

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

DRAFT

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Los Angeles Plaza Historic District (Amendment)
Other names/site number: El Pueblo de Los Angeles State Historic Park District; El Pueblo de Los Angeles; El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historic District
Name of related multiple property listing:

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)
N/A

2. Location

Street & number: Roughly bounded by W. Cesar E. Chavez Avenue (north), N. Los Angeles/N. Alameda Streets (east), W. Arcadia Street (south), and N. Spring Street (west).

City or town: Los Angeles State: California County: Los Angeles

Not For Publication: Vicinity:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this ___ nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___ national ___ statewide ___ local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

___A ___B ___C ___D

<p>_____ Signature of certifying official/Title:</p> <p>_____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p>	<p>_____ Date</p>
---	-------------------------------

Los Angeles Plaza Historic District
Name of Property

Los Angeles, California
County and State

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official: _____ **Date** _____

Title : _____ **State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government** _____

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:
___ entered in the National Register
___ determined eligible for the National Register
___ determined not eligible for the National Register
___ removed from the National Register
___ other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper _____ Date of Action _____

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site

Los Angeles Plaza Historic District
Name of Property

Los Angeles, California
County and State

Structure
Object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>20</u>	<u>8</u>	buildings
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	sites
<u> </u>	<u>1</u>	structures
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	objects
<u>20</u>	<u>9</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 22

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/business
COMMERCE/warehouse
RELIGION/religious facility
DOMESTIC/single dwelling
DOMESTIC/hotel
LANDSCAPE/plaza
GOVERNMENT/fire station
FUNERARY/cemetery
RECREATION AND CULTURE/theater
SOCIAL/meeting hall

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/business
COMMERCE/restaurant
COMMERCE/warehouse
RELIGION/religious facility
LANDSCAPE/plaza
FUNERARY/cemetery

Los Angeles Plaza Historic District
Name of Property

Los Angeles, California
County and State

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COLONIAL/Spanish Colonial

LATE VICTORIAN/Stick/Eastlake

LATE VICTORIAN/Italianate

OTHER/Adobe

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Concrete foundations; brick, adobe, wood, and stucco walls; asphalt and terra cotta roofs.

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The Los Angeles Plaza Historic District encompasses approximately 9.5 acres in downtown Los Angeles, California. The district includes 20 contributing and 9 noncontributing resources, which date from the early 19th century through the early 20th century. It occupies a relatively level portion of land between the Los Angeles River (approximately 0.6 miles to the southeast) and the hilly terrain to the northwest. Centered on the open Plaza, the district is roughly bounded by W. Cesar E. Chavez Avenue (north), N. Los Angeles and N. Alameda Streets (east), W. Arcadia Street (south), and N. Spring Street (west). Located in the historic core of Los Angeles, the district represents a rare, intact, and diverse group of historic resources that exemplify the founding and early growth of the city. These resources include buildings and sites from the city's Spanish, Mexican, and early American periods, and range from 18th century adobe buildings and large Victorian commercial blocks, to Spanish Revival buildings from the early 20th century.

The district was first listed in the National Register of Historic Places on November 3, 1972. The nomination was subsequently amended on October 29, 1981 to include five additional contributing resources and to provide more information on two buildings listed in the original nomination.

The National Register nomination for the Los Angeles Plaza Historic District is being updated to fulfill the following objectives:

Los Angeles Plaza Historic District

Los Angeles, California

Name of Property

County and State

- (1) To reframe the nomination in accordance with contemporary historic resource evaluation and preservation standards (in particular, those outlined in *How to Complete the National Register Registration Form*, 1997).
- (2) To add, remove, and reclassify contributing resources. A number of resources were previously included within the boundaries of the district but not identified as contributing or non-contributing. These include the Italian Hall, the Plaza Substation, the Simpson-Jones Building, and the Hellman-Quon building, among others. In addition, one contributor to the district, the Biscailuz Building, no longer retains sufficient integrity to convey its period of significance; this building is reclassified as non-contributing due to extensive alterations that occurred outside of the period of significance.
- (3) To include as a contributing element the Plaza Church Cemetery (which at the time of the 1972 and 1981 nominations consisted of a surface parking lot). Partially excavated in 2010/2011, the Plaza Church Cemetery is now covered with a memorial garden with interpretive signage.
- (4) Removal of the Brunswig Annex, which was demolished in 2008, from the list of contributors.

Narrative Description

Throughout the Spanish and Mexican periods, the Plaza area was the center of life for the developing pueblo. It was the location of the Plaza Church, its cemetery, and the community's primary water source, the Zanja Madre. In addition, the Plaza area was fashionable for residential construction during the Spanish and Mexican periods and was surrounded by the adobe townhouses of the city's most prominent families, including the Sepulvedas, Olveras, and Lugos. Little immediate change occurred within the Plaza area in the early American period as evidenced by a report from 1860, which described Los Angeles as a group of one-story houses mostly "build [sic] of adobe or some burnt brick with very thick walls and flat roofs" (National Register of Historic Places 1972).

While the area north of the Plaza retained a characteristically Mexican style into the following decade, the area to the south began a transformation into a vibrant American city. Buildings constructed between the late 1850s and 1870s are characteristic of this time period; they consist primarily of Victorian and Italianate designs and brick construction. Extant examples include the Pico House, Masonic Hall, and Merced Theater. With the arrival of the railroad and subsequent population and construction boom of the 1880s, the rate of this transformation intensified. Many of the flat-roofed adobe buildings of the Spanish and Mexican periods were demolished to make way for more contemporaneously designed buildings, including the Eastlake Sepulveda House and the Richardsonian Romanesque Garnier Block.

A number of smaller brick commercial blocks were developed along Olvera Street during the early 20th century. However, the shift of the central business district southward, as well as the continued outward growth of the city, resulted in the overall deterioration of the Plaza area by the 1920s. By this time, Olvera Street was an unpaved alley used to make deliveries to the rear entrances of the shops fronting Main Street; the Avila Adobe was condemned by the Department of Health, declared unfit for human habitation (Poole and Ball 2002:48). In this context began the preservation efforts of Christine Sterling, which resulted in the romanticized revival of

Los Angeles Plaza Historic District

Los Angeles, California

Name of Property

County and State

Olvera Street as a Mexican Market Place, complete with *puestos* (or small street smalls) and a statue commemorating the founding of Los Angeles. This renewed interest in Los Angeles's historic core also resulted in the construction of new buildings such as the Plaza Methodist Church and Biscailuz Building, which were constructed in the Spanish Revival style popular during the 1920s.

Although some buildings have been altered since the district was last updated in 1981, the components that define the historic character of the district are intact and remain largely unchanged. The district retains integrity and continues to convey the sense of its historic environment dating to the period of significance.

Individual Building Descriptions

The following section draws primarily from the previous nomination forms, noting any changes that have occurred since the district was last amended in 1981.

1. Plaza, North Main Street, circa 1815 – Contributing

Since its early development, the central focus of activity in El Pueblo de Los Angeles was and continues to be the Plaza. The Plaza was laid out at its present-day location between 1825 and 1830 following recurring flooding of the Los Angeles River. By the 1830s, it was a square, open plaza surrounded by the adobe townhouses of prominent settlers. The city's first water storage tank was constructed at the center of the plaza in 1861, where it remained until it was removed in 1871. At that time, the Plaza was reshaped into a circular design, and the central fountain was installed. In 1875, the Plaza was landscaped with orange and cypress trees, and around 1878 the four Moreton Bay fig trees were planted at each side. Paved in cement, the circular Plaza features brick diagonal strips that radiate out from the wrought-iron bandstand at the center, which was installed in 1962. The Plaza is framed around the exterior by low walls of patterned brick that were laid in 1930.

2. Old Plaza Church Rectory, 535 North Main Street, 1983 – Non-Contributing

Located to the north of the Old Plaza Church is the Plaza Church Rectory, an office and pastoral center which was constructed in two phases and completed in 1983. The one- and two-story building features a clay-tile roof and is connected to the Plaza Church via a walkway at the rear (west), forming a central courtyard to the north of the church. The building replaced an earlier rectory dating to 1913.

In 1981, in preparation of the rectory's construction, the Northridge Archaeological Research Center (NARC) conducted a study of the area north of the church on behalf of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. The study concluded that the area was likely to contain "intact archaeological foundations, features, and artifacts associated with the Padre's quarters" (Singer et al. 1981:33). The study also raised the possibility that the area contained "part of the old cemetery and the old Church garden compound" as well as "aboriginal materials and features associated with the village of *Yang-na*." NARC conducted test excavations at the site, including 44 test units, over approximately eight months in 1981. Five truckloads of additional site materials were

Los Angeles Plaza Historic District

Los Angeles, California

Name of Property

County and State

transported to the Andres Pico Adobe, and at least two loads were screened and cataloged (Kealhofer 1991:278–280). If NARC produced a report of their findings, it is not housed at the South Central Coastal Information Center (SCCIC). The team did produce a record for the site, however, which was given the designation CA-LAN-1112H. The record (NARC 1981) indicates that no human remains had been identified in the excavations as of July 3, 1981.

The results of the NARC excavations were presented in a dissertation prepared by Kealhofer (1991), along with detailed analyses of recovered ceramic artifacts, particularly native-made Mission ware, and faunal bone, particularly cattle. Kealhofer describes a 7-m diameter, Spanish Colonial period trash pit that was once located in the backyard of one of the original plaza house lots, possibly that owned by Pablo Rodriguez from 1781 to 1796. The pit appears to have contained materials from multiple households, however, and it may have been used until the construction of the church in 1818. The excavation revealed several additional features, including the cobble foundations of the original padre's house, as well as later deposits dating through the 1860s, and to a lesser extent, the 1920s. While this evidence suggests the archaeological site may have the potential to yield information, without additional documentation to identify its current integrity, it is not possible to include it as a contributing resource at this time.

3. Old Plaza Church, 535 North Main Street, 1822 – Contributing

The Old Plaza Church is located along North Main Street immediately northwest of the Plaza. Also known as *Iglesia de Nuestra Señora la Reina de Los Angeles*, or affectionately as *La Placita*, the church was constructed between 1815 and 1822 and is the oldest church in Los Angeles. As originally constructed by Native American laborers, the building was much smaller and capped with a flat brea roof, which was later replaced by wood, and more recently by pitched clay tile. The transepts were most likely constructed during the 1840s; after the primary (east) façade collapsed in 1861 due to heavy rains, it was replaced by the present stucco-covered brick façade. The façade features a wide triangular pediment flanked by pointed buttresses, which is different than an earlier curved gable and double doors that were situated under an arched opening. A Victorian-style bell corner on the southern corner of the façade, also flanked by pointed buttresses, was added in 1869. In 1913, the church was enlarged by expanding the sanctuary and west end to the building. Finally in 1965, a new church was added at the northwestern end to accommodate the growing congregation. The original church currently serves as a chapel.

4. Plaza Church Cemetery, North Main Street, 1822 – Contributing

The Los Angeles Plaza Church Cemetery, in use between 1823 and 1844, included burial areas north, south, and possibly east of the Old Plaza Church. The southern area, described here, is located on an approximately 0.36-acre lot situated between the Old Plaza Church to the northeast and the Plaza House to the southwest. The cemetery is presently landscaped as a memorial garden and enclosed by a decorative fence. Following the opening of the nearby Calvary Cemetery in 1844, the grave markers at the Plaza Church Cemetery were removed and an orange grove was planted on the site. The land was leased by the Church sometime around 1900, and by

Los Angeles Plaza Historic District

Los Angeles, California

Name of Property

County and State

1905 a small commercial building fronting North Main Street was constructed on the site. Following the purchase of the land by the County of Los Angeles in 1950, the building was demolished and the site was paved to develop a parking lot, which remained in place until its removal in 2001. The site was landscaped with grass and enclosed with a fence until 2010 when construction activities for the LA Plaza de Cultura y Artes project resulted in the discovery of historic graves and a subsequent archaeological excavation of the cemetery.

A total of 106 burial features, along with associated artifacts, were identified as a result of the osteological and archaeological analysis of materials recovered from the site during the 2010-2011 excavation efforts (Dietler et al. 2012), and the site was given the designation CA-LAN-4218H. A minimum number of individuals (MNI) of 130 was calculated as result of analysis; however, burial journal records indicate that a total of 693 individuals were interred at the cemetery between 1823 and 1844 (Huntington Library 2006). Burial records of the Plaza Cemetery indicate that Hispanic, Native American, and individuals of varied heritage were buried in the cemetery. The site was found to be previously disturbed, as evidenced by extremely fragile and often commingled skeletal remains and poor artifact condition. Nevertheless, many graves were substantially intact at the time of excavation, including associations between human remains and funerary artifacts.

5. Plaza House/Garnier Block, 507-511 North Main Street, 1883 – Contributing

Constructed in 1883 by early Los Angeles developer Phillippe Garnier, the Plaza House is located southwest of the Plaza Church Cemetery on North Main Street. The two-story brick building was designed by the pioneering Los Angeles architecture firm of Kysor and Morgan, consisting of Ezra F. Kysor and Octavius Weller Morgan Sr. A native of New York, Kysor was one of Los Angeles's earliest and most prolific architects in the final quarter of the nineteenth century. Kysor's early commissions included the Pico House and Merced Theater (described below) and the Saint Vibiana Cathedral. With its Italianate stylistic detailing, the building initially housed commercial space on the ground floor and a hotel on the second floor. Following an earthquake in 1971, much of the original ornamentation on the primary (east) façade was removed for fear of seismic hazard. Recently, however, the exterior of the building was rehabilitated with the reconstruction of many of the building's original decorative elements, including the bracketed cornice, dentils, and paneled frieze, as well as the detailed central triangular pediment. This work was completed as part of the building's adaptive reuse by the County of Los Angeles for the LA Plaza de Cultura y Artes center.

6. Vickrey-Brunswig Building, 501 North Main Street, 1888 – Contributing

Adjacent to the Plaza House on the corner of Republic Street and North Main Street, the Vickrey-Brunswig Building was one of the city's first five-story buildings. Commissioned by Indiana native and investor William Vickrey at the height of the 1880s building boom, the Vickrey-Brunswig Building originally served as ground-floor retail space with lodging in the upper floors. The building was designed by pioneering Los Angeles architect Robert Brown Young, principal of R.B. Young & Son, in a transitional Victorian-Italianate style. After Vickrey declared bankruptcy with the collapse of the 1880's boom, the building was purchased by

Los Angeles Plaza Historic District

Los Angeles, California

Name of Property

County and State

Frederick W. Braun in 1897. Braun, along with his partner Lucien Napoleon Brunswig, established one of Los Angeles's earliest pharmacies and drug stores in the building. In 1907, Brunswig purchased from Braun his interests in the company, which was renamed the Brunswig Drug Company. As with the Plaza House, much of the Vickrey-Brunswig Building's original ornamentation was removed following the 1971 Sylmar earthquake. As part of its adaptive reuse for the LA Plaza Cultura y Artes center, the exterior of the building was rehabilitated and many of the original features were repaired and restored; this included the reconstruction of the bracketed cornice, decorative paneled frieze, dentils, and roof cresting. Additionally, the centrally located triangular pediments were reconstructed, presently featuring the name of the building's last occupants during the period of significance.

7. Pico House, 424 North Main Street, 1869-70 – Contributing

The Pico House, located at the corner of North Main Street and the southwest edge of the Plaza, is a three-story stone and brick hotel built in 1869-70 by Pio Pico, the last Mexican governor of Alta California. The 82-bedroom Pico House was the first three-story building in Los Angeles, and at the time of construction, was considered the finest hotel in southern California. The hotel office, a lobby, two dining rooms, and two stores occupied the ground floor, and suites and a public parlor filled the second floor. Only sleeping rooms were contained on the third. The building also includes two interior courts. The Italianate building was designed by pioneering Los Angeles architect Ezra F. Kysor. The stucco-clad exteriors fronting North Main Street and the Plaza were painted to look like blue granite, with segmental-arched windows used to give the façade an arcade effect. A belt course encircles the building at the second- and third-floor sill levels. Marking the roof line and spanning the façade is a projecting cornice, accented with dentils and brackets, and a paneled frieze beneath. Shaped parapets contain the building's name over the central bays.

8. Merced Theater, 420 North Main Street, 1870 – Contributing

Abutting the southwest end of the Pico House, the Merced Theater was constructed by William Abbot in 1870 and was the first building constructed in Los Angeles specifically for the presentation of dramatic performances (Poole and Ball 2002:103). Like the Pico House, the Merced was designed by architect Ezra F. Kysor in an ornate Italianate style, with gold painted finials on the roof and balconies, and arched windows deeply set along the façade. Marking the roof of the building is a prominent decorative cornice, which spans the façade and is accented beneath by a course of dentils and a paneled frieze. A curved, partial parapet caps the building. The ground floor, which has housed a saloon, a church, and an armory for the Los Angeles Guard, features a recessed entrance with multi-paned windows. In 1960, the basement was connected to the Garnier Building basement under Sanchez Street.

9. Masonic Hall, 416 North Main Street, 1858 – Contributing

The Masonic Hall is a two-story brick building located on the northeast corner of North Main Street and Arcadia Street. Constructed in 1858, the building was designed by William Perry and James Brady for Los Angeles Lodge No. 42 A & FM (Accepted and Free Masons), and was the

Los Angeles Plaza Historic District

Los Angeles, California

Name of Property

County and State

first specifically-built lodge meeting hall in Los Angeles. The lodge occupied the second story until 1868, and the ground floor was used for storage and commercial purposes. In the 1870s, the primary (northwest) façade was altered to conform more closely to the Pico House and Merced Theater through the addition of the second floor balcony and the addition of stucco sheathing. The first floor features three pairs of glass- and wood-paneled doors placed under segmental-arched transoms. An elaborate bracketed and dentilled cornice with paneled frieze runs along the edge of the flat roof. The building was saved from demolition for freeway construction in 1953 when the Los Angeles Masonic community campaigned for its preservation. Restored by the State of California in 1960-62, the building was rededicated as a Masonic Hall in 1962.

10. Garnier Building, 419 North Los Angeles Street, 1890 – Contributing

Located on the northwest corner of Arcadia Street and North Los Angeles Street, the Garnier Building was constructed by early Los Angeles developer Philippe Garnier in 1890 specifically to be used by Chinese renters. The two-story brick and sandstone building was designed by Abraham M. Edelman in a Richardsonian Romanesque style, characterized by rounded stone corbel posts. Garnier only constructed the exterior walls of the building, with Chinese lessees completing the interior walls. Until the State of California acquired the building in the late 1940s, the building acted as the unofficial “City Hall” for the Chinese-American population in Los Angeles. With much of San Francisco’s original Chinatown destroyed during the 1906 earthquake and subsequent fires, it stands as one of the oldest surviving Chinese-American-related buildings in a California metropolitan area (Poole and Ball 2002:104). While the two southwest bays were demolished for construction of U.S. Route 101 in 1953, the remaining original portion of the building retains integrity and is currently occupied by the Chinese American Museum.

11. Sanchez Building, 425 North Los Angeles Street, 1898 – Contributing

The Sanchez Building is a narrow 3-bay, 2-story brick building located to the south of the Turner Building. Constructed in 1898, it was primarily used by Chinese Americans for commercial and residential purposes. Brick segmental arches head the first-floor wood- and glass-paneled doors with transoms. The 1-over-1 wood sash windows on the second story have brick labels with corbel stops; decorative brickwork runs along the flat roofline. Like the Garnier Building, the Sanchez Building is currently occupied by the Chinese American Museum.

12. Turner Building, 430 Sanchez Street, 1960 – Non-Contributing

The Turner Building adjoins the Sanchez Building to the southwest and the Hellman-Quon Building to the northeast. Constructed in 1960, it is a one-story brick building designed to complement the neighboring buildings.

13. Hellman-Quon Building, 130-132 Paseo de la Plaza, 1900 – Contributing

Constructed in 1900 by Isias Hellman, the Hellman-Quon Building is a one-story brick building fronting on the Plaza. It was long rented by Quon How Shing, who purchased the building in

Los Angeles Plaza Historic District

Los Angeles, California

Name of Property

County and State

1920 and owned it until 1954 when the State of California acquired it. The building features rectangular multi-paned windows set under segmental arched and rectangular heads, and brick corbelling, which runs along the flat roof line. Partially rehabilitated, the building is currently used for exhibitions, meetings, and education workshops.

14. Plaza Firehouse, 134 Paseo de la Plaza, 1884 – Contributing

The Plaza Firehouse is a 2-story brick building located on the corner of Paseo de la Plaza and Los Angeles Street. Constructed in 1884, it was the first structure in Los Angeles designed specifically for firefighting equipment and crews, serving in this capacity until 1897. It was converted to other uses following its use as a fire station, such as sleeping rooms on the second floor and a restaurant and saloon on the ground floor. The building features a corbel table that decorates a low stepped parapet and plain brick segmental-arched window heads and 2-over-3 wood sash windows. Above the wide-paneled wood station doors is a frame balcony with a shed roof. The building was completely restored, which included the reconstruction of a cast dome for the fire alarm, and currently operates as a museum that displays firefighting equipment dating to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

15. Biscailuz Building, 125 Paseo de la Plaza, 1926 – Non-Contributing

Adjoining the Plaza Methodist Church to the southeast is the Plaza Community Center (Biscailuz Building), which was constructed in 1926 as the United Methodist Church Conference Headquarters. The present appearance of the four-story masonry building is largely the result of exterior alterations completed during the 1960s that were designed to give the building a more Spanish style appearance. These include the addition of a tiled hipped roof to the previously flat roof of the main block, the combination of original three-bay window groupings to create single windows, and the alteration of the original segmentally arched arcade-like entry, which now features a continuous arcade with round arches that extends around the east side of the building. The lower southeast wall of the building features a mural from 1978 by Los Angeles Artist entitled “The Blessing of the Animals,” which depicts a traditional ceremony that takes place within the Plaza Area every year on the Saturday before Easter.

While previously listed in the 1981 nomination as a contributing resource, the current nomination is reclassifying the Biscailuz Building as a non-contributing resource due to the extensive alterations that occurred outside of the district’s period of significance. These alterations have seriously affected the integrity of the building’s design, materials and workmanship; though the Spanish design of the building may be more appropriate to the district’s overall architectural character, it creates a false sense of history.

16. Plaza Methodist Church, 115 Paseo de la Plaza, 1926 – Contributing

The Plaza Methodist Church is located at the intersection of Olvera Street and Marchesseault Street, immediately adjacent to the Plaza Community Center (Biscailuz Building). Constructed in 1926, the three-story building was designed in a Spanish Churrigueresque style by the architecture firm of Train and Williams, established by Robert Farquhar Train and Robert

Los Angeles Plaza Historic District

Los Angeles, California

Name of Property

County and State

Edmund Williams. The building features sculptural ornamentation and a Moorish dome of yellow and green tile with a garlanded finial at each corner. Entrance to the building is a granted through a full-story paneled wood door, which is topped by an elaborate leaded-glass window and a large trefoil surround. The decorative detailing of the door surrounds is elaborate and the focal point of the design. While the building maintains its integrity on the exterior, the interior was significantly altered in the 1960s, including the removal of architectural detailing and the elevation of the altar onto a large platform.

17. Plaza Substation, 611 North Los Angeles Street, 1903-04 – Contributing

The Plaza Substation is located along the east side of Olvera Street and was constructed in 1903-04 as the first and largest of fourteen substations built to supply electrical power for the Los Angeles Railway Company. Because of the sloping terrain of its site, the brick masonry building is three stories on its Olvera Street elevation (on the northwest) and four stories on its southeast elevation. Divided into 5 bays by buttresses, the façade features brick pilasters and a roof supported by elaborate wooden trusses. Rectangular wood-framed windows are set into segmental-arch surrounds, with two banks of clerestory windows. The building's ornamental stepped parapet was removed after the 1971 Sylmar earthquake but restored in 1989-90. In 1978, the Plaza Substation was individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places for its association with the transportation of history of Los Angeles.

18. Avila Adobe, 10 East Olvera Street, 1818 – Contributing

Located to the north of the Plaza Substation is the Avila Adobe, which was constructed by Don Francisco Avila in 1818. The one-story adobe building is the oldest existing residence in Los Angeles. At the time of its construction, it featured three-foot thick adobe walls, packed earth floors, and a flat roof sheathed with a mixture of tar, rocks, and horse hair. Wood floors, doors, and window frames were later additions, as was the full-width planked veranda and steps fronting Olvera Street. In 1868 the Avila family vacated the house; in subsequent decades, it was used as a boarding house and eventually an Italian restaurant and hotel. When it was threatened with demolition in the 1920s, Christine Sterling was inspired to restore the building and eventually transform the rest of Olvera Street. It was donated to the State of California when the Plaza area became a state park in 1953 and subsequently has operated as a historic house museum.

19. Avila Annex, 10 East Olvera Street, 1974 – Non-Contributing

The Avila Annex is a one-story, L-shaped building located in the rear (southeast) patio of the Avila Adobe. The building was constructed in 1974 and currently houses park staff offices and restrooms.

20. Zanja Madre, Olvera Street, ca. 1781 – Non-Contributing

Known to be located underneath Olvera Street is a segment of the Zanja Madre, or mother ditch, which is an early water conveyance system initially built in 1781 to divert water from the Los

Los Angeles Plaza Historic District

Los Angeles, California

Name of Property

County and State

Angeles River to the newly established Pueblo. Originally an open earth ditch, this segment of the zanja was encased by a conduit brick masonry pipe between 1884 and 1888 (Hall 1888). Numerous historical maps and accounts indicate that the zanja traveled southwest from the river between present-day North Broadway and North Alameda Street to the approximate intersection of West Cesar Chavez Avenue and North Main Street (Ord 1849; Kellehrer 1875; Ruxton 1873). From that point, the zanja traveled south across Olvera Street to the junction of North Alameda Street and North Los Angeles Street and then continued to the southwest, eventually branching into several numbered zanjás.

An archaeological excavation undertaken in 1978 identified a portion of the brick-lined Zanja Madre that appeared to exit from the Avila Adobe property, indicating the alignment depicted in historical maps is indeed correct (Costello and Wilcoxon 1978). While this evidence leaves little doubt that segments of the zanja traverse the boundaries of the district, without additional documentation to identify the resource and its current integrity, it is not possible to include it as a contributing resource at this time.

21. The Winery, 11 East Olvera Street/845 North Alameda Street, 1870-1914 – Contributing

Located at the northeast end of Olvera Street, the one-story Winery building was constructed in stages between 1870 and 1914. The polygonal brick building was one of several wineries operated by Italian-Americans living in the pueblo area in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Presently the building (which was subdivided in 1930) functions as exhibit space, shops, and offices; as well as a restaurant, which is located within the portion fronting Olvera Street.

22. Italian Hall, 644-650 North Main Street, 1907-08 – Contributing

The Italian Hall is a two-story masonry building located at the northernmost end of Olvera Street. Built in 1907-08, the building was the social center for the town's Italian community and used for banquets, weddings and dances. Developer Marie Hammel chose architect Julius W. Krause to design the building, which features yellow-colored brick on the northwest and northeast elevations and unpainted brick on the elevation facing Olvera Street. Sash windows are placed within rectangular and segmental arched openings, and the primary entrance on North Main Street is located under a wrought iron balcony. After shops opened on Olvera Street in 1930, the Italian-American groups began moved towards larger quarters. Current plans call for the upper floor to house a museum on the history of Italian immigrants in Los Angeles.

On the second-story southwestern elevation is the 18 x 80-foot mural, *America Tropical*. The mural was painted by the prominent Mexican artist and activist David Alfaro Siqueiros and is his only surviving public mural in the United States (Poole and Ball 2002:90). When it was completed in 1932, *America Tropical* provoked controversy due to its content, which depicts a Mexican Indian crucified on a double cross beneath an American eagle, with two sharpshooters taking aim at the eagle from a nearby rooftop. Negative reaction to the mural resulted in the mural being partially covered with white paint within a year, and completely covered by the end of the decade. Early conservation efforts began in the 1970s, with substantial steps not occurring

Los Angeles Plaza Historic District

Name of Property

Los Angeles, California

County and State

until the late 1980s. Over the following two decades, additional research, fundraising, and conservation efforts were carried out, and in 2012 the mural was reopened with a protective shelter and viewing platform, and an interpretative center in the Sepulveda House.

23. Hammel Building, 634-642 North Main Street, 1909 – Contributing

Adjoining the Italian Hall to the northeast and the Pelanconi House and Warehouse to the southwest, the Hammel Building is a one-story brick building constructed in 1909 by developer Marie Hammel. The building features a flat roof, trimmed with a continuous cornice lined with dentils and four storefront openings along its northwest elevation. As originally built, the building housed four light-industrial shops and a partial basement/storage area along Olvera Street. In the 1930s, staircases were added to the southeast elevation to provide access to the building from Olvera Street, and small basements were excavated in the 1940s to provide additional commercial space. A large canopy was constructed on the north end of the building in 2012 to protect the *America Tropical* mural, which is painted on the exposed second story, south wall of the adjacent Italian Hall. The protective shelter consists of a wrapped steel-framed canopy and free-standing, angled side panels on the North Main Street and Olvera Street elevations. While this structure is a highly visible addition to the Hammel Building, it is reversible and its design and materials are clearly differentiated from the original building; this alteration therefore has not compromised the building's integrity and ability to convey its period of significance.

24. Pelanconi House, 17 West Olvera Street, circa 1852-57; Pelanconi Warehouse, 630-632½ North Main Street, 1910 – Contributing

The Pelanconi House and Warehouse are located along the west side of Olvera Street between the Hammel Building to the northeast and the Gibbs Brothers Electric Company Building to the southwest. Constructed circa 1852-57, the small 2-story building is one of the first brick buildings in Los Angeles, and the oldest surviving example. The ground floor, or exposed basement, initially housed a wine cellar, and living quarters were located above. The house was built by Giuseppi Covaccichi and purchased by Antonio Pelanconi in 1871, who used the first floor store wine from his winery across the street. Fronting North Main Street, the Pelanconi Warehouse, a brick masonry building, was constructed by the Pelanconis in 1910. The warehouse was connected to the residence in 1930 through the removal of the adjoining wall when La Golondrina Mexican restaurant moved into the ground-floor of the building, which continues to occupy this space.

25. Gibbs Brothers Electric Company, 626 North Main Street, 1919 – Non-Contributing

Constructed in 1919, the Gibbs Brothers Electric Company is a small, one-story brick masonry building sheathed in stucco. It is located between the Pelanconi House and Warehouse to the northeast and the Sepulveda House to the southwest. The building has been significantly altered since its construction, including the installation of modern storefront windows on the primary (northwest) façade, which were in place by 1990. Additional work was performed in support of the development of the *America Tropical* Interpretive Center in 2012, which encompasses the

Los Angeles Plaza Historic District
Name of Property

Los Angeles, California
County and State

Gibbs Brothers Electric Company Building and the adjacent Sepulveda House. These two buildings were connected through the partial removal of their adjoining interior wall. Additionally, a large double door was installed at the rear (southeast) of the building and a viewing platform was constructed on top of the building.

26. Sepulveda House, 622-624 North Main Street, 1887 – Contributing

The Sepulveda House is a two-story brick building fronting North Main Street. The building was constructed in 1887 by Eloisa Martinez de Sepulveda for commercial-residential use. Designed by architects George F. Costerisan and William O. Merithew, the building displays features of the Eastlake architectural style, an idiom that is not commonly seen in Los Angeles. The Sepulveda House represents the city's transformation from its early Mexican traditions. Architectural details characteristic of this style include two prominent bay windows situated over two individual storefronts, as well as a mansard roof, bracketed cornices, and wrought-iron cresting. The Sepulveda House included twenty-two rooms when constructed, with a central breezeway running the width of the building. Possibly used as a bordello in the early twentieth century, it operated as USO canteen during World War II and currently houses the *America Tropical* Interpretive Center.

27. Machine Shop, 10 West Olvera Street, 1910 – Contributing

Located south of the Sepulveda House, the Machine Shop is a narrow one-story brick masonry building constructed in 1910. It has rectangular window surrounds and a flat roof, with a parapet marking the the Olvera Street (southeast) elevation. Originally constructed as a machine shop, the building was used for light industrial functions such as tinsmithing, electroplating, metal patterning, and machining. Two of the three arched openings on the Main Street (northwest) elevation have been in-filled with stucco. The central arch features vertical wood plank double doors with wrought-iron boards. With the transformation of Olvera Street in the 1930s, the primary entrance was shifted to Olvera Street and adapted for use as the Leo Carillo Theatre. Presently, it functions as one of the many commercial spaces along Olvera Street.

28. Jones Building, 608-618 North Main Street, circa 1888 – Non-Contributing

Constructed in circa 1888, the Jones Building is a one-story brick masonry building that originally faced North Main Street (eastern elevation). As built, the flat-roofed building was divided into five individual spaces containing industrial uses, such as plumbing and tin shops, harness and leather shops, and blacksmith shops. Following the transformation of Olvera Street, the primary entrances of the building were reversed to face Olvera Street.

29. Jones-Simpson Building, 103 Paseo de la Plaza, 1894 – Non-Contributing

Located at the southwestern end of Olvera Street, the Jones-Simpson Building was constructed in 1894 for use as a machine shop. The one-and-one-half story brick building features a parapet facing the Plaza that is accented with decorative brick corbelling. In 1960, it was significantly altered through the creation of large-arched windows on the northwest and southeast elevations.

Los Angeles Plaza Historic District
Name of Property

Los Angeles, California
County and State

In the late 1960s, La Luz del Día Restaurant moved into the building and added a patio area to the southern end of the southwest elevation with a wrought-iron railing and a tiled roof.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

Los Angeles Plaza Historic District
Name of Property

Los Angeles, California
County and State

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Exploration/Settlement

Community Planning/Development

Architecture

Period of Significance

1818-1930

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Kysor, Ezra F.

Costerisan, George F.

Merithew, William O.

Edelman, Abraham M.

Morgan, Octavius

Young, Robert Brown

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

As listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1972, the Los Angeles Plaza Historic District is significant as “the living composite story of Los Angeles from Indian times prior to 1781 through Spanish, Mexican and American periods to become the nation’s largest city on the Pacific basin.” A 1981 amendment to the nomination form added five additional buildings, which reflected the “Americanization” of Los Angeles and the “strong involvement of French and French Canadian settlers in this predominantly Hispanic town of the 1870’s and 1880’s.” Although the 1972 nomination and the 1981 amendment discuss the historical significance of the district, they do so in general terms and do not identify applicable criteria or areas of significance. The current amendment incorporates previous documentation with new information

Los Angeles Plaza Historic District

Los Angeles, California

Name of Property

County and State

to clearly define the district's significance in a manner consistent with present-day preservation standards.

The Los Angeles Plaza Historic District is significant under National Register Criteria A and C for its historical and architectural contributions to the founding and evolution of the original City of Los Angeles. With a period of significance from 1818 to 1930, the Los Angeles Plaza Historic District qualifies under Criterion A as the only remaining resource in Los Angeles that embodies the city's transition from a colonial outpost in the early 19th century to a prosperous, increasingly commercialized/industrialized American metropolis in the early 20th century. The district reflects associations with important events in the areas of exploration/settlement and community planning/development. Buildings within the district document the city's beginnings as a Spanish Pueblo, its growth into the social and financial center of southern California during the Mexican period, and its eventual transformation into a modern American city.

The Los Angeles Plaza Historic District is also significant under Criterion C in the area of architecture. Historically significant buildings in the district embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, and/or method of construction, ranging in date from 1818 to the 1920s and including Colonial-era adobe, Italianate and Victorian-era commercial buildings, and Spanish Revival styles.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

The founding of Los Angeles dates to 1781, when 44 *pobladores* from Sonora, Mexico, accompanied by the governor, soldiers, mission priests, and several Native Americans, arrived at a site alongside the Rio de Porciúncula (later renamed the Los Angeles River; Robinson 1979:238; Ríos-Bustamante 1992). They founded a pueblo called La Reyna de los Angeles, or the town of the Queen of the Angels (Treutlein 2004; contrary to Weber 1980). As a planned pueblo (one of only three in California), four square leagues (about 75 square km, 28 square miles) of land were set aside for the settlement, and included 12 house lots surrounding a common square, or plaza, and 36 fields laid out south of the plaza (Gumprecht 1999; Robinson 1979). The area's rich, well-watered soils created an ideal locale for a town meant to supply livestock and feed to the presidios of San Diego and Santa Barbara, and to serve as a home for retired Spanish soldiers. Initial development of the pueblo also included the construction of an extensive water management system. Water was diverted from the Los Angeles River into a ditch named the Zanja Madre (mother ditch), which in turn fed numerous smaller zanjas, providing water for agricultural and domestic purposes (Newmark 1977). By 1786, the flourishing pueblo attained self-sufficiency, and funding by the Spanish government ceased (Gumprecht 1999).

Following continued flooding of the Rio de Porciúncula, the plaza was relocated to its current location on higher ground in 1818. The newly developed Plaza was the center of the growing community and "became a fashionable area for residential construction; the Carrillos, Sepulvedas, Lugos, Olveras, and other leaders of the community having built their homes there" (National Register of Historic Places:8-3). One of the earliest residences along the Plaza was the

Los Angeles Plaza Historic District

Los Angeles, California

Name of Property

County and State

Avila Adobe, which was completed in 1818 for the wealthy cattle rancher Francisco Avila using adobe bricks and traditional construction techniques. That same year, construction began on a new church, located adjacent to the Plaza. Due to funding issues, however, the Plaza Church would not be completed for several years. Following the church's dedication on December 8, 1822, land to the north and south was consecrated as a Catholic cemetery (de Packman 1944:65; Owen 1960:17) and the first recorded burial occurred on January 6, 1823 (Huntington Library 2006). Prior to this, the pueblo's residents were forced to transport their deceased 9 miles to Mission San Gabriel to receive a Catholic burial.

Meanwhile, Alta California became a state following Mexico's independence from Spain in 1821. In an effort to attract settlers to the region, the Mexican government awarded approximately eight hundred land grants, many of which were developed into cattle ranches, or *ranchos*. A vibrant cattle industry quickly developed, and Los Angeles (and more specifically the Plaza) became the unquestionable center of social, political, and economic activity in southern California (Estrada 2008:48). Roads across the region led to the Plaza, where wealthy *rancheros* came to sell cattle, and attend mass, fiestas, and other social activities (Poole and Ball 2002:15). The Mexican Congress eventually elevated Los Angeles from pueblo to city status in 1835 and declared it the state capital of Alta California (Bancroft 1886; Robinson 1979). The Los Angeles *ayuntamiento*, or city council, had the pueblo's buildings repaired and whitewashed in honor of the occasion to "show its cleanliness, magnificence, and brilliance in such a manner that the traveler who visits us may say, 'I have seen the City of the Angeles'" (Robinson 1979:37).

Under Mexican rule, the population of the Los Angeles nearly doubled, rising from 650 to 1,250 between 1822 and 1845 (Weber 1992). While the majority of the city's new residents were citizens arriving from other parts of Mexico, Los Angeles' agricultural potential also began to attract a growing number of French, Italians, and Americans. Other new arrivals included Native Americans from the surrounding region, who were drawn to Los Angeles following the secularization of the missions in the mid-1830s. Although they enjoyed greater freedoms than they had under the Franciscan padres, their existence continued to be difficult and many were relegated to performing work similar to what they had done at the missions (Poole and Ball 2002:15). As the city and its population grew, agricultural interests were gradually supplanted by more urban industries, with about a third of Los Angeles residents supporting themselves with non-agricultural pursuits by 1836 (Weber 1992).

Two years after the Mexican-American War and five months prior to California earning statehood, the City of Los Angeles was formally incorporated into the United States on April 4, 1850. The transfer to American governance had little immediate effect on Los Angeles; however, the aftereffects of the 1848 northern California Gold Rush gradually brought changes to the social, cultural, and physical makeup of Los Angeles. Economically, the Gold Rush brought new prosperity as the northern demand for beef replaced the earlier hide-and-tallow trade. Socially, the population of Los Angeles further changed following the arrival of miners from the north, including failed Anglo miners and Chinese miners fleeing racial violence. Other new residents included prospectors heading north from Sonora, Mexico, many of whom stopped in Los

Los Angeles Plaza Historic District

Los Angeles, California

Name of Property

County and State

Angeles and never left. So many settled in the area north of the Plaza that it eventually became known as Sonoratown (Estrada 2008:58; Poole and Ball 2002:22).

As the population of Los Angeles grew to over four thousand inhabitants during the 1850s, a number of visual changes occurred at the Plaza (Poole and Ball 2002:23). Wealthy rancheros, such as Iganacio del Valle and Vicente Lugo, constructed new adobes or added second stories to their homes on the east side of the Plaza. To the west, American merchant Abel Stearns (who arrived in Los Angeles in 1829 and eventually became one of the area's wealthiest citizens) constructed a massive-walled home along Main Street that was known as El Palacio (Estrada 2008:58). In 1857, a municipal brick water tank was built at the center of the Plaza and the surrounding area was landscaped with trees, flowers, and foot paths. As evidence of the city's changing demographics, buildings constructed during the 1850s also included two of the earliest brick buildings in Los Angeles, Italian settler Antonio Pelanconi's winery cellar and residence (1852-57), and the Masonic Hall (1858), which was built as Lodge 42 of the Free and Accepted Masons (National Register of Historic Places 1972).

The growing wealth and prosperity of Los Angeles also attracted an increasing number of gamblers, outlaws, and prostitutes, who arrived in the city in the 1850s and 1860s. The resulting vice and violence largely centered on the southeast side of the Plaza on present-day North Los Angeles Street, then-named *Calle de los Negros* (Street of the Blacks), or "Negro" or "Nigger Alley" as known by the Anglo-Americans (Estrada 2008:59). As historian W.W. Robinson writes, "once a street of happy homes, Calle de los Negros, opening into the Plazuela and the Plaza, was... a pandemonium of races, gambling, vice, and crime" (Robinson 1981:61). The crime rate of the city grew exponentially during this period, and vigilante justice and public hangings becoming commonplace. Although many of the wealthy rancheros supported vigilante rule, others condemned these tactics, which were predominantly racially motivated and commonly at the expense of Mexican, Native American, and Chinese inhabitants (Estrada 2008:60; Poole and Ball 2002:26).

Largely the result of persisting violence, wealthy rancheros began to abandon their adobe residences in the 1860s and the Plaza gradually lost its prestige as the economic and social center of Los Angeles. The city's new development extended further to the southwest, and the Plaza came to represent the dividing line between the old "Mexican" city to the north and the new "American" city to the south (Estrada 2008:65-66). In an effort to revive the Plaza area, Pío Pico, the last governor of Alta California and a wealthy land owner, began construction of a new hotel at the corner of Main Street and the Plaza in 1869.

When the hotel was completed the following year, it was Los Angeles's first three-story building, featuring an Italianate design, eighty-two guest rooms, twenty-one parlors, and amenities unrivaled in southern California (Poole and Ball 2002:100). Six months later, the Italianate-style Merced Theater opened next door to the south. As the first building constructed within the city for dramatic performances, the theater enjoyed immediate success (Poole and Ball 2002:102). Although the architecture and purpose of these two buildings symbolized the growing prosperity of Los Angeles, violence continued to plague the Plaza area, and by the early 1880s, both the hotel and theater had fallen on hard times.

Los Angeles Plaza Historic District
Name of Property

Los Angeles, California
County and State

The Southern Pacific Railroad extended its line from San Francisco to Los Angeles in 1876, signaling the beginning of a new era for Los Angeles. Newcomers poured into the city, nearly doubling the population between 1870 and 1880. The completion of the second transcontinental line, the Santa Fe, took place in 1886, causing a price war that drove fares to an unprecedented low, including a promotional one-way ticket from Kansas City that sold for one dollar. More settlers continued to head west and the demand for real estate skyrocketed. As real estate prices soared during the boom of the 1880s, land that had been farmed for decades outlived its agricultural value and was sold to become residential communities (Dumke 1944; Fogelson 1967). The large ranchos that surrounded the city were each annexed, subdivided, and developed in turn. Los Angeles' population more than quadrupled in a decade, from 11,183 in 1880 to 50,395 by 1890 (Dumke 1944; Fogelson 1967; Meyer 1981; Robinson 1979; Wilkman and Wilkman 2006).

Successive waves of immigration from the east, as well as overseas, transformed the demographics of the city from predominantly Californio and Native American prior to the American takeover in 1848 to predominantly Anglo-American thereafter. Census data, which lump Californios and Anglo-Americans into the category "white," show a steady decline in the "Indian" population from 1860 to 1880, despite a dramatic increase in total population. The population of "Colored" people increased slowly during this period, while that of Asians (primarily Chinese and Japanese) exploded, particularly in the 1860s and 1870s. Virtually no Asians resided in Los Angeles prior to 1848, and by 1850, only two Chinese men were listed in the census data. Intolerance and bigotry abounded during the late nineteenth century, both officially and unofficially, with California passing laws that targeted fugitive slaves (in 1852) and Chinese immigrants (1882). Chinatown, a crowded and dangerous ghetto located just east of the plaza, was burned twice—in 1871 and again in 1887 (Gibson and Dietler 2012:21–22; Greenwood 1996:9–12).

Meanwhile, much of the Plaza and surrounding area had fallen into disrepair by the late 1880s as the city's commercial and social center shifted south. Eloisa Martinez de Sepulveda was one of the few members of the original ranchero families that remained at the Plaza past the 1880s. In 1887, she built a residence and boarding house on Main Street that was designed in an Eastlake-style common on the East Coast, but rarely seen in Los Angeles (Poole and Ball 2002:121). As the Plaza area approached the turn of the century, a number of new ethnic groups arrived and began to establish residences and businesses. Adobes along Calle de los Negros were razed in 1887 and replaced by buildings specifically constructed for Chinese businesses and tenants (Poole and Ball 2002:105-106). These included the building at 425 North Los Angeles Street (ca. 1898), the Hellman-Quon Building (1900), and the Garnier Block (1898). The latter of these was designed in a Richardsonian Romanesque style, and following the destruction of the 1906 San Francisco earthquake and fire, it remains one of the oldest Chinese buildings in a metropolitan California area (Poole and Ball 2002:104). Italian immigrants further established themselves with the expansion of the Winery (1870-1914), the construction of the Italian Hall (1908), and the addition of the Pelanconi Warehouse (1910). French immigrants also developed businesses along Main Street including Garnier's construction of the Plaza House in 1883 and Lucien

Los Angeles Plaza Historic District

Los Angeles, California

Name of Property

County and State

Napoleon Brunswig's early involvement in and 1907 acquisition of the former Vickrey-Brunswig Building for his growing drug company.

The area north of the Plaza also began to change following a number of new developments in the late-eighteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Along Main Street, a shift towards light industry included the construction of a number of shops to house machinists, plumbers, blacksmiths, tailors and other tradespeople. These included the Jones Building (ca. 1888), the Simpson-Jones Building (1894), and the Hammel Building (1909). In addition, the Plaza Substation was built in 1904 to provide power to the Los Angeles Railway Company's yellow electric streetcars as part of the growing transportation system. The Olvera adobe, which was constructed in between 1830 and 1845, was demolished in 1917 and replaced by the Plaza Methodist Church and adjacent community center in 1926. The church was designed in a Spanish Churrigueresque style and built to combine Hispanic tradition and Protestant Heritage (National Register of Historic Places). The community center featured a minimal art-deco design and housed the United Methodist Church Conference Headquarters, with child day care, social services, and a clinic. The property was renamed the Biscailuz Building in 1965.

Despite these new developments, the condition of the Plaza continued to deteriorate into the 1920s. The Avila Adobe, the Pelanconi House, and the Sepulveda House were by this time functioning as short-term boarding houses and brothels; because of Prohibition, businesses such as the Winery were only able to produce soda and communion wine (Poole and Ball 2002:44). In 1926, while visiting the Plaza, Christine Sterling saw a condemnation notice posted on the Avila Adobe. Originally from Oakland, California and recently widowed, Sterling became the local champion of saving the building. She enlisted Harry Chandler, publisher of the *Los Angeles Times*, and began a public campaign to raise awareness about the history of the adobe and the threat of its demolition. With the additional assistance of Avila family descendants, Sterling was able to save and restore the adobe, subsequently turning her attention to Olvera Street and the adjacent buildings (Poole and Ball 2002:47-48).

Although Olvera Street was historically little more than an unpaved alleyway, it retained a number of extant historic buildings and Sterling envisioned transforming it into a "Spanish-American social and commercial center, a spot of beauty as a gesture of appreciation to Mexico and Spain for our historical past" (Poole and Ball 2002:50). Influenced by Helen Hunt Jackson's extremely popular 1884 novel *Ramona*, this vision of the past was largely based on a romanticized version of California's history and life on the missions and ranchos. Sterling returned to Chandler, as well as other civic leaders such as Lucien Brunswig, and succeeded in securing funding and subsequently creating the Plaza de Los Angeles, Inc., to oversee the development of Olvera Street. Construction began in 1929 and included the closure, grading, and paving of Olvera Street, and the renovation of historic buildings such as the Pelanconi House and Sepulveda House for new uses. The Mexican marketplace opened to great fanfare in 1930, featuring largely Mexican-American-owned restaurants and shops (Poole and Ball 2002:53).

As Olvera Street flourished over the following decades, a number of changes occurred to the Plaza and surrounding area. Old Chinatown to the east was demolished in the 1930s for the construction of the nearby Union Station train terminal (1938). Many of the subsequently

Los Angeles Plaza Historic District
Name of Property

Los Angeles, California
County and State

displaced Chinese-American residents moved north of the Plaza to eventually establish the new Chinatown in the old Sonoratown district, whose residents had largely left for neighborhoods in East Los Angeles by this time (Poole and Ball 2002:55). Another loss to the Chinese community was the Lugo House, an adobe built by Vicente Lugo on the east side of the Plaza circa 1838, which had been occupied by Chinese American businesses and tenants since the late 1880s. After the building was threatened with demolition in 1950, a group of Chinese American merchants raised thousands of dollars in an attempt to save the building, but were ultimately unsuccessful, largely because of Sterling who declared the “Chinese must go” and that the building’s eventual removal in 1951 was necessary to “clean up the area” (Poole and Ball 2002:55). Two years later in 1953, the Plaza area was further affected by the construction of U.S. Route 101 to the southeast, which not only resulted in the physical separation of the Plaza from the rest of downtown Los Angeles, but also in the demolition of two bays of the Garnier Building.

Nonetheless, the entire Plaza area secured recognition in 1953 as a state historic park. In 1972, the district was first listed in the National Register of Historic Places, in a nomination that was amended in 1981 to include additional buildings. Beginning in 1974, the park operated under a joint-powers agreement between the State of California, City of Los Angeles, and County of Los Angeles. (In 1987, the California State legislature enacted a statute that transferred the state-owned property within the El Pueblo de Los Angeles State Historic Park to the City of Los Angeles, thereby ending the tripartite agreement that created the El Pueblo de Los Angeles State Historic Park.) Through this time, the district has remained largely intact and continues to convey the story of Los Angeles’s founding and early transformation from an agricultural outpost to an increasingly important and prosperous metropolis.

Los Angeles Plaza Historic District
Name of Property

Los Angeles, California
County and State

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Costello, Julia G., and Larry Wilcoxon

- 1978 *An Archaeological Assessment of Cultural Resources in Urban Los Angeles*. Prepared for the City of Los Angeles in connection with construction project La Placita de Dolores, LAN-887. On file at the South Central Coastal Information Center, California State University, Fullerton.

de Packman, Ana Begue

- 1944 Landmarks and Pioneers of Los Angeles in 1853. *The Quarterly: The Historical Society of Southern California*, 26 (2-3):56–95.

Dumke, Glenn S.

- 1944 *The Boom of the Eighties in Southern California*. San Marino, CA: Huntington Library.

Fogelson, Robert M.

- 1967 *The Fragmented Metropolis: Los Angeles, 1850–1930*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Gibson, Heather and Sara Dietler (editors)

- 2012 *Not Dead but Gone Before: The Archaeology of Los Angeles City Cemetery*. AECOM Cultural Heritage Publication No. 4. Prepared by AECOM for Los Angeles Unified School District, Los Angeles.

Gumprecht, Blake

- 1999 *The Los Angeles River: Its Life, Death, and Possible Rebirth*. The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, Maryland.

Hill, Laurance L.

- 1929 *La Reina: Los Angeles in Three Centuries*. Los Angeles, CA: Security Trust & Savings Bank.

Mullaly, Larry, and Bruce Petty.

- 2002 *The Southern Pacific in Los Angeles, 1873–1996*. San Marino, CA: Golden West Books and Los Angeles Railroad Heritage Foundation.

Nadeau, Remi.

- 1960 *Los Angeles, from Mission to Modern City*. New York: Longmans, Green and Co.

Los Angeles Plaza Historic District
Name of Property

Los Angeles, California
County and State

National Register of Historic Places

- 1972 Los Angeles Plaza Historic District, Los Angeles, Los Angeles County, California, National Register #72000231.
- 1981 Los Angeles Plaza Historic District [amendment], Los Angeles County, California, National Register #72000231.

Newmark, Maurice H., and Marco R. Newmark, eds.

- 1916 *Sixty Years in Southern California, 1853–1913, Containing the Reminiscences of Harris Newmark*. 4th edition. Los Angeles, CA: Zeitlin & Ver Brugge.

O’Flaherty, Joseph S.

- 1972 *An End and a Beginning: The South Coast and Los Angeles 1850–1887*. Hicksville, NY: Exposition Press.
- 1978 *Those Powerful Years: The South Coast and Los Angeles, 1887–1917*. Hicksville, NY: Exposition Press.

Owen, Thomas J.

- 1960 The Church by the Plaza: A History of the Pueblo Church of Los Angeles. *The Historical Society of Southern California Quarterly*. March:5–28.

Poole, Jean Bruce.

- 2002 *El Pueblo: The Historic Heart of Los Angeles*. Los Angeles, CA: Getty Publications.

Robinson, W. W.

- 1979 *Land in California: The Story of Mission Lands, Ranchos, Squatters, Mining Claims, Railroad Grants, Land Scrip, Homesteads*. University of California Press, Berkeley.

Treutlein, Theodore E.

- 2004 Los Angeles, California: The Question of the City’s Original Spanish Name. In *The Founding Documents of Los Angeles: A Bilingual Edition*, edited by Doyce B. Nunis Jr. Historical Society of Southern California. Los Angeles, California.

Weber, David J.

- 1992 *The Spanish Frontier in North America*. Yale University Press, New Haven, Connecticut.

Weber, Francis J. (editor)

- 1980 *The Old Plaza Church, A Documentary History*. Libra Press Limited, Hong Kong.

Wilkman, Jon and Nancy Wilkman

- 2006 *Picturing Los Angeles*. Gibbs Smith, Salt Lake City.

Los Angeles Plaza Historic District
Name of Property

Los Angeles, California
County and State

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
 previously listed in the National Register
 previously determined eligible by the National Register
 designated a National Historic Landmark
 recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
 recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
 recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 Other State agency
 Federal agency
 Local government
 University
 Other
Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property 9.5

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (decimal degrees)

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

Los Angeles Plaza Historic District
Name of Property

Los Angeles, California
County and State

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- | | |
|--------------|------------|
| 1. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 2. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 3. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 4. Latitude: | Longitude: |

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

- | | | |
|-------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| 1. Zone: 11 | Easting: 385550 | Northing: 3768950 |
| 2. Zone: 11 | Easting: 385740 | Northing: 3768780 |
| 3. Zone: 11 | Easting: 385920 | Northing: 3769100 |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The Los Angeles Plaza Historic District is roughly bounded by W. Cesar E. Chavez Avenue (north), N. Los Angeles and N. Alameda Streets (east), W. Arcadia Street (south), and N. Spring Street (west). These boundaries are also depicted on the accompanying map.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

As identified on the 1981 nomination update, the boundary of the Los Angeles Plaza Historic District is centered on the Plaza and largely defined by the surrounding streets, historical property lines, and the physical changes that have occurred after the period of significance. On the south, the boundaries are dictated by the clear division of U.S. Route 101, extending slightly to the northwest to Republic Street to exclude a surface parking lot located at the northern corner of the intersection of Arcadia Street and North Main Street. The western boundary follows the historical alignment of New High Street, which defined the development of buildings such as the Vickrey Brunswig and Plaza House, before the boundary extends back along Paseo Luis Olivares to North Main Street to exclude a surface parking lot north of the Plaza Church property. East Cesar Chavez Avenue provides a clear

Los Angeles Plaza Historic District
Name of Property

Los Angeles, California
County and State

division between the district and newer development to the north. The eastern boundary extends south along Alameda Street to North Los Angeles Street and eventually U.S. Route 101.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Steven Treffers/Architectural Historian
organization: SWCA Environmental Consultants
street & number: 150 South Arroyo Parkway, 2nd Floor
city or town: Pasadena state: CA zip code: 91105
e-mail streffers@swca.com
telephone: (626) 240-0587
date: January 2015

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Los Angeles Plaza Historic District
Name of Property

Los Angeles, California
County and State

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Los Angeles Plaza Historic District

City or Vicinity: Los Angeles

County: Los Angeles

State: California

Photographer: Steven Treffers/SWCA Environmental Consultants

Date Photographed: May 2013

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 1 of 12 CA_Los Angeles_Los Angeles Plaza Historic District_0001; Biscailuz Building (#15) and Plaza Methodist Church (#16); view looking north.
- 2 of 12 CA_Los Angeles_Los Angeles Plaza Historic District_0002; Pico House (#7); view looking south.
- 3 of 12 CA_Los Angeles_Los Angeles Plaza Historic District_0003; Old Plaza Church (#3) and Cemetery (#4); view looking north.
- 4 of 12 CA_Los Angeles_Los Angeles Plaza Historic District_0004; Masonic Hall (#9), Merced Theater (#8), and Pico House (#7); view looking northwest.
- 5 of 12 CA_Los Angeles_Los Angeles Plaza Historic District_0005; Vickrey Brunswick Building (#6) and Plaza House (#5); view looking north.
- 6 of 12 CA_Los Angeles_Los Angeles Plaza Historic District_0006; Plaza (#1); view looking southwest.
- 7 of 12 CA_Los Angeles_Los Angeles Plaza Historic District_0007; Hellman-Quon Building (#13) and Plaza Firehouse (#14); view looking southeast.

Los Angeles Plaza Historic District

Los Angeles, California
County and State

Name of Property

- 8 of 12 CA_Los Angeles_Los Angeles Plaza Historic District_0008; Olvera Street; view looking southwest.
- 9 of 12 CA_Los Angeles_Los Angeles Plaza Historic District_0009; Olvera Street; view looking northeast.
- 10 of 12 CA_Los Angeles_Los Angeles Plaza Historic District_0010; Jones-Simpson Building (#29), Jones Building (#28), Machine Shop (#27), and Sepulveda House (#26); view looking northeast.
- 11 of 12 CA_Los Angeles_Los Angeles Plaza Historic District_0011; Hammel Building (#23) and Italian Hall (#22); view looking northeast.
- 12 of 12 CA_Los Angeles_Los Angeles Plaza Historic District_0012; Old Plaza Church (#3) and Rectory (#2); view looking southwest.

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

Los Angeles Plaza Historic District

Los Angeles, California
 County and State

Name of Property

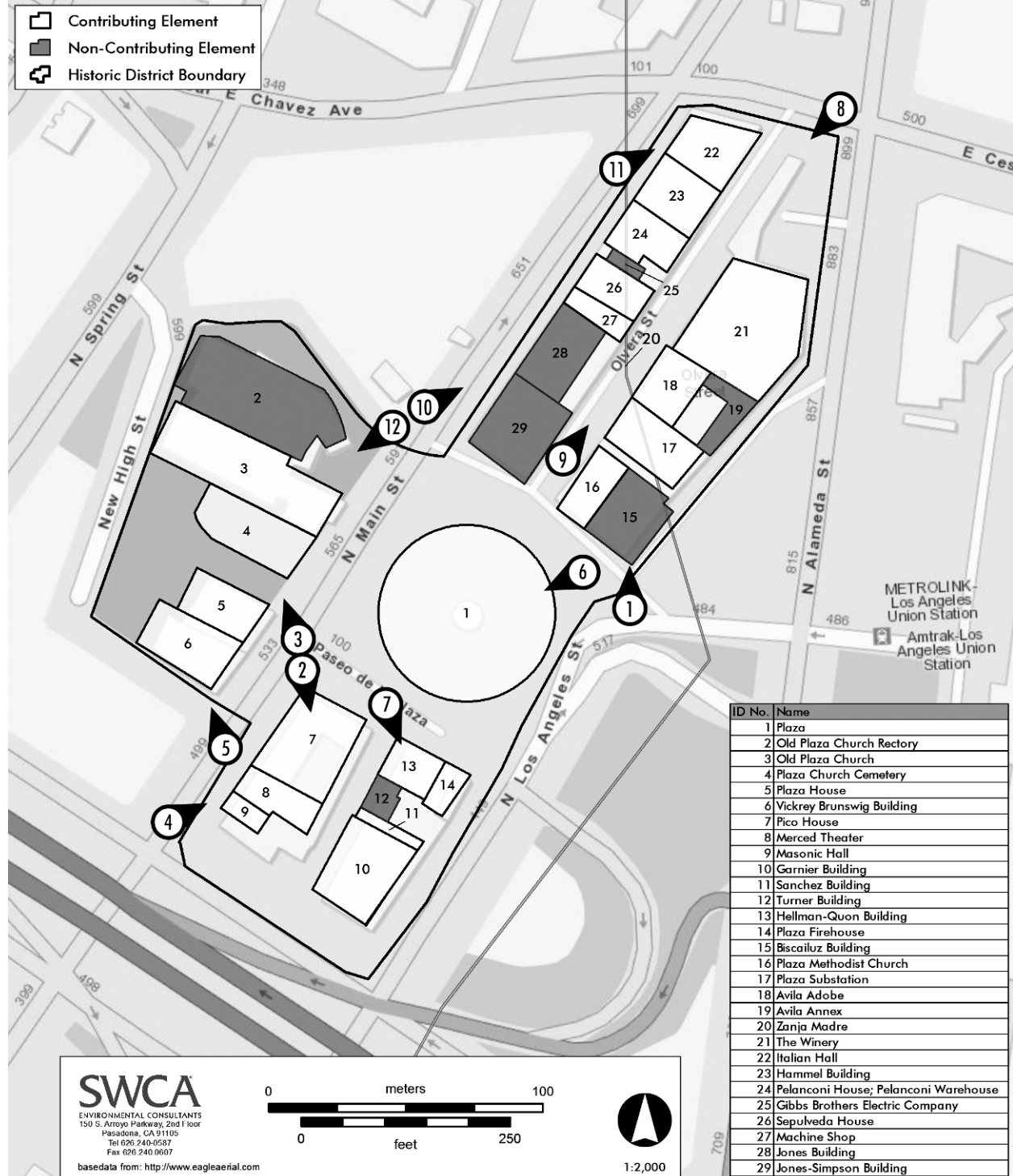


Figure 1. Sketch map and photo key.

Los Angeles Plaza Historic District
Name of Property

Los Angeles, California
County and State

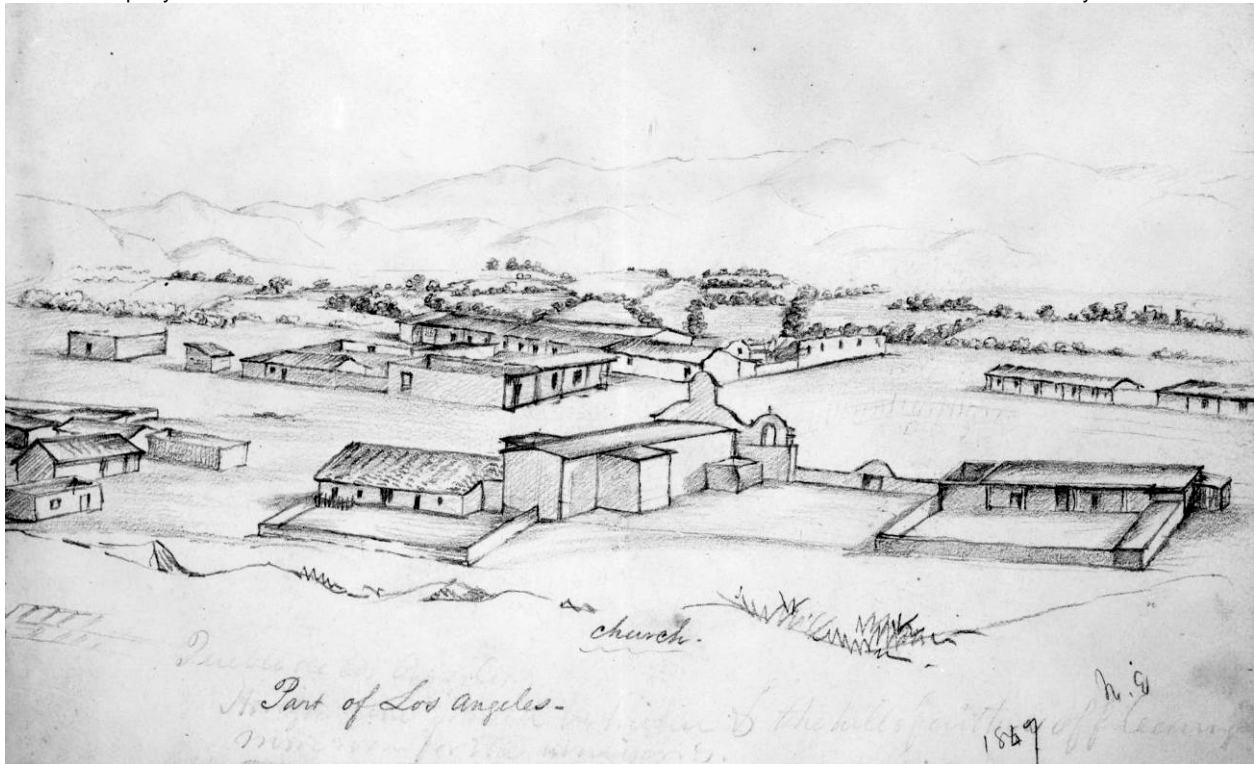


Figure 2. Earliest known drawing of La Plaza, 1847 (Source: Title Insurance and Trust and C.C. Pierce Photography Collection, USC Libraries).

Los Angeles Plaza Historic District
Name of Property

Los Angeles, California
County and State



Figure 3. Earliest known photograph of La Plaza, circa early 1860s (Source: Braun Research Library Collection, Autry National Center).

Los Angeles Plaza Historic District
Name of Property

Los Angeles, California
County and State



Figure 4. The Plaza as it appeared in 1890. (Source: Los Angeles Public Library).

Los Angeles Plaza Historic District
Name of Property

Los Angeles, California
County and State



Figure 5. Aerial view of La Plaza and surrounding buildings (Source: Water and Power Associates).

Los Angeles Plaza Historic District
Name of Property

Los Angeles, California
County and State



Figure 6. Pico House circa 1920 (Source: Water and Power Associates).

Los Angeles Plaza Historic District
Name of Property

Los Angeles, California
County and State



Figure 7. Olvera Street prior to improvements, circa 1920 (Source: Water and Power Associates).