Los Angeles Then & Now

1900
November 12: An explosive lantern results in a fire that causes hundreds of dollars in property damage. The fire starts in the barn at the rear of the Donato brothers grocery store at the corner of Alpine and Figueroa. According to an employee, the lantern explodes and a fire instantly feeds on the hay stored in the barn. In addition to the loss of the Donato grocery store, upstairs apartment and barn, M. Schwartz's cottage and the grain yard owned by J.W. Stafford are destroyed in the conflagration. Firefighters arrive at 5:55 pm and squelch the flames within fifteen minutes.

1923
October 6: Local prohibition enforcement officials confiscate 15,000 gallons of illegal wine in what is known as the "Little Italy" section of Los Angeles. Approximately 30 homes are raided and officers pile high the casks and jugs of bootleg red and white wine before destroying them. At one home a 1,000 gallon keg of wine is discovered. One officer then releases the vast amount of wine from the keg in front of a growing crowd of agitated residents. The wine floods the neighborhood and in some cases the officers wade waist deep through unkegged wine in the different basements as they continue the raid. A number of this homes raided are on Alpine Street, Yale Street, and Bunker Hill. A similar raid takes place in 1929, moving beyond the original perimeter to include Broadway. Prohibition ends in 1933.

1888
December 12:
After a year of construction, architects Mr. Kyson, Mr. Morgan and Mr. Walls complete the new orphanage building in the shape of a "T" on Yale and Alpine Streets. The two story brick building has a basement, an attic and an abundance of light and ventilation throughout. The top of the "T" faces Yale and the main entrance is located on Alpine; the south side of the building has the most windows and thus is perfect for the nursery wing. Eighteen people are hired a week before the opening to ensure the building is ready for the incoming 150 orphans. The old girls orphanage is converted to a hospital and the boys asylum is torn down.
In the Los Angeles Orphans' Asylum's 20 years at this location 2,382 homeless children find shelter.
In 1911, it moves to El Centro, Waring and Colgrove Streets.

1869
La Maison Santé Française, or the French Hospital, is built by the French Benevolent Society. Here, French immigrants are tended to the city's most influential physician, Walter Lindley. Lindley also creates the California Hospital at Grand and Eighth Streets in 1889, now known as the California Hospital Medical Center. The French Hospital is now the Pacific Alliance Medical Center. The first known French person settles in Los Angeles in 1830—Louis Bouchette lives on what is now Macy Street. Jean Louis Vignes arrives in 1831 and uses Indian labor to plant 100 grape vines for a vineyard. In 1883 French immigrants establish the newspaper *La Progrès or The Advance*.
In 1964 a statue of Joan of Arc is erected in front of the hospital as a memorial to this history.

1882
The Castelar Street School is a focal point for the immigrants who settle north of downtown and is named after Emilio Castelar—a statesman, historian, journalist, and the third and final president of the Spanish Republic in 1870. In the late 1800s, the students include children from Central and South America, Croatia, France, Italy and Serbia, whose parents come in search of a better life for themselves and their children. These children are the first to attend Castelar School. In 1930 the first Chinese American, Mary Jane Fong, enrolls. Originally called "Castelar Street School," it is located at what is then "Castelar Street," located north of Hill Street. In 1965, "Castelar Street" is changed to "North Hill Street," and the word "Street" removed from the name, making it "Castelar Elementary School." In 1978 Leo Politi paints the mural in its foyer, inspired by its students.

1983
Hop Li
Seafood Restaurant
opens to rave reviews. Generations of families now make this restaurant a tradition. Is it yours?

The ad at left runs in the *Los Angeles Times*.

1873
Los Angeles High School is the city's oldest high school. It is founded in 1873 and originally located at the corner of what are now Temple and Broadway Streets. Its main entrance welcomes visitors with the Greek quote: "Cities must be walled about not with ramparts of wood and stone, but with the virtue of the citizens." When the school opens, its courses include Latin, English and "Classical" studies and the school adopts the "Romans" as its mascot. By 1900, the school's popularity and reputation for excellence increases its student population to 1,400 with a waiting list of 200 students. In the 1900s, following the school's liberal arts traditions, students publish *Nuntius*, a newsletter with articles in English, Latin and occasionally Greek.
The school is currently located at
4600 Olympic Boulevard.

1880s
The St. Elmo Hotel is scene to many Los Angeles dramas including the arrest of a teenager "Clara" (who refuses to give her real name) for obscene language in 1888; a drunk and hysterical actress in 1888 who wakes everyone up at 2:00 am looking for her sister who is in "Willie's room;" Dr. Schleisinger a visiting medium from San Francisco, who promises to conjure "spooks" for a fee in 1889; the 1895 suicide of Charles Watts, whom Watts is originally named for; and Charles Phillis, a thieving night clerk in 1906—who is caught in the act and found with marked bills by undercover detectives.

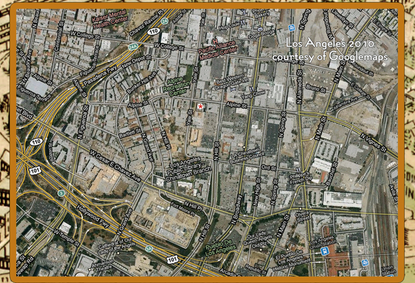
1907
Anthony Schwamm is an active figure in Los Angeles. In 1888, he along with a dozen other citizens, assert their rights to Elysian Park and protest the planned building of a "penthouse" in the Park, stopping its construction. He is also Fire Commissioner and involved in Democratic Party politics. In 1907 he is twice accused of "anarchist" language; first, by Party leaders when he calls the rich "predatory" during a dinner with "the common people" and again, when he chastises the City Council for appointing a Republican veterinarian to care for the horses for a Democratic Fire Board. A populist Democrat, Schwamm unsuccessfully runs for the Board of Supervisors in 1908 though he is supported by the Italian American constituents of this neighborhood and the traditionally Republican Chinese.

1880
July 11: Petitions are submitted in favor of and against a prostitution zone on New High Street to the City Council. Mr. J. W. Robinson suggests that such houses be shut down. Mr. H. Marsten and other property owners on New High Street ask that "New High Street, from Bellevue Avenue and Alpine Street" be set aside for houses of prostitution. The "street-walkers" are such a "menace" that many business men sign a petition requesting that "some portion of the city be set aside for the use of these women where they can be allowed to live under police surveillance." Marsten and others suggest this street as prostitutes already live here and they are "outside the line of street-car travel and those who drive in buggies for recreation." Many consider Marsten's petition an insult and it is later discovered that many of the signatures on his petition are from deceased men.

1815
This site becomes the third location of the city's Plaza. Throughout the 19th century it is the center of social life. Many influential Californios reside in the space including Pío Pico, the last Mexican governor of California. Pico also builds the first 1 story structure in Los Angeles within the Plaza. During the Depression, historic preservationist Christine Sterling creates "Olvera Street" as a reminder of this history, and in an effort to preserve the Avila Adobe. This adobe is home to the prestigious Avila family from Los Angeles' Mexican Period. The whole Plaza site is currently known as El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historic Monument.

1885
The Baker Iron Works at 950 Buena Vista is a thriving business whose "Works" include a boiling room, machine shops, moulding rooms, office buildings and pattern shops. The Works create the steel of the city's first "skyscrapers" (like the twelve story 1904 Union Trust Building designed by John Parkinson), the equipment for oil drilling, rigs, pumps, ornamental iron works, sidewalk plates, iron piping, sewer traps, and castings for heavy construction. Cram elevators, elevators used in buildings across the nation, relies on the Baker Iron Works for its steel. Immediately following the 1906 San Francisco earthquake and fire the firm's production goes into over drive to rebuild San Francisco as the buildings with steel infrastructures withstand the earthquake better than their counterparts.

1831
Abel Stearns builds the Capitol Milling Company, a flour mill with brick imported from Philadelphia and millstones from France. Stearns, a Massachusetts Yankee, arrives in the city in 1829 via Mexico where he becomes a Mexican citizen. In Los Angeles he is a very successful merchant. His nickname is "Cara de Caballo" or Horseface" due to a facial scar incurred during a robbery at his store. Stearns marries fourteen-year-old Arcadia Bandini in 1842 at the ripe age of 40. In so doing, he increases his already substantial real estate holdings. Stearns is later known as "Don Abel," a term of respect, for his service as a judge and in the State Assembly. The Capitol Milling Company building is located on north Spring Street. It is considered the oldest existing manufacturing structure in Los Angeles.



1887
February 12: Fears of the Los Angeles River flooding and destroying the buildings east of Alameda are partially realized after an hour's worth of constant rain. Those living near the River and along Vignes Street are rescued and must sleep in the City Council Chambers until other plans are made for them. The Los Angeles River floods several times throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries, until the River is channalized in concrete in the 1930s. Currently, there are multiple ongoing projects at the individual and institutional level aimed at revitalizing the River through bike paths, parks and public art projects.

1870s
A wooden covered bridge is built over the Los Angeles River at Macy Street. The bridge survives several episodes of flooding and Remi Nadeau builds a channel to take overflow water from the bridge to his nearby orchard. The covered bridge, however, loses its roof in 1892 on order by the City Council, going against the wishes of then Mayor Henry Hazard, who argues that removing its roof will make the bridge structurally unsound. A City Council member from the First Ward responds to the Mayor's reasoning by stating: "There is not an engineer in the city who would say that the roof added to the strength of the covered bridge. It only added weight. Of course the Mayor is entitled to his opinion, but he ought not to set his judgment against that of competent engineers, or even nine men who probably knew as much about bridges as he did."

1887
The Los Angeles Pressed Brick and Terra Cotta Works on Cleveland Street costs $ 100,000 to build but in its first year is able to generate $200,000 in revenue. The plant takes clay rich in silica and then through a process of baking and glazing creates pressed brick and terra cotta. In 1888 the plant produces 9,000 bricks per day and employs 45 skilled laborers. While the brick-making process of the Works is available for public tours, the terra cotta process remains a trade secret though the clay is pulled from the banks of the Los Angeles River. In 1892 the Works is recognized for its charitable contribution of $25 towards Associated Charities. Bricks from this plant are used to build the "new" City Hall, which is ultimately replaced by the current 1928 structure.

1850
The 1850 United States Census for Los Angeles lists two Chinese men among the counted. By 1870, there are 4,000 Chinese immigrants in Los Angeles, mostly men who form a bachelor society. They come primarily from the Canton region of China. In Los Angeles they work as farmers and fruit and vegetable peddlers. Despite their hard work, the Chinese are targetted by the California Workingmen's Party as, "stealing jobs from white men." The Chinese face descrimination throughout Los Angeles history, most notably in the building of Union Station. In 1926 Los Angeles voters chose to move the city's original Chinatown in favor of building the next central train terminal, and Union Station opens in 1939. In the 1990s remnants of this old settlement are uncovered including plates, bottles and paper.

based on an excerpt of a 1909 map

"Los Angeles, Then & Now" was created by the Studio for Southern California History as a thank you to Bing, Ting and everyone at Hop Li's who welcomed us to Chinatown.
The background image of this map is from Gates Worthington, "Los Angeles: A Bird's Eye View" from Bird's Eye View Publications, Los Angeles 1909. Available from the Library of Congress.
Satellite map image provided by Googlemaps. Learn more about the Studio for Southern California History at www.socalstudio.org.