfroid" had flabbergasted even the most jaded court reporters, slithered south to San Diego never to be heard from again.

With the legal impediments of Mrs. Driggs out of the way, Lillian was faced with a choice: she could become a bean farmer or she could subdivide the property and make a great deal of money; Price



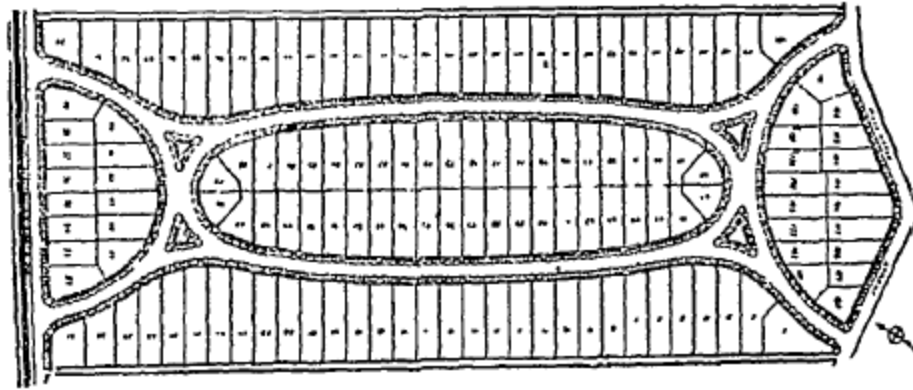
Mrs. Gertrude Driggs,

chose the road most traveled by. The eminent landscape architect Wilber David Cook, Jr. was hired to design the proposed tract. Cook had made his reputation working with Frederick Law Olmstead, the man who designed New York's Central Park. With Olmstead he had worked on the Columbian Exposition of 1893 in Chicago and the improvement of the grounds of the U.S. Capitol in 1902. Cook moved to Los Angeles in 1906 after receiving the commission to design Beverly Hills, and went on to lay out the grounds to Exposition Park, the Los Angeles Civic Center, and Palos Verdes Estates.



PALM PLACE

The former ranch was surveyed in October 1911, recorded in January 1912, and officially designated Tract No. 928. Veteran real estate broker George J. Cote was hired as the sales manager and Tract No. 928 was transformed into Palm Place, “a new aristocratic suburb”. Palm Place didn’t offer lots for sale but “villa sites”, the largest of which were over an acre. A \$4,000 minimum cost restriction was imposed on the “country estates” expected to populate this “suburb of refinement and distinction” where “culture predominates”. Such were the flowery phrases used to invoke a sense of genteel elegance in an area still very much in the sticks. Cote flooded the *Times* for nearly two solid years with display ads extolling the “beauty and desirableness” of Palm Place, the net result of which were two country estates constructed on a possible 138 villa sites – one of which was the house he built for himself in 1912.



The original plat map for Palm Place. Venice Boulevard runs along the left border, Washington Boulevard on the right. The Oval would remain whole until 1927, when Washington Place cut it in half.

Lillian had sold her interests in the tract to Robert P. Sherman by April 1912. Sherman was the step-son of General Moses H. Sherman, the man who co-founded the Los Angeles Pacific Railroad in the 1890s and subdivided Sherman Oaks. Robert Sherman was the General Manager of the railroad. When the L. A. Pacific merged with the Pacific Electric Company in 1911, Robert resigned and became a real estate developer. He evidently saw tremendous potential in Palm Place. After all, its northern boundary ran parallel to the popular Pacific Electric line that connected Los Angeles to Ocean Park, with a station opposite the tract, and its southern boundary, Washington Boulevard, was the only paved road connecting downtown Los Angeles to Venice.

Sherman owned Palm Place for eight years. When he sold the tract in October 1920 one other home had been erected for a grand total of three country estates in the entire development. The financiers who bought the tract apparently realized that the villa sites of Palm Place were too big for the more modest objectives of the average home owner likely to build in the area, and Palm Place was re-subdivided into the still-generous sized lots of the current tract. The neighborhood was re-christened Marshall Manor, and after a month-long advertising blitz in the summer of 1922 the Oval finally took off. By 1927 over fifty new homes peppered the tract. The subdivision would be known as Marshall Manor

through the 1950s, after which the new name was forgotten as completely as its predecessor. It has been referred to locally as the Oval ever since.

Exploring the Historic Oval

11837 North Park Ave (1)

This pretty bungalow with the colonnaded portico and jerkin head gables was built in 1924. Since 1998 it has been the home of Christopher McKinnon and Patricia Karasick. McKinnon is a former Zone 5 director and treasurer of the Mar Vista Community Council. Chris and Pat did some renovation work to the house not long after buying it and discovered a handwritten note folded up inside the rear wall which read:

“To who ever finds this, My name is Diane Irvine. I live at 11837 North Park Ave. Los Angeles, California. I am 12 years old. The date is February 27, 1971. Love Diane”.



11837 North Park, circa 1940. Note the palm tree in front of the house; today it is three times as tall.

Diane’s grandfather, Henry T. Irvine, bought the house in the 1930s. Her father moved here in 1961 and sold it in 1971. Some restoration work was done to the wall prior to selling the place, and Diane dropped in her message. In 2001 a woman named Diane Armitage contacted Chris and Pat seeking permission to visit their house, explaining that it was her girlhood home. During her visit she was handed the long-forgotten note she wrote thirty years earlier and Diane

provided Chris and Pat with photographs of the home taken in the 1930s. A view of the McKinnon - Karasick home can also be seen as it appeared in 1960, in the background of the B-movie *Key Witness*. It is visible in the scene in which a young Dennis Hopper, playing a murdering hoodlum, forces a car into the triangular-shaped lot across the street.

11825 North Park Ave (2)

Among the conditions under which the original Palm Place villa site purchasers were subject were: any building constructed in Palm Place had to be a private residence, a stipulation that would be

in effect until January 1, 1925. Less than two years after that expiration date the three original country estates of Palm Place had been converted into sanitariums, to the alarm of the residents in the tract. In the 1920s the term “sanitarium” was often a code word for “mental institution”. People with “nervous conditions” were sent to sanitariums, as well as alcoholics and drug addicts. A group of citizen activists opposed to the sanitariums, working through the Los Angeles City Council, got an ordinance passed restricting the existence of L. A. sanitariums to the central downtown area and the San Fernando Valley. The sanitarium owners were issued arrest warrants and told to pack up. They hired lawyers and a legal battle ensued. Public hearings were held at which the anti-sanitarium protesters came forth with lurid tales of maniacs running amok in Mar Vista. One such story was delivered by the original owner of this 1925 house, Curt C. Gaebel, who reported that his daughter, a schoolgirl named Jeanette, had been chased by a man in his nightshirt while she rode her bicycle in the tract. Despite such testimony a judge found the anti-sanitarium ordinance “unreasonable, unwarranted, discriminatory and arbitrary”. The sanitariums won the right to stay and it was Gaebel who ended up leaving.



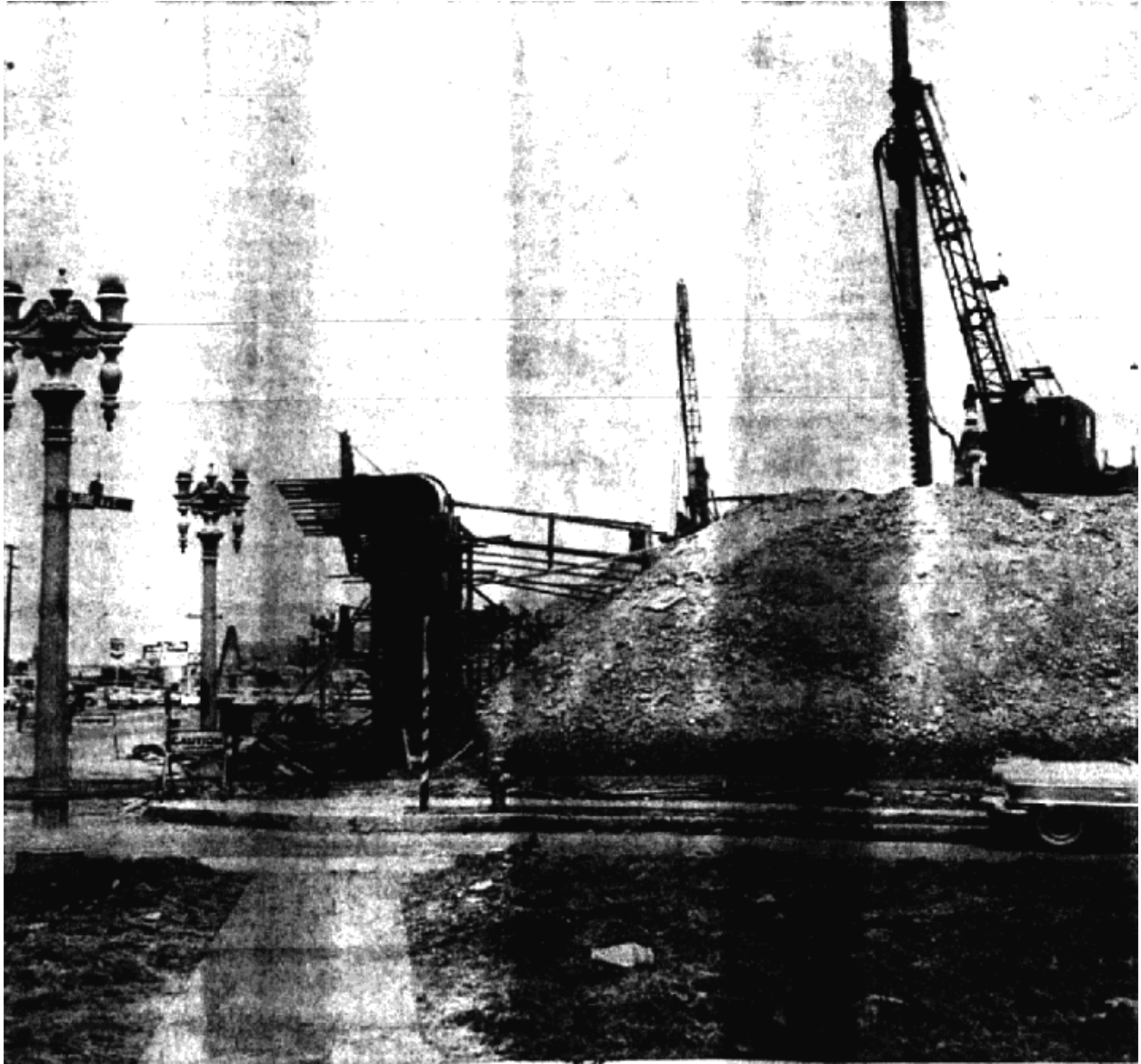
The triangular lot of 11820 North Park can be seen directly behind the two babes, before a house was moved there in 1958. According to long-time residents, the lot was planted with lima beans prior to the move. I got dibs on the blonde.

11820 North Park Ave (3)

The triangular lot at this address, one of four such lots in the tract, was originally intended as a verdant pocket park for the mutual enjoyment of Palm Place inhabitants. But the potential commercial value of these plots was evidently too tempting for the subdividers of Marshall Manor to resist, and they were converted into residential lots and put up for sale. The house here was built in 1951 at 5493 Slauson Avenue and moved to

this location in 1958 due to construction of the San Diego Freeway. Initially called the Sepulveda Parkway, about 600 pieces of property in Ballona Valley were affected by this mammoth project. The owners of a house in the freeway’s right-of-way had either to relocate their dwelling or accept a “fair market price” and have it razed. On January 11, 1959, the new freeway was open as far south as Venice Boulevard. Three weeks later the first fatality on the 405 took the life of a 40-year-old market owner from Sherman Oaks. On June 24, 1960, the link connecting Venice to Jefferson boulevards opened, completing the Rancho La Ballona portion of the San Diego Freeway.

In 1995 this house was used for a scene in the film *Get Shorty*.



Construction of the San Diego Freeway, circa 1958. The view is from Washington Place and Globe Avenue looking east. The two fancy “marblite” streetlights, installed in 1925, are no longer there, but several others still exist on Washington Blvd.

11840 Venice Blvd (4)

Because of the proximity of the Oval to the movie studios that flourished in Culver City, it’s not surprising that several of its residents were – and are - involved in the film industry. From 1936 to 1943 the lot at 11840 Venice was the property of movie pioneer Verne R. Day. As the General Manager of the Chicago-based motion picture company Essanay, Day was involved with such early silent stars as Francis X. “King of the Movies” Bushman and “Broncho Billy” Anderson, the first celluloid cowboy hero. In 1915 Essanay lured Charlie Chaplin from Keystone with a \$1,500-a-week contract. Charlie made 14 films for the studio, including *The Tramp*, regarded by cineastes as his first masterpiece.



Pioneer film producer Vern R. Day owned land in Mar Vista.

Day (left) was sent to Los Angeles in 1917 to establish a west coast production studio and settled in Culver City. The new studio produced its first film in May, but by the end of the year Essanay went belly up. The astute Day, meantime, had become connected to the local political scene, and on September 8, 1917, got himself elected to the original Culver City Board of Trustees. This was the same historic election that established Culver City as an independent incorporated city. Day remained a prominent politico in Republican circles both locally and nationally until his death in 1945.

3825 McLaughlin Ave (5)

In 1930 Yvonne and Edward Lyon rented a house at 3828 East Boulevard. On July 28 a “squad of Central vice officers” raided the home and discovered the 29-year-old Mrs. Lyon serving beer to several patrons. The bulls arrested Yvonne and confiscated 70 gallons of beer mash, two pints of whiskey, and 200 quart bottles of beer. The Oval’s only known speakeasy had officially gone out of business. The house, built in 1925, was torn down in 1987 and replaced by the Islands of Tranquility apartment complex that covers the site today.

3871 McLaughlin Ave (6)

Actress Luana Anders bought this 1923 home in the early 1990s. Born in 1938 with the surname Anderson, she was named for a Hawaiian dancer named Princess Luana. In April 1948 her mother

Marina opened a children's clothing and toy store at 12128 Venice Boulevard in a building that no longer exists. Luana was ten when she began working at the store during her summer break from school, and was the same age when she "starred" in her first theatrical productions while vacationing at a girl's camp. She began her film career in the low-budget films of Roger Corman in the late 1950s, most memorably as Vincent Price's sister in *The Pit and the Pendulum*. In the 1960s she hooked up with Peter Fonda as the skinny-dipping hippy Lisa in *Easy Rider*, was in *Missouri Breaks* with Marlon Brando, and appeared in other films with Debbie Reynolds, James Garner, and Warren Beatty. She was also assigned several small roles in the films of her good friend Jack Nicholson, who paid tribute to her after her death during his Oscar acceptance speech for *As Good As It Gets*. Luana died in this house in 1996 from breast cancer; she was 58.



Actress Luana Anders

3920 East Blvd (7)

This 1940 house has been the home of film composer Alex Wurman since 2003. Wurman wrote the scores to such films as *March of the Penguins*, *Talladega Nights*, *Confessions of a Dangerous Mind*, and *Thirteen Conversations about One Thing*. He also contributed music to *The Lion King*, *Armageddon*, and *A League of Their Own*. Wurman bought the house from actor Bruce McGill, who lived here from 1992 to 2003. McGill appeared in *National Lampoon's Animal House* as "D-Day" and can also be seen in *Silkwood* with Meryl Streep, *Collateral* with Tom Cruise, and many other films.

3928 East Blvd (8)

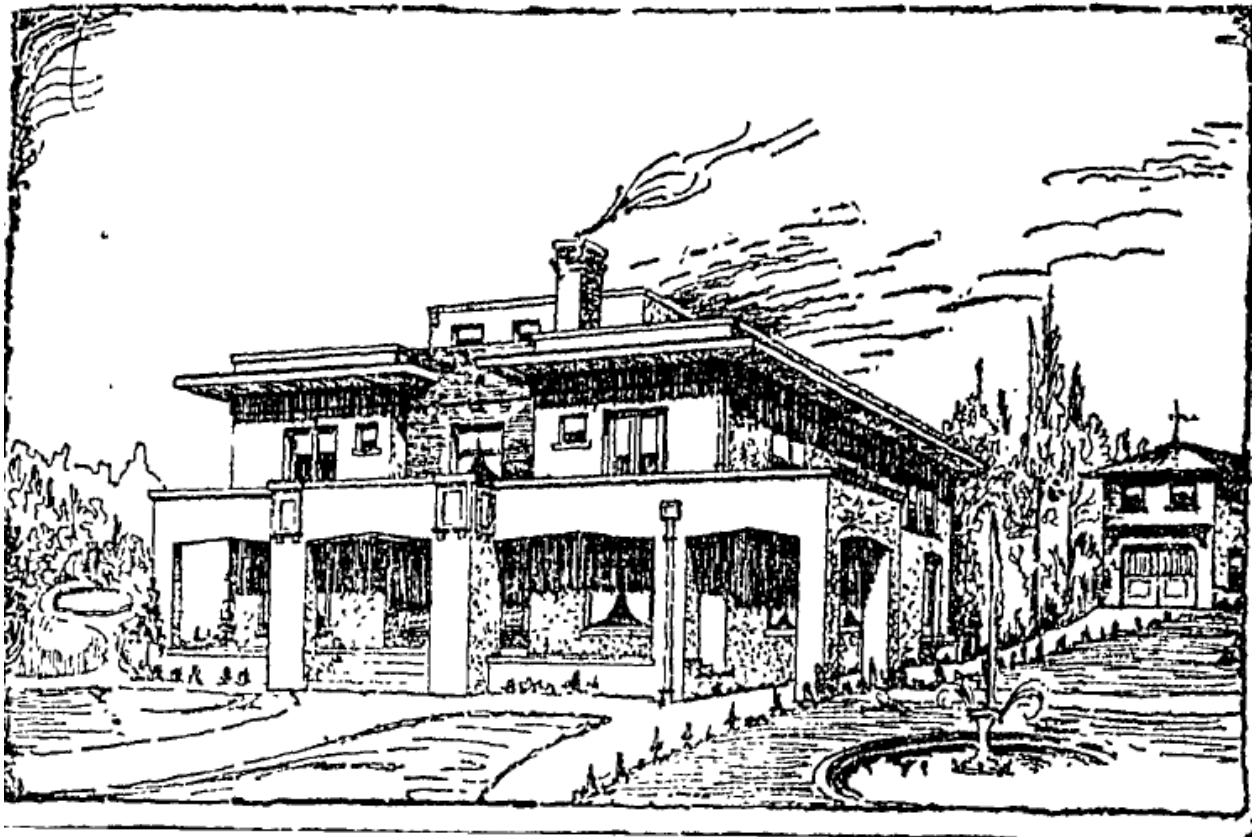
In 1964 a Culver City realtor named Edith Elkins moved into the 1924 home that formerly stood on this lot. In August of the following year her 27-year-old son Jerome became the first Marine to die in the Viet Nam War. Lieutenant Jerome Elkins joined the U.S. armed forces in South East Asia in the spring of 1965. The 27-year-old West Pointer had already been awarded five medals when he was killed in aerial combat. Elkins was buried at Arlington National Cemetery. Mrs. Elkins sold her house in 1966.



Lt. JEROME ELKINS

3951 East Blvd (9)

The two-story structure facing the street of this multiple-unit institution is the converted home of the first country estate built in Palm Place, constructed by George J. Cote in the summer of 1912. Cote was the sales manager for Palm Place. He broke into the real estate business in 1896, and in 1905 sold lots across Venice Boulevard in the East Ocean Park Villa subdivision. He owned the property here until 1925 when Emil Wittman bought the place and turned it into a combination sanitarium/orphanage called the Wittman Home for Children. In 1957 it became Meadowbrook Rest Home, a retirement home for the aged. In the mid-60s it was turned into Meadowbrook Manor, a 77-bed mental facility made up mostly of people diagnosed as schizophrenics.



Home to be erected by George J. Cote in Palm place.

The actual house that Cote built was not quite as lavish as the artist's rendering above, but it was as massive.

There have been complaints about this hospital, both official and unofficial, for years. Neighbors have told stories about screaming and cursing heard at all hours, of patients scaling the walls and roaming the streets at will, and of couples coupling in front of windows. In 1967 an elderly patient wandered from the facility and turned up missing. Another inmate allegedly stole a car that had been

left running across the street and killed a pedestrian across town during his attempted escape. In 1977 the Manor was fined \$8,000 for violations of nursing service laws. In 1986 city officials discovered 22 mental patients who were more than “mildly mentally disabled”, the legal limit for inmates here. An attempt to close the place in 1996 failed; the facility’s defenders called Meadowbrook’s detractors “discriminatory”. It is now a lockdown facility, a sort of minimum security house in which the patients are locked in for the night.

In 1963, when Meadowbrook was still a rest home, a 92-year-old resident named Wingardt became ill and was transferred to a hospital. In the same ambulance that picked up Wingardt was an 80-year-old transient named Collins. Both men, according to the *L. A. Times*, were “deaf and senile”. Wingardt died during the night. His kin were notified and an open-casket funeral was arranged. When the mourners started filing past the coffin, looks of consternation spread over their faces: the man in the coffin was a stranger. It seems that the hospital admission papers for the two men had been accidentally switched, and the fellow in the coffin was Collins. When the mistake was discovered, Wingardt’s family “arranged to postpone burial”, a decision we may suppose was seconded by the still-breathing Wingardt.

The handsome two-story home across the street at 3946 East was built in 1922. It is the oldest extant house constructed in the Oval after the tract was re-subdivided as Marshall Manor.

3957 East Blvd (10)

This 1924 ranch-style house resembles a saloon out of the old West. Its most striking feature is the expansive porch, adorned with a balcony rail and wagon wheel lunettes near the top of the porch posts, which serve as braces for the narrow decorative spindled porch frieze that runs below the roof. The porch was an addition to the main house, which is a standard saltbox home, with the short roof in front and the longer rear catslide roof running down to the first floor. The house was moved here in 1948.

3961 East Blvd (11)

Built in 1912 at 272 North Hobart near Western and Wilshire, this house was moved here in 1948 by the same person who owned the house next door at 3957 East. The owner bought this lot, divided it in half, and moved these two homes here. The house has the asymmetrical roof reminiscent of a saltbox home, the rear section of which has a much lower pitch than the front. The two small gable dormer windows give it a Colonial look.

The 1927 house across the street at 3964 East was rented out to a fellow named Warren W. Wilson in the late 1930s. Wilson was arrested for grand theft auto in March 1938 as a member of a hot car ring that stripped stolen autos for parts.

3967 East Blvd (12)

The lot at this address has three homes on it: the one we can see in front and two others in the back. During the mid-teens, before any of these homes were built, attorney George Beebe owned the property. Beebe was a prosecutor for the District Attorney in the first decade of the 1900s and was an assistant Attorney General of California in 1914, the year after he bought the lot. After returning to private practice in the 1920s Beebe represented Lita Grey in her divorce suit against Charlie Chaplin. Lita was a 12-year-old nymphet when Chaplin cast her as the Angel of Temptation in the dream sequence of *The Kid*. Apparently the temptation aroused by Miss Grey was too strong for Charlie to resist, for in 1924, at the age of 16, Lita became the second Mrs. Chaplin. Three years and two kids later she filed for divorce. Pirated copies of the 52-page divorce complaint, full of explicit details of their sex life, became a best seller in the underground book trade. Beebe got for his client the largest settlement in American legal history up to that time: a \$600,000 cash settlement for Lita and a \$100,000 trust fund for each child. Chaplin decided to settle out of court rather than stand trial because Lita threatened to publically name five actresses with whom the Little Tramp had been intimate, and Charlie wanted to spare their careers, not to mention any further mortification to himself. Such a scandal could destroy a film career in those days, as it had "Fatty" Arbuckle's a few years earlier, and were it not for the universal adulation of Charlie, could have ended his.

The home behind the front house, on the right side, has since 1982 been the residence of Nadine Moroto. Nadine is the granddaughter of pioneer film producer Bud Barsky. Known as "the Henry Ford of the motion picture business", Barsky made hundreds of silent and early talking pictures at his own independent film company and at MGM, Warner Bros., and Columbia. He died in 1967 at the age of 76.

3979 East Blvd (13)

Special effects man Garry Elmendorf is the owner of this 1949 house. Garry has worked as a special effects technician, director, or supervisor on such films as *The Sixth Sense*, *Broken Arrow*, *Tombstone*, *Hook*, and *The Deer Hunter*. His grandfather was Carl Elmendorf, a powder man at MGM for 26 years who specialized in pyrotechnics. In 1961 Carl was killed in an explosion at the Culver City lot while priming blank cartridges for the TV show *Rawhide*, the series that launched the career of Clint Eastwood. Investigators surmised that the blast was caused by static electricity while Carl or a co-worker was handling a highly volatile chemical called zirconium.

3976 East Blvd (14)

Actor Roger A. Brown has lived in this house since 1997. Brown has made guest appearances in scores of television series since the 1970s, including *The Rockford Files*, *Kojak*, *Mannix*, *Picket Fences*,

CSI: Crime Scene Investigation, and *ER*. Among the feature films in which he had roles are *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*, *Action Jackson*, and *Robocop2*.



3980 East Blvd (15)

This English Tudor house was built as a private residence in 1926. In 1953 it was converted into an eight-unit care facility called Marshall Manor Lodge; two years later it became the Culver City Sanitarium. In November 1963 a fire broke out in the house and the patients were all rescued and transferred across the street to 3995 East Blvd. In 1970 the house was re-converted into a private residence.

3995 East Blvd (16)

In 1913 the second country estate in Palm Place was built on this site. By 1927 it had been converted into the Marshall Manor Sanitarium. The facility's name was changed in 1953 to Colonial Manor Sanitarium. That institution was torn down in 1971 to make way for the apartment complex still here today.

The lot on which Marshall Manor sat lost a 30 foot sliver of land in 1927 when Washington Place was built and cut the Oval in half. Horizontally, the new street didn't line up precisely with the previously existing lots but was oriented a degree or two off. This resulted in some of the lots abutting Washington Place losing a slice of land and others gaining a bit.

4040 East Blvd (17)

This house has had some notable owners. It was built by a man named Hugh K. Cassidy in 1926.



The following year Hugh loaned his gun to Thomas A. Christian, who used it to kill Walter Galloway in the "red wagon murder" case, already discussed in The First Wave chapter.

In 1963 Bernard and Maria Kastin moved into the house with their 7-year-old daughter Elissa. The girl grew up in Mar Vista and went to Venice High School. In 1977 she was 21, living in an apartment in Hollywood, and working at the Healthfaire Restaurant near Hollywood and Vine. On the night of November 5 she drove the few blocks to her apartment after her shift and parked. A Cadillac pulled up alongside her car and two plainclothes policemen got out. They showed her their badges, explained

Elissa Kastin, murder victim.

that her Volkswagen bug matched the description of a car used in a recent robbery, and said they would have to take her in for questioning. The two plainclothes policemen were Kenneth Bianchi and Angelo Buono, the Hillside Stranglers; Lissa became their third victim. Lissa's mother (her parents had divorced in 1969) still lived in this house with her second husband at the time of the murder, and Lissa had visited her mom and spent the night of November 4 here. Her mother sold the house in 1979.

4065 East Blvd (18)

This stately New England Colonial saltbox house was originally located across the street from Manual Arts High School near Exposition Park. Built in 1902, it is the oldest house in the Oval. The home has the short front roof and the longer rear catslide roof, as well as a side entrance, all standard features of the saltbox style. The wooden quoins, rusticated siding, and three dormer windows strengthen the colonial look. According to a December 10, 1970 *Times* article, this house was built by an unnamed sheep rancher whose holdings extended from Baldwin Hills to the sea. It was purchased by a used car dealer in 1930, and by the time it arrived here in 1935 had been remodeled in a Spanish Colonial Revival style with a tile roof. The house was restored to its original – and current – look in 1939.

The neo-Victorian home with the fancy bargeboard pendants at the peaks of the gables, across the street at 4066 East, was built in 1953.

4103 East Blvd (19)

Architect/artist Josh Schweitzer and his wife, celebrity chef Mary Sue Millikin, own the 2004 house on this property. Mary is the co-owner of the Border Grill restaurant in Santa Monica and Ciudad restaurant in downtown Los Angeles. Besides her eateries, Millikin has written several cook books and appeared on the Food Network with her restaurant partner Susan Feniger as the *Too Hot Tamales*. She also worked as a consultant for the 2001 film *Tortilla Soup*. Schweitzer, formerly an associate with Frank Gehry, is best known as a designer of restaurants, including City, Campanile, and Border Grill 2. He also designed this house, and presumably the wall that hides it from the view of curious by-passers.

4124 East Blvd (20)

This massive house was built in 1910 near the Hancock Park/Windsor Square neighborhood and moved here in 1927. With its enclosed porch, notched rafter tails, and shingle siding on the large front gable, it is something of a cross between the Prairie and Craftsman styles. From 1939 to 1993 it was the home of Al Jennings, a prolific second unit and assistant director at MGM. During his 30-plus years behind the camera Jennings worked with such major stars as Judy Garland, John Wayne, Jane Fonda, Kirk Douglas, Myrna Loy, Marlon Brando, and Elvis Presley. Among the better-known films to which he contributed are *Annie Get Your Gun*, *Where the Boys Are*, *Point Blank*, and *Deliverance*.

The rustic home next door at 4118 East with the eyebrow roof over the door dates from 1927.

4201 East Blvd (21)

Although it doesn't look it, this home was also built in 1910. Relocated here in 1945, it originally stood at 620 South Catalina Street, one block north of Wilshire and three blocks west of Vermont boulevards in what is today Koreatown. The triangular pediment above the door, the sidelights, and the symmetrical double hung windows on the second floor suggest the Georgian style. Also notable are the multiple-paned stained glass sashes above the ground floor windows.

Across the street at 4210 East is a nice 1929 English Tudor cottage with a castle-like tower entranceway, steeply pitched gable roof, and long narrow windows.

4240 East Blvd (22)

Washington Boulevard was the southern boundary of Palm Place as well as the southern boundary of the community in which it was situated, Ocean Park Heights-Mar Vista. The lot on which this 1922 bungalow sits extends to the alley on the south, and is also situated in Mar Vista. Yet the alley itself and all the territory between it and Washington are today part of Culver City. This geographical curiosity came about in October 1925 when Culver City appropriated a sizeable chunk of Mar Vista territory in a slick land grab called the Walnut Park Annexation (see the Odds and Ends chapter). The new property line that emerged after the annexation, which follow the crooked contours of Washington Boulevard, sometimes sliced through a pre-existing lot of a Marshall Manor homeowner. In such cases the northern part of the property remained in Los Angeles while the southern part was mired in Culver City. For many years these individuals had to pay two sets of property taxes.

11831 Atlantic Ave (23)



Actor Eric Blore

Character actor Eric Blore owned this house during the early 50s. The English-accented thespian appeared in some 100 films from the 20s through the 50s, often playing a droll butler. He provided comic relief in four of the Astaire-Rogers musicals of the 1930s. About 40% of the property of his 1940 house now lies in Culver City.

A few doors away at 11907 Atlantic is the former home of one Milton Douglas Carlson. In June 1958 Carlson was arrested while driving a stolen car. After a police grilling he admitted to being the leader of a bay area burglary ring. By "smashing" this operation police were able to

close the books on 18 burglaries and 11 thefts that had recently taken place in Culver City, Venice, West Los Angeles, and Santa Monica.



Director W.S. Van Dyke

4151 Marcasel Ave (24)

Local athletic hero Frank Lescoulie built this unassuming house in 1954. As the star quarterback of the Venice High School football squad, Frank led the 1941 Gondoliers to an undefeated season and a gridiron championship.

In the late 1920s and early 30s the lot on which this house sits was owned by MGM director W. S. Van Dyke. Woodbridge Van Dyke began acting in vaudeville and stock while still a child. He entered motion pictures as one of D. W. Griffith's assistants on the 1916 film *Intolerance* and became a director himself the following year. In a career that spanned 25 years he made 80 feature films, including the first Johnny Weismuller - Maureen O'Sullivan Tarzan picture and the first four *Thin Man* films starring William Powell and Myrna Loy. Van Dyke also has the distinction of directing the gangster film that lured John Dillinger to the Biograph Theater the night he was shot dead in Chicago: *Manhattan Melodrama*. W. S. Van Dyke was just 53 when he died in 1943.

4068 Marcasel Ave (25)

The original home on this lot was built by chiropractor Lowell Cripe in 1956. Lowell was the grandson of Jim Cripe, the man who subdivided Venice View Heights in 1905 to create the sixth-oldest residential neighborhood in Mar Vista (see the Mormon Hill chapter). Born in a little house across the street from Venice High School in 1917, Lowell was a four-time president of the California Chiropractic Association. His father, Naturopathist Calvin Cripe, died in this house in 1984, age 94.

In 2003 the house underwent a major renovation by the new owner, award winning chef and restaurateur Hans Rockenwagner, with good results. Hans owns the Rockenwagner Bakery/Cafe in Santa Monica at 3rd and Arizona, the 3 Square Café + Bakery in Venice on Abbott Kinney, and the Rockenwagner Mar Vista Bakery at 12835 Washington Boulevard.

4057 Marcasel Ave (26)

This charming 1941 home was built by John K. Cassidy, the son of Hugh Cassidy of 4040 East on the other side of the Oval, whose gun figured in the "red wagon murder" case. John was the superintendent of the MGM prop department for 28 years. The unique front door of the house looks like it may have come from the set of a movie. Equally unusual is the latticed windows fronting the home.

4056 Marcasel Ave (27)

This 4,800 square-foot edifice is the Jones-Diaz house. Known as Casa Moderna, it was designed by modernist architect J. Frank Fitzgibbons for entertainment executive John Richard Diaz and his wife, abstract artist Nancy Louise Jones. The intention was to create an avant-garde hacienda. The focus of the house is the courtyard, which features an oblong pool and a spa. All of the rooms on the ground floor of the house open to the courtyard through glass doors, creating an illusion of seamlessness between indoor and outdoor spaces. There is no front door; guests enter through the front gate into the courtyard. The garage doors roll up into the 26-foot ceiling, which allowed Jones to transport her artwork in and out no matter how overblown. The curved roof of Casa Moderna is made of industrial metal decking.

In 2000 Diaz was one of 97 people who survived the crash of Singapore Airlines flight 006. The plane crashed attempting to take off during a rainstorm in Taiwan and took the lives of 82 people. The accident left him partially disabled, which is why the house's foundation is also the floor: the ground floor of the house is completely flat, without a single step, not even into a shower. The steps to the second floor lead to two guest rooms. Jones and Diaz sold their house in 2009, three years after building it.

4040 Marcasel Ave (28)

In 1946 this unpretentious home was being rented by a young couple named William and Betty Wescott. Bill Wescott was a Venice dairy salesman before enlisting in the Marines for WWII. During the Normandy invasion Wescott was the jeep driver assigned to transport war correspondent Ernie Pyle from the LST to the beachhead, and for the next several weeks served as his chauffeur. Pyle wrote two columns about Wescott which later appeared in his best-selling book "Brave Men". The Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist was killed by machine gun fire in 1945. Wescott lived through the war and was the proud owner of a cigarette lighter that Pyle had given him.

3966 Marcasel Ave (29)

In 1914 the third and last country estate in Palm Place was built on this site. In 1925 the home was leased by Jerrald A. Stern and transformed into the St. Ernes Sanitarium, a name contrived as a pun on Stern's surname. In 1936 Stern moved his operation to a larger facility in Inglewood and the property became the Mar Vista Sanitarium. 1936 is also the year the sanitarium's most famous patient checked in, actor John Barrymore. The Los Angeles *Times* reported that the "Great Profile" came here for a "heart condition" - a condition that was no doubt exacerbated by his well-known fondness for grog. In 1949 former Broadway showgirl Frankie Bailey, the "Girl with the Million Dollar Legs", checked in and spent the last four years of her life here. Frankie was the step-sister of James A. Bailey, of Barnum and Bailey circus fame. Since 1999 the facility has been the Country Villa Mar Vista nursing home.



The Mar Vista Sanitarium, as it appeared in 1951. Despite persistent rumors linking Fatty Arbuckle to this house, there is no known documentary evidence to substantiate the claim.

The original building, which no longer exists, is the one most commonly rumored to have been owned by "Fatty" Arbuckle, although his name does not appear in the official Map Books or deed records as the owner of the property from the time it was built until 1933, the year he died. That leaves the possibility that Arbuckle was a silent partner in the property or a renter, although there is no known documentation to support such a notion. Ironically, one of Arbuckle's pre-Keystone films was a 1910 Selig one-reeler titled *The Sanitarium*.

3940 Marcasel Ave (30)

Motion picture special effects man Norman Breedlove built this home in 1941. Breedlove worked on such films as *Around the World in Eighty Days*, *Forty Guns*, and *The Party*. A handy gadget man, he reputedly created the sawed-off shotgun used by his friend Nick Adams in the 1950s TV series *Johnny Yuma*. Norman's son Craig was a hot rod enthusiast who built his first car at the age of 14 in the driveway of this house, although he would have to wait two more years before he could drive it. Craig Breedlove went on to set several land speed records during the 1960s in his famous jet-powered car Spirit of America; he was the first to break the 400mph, 500mph, and 600mph speed barriers.



Craig Breedlove, center, Venice High School graduate and holder of the world's land speed record, is presented with a certificate of appreciation by Dr. Earl James,

right, a member of the Mar Vista Optimist Club, while high school principal, Robert Bosanko, looks on. Breedlove appeared before three assemblies at the high

school Thursday. He told students of his record breaking run last November. Breedlove appeared on the program as a part of the Optimist "Youth Appreciation Week."

3930 Marcasel Ave (31)

Film composer Christopher Young owned this house from 1997 until his divorce a few years later. In Hollywood since the early 80s, the prolific Young has provided music for over 80 films, including *Hellraiser*, *Spider-Man 2 and 3*, and *Something's Gotta Give*.

3911 Marcasel Ave (32)

Since 1997 this has been the home of Eames Demetrios, the grandson of modernist design icons Charles and Ray Eames. Demetrios is a self-styled filmmaker/artist/design steward who made the 1992

film *The Giving*. For the past few years he has been a “geographer at large” tracking and documenting the mythology of “Kcymaerxthaere”, an alternative universe whose historic sites are commemorated with bronze plaques in our “linear world”. In his public presentations Eames expounds on such concepts as the “umbersphere” (a region of shadows), the “bar sinister” (a cabal of “undead” lawyers who help the guilty go free), “infinity minus 29”, and “benches in their natural habitat”. Various inhabitants of Kcymaerxthaere are illustrated with “disputed likenesses”. For more on Eames and his world, visit www.kcymaara.com.

The original house built on this lot in 1939 was the home of All-American USC football star Johnny Hawkins. Like many former USC gridiron stars, Hawkins found employment at MGM studios after his football career. His brains had been rattled so often during his playing days that he suffered occasionally from severe headaches. Not long after moving into this home he died at age 37 after being stricken at work with head pains. The house has appeared as it does today since 2005.



Henry H. Linke (center) ran his plumbing business in the early days from his house at 3869 Marcasel. His wife Fern was instrumental in getting the name of the street she lived on changed from West Blvd. to Marcasel Ave. The reason why the roadway was downgraded from a boulevard to an avenue would be interesting to know. The photo was taken in 1958.

3869 Marcasel Ave (33)

Marcasel Avenue was originally named West Boulevard. It became Marcasel in 1946 largely through the efforts of the woman who lived in this house (pictured above) for 22 years, Fern Linke. Fern was having trouble with her mail getting confused with another West Boulevard in the West Adams district. She led a neighborhood petition drive to get the street changed to Marcasel, the name of the Pacific Electric Short Line station on Venice Boulevard at McLaughlin. 75% of the residents on the Oval's West Boulevard signed the petition, and on October 9, 1946, the new street signs were installed. The name Marcasel reputedly came about from re-arranging the letters of the Casa Del Mar Sanitarium, located near the Short Line station on Venice just across the street from the Oval tract.

11970 Venice Blvd (34)



[Brand's Restaurant, 11970 Venice Boulevard, just after it opened in 1953.](#)

Until the early 1950s the property now belonging to Fire Station 62 was divided into five residential lots, some of which had homes. In 1953 Brand's Restaurant was built on the two northernmost lots. Czechoslovakian William "Billy" Brand had managed the Bel-Air Bay Club in Santa Monica for 15 years and the Hillcrest Country Club for 5 before becoming a restaurateur. Modeled after an old European Inn, Brand's was the first classy restaurant in Mar Vista. It had a huge fireplace, ruby leather booths, a genuine charcoal broiler, a cocktail lounge with a redwood service bar, and a banquet room. Chef Alfred Keller had formerly worked at Perino's. Brand's opened on December 12, 1953. Specialties

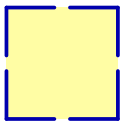
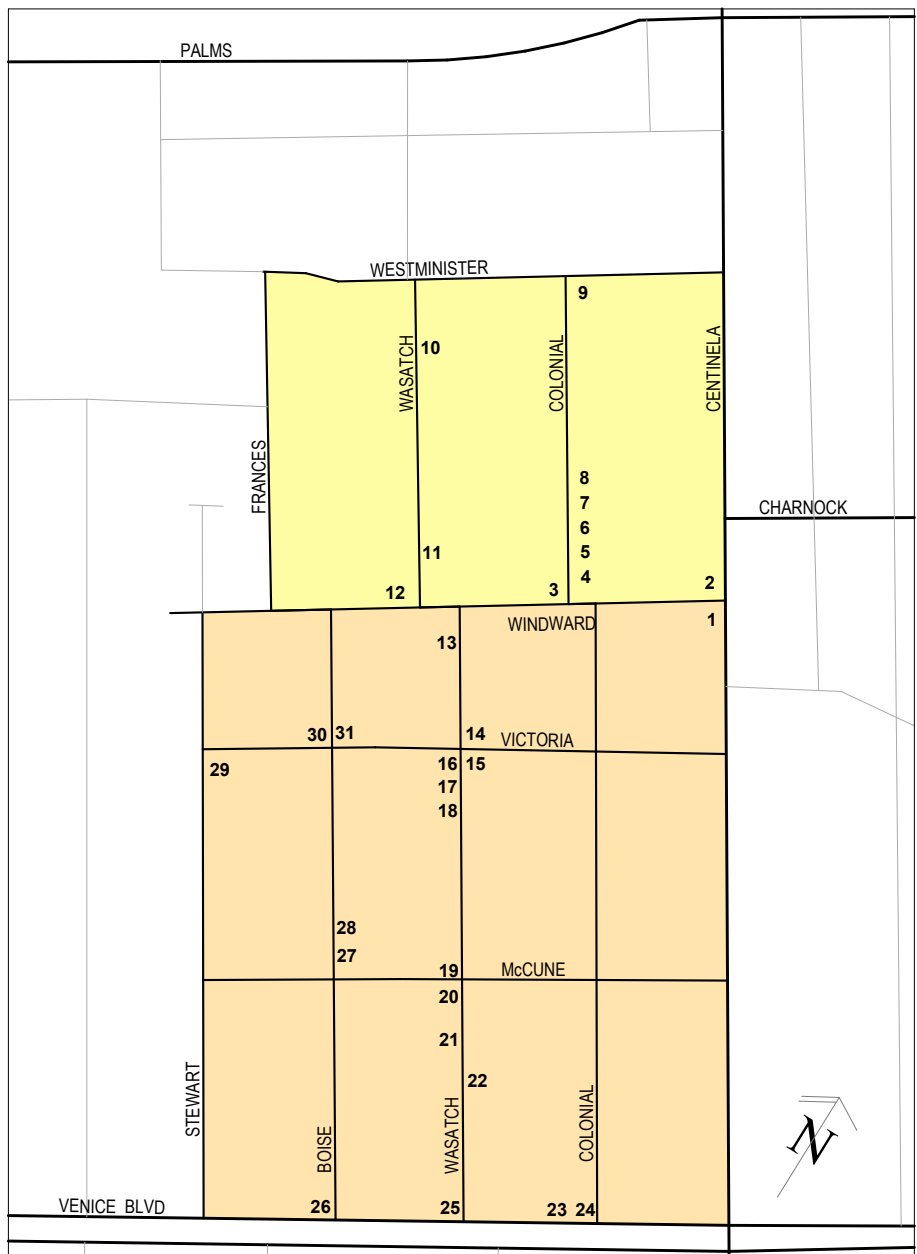
of the house included sea food, fried chicken Vienna, and calves sweetbread. Lunches started at 90¢ and dinners at \$1.80.

In 1964 the place was under new ownership as The Courageous Rooster. From 1968 to 1980 it was called the Charter Oak Steak House. In the early 80s it was known as the Breakers Seafood Company, then changed to the Breakaway Restaurant and Bar from 1987 to 1990. It became an upscale pool hall called the Break Shot from 1992 until the city of Los Angeles took over the site in 2006.

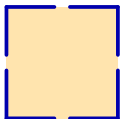
Before it was torn down to make way for the fire station there was a house at the south end of the property, designated 3827 Marcase, which in the late 1940s was the home of a Mrs. Helen Gregg. Helen was arrested for drunk driving in 1949 after causing a head-on collision at 2:30 in the morning which threw her passenger, a fellow named Scheck, through the windshield. Mrs. Gregg was taken to the station house wearing a fur coat over her pajamas. She explained that Mr. Scheck was at her home on business and she was driving him home - monkey business, so it would seem.



Roscoe "Fatty" Arbuckle was one of the most popular and highest-paid actors in Hollywood when his career came to a catastrophic end in 1921 in the wake of a death/sex scandal. Fatty owned a Culver City nightspot called the Plantation Café on Washington Boulevard and Elenda Street, but he never owned any property in Mar Vista – although no less than three different houses in the Oval neighborhood have been claimed by various people to have belonged to the silent comedy star.



VENICE VIEW
HEIGHTS



MAR VISTA PARK

Map Key

MORMON HILL

- | | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. 3655 Centinela Ave | 12. 3635 Wasatch Ave | 23. 12511 Venice Blvd |
| 2. 3631 Centinela Ave | 13. 3665 Wasatch Ave | 24. 12503 Venice Blvd |
| 3. 3635 Colonial Ave | 14. 3680 Wasatch Ave | 25. 12553 Venice Blvd |
| 4. 3628 Colonial Ave | 15. 3704 Wasatch Ave | 26. 12601 Venice Blvd |
| 5. 3620 Colonial Ave | 16. 3705 Wasatch Ave | 27. 3740 Boise Ave |
| 6. 3614 Colonial Ave | 17. 3715 Wasatch Ave | 28. 3736 Boise Ave |
| 7. 3608 Colonial Ave | 18. 3725 Wasatch Ave | 29. 3714 Stewart Ave |
| 8. 3582 Colonial Ave | 19. 3751 Wasatch Ave | 30. 3677 Boise Ave |
| 9. 3554 Colonial Ave | 20. 3755 Wasatch Ave | 31. 3680 Boise Ave |
| 10. 3574 Wasatch Ave | 21. 3765 Wasatch Ave | |
| 11. 3620 Wasatch Ave | 22. 3770 Wasatch Ave | |

Mormon Hill: Venice View Heights and Mar Vista Park

Mormon Hill is a fifteen-block section of Mar Vista anchored by Venice Boulevard on the south and bounded by Centinela, Westminster, and Stewart/Francis avenues. This was Machado land until the late 1870s, when prominent businessman Wallace Woodworth bought it and some 275 surrounding acres. Woodworth helped organize the first gas company in Los Angeles in 1867, and in September of that year L. A. city's first artificially lighted street - a few blocks of Main Street - was illuminated by gaslights lit by a lamplighter on horseback. In 1881 Samuel Cripe bought Woodworth's 335-acre parcel, which extended west from Centinela to modern-day Beethoven Street between Palms and Washington boulevards. Cripe sold off his land over the years, including some forty acres to his son James S. "Jim" Cripe at what is now the crown of Mormon Hill.

Jim Cripe began farming his land, located just south of Windward Avenue between Colonial and Wasatch Avenues, in the late 1880s. He and his wife Annie sired and raised six children on their farm. In 1905, perhaps inspired by the subdivision frenzy taking place just down the hill, Cripe converted some twenty acres of his farmland into 96 lots measuring 50' X 150' laid out in three oblong blocks. He named his tract - the sixth residential subdivision in Mar Vista - Venice View Heights. (Abbott Kinney's Venice of America had just opened to the public on the Fourth of July. That Cripe would record his tract as Venice View Heights only three months later is compelling evidence of how immediately popular was "Kinney's Folly"). Jim moved his family into a house on Washington Boulevard and put Venice View Heights on the market in late 1905, yet strangely not a single home was built in the neighborhood for nearly two decades. This is the way things stood in Venice View Heights in 1922, an area we may conveniently designate "North Mormon Hill" - even though there was nothing remotely Mormon about it yet.

"South Mormon Hill" is inextricably tied to the Mormons in general and to George W. McCune in particular. A businessman, banker, and high-ranking Mormon from Ogden, Utah, McCune was sent to California in 1922 by the Mother Church in Salt Lake City as president of the Los Angeles Stake of Zion, to organize the first stake of the Mormon Church in Los Angeles County. (A "stake" is a large geographic area comprised of two or more "wards". A ward is a smaller geographic area composed of a Mormon congregation). Mormons had been migrating to California since the 1850s, and by the second decade of the 1900s had begun establishing homes in Santa Monica, Culver City, Palms, Sawtelle, and Ocean Park Heights. To accommodate this population the first Mormon ward in Ballona Valley was created and its first church built.



George W. McCune

Dedicated on September 22, 1922, the Ocean Park Ward Church, located on 2nd and Strand streets in what is today Santa Monica, still stands.

In November McCune and four partners organized the California Intermountain Investment Company, through which they purchased a forty-acre barley field in Ocean Park Heights and created their own subdivision. Their tract ran from Windward Avenue south to Venice Boulevard, between Centinela and Stewart avenues, thus uniting “North” and “South” Mormon Hill. They initially dubbed the project Pacific Park, but in January 1923 changed it to Mar Vista Park, a name probably derived from the Pacific Electric railroad’s Mar Vista Station near Centinela Avenue at the base of the tract. McCune and his colleagues formed a water company with a well and a pump house near Venice Boulevard and a large water tank on a wooden derrick at the top of the hill. They also built homes and settled in the new neighborhood, and their example was followed by many other Mormon families. By 1928 the local Mormon population had grown so large that a second Mormon ward on the west side of Los Angeles was created, the Mar Vista Ward, and a new church was built, on Centinela and Windward avenues. The presence of the church drew ever more Latter-day Saints to the area, and over the ensuing half century the Hill flourished as a Mormon enclave.

Exploring Historic Mormon Hill

3655 Centinela Ave (1)

The two lots upon which the Mar Vista Ward Mormon Church was built were originally part of a four-acre parcel set aside by the officers of the California Intermountain Investment Company in 1922 as a possible site for a great Temple which the Mormons hoped to build in the area. The northern-most lot was initially the location of the neighborhood water tower, which stood at Windward Avenue by the alley. Once plans for the Temple had been suspended, McCune and his business partners donated two of the lots for the local ward church in 1928. The church was built entirely by labor contributed by parishioners, at the time comprised of just seventy-one families with a total of 361 people, and other community volunteers. As many as 150 people worked on the project during a shift, including children, who would provide the adults with water, stack tiles for the roofers, and nail lathing for the plasterers. Women and girls cooked for the men and did most of the painting. Much of the labor was done at night by volunteers who had day jobs, with illumination provided by huge arc lights. Construction began on May 1 and was completed, and completely paid for, on September 1, four months to the day, a remarkable feat even by modern standards. The beautiful Spanish Colonial Revival building had a 600-seat capacity, a broad four-story tower, a baptismal fount, a banquet room, and a large recreation hall. By the late 80s the “Little White Church on the Hill” was deemed insufficient for the modern congregation. It was torn down in 1989 and replaced by the building here today.

The church’s parking lot is on property formerly owned by contractor Robert M. Crouch, a Civil War Veteran who served with William Tecumseh Sherman during his March to the Sea and Siege of Atlanta campaigns.



3631 Centinela Ave (2)

Fire Station 62 is a fine specimen of late Moderne architecture. The two prime lots on which it is built were purchased in December 1947 for \$6,110. Construction on the 50 X 110 foot building began in the last week of November, 1949. Besides the engine room there was a kitchen, a recreation room, a dormitory, locker rooms, shower rooms, a captain's office, a general office, and a 36-foot hose drying tower in the rear. The building was completed in July 1950 at a cost of \$77,500. The firehouse served the community until 2007 when it was replaced by a new station at the southeast corner of Venice and Inglewood boulevards.

Prior to the Windward station Mar Vista didn't have a firehouse of its own – when a blaze broke out in the area the community had to rely on fire crews from Culver City or Venice. But this could be tricky, for each crew had clearly defined, inviolable boundaries, and if, say, a Culver City fire engine showed up to put out a fire that was across the street from its authorized territory, it would have to turn around and go back to the station.



This historic building, now the Firehouse Restaurant, still looks pretty much the same except for the tall hose tower in back.

The crew that first moved into this building, Engine Co. No. 62, formerly worked at the historic Venice Fire Station (pictured above) at the northeast corner of Main Street and Rose Avenue. Built in 1906 for \$6,000 by the city of Ocean Park, the firehouse was a two-story wooden structure with a bell tower and a stable for the horses that pulled its first fire wagons. The horses were originally pressed into service from the teams used by the City of Venice for street cleaning and garbage collection. The first fire fighters were all volunteers. City employees cared for the horses and rang the bell when a fire broke out.

Their first motorized engine was a two-cylinder Buick acquired in 1911. Five years later the Venice Fire Department consisted of three firemen, a ladder truck, and a 1916 La France fire engine that held 350 gallons of water. When Venice merged with Los Angeles in 1925 the station became Engine House 62. The city of L. A. replaced the old fire engines with three “modern” ones: a 1918 hose-wagon, a 1923 1000 gallon capacity American-La France engine, and a 1920 Seagreave relief pump and hose carrier. Incredibly, those three machines were used by Engine Co. No. 62 until they moved into their new Mar Vista station in 1950 and were furnished with a 1949 Triple Action Seagreave engine. Today the old Venice Fire Station 62 is the remodeled Firehouse Restaurant.

Colonial Ave

Colonial was originally named Evanston Avenue, after Evanston, Wyoming, a town with a large Mormon population about 80 miles east of Salt Lake City. It became Colonial in 1927, possibly in commemoration of the 150th birthday of the Union the year before.

3635 Colonial Ave (3)

Not everyone who lived on Mormon Hill was a Mormon. In 1945, radio and television sports announcer Jimmy Lennon, an uncle to the famous singing Lennon Sisters, moved into this 1941 house with his wife Eleanor and their two children. By 1948 the Lennons were divorced and Jimmy was dating 24-year-old musical comedy star Doris Link. One day Jimmy and Doris stopped by to pick up the kids for an outing and returned much later than the agreed-upon time. Jimmy took the kids back into the house and an argument ensued with his fuming ex-wife. While explaining to Doris what had happened, Eleanor stalked out to their parked car wielding a riding crop and struck Miss Link several blows across the shoulder. Doris filed felony assault charges and the newspapers had a field day covering what the *Vanguard* called “the Mar Vista horsewhipping case”. Eleanor claimed she was directing her blows at Jimmy and was found not guilty by a sympathetic jury. Jimmy and Doris eventually married. Eleanor lived here until 1966.

The next owner of the house was Jim Toole, a general contractor from Liverpool who was one of the world’s leading authorities on the Rolls Royce. Among the vintage cars in his collection of Rolls’, Jaguars, and Bentleys was Winston Churchill’s 1931 Lagonda V-12, and the 1958 Silver Cloud I Rolls owned by composer Frederick Loewe. The latter was one of only 25 such automobiles manufactured and won for Toole 62 straight Concours d’Elegance first place awards.



Sports announcer Jimmy Lennon (left) appeared in a few films, including *Raging Bull* and *Rocky III*, usually as himself.

3628 Colonial Ave (4)

This Spanish Colonial Revival home was built in early 1926 by Oscar L. Reeves, an entrepreneur from Chicago who turned to real estate during the Mar Vista construction boom of the mid-20s. Reeves erected several homes in Mormon Hill as well as the two-story brick commercial Reeves Building at the northwest corner of Wade Street and Venice Boulevard.

One of the most notorious swindlers in the history of California purchased the house in 1929. Frederick Grant White was a lawyer in his native Illinois when he was convicted of forgery in 1914 and

sentenced to Joliet Penitentiary. Paroled in 1917, he slipped away to California and was soon arrested for selling “immunity from the draft” to German immigrants at \$100 a head. His plea of insanity resulted in a stretch in Folsom prison. After his release in 1921 the incorrigible White joined the First Methodist Church of Los Angeles and presently fleeced the congregation of \$100,000. He fled to Massachusetts, was caught, extradited, and sent back to Folsom in 1923. Three years later he became affiliated with the First Methodist Church of Venice after finagling another parole. Utilizing the “Pacific Building and Loan Association”, a corporation owned by Harry H. Culver, White sold securities to church members with promises of huge profits within a year. He started investing the money in residential real estate in July 1929, three months before the onset of the Great Depression, and when the year was up so was the jig. He lammed to Cuba under an assumed name, where he was arrested in 1931 and charged with multiple counts of grand theft and violating the State Securities Act.

The former jurist acted as his own attorney during his trial and, using all the tricks of the practiced shyster, bogged down the proceedings with objections, harangues, histrionics, and postponements. He was found guilty but appealed the ruling and gained his liberty through a \$40,000 appeal bond. During the adjournment White became the alleged “chief distributing agent” for a Mexican dope smuggling ring, an operation that made use of a secret code based on oil industry jargon. White claimed the \$800,000 he generated while out on appeal came from negotiating oil deals. He was convicted of violating the federal narcotics laws and sentenced to prison for 12-15 years.

By August 1943 White was out of jail and appearing for arraignment on two bunko charges before Judge Charles W. Fricke, the man who as chief deputy district attorney had prosecuted him in 1923. He was in the bush leagues by now playing short con, charged with filching \$220 peddling a non-existent mine in Nevada and \$105 for a phony used car venture. In 1947 he was pinched one final time for forging signatures on petitions to nominate members of the Republican Central Committee. White died in San Quentin a year later at the age of 78.

This house, and the 62 other pieces of property White bought with other people’s money, eventually landed in the hands of the California Building and Loan Commission, which liquidated his assets in the mid-30s. The current owner is Delight Poske, an aptly-named woman whose parents bought the house in 1936, about the time of her eighth birthday. The family commemorated their first yuletide here by planting their Christmas tree in the front yard after the holidays. It has been growing for nearly seventy-five years and is today the enormous fir tree that dominates the property.

3620 Colonial Ave (5)

Captain of Detectives Grover Armstrong built this house in 1940. A law man with the Venice Police Department since the 1920s, Armstrong was kept busy enforcing the Volstead Act during the decade that roared, arresting dozens of bootleggers in dry raids. He was awarded a \$300 check from Shell Oil in 1926 for his help in the capture of two serial gas station stickup men, and in May of that year was assigned to investigate one of the sensational “disappearances” of controversial evangelist Aimee Semple McPherson. Armstrong was awarded a commendation for his help in convicting gangster

Mickey Cohen of income tax evasion in 1951, and in 1962 he investigated the death of Marilyn Monroe, whose Brentwood home was in his jurisdiction. For the last 17 years of his career Armstrong was Commander of the detective bureau of the LAPD.

3614 Colonial (6)

The lower floor of this fine-looking Monterey hacienda was built in 1929 by Henry Olsen, an auto mechanic from Massachusetts. In early 1925 Olsen went to work at the first gas station built in the community, located near the northwest corner of Grand View and Venice boulevards, and by 1929 he owned the Mar Vista Service Station and Garage.

In 1944 Detective Grover Armstrong sold his house next door and bought the Olsen house. He lived here until 1972, the year before his death. For the first 75 years of its existence this house was a single-story dwelling. The beautiful second floor addition was completed in 2004.

3608 Colonial Ave (7)

Pioneer Santa Monica civic and business leader George G. Bundy bought the lot at this address in 1914. Born in Iowa in 1873, he moved to the Bay area as a child. In 1913 he opened a Santa Monica car dealership on 3rd and Utah streets, where he sold Studebakers and Maxwells (left) for many years. He also raised horses to sell to the nearby movie studios for Western pictures, and was a director of the Santa Monica Chamber of Commerce. His brother Frank was a major real estate developer, and is the man for whom Bundy Drive is named. George Bundy sold his lot in 1923; he died in 1936 at age 63.

The house here today, the oldest extant house built in Venice View Heights, was constructed in 1924 by Mae Thomas, a Mormon widow from Ogden, Utah. Mae formed a partnership with her son-in-law Myron Condie in a dry goods

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Electrically controlled trunk	Overhead valves

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 The long, resilient springs, cushion any road-motion and the deep upholstery adds full comfort to the admitted driving power of the car.
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business and opened the first “department store” in Mar Vista in 1925. Thomas & Condie, located in the Busby Building, sold clothes (“Perky Peggy” dresses for \$5.15; “Nainsook” athletic underwear for 95¢), accessories, textiles, appliances, and furnishings. T & C was also the sole outlet in Mar Vista where one could buy a “radium ore revigator”, a gadget that sounds as phony as dowsing rods and biodynamic wine. But business must have been good: in 1929 Mae built the house next door at 3604 for her daughter and her business partner.



This was the first home built in Venice View Heights. It was torn down in 2008, not long after this photo was taken .

3582 Colonial Ave (8)

The first house built in Venice View Heights (above) was a single-story wood-framed bungalow erected in 1923 on this one-and-a-half lot site. It had jerkin head gables and a porch with four Doric columns supporting a portico and flanking pergolas. As late as the 1990s the yard behind the house was still flush with fruit trees from which homemade wine was distilled, and contained a fish pond and a chicken coop patrolled by a rooster. This lovely, historic portal to the past graced this site for 85 years.

In 2008 it bulldozed and replaced by the incongruous, ultra-modern museum-like edifice here today, as inappropriate to its surroundings as a jackass in a cathedral.

3554 Colonial Ave (9)

The original single-story house on this lot was built in 1939 by Elton and Lorraine Callender. In 1954 the Callender home was turned into the headquarters for a mail order business selling a Bible-themed game they invented called Scripturama. The game was designed for parents and Sunday school teachers as a means of imparting the “mechanics of the bible” to children. By February 1955 the Callender’s had sold 1000 units of Scipturama and, as evinced by the profitable sale of their house later that year, had also learned the mechanics of capitalism. The Callender house was refashioned into a two-story Spanish Colonial Revival mansion in 2004-5.

Wasatch Ave

This street was named after the Wasatch Mountains, a range that runs from the Utah-Colorado border south through central Utah. The Wasatch Mountains are actually the westernmost edge of the Rockies and form the backdrop to Salt Lake City.

3574 Wasatch Ave (10)

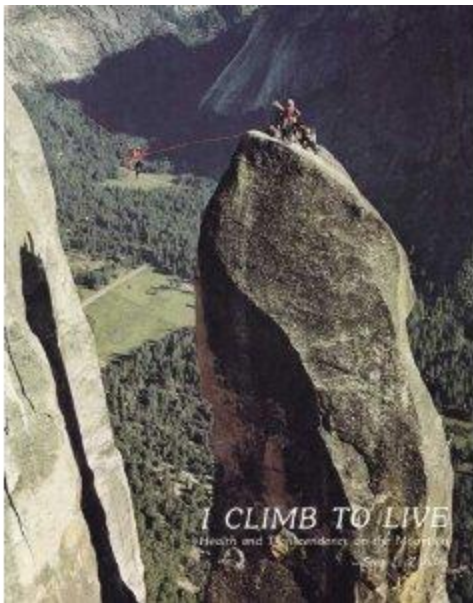
Jim Cripe, the man who subdivided Venice View Heights in 1905, held on to this lot until 1937; it was the last lot to be sold in the tract. Construction of the house here began the following year and was completed in 1939. The most arresting feature of this unique dwelling is its storybook shingle roof, as improbable a hodgepodge of whorls, curlicues, and geometric whimsy as you’re ever likely to see. This roof, and the sprawling, somewhat sinister tree in the front yard, prompted the local kids of the 50s and 60s to regard this home as a witch’s house. The regal coat of arms on the front latticed bay windows serves to heighten the home’s aura of eccentricity.

Although Jim Cripe established the first subdivision on Mormon Hill he was not himself a Mormon, nor was his wife, the former Annie Lamb, even though she was born in Utah. The fact is, her father had moved the Lamb’s from Utah to California because of his *antipathy* to the Mormons. It was Jim and Annie’s second son Calvin, born nearby on the Cripe farm in 1890, who was the first member of the family to convert to the faith. Calvin helped build the Mar Vista Ward Church in 1928 and served as the First Counselor to its original Young Men’s Mutual Improvement Association, an organization that provides athletic and social activities to the congregation’s male teens. At the age of 74 Calvin became of doctor of Naturopathy, a method of treating disease that employs no surgery or synthetic drugs but utilizes instead herbs, vitamins, and massage to assist the natural healing processes. It has the added benefit for its practitioners of not having to bother earning a medical degree and wasting valuable time

studying medicine, anatomy, or pathology. Naturopathy seems to have worked well for Calvin, who reached the age of 94 before shuffling off his mortal coil.

3620 Wasatch Ave (11)

Mormon Stan Zundell moved to the southland from his native Oregon while a teenager and built this house in 1940. A man of remarkable single-mindedness, he graduated from Venice High School on a Friday and the following Monday got a job as a messenger boy at a bank in downtown Los Angeles; 47 years later he retired as manager of the Santa Monica branch of Bank of America. When in his 50s Stan suffered a heart attack and was diagnosed with cancer. His doctors gave him a short time to live and prescribed complete rest. Stan instead began a strenuous exercise regimen that included running, swimming, and weight lifting. He also developed the curious belief that cancer cells could be cured with



adrenalin, and because of his fear of heights Stan concluded that mountain climbing would be the perfect activity to provide both vigorous exercise and a constant flow of adrenalin. Stan climbed his first mountain when he was 59 and still holds the world record for the number of times an amateur mountain climber scaled the Matterhorn – thirteen ascents. His experience on this and other peaks inspired his 1979 book (left) *I Climb to Live - Health and Transcendence on the Mountain*. Zundell was 85 when he died in 1998.

3635 Wasatch Ave (12)

This 1930 English cottage was the home of celebrated surfer Bob Cooper from the age of six. Known as one of the original beatnik surfers, Bob began riding the waves at Malibu at fifteen. He hanged ten in a few early surfing films, including two made by *Endless Summer* director Bruce Brown: *Slippery When Wet* (1958) and *Surfing Hollow Days* (1962). In 1968 Cooper won the European Surfing Championships. As a Mormon Bob attended the Mar Vista Ward Church and has always been a dedicated follower of the faith, the reason why he allegedly never surfed on Sundays. He has lived in Australia since 1969. The house stayed in the Cooper family until 1997.



Bob Cooper, circa 1960, hanging five at Putty Point, Port Hueneme.

The ten acre strip of land between Windward, Victoria, Centinela, and Stewart avenues was sold by Jim Cripe to a real estate investor named John E. Yoakum in 1906. Yoakum was the subject of a Los Angeles *Times* article in 1901 concerning a large piece of property he had sold to heavyweight champion James J. Jeffries for \$30,000 that was later valued at \$500,000 when oil was discovered on the land. Yoakum re-sold his ten acres of Mormon Hill in 1911. Whether he checked for oil prior to the sale is not known, but after his experience with Jeffries he probably wouldn't sell a jar of molasses without probing it with a dip stick first.

3665 Wasatch Ave (13)

This stolid two-story edifice was built by Mormon optometrist Louis A. James in 1926. A native of Spanish Fork, Utah, James moved to the bay area in 1920 and opened an office in Venice. He was a president of the Venice Lions Club, a commander of the Venice American Legion Post, and an active member of the Venice Chamber of Commerce. Before the Mar Vista Ward Church was built he offered his big house to the tots of the congregation for their Primary meetings, a program that provides fun activities and religious instruction to young children. After the church was built he was assigned as the first president of the Mar Vista ward's Young Men's Mutual Improvement Association. In July 1930 Dr. James became the fourth president of the Mar Vista Chamber of Commerce. In 1942 he was found unconscious in his office at 45 Windward Avenue. He died a short time later of a heart attack at age 48.

In the 1950s a family named Grieb lived here. Three weeks before Christmas 1951 Mrs. Grieb made the pages of the *Vanguard* after losing a wrist watch valued at \$200: she was making a left turn from National onto Centinela, and instead of using the turn signal on her steering column stuck her arm out the window for an old-fashioned hand signal.

3680 Wasatch Ave (14)

A Mormon physician from Salt Lake City named Raphael Olsen built this grand Spanish Colonial Revival mansion on a double lot in 1924. The trees, shrubbery, and flowers that flourish on the grounds have always been abundant and well-maintained. An apartment above the two-car garage behind the house was, during the time Dr. Olsen owned the estate, occupied by a full-time gardener whose wife was the Olsen's housekeeper. The back yard was a favorite haunt of the neighborhood kids, who played in three huge pepper trees fitted with platforms and grappling ropes. Besides his medical practice this Latter-day Saint delivered lectures on psychology and philosophy and was considered something of a local sage.

Olsen also owned the adjacent lot at 3670 Wasatch. In 1940 he built and moved into the more modest house that's still there today. After his death in 1941 his widow sold their large manor on the corner and remained in the smaller home, where she died in 1980.

Victoria Ave

Victoria was originally named Logan Avenue, after Logan, Utah, a town about 65 miles north of Salt Lake City.

3704 Wasatch Ave (15)

Businessman George W. McCune, the man who put the Mormon in Mormon Hill, built this expansive 12-room Mediterranean/Moorish home in 1924. McCune became the first president of a Mormon stake in Los Angeles County in 1922. He organized the California Intermountain Investment Company, the firm through which this very neighborhood was financed. In 1927 he took the helm of the newly-created Hollywood Stake, and as its president held sway over eleven wards. That same year he became the chairman of the board of directors of the Mar Vista State Bank, the first bank in the community. In 1928 McCune and his partners donated the two lots that became the site for the Mar Vista Ward Church, and on May 23 he set the cornerstone for the building.

George was a golfer, and during the time he lived here only a few other homes existed to the south on the east side of Wasatch or the west side of Colonial avenues. He used this 300 yard-long greensward as his personal driving range, and after exhausting a bucket of balls would pay some lucky kid a whole quarter to retrieve them. In the early 30s he moved to the Hancock Park area. McCune sat on the board of directors of several companies and was a member of the Los Angeles City Health Commission. He died in 1963 at the age of 90.

3705 Wasatch Ave (16)

This impressive 1924 Spanish Colonial Revival home was the residence of David Oscar Stohl, manager of the Stohl Furniture Company of Brigham City, Utah. He moved to the Bay area in 1922 and became a partner with George McCune in the California Intermountain Investment Company. Stohl helped direct the building of the Ocean Park Ward Mormon Church and became its first bishop. In 1926 he built the Stohl Building on the northwest corner of Venice and Colonial, which housed his D. O. Stohl Investment Company and the Mar Vista State Bank, the community's first financial institution. He was a director of the Mar Vista Chamber of Commerce and provided insurance policies to local residents as president of the Beneficial Life Insurance Company. When the decision was made to form a new ward in Mar Vista and build the local church, it was Stohl who donated all the doors and windows for the building. He died in 1950 on Christmas day.

Film editor William M. Ernst moved into the house two years later. Ernst started his career at Monogram in 1942, worked at RKO, 20th Century-Fox, and ended his career in 1974 at MGM.

The wall in the back of this house is reputedly made from bricks salvaged from Venice Polytechnic Union High School. Completed in 1914, Venice High was a beautiful campus of neo-classical brick buildings. The school suffered such severe damage during the 1933 Long Beach earthquake that most of its buildings were condemned, resulting in several huge brick piles. School officials allegedly offered the bricks free of charge to anyone willing to haul them off. There are several driveways, fireplaces, and walls in the surrounding area said to be constructed from these bricks, including the rear wall of the Stohl house.

3715 Wasatch Ave (17)

This 1924 Mediterranean-style home was built by Orson Henry Hewlett, a former legislator in the Utah State House of Representatives and president of Hewlett Bros. Company of Salt Lake City, manufacturers and importers of tea, coffee, and "Superior Jam". Born in Bristol, England, Hewlett began spending his winters in Ocean Park in 1907. His standing in the still-small bay area Mormon community was such that by 1917 he was put in charge of an annual "Utah Day" picnic, a week-long celebration that drew Latter-day Saints from all over the western United States. Hewlett moved to Ocean Park in 1921 and was made chairman of the finance committee for the construction of the Ocean



O. H. Hewlett

Park Ward Church. By March 1922 he had raised the entire \$30,000 needed for the project. The ground breaking ceremony took place on April 6, and the first Mormon Church in the Santa Monica Bay District was completed in September 1922. The following month Hewlett helped George McCune organize the California Intermountain Investment Company, the subdividers of Mar Vista Park. In 1925 he built the Hewlett Building on the northwest corner of Venice and Boise, one of the earliest commercial buildings in Mar Vista. He served as chairman of the finance and building committees during the construction of the

Mar Vista Ward Church, and kept his hand in politics as a member of the Republican Central Committee. O. H. Hewlett died in 1950.

The political connection to this home was renewed in 1991 when former cable TV executive and cable TV talk show host Bill Rosendahl (right) moved into the house. Rosendahl was elected to the Los Angeles City Council in 2005, representing the

11th District, and re-elected in 2009.

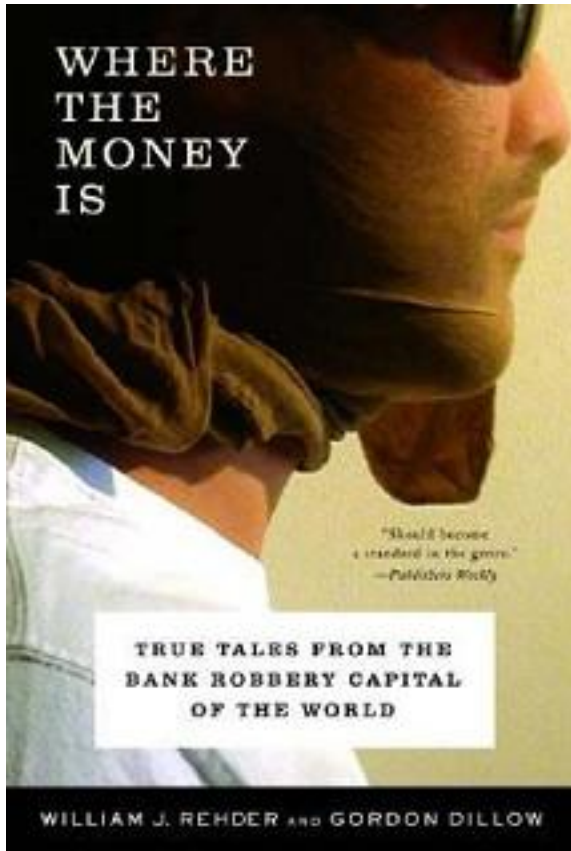


Mar Vista Councilman Bill Rosendahl.

3725 Wasatch Ave (18)

A realtor from Utah named William C. Davidson built this French-Norman home in 1925, right next door to his father-in-law, Orson H. Hewlett. Davidson became partners with Oscar L. Reeves in the construction business and built some two dozen homes in the Mar Vista area. His Davidson Realty Company had offices in the Hewlett Building. He lived in this house until his death in 1957.

Retired FBI agent William J. Rehder moved here in 1974. During his 33-year career with the Bureau, Rehder personally participated in some 250 felony arrests. He spent the last 18 years of his career as head of the FBI's Los Angeles area bank robbery squad. In that capacity he helped track down Eddie Dodson, the most prolific bank robber in L. A. history. During a seven-month stretch in 1983-84 Dodson committed 64 bank jobs – six in one day – for a total take of \$280,000. In 1986 Rehder apprehended another member of the FBI's Ten Most Wanted List in an apartment a few blocks away near Wade Street and Venice Blvd. Dubbed the "Veil Bandit" because of the gauzy material he draped over his baseball cap during his robberies, this crook knocked over 34 banks in six states over a three-year span that netted him \$100,000. Rehder also helped put a knucklehead known as the "Mercury Bandit" behind bars. This career criminal had heard that covering your face with mercury would render your mug invisible to surveillance cameras. He got himself some deadly quicksilver, mixed it with a paste, and went into the bank robbery business. But the preparation, instead of inducing invisibility, brought about exceptionally



clear pictures - a Hollywood portrait photographer couldn't have snapped better shots - and the bandit was quickly apprehended.

Rehder retired in 1999. In 2003 co-authored the book *Where the Money Is: True Tales from the Bank Robbery Capital of the World*. He also worked as a consultant on the 2002 Steven Spielberg film *Catch Me If You Can*, and did the voice over as the judge who sentences Tom Hanks' character to prison. You can see him being interviewed in the expanded DVD version of the movie.

3751 Wasatch Ave (19)

During the early 30s this 1929 Spanish-style house was the home of an interesting woman named Mimi Hawkins, nee Van Pee. She was born in Charleroi, Belgium, to prosperous parents whose house was seized by the Germans during the WWI occupation of the city. Fleeing to a nearby village, Mimi and her brother risked their lives many times smuggling food, mail, and other contraband to and from their hometown. She was imprisoned three times for short sentences before getting caught smuggling verboten goods in a cart with a false bottom made by her father. This time she was sent to Bonn and sentenced to six months in jail; her 17-year-old brother was shot as a spy. In 1932 the Belgian Consul appointed Mimi chairman of the entertainment committee for her countrymen's stay during the Los Angeles Olympic Games, noting that she represented "the indomitable will of the Belgian people".

In January 1928 the *Vanguard* reported a story about a woman who lived two houses away at 3741 Wasatch, a Mrs. H. Dale, who was held up by a bandit in front of her house and robbed, "after which he struck out across the open fields towards Santa Monica". His total take was 20¢.

3755 Wasatch Ave (20)

The second owner of this fortress-like 1924 edifice was John Lester Quist, a Mormon from Salt Lake City who owned the house for two years. In March 1929 Quist became the second postmaster of the Mar Vista post office. His wife Minnie opened the first known beauty shop in Mar Vista in September 1929, located in the Hewlett Building. John remained the postmaster until 1935. He died two years later.

In 1926 William F. Jamison bought the house. A dentist from Virginia, Jamison lived in Utah and Idaho before migrating to California in 1924, initially settling in Sawtelle. On a Sunday afternoon in 1925, while driving his family to a Mormon conference at which he was scheduled to speak, his car was rammed by a Venice Short Line Pacific Electric train. His wife and mother-in-law were killed in the crash and he was seriously injured, but his five kids, all in the back seat, escaped relatively unscathed. Because of his injuries Jamison couldn't physically assist in building the Mar Vista church in 1928, but managed to play a role in its construction by offering discounts to his dental patients in exchange for a set amount of labor. Jamison still lived here when he died of a heart attack in 1948. Originally a single-story dwelling, the house didn't acquire its current boxy look until the 1980s.

One of the Jamison kids to survive the crash with the train, Paul, lived at 3660 Stewart Avenue in the late 40s. In 1951 he won the two highest awards bestowed by the USC School of Dentistry, and in the 1960s became the president of the Glendale Stake of the Mormon Church. Another of Jamison's kids was Billy. Born in 1938, he had just started to appear in motion pictures at MGM when he died, two years after his father, of leukemia at age 12. You can see this curly-haired towhead in several scenes of his only credited film, *The Bride Goes Wild*, playing the orphan Robert.

3765 Wasatch Ave (21)

This pretty Spanish Colonial Revival home is one of two remaining houses built in Mar Vista Park in 1923, the year the first homes appeared in the neighborhood. It was erected by Harold Anderson, a violinist who led the choir at the Mar Vista Ward Church. Harold also ran the Anderson Music Studio from this house: his wife Muriel gave piano lessons and he offered violin lessons and taught, not mere singing but "voice culture - through the easy, modern method." The Professor also conducted what the *Times* called one of the best loved singing quartettes in Los Angeles, the Ruppe Mortuary Quartette; and a cheerier name for a group of sonorous warblers can scarcely be imagined. In 1929 Anderson moved to Lynwood to become the director of music at Lynwood high school.

In 1962 a chiropractor from Utah named Melvin Smith bought the house. Smith was the seventh bishop of the Mar Vista Ward Church, serving from 1954 to 1958. After moving here he took on the role of a "patriarch", a respected church elder whose judgment is esteemed and who is called upon to offer blessings to church members and their endeavors.

3770 Wasatch Ave (22)

Champion athlete Allene Gates grew up in this 1939 house. Allene was a teenage golf sensation when she first made the sports pages as a 17-year-old Venice High School student by nearly upsetting the defending champion in the Los Angeles Women's City Golf Championship tournament. She would go on to win several golf tournaments and was a top player throughout the 1950s and early 60s. The



Allene Gates

pretty blonde met Tarzan portrayer Johnny Weismueller on the links when she was 15, and in 1948, at the age of 22, became his fourth Jane. She fared no better than her three predecessors and divorced the Ape Man in the early 1960s. Allene's Mormon pedigree is impeccable: her great-grandfather was reputedly Heber Kimball, an aide to Brigham Young during the historic Mormon trek to Utah in 1847.

12511 Venice Blvd (23)

This building has been a take-out chop suey joint since 1957, first as Chin Lee, then from 1966 to the present as the Canton Kitchen Chinese restaurant. In 2001 it was transformed into the Crenshaw Kitchen Chinese Soul Food restaurant in a scene from the Jackie Chan action film *Rush Hour 2*, the menu of which would be interesting to imagine: turnip greens foo young, for instance, or pig knuckles chow mein.



The Stohl Building, 12503 Venice, now has an addition in back, otherwise it looks almost the same as it did in 1927.

12503 Venice Blvd (24)

The Stohl Building was built in 1926 by David O. Stohl of 3705 Wasatch. The ground floor fronting Venice Boulevard became the home of the Mar Vista State Bank on March 19, 1927. It was the first bank to open in Mar Vista and, as the *Vanguard* attests, was an immediate success: “Mar Vista’s Flock to Put Cash in Bank. \$100,000 is Deposited the First Day”. In 1928 the bank moved to 1201 Washington Boulevard in Venice and was renamed the Washington Commercial and Savings Bank. It

went out of business in 1932, a bad year for many banks, and it would be another twenty years before the next financial enterprise appeared in the community to accommodate a flock of Mar Vistans.

12553 Venice Blvd (25)

This Casket Company and the lot next door was, from 1925 through the late 30s, the site of Swartz's Service Station. George Swartz donated the gas and oil used to power the tractor the Mormons operated to grade the lots in preparation for the construction of their church. His contribution was repaid many-fold as nearly every church member with a car gassed up at his filling station. Swartz's pumps were hand-operated in the early days, like an old water pump, and dispensed Gilmore gas, a fuel manufactured by the Gilmore Oil Co. The Gilmore family owned a large piece of the old Rancho La Brea and built the famous Farmer's Market in the Fairfax District. Their gasoline was hawked during the 30s with a peppy radio advertisement jingle:

"Blu-green gas, blu-green gas, put it in your motor, you've sure got class. There's nothing on the highway that you can't pass - roar with Gilmore."

From the 60s to 1980 the place was a Texaco station, and after stints as a used car lot, a towing service, and a pet store, began selling coffins in 2005. The current building dates from 1991.

Boise Ave

Boise Avenue was named for the capital of Idaho. Less than 350 miles from Salt Lake City, a sizeable Mormon population lived in Boise and other Idaho locations.

12601 Venice Blvd (26)

This two-story structure was completed early in 1925 by Orson H. Hewlett of 3715 Wasatch. The Hewlett Building is one of the oldest commercial buildings in Mar Vista. In 1926 it succeeded the



The Hewlett Building, 1925.

Busby Building as the meeting place for the Mar Vista Chamber of Commerce. On May 17 of that year the Chamber's resolution to annex Mar Vista to Los Angeles was decided here, and it was in the Hewlett Building that local residents of precinct 1 voted for the merger on September 22. The tally was 473 to 240 for annexation.

One of the ground floor businesses in the Hewlett was a single-seat barber shop operated by Harry McCune, stake president George W.

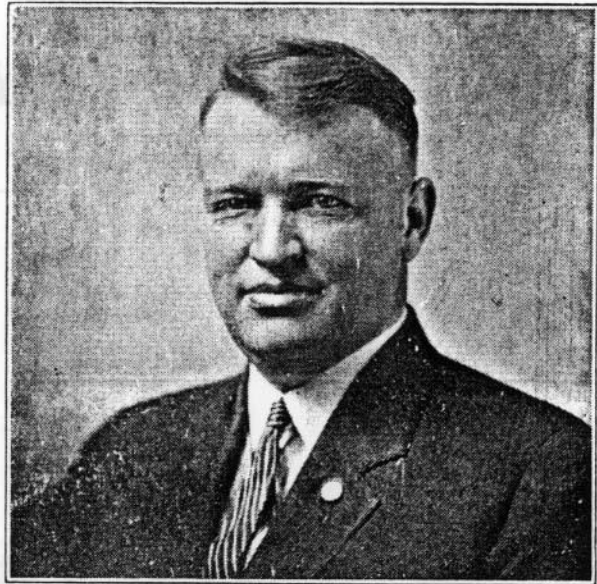
McCune's less ambitious brother. Other early establishments to rent space here were the Mar Vista Market, the Davidson Realty Company, and, in 1927, the first chic boutique for smart Mormon ladies, the Mar Vista Fashion Shoppe.

3740 Boise Ave (27)

Barber Harry McCune, a brother of George W. McCune, built this modest house in 1924. Harry trimmed hair and shaved whiskers in his one-seat barber shop in the Hewlett Building at the corner of Boise Avenue and Venice Boulevard, a short block-long walk from his home. In 1932 another of George McCune's brothers, William, bought this house and lived here until 1939. William had a long career with the Union Pacific Rail Road, ending up as the general freight agent for the company.

3736 Boise Ave (28)

This was one of three Mormon Hill homes owned by Elick Joseph Sorensen. Born in Utah in 1891, Sorensen moved to California in 1927 and became the second president of the Mar Vista Chamber of Commerce in October of that year. In March 1928 he was made the first bishop of the Mar Vista Ward Church, a position he held for two years. A big, amiable, barrel-chested man, Sorensen was the official hod carrier during the construction of the church. But this dynamic, assertive fellow helped build the church over which he would preside even more with his moxie. He persuaded a non-Mormon contractor to dig a septic tank for the



E. J. SORENSEN, *Bishop*

chapel by asking, "How would you like to build a cesspool for Jesus"? The church organ was acquired from the Santa Monica-based Artcraft Company with a down payment of \$1000. When the firm fell on hard times its president asked Sorensen if he could possibly make the next payment ahead of schedule. Sorensen agreed, providing the Artcraft workforce helped install the sub-floor of the church. Every employee from Artcraft showed up and laid the sub-floor in a single night. Sorensen then wangled them to return when it was time to lay the finished hardwood floor. The seats in the church were individual theater seats, not pews. The aisle seat in the back row was built extra wide for the portly E. J.

A bishop of a Mormon church, or indeed any officer of a local congregation, does not get paid for his service. Such work is considered a "calling" and is carried out gratis. Sorensen made his living as the manager of the Beneficial Life Insurance Company, located near the northwest corner of Venice and Centinela. He was also an award-winning painter of landscapes and an inveterate writer of light verse

and song lyrics. Among his librettos is the “Mar Vista Anthem”, which was sung, to the tune of “Marcheta”, at the dedication ceremony of the Mar Vista Ward Church in 1928:

Mar Vista, Mar Vista, I love you, Mar Vista,
Your sweet name is music to me.
With heights overlooking the mountains and valleys,
The city and beautiful sea.
Nature endowed thee with flowers and sunshine,
Delightful the whole year through.
The moon shines most glorious
On thee Mar Vista.
I love you Mar Vista, I do.

E. J. Soreneson died in 1977 at the age of 86 – but his anthem will live on forever.

Stewart Ave

Stewart Avenue is named for Charles B. Stewart, the attorney and businessman who helped George McCune organize the California Intermountain Investment Company.

3714 Stewart Ave (29)

This unusual house dates from 1925, and allegedly has a connection with Billy Sunday, the well-known evangelist of the early 1900s. A professional baseball player in the 1880s, Billy became “born again” after hearing a street preacher in Chicago in 1891. He held his first revival meeting in 1897 and became an ordained minister in 1903. Sunday was the most electrifying bible thumper during the first two decades of the 20th Century, and his exhortations against Demon Rum played a significant role in the passage of the Eighteenth Amendment outlawing alcohol.

George M. Sunday, Billy’s eldest son, developed a business head by managing his father’s traveling revival meetings. In 1920 George settled in Los Angeles and began a real estate business with the slogan “Open Every Day But Sunday”. But in July 1922 he was officially censured by Methodist churchmen for selling property on the seventh day and breaking the Sabbath. Then in November 1923 an article in the Los Angeles *Times* reported the arrest of a local bootlegger and the seizure of his little



Flamboyant evangelist Billy Sunday, exhorting.

black book of customers. Among the famous names therein were many movie stars, including John Gilbert, Greta Garbo's on and off-screen lover, and Mabel Normand, the original queen of comedy. Another prominent name was George Sunday. This disclosure was potentially bad for business because George had been hired by the Mormons as the sales manager for Mar Vista Park, Unit No. 2, which was having its grand opening in less than three weeks. But the Mormons stood by George and five years later he repaid their loyalty by loaning them his tractor and cement mixer free of charge during the construction of their church.

Besides the public revelations that he indulged in drink and worked on Sundays, George made several other embarrassing appearances in the pages of the *Times*, all involving either spats with his wife or tales of his girlfriend, a Hollywood "manikin" named Mauryne La Salle. He eventually divorced the quarrelsome Mrs. Sunday and married Miss La Salle, but fought with her as well. In 1933 he punched her in the eye and broke one of her fingers during a row, then in a fit of remorse leaped from the fourth floor of their San Francisco apartment. He died four days later.

So what does any of this have to do with this house? Well, a very old woman who grew up in the neighborhood passed away a few years ago. She used to tell a story of seeing Billy Sunday deliver a sermon from the roof of this house when she was a girl. Since George Sunday did own the house for a brief time in the late 20s, the story seems at least possible. An appearance by Sunday was headline news in the 20s, and a search of the Los Angeles *Times* and Venice *Vanguard* archives turned up no evidence that he ever made such a speech in this area. If the tale is true, the sermon in question must have been a small spur-of-the-moment affair. Presumably Billy's anti-drinking message, if it was actually delivered, was well received in Mormon Hill.

3677 Boise Ave (30)

This Moorish-influenced home was built in 1924 by Charles Addison Short, one of the five partners in the California Intermountain Investment Company and the manager of the firm. Short was in the mining business in Nevada and served as the superintendent of schools in Park City, Utah before moving to Venice. He was elected a trustee of the Venice grammar school board and headed the Venice chapter of the Red Cross. After moving to his home on Boise he was equally active in Mar Vista affairs, becoming a director of the first Mar Vista Chamber of Commerce and president of the La Ballona Development Association. In 1921 he delved into real estate, and as manager



Charles A. Short

of the Harry H. Culver acreage department brokered the 1922 deal to acquire six acres at the summit of Ocean Park Heights for the site of a Mormon Temple, a deal which eventually fell through. As early as 1924 Short was advocating the creation of a yacht harbor south of Washington Boulevard, a project that would eventually be realized as Marina Del Rey. Short sold this house in 1931 and moved to Glendale, where he died in 1933. Short Avenue and Short Elementary School in Del Rey are named after him.

Henry C. Trigg, a 32-year-old worker in the Del Rey-Venice oil fields, was the next owner of the house. In 1936 Trigg got into trouble with the law when he fired a dozen rounds from a .22 caliber rifle at two deputy Marshals who had come to repossess his car. When two Venice police officers showed up he shot at them too. Trigg was arrested for assault with a deadly weapon, but got off with a \$400 fine by claiming he thought the lawmen were burglars.



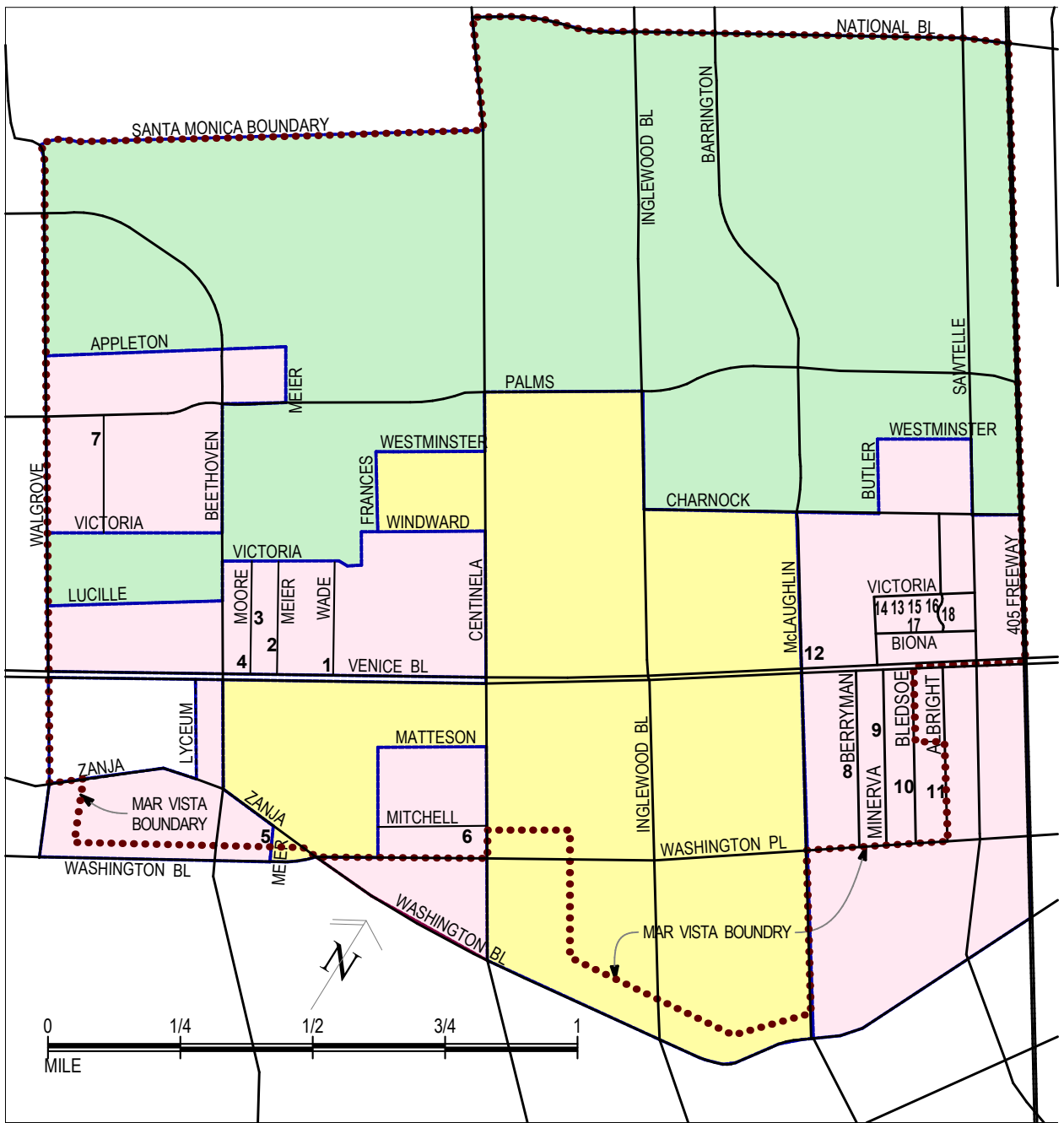
Layne "Shotgun" Britton and his wife of 42 years, Leila, parked outside their home at 3677 Boise, circa 1952. The car, a Singer, was painted bright red, the exuberant makeup artist's favorite color. Layne acquired his nickname when, as a boy, he strolled into his father's Texas barber shop and one of the customers exclaimed, "He looks like a sawed-off shotgun!" Surely no other residence in Mar Vista has been visited by more Hollywood stars than this unique domed house – they include Cary Grant, Jane Russell, Henry Fonda, Jean Simmons, Clint Eastwood, Ava Gardner, Vincent Price, Bob Hope, and John Belushi.

The Trigg's sold the house to legendary makeup artist Layne "Shotgun" Britton in 1946. Britton started his career at nearby MGM in the early 30s and worked at RKO in the 40s during the years Howard Hughes owned the studio. Among the famous clients to whom he was under personal contract were Jane Russell, Bob Hope, and Frank Sinatra. Layne was a president of the makeup artists union and a member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. During his 60-year career he worked on some 200 films. As respected in the film industry as he was, Britton was never accorded the honor of preserving his hand prints and name in the forecourt of Grauman's Chinese Theater. Not to be outdone, he autographed the wet cement of his driveway off Victoria Avenue with his nickname and left an imprint of his right palm, both of which are still legible. Layne lived in this house until his death in 1993; his son, an entertainment lawyer, resides here now.

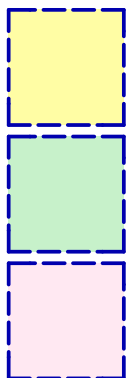
3680 Boise Ave (31)

This Spanish Colonial Revival house stands out from the many similar homes in the area through its Greek Revival portico, a clash of styles that nevertheless charms the eye. It was built in 1924 by Charles E. M. Beall, a retired railroad contractor and a director of the Mar Vista State Bank.

The 1927 Neo-Gothic house two blocks away at 3680 Colonial is worth a look.



Map Key



SUBDIVIDED MAR VISTA PRIOR TO 1923

LIMA BEAN FIELDS

BIG BANG SUBDIVISIONS

THE BIG BANG

- | | |
|----------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. 12701-12705 Venice Blvd | 10. 3937 Bledsoe Ave |
| 2. 3771 Meier St | 11. 3947 Albright Ave |
| 3. 3752 Moore St | 12. site of Velodrome |
| 4. 12801-12823 Venice Blvd | 13. 11406 Victoria Ave |
| 5. 3985 Meier St | 14. 11410 Victoria Ave |
| 6. 12516 Mitchell Ave | 15. 11354 Victoria Ave |
| 7. 3491 Ashwood Ave | 16. 11350 Victoria Ave |
| 8. 3911 Berryman Ave | 17. 11359 Biona Dr |
| 9. 3853 Minerva Ave | 18. Guthrie Estate |

The Big Bang: The Expansion of Ocean Park Heights, the Transformation to Mar Vista, and Annexation to Los Angeles

Between April 1923 and September 1926 Ocean Park Heights, “this strip of no man’s land”, was transformed, as the Venice *Evening Vanguard* put it, “from a barren, desolate expanse into a wide-awake center of beautiful homes and enterprising business concerns.” Eight new residential tracts were recorded in 1923 alone, and by the end of 1926 the total area of land under subdivision in the community had more than doubled. During these boom years Mar Vista reached its utmost limits eastward and westward: the 405 Freeway and Walgrove Avenue, respectively. Unlike the subdivisions of the first two decades of the 1900s which featured extra-large lots with the farmer in mind, the lots of the 1920s tracts were plotted for suburbanites with roughly the same area as a modern residential lot. This shift was prefigured in 1920 when the acre-plus lots of Palm Place were cut down 75% to their present-day sizes. With the appearance of the first commercial building and the Chamber of Commerce in 1924, the suit-and-tie businessman replaced the denim-clad rancher in shaping the affairs of the community and the conversion of the region from a rural to an urban center was set in motion.

1922 was the decisive year that got the economic ball rolling in the area. The Great War in Europe had ended in 1918 and the terrible Spanish flu pandemic that followed in its wake had dissipated by the spring of 1919. Financial stability slowly took root in the bay district and economic confidence returned. In the summer of 1922 houses started cropping up in the six established Ocean Park Heights neighborhoods that had for the past five years been stagnating. In the last quarter of '22 a group of Mormon businessmen began buying up land along Venice Boulevard west of Centinela, and in November they announced plans for a new subdivision in Ocean Park Heights – the first new subdivision in the vicinity in a dozen years. On December 9, 1922, the *Vanguard* reported that 25% of this subdivision, which had yet to be surveyed or officially recorded, was already presold. The success of what would be called Mar Vista Park sparked the residential chain reaction that triggered the Big Bang.

In 1923 one new residential tract after another was laid out and homes sprang up as fast as they could be built. In response to the growing population L. C. Busby began work on the first major commercial building between Culver City and Venice in October, and by the spring of 1924 the southwest corner of Venice and Grand View became the established business center of the community. With the assurance of a local post office in the near future, 73 Ocean Park Heights merchants formed a Chamber of Commerce in October 1924, headquartered in Busby’s building. It was here that the decision to change the name of Ocean Park Heights to Mar Vista took place. In January 1925 a four-day “fiesta” celebrating the new community was staged at Grand View and Venice boulevards in a big tent rented from the nearby Barnes Circus. By the summer the *Vanguard* was telling its readers, “Mar Vista Enjoys Big Boom...realty prices are steadily soaring...buildings are going up by the score”. On October 23, 1925, the paper reported, “Mar Vista is the site of several budding industrial enterprises”, including the Mar Vista Mill Works, manufacturer of furniture, sashes, and doors; the Reeves Building Company, residential contractors; and the D. O. Stohl Investment Company.

Soon another business-oriented group was formed in the Hewlett Building at the northwest corner of Boise and Venice. Called The Mar Vista Commercial Club, the purpose of this Mormon-dominated organization was “to build up a bigger, better, and cleaner Mar Vista and to foster and protect every section of the community.” More specifically, the Club wanted to improve local streets, garbage collection service, and water service. Issues like these, together with the fear of a forced annexation to Culver City, Venice, or Santa Monica, prompted this organization to unite with the Chamber of Commerce and start the drive to annex Mar Vista to Los Angeles. This decision was reached at a meeting in the Hewlett Building on May 17, 1926. On July 17 Commerce volunteers began circulating annexation petitions door to door, and by the 21st half of Mar Vista’s registered voters had signed the merger papers. On July 28 the Los Angeles City Clerk declared that the petitions had enough valid signatures to hold a special election, and on the 31st the election date was set. On September 22 Mar Vistans voted nearly 2 to 1 – 473 to 240 – for annexation, and after a series of bureaucratic delays the community officially became part of Los Angeles on March 1, 1927. The last subdivision of the “Big Bang” was recorded on October 15, 1926; another 20 years would drag by before the next Mar Vista neighborhood would appear.

Mar Vista Park, Unit No. 2

The east side of Stewart Avenue was the western boundary of Mar Vista Park/Mormon Hill, which was recorded in April 1923. In December George W. McCune and his partners in the California Intermountain Investment Company subdivided another big parcel of land they called Mar Vista Park, Unit No. 2, which ran from Stewart west to Beethoven Street. The north-south boundaries were Victoria Avenue and Venice Boulevard, respectively.

12701-12705 Venice Blvd (1)

Chicagoan Oscar L. Reeves built this handsome two-story brick edifice in 1926 for \$35,000. As the manager of the Reeves-Bowdish Building Company, Reeves constructed several houses in Mar Vista Park, including the homes of Orson H. Hewlett (3715 Wasatch) and Frederick G. White (3628 Colonial). The ground floor of the Reeves Building was used for retail space and the upper floor was made into apartments. E. J. Sorensen, the Mar Vista ward’s first bishop, rented one of these apartments before buying his first house. The Mormons living in this neighborhood had been meeting as a separate ward from the one at Ocean Park long before the Mar Vista ward was officially created. The Reeves Building was used for their Sunday meetings until the church was built in 1928. The building was periodically used as a meeting place for the Mar Vista Chamber of Commerce in the late 1920s.

At the southeast corner of the building are two decrepit neon signs, one spelling out LIQOUR and the other LIQUORS. They were mounted in 1949 to promote the Francis Liquor Store, the first of several alcohol emporiums to work this corner. On February 24, 1950, owner Elmer E. Francis was robbed of \$40 by a lone gunman in the first known liquor store hold up in Mar Vista.

Pre-Opening Announcement ~
Mar Vista Park
 (UNIT No. 2)

On Sunday, December 9, Mar Vista Park Unit No. 2 Will be Formally Placed On the Market.

During the preliminary work, while preparing the tract for sale by rough grading the streets, setting lot stakes and other necessary preparations, lots were offered at pre-opening prices. This preliminary work now has been completed. The tract is in condition to show its possibilities as a most wonderful residential section---But---

Up to and including Sunday pre-opening prices on all business, income and residence lots will prevail. After midnight of Sunday, December 9, prices on all lots remaining will be advanced 10 per cent.

Mar Vista Park Unit No. 2 is located on Venice Boulevard, the shortest route between Los Angeles and the Sea. It is less than 30 minutes from the heart of the city and 10 minutes from the Beach.

Mar Vista offers exceptional educational advantages for its residents. The magnificent Venice Polytechnic Union High School which is equipped to educate children from the kindergarten stage until they are ready for college, is only two blocks from this tract.

Mar Vista Park is particularly suitable for high class homes. Its climate is ideal, its location is superb, and the character of homes now under construction assures buyers that this subdivision always will be a high class residential section.

There are yet Five Days during which you may buy

**MAR VISTA
 PARK**

property at Pre-Opening Prices. After Sunday these prices will be advanced 10 per cent. You never again will be able to buy this property at present prices.

How to Go to Mar Vista Park

By Auto—From Los Angeles go out Washington Boulevard to Culver City. At Goldwyn Studio turn to right to Venice Boulevard and drive direct to property. Watch for the big Black and Gold Signs at Mar Vista Park. BY TRAIN—Take Venice Short Line at Fifth and Hill Streets. Get off at Mar Vista Station right at property.

George Sunday, Inc.

400 Lane Mortgage Building
 Eighth at Spring

878-601 — NEW PHONE — 878-601

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This display ad was published on December 5, 1923, about a year after Mar Vista Park, unit No. 1, i.e., Mormon Hill, jump-started the post-WWI real estate market in the area. George Sunday was the son of evangelist Billy Sunday.

3771 Meier St (2)

The original version of this house was built in 1928. A music teacher from Ogden, Utah named Reid Cox rented the house in the mid-30s. Cox was for many years the music professor at Venice High School and the director of the Santa Monica Bay Men's Chorus. His Reid Cox Boy's Choir appeared frequently on radio programs and at club and concert dates. In 1936 his 6-year-old son Garth was hit by a car and killed when he darted into traffic from the thick weeds along Venice Boulevard. Despite the facts that the driver had no license, that there were three other people in the front seat with him at the time of the collision, and that the car was found to have faulty brakes, the incident was ruled accidental and the driver eluded criminal liability. Reid and his wife Flora bought this house in 1937; they eventually split up and moved out in 1946. Two years later Flora committed suicide with an overdose of sleeping pills. Reid remarried, moved to the Westlake area, and died at 65 in 1968.

3752 Moore St (3)

For 17 years Lucia "Mother" Coulter was the venerated head of the wardrobe department at MGM studios. Born in Kentucky in 1864, she was a 26-year-old widow with four young kids when she began making clothes and costumes for traveling light opera and circuit stock companies. She moved to California in 1915 and got a job as a wardrobe mistress at Universal. In 1918 she went to work for the Triangle Film Corporation, the Culver City movie studio that in 1924 became Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. Coulter made gowns for most of the Dream Factory's greatest stars, including Greta Garbo, Joan Crawford, Norma Shearer, and Jeanette McDonald. She also made the gloves and scarf worn by Lon Chaney for the scenes he played as an old woman in *The Unholy Three*. And she made many lasting friendships among the actresses for whom she served as confidante and mother confessor. Coulter bought this expansive house in 1928, the year after it was built. She died here in 1936 at the age of 73.

12801-12823 Venice Blvd (4)

The two long commercial buildings on the north side of Venice Boulevard between Beethoven and Moore streets were built in 1946-47. This area was known locally as Ven-Mar because even though it was clearly situated in Mar Vista, residents here got their mail delivered by the Venice Post Office. At 12801 was the Ven-Mar Drug Store, one of three pharmacies in Mar Vista in the late 1940s. 12803 was the address of the Laundry Lounge, an early-day Laundromat where customers were bidden to "lounge while you wash". Next door at 12805 was Jack's Department Store. In November 1947 the Ven-Mar Market, a full-service grocery store with a butcher shop that featured Jim's Choice Meats, opened at the 12807-13 spaces. The Ven-Mar Market was in business until 1981.

At 12815 was the Ven-Mar Liquor Store run by Carl Sabatino and son. In May 1950, less than three months after the Francis Liquor Store holdup, this place was robbed of \$266 by two gunmen. Carl managed to get a shot off from a pistol he kept behind the counter as the bandits fled. The place still

sells booze today as Raj Mohan's Liquors. Shirley's Tot to Teen Shop occupied the space at 12817. Next door at 12819 was McCarthy's Cleaner and Dyers, now a Mexican restaurant called El Charro. You can get a look at El Charro in a scene from the 2005 film *Crash*. The Hurry Curry Indian Restaurant at 12823/25 was originally the Utility Hardware and Appliance store.



Venice High School kids stopping at Curries Ice Cream Parlor, a favorite after-school hangout in the 50s and 60s. The scene is the north side of Venice Boulevard, just west of Beethoven Street, looking east. Curries, which debuted in 1950, is on the northwest corner of Beethoven and Venice – the bottom of its ice cream cone sign can be seen at the top of the photo near the left corner. And just to the left of the cone can be seen the sign for the Utility Hardware and Appliance Store, situated across the street at the corner of the Ven-Mar shopping center, today the site of the Hurry Curry Indian Restaurant. Note the narrow sidewalk and absence of trees; the depth of the sidewalks doubled and the current trees were planted during the Venice Boulevard Beautification Program of 1968-69. Jess' Barber Shop is just out of camera range at right edge of photo.

Kinema Square

Kinema Square is a 35-acre tract located directly south of Zanja Street, running south to Washington Boulevard between Walgrove Avenue and Meier Street. Its 238 lots were recorded in October 1923. A leisurely stroll through this old neighborhood will reveal a score of vintage homes built in the 1920s.

3985 Meier St (5)

In 1939 a 68-year-old man named Martin Donahue was renting this 1924 house and domiciled with his wife of forty years, Elizabeth. On Labor Day morning Martin, who had been drinking for several days, told his white-haired missus to get up and make coffee. Lizzy was cozy where she was and stayed put. Martin bellowed at his wife for some ten minutes in an effort to shout her into the kitchen, all the while heating up with a bitter slow burn. The little lady finally got out of bed, but instead of making java she made herself comfortable in an overstuffed chair in the living room. This effrontery on the part of Mrs. Donohue was too much for Mr. Donahue to bear. He fetched his .410 caliber scatter gun and shot his obstinate mate at close range. The *Vanguard* was more explicit: “the blast caught her just above the right eye”; that would do the trick.

Donohue was very drunk when the police showed up and claimed he couldn’t remember the incident, and as pickled as he was this may have been true. He was convicted of murder and sent to his just desserts.

Tract No. 3786

The small subdivision bordered by Matteson, Centinela, and Frances avenues and Washington Place was recorded on May 21, 1925. Several of the tract’s original ornate lamp posts still illuminate – feebly – the streets and sidewalks of this old neighborhood.

12516 Mitchell Ave (6)

One of the most colorful personalities in the history of Mar Vista spent the last six months of his life in this 1939 house. Myo John Elliott was born in Crab Orchard, Nebraska, circa 1882. Elliott saw action in the Chinese Boxer rebellion as a young soldier in the U. S. Army, and was stationed in San Francisco during the 1906 earthquake. A barnstorming pilot in the early days of aviation, Elliott flew aircraft pioneer Glenn L. Martin’s first airplane, an early bi-plane designed by the Wright Brothers. He also helped build and design the Lincoln Beachey monoplane, and warned Beachey that the wing span was not wide enough to bear the weight of the plane. Lincoln ignored Elliott’s counsel and was killed during a test flight of the craft. After moving to Los Angeles he became a close friend of actor Lon Chaney.

Elliott seems to have had an aversion to bathing, and his indifference to personal hygiene was cited by his wife Maybelle in her 1924 divorce complaint. He bathed so infrequently, claimed Mrs. Elliott, that one time after getting out of a tub he commemorated the occasion by writing "I have taken my annual bath" in the family bible. Elliott was still working in the aviation industry as an electrical flight inspector at the Douglas Aircraft Company when he died in 1946 - on Halloween - at the age of 64.

Tract 7681

In January 1924, 377 lots were subdivided on land bounded by Beethoven Street, Marco Place, Walgrove Avenue, and Appleton Way. The land had been allotted to Juan Machado in 1875.

3491 Ashwood Ave (7)

Farmer Joe Soares bought this unusual home in 1945. It was located just a block south of a 120-acre field he first leased the year before to grow lima beans. After tilling the land for seven years Soares lost his lease. On May 6, 1952, his threshing machines and harvesting wagons were forced off the land to make way for the earth movers of a construction company. The land Joe had been farming was by then the last remaining commercial lima bean field in Mar Vista, and would soon be plowed under to bear a 550-home housing tract called Westcrest. Soares continued living here until 1959.

Albright City

In December 1923 approximately 65 acres of longstanding farmland was surveyed for subdivision and recorded as Tract No. 7668. The tract, bounded by Venice and Sawtelle boulevards, Washington Place, and McLaughlin Avenue, was marketed as Albright City by realtor Harry H. Culver. The developer was Charles C. Albright, a pioneer Los Angeles real estate man from Washington who moved to the Southland in 1912. According to his obituary Albright was one of the first subdividers of tracts west of Western Avenue. In 1921 he developed three neighborhoods at Venice Beach, and in 1927 became involved in the creation of Sherman Oaks. He died in 1932 of a "traffic hurt" when, attempting to cross La Brea Avenue to reach his parked car, he was struck by a car in motion and suffered a fractured skull; he was 44.

The word "city" in the tract's name was meant seriously, at least by Albright and Culver if by no one else. Some of the ads from 1924 refer to it as "Albright, the new Venice short line subway city." On October 4, 1925, the *Times* told its readers: "...Albright City, a community which has established the essentials of a town except incorporation" - this at a time the community consisted of a single brick commercial building and some three dozen single-family homes.

Although the advertisements for Albright City called Harry H. Culver & Co. the "general sales agents" for the tract, Culver was more involved in the subdivision than a mere sales rep. Most of the 50-plus homes built in the tract during the 1920s were financed by a corporation located in Culver City



The Pacific Electric depot at Albright City on Venice Boulevard, just west of Sawtelle Boulevard, flooded by winter rains, 1928. The Westward Ho Country Club, across the street and to the right, is just out of camera range. The brick building at the left is the Dempsey Building, the first commercial building erected in Albright City, in 1924; it still stands at the southwest corner of Venice and Sawtelle, but is now part of Culver City.

named Pacific Building & Loan Association. Harry H. Culver was the president of the firm, and a vice-president was Benjamin F. Bledsoe, whose name was used for one of the tract's streets. On September 9, 1925, Culver announced, through the pages of the *Vanguard*, an "innovation in home selling": an unspecified number of

houses in the tract "were not only completely furnished ready to move into but contain new automobiles in the garages as well." Additionally, the first three lucky buyers "were to have their choice between a five tube Atwater

Kent radio or a Maytag washing machine". If these measures were meant to boost home building in the area, they failed; the big bang was nearly over. Exactly three weeks after Culver's "innovations" were introduced, he transferred three whole blocks of the tract from Mar Vista to Culver City as part of his Walnut Park Annexation land grab.

Imbedded in the sidewalks throughout Albright City and in several other locations in Mar Vista and Venice are the words, "W. F. Crawford, contractor". Walter F. Crawford headed the crew that surveyed the streets and laid out the canals of Abbot Kinney's Venice of America in 1904. He then went to work for the city of Ocean Park as a deputy engineer and, from 1909 to 1922, as the city engineer of that community. He left the public sector in 1922 to form his own contracting company. Crawford was hired to survey the tract map for Albright City, and to lay the sidewalks. His workmanship here looks remarkably contemporary for a job finished 88 years ago in 1924.

3911 Berryman Ave (8)

Independent theatrical producer Orville D. Woodward bought this house in 1932, eight years after it was built. During the first decade of the 20th century O. D. controlled the Kansas City theater circuit, and produced plays in other cities of the Midwest, including a production in Omaha starring the legendary Alla Nazimova. He brought *Dracula* to Broadway in 1927; the play was a smash hit that ran 41 weeks and made a star of the lead actor, Bela Lugosi. Woodward brought the play to Hollywood in 1929 and produced many other productions in Los Angeles. He died of heart failure in this house in 1946; he was 79.



Ad for Woodward's 1929 production of *The High Road*.

3853 Minerva Ave (9)

Academy Award-winning cinematographer William H. Daniels is the most famous resident of this house. Starting as a \$12-a-week assistant cameraman at Triangle studio in Culver City, Daniels worked on several of Erich von Stroheim's great silent films, including *Greed* and *The Merry Widow*. He signed an



William H. Daniels, seated, focuses on Greta Garbo in the 1930 MGM release *Romance*.

exclusive contract with newly-formed MGM in 1924 and worked at the Dream Factory for twenty-four years. He shot 19 of Greta Garbo's 22 American films, including *The Torrent*, her first, and *Ninotchka*, her next-to-last. He also photographed the first important films of Clark Gable, Joan Crawford, Jimmy Stewart, and Glenn Ford. Daniels won his Oscar in 1948 for *Naked City* and was nominated three other times. It is not certain exactly how long Daniels lived in his modest 1924 Mar Vista home. The 1930 census shows that he was renting the house (and employing a live-in maid) by that year, and in 1940 he bought the place only to sell it three years later. He died in Hollywood in 1970.

3937 Bledsoe Ave (10)

This Spanish-style house is one of nineteen such homes built in Albright City between 1924 and 1925 that still exist. In 1927 pioneer film technician Henry Knollmiller bought this one. Knollmiller entered the motion picture industry in 1912, and for several years was the lab supervisor for Hal Roach. In 1934 he went to work at Warner Bros. in the special effects department. Henry made the news in 1942 when, at the age of 44, he enlisted in the U. S. Navy as chief specialist of photography. He survived World War II and died in 1962. Henry lived here four years.

3947 Albright Ave (11)

This bright orange Spanish colonial revival home was one of four nearly-identical houses built early in 1924 by a fellow named Stilwell. Each one was called a "six room bungalow", had stucco exteriors, tile roofs, and a garage. The one next door at 3953 was purchased on June 23, 1924, by a man named William B. Harkness. In January 1941 Harkness was walking his dog, a big German shepherd, near the corner of Washington Boulevard and Mildred Avenue when he collapsed on the sidewalk, apparently the victim of a heart attack. Passersby attempted to assist the stricken man but were kept at bay by the vicious growls and snapping fangs of the canine. It took two hours for would-be rescuers to lure the pooch away, but by then Harkness was dead. Like Othello's love for Desdemona, the shepherd guarded his master not wisely, but too well.

Biona Hills: The Phantom Tract (refer to Big Bang map)

Boyer's Grove

In the early years of the 1900s the roughly 60 acres bounded by Venice Boulevard, Sawtelle Boulevard, Charnock Road, and McLaughlin Avenue were part of an area known as Boyer's Grove, named after Isaac Boyer, a pioneer farmer in the vicinity. This 60 acres consisted of three large tracts of land: from Sawtelle west to about Purdue Avenue was the 15-plus-acres of William J. Guthrie; continuing west to about Butler Avenue was another 15-acre tract belonging to Robert P. Sherman; and adjoining Sherman's land and running west to what was then called East Lane (named by folks who lived just west of it) was the nearly 29 acres of farmer William McLaughlin.

Guthrie was a mining man from Indiana who built a palatial manor house in 1909 near what is now the southwest corner of Victoria and Sawtelle. (The boundaries of Guthrie's huge house and its groomed immediate grounds encompassed 2.3 acres and are today precisely outlined by the sidewalks of Biona Drive, Sawtelle Boulevard, Victoria Avenue, and Corinth Avenue; the semi-circular curve of Corinth between Biona and Victoria traces the approach to the mansion's west entrance, from which one could see the ocean.) Guthrie was a "promoter" of Venice who built the popular Virginia Reel ride on the Kinney pier, but who later lost considerable money investing in the abortive Maier and Center Street piers. Depressed by these financial setbacks he committed suicide with cyanide in 1915.

Robert P. Sherman was the step-son of General Moses H. Sherman, the man who co-founded the Los Angeles Pacific Railroad in the 1890s and whose name is commemorated with Sherman Oaks. Robert Sherman was the General Manager of the railroad, a line of which ran along the southern edge of his land. When the L. A. Pacific merged with the Pacific Electric Company in 1911, Sherman resigned and became a real estate developer. One of his first big projects was Palm Place, the 137-acre subdivision today known as the Oval, located just south of Venice Boulevard and encircled by Marcasel Avenue and East Boulevard.

Figures in the Poison Puzzle at Palms.

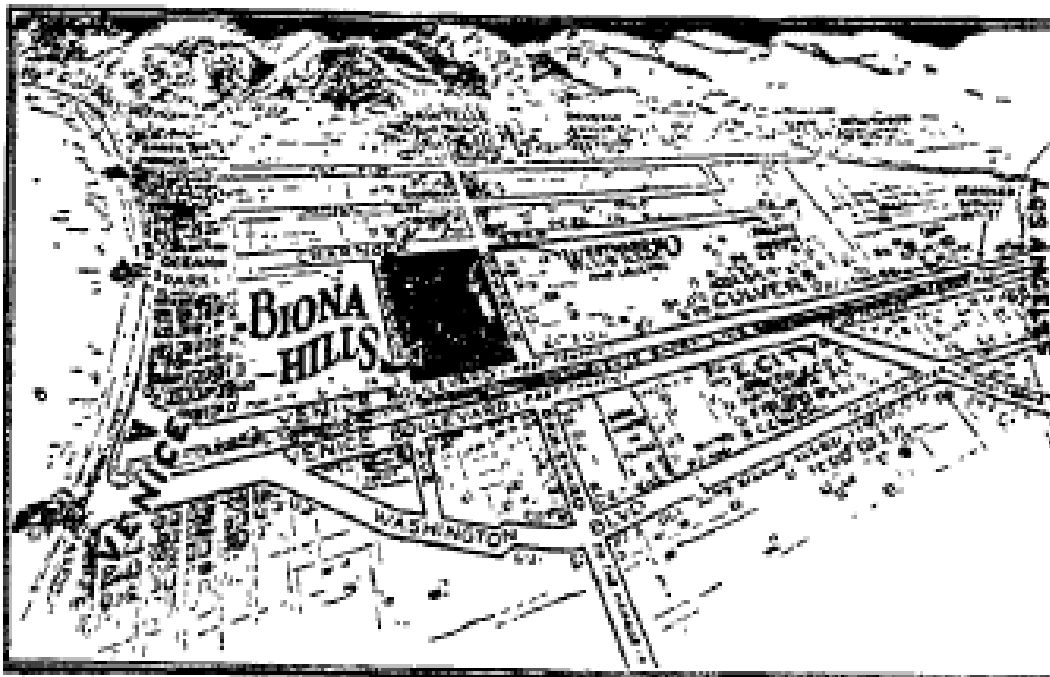


Mr. and Mrs. William J. Guthrie,
and their little daughter, Emily. Mr. Guthrie is dead from cyanide poisoning which the authorities now believe to have been self-administered, although no container has been found. Below is the palatial Guthrie mansion.

William McLaughlin was the third eldest of a ten-kid family from Kansas that moved to Ballona Valley when he was a boy. In 1884 he and his brother George bought from John Charnock 100 acres “more or less”, bounded by Charnock Road, McLaughlin Avenue, Washington Boulevard, and Minerva/Butler Avenues. William was a pioneer lima bean farmer in Mar Vista and an original trustee of Venice Polytechnic High School. In 1923 he sold his Boyer’s Grove acreage and then disappeared from local history. By 1930 only 61-year-old George remained, living in a house he built in 1922 that still stands at 3749 Mountain View Avenue, less than a half mile from the street that bears his family name.

Biona Hills and the Westward-Ho Club of California

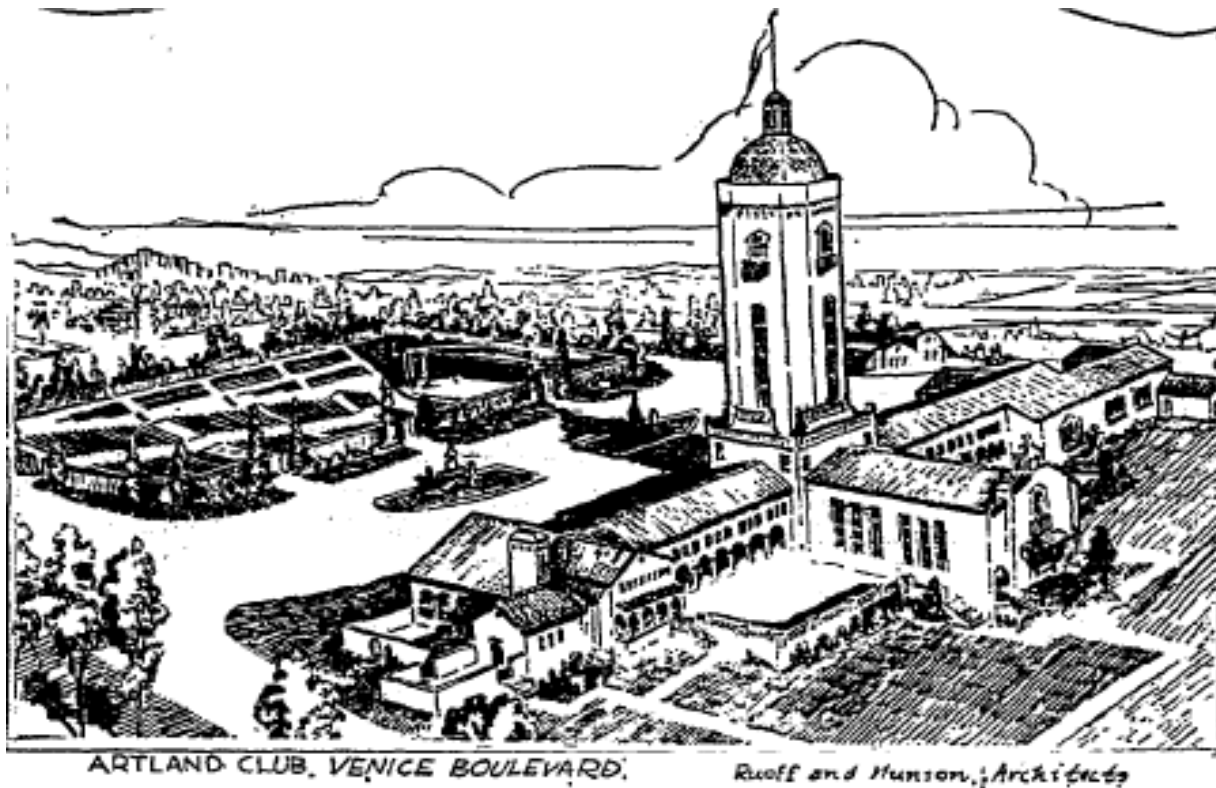
McLaughlin, Sherman, and Guthrie’s widow sold their Boyer’s Grove real estate in the early 1920s to a syndicate of investors. In 1923 they transformed the acreage into a subdivision called Biona Hills, “a high class residential property” which advertisements claimed had “already been called ‘The Second Beverly’” – Hills, that is. A Sunken Garden was promised that “will be a marvel to all who see and a source of lasting pleasure... to the home-owners in Biona Hills.” A “splendid social club” called the Westward-Ho Club of California, a name derived from “the celebrated Clubs of the same name in London and Chicago”, was offered to potential buyers provided they could pass the “stringent qualifications that will keep the membership to a high social standard.” The Guthrie mansion with its “artistically landscaped grounds” was converted into the clubhouse. The public were invited to inspect the Westward-Ho Club House and the Biona Hills tract for its formal opening on December 12, 1923.



Display ad for Biona Hills, December 15 1923. The Guthrie mansion, now the Westward Ho Country Club, is the white oblong at the right center of the tract; a curved arrow points to it from the words Westward Ho, which are just discernible at right.

The Artland Club and the Westward Ho Country Club

Possibly the “exclusive nature” of the Westward-Ho Club of California was too rarefied for a region still more rural than urban; or perhaps disagreements arose among the individual investors of the tract; or, what is most likely, for reasons that will never be clear, the Biona Hills subdivision and its elite social club never materialized. Instead, an even grander scheme was devised during the fallow year of 1924: excluding most of the old Guthrie estate, the northern half of Biona Hills would be developed into a golf course while the southern half would be home to the Artland Club, “a place where the arts become a real and constant influence on everyday life, a school where study of the arts may be pursued under congenial and advantageous circumstances, a place of recreation and entertainment not influenced by commercialism.” You can laugh now or wait for the punch line.



The Artland Club, had it been built, would have been the most splendid architectural gem in Mar Vista, rivaled only by the Mormon Temple that didn't get built on Mar Vista Hill three year earlier. The rub for both projects was doubtless the half million dollar cost. Artland Club architects Ruoff & Munson dissolved their partnership a month after this ad came out.

In May 1925 the projected golf course opened on 25 acres of former Boyer's Grove land; the nine-hole course was bounded by McLaughlin, Victoria, and Corinth avenues and Charnock Road. It featured several water hazards and nearly 100 walnut trees that bordered the fairways. Judged by experts to be one of the best in the country, the holes of the three-par course averaged 222 yards. The

directors of the golf course bought the resilient Guthrie place for their own clubhouse and retained the name Westward Ho for their Country Club. The mansion became the site of debutante balls, society marriages, and other swank gatherings of bay area elites.



WESTWARD HO COUNTRY CLUB

[A local landmark for 44 years, the durable Guthrie mansion was both private residence and exclusive country club.](#)

The bold ambitions of the Artland Club did not fare as well, except in those few cases where they stooped to commercialism; but they were lofty ambitions. A half million dollars was to be expended for “a great fine arts center”, a massive architectural wonder composed of two long two-story wings flanking a soaring central tower 150 feet tall. This magnificent edifice was to house artist studios, affiliated art clubs, auditoriums and educational facilities, all to support and encourage painters, authors, sculptors, architects, and musicians. There was to be a recreation area housing a gymnasium, a swimming pool, and Turkish baths. Surrounding this resplendent structure would be a large sunken “Shakespearean Bowl” and a “monster” outdoor community theater.

Of all these projected plans only the large community theater was actually built – or rather, the “temporary stage” that was erected in 1926 for the “informal dedication of the grounds” that took place on May 9 and that featured the *Little Symphony* of Adolph Tandler. During the summer of 1926 the local newspapers announced “musical entertainments” and “twilight concerts” held at the Artland Club that may have also made use of this stage, but by winter the organization had moved to the Fine Arts Building in downtown Los Angeles. The “temporary” stage, built amid “a grove of full-grown trees”, was never dismantled but simply abandoned to time and the elements.

Besides the stage a huge pit was excavated, either for the sunken bowl theater or for the foundation of the arts center, but neither was ever erected. In 1928 a velodrome not mentioned in the original Artland Club plans was built near the corner of McLaughlin and Venice. The 1/8 mile "saucer oval" seated 2000 spectators; "Long Bill" Furman, (pictured at right) a past champion bicyclist, was appointed director-general. The first races of the "Los Angeles Cycle Center Velodrome" were held on September 2 and 3, 1928, and the track was used during the 1929 racing season as well; and then it simply faded away along with all the noble plans for an art center. In 1931 the deep pit was contracted to a man "engaged in all kinds of hauling". He filled the excavation back up with "dirt, rock, concrete, and asphaltum", thus burying with an undignified finality the Artland Club and its high aspirations. By the mid-50s the entire 15-acre art center site was decorated with single-family homes.



"Long Bill" Furman

The Peerless Tract

At least the golf course was successful, and for a quarter century flourished. But in 1951 the Westward Ho Country Club finally succumbed to the subdivisions that had by then completely surrounded it. It was sold to the Peerless Building Corporation for \$250,000, and on the morning of December 5 bulldozers began grading the links in preparation for a 124-home tract. The Guthrie Mansion staunchly resisted this urban onslaught and for a year and a half held its place on the hilltop, looking down on the tiny tract homes that had sprung up around its once-extensive grounds. This last physical trace of Boyer's Grove was torn down in April 1953 to make way for a complex of twelve big apartment buildings; and yet a faint echo of an era half a century earlier lingered a while longer through the name of the complex: the Westward Ho Apartments.

During the 1950s the Peerless Building Corp. erected hundreds of homes in the west side of Los Angeles and the San Fernando Valley. The homes in their Mar Vista tract had three-bedrooms or two-bedrooms and a den, and came in "ranch, English farm, contemporary modern, and English and modern" styles. The dwellings averaged about 1,225 square feet and could be had for about \$14,000. The first two houses sold were located at the corner of Charnock and McLaughlin, on July 18, 1952; the last seven were snapped up on September 19, two months later. In 1954 Peerless bought the still undeveloped "Artland tract" south of Victoria from Butler west to the storm channel and built seventeen more houses. There are still dozens of fairly intact Peerless homes to be found in the old grove.

11406 Victoria Ave (13)

James O. Stevenson built this two-story Spanish Revival home in 1928; it is the oldest house still extant in Biona Hills. In 1923 Stevenson acquired the 29-acre McLaughlin tract and was one of the planners and developers of Biona Hills. He was a director of the original 1924 Mar Vista Chamber of Commerce and was active in that organization for many years. Stevenson was the founder of the Westward Ho Country Club, the executive vice-president of the Artland Club and the man who donated



Mar Vista Creek flows under the bridge at Charnock Road, January 1952, into the just-completed Venice-to-Charnock segment of the Sawtelle-Westwood Storm Channel. Police are dragging the creek for the bodies of Otis and Harry Weymouth (see pg. 72). In the background, center, is the Peerless home at 11600 Charnock Road; to the left is 11601 Francis Place; both were still under construction. The final segment of the storm channel would obliterate Mar Vista Creek in 1956.

the land for their huge art center building, and was one of the three directors of the velodrome. Stevenson only lived in his Victoria house a couple of years; in the early 1930s he moved into a more modest home at 11524 Biona Drive. In 1954 he sold that house to the Peerless Building Corp., which demolished it in preparation for their “Artland tract”. Stevenson moved to Pasadena, where he died in 1973.

11410 Victoria Ave (14)

This pleasant 1941 house was bought by Reid J. Sampson in 1944. Reid was a mining engineer in Arizona when in 1929 he was hired by the state of California to survey the mineral resources of the Golden State. Through a beauty contest his daughter Virginia won a screen test and, while still a 17-year-old high school student, a movie contract at RKO. Billed Virginia Reid, Miss Sampson appeared in *Kid Millions* with Eddie Cantor and *Roberta* with Fred Astaire. In 1937 she changed her name to Lynne Carver and moved to MGM. By 1942 she was playing opposite Johnny Mack Brown and Roy Rogers in westerns at Monogram and Republic. Lynne moved to New York in 1947 to work on stage and in television. She died there of cancer at the age of 38. Her father sold their Mar Vista home in the early 50s.



11354 Victoria Ave (15)

The house on this lot was built in 1936 by Eddie Chandler, a prolific character actor who lived here until



**Eddy Chandler with Curly Howard in the 1942
Three Stooges two-reeler *Matri-Phony*.**

1940. Born in 1894 in Iowa, Chandler moved to California at age ten and at seventeen became a thespian at Inceville in the 101 Ranch westerns of Thomas H. Ince. Besides appearing in scores of two-reel silent films Chandler had small roles in 225 feature films at virtually every studio in Hollywood from 1926 to his death in 1948. The number of major stars Eddie worked with is impressive; a short list includes: James Cagney, Rita Hayworth, Gary Cooper, Carole Lombard, Humphrey Bogart,

Bette Davis, Edward G. Robinson, John Barrymore, the Marx Bros., W. C. Fields, and Laurel and Hardy. You can get a good look at him in *It Happened One Night* as the bus driver whose enthusiasm for “The Man on the Flying Trapeze” sing-along causes the bus to crash.

11350 Victoria Ave (16)

Born Henry Rodolph de Fiennes in San Francisco, Rhody Hathaway was a stage actor and theatrical advance man before making his first movies in 1908 at the American Film Company. He made dozens of silent films and had small roles in a few talking pictures before retiring in the mid-1930s. His wife, actress Jean Hathaway, also made the switch from stage to films, appearing on screen from 1912 in Kay-Bee shorts and Universal serials. But it was their son, Henry Hathaway, who made a lasting name for himself in cinema as a director of over 60



Henry Hathaway

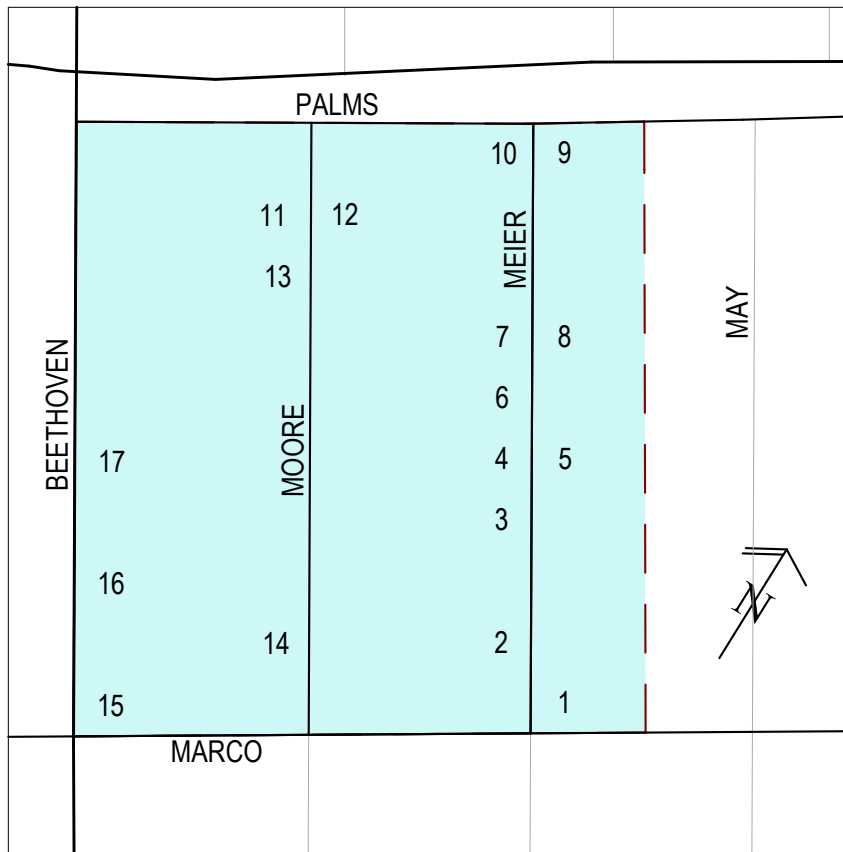
feature films. Rhody built this house in 1940; he died four years later in a Culver City sanitarium just three blocks away.

11359 Biona Dr (17)

Robert A. Matthey was head of the mechanical special effects department at Walt Disney studios for nearly twenty years. He got his start in the movies accidentally, when his father, a costume jeweler, was hired to make the “ancient” coins of Judea for the 1927 Cecil B. DeMille epic *King of Kings*. Robert worked on some early Johnny Weismuller *Tarzan* films, some Universal horror films, and the *Flash Gordon* serials before going to work at Disney to create the giant squid for *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*. Besides devising levitating gimmicks for *Mary Poppins* and *The Absent-Minded Professor*, Matthey also designed some of the animatronics for Disneyland. He came out of retirement in the 1970s to build “Bruce”, the mechanized shark for Steven Spielberg’s blockbusters *Jaws* and *Jaws II*. Matthey bought this house new in 1941 and lived here through the 1950s.



Special effects artist Robert A. Matthey, working on a rubber crocodile used for the 1954 film *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*.



THE GREGORY AIN TRACT

- | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. 3562 Meier St | 11. 3507 Moore St |
| 2. 3557 Meier St | 12. 3508 Moore St |
| 3. 3543 Meier St | 13. 3515 Moore St |
| 4. 3537 Meier St | 14. 3559 Moore St |
| 5. 3536 Meier St | 15. 3564 Beethoven St |
| 6. 3531 Meier St | 16. 3552 Beethoven St |
| 7. 3523 Meier St | 17. 3526 Beethoven St |
| 8. 3522 Meier St | |
| 9. 3500 Meier St | |
| 10. 3501 Meier St | |

Gregory Ain: Mar Vista Becomes Modernique

In 2003 the first – and still the only – Historic Preservation Overlay Zone (HPOZ) was established in Mar Vista. An HPOZ is a residential sector in Los Angeles comprised of a group of buildings related to each other architecturally, culturally, or historically, created to protect the unique character of the zone from the bulldozers of bottom-line real estate developers. Mar Vista’s HPOZ is a three-block tract bounded by Beethoven Street, Marco Place, Meier Street, and Palms Boulevard, and is the first HPOZ composed solely of post-WWII houses. What makes the 52 sleek, elegant homes of this tract unique is that they were all designed by the same acclaimed architect, Gregory Ain. In all of Los Angeles there is no other equally intact neighborhood designed by a single architect of comparable stature.

Born in Pittsburgh in 1908, Ain was raised in Southern California from the age of three. As a freshman and sophomore at UCLA he studied physics before turning his attention to architecture at USC. He went to work for modernist designer Richard Neutra in 1931 and studied the work of Rudolph Schindler, at whose iconic Kings Road house Ain often visited and drafted. He became an established architect in his own right with the Dunsmuir Flats, a 1937 Modern International Style apartment building that has lost none of its power to impress. Ain won a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1940 and eventually became a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects.

By the mid-40s Ain was absorbed with the idea of combining low cost housing with modernist sophistication. In 1947, in association with collaborating partners Joseph Johnson and Alfred Day, he applied these concepts to the Mar Vista housing project for the Advance Development Company, a.k.a. the Gregory Ain Mar Vista Tract. Only the 52 houses of the first phase of the project were actually completed. A single master floor plan of roughly 1,050 square feet was used, but seven configurations were devised by orienting the houses in different directions. Further variety was achieved with the addition of a stylish canopy covering the front entrance way of some houses and a diverse neighborhood-wide color scheme used to decorate the exterior walls. But the most striking features of these homes remain the flat roofs and the horizontal orientation of the high narrow streetscape windows, both career-long hallmarks of Ain architecture.

No less distinctive were the interiors. Ceiling to floor windows looking out to the backyard from the living room served to open up the homes. Multiple interior plans were made possible with a folding wall panel in the living room: when left open an extra-large space was realized; when closed, a bedroom or den was formed. A sliding wall panel at the rear of the house afforded the options of a large master bedroom, two standard bedrooms, or one standard bedroom and a den. A built-in dining table separating the kitchen from the living room offered additional flexibility. By removing the chairs it could serve as a bar or buffet. And a sliding panel below the table and a blind above could be employed to close off the kitchen entirely. As with the exteriors, a sophisticated, variable color scheme was used to decorate the interior walls, cabinetry, and doors.

The landscaping of the project fell to Garrett Eckbo, a noted landscape architect and frequent collaborator of Ain, and included the median strip that separates Palms Boulevard from the access street of the tract. In March 1949 the *L. A. Times* reported that “the area in which the homes are

located now has a park-like appearance”, an effect aided by the deliberate exclusion of fences between the homes. Eckbo utilized a large variety of exotic plants throughout the neighborhood, but ultimately only the model house at 3508 Moore Street was completely landscaped. His plan for the curb-side trees that line the sidewalks – Ficus on Beethoven, Melaleuca Leucadendron along Moore, and Magnolia on Meier – was accomplished and remains intact.

Despite the architect’s goal of providing affordable housing to working class folks, the average price of these homes was over \$12,000, considerably more than a comparably-sized dwelling in the area. The homes were advertised in display ads as “Modernique”, a coinage, apparently, of the sales manager as the term was never used by Ain. The first house sold in the tract, at 3538 Beethoven, was purchased on June 29, 1948. After a sluggish start the homes began selling at a steady pace in November, notwithstanding their relative priceyness. The last one, at 3558 Beethoven, was snapped up on July 16, 1949.

Exploring the Historic Gregory Ain Tract

3562 Meier St (1)

The original owners of this house were Max and Rita Lawrence, the proprietors of a meat packing plant who brought mid-century California chic to potted plants when they opened California Pottery in 1950. It was Rita who became inspired by the sophisticated ceramic planters created by Pasadena art students she saw on display at a Westside nursery on Barrington in 1949 – possibly Mar Vista’s own Paul Howard’s California Flowerland. California Pottery’s sleek, oversized geometric planters quickly found favor with modernist architects like Richard Neutra and John Lautner, who used them to decorate the patios of many of their commissioned houses of the 50s. The Lawrences were also close friends with Gregory Ain, and rented an apartment in his Dunsmuir Flats before buying their Ain home in Mar Vista.

Producer, director, and screenwriter Joseph Strick lived here from 1953 to 1965. Strick got his first taste of filmmaking as a cameraman in the Air Force in WWII and co-directed his first film, the documentary *Muscle Beach*, in 1948. His 1960 documentary-style art film *The Savage Eye* won the BAFTA Flaherty Documentary Award, and in 1970 he won an Academy Award for the documentary *Interviews with Mi Lai Veterans*. Strick adapted several literary classics for the screen, directing Shelly Winters in *The Balcony*, Ellen Burstyn in *Tropic of Cancer*, and John Gielgud in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. His son Jeremy was a curator at the National Gallery of Art in Washington D. C. and the Art Institute of Chicago before being named director of L. A.’s Museum of Contemporary Art in 1999.



Filmmaker Joseph Strick

3557 Meier St (2)

Film producer Peter Frankfurt has lived here since 1997. He began his motion picture career making coming attraction trailers for such hit films as *Alien*, *Ghostbusters*, and *Out of Africa*. Among the movies he produced are *Boys with Winona Ryder*, *Juice* with Tupac Shakur, and the *Blade* films with Wesley Snipes. His wife Liseanne is a jewelry maker.

3543 Meier St (3)

Doctor Alfred H. Katz headed the Division of Social Welfare at the UCLA Medical School when he moved into his Ain home in 1959. Born in Auckland, he graduated with a B. A. from the University of New Zealand at age 19 and got a master's degree in Psychology at the age of 20. He was the author of nine books, contributed chapters to several others, and published dozens of scientific papers. In 1999 he founded the *International Journal of Self Help and Self Care*. Katz was Professor Emeritus of the UCLA School of Public Health at the time of his death in 2001.

3537 Meier St (4)

Artist, writer, director, and punk-rocker Lucas Reiner has lived here since 1997. The son of actor/director Carl Reiner and the brother of actor/director Rob "Meathead" Reiner, Lucas studied art at Parsons School of Design in New York and locally at the Otis Art Institute. For the past several years his paintings have centered on trees, many as neatly trimmed as a Beverly Hills poodle, but blurry in detail, as if the image were captured from a moving car. Besides his artwork Reiner wrote and directed the feature films *The Spirit of '76* and *The Gold Cup*. His father and brother had cameos in the former.

3536 Meier St (5)



Barbara, wearing her pearls, as June Cleaver.

Actress Barbara Billingsley owned this house from 1950 to 1955. Barbara was born in Los Angeles in 1915 and became interested in theater in high school. After working on Broadway and on New York runways as a fashion model she moved back west and married Culver City nightclub owner Glen Billingsley. She signed a contract at MGM in 1945 and appeared in small roles in major films (*The Bad and the Beautiful*) and television series (*Four Star Playhouse*). In 1957 Billingsley landed the role for which she remains famous today, that of June Cleaver on the *Leave It to Beaver* sitcom. She played the idealized American housewife

who wore pearls and high heels while preparing breakfast for six seasons.

Filmmaker/educator Ernest D. Rose bought the house from Barbara. Rose received one of the first master's degrees in Motion Pictures from the Theater Arts Department at UCLA in 1951. He has worked on some 200 films as a writer, director, cinematographer, editor, or film teacher, chiefly independent and experimental films. From 1963 to 1968 he headed the film and production units of the Statewide University of California, after which he served as Professor of Communications at Temple University. Rose lived here until 1961.

3531 Meier St (6)

Architect Chester A. Widom lived in this house from 1980-84. Widom was a founding member of the Santa Monica-based architectural firm WWCOT. He has worked in Los Angeles as a Commissioner of the Planning and the Building & Safety departments. In 1995 he served as the National President of the American Institute of Architects.

3523 Meier St (7)

Television/cinema art director Seymour Klate was the first owner of this house. Klate worked on such television series as *The Incredible Hulk*, *Knight Rider*, and *Partridge Family* and designed sets for the films *North by Northwest*, *Cleopatra*, and *Catch 22*. He was twice elected governor of the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences.



Accused killer Dennis Vasquez.

Klate sold his home in 1954 to Harold and Alice Lewis. When Harold, a draper at MGM studios for 25 years, died in 1968 his widow became somewhat reclusive. A week before Christmas 1975 the 80-year-old homemaker was raped and strangled by an assailant who had entered the house through the back door. A neighbor saw the killer leaving the house but, not knowing what had happened,

thought nothing of it. The case remained unsolved for nearly 34 years. Then in 2009 a 50-year-old petty career criminal named Dennis Vasquez was picked up on a routine traffic stop. And because his license plates didn't match the make or model of his car and he had outstanding arrest warrants, the police obtained a standard DNA swab and sent it to the California DNA database. When the swab matched a sample taken from the Lewis murder scene Vasquez was arrested; his case is now pending. He was a 16-year-old Venice High School student when Alice was murdered.

3522 Meier St (8)

Guerilla poster artist Robbie Conal lived here from 1992 to 2010. Conal's satirical protest posters of grim-visaged, nationally prominent politicians and other public figures began appearing during the Reagan administration. Essentially a political cartoonist, Conal, instead of publishing his work in newspapers or magazines, originally circulated it throughout the city as posters aided by a "guerilla



army" of like-minded volunteers. Eventually his artwork appeared in more traditional venues like *Time*, *Newsweek*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and the book *Artbum*. He was featured in *Post No Bills*, the award-winning 1992 documentary about his guerilla posting of LAPD Chief Daryl Gates in the wake of the 1991 L. A. riots. His wife, Deborah Ross, is a graphic designer.

Typical Conal poster.

3500 Meier St (9)

Art dealer Silvan Simone bought this house in 1980. His Silvan Simone Gallery at 11579 W. Olympic Boulevard was a showcase for the work of international modern abstract artists for over twenty years. Sculptor/architect James Wines had his first West Coast exhibition at Simone's gallery in 1958, and the work of such well-known artists as Jose Clemente Orozco, Rico Lebrun, Gordon Wagner, and Rinaldo Paluzzi have also exhibited there. Simone moved to Ashland, Oregon shortly before his death in 1984.

The home next door at 3508 Meier was used for the exterior shots of Nicholas Cage's house in the 2003 film *Matchstick Men*. This house is also unusual in that it is one of only a handful in the tract to have undergone no structural alterations during their 60-plus year existence.

3501 Meier St (10)

The first owner of this house was Barnett B. Poles, the construction engineer for the Ain Tract project. A general contractor from 1945 until his death in 1970, Poles also supervised the construction of the Bel-Air Professional Building, the Palisades Plaza Apartments, and the General Industrial Tool and Supply Company building in North Hollywood. One would think that Poles, more than most people, would have appreciated the unique character of his home and respected its architectural integrity. And yet after living here a mere eighteen months he made one of the first modifications of an Ain home with a 238 square foot addition, enlarging the living room and adding a den. Poles sold his house in 1954.

3507 Moore St (11)

Cameraman Mitch Dubin has lived here since 1997. Dubin operated a camera on such films as *The Rock*, *Jerry Maguire*, *Saving Private Ryan*, *Catch Me if You Can*, and *Live Free and Die Hard*. He also provided footage for *Matchstick Men*, some of which was filmed on the next block at 3508 Meier.

3508 Moore St (12)

This house was used as the model home for the sales staff of the Ain Tract. As the only residence the developers fully landscaped and furnished, it was the one to which interested shoppers were directed to get a sense of how their prospective home would appear lived in. The Ain Tract model home remained true to its original structural design until 2005, when it was altered with a 540 square foot addition.



3508 Moore Street, model home for the Ain tract.

3515 Moore St (13)

From 1954 to 1957 aviatrix Frances Bera lived in this house. The petite housewife started taking flying lessons during WWII at age 16 and earned her pilot's license at 18. She made a living flying charter planes, instructing novices, and making test flights. Flying a Beechcraft Bonanza, Bera won the annual All Woman Trans Continental Air Race (also quaintly known as the "Powder Puff Derby") five

times, in 1953, '55, '56, '58, and '62, and placed second twice. She met her husband Gordon, a production cost analyst at nearby Douglas Aircraft, in Michigan while working as an instructor at his flight school.



Powder Puff Frances Bera, 3515 Moore St.

3559 Moore St (14)

Art historian Albert Boime lived here from 1980 to 2008. After taking master's and doctorate degrees in Art History at Columbia University, Boime became a professor at UCLA in 1979. He was the author of nearly twenty books on the history of art, written from a Marxist perspective and employing a psychoanalytical approach that looked at art as "social documents" influenced by the historical events of their era. His methodology demonstrated the importance of previously overlooked "lesser" artists on the development of Impressionism and other art movements, and was hugely influential. Boime died at the age of 75 in 2008.

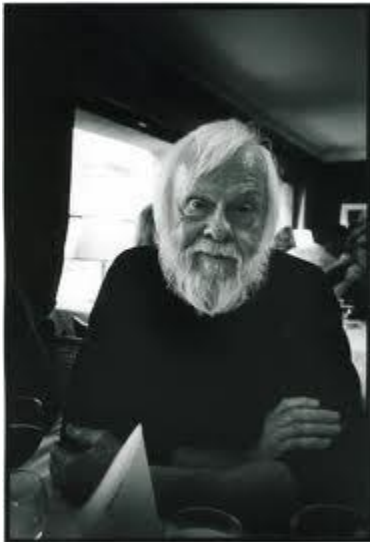
3564 Beethoven St (15)

On January 22, 1949, Robert and Rachel Hofsaes bought this house for \$11,800. The couple had learned about the Ain Tract from their friend John Entenza, the editor of Arts and Architecture magazine. There were still 29 unsold houses to choose from when they bought their home. Several of the original purchasers of an Ain "modernique" home lived in them for at least twenty years, and two

stayed put for over three decades, but Rachel is the only person who bought her home from the Advance Development Co. that's still here today, over 60 years later. A retired school secretary, she has never made any structural modifications to her home and was one of the leaders in the successful bid to designate the Ain tract a Historic Preservation Overlay Zone.

3552 Beethoven St (16)

Native California artist John Baldessari owned this house from 1978 to 1985. One of the early exponents of Concept Art in the United States, Baldessari's droll, cerebral text paintings, photo collages, and "sculptures" have proven enduring and influential. Among the prestigious museums at which you can view his artwork are the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Art Institute of Chicago, and locally at the Broad Contemporary Museum of Art at LACMA, the J. Paul Getty Museum, and the Armand Hammer Museum of Art.



Artist John Baldessari

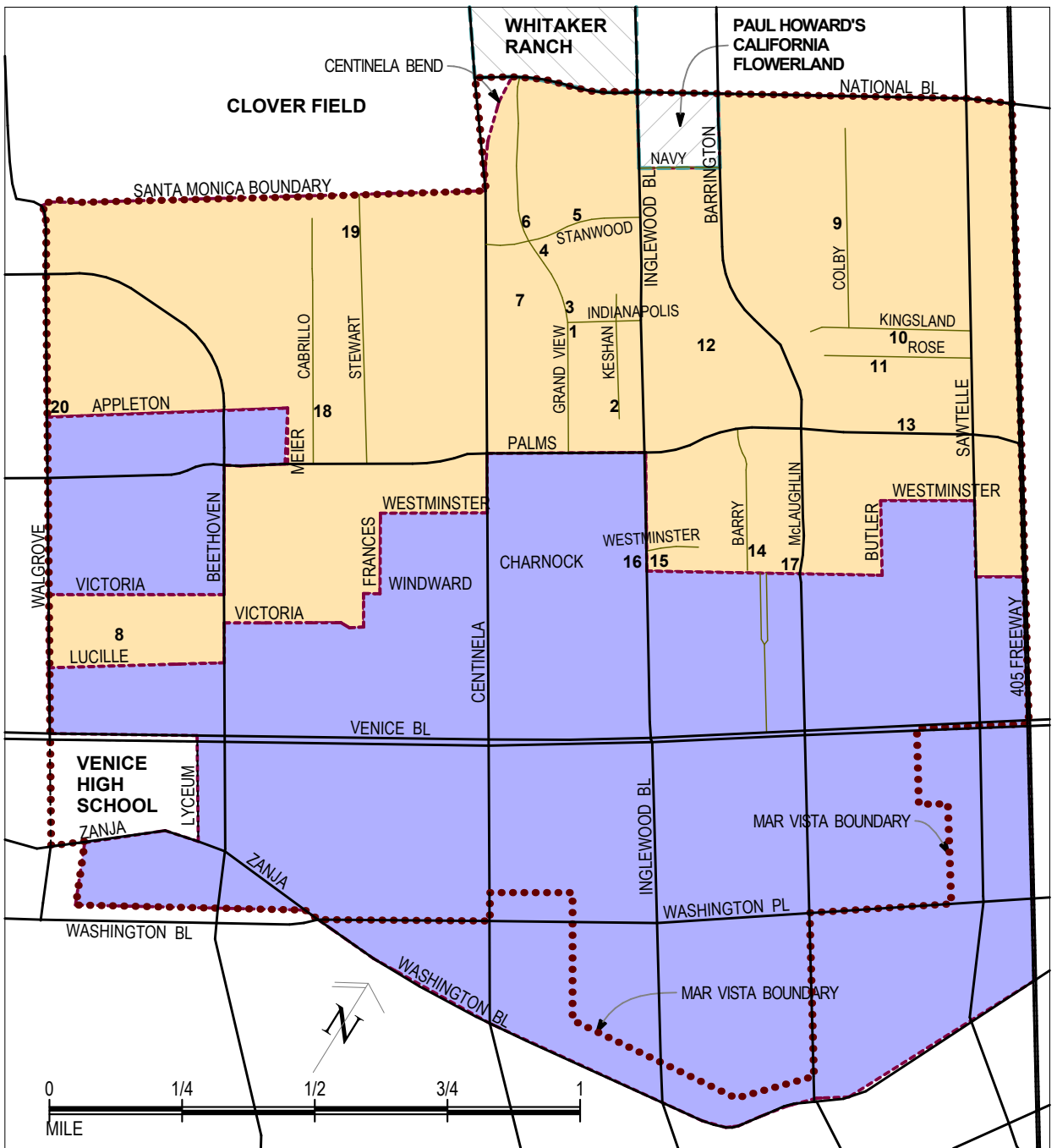


Baldessari's art

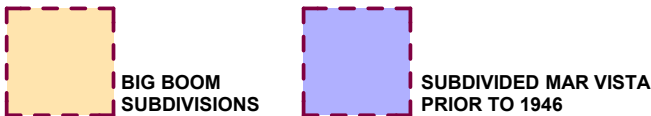
3526 Beethoven St (17)

Viennese architect Wolf D. Prix owned this house for two years in the mid-1990s. Prix was a founding member of the Studio Coop Himmelb(l)au, an Austrian firm that was a leader in the ultra-modern "Deconstructivist" movement in architecture. The Akron Museum of Art, the BMW Welt in Munich, and the Musée des Confluences in Lyons are three of the extraordinary buildings in which Prix was involved. Wolf also helped design the LAUSD Visual Arts High School in downtown Los Angeles, two views of which can be seen on the following page.





THE BIG BOOM



Map Key

- | | | |
|-------------------------|--|---------------------------|
| 1. 3300 Grand View Blvd | 8. 3711 Beethoven St & 2224 Walgrove Ave | 15. 11930 Westminister Av |
| 2. 3406 Keeshen Dr | 9. 3249 Colby Ave | 16. 3543 Inglewood Blvd |
| 3. 3282 Grand View Blvd | 10. 11417 Kingsland St | 17. 11729 Charnock Rd |
| 4. 3238 Grand View Blvd | 11. 11431 Rose Ave | 18. 3468 Cabrillo Blvd |
| 5. 12135 Stanwood Dr | 12. 3300 Granville Ave | 19. 3279 Stewart Ave |
| 6. 3140 Grand View Blvd | 13. 11430 Woodbine St | 20. 1630 Walgrove Ave |
| 7. 3277 Grand View Blvd | 14. 3552 Barry Ave | |

The Big Boom: Mar Vista after WWII

At the beginning of 1946, five months after the surrender of Japan that ended WWII, there were still over 500 acres of Mar Vista land devoted to the cultivation of lima beans. By the end of 1952 virtually all the lima beans growing in the community were sprouting in the backyard gardens of private homes. During these seven years one large stubbled field after another disappeared to accommodate an invasion of servicemen armed with FHA loans and a desire to settle in Southern California. No less than fifteen new subdivisions appeared in Mar Vista during this post-war building boom. And the hammering of nails into two-by-fours wasn't the only banging going on - the population in the community more than doubled between 1942 and 1952, stimulating the erection of three new grade schools and a junior high school.

The big difference between the homes of the first Mar Vista neighborhoods and those of the post-war Boom subdivisions was the advent of the tract house. Well before the end of the war the bay area experienced a prolonged housing shortage caused in part by the influx of defense workers at the Douglas and Hughes plants and various ancillary concerns. To cope with this predicament new building techniques emerged that resulted in the mass-produced assembly-line tract home, which solved the housing problem but put an end to the architectural diversity found in Mar Vista's oldest neighborhoods. Three of the most prolific real estate developers in Southern California built tract home "villages" in the community – Paul W. Trousdale, Fritz B. Burns, and S. Mark Taper. Perhaps in time these homes will acquire the same historic cachet that the 100-year-old Mar Vista dwellings have today.

Grand View Hills

Grand View Hills, located between Palms and National boulevards to the north and south, and between Inglewood and Centinela on the east and west, is actually the northern section of the old Ocean Park Heights tract that somehow resisted real estate developers for over forty years. One of four Mar Vista subdivisions developed in 1947, the soil here had been yielding lima beans by the ton every harvest for half a century.

This vicinity nearly became the hallowed ground of a glorious shrine. On December 13, 1921, the *Vanguard* announced that Ocean Park Heights was to be the site of a \$500,000 Mormon Temple, to be built at the summit of Grand View "on an eminence that commands a view of the ocean and the entire bay district". The magnificent structure was to occupy six acres laid out on the same plan as Temple Square in Salt Lake City. The exact location of the holy place wasn't specified, but no matter: three months later the paper reported that the proposal had been canceled by Church president Heber Grant, who felt that local church membership wasn't strong enough to justify the tremendous cost. Thirty years would pass before the Temple was actually built, at Santa Monica Boulevard and Overland Avenue.

3300 Grand View Blvd (1)

This was the model home for the first phase of the Grand View Hills subdivision. The six-room homes of the tract were approximately 1,200 square feet and went on sale in the summer of 1947. They had wood-burning fireplaces, oak floors, a single bathroom containing separate stall showers with glass doors, "steel sash" windows, and either two bedrooms and a den or three bedrooms; the total price was \$10,750. Most of them have been remodeled, augmented, or torn down and replaced with much larger dwellings. This house was enlarged in the 1960s with two additions.

3406 Keeshen Dr (2)

The first version of this house was purchased in July 1956 by a couple named Almon and Florence Dibble. Florence has been given credit as Mar Vista's first librarian. She opened one of two small library sub-stations in her home at 12450 Gilmore Avenue in 1927, when that area was still considered Mar Vista territory. She became a real estate agent around 1940, in time to participate in the post-war residential boom. Almon, a movie studio machinist, died in his new home less than a year after moving in. Florence checked out during a stay in the Baldwin Hills Hospital, taking her own life at 78 with an overdose of barbiturates. The Dibble house was modified with a two-story addition in 1979-80.

3282 Grand View Blvd (3)

Robert G. Neumann bought the original house at this address in November 1947, the year he joined the staff of UCLA as a professor of political science. Neumann helped organize the Institute of International and Foreign Studies at the university, and was its first director. He left UCLA in 1966 to become the ambassador to Afghanistan under President Johnson, and was appointed ambassador to Morocco by President Nixon. Neumann headed President Reagan's State Department transition team and was named his ambassador to Saudi Arabia. His son Ronald E. Neumann was President Clinton's ambassador to Algeria. Neumann and his wife lived in Grand View Hills until 1960. Their home was remodeled in 1965.

3238 Grand View (4)

Professional baseball pitcher Hollis "Sloppy" Thurston lived in this house from the early 1950s to his death in 1973. "Sloppy" played in the big leagues from 1923 to 1933, posting a .509 win-loss record and a career 4.26 earned run average. His best year came in 1924 when he won 20 games with the Chicago White Sox. Hollis could hit as well as pitch; in 1928, playing in the minors for San Francisco in the Coast League, he hit .350 with 25 home runs. Thurston is one of a handful of hurlers to give up six home runs in one game. On the other hand, he is the only man in the history of baseball to pitch an



“immaculate inning” in an extra inning of a game – the feat of striking out all three batters on nine straight pitches, which he did in 1923 in the 12th inning. “Sloppy” was 74 when he shot himself in the head here.

12135 Stanwood Dr (5)

MGM sound man Douglas Shearer owned the original Grand View Hills home on this lot from 1949 until his death in 1971. Shearer broke into the motion picture business as an assistant cameraman in 1925 during a visit with his sister, Metro star Norma Shearer. Possessed of great mechanical ingenuity and a background in engineering, Shearer quickly impressed his employers by devising several trick camera effects. In 1927 he organized MGM’s sound department and led it as director of Technical Research until his retirement in 1968. Shearer and his department won 12 Academy Awards for their technical innovations. His small house was replaced in 1983 by the hefty two-story river-rock cabin here today.



Douglas Shearer with sister Norma, Mrs. Irving Thalberg.

3140 Grand View (6)

Advertising executive Leonard Gottlieb moved into this house with his wife Liz on April Fool's Day 1948, when Grand View Boulevard this far north of Palms was still a dirt road. Gottlieb first delved into politics in the mid-50s, starting the West Area Civic Council and spearheading the drive to get the storm channel that cut through the Mar Vista Recreational Center covered. In 1957 he ran for a seat in the Los Angeles City Council's 11th District but lost to the eventual winner, Karl L. Rundberg. Gottlieb was still able to represent the community as Rundberg's field deputy. Liz served for two years as president of the Venice-Mar Vista Coordinating Council. Leonard was a fund raiser for the National Kidney Foundation for 30 years; he died in 2003. The Gottlieb house has changed very little in the 64 years that Liz has lived here.

3277 Grand View Blvd (7)

On the west side of Grand View, between Everglade Street and Stanwood Drive, are 14 acres that contain two baseball fields and a community garden. During much of Ocean Park Heights' history the land near the brow of the hill that overlooks Centinela was used as a dumping ground, both legal and otherwise. When a dumping permit existed for the site in the early 1930s the pile of rotting trash grew so large that its overflow reached Centinela. In December 1933 the Board of Public Health revoked the permit, but in July 1934 the Mar Vista Chamber of Commerce was seeking police assistance to stop the dumping that had continued despite the legal ban. In 1935 Santa Monica politicians found a way around the ban and were not only leasing the dump site but incinerating its rubbish there as well. "The foul smoke of burning debris carried on sea breezes", stated the *Vanguard*, "has penetrated inland for several miles" - to the outraged objections of downwind residents as far away as Palms. Despite such an offensive public nuisance the burning of municipal trash by Santa Monica on Mar Vista land wasn't halted until 1936.

This land was purchased in 1943 by the Los Angeles City Department of Water and Power as a site for a proposed reservoir; when a reservoir was later deemed unnecessary the land was left undeveloped. In 1967 the Department of Recreation and Parks negotiated a deal with the DWP to lease the land for \$1.00 a year to the North Venice Little League to create two baseball fields. The kids and other volunteers cleared and graded the weed-covered land, built fences around the fields, installed the plumbing for restrooms and a sprinkler system, and planted the grass. The first game was played here in 1968. In August a group of locals calling themselves the Grand View Property Owners Association filed an action in Superior Court to oust the ball parks, claiming the fields were creating a dust nuisance, the kids and their fans were noisy, and the surrounding area was littered with trash. The action was ultimately denied.

The land west of the baseball diamonds on the slope leading to Centinela was still occasionally used for illegal dumping and by teenagers as a place to neck and drink beer. In 1977 the parks department was persuaded to release this land for a community garden, and Ocean View Farms was

launched. These grounds have been expanded several times over the years to form one of the largest such neighborhood gardens in Los Angeles.



Police investigate the murder of Jeanne French, February 10 1947. Note the empty field in the background, called by some locals "The Moors"; a year after this photo was taken the Moors would be occupied by the homes of Grand View Hills.

On the morning of February 10, 1947, about where the center-field fence of the northern-most baseball field is located, a tractor driver grading the fallow field across the street for the new Grand View Hills subdivision spied something lying in the weeds. A closer inspection revealed a ghastly sight: the nude, badly battered body of a dead woman, Palms resident Jeanne French. Jeanne, a nurse and bit player in the movies, had been stomped to death and her body desecrated with an obscenity written with her lipstick. Dubbed the "red lipstick murder", the killer signed himself "B. D.". Jeanne's brutal slaying was committed less than a month after the more famous "Black Dahlia" murder, and police

investigators at the time believed the same fiend killed both women. Some modern researchers concur; both crimes remain officially unsolved.

Early in WWII the U. S. army stationed anti-aircraft guns on this rise to protect the Douglas Aircraft plant from a possible Japanese bombing raid. About three o'clock in the morning of February 25, 1942, bay area citizens were awakened by the shriek of air raid sirens and the thunder of canon fire. Dozens of searchlights were focused on a point moving southward that looked to various witnesses like a plane formation, a blimp, a flock of birds, or a cloud. The "Battle of Los Angeles" - the first anti-aircraft gunfire during a blackout of an American city - was over in a few minutes. Rumors ran rampant, among them, Japanese warplanes had been shot down over Palos Verdes. Army officials soon concluded that the hubbub had been a false alarm.

Although no casualties transpired during the shelling some local damage did occur – nearly fifteen years later. On December 17, 1956, while city employees were digging a ditch for a storm drain near the corner of Penmar and Rose avenues, a still-live shell that had buried itself in an empty lot during the Battle of L. A. was dislodged. The work crew had just cleared the area when the shell exploded. The blast broke a window of a house on Indiana Avenue and threw out debris over 100 feet, damaging the porch of the home at 1130 Rose. Fortunately, these homes were situated in Venice over a quarter of a mile from Mar Vista.

3711 Beethoven St & 2224 Walgrove Ave (8)

Not all of the lima bean fields in Mar Vista were mowed down for residential construction. With so many people moving into the area during the Boom years it was early divined that more schools would have to be built and more classrooms added to existing campuses. During the spring of 1947 the Los Angeles City School District bought the eastern-most 5.5 acres of a 20-acre bean field bounded by Beethoven Street and Victoria, Lucille and Walgrove avenues. The land had once belonged to Vicenta de Lugo, a daughter of Aqustín Machado, who acquired the plot in 1875. Four double bungalows were hastily constructed at the southwest corner of Victoria and Beethoven, and students received the first lessons taught at Beethoven Street Elementary School on December 1, 1947.

In September 1948 the L. A. School District bought the other 14.5 acres of Mrs. Lugo's former land for the site of a new junior high school. Construction of what was at first called Venice Junior High began on May 3, 1949, and the original 19 bungalow classrooms of the campus opened in time for the fall school term on September 12. The school was immediately plagued with postal problems, instigated by the fact that another Venice Junior High already existed on the campus of Venice High School. The students were allowed to establish a new name for their school by ballot. Their choice, Mark Twain, was approved by the School Board on January 12, 1950.

Three months later a 22-year-old UCLA student named Harold H. Whiting took off in a light plane from the Santa Monica Airport on a practice flight. The plane's engine died a few minutes after takeoff and he was forced to make an emergency landing. Sighting a conspicuous expanse of open

blacktop, Whiting glided his plane toward Mark Twain’s brand new playground. The novice pilot barely cleared a rear bungalow of the Beethoven grade school in setting down on the school grounds, and though he lost a wing when his plane hit the iron upright of a football crossbar he lived to fly another day. As the incident happened on a Saturday no children were present and no one was injured.

Westdale Village

The area bounded by National, Inglewood, Sawtelle, and Palms boulevards was in the 1880s a ranch known as the Stephens Homestead. In 1946 real estate developer Paul W. Trousdale bought

over 100 acres of the old homestead and built 600-plus homes on what had been for three generations productive farm land. He called this three-phase subdivision Westdale Village. One of the major residential developers in Southern California in the 1940s, he also developed the exclusive Trousdale Estates in Beverly Hills and the Rancho Vista tract in the foothills of Baldwin Hills. His Westdale homes are prime examples of the post-war California tract house. They came in five different floor plans of about 1,400 square feet each, had two or three bedrooms, and were marketed as the embodiment of the laid-back sunny California life style, homes “designed for outdoor living” that came “with the nostalgic charm of adjoining patio and scenic garden vista”.

3249 Colby Ave (9)



John Wooden, 1932, at Purdue.

Legendary UCLA basketball coach John Wooden first purchased this house in January 1949, the year after he arrived at Westwood as the Bruin’s head coach. In his 27-year career at UCLA his teams won an unprecedented 10 National Titles, including seven consecutive championships. From 1971 to 1974 UCLA won 88 straight basketball games, still the men’s NCAA record. The “Wizard of Westwood” lived in his Westdale Village home for five years. The Wooden house is one of dozens of relatively unaltered Westdale homes that still exist in the tract.

Westdale Village ad, 1946

11417 Kingsland St (10)

Actor Lloyd Bridges bought this house on February 17, 1950, just before he shot his best film, *High Noon*. He sold the house in 1959, right after wrapping the second season of *Sea Hunt*, the TV series for which he is best known today. His thespian sons Beau and Jeff did some of their growing up in this house.



Lloyd Bridges in his signature role of Mike Nelson on TV's *Sea Hunt*.

11431 Rose Ave (11)

Basketball superstar Jerry West bought this 1951 house in the summer of 1962, two years after joining the Los Angeles Lakers from college. A clutch-shooting guard, West played in the NBA 14 years and was voted to the All-Star team each one of those years. He led the Lakers to the 1972 NBA Championship, and won the MVP Award during the 1969 NBA Championship series despite playing for the losing side. He was elected to the Basketball Hall of Fame in 1980. West lived a short dribble from the Mar Vista Recreation Center, and while he lived here it was not unusual to find him shooting hoops with the neighborhood kids. He lived in this house until 1970.



The official NBA logo is based on West.

3300 Granville Ave (12)

On July 21, 1947, the Los Angeles School District bought the southwestern corner of Trousdale's tract as the site for a new grade school. When it opened in five bungalows on January 29, 1948, a staff of ten educators served a maiden class of 190 students. Mar Vista Elementary School was formally dedicated on February 9, 1950. You can get a look at the school's blacktopped playground as it appeared in the mid-70s in the skateboard documentary *Dogtown and Z-Boys*.

11430 Woodbine St (13)

The 20 acres just south of Westdale Village, running to Palms Boulevard, was acquired by the Department of Recreation and Parks in the summer of 1948 for \$100,000 as a playground. In 1956 a fork of the Westwood-Sawtelle Storm Channel burrowed through the park. City officials had originally planned to build a fence around the 23-foot deep conduit but fierce community opposition forced them to cover the channel, as they had on McLaughlin Avenue. The park's buildings, baseball diamonds, picnic areas, and parking lots would not be completed until 1961. At first known as the Mar Vista Playground, it is today the Mar Vista Recreation Center.

Kaiser Community Homes

The irregularly-shaped subdivision bounded roughly by Charnock Road, Inglewood Boulevard, Woodbine Street, and Barry Avenue, is a 292-unit Kaiser Community Homes tract developed in 1946 by Fritz B. Burns. Known as “the king of low-cost housing”, Burns was a prolific Southern California real estate developer who created several tract home communities in the area, including Westside Village and neighborhoods in Westchester and Playa Del Rey. A president of the Home Builders Association of Los Angeles and the National Association of Home Builders, his innovative assembly-line methods could produce 100 dwellings a week.



Actor Lee Phelps with the Great Garbo in *Anna Christie*, her first talkie. Cagney fans can watch Jimmy spit a mouthful of beer in Phelps face in *Public Enemy*.

3552 Barry Ave (14)

A man with the gaudy name Napoleon Bonaparte Ku-Kuck bought a Kaiser home on this lot in the summer of 1951. A tall, balding, solidly-built character actor billed on screen as Lee Phelps, he appeared in small roles in over 300 films from the late teens through the 1940s. Phelps became part of cinematic history in 1930 when Greta Garbo uttered her first on-screen lines to him in *Anna Christie*: “Gimme a viskey, ginger ale on the side, and don’t be stingy, baby”. Phelps can also be spotted in such classic films as *King Kong*, *Gone With the Wind*, *Arsenic and Old Lace*, and *The Philadelphia Story*. He still resided here when he died in 1953 at age 59. His small Kaiser house was remodeled as it is today in the late 1980s.

11930 Westminster Ave (15)

Tim Robbins threw a rock through the front window of this house and Peter Gallagher took a chain saw to the furniture inside in the 1993 Robert Altman film *Short Cuts*. Other than the remodeled Westminster-facing windows, the house of today appears the same.



Peter Gallagher about to lay waste to the living room of 11930 Westminster in Robert Altman's *Short Cuts*.

3543 Inglewood Blvd (16)

Originally part of the Ocean Park Heights subdivision, the west side of Inglewood Boulevard from Palms to Charnock was purchased by Fritz Burns and included in his Kaiser tract. An Italian-born barber named Guy Crocetti and his wife Angela bought the house at this address in 1950. The year before, their son Dino appeared in a movie for the first time. Dino was better known by his stage name,



Dean Martin with his Mar Vista parents Angela and Gaetano.

Dean Martin. Angela was active with the Italian Women's Club and rated high with that organization by consistently persuading Dean to entertain at their annual charity dinner dance. Mrs. Crocetti died on Christmas day in 1966. Guy passed away in this house the following August at the age of 72.

11729 Charnock Road (17)

In the summer of 1951 14.74 acres of land adjacent to the Kaiser Community Homes tract was subdivided into 73 lots. The land, running east to McLaughlin Avenue between Palms Boulevard and Charnock Road, had been purchased in 1903 by Frenchman Antione Revolon and planted with lima beans. A farmer from Lyons, France, Revolon came to California in 1879 in his 31st year. He and his wife were living in Palms in 1910, but by 1920 they were domiciled in the rickety house still standing at the northwest corner of Charnock and Federal Avenue. This house is reputedly the oldest in Mar Vista: it is claimed to have been built in Pasadena in 1892 and moved here in 1899. These events happened so long ago that no known building or relocation permits can be found to verify them. They are, however, partly supported by a resident of the tract now in her 80s, who confirms that the house was said to be over 50 years old when she moved into her then-new home in 1951.

In 1934 the Los Angeles *Times* covered the Revolon's 65th wedding anniversary, which was held in this house. Antoine died two years later at the age of 89; his wife Catherine lived another three years.

The property was inherited by their twin daughters, who had married a pair of brothers named McCoy. In 1948 the McCoy's sold a 20-acre plot they had also inherited to the L. A. Department of Recreation and Parks that would become the Mar Vista Recreation Center. In 1951 they sold their father's old lima bean field to subdividers – all but the corner lot and the old family home.

In 1962 Frank and Sondra Pratt bought the Revolon house. Their son Nathan Pratt was a founding member of the Z-Boys skateboard team when it was organized in 1975. Pratt placed 4th in the slalom competition of the 1975 Del Mar Nationals, the event that introduced the Z-Boys to the skateboarding world. The Pratt family still owns the house at 11729 Charnock Road.



The time is 1946 and we are looking north at the Kaiser Community Homes tract not even half-finished. The road at the southern end of the tract, near the bottom of the photo, running all the way from left to right, is Charnock. The Revolon farmhouse is at the extreme right edge of the picture, on the north side of Charnock, perched on the southwest corner of a 15-acre lima bean field. The wide road at the left running north is Inglewood Blvd.; note how it comes to a halt about a quarter of a mile past Palms, and how Palms itself is halted by another field of crops near the right edge of the photo, at what today is McLaughlin Ave. The wide street at the top, near the center and running toward us, is Barrington, as it halts right at the entrance to Paul J. Howard's California Flowerland nursery on National Blvd. All of the farmland in this picture would be gone in less than two years, lost mostly to Westdale Village on the right and, left of Inglewood, Grand View Hills.

Mesa La Ballona

Cabrillo Boulevard runs a half mile from Palms Boulevard to the city limit of Santa Monica at Dewey Street. The lots on either side of this narrow stretch of land are part of an obscure tract recorded on August 10, 1904, making it technically the second oldest subdivision in Mar Vista. Called Mesa La Ballona, the original lots ranged from .89 to 1.9 acres and until the mid-1940s were planted with crops. The first house on Cabrillo appeared in 1947, and by the end of the 50s the tract was entirely residential.

3468 Cabrillo Blvd (18)

Retired school teacher Bill Hahn and his wife Madelyn moved into this 1950 home when it was brand new and there were only six houses on Cabrillo. Born in Culver City in 1923, Bill attended La Ballona School from kindergarten through the eighth grade. (Built in 1865 at the corner of Washington Boulevard and Elenda Street, the school was the oldest in Ballona Valley; it was torn down in 1966). During WWII Hahn fought in Germany with the 12th armored division, Company C, 66th armored infantry battalion, and was awarded the Silver Star for gallantry. Madelyn contributed to the war effort too by delivering homemade cookies to the guard house on Grand View Boulevard for the soldiers who manned the artillery battery overlooking the Douglas Aircraft plant. Bill was a member of the original faculty of Mark Twain Junior High School, where he taught machine shop. He ended his career as a vice principal at Marina del Rey and Palms junior high schools.

The house next door at 3460 Cabrillo can be seen briefly in the 1980 Martin Scorsese film *Raging Bull*. It was used as a stand-in for Jake La Motta's Miami home.

From 1981 to 1998 the two-story Colonial mansion across the street at 3475 Cabrillo was the home of actress Inga Swenson. Inga was a mainstay of the Broadway stage from the late 1950s through the 1960s. She beat out Barbra Streisand for the role of Lizzie in *110 in the Shade*, and her performance was nominated for a Tony Award. She is best remembered today for her role as Gretchen Kraus, the domineering Deutch housekeeper on the TV series *Benson*. Her husband is actor-singer Lowell Harris.

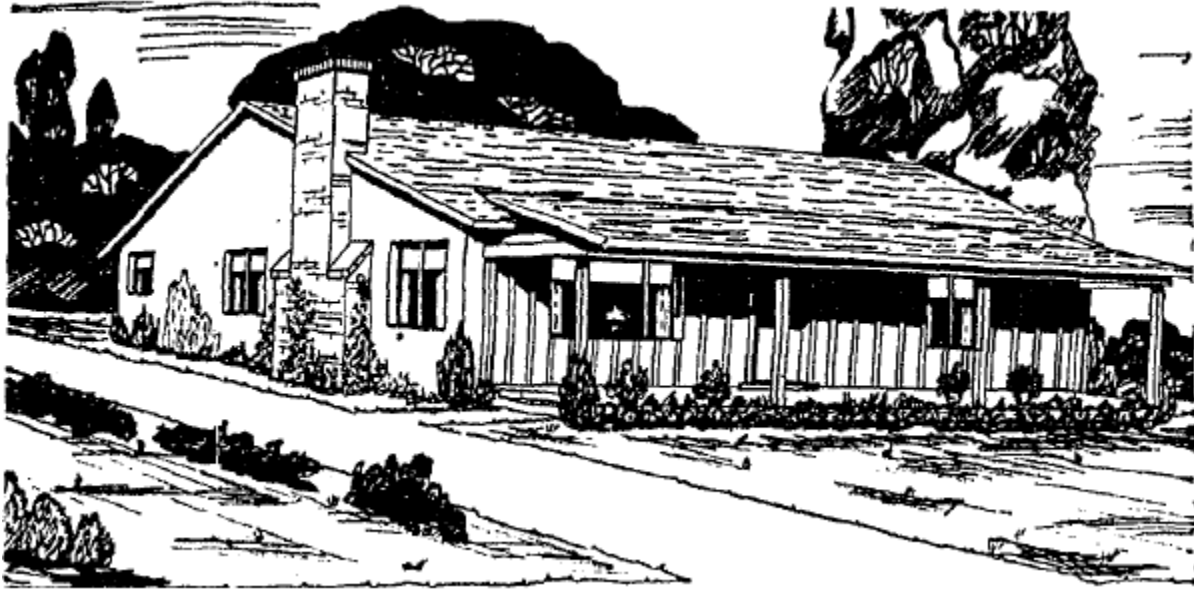
3279 Stewart Ave (19)

The northern section of the Mesa La Ballona tract was re-subdivided in 1951 and marketed as West Los Angeles Manor Homes. The 1,100 square foot dwellings came with either three bedrooms or two bedrooms and a den. They featured brick fireplaces, cedar shingle roofing, oak floors, garbage disposals, "dual floor furnaces", board and batten exterior siding, and - incinerators. The cost of



Actress Inga Swenson

these homes was \$11,000 - \$10 a square foot. The corner house at 3279 Stewart was one of three model homes for the tract and is a well-preserved example of an early-50s Southern California ranch-style tract house.



3279 Stewart was a model home for the West L. A. Manor Homes and still looks nearly identical to the drawing above.

Westcrest

The land bounded by Walgrove Avenue, Dewey Street, Meier Street, and Appleton Way was the last large commercial lima bean field to succumb to subdivision in Mar Vista. Built on former Machado land by developer, financier, and philanthropist S. Mark Taper, the 550 homes of Westcrest started going up in July 1952. The houses of the first phase went on the market in October and the formal opening for the tract was held on March 1, 1953. The three-bedroom, one-and-a-half bath, 1,100 square foot homes came in eight basic designs and were priced at \$13,350. Among the alluring features of these homes were “new freedom” knotty pine gas kitchens, covered terraces, two-car garages, thermostat controlled heating, garbage disposals, electric bathroom heaters, and built-in breakfast nooks with “upholstered plastic seats”. Like the Gregory Ain tract, the exteriors of the Westcrest homes made use of the Plochere color method to “harmonize” the neighborhood – and to help create a semblance of individuality in dwellings that were otherwise identical.



There are still a few Westcrest homes that resemble the original look of the one pictured above.

The houses of Westcrest were among some 35,000 tract homes that Taper built for middle and low-income Southern Californians in the 40s and 50s. Most of his subdivisions were located in the southeast sector of Los Angeles: Long Beach, Lakewood, Compton, and Norwalk. A \$1.5 million donation to the Los Angeles Music Center resulted in the circular theater “forum” on Grand Avenue that bears his name.

1630 Walgrove Ave (20)

Eleven acres in the southwestern corner of the Westcrest tract were set aside for a much-needed grade school. Construction began in April 1953 and Walgrove Avenue Elementary School opened on December 7. The official dedication took place on May 6, 1954.

Mar Vista Village

WINTER FESTIVAL of VALUES

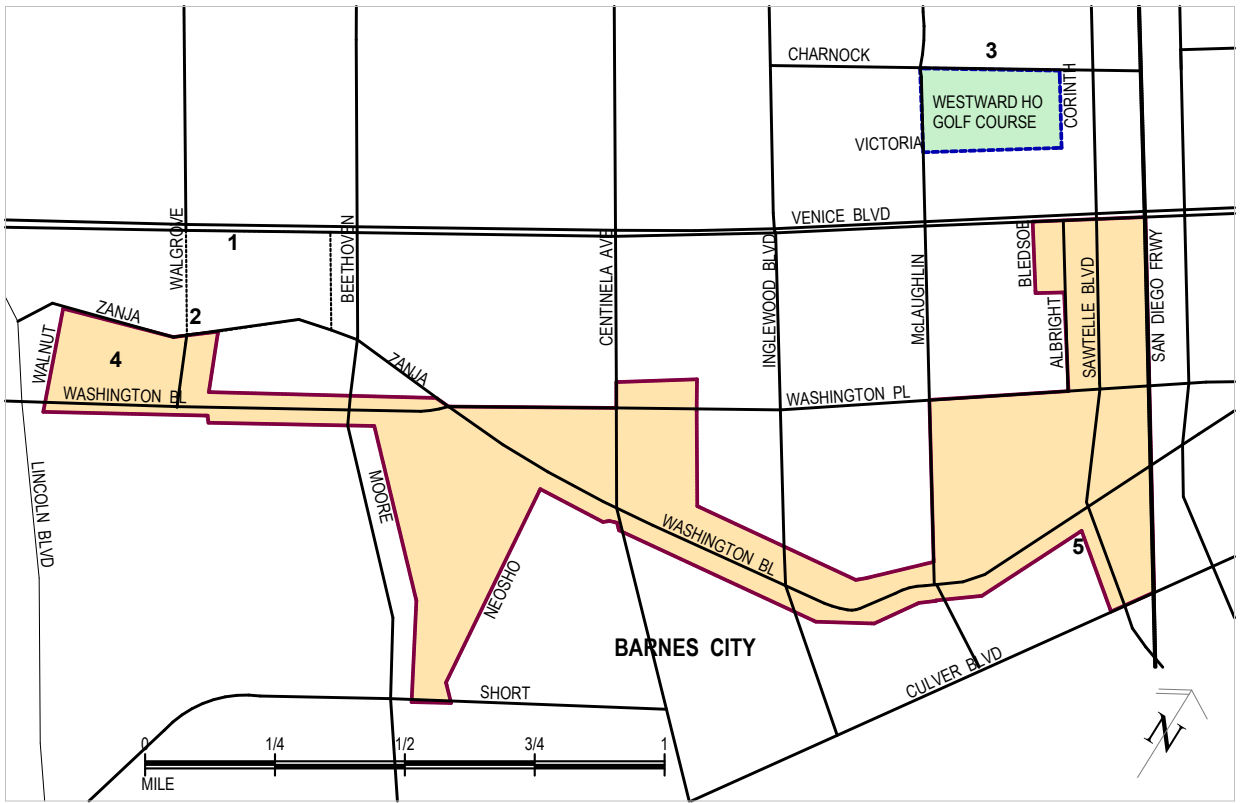
3 BIG SALE DAYS — THURS. — FRI. — SAT. — OCT. 2-3-4



- 1—Murray's Bents
- 2—Joe's Nursery
- 3—Mar Vista Gift Shop
- 4—Newman's Delicatessen
- 5—Mar Vista Outlet Store
- 6—Mar Vista Medical Center
- 7—Whitey Hardware
- 8—Mar/Old Palm Store
- 10—Marshall Television
- 11—Mar Vista Kiddy Shop
- 12—A. S. K&M, Post Store
- 13—Bill's Barber Shop
- 14—Mar Vista Cleaners
- 15—Spokane Shop
- 16—Ray Rite Furniture
- 17—Mar Vista Laundry
- 18—Pete's Gift
- 19—Mar's Beauty Shop
- 20—Mar's Barber Shop
- 22—Chas. West, Plumbing
- 23—Matteson's Dry Goods
- 24—Alfon Bakery
- 25—Mar Vista Cleaners
- 26—Mar Vista Shoe Service
- 27—Mar Vista Drive
- 28—Bob's 3 and 10
- 29—Procy Market
- 30—Mar Vista Road & Flyer
- 31—Mar Vista Post Office
- 32—Mar Vista Public Library
- 33—Bob's Pies
- 34—Bob's Appliances & Pies
- 35—Mar Vista Tugery
- 36—Dr. Grigs, Chiropractor
- 37—Frank Oil Service
- 38—Al Furniture, Tissue Serv.
- 39—Mar's Custom Pies
- 40—J. Stern, Beauty
- 41—James Kirby, Contractor
- 42—Chamber's Bookend Service
- 43—Mar's Hot Dog Stand
- 44—Yoko City—Television
- 45—Lay Barber Shop
- 46—Mar Vista Beauty Salon
- 47—Ralph Walker's Men's Wear
- 48—Mulligan's Children's Wear
- 49—Boy's Store
- 50—Pollard Bookie
- 51—Rim—The TV Man
- 52—Mar Vista Booked Events
- 53—Dr. Martin, Dentist
- 54—Dora's Wash Shop
- 55—Mar Vista Wash Shop
- 56—Mar Vista Wash Shop
- 57—Mar Vista Wash Shop
- 58—Mar Vista Wash Shop
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- 97—Mar Vista Wash Shop
- 98—Mar Vista Wash Shop
- 99—Mar Vista Wash Shop
- 100—Mar Vista Wash Shop

ACRES OF FREE PARKING — COMPLETE 1-STOP SHOPPING CENTER

The Chamber of Commerce tried to transform the commercial strip between Ingelwood and Centinela into a high-end shopping center which they touted as Mar Vista Village. The attempt failed, but the ad, published on October 1, 1952, provides a map of "downtown Mar Vista" at the close of the Big Boom. Note the center strip parking.



ODDS AND ENDS

MAP KEY



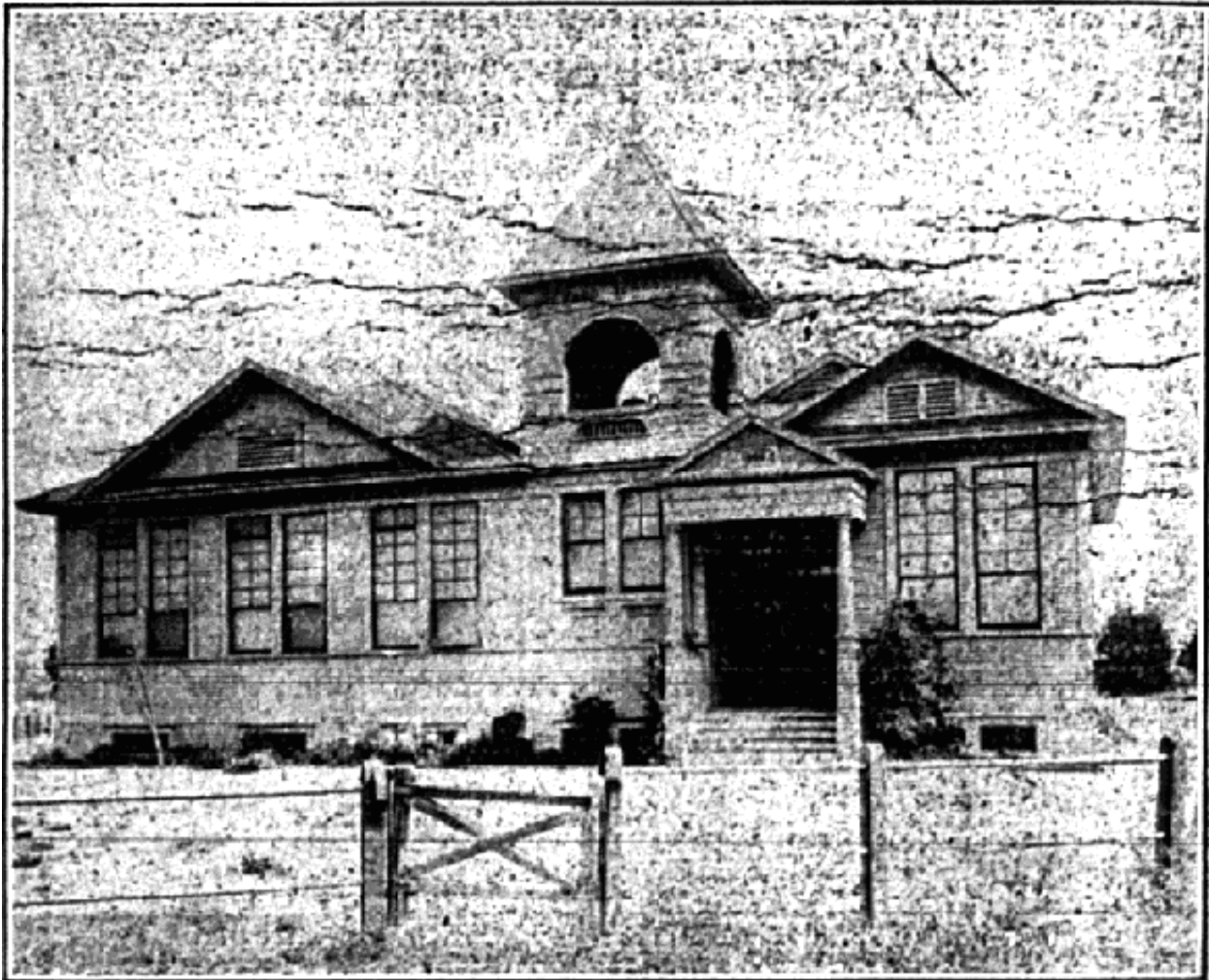
WALNUT PARK ANNEXATION

- 1. VENICE HIGH SCHOOL
- 2. MACHADO PUBLIC SCHOOL
- 3. CHARNOCK WELLS PUMPING PLANT
- 4. WALNUT PARK
- 5. BARNES ZOO

Odds and Ends

Machado Public School/Venice High School (1/2)

One of the more curious scraps of Ballona Valley history is the fact that Venice High School, at least originally, was located not in Venice but Mar Vista. The land on which the school was built was part of a 1,688-acre parcel allotted to the heirs of Augustín Machado when the Rancho was broken up in 1868. This parcel was divided among those heirs in 1875; Candelaria Machado's 60 acres of third class pasture land included the Venice High School grounds. In 1895 she granted this land, at the time planted with alfalfa and orange trees, to the Machado School District, upon which was built a one-room schoolhouse on two acres at the southwest corner of the property, today the corner of Zanja Street and Walgrove Avenue. Named the Machado Public School after its benefactor, it was the first school built in what would become the territory of Ocean Park Heights/Mar Vista. The lone teacher was a niece of Candelaria's named Ascencion Machado Minor.



The original 1895 one-room school house was replaced in 1900 by the building above. Another room was added in 1905, and a final addition was tacked on in 1925, which, including a separate 1922 brick annex, completed the campus.

In 1900 a larger building was erected on the site with a belfry; the bell that hung there called the local kids to school for many years. In 1913 additional buildings were added to the campus that would serve the community's grade school kids until June 30, 1961, when it was closed and shuttered. In 1967 the Department of Parks and Recreation built an indoor community pool where the Machado Public School had stood for 67 years. The old school bell, which had disappeared for a few years after the school was demolished in 1962, was discovered in a Board of Education maintenance yard and returned in 1969. It is mounted in the yard along Walgrove, minus the bronze plaque that read:

1895 Machado School 1961

Dedicated to the students who

Served this country

“Ring Out the Peace

To all Mankind”



The Kinney Bath house was converted into the first Venice High School in 1911; it burned down in 1914, right before the completion of the new campus on Venice and Walgrove.

The first manifestation of Venice High School opened on September 11, 1911, in the converted 1905 Kinney company bath house that overlooked the Venice lagoon, today the north side of the traffic circle where Windward Avenue, Main Street, and Grand Boulevard converge. The bath house had been abandoned three years earlier when the Venice Plunge debuted in June 1908, on the ocean front. The old bathing pavilion was intended as a temporary facility until a permanent school could be constructed. In September 1913, 29 acres of Candelaria Machado's former land, which had somehow passed from the Machado School District into private hands, was purchased for the new high school. C. H. Russell, the man who designed Venice of America's Windward Avenue, was chosen as the architect. Groundbreaking took place on March 20, 1914, and the cornerstone was set on May 29. On September 10, 1914, two months before the new school was to open, the uninsured bath house burned down. Abbot Kinney seems not to have learned anything from this experience, as he never acquired insurance for his amusement pier either, and when it perished by fire in 1920 his heirs incurred considerable financial difficulties.

The new campus, "one of the handsomest and most up-to-date grade schools in Southern California", went up at the corner of Walgrove Avenue and Venice Boulevard, just east of the Venice city limits. The school consisted of six brick buildings "in the Lombardic style of architecture" and cost the tax payers \$225,000. Fronting Venice Boulevard was the Administration Building flanked by the Domestic Arts and the General Science buildings. Behind these were the gymnasium, a cafeteria, and the manual training building that housed the carpentry, wood working, machine, and blacksmith shops. It wasn't until 1916 that Venice annexed the high school grounds from the county of Los Angeles, and Venice High finally stood in its own city. Eventually a Junior High School and an auditorium were added to the campus.



Venice Union Polytechnic High School, 1914-1933

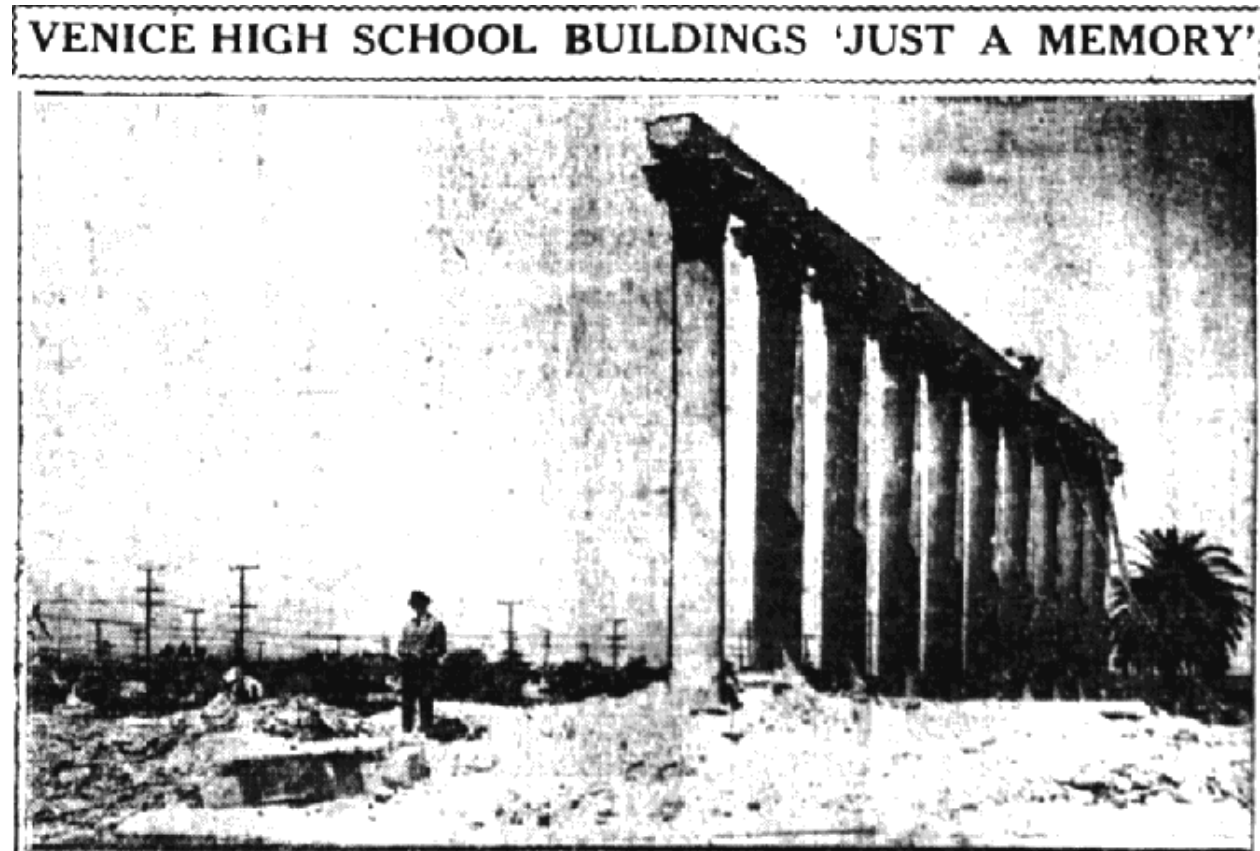
On December 3, 1920, a fountain with a graceful female statue was dedicated in front of the Administration Building. The work was created by Venice High art director Henry Winebrenner, who later added two minor figures to the sculpture. These new figures were so superior to the original central statue that Winebrenner decided to create a better one to replace it. Called "Inspiration", a Venice High School student named Myrna Williams posed for the piece. Myrna would drop out of school before graduation and become a screen actress. As Myrna Loy she appeared in over 100 films and was Hollywood's most popular female star in the mid-1930s.



The alluring Myrna Loy

The beautiful campus lasted less than a generation, becoming a victim of the Long Beach earthquake that shivered the Southland on March 10, 1933. A headline from the Venice *Evening Vanguard* on the 11th was reassuring: "Local Quake Damage Is Slight, Survey Shows"; but a little into the story we read,

“Apparently hardest hit...was Venice high school”, and more ominously, “the south wall of the west [Domestic Arts] building was badly crumbled”. A more comprehensive inspection by engineers two days later revealed that the tremor “shook the walls of three high school buildings out of plumb”, and in a story published March 22 the paper referred to these structures as “the condemned buildings”. Two weeks after the earthquake hit classes reconvened in the gymnasium, the cafeteria, and a “colony of twelve tent bungalows”. This arrangement lasted the 2 1/2 years it took to rebuild the campus.



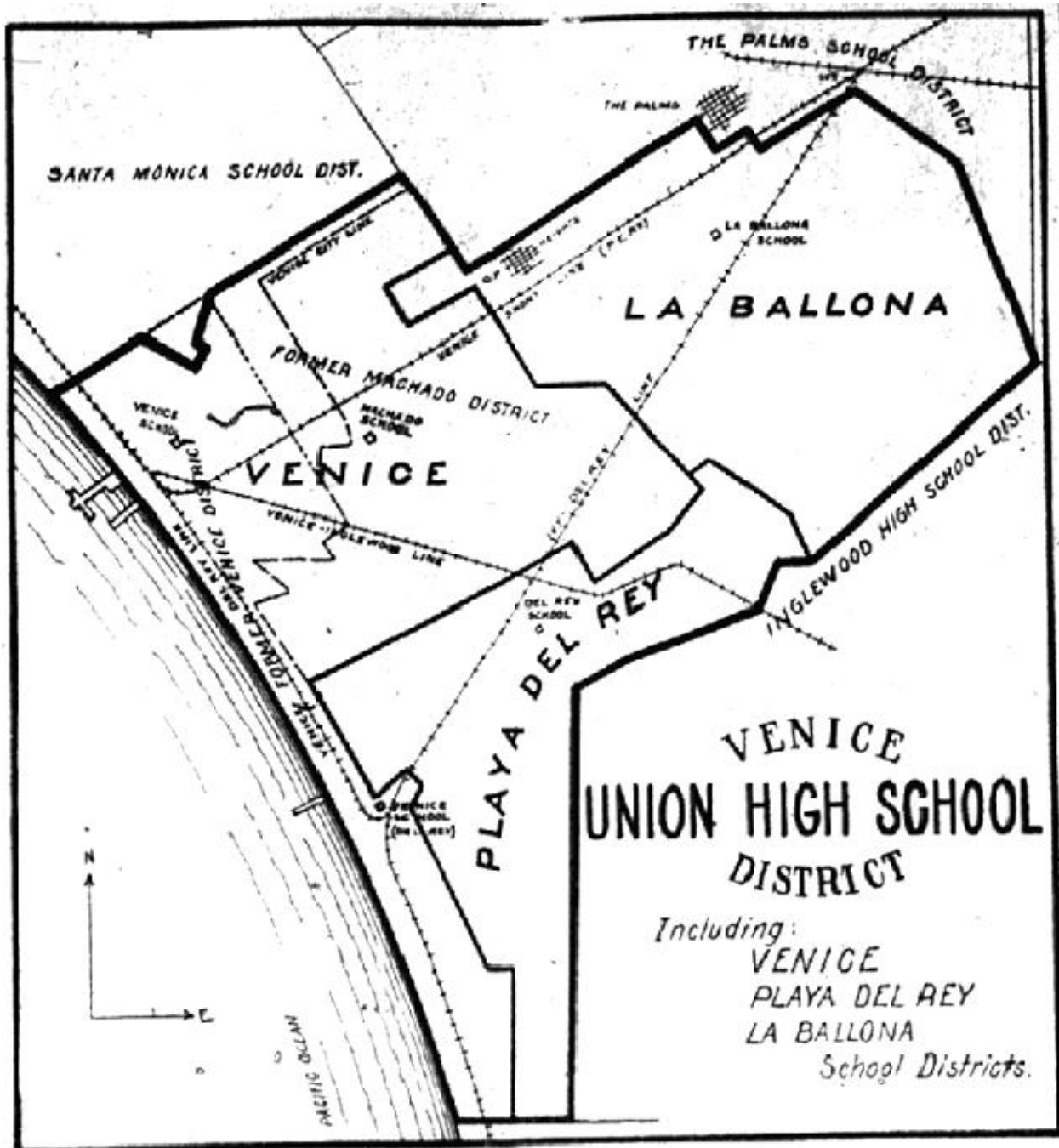
Looking more like the Roman Forum than a campus, no other building in Ballona Valley sustained so much damage from the 1933 Long Beach earthquake than Venice Union Polytechnic High School. The fellow in the photo seems to be taking it well.

Groundbreaking for the new Venice High took place on January 22, 1935. Architect John C. Austin designed the striking Art Deco Moderne campus and also functioned as the consulting engineer. The \$375,000 high school opened on September 10, 1935. The shop buildings were completed in April 1936, and the auditorium was finished a year after that. The fountain statuary was the only vestige of the original campus to survive the earthquake. The “Myrna Loy” statue could not, however, survive the repeated acts of vandalism which eventually destroyed it. A new, larger bronze replica of “Inspiration” was unveiled near the site of its predecessor on April 11, 2010.

When the 1914 campus buildings were razed, the resulting brick piles were offered to anyone willing to haul them away. There are any number of local residences with drive ways, fire places, and garden walls allegedly made from the bricks of Venice Union Polytechnic High School.



Look, ma, no hands! And yet Myrna still manages to look graceful.



1913 map showing Machado Public School (which seems to serve as a dot for the i in the word Venice) outside the limits of the city of Venice; the high school that would be built the following year would be situated even farther east. Ocean Park Heights and Palms, both just north of the Venice Short Line tracks, are represented by a patchwork of lines; Culver City does not yet exist. La Ballona School, built in 1865, is just south of Palms; in fifteen years Fatty Arbuckle's Plantation Café would be built right across the street from the school. The rail line running from Palms to Playa Del Rey is today Culver Boulevard.

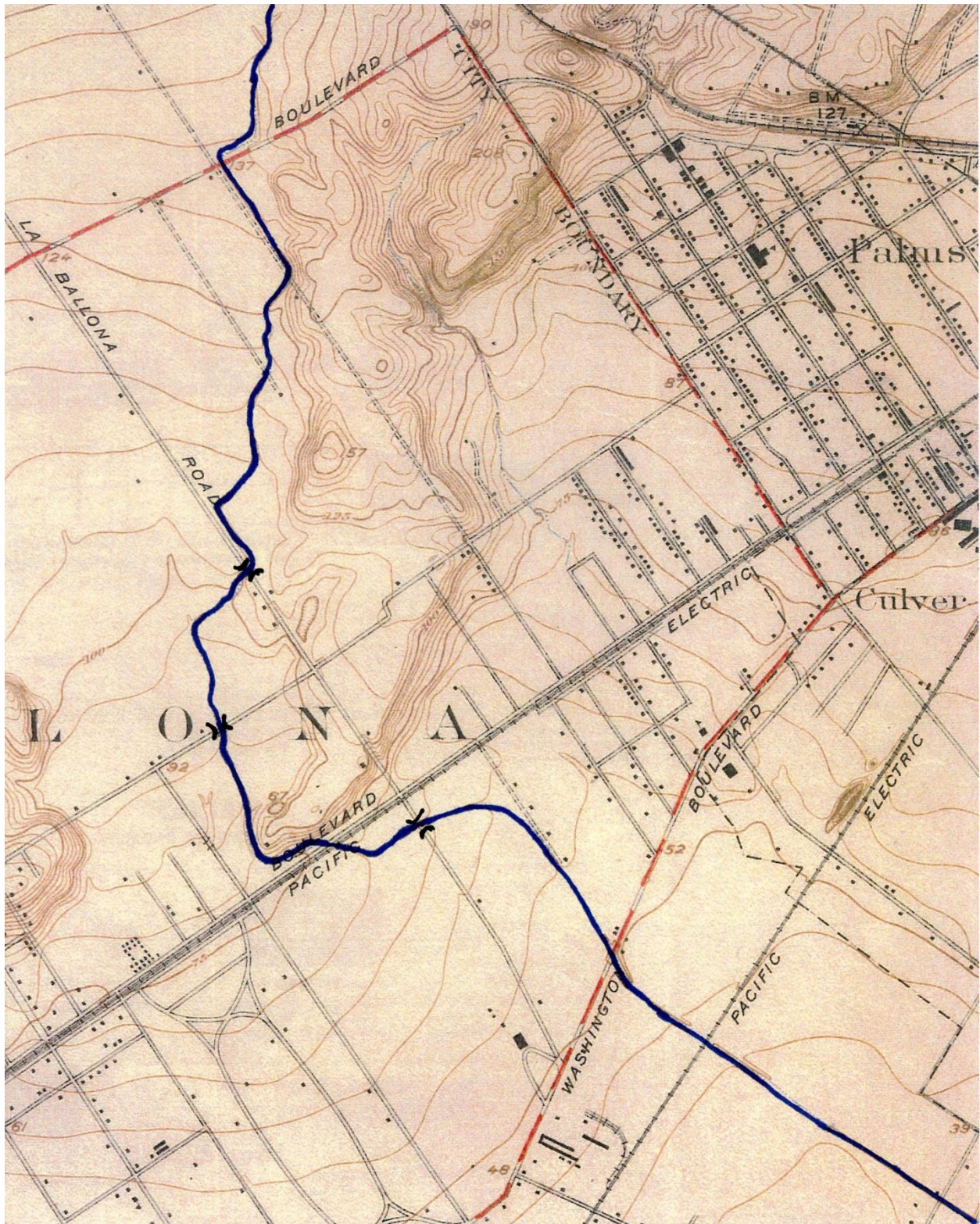
Mar Vista Creek

The concrete storm channel visible at the northeast corner of Venice Boulevard and McLaughlin Avenue was, until 1951, a waterway known locally as Mar Vista Creek. A tributary of Ballona Creek to the south, the stream was called Baloney Creek by some of the local kids who hunted crawdads, pollywogs, and frogs along its shores, and a drainage ditch by engineers. The creek flowed south along the path of the current storm channel until, about 200 feet from Venice Boulevard, it made a sweeping turn to the east to run nearly parallel with Venice for some 350 feet. It then streamed into a culvert at Venice Boulevard just west of Butler that carried the water under the Pacific Electric tracks to the south side of Venice, where it continued as an open creek easterly to a bigger ditch located roughly where the 405 Freeway runs today. It then finished its course southward to Ballona Creek. The waterway was not stable, however, for during heavy winter storms the gentle creek would wax into a raging torrent whose overflow could flood Venice Boulevard as far east as Bentley Avenue in Palms. The intersections of Venice and Sawtelle and Venice and Sepulveda would become veritable lakes in which cars could stall in three and a half feet of water. When the rain stopped and the runoff seeped away, Venice Boulevard would be covered with mud and debris three feet thick. Most of this flood water came from the Sawtelle-Westwood storm drain that carried runoff water from the north as far south as National Boulevard, where it abruptly ended, pouring its discharge into “open ditches”, one of which was Mar Vista Creek. But where did even this water come from?

Ballona Creek is the main outlet for a 130 square mile drainage basin that receives storm water from as far away as the Santa Monica Mountains and the Hollywood Hills. Up to the second decade of the 1900s, when the population in Ballona was still insignificant, most of the drainage surface in the valley was pasture, brush, or crop land, ground that could easily absorb water from even a heavy storm. But by the mid-1920s, with over a half million people settled in the valley, the land now covered with homes, businesses, schools, and miles of pavement became impervious to water. This resulted in an ever-increasing volume of runoff breaching the natural gullies and channels that led to the sea, including Ballona Creek, which periodically subjected Mar Vista, Culver City, and especially Venice to severe flooding.

The cyclical winter deluge became so acute that in 1932 a large-scale, \$6 million attempt to solve the problem was proposed: to dredge, straighten, widen, and deepen Ballona Creek and convert it to a cement storm channel. By March 1933 a more comprehensive project was advanced that included extending the Sawtelle-Westwood storm drain all the way to Ballona Creek. Work on Phase I, the Ballona Creek storm channel, began in May 1933 and was interrupted on New Year’s Day 1934 by what the *Vanguard* called “the greatest rainstorm and flood in the history of Los Angeles”. The downpour dumped five and a half inches of rain in the region in a matter of hours, destroyed the local celery crop, and drove 400 families from their homes; 62 people were drowned.

In spite of such awful proof for the need of flood control in Ballona Valley, money for the project dried up and work wasn’t resumed until May 1937, when federal funding was obtained. Before the channel could be completed another flood, even worse than the 1934 disaster, hit the area in March 1938. Standing water was five feet deep in some places, and 1,500 people were left homeless. Gushing



Mar Vista Creek traced in blue from a 1923 Geological Survey map. The unidentified boulevard at the top left is National; the first bridge (marked in black) crosses La Ballona (Sawtelle) Road; the second crosses Charnock Road; the creek flows under the Pacific Electric tracks at Venice Blvd., then re-crosses Sawtelle under the last bridge, to turn south at the yet-to-be-built Sepulveda Boulevard and run on to Ballona Creek. The Barnes Zoo, with its own railroad spur line, is at bottom center.

water ripped chunks of road pavement loose and washed out half a mile of the Pacific Electric railroad track. A week later \$3 million in Emergency Relief funds were approved to work on the Sawtelle-Westwood storm drain – funds that would ultimately be channeled elsewhere.



A typical scene in the 1930s and 40s along Venice Boulevard near Sawtelle and Sepulveda during winter rain storms. The Pacific Electric tracks, situated between the two sets of telephone poles, are completely inundated.



The Sawtelle-Westwood Storm Channel, August 1950, looking north from Washington Boulevard along McLaughlin "Avenue".

The Ballona Creek Storm Channel was finally finished by the end of 1938, but the Sawtelle-Westwood flood control project that would encompass Mar Vista Creek would be plagued by bureaucratic delays for over a decade. Preliminary work on the project had actually begun in September 1941, but with the entry of the U. S. into WWII three months later this work came to a halt for the duration of the war. The project resumed in the summer of 1949, beginning at Ballona Creek and working northward. The section of the drain from Washington Boulevard north to Venice ran as a culvert under McLaughlin Avenue. By the end of 1951 the 23-foot-deep, 40-foot wide channel had reached

Charnock Road, at which point it stalled for a while; Mar Vista Creek would still exist north of Charnock for a few more years.



Mar Vista Creek, early 1952, looking north from Charnock. The men are searching for Otis and Harry Weymouth (see pg. 72)

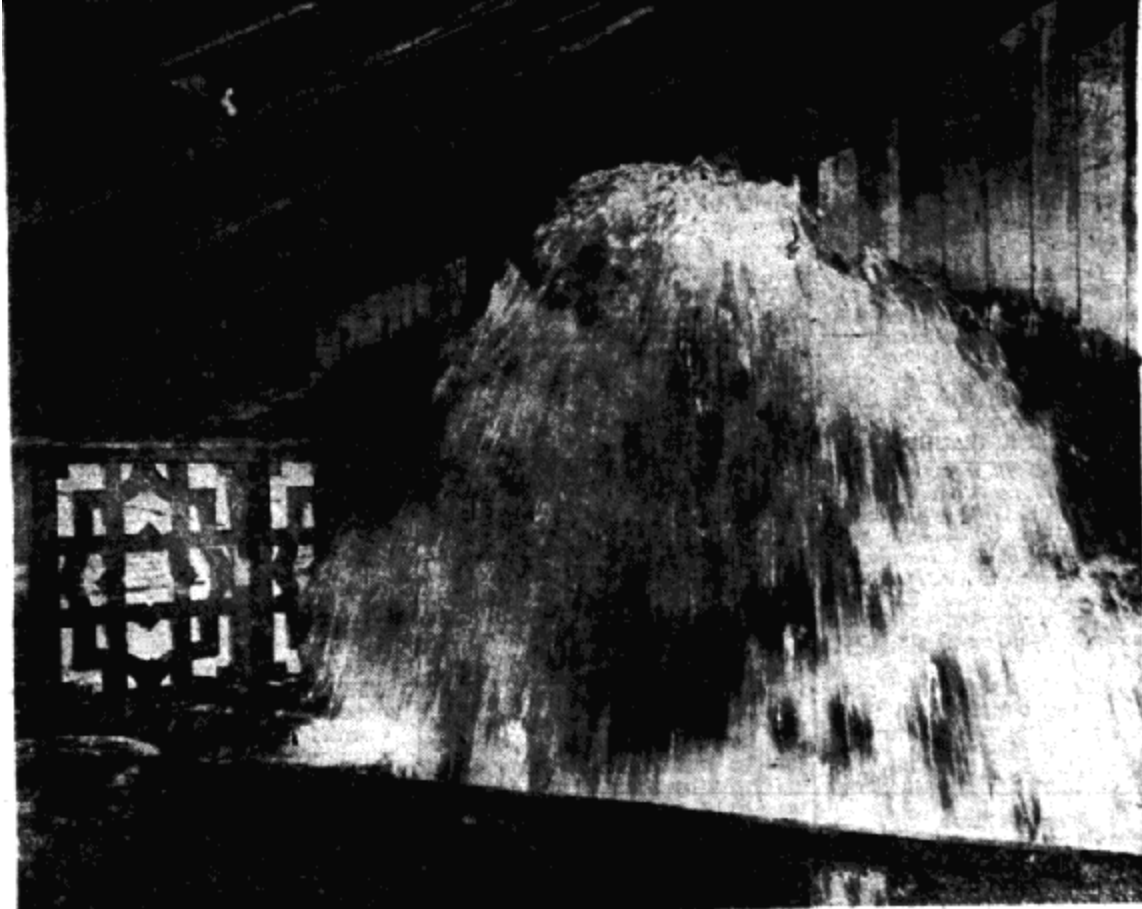
The channel successfully solved the flooding that had created “lakes” along Venice Boulevard, but they created new flood zones north of Charnock, especially at Manning and Queensland and Rose and Sepulveda. It was at the latter juncture that the car of MGM costume designer Gile Steele was swept away by flood waters in January 1952, drowning him. Yet it took another epic storm in January 1956, a deluge that poured 7.97 inches of rain in the L. A. metropolitan area and reckoned the third heaviest rainstorm in the city’s history, to spur officials to finish the Sawtelle-Westwood channel. The storm drain was completed in November 1956, and Mar Vista Creek was nothing but a memory. Annual flooding continued, however, in southwestern Culver City and Del Rey until the late 1960s, when more storm channels and sewers were completed.

Charnock Wells Pumping Plant (3)

The house at 11525 Charnock Road, just west of the Sepulveda-Westwood storm channel, seems like a fairly typical example of the single-story Spanish-influenced dwelling which abounds in the area, until one peers through the front window. The house is in fact a decorative blind that hides a pumping station that was started in 1928 and completed in 1929 by the independent Southern California Water Company to supply Mar Vista, Palms, and Venice with water. In the “back yard” of the property can be found several large reservoirs, all part of the old Charnock wells water field, an immense underground lake of fresh water.

Santa Monica began usurping Mar Vista’s water from the field in 1924, when it acquired 20 acres south of Palms Boulevard between Sawtelle and McLaughlin and began operating three wells. Local ranchers who had wells of their own in the area were outraged and took legal action, but to no avail. On June 12, 1925, the *Vanguard* told its readers of “the victory scored by Santa Monica in the suit brought by certain property owners in the vicinity of the Charnock wells to restrain the city from taking water from that basin”. The property owners sought an injunction on the grounds of priority rights; Santa Monica officials countered by claiming the city had been drawing water from Charnock wells for 30 years. Really?

Ever since the late 1890s water was a constant problem for Santa Monica. The original source of its municipal water came from the San Vicente springs north of the city, but by the turn of the century the principal source was being supplied by four independent water companies, in the days before this vital commodity was provided by city government as it is today. But these companies weren’t completely reliable, as the residents in the vicinity of 12th Street could attest who, in 1912, were obliged to buy water peddled from a wagon when the regular supply temporarily ran dry. When city officials hired a hydraulic engineer to seek a permanent solution he proposed they purchase the water companies on which Santa Monica already relied. This proposal was carried out, but it wasn’t long before the *Outlook* was reporting that the city’s “water situation” was “giving city officials as well as consumers much uneasiness.” The abundant supply of aqueduct water flowing to Los Angeles from the Owens Valley seemed like a simple solution to the problem, but L. A. steadfastly refused to sell “their” water to the city unless Santa Monica agreed to annexation. Many citizens advocated such a merger.



Interior of the "house" at 11525 Charnock Road, April 3 1929, right after the water was first turned on.

Most were opposed because of the obvious loss of independence, while others objected because it meant the local bars would have to close on Sundays. On February 26, 1915, the city filed for an application to run its own municipal water system, which was finally accomplished by September 1916.

None of these four companies got their water from the wells on Charnock Road. The first local reference to Charnock wells in connection to Santa Monica didn't surface until August 1924: "Fifty more inches of water were turned into the Santa Monica city system late Saturday from the new well on Charnock Road". An article printed a month later in September that dealt with the possibility of Santa Monica annexing to Los Angeles "due to the water problem" reveals that the tremendous resources under "the new well on Charnock Road" hadn't yet been comprehended by the city's water department. It wasn't until a year later that the full measure of the liquid bounty they had tapped into had finally been realized, as a headline from the *Vanguard* of September 11, 1925, makes clear: "Santa Monica Has Water in Great Plenty". The story went on to say that F. C. Finkle, the hydraulic engineer employed by the city, "has made an extensive and searching examination of the supply from which the Charnock wells draw their water" and declared it "virtually inexhaustible".

In April 1934 the Los Angeles Bureau of Water and Power finally extended limited service to the Santa Monica bay area. By 1941 both Los Angeles and Santa Monica got their water supply almost entirely from the Colorado River – except for some 70,000 households in Mar Vista, Venice, Palms, and Culver City that would remain dependent on the Southern California Water Company’s wells on Charnock Road for years. On June 12, 1951, the city of Los Angeles ended a decade-long struggle to acquire the distribution mains, tanks, reservoirs, and pumping plants of the Southern California Water Company, and on October 8 Mar Vistans began receiving DWP water. Culver City, however, would continue getting their water from the Charnock wells until 1958.

In the mid-1990s Santa Monica still operated three wells on six acres of the Charnock Field. They were closed down in 1996 when the carcinogenic gasoline additive MTBE was discovered in the water at dangerously high levels. Santa Monica took legal action that in 2003 resulted in Exxon, Chevron, and Shell oil companies obliged to build and operate a treatment facility to clean up the contaminated wells. The project finally went on line in 2010, and clean water was being mined by 2011.

The Walnut Park Annexation (4)

In October 1925 Mar Vista lost about 250 acres of subdivided land and the Betsy Ross Elementary School to Culver City in a brazen political maneuver known as the Walnut Park Annexation. Harry H. Culver, the founder of Culver City, was never reticent about his desire to expand the boundaries of his city. On May 11, 1920, less than six years after it had been incorporated as an independent city, the Venice *Vanguard* ran a story headlined, “Culver City Anxious to Spread Out”. The article went on: “Annexation ambitions are stirring leading residents [read Harry Culver] in Culver City. Many acres lying west of that city should become a part of it by annexation, these boosters assert, and some are giving so far as to urge that everything west to the city limits of Venice should be included.” In July 1925 Culver tried to realize these ambitions by announcing an annexation effort of the large section of unincorporated land from the western limits of Culver City to Lincoln Boulevard, between Venice and Culver boulevards, most of which was considered Mar Vista territory. On July 27 an election was held but the annexation attempt was defeated. Then Culver got cagey. Knowing he didn’t have the votes of most of the residents in the coveted area, he cherry-picked the region to include only the business districts, the Betsy Ross School, and the few small residential sectors he knew to be largely pro-annexation. His gerrymandering resulted in a “shoestring strip” along Washington Boulevard that connected Culver City to Walnut Park, a 21-acre parcel of unimproved, unpopulated land at the northeast corner of Walnut Avenue and Washington Boulevard. The legal documents were engineered and the matter was again set before the voters. However, “the voters” did not include the citizens of Mar Vista, or of Culver City, or any of the entrepreneurs who owned businesses in the carefully chosen terrain but only people who resided therein. The issue was decided on October 1, 1925, by 134 people at the voting booth; the tally was 84 to 50 for annexation.



Harry Hazel Culver, no doubt contemplating his next swindle.

There are some who believe Culver masterminded the annexation to set up a dog track at Walnut Park. And indeed, the “Culver City Kennel Club” did build such a track, with a grandstand along Washington Boulevard that held 8,000 spectators, but not until 1932, seven years after the election. The quarter-mile oval racecourse offered “option betting” and was an immediate hit with the public. Police officials were less enthusiastic and promptly arrested track employees for violating state gambling laws. Thus began a 5-year legal tug of war that ultimately led to the end of greyhound racing in California.



The Culver City Speedway (1931- 1954) looking east down Washington Boulevard from just east of Lincoln.

As early as November 1932 the track was being shared by motorcycle racers, and by May 1933 such scooter luminaries as Sprouts Elder and Bo Lissman were thrilling racing fans every Friday night. The grounds were also used for swaps meets, auctions, and an occasional two-day Venice Boy Scout “Camp-o-ree”. In 1941 the facility was converted into the Culver Legion midget racecar track, which was considered one of the fastest on the Pacific Coast by the “65 daredevil race drivers of the United Midget Car Association”. By 1948 the track had steeply banked turns and was called the Culver City Speedway; fans were enticed there on Saturday nights with a demolition derby called “jolting jalopies”.

On April 28, 1954, Douglas Aircraft announced plans to buy the racetrack for \$400,000 and build a sub-assembly plant on the site. Groundbreaking took place on July 27, 1955, and the \$2 million facility opened on December 12. By the late 1950s the plant was participating in the Space Race working on missile and rocket systems. Douglas Aircraft closed its Culver City plant in 1994. Five years later a 150,000 square foot Costco Wholesale megastore was built on the grounds of the old dog track.

Whatever Harry Culver’s original intentions were in 1925 – and they were probably nothing more than to add as much territory to his city as he could get away with – the tangible result of the

Walnut Park Annexation was to spur the residents of Mar Vista to action. Seven months later the Chamber of Commerce voted unanimously to join Los Angeles.

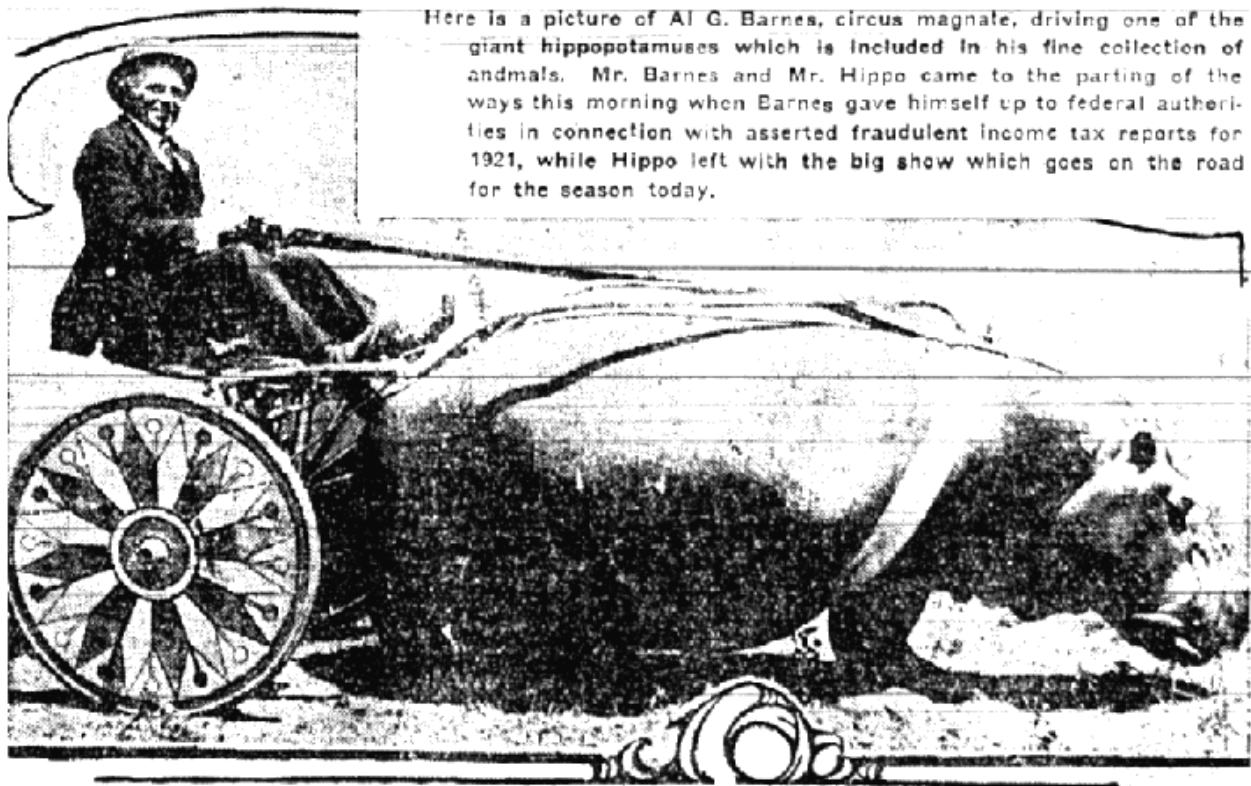
Barnes City (5)

The area just south of Washington Boulevard at the time of Walnut Park Annexation was known as Barnes City. Al Barnes was a circus impresario whose mammoth wild animal show first performed in Los Angeles in 1911. Barnes needed 30 railroad cars, 21 animal wagons, and 93 baggage horses to transport his traveling big top, which performed in the western United States, Mexico, and Canada. At the end of the 1911 season he chose the city of Venice as the site for his winter quarters, which lasted from late November to early March. During these months of inactivity the Barnes Circus would be converted into a zoo that featured the exotic beasts of his circus, among them elephants, hyenas, bears, “sacred cattle”, tigers, lions, monkeys, seals, and a hippo, the best trained of which were “educated beyond the power of human comprehension.”



The Barnes Zoo. Washington Boulevard runs diagonally left to right in the foreground.

This huge menagerie did not have the unanimous approval of the Venice citizenry. Principal opposition came from light sleepers who complained that the unremitting growls, roars, and screeches emanating from the zoo disturbed their slumber. Other grievances were prompted by an occasional critter escaping captivity, including a 10-foot python and a tiger. In 1920 Barnes purchased part of a 780-acre ranch situated on the south side of Washington and west of Sawtelle boulevards that became known as Barnes City. His zoo was located just west of Sawtelle between Washington and Culver boulevards. The borders of Barnes City would eventually extend west to Lincoln Boulevard and south to Ballona Creek to comprise nearly four square miles.



No, this is not Cal Worthington and his dog Spot, but Al Barnes and Lotus, "the world's largest hippo". Al's zoo also featured Tusko, "the world's largest elephant"; clearly, size mattered with Barnes.

Culver City's Walnut Park annexation occurred a month before the circus settled into its winter quarters in November 1925 and, leery of a similar move on his own land, Barnes organized an election to incorporate Barnes City as an independent municipality. This election took place in February 1926, and with the push from all the circus/zoo employees casting yea votes the measure passed by just 18 votes, and Barnes City became a burgh. Legend has it that Barnes let the monkeys in his zoo cast votes, and if true we can be sure that any simian ballots cast were interpreted as pro-incorporation votes.

Barnes appointed his own brother as the mayor of his metropolis and filled the other municipal posts with equally loyal cronies.

Not all the residents of Barnes City were happy with this outcome and Barnes' outrageous tactics, which they called "peanut politics." The opposition complained he had allowed "his midgets, his freaks, and 20 hoboes" to vote. When in March the circus departed for the season the anti-Barnes faction orchestrated another election, this time to annex Barnes City to Los Angeles. Without the advantage of the midgets, freaks, hoboes, and monkeys voting against the measure, Barnes City became a community of Los Angeles in September, just seven months after it had achieved independence. The outcome at the polls was 261 to 153.

Barnes had announced even before this election that he would move his zoo and winter quarters elsewhere, as his Ballona acreage was by then too valuable to serve as a mere stomping ground for his animals, no matter how well educated. He subdivided the 70-acre zoo site into 430 residential lots and in 1927 relocated his menagerie to Baldwin Park, just east of El Monte. He sold his circus in 1929 and died two years later. Al's former domain continued to be referred to as Barnes City on formal maps as late as the 1950s.

Mar Vista's Racial Covenants

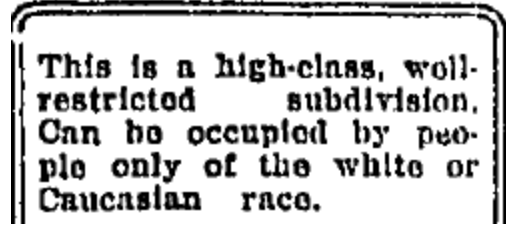
One of the unpleasant – but hardly surprising – discoveries made in researching this book was the racial covenants that were a standard clause in the deeds of Mar Vista subdivisions prior to the 1950s. The first instance of this shameful practice can be found in the community's very first neighborhood, Ocean Park Heights, in the second paragraph of the "express conditions" section: "said property shall be occupied for residence purposes only, and shall not be rented, conveyed to, nor occupied by any person of African descent."

It's both instructive and appalling to see how the wording of this restriction evolved over the years to become ever more exclusive. In the deeds of the Palm Place lots of 1912, for instance, the phrase "any person of African descent" was replaced by the more comprehensive "can be occupied by people only of the white or Caucasian race." The Gregory Ain Tract's "Declaration of Establishment of Conditions, Restrictions, Etc." of 1948 does this one better: "any person other than one *wholly* of the Caucasian or white race", just in case someone like president Obama tried to finagle his way into the neighborhood. The 1947 Westdale Village Declaration of Restrictions used the scattershot approach: "by any person of African or Asiatic descent or by any person not of the white or Caucasian race."

This "white or Caucasian" expression became the stock term; the next stage of refinement came with the conditional verbs. The single Palm Place verb "occupied" was expanded in the 1923 Mormon Hill deeds to "no part of said property shall be *leased, sold, demised, or conveyed to or become* the residence of or the property of anyone not of the Caucasian or white race." Westdale Village put it this way: "shall be *used or occupied or be permitted to be used or occupied*, in whole or in part..." Presumably, that covered every imaginable possibility.

Another evolutionary aspect of these covenants concerned the *duration* of the conditions. The restrictions of Palm Place deeds terminated on “January 1 A.D. 1925”, a mere thirteen years. Those of the 1904 Ocean Park Heights deeds “shall be in force and effect until March 1st, 1920” –

fourteen years. But on February 16, 1920, two weeks before the restrictions were to elapse, every property owner in the tract signed a new agreement that extended the covenants to the end of 1935. Half of the ten conditions in the deeds of the 1923 Mormon Hill tract “shall be in effect until January 1, 1948”, a quarter of a century; but the other five, including the Caucasian or white race clause “shall be perpetual”, i.e., forever and ever throughout all eternity. The 1948 Ain Tract contained sixteen conditions, all but two of which would terminate on February 1, 1973, ten days shy of 25 years. The one forbidding the erection of oil derricks on the lots and the Caucasian or white race clause “shall be perpetual.” There was, however, an exception: “this covenant shall not prevent occupancy by domestic servants of a different race domiciled with an owner or tenant.” That was white of them.



This paragraph is from an L. A. *Times* ad for the Marshall Manor tract, 1922, a time when racial discrimination was overt and legally sanctioned.

The U. S. Supreme Court abolished racial covenants in May 1948. Yet in an addendum to their Declaration of Restrictions filed four months later on September 1, 1948, Westdale Village modified two conditions, neither of which had anything to do with the racial restrictions, which were left intact. And in 1950 the Associated Home Furnishers, subdividers of tract 15663 just east of the Gregory Ain tract, recorded the mother of all racial covenants - *over two years after they were outlawed*: “no lot in said tract shall at any time be lived upon by a person whose blood is not entirely that of the Caucasian Race, and for the purpose of this paragraph, no Japanese, Chinese, Mexican, Hindu or any person of the Ethiopian, Indian, or Mongolian Races shall be deemed to be a Caucasian.”

One of the first Mar Vista subdivisions to abolish racial covenants was the Peerless Building Corporation’s development of the Westward Ho Country Club land. In the five-page Declaration of Restrictions filed on November 30, 1951, there is a clause prohibiting corrals, livery stables, and the raising of poultry and small game, but no conditions restricting occupancy. Of course, ridding restrictive covenants in deeds is one thing, getting owners to sell or rent homes to persons not of the white or Caucasian race is quite another. The historical record shows that this process had taken tentative root in Mar Vista by the end of 1963, when the Los Angeles *Times* reported that 3.4% of Mar Vista’s population had a Spanish surname (!) and the “Negro” population of the community amounted to one tenth of one percent. There were no statistics provided for Hindus, Ethiopians, or Mongolians.

The Centinela Bend (see Big Boom map)

Anyone who has traveled north on Centinela Avenue is aware that the road bends eastward in a long arc as you pass the Santa Monica Municipal Airport, and when the road straightens back out Centinela has become Bundy Drive. So what gives?

Until the mid-1930s Centinela, the east/west boundary line between Santa Monica and Mar Vista north of Dewey, was a narrow, unpaved, weed-choked lane. Just *how* narrow is not certain, but some idea may be formed from a Venice *Vanguard* article published on January 21, 1935, which reported that the street was to be paved from Washington Place to Pico and widened - *to 40 feet*. "The present condition of the road", the paper noted, "has resulted in a number of deaths in traffic accidents, particularly at Venice and Centinela." The danger of that intersection notwithstanding, it would be another 14 years before traffic lights appeared there.

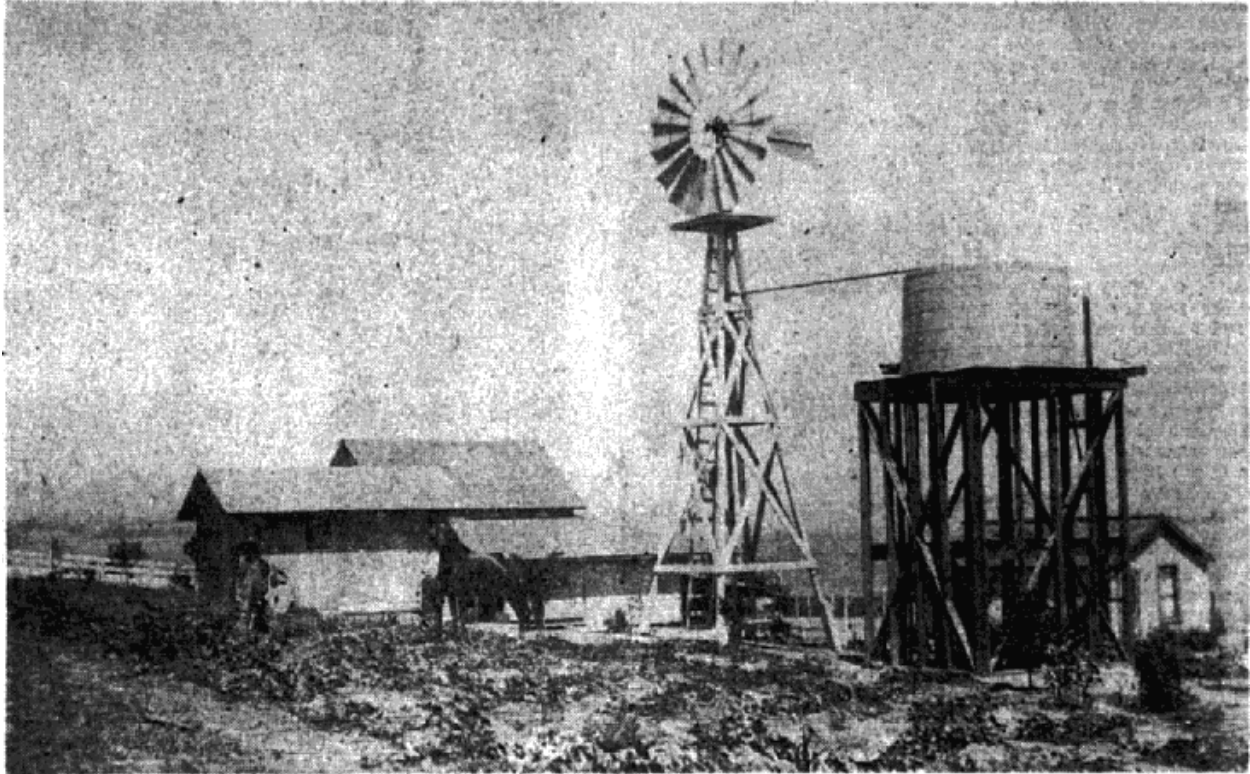
At the end of the 1800s, on the east side of Centinela and running north from National Boulevard, was a 60-acre ranch owned by Alonzo Whitaker. Born in 1856, Lon moved from Indiana to Ballona Valley in the early 1880s. In 1894 he was elected the superintendent of streets in Santa Monica, and by the turn of the century had established his farm just north of the future Ocean Park Heights tract. In 1909 Whitaker hurt his leg while clearing his land with a "cyclone weeder" and blood poisoning set in. He died in his ranch house, located near the northeast corner of National and Centinela, two weeks shy of his 53rd birthday.

Opposite Whitaker's farm on the west side of Centinela was a 173-acre ranch owned by a fellow named Herbert W. Stanton. In 1922 the U. S. Government decided to build an aviation field in the bay area, and in April settled on Stanton's land when he agreed to lease the property to the city of Santa Monica, which in turn promised to lease it to the Federal Government for \$1 a year. Under this arrangement the proposed "airdrome" would not only be "the headquarters for the western United States Army Officers Reserve Corps, flight section, and the National Guard aviation unit", but would also be open to commercial aviation and private planes. It was named Clover Field in memory of Lieutenant Greaver Clover, a Los Angeles area pilot who lost his life flying over France during WWI. The Santa Monica Airdrome-Clover Field was dedicated on April 15, 1923.

In 1926 it became a municipal airport when the city of Santa Monica bought the land from Stanton for \$860,000. Douglas Aircraft, which had a manufacturing plant on Wilshire and 22nd Street in Santa Monica, moved its operation to Clover Field at this time. In 1929, six years after aircraft had been routinely taking off from and landing at Clover Field, airport officials finally got around to paving the heretofore dirt-packed runway.

In 1939 Douglas Aircraft was awarded a contract to build the four-engine B-19, a giant bomber that needed an extra-long runway to take off. To accommodate the huge warplane it would be necessary to extend the airstrip east by rerouting Centinela Avenue in a northeastward arc and realigning it with Bundy Drive. In December 1940 an ordinance condemning part of the old Whitaker farm was adopted, and the ranch house at 2956 Centinela, "a monument to the gracious living of early

California days”, was torn down. The B-19 bomber made its historic test flight from Clover Field on June 28, 1941.



The Whitaker Ranch farm house, today the site of a Texaco gas station at Bundy and National. Windmill-powered water wells and gravity-feed water tanks were common in Ballona Valley in the late 1800s and early 1900s.

Whitaker’s widow Katherine and his daughter Alice were still living in the ranch house at the time it was condemned. They moved to a five-acre compound at 3450 Mountain View Avenue, where Katherine died in 1952. Alice married Edwin A. Johnson, a Texas-born realtor and one-time president of both the Venice Realty Board and the Mar Vista Chamber of Commerce. They spent the rest of their lives at the Mountain View address.

During WWII the 60 acres that comprised the Clover Field/Douglas Plant were camouflaged by a vast network of “chicken wire, feathers, and spun glass” supported by poles and high-tension cables. Designed by landscape architect Edward Huntsman-Trout to appear, from the air, like a housing tract, the burlap streets, pasteboard homes, and combustible lawns of the subterfuge also included a fake replica of the Douglas Plant and Clover Field just south of the hidden originals. The plant was so cleverly disguised that several near-accidents occurred when even experienced Army fliers had difficulty locating the airstrip while landing at the airport. After the war the massive shebang was pulled down and stored

on site. Before a decision could be made as to how best dispose of the clutter, a fire, “believed to have been started by a lit cigarette or a carelessly thrown match”, made this decision somewhat easier.

In 1951, literally a stone’s throw from the old Whitaker Ranch, a small drive-in eatery opened at 3030 Bundy Drive that, in 1954, was expanded into a stylish restaurant and bar called Huddle. The owner, Paul S. Cummins,

hired architects Arment & Davis, the firm that would produce the Mar Vista Bowl in 1961, to design the building.

The result was the futuristic glass-enclosed Skyroom Cocktail Lounge that overlooked Santa Monica airport, where loungers could take in views of the ocean and the mountains and get tight. In 1963 the building, the land, the fixtures, and even the liquor license went up for auction during a bankruptcy sale. Instead of being dismantled, however, the place reopened as The Steps (“because” said the *Times* reviewer “that’s what you have to take to get up to it”) and specialized in prime rib. But apparently the food and the view didn’t justify the climb, for two years later the whole kit and caboodle was back on the chopping block, “ordered sold as a package by board of directors of Small Business Investment Corp.” After waiting two years for a taker, the board of directors approved another piecemeal auction in 1968. In 1970 this unique architectural gem was converted, with lots of stucco, into the fairly conventional office building that still exists today.



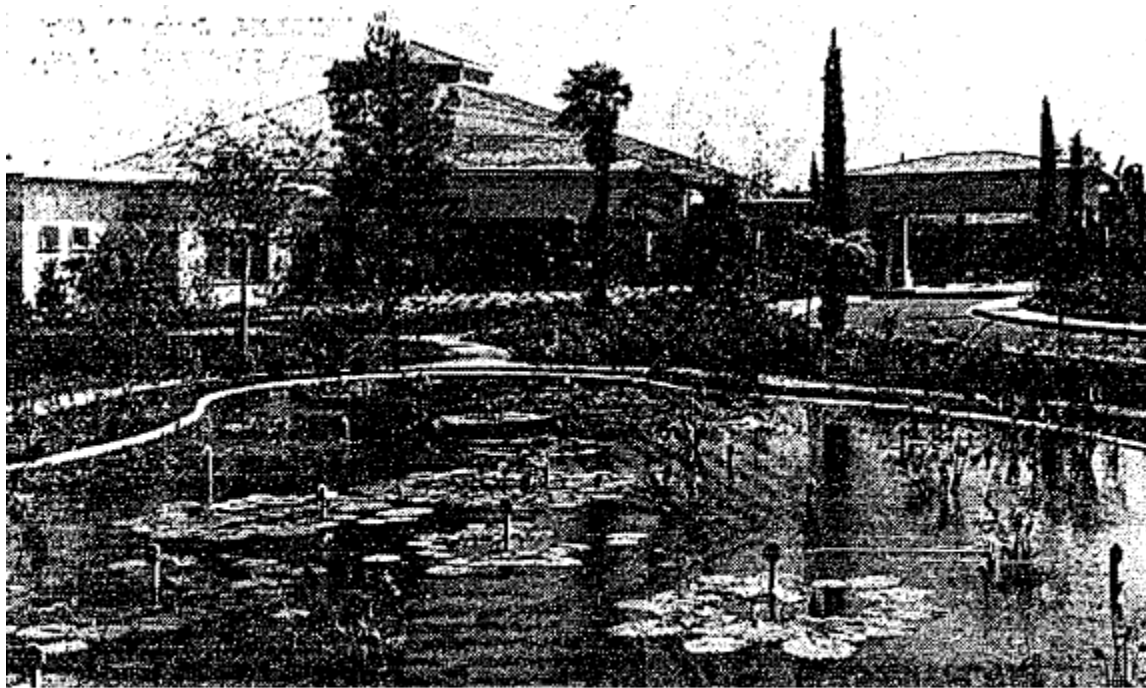
The Skyroom Lounge, Huddle Restaurant, circa 1955.

California Flowerland (see Big Boom map)

Horticulturist Paul J. Howard opened his first Flowerland nursery in 1923 near 7th and Union streets in downtown L. A. In 1939 he bought forty acres of Mar Vista farmland at National Boulevard, running south between Inglewood and present-day Barrington, and on June 29, 1940, opened Paul Howard’s California Flowerland. “The Gateway to Better Gardens” was the largest retail nursery in the state. It had an octagonal salesroom 100 feet in diameter, four large greenhouses, and several pools growing water plants. The acres of shrubs, fruit trees, and display beds included exotic plants from around the globe. The Garden of a Thousand Roses had some 250 varieties among its 1000 blooms, several of which Howard bred himself. Also on the grounds was a showpiece five-acre botanical garden with virtually every native California plant and flowering shrub.

In 1948, perhaps influenced by the Westdale Village tract directly east of his nursery, Howard subdivided the southern 22 acres of his land to create Flowerland Park. This project extended Barrington Avenue, which had formerly ended at National Boulevard, south to McLaughlin Avenue at

Federal. Allaseba Street, at the southern edge of the tract, is named after Howard's wife. Howard landscaped his tract with a variety of beautiful flowering trees, most of which still stand. At the same time he built Colonial Corners, the commercial buildings at the four corners of Barrington and National. Each of his original American Colonial-style buildings still exist. Flowerland Park opened on May 22, 1949.



NEW NURSERY IN SETTING OF GARDEN-LIKE BEAUTY

Lovely as a garden is Paul J. Howard's new California Flowerland. In the foreground is one of the 40-acre nursery's pools stocked with water plants. Behind it is the attractive salesroom with porte cochere reached by the winding driveway seen at right rear. Expansive display beds of colorful blooms make the nursery a real showplace.

The house at 3802 Stoner has an interesting history. Built in 1950, it was purchased in October of that year by a family named Hagerman. In 1953 the *Times* ran an article with the headline, "Party Crashers Cause Near Riot." It seems that a private birthday celebration held by 17-year-old Ralph Hagerman was interrupted by "a shouting gang of 150 youths" who arrived "in a cavalcade of more than 50 hot-rod automobiles" and turned the place upside down. It took more than a dozen policemen to restore order; 18 kids were arrested.

The next owner of the house was radio and TV writer, director, producer, and actor William D. Gordon. This multi-talented man started his career in 1936 writing scripts for radio programs like *The Tommy Dorsey Show* and *The Cisco Kid*. He directed his first television show in 1939 in the days of live broadcasts, and worked on such series as *Maverick*, *The Alfred Hitchcock Hour*, *The Fugitive*, and *Ironside*. Gordon also acted occasionally; his most memorable role came in 1960 when he played the

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of extreme importance to those who require a homesite of superior advantages.

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Building costs have been reduced considerably. Many architects and contractors are now in the position to build for you a better house at less cost and in less time than at any period since the war. A lot in Flowerland Park is the ideal location for your home. Flowerland Park adjoins the nationally famous Paul J. Howard's California Flowerland.

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HOW TO DRIVE TO FLOWERLAND PARK TODAY

Above is a display ad for Flowerland Park, horticulturalist Paul J. Howard's real estate subdivision. Note how Barrington ends at National Boulevard; it was the opening of Flowerland Park that led to the extension of Barrington to McLaughlin. Below is a drawing of the first of four large commercial buildings built by Howard known today as Colonial Corners, all of which still exist. The attractive buildings were considered part of the Flowerland Park tract.



INITIAL STRUCTURE—Design of first building being built at southeast corner of Barrington Ave. and National Blvd. in shopping center that is to be portion of Flow-

erland Park, slated to be opened today. The tract, comprising single-family dwelling sites and income-property lots, is being developed by Paul J. Howard Co.

grotesquely misshapened head doctor in "Eye of the Beholder", one of the very best episodes in *The Twilight Zone* series. Gordon owned this house for nearly five years in the early 1980s.

Paul Howard died in 1966. California Flowerland closed three months later and was put up for sale. In 1968 the last large undeveloped privately-owned acreage in Mar Vista underwent subdivision. The result was the first high-priced “prestige” tract houses in Mar Vista, the Barrington Homes. These “residences of distinction” had from 3 to 6 bedrooms, up to 4 baths, two-story entry halls, formal dining rooms, and sunken living rooms. They offered “estate elegance, townhouse convenience, and custom quality” and went on sale in 1969, starting at \$57,850. Most of the Barrington Homes, located in the two cul-de-sacs just north of Navy Street between Inglewood and Barrington, are still around and in good shape.



William D. Gordon, 3802 Stoner, playing a hood in the *Twilight Zone* episode “Nervous Man in a Four Dollar Room”.

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in west los angeles**

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BARRINGTON HOMES. An enviable setting — the priced, level-terrain site of the historic Paul J. Howard gardens. Here, without even needing a freeway, you are within ten minutes of Beverly Hills, Century City, the Pacific Palisades and ocean beaches.

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barrington homes

Sales Office: corner Barrington Ave. & National Blvd.
Open daily and weekends from 11 a.m. Phone 336-2757

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Much of the information used in this book came from the archives of the *Venice Daily* (1907-1916) and *Evening* (1916-1969) *Vanguard*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and to a much lesser extent the *Santa Monica Evening Outlook*. The *Times* is fully indexed and accessible on-line. The *Outlook* is indexed from 1875 to 1916 and is also available on-line. The *Vanguard* is not indexed, which is unfortunate because for many years its publishers regarded Mar Vista as a suburb or territory of Venice and ran hundreds of items that do not appear in the *Times* or the *Outlook*. It is the closest publication Mar Vista ever had to an official historical record and is an essential resource. The *Vanguard* archives are available on microfilm at the Culver City Julian Dixon Library at 4975 Overland Avenue, Culver City, and the Los Angeles Central Library at 630 W. 5th Street, Los Angeles.

Public Records:

Information about individual houses, the lots and tracts on which they were built, and their various owners are available in the Map Books at the Assessor's Archives office at 222 N. Hill Street, Los Angeles, and in the Deed Books at the County Registrar-Recorder's office at 12400 Imperial Highway, Norwalk. From the latter site one can also examine birth, death, and marriage certificates. This book made copious use of these materials.

Another excellent source of information is the U. S. census records, available on-line at the Los Angeles Central Library from the Ancestry Library Edition database.

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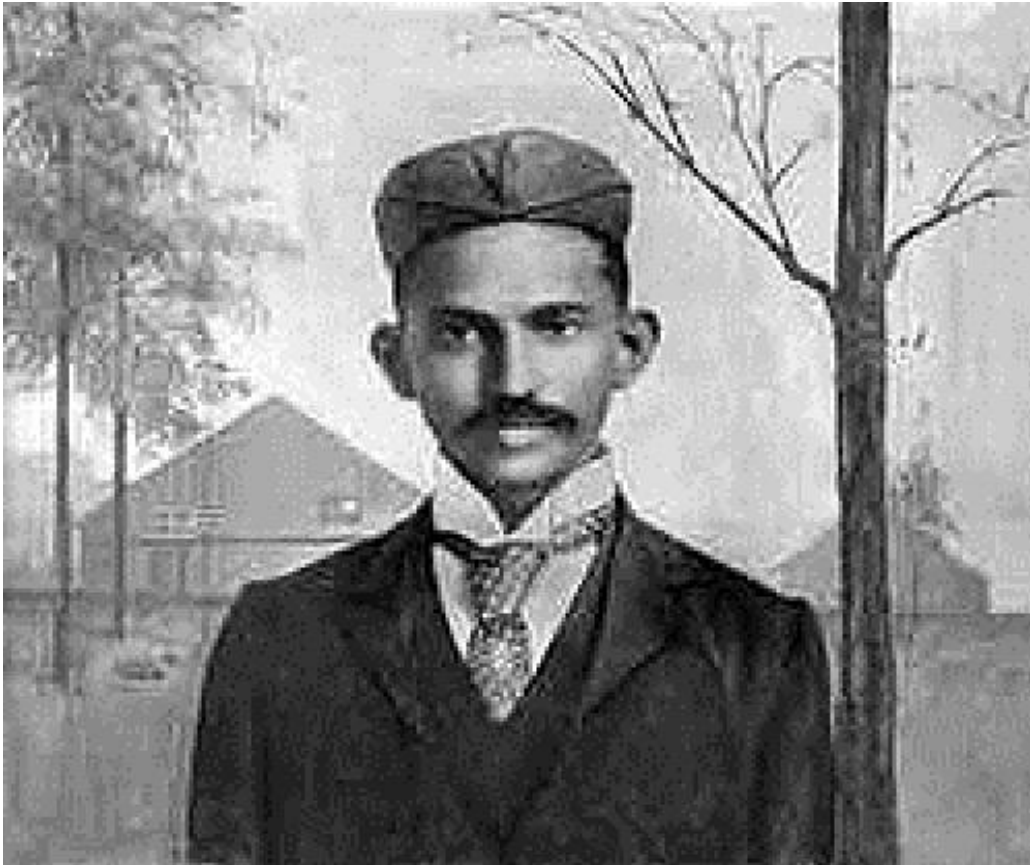
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About the author

Sinjin Ravi Tam was born in Dum-Dum India in 1954. An autodidact, he was educated watching television and reading the backs of cereal boxes, a methodology that led to the extraordinary range of his ignorance. After completing pre-graduate studies at Calcutta Ewe he immigrated to the United States illegally; he is still at large and should be considered irrelevant. A resident of Mar Vista since 1992, Mr. Tam has engaged in an interesting variety of work, including selling balloons in Mar Vista Gardens and manning a boom for the San Fernando-based Big Thang Entertainment. He currently practices therapeutic touch as a “guru” at Yogi Bare, the nudist Grand View yoga venue. Tam is the originator of *yarblethwack*, a non-violent Punjabi martial art that combines wishful thinking with aggressive cowering and fleeing.



Sinjin Ravi Tam in front of his boyhood home in Dum-Dum.