



North Broadway-Buena Vista
Street Bridge. Photo: Stephen
Schafer Schaferphoto.com.

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A SENSE OF PLACE IN THE CITY OF ANGELS

Los Angeles is a city of landmarks—from the Hollywood sign and Walk of Fame to the towering palm trees lining the city’s streets. But to many of its residents, Los Angeles is much more than tourist haunts—it’s a city with a rich cultural history waiting to be explored. Much of this history is now accessible, free, and online with HistoricPlacesLA.org, the most advanced cultural resource inventory management system in the United States, recently launched by the City of Los Angeles in partnership with the Getty Conservation Institute (GCI).

HistoricPlacesLA is the first online information and management system specifically developed for the City of Los Angeles to map, inventory, and describe its significant cultural resources, including places of social importance, architecturally significant buildings, historic districts, bridges, parks, gardens, streetscapes, and more. As Los Angeles grows and changes, the system will be an important tool for protecting and preserving the character of the city’s distinctive neighborhoods, from the Victorian-era homes of Angelino Heights to 1950s ranch-style houses in the San Fernando Valley.

“The system unlocks Los Angeles’s rich cultural history and puts it in the palm of anyone’s hand,” said Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti. “HistoricPlacesLA will enrich and enlighten visitors and Angelenos alike and will encourage people to truly explore our streets and be conscious of the history around us.”

HistoricPlacesLA contains information gathered through SurveyLA, the citywide survey of significant historic resources that represents the largest and most ambitious historic resources survey project to date in the United States. SurveyLA is a multi-year public/private partnership between the City of Los Angeles and the Getty, including both the GCI and Getty Foundation.

Prior to 2010, only 15 percent of the city had been surveyed for historic resources. Over the last five years, SurveyLA has been surveying the remaining 85 percent of the city. SurveyLA is now approximately 75 percent complete—and as new information comes to light, it is also entered into the HistoricPlacesLA system.

HistoricPlacesLA can be accessed online by anyone interested in these resources, including policymakers, property owners, developers, architects, and other stakeholders. Want to know where the Brady Bunch house is located? Just search the system and you’ll get your retro fix at 11222 Dilling Street. Curious about the steel sculpture garden on 62nd Street? With HistoricPlacesLA, it’s easy to find the “10th Wonder of the World,” otherwise known as the Lew and Dianne Harris Sculpture Yard.



Griffith Observatory. Photo: Stephen Schafer Schafphoto.com

“HistoricPlacesLA will enable visitors to search and discover our interesting finds from SurveyLA and long-cherished landmarks across the city,” said Ken Bernstein, manager of the City of Los Angeles Office of Historic Resources. “This information will not only bring to life our city’s fascinating history, but it will help enable more informed decisions by property owners, developers, community activists, urban planners, and policymakers.”

One such discovery is the Sugar Hill Historic District, a small neighborhood known for its association with the African American community and the movements to abolish deed restrictions that promoted racial segregation. In 1945 African American homeowners hired Loren Miller, a prominent civil rights attorney, and sued for their right to own homes in Sugar Hill. This led to a Supreme Court decision that such restrictions were unenforceable nationwide.

The system also sheds additional light on the city’s well-known communities—including its Japanese, Chinese, and Armenian neighborhoods—while revealing lesser known enclaves, such as San Pedro’s Norwegian and Croatian inhabitants and the German Jewish

émigrés that settled in Los Angeles during World War II.

In creating HistoricPlacesLA, the GCI has customized the Arches system, an open source, geospatial, and web-based information platform built to inventory and ultimately protect cultural heritage places. Arches was jointly developed by the GCI and World Monuments Fund.

“The GCI has worked with Los Angeles for many years to complete a survey of the city’s historic resources, and that investment has come to fruition with HistoricPlacesLA,” said Tim Whalen, director of the GCI. “We welcomed the opportunity to customize the Arches software for Los Angeles, and to demonstrate the benefits of its application for other cities and countries.”

As Los Angeles continues to be a city of rapid change, HistoricPlacesLA also gives developers, property owners, policymakers, and the general public information about significant historic resources in their community.

“Developers have never had such a powerful tool to direct us to potential opportunities for adaptive reuse projects, or to help us make sure we don’t inadvertently affect significant historic resources in areas that we’re

considering for development,” explained Wayne Ratkovich, president and CEO of the Ratkovich Company, a company focused on sustainable urban development projects in Los Angeles.

The system will also make a difference for the city’s conservation advocacy groups. It could potentially aid community members as they seek to protect key architectural sites or other critical parts of neighborhood history.

“HistoricPlacesLA will help us conserve our important cultural heritage, and can help us protect Los Angeles’s important past as the city grows dynamically into the future,” said Linda Dishman, director of the Los Angeles Conservancy. “Los Angeles has always been a city of radical architectural experimentation, but HistoricPlacesLA also sheds light on sites of rich social and cultural significance.”

To explore places recently identified through SurveyLA, as well as long-cherished landmarks across Los Angeles, visit www.HistoricPlacesLA.org.



Following are places of historical and cultural significance inventoried through SurveyLA and now on HistoricPlacesLA.org

Originally constructed as the Mexican Methodist Episcopal church, St. John’s United Methodist church was built in 1936 for a Mexican American congregation. It is one of the oldest and largest churches remaining in Watts and represents a significant association with the Mexican American community.

The Ebell Club South on Menlo Avenue is an intact women’s club building significant for its contribution to the social history of South Los Angeles and women in Los Angeles. It’s also noted for its Zig-Zag Moderne and Egyptian Revival design.

The Boathouse Thematic Group are twelve identical single-family “boathouse” residences constructed in 1959 and located in the hills along the south side of the Cahuenga Pass. A team of Norwegian shipbuilders assisted in the construction, using hand-axes rather than saws for cutting wood to achieve a handcrafted look.

Canyon School Schoolhouse, built in 1894, is an extremely rare example of a nineteenth-century schoolhouse in Los Angeles. It may also be one of only three remaining schoolhouse buildings in the Los Angeles Unified School District.

Edgar Rice Burroughs Office is a revival building significant for its association with Edgar Rice Burroughs, noted author of the Tarzan novels and developer of Tarzana in the San Fernando Valley.

The former homes of Nat King Cole, Amelia Earhart, Marilyn Monroe, Bill “Bojangles” Robinson, Shirley Temple, and other famous names are searchable online.

Boathouse Thematic Group