

# WAJHA Strolls: Along Washington Boulevard



**Welcome to Washington Boulevard**, which courses through Harvard Heights, Angelus Vista, Western Heights and Arlington Heights as it makes its way from Downtown to the Pacific Ocean.

Washington Street, laid out in the late 1890s, held the promise of becoming Los Angeles's "Grand Avenue from Downtown to the Sea." At first there were horse & buggies and a dusty street, but the carriages soon gave way to trolleys, streetcars, and flivvers. In 1922, the *Los Angeles Times* published a story entitled "Washington is Active," describing 26 buildings under construction Western Avenue and Vineyard, just west of Crenshaw. A year later, the newspaper described how the Arlington Heights shopping district, Washington Boulevard from Western to 7th Avenue, had become a major shopping district, a destination, really, second only to Downtown.

Most of the buildings were new, designed in a style we now call "Street Car Commercial." And the boulevard was bustling with commercial activity. It quickly became home to banks, real estate offices, pharmacies, grocery stores, movie theaters, ice cream parlors and candy stores – plus gas stations and auto supply stores. Soon the automobiles would take over the trains, but in the 1920s and 1930s you could still see railroad tracks running down the middle of Washington.

A century later, Washington Boulevard's becoming home to cultural institutions like the Debbie Allen Dance Academy (DADA) and Amazing Grace Conservatory, along with new affordable housing developments including the Gramercy Apartments for seniors, at Washington and Gramercy, and family units under construction at 3rd Avenue and Washington. We invite you to see what Washington Boulevard became over the past 125 years, and what it promises yet to be.



# A Stroll Along Washington Boulevard

## 2350 West Washington Blvd.

1924

### Architect Dwight C. Powell

This building's original owner was Clarence Urban (1878-1961). He was a realtor until he was appointed Real Estate Commissioner of California in 1939. He also served as president of the Urban Mortgage Company (Los Angeles). He lived just around the corner at 2251 West 20th Street in Western Heights, and had his offices down the street at 3303 West Washington.



His collection consists of photographs, photograph albums, a handbook, memorabilia, and correspondence focused on local real estate is held at UCLA.

## 2401 West Washington Blvd.

1929

This group of stores now housing the Grace Conservatory was built in 1929. It was soon owned by pharmacist Albert Carl Behne and called the Gramercy Drug Company. Behne lived in Western Heights at 2236 West 20th Street. His aunt was the artist Zetta Behne Richardson.

## 2422 West Washington Blvd.

1923

This two-story, 18-room "stores and apartments" building cost \$22,000, and replaced a small real estate office. It later housed the Arlington Laundry & Cleaners.



## 2433 West Washington Blvd.

### Congregational Church of the Messiah/Amos CME Church

#### Arthur B. Benton (original wing)

#### Claude Faithful and Mayberry & Parker, Architects (addition)

#### Allison and Allison (new front + fellowship wing)

1907; 1910; 1923

This church building began life as the Congregational Church of the Messiah. Congregationalism is that system of church organization which recognizes the independence and autonomy

of the local Church, but without ecclesiastical authority. The congregation was organized on June 27, 1907.

That year the congregation had Arthur Burnett Benton, architect of Riverside's Mission Inn and an Episcopalian, design an imposing set of ecclesiastical buildings in the English Gothic style, including the church itself and a group of related structures. The corner stone was laid in 1907, but the funds were not available to complete the entire project – or even start most of it. In 1910, Claude Faithful and Mayberry and Parker, Architects, added a 72 x 79 two-story brick structure, 35 feet high, to the property at an estimated cost of \$4,000. The permit noted a concrete basement was already in. The 1921 Sanborn Fire map shows two churches on the site. One is a single story frame building labeled "Old Church" where the fellowship hall now stands, and a second brick church with a basement labeled the Church of the Messiah.

In 1923, Allison and Allison removed the front of the church, and added the vestibule, church



office, and fellowship wing, for a cost of \$75,000. You can see on the side where the old portion was removed (two bays back) and the new section added. Pre-cast cement elements were used (arches around doors, tops of buttresses).

Half a century after its original construction, the Church of the Messiah complex was sold to the Calvary Evangelical United Brethren Church of Los Angeles. The United Brethren were generally descendants of German speaking Methodists. The denomination joined with the Methodist Church in 1968 to form the United Methodist Church. The Church of the Messiah moved to Westchester, where they still meet.

In 1964, Calvary sold it to Amos Memorial Christian Methodist Episcopal Church. Amos was organized in 1956 as St. John CME Church, with a building at 2709 Jefferson Boulevard. The name was changed in 1966 to Amos CME Church, in honor of benefactor Bishop Walter H. Amos.

According to SurveyLA, this building is an "excellent example of a Gothic Revival church, exhibiting a high quality of design and craftsmanship. Eclectic in style; exhibiting English influences and Craftsman features [with] steeply pitched front or cross-gable roof with finials, pinnacles, towers and spires, windows and doors set in pointed arched openings." The windows include stained glass, leaded glass, rose, lancet, and clerestory.

# *A Stroll Along Washington Boulevard*

## **2475 West Washington Blvd.**

### **Fire Station 26**

**1911**

In the 1880s, Los Angeles was a sleepy little pueblo, with agriculture as its primary industry. The use of firemen to protect buildings and citizens was in its infancy. The Los Angeles Fire Department became a career, paid department on February 1, 1886. In those days, the city would go for days, or even weeks, without a fire. Yet, on the first day of the paid department, two working fires put the new “career” firemen to work. By 1900, the Department had grown to 18 fire stations with 123 full-time paid firefighters and 80 fire horses. The city had also installed 194 fire-alarm boxes allowing citizens to sound the alarm if a fire was spotted. 660 fire hydrants were placed throughout the city, giving firefighters access to a reliable water source.

Engine Company No. 26’s fire station was erected in 1911. The City paid \$3,400 and hired architect J.J. Backus to design a station to service Angelus Vista, Arlington Heights, Western Heights and other nearby neighborhoods. Completed a year later, the two-story brick structure cost the city \$14,600. As was customary during that time, kitchen facilities were housed in a separate building in the back of the station. High above the roofline was an ornate brick hose tower that was later shortened.

The station was built with horse drawn apparatus in mind. However, the department was slowly switching to motorized apparatus and the horses were never assigned. Housed within the stations walls



were the crews of Engine Company 26, Truck Company 8 (which became Truck 26 after 1932), along with quarters for Battalion 3. The station remained in service until 1971. The building remained abandoned until August 4, 1978 when it reopened as senior center.

## **2461 West Washington Blvd.**

### **Carty Bros Market**

**1936**

This distinctive Streamline Moderne commercial building, now housing an auto use, started out life in 1936 as a grocery store. Daniel Arthur Carty (1896-1937) and his brother Henry James Carty (1894-1955) were co-founders of Carty Bros Markets, one of the first supermarket chains in southern California. With the financial backing of their parents, in 1923 they opened the first

Carty Bros Market at 6658 Hollywood Blvd. Just a small store at first, their business grew to become a chain of eight grocery stores. Daniel Carty died suddenly in 1937 of appendicitis, which left Henry in sole control of their business. In 1949, Henry Carty

replaced Ted von der Ahe (of Vons Grocery Company) to become the

Chairman of the Board for the Certified Grocers of California, a retailer-owned cooperative

of grocery stores that is now known as Unified Grocers. Today this group is the largest such cooperative in the United States. Henry remained the chairman of the board until 1954, when he retired and sold all eight of his Carty Bros supermarkets to Kory’s Markets, which was a small chain of stores owned by a fellow Certified Grocers board member. Kory’s was subsequently acquired in 1973 by another Certified Grocers company known as Boys Markets, which merged in 1994 with Ralphs and Food 4 Less, both of which are modern-day subsidiaries of the number-one U.S. grocery store company Krogers.



## **2501 West Washington Blvd.**

### **Lilly and Fletcher, builders**

### **Architect L.A. Smith**

**1922**

This two-story building, described on its permit as “bank, stores, lodging and offices,” cost \$50,000 to build. It was to house the new branch of the Citizens National Bank, which was one of the City’s largest financial institutions (with assets in 1919 exceeding \$28 million).



## **2513 West Washington Blvd.**

### **Architect L.A. Smith**

**1921**

Another L.A. Smith design, this building was originally a “picture theater.” Indeed, Architect Lewis Arthur “L.A.” Smith worked on a number of Los Angeles-area theatre buildings with Lilly and Fletcher Company as building contractors; Smith also had an office in the Lilly and Fletcher Building in Los Angeles in 1924. Smith worked extensively for the Bard’s and Fox West Coast chains in the 1920s, and during his career he designed approximately 40 theatres. For a time circa 1920, he lived in Jefferson Park at 2040 West 31st Street.

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## **3323-3327 West Washington Blvd./1820 4th Avenue Herbert Kalliwoda Stores & Apartments 1923**

Druggist Herbert Kalliwoda already owned the Westlake Pharmacy in 1923 when he hired Architect H. C. Deckbar to design the Majestic Pharmacy Building, a two-story Renaissance Revival brick building at the corner of Washington and 4th Avenue in Arlington Heights. In 1993, the non-profit Gramercy Housing Group acquired it to restore and turn it into affordable, supportive housing for homeless young mothers.



## **3617-3627 West Washington Blvd. Ralph's Grocery and Bakery Morgan, Walls & Clements 1926**

The Los Angeles Conservancy on its website describes the Ralphs grocery chain and its relationship with the architectural firm, Morgan, Walls, and Clements:

Founded in downtown Los Angeles by George S. Ralphs in 1873, Ralphs Grocery was a national pioneer in the grocery industry. By the twentieth century, Ralphs stores featured innovative self-service aisles and included a wide variety of foods and services under one roof. As Ralphs' business grew along with the city, he hired the noted architectural firm of Morgan, Walls, and Clements to design a series of grocery stores promoting a clean and substantial image.

These stores were built in the Churrigueresque style popular in Southern California, an ornate Spanish Revival style that architect Stiles O. Clements defined and perfected. Each of the new Ralphs stores was unique yet similar, exuding strength through large blocks of faux masonry, intricate wrought ironwork, prominent display windows, and Spanish tile roofs.

Morgan, Walls & Clements played a leading role in creating the



architectural landscape of early Los Angeles. One of the oldest and most prolific firms in the city, the company designed many of Los Angeles' landmark buildings dating back to the late 1800s.

Known for working in various Spanish revival styles in their earlier years, the firm became one of the city's most prominent practitioners of Art Deco and Streamline architecture in the late 1920s and 1930s. Their trove of Los Angeles landmarks includes theatres such as the El Capitan and Mayan, the now-demolished Richfield Tower, Malibu's Adamson House, and the Wiltern Theatre.

In 1940, Ralphs published its "Remarkable Roster" poster advertising the wonderful mix of Spanish Colonial Revival and Art Deco stores (with a Victorian thrown in for good measure) that the chain was operating at the time.

## **4136 West Washington Blvd./1908 S. Bronson Ave. St. Paul's Catholic Church Architect John C. Austin 1936**

This Italian Romanesque/Renaissance Revival style church was designed by John C. Austin and Frederic M. Ashley. The church building design was based on the ancient Roman basilica, The Basilica di San Paolo Fuori le Mura, and reflects elements of



Italian ecclesiastical design. Along with its Latin cross plan, the church has arcades, arches, Classical proportions, monumental scale, and a squared tower.

Architect John Corneby Wilson Austin (1870-1963) designed and supervised the construction of the Shrine Auditorium, Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce, California State Building, St. Vincent's Hospital, Griffith Observatory -- and St. Paul's Church in Arlington Heights. In conjunction with two other firms, Austin also helped design and supervise the building of Los Angeles City Hall.