

News Release



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 9, 2008

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A Selected Chronology of Los Angeles State Historic Park (LASHP)

"The completion of a transcontinental railroad line to Los Angeles in 1876 changed Southern California forever . . ." --Blake Gumprecht, *The Los Angeles River* (1999), 83.

- 1769 Spain's Portolá expedition of 64 men camps along the river and travels through LASHP site (Aug.), and Tongva/Gabrieleno village of Yangna, one of 40 to 60 villages in region. Expedition notes value of river to creating agricultural settlement in area.
- 1781 Gov. Felipe de Neve and a party of 11 families (44 men, women, and children) found pueblo of Los Angeles near the present Plaza; LASHP site is part of the pueblo lands as communal planting lands (suertes); the Zanja Madre is first water conveyance system to bring water from the L.A. River across the bluff currently on the west side of the Gold Line to plaza.
- 1804 Earliest documentation of LASHP site's use for agriculture.
- 1835 Mexico elevates Los Angeles to status of *pueblo* (city) and shortly serves as capital of Alta California; its population of 1,650 people (including 600 Indians) is largest civil community in the territory.
- 1850 California admitted to the Union; City of Los Angeles is incorporated; U.S. census counts 1,610 non-Indian inhabitants in the city of Los Angeles.
- 1858 Water wheel is completed on-site to capture water from the Zanja Madre and lift it to Buena Vista Street (Broadway) pipes and eventually to the plaza.
- 1872 **Voters approve referendum granting Southern Pacific Rail Road (SP) \$600,000 in cash, control over rail line to San Pedro, and 600 acres for a rail yard and rights-of-way (will include LASHP site)**, connecting L.A. to a transcontinental national rail network and undercutting San Diego's bid as a rail port; SP hires journalist Charles Nordhoff, to write *California for Health, Pleasure, and Residence* selling Southern California as a place of agricultural riches, sunny skies and healthy climate to lure wealthy travelers and settlers.
- 1873 SP starts laying tracks from new L.A. Junction or the "River Station" (LASHP site) toward San Francisco.
- 1875 **River Station facility is under construction; opens for first local passenger service.**
- 1876 SP, headed by Leland Stanford, completes rail link between L.A. and San Francisco at Soledad Canyon thus changing Southern California forever
- 1877 SP arrival sparks land boom with ripple effects in Pasadena, El Monte, etc.
- 1878 Wolfskill family sends first shipment of oranges east via SP and it arrives in St. Louis in good shape—sparks a commercial agricultural boom for So. California.

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- 1879 River Station's new depot and original Pacific Hotel opens for business with its featured "parlor sitting room" and 25-minute meal service for through passengers; William N. Monroe, hotel owner, is elected to city council.
- 1880 **Roundhouse and shops are in operation at River Station.** City population nearly doubles in 10 years, reaching 11,183.
- 1881 SP completes Southern rail link with New Orleans via Yuma and Los Angeles.
- 1882 First L.A. telephone is installed at River Station.
- 1883 Increased passenger service requires building of a new larger depot and hotel with restaurant to deal with the transcontinental rail traffic at River Station.
- 1885 Santa Fe Railway completes second national rail line into Los Angeles, triggering the first major land boom in Southern California.
- 1887 **SP brings 120,000 "boomers" to Los Angeles.**
- 1888 **SP adds additional buildings to River Station (from 1888 to 1894) filling entire property;** but demand and Station's location on "outskirts of town" pushes SP to build more elaborate Arcade Station in 1889 on Alameda Street near 1st;
River Station is at its height of development with the depot/hotel, freight house, 26-stall roundhouse, 75-foot diameter turntable, coaling & wood house, full-set of maintenance shops, and most importantly for the citrus industry, a large icing facility. It served as SP's headquarters for all passenger, freight, and regional maintenance operations. As such it regularly employed over 300 permanent employees who lived in the new residential and industrial neighborhoods surrounding the yard.
- 1889 Los Angeles Electric Railway Company extends trolley lines down Buena Vista (North Broadway) and San Fernando (North Spring).
- 1890s Semi-Tropic Homestead Co. develops housing tract near River Station, works with SP to build pedestrian bridge spanning rail yard to provide access from Broadway (Buena Vista).
- 1890 County population is 101,454; city population, 50,395.
- 1892 Oil is discovered in Los Angeles, begins oil boom. Standard Oil builds first refinery next to River Station between Baker and North Spring.
- 1893 **SP closes Pacific Hotel,** converts the building to a freight office; Fruit Growers Exchange founded to partners with railroads in promoting oranges.
- 1897 **SP begins move of maintenance shops from River Station to new "General Shops Yard" in East Los Angeles (now known as Lincoln Heights) to accommodate volume of freight operations. At this time the shops, roundhouse, and turntable were dismantled and re-constructed at the new site. The old foundations were then buried and graded flat for new rail (these are some of the archaeological features recently uncovered on site).**
Freight yards were extended another 1500 feet down and across Alameda for several new shipping houses were built.
- 1902 **Old River Station Depot/hotel is removed from original site and incorporated into new larger freight house on south end of property.**
- 1903 SP builds new bridge over the river; Henry E. Huntington begins trolley empire.
- 1908 **Area around River Station out to river edge is the first area in the City zoned for manufacturing—officially Industrial District #1.**
- 1910 County population reaches 504,131; City's reaches 310,198.
- 1910s **River Station is nerve center of SPs multi-million dollar freighting operations in L.A. The Station employed four to five hundred workers on around-the-clock shifts moving an estimated 85,000 freight cars through the yard per month—often blocking the city streets surrounding the yard all day long.**

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- 1914 SP opens Central Railroad Station at northwest corner of Fifth St. and Central Ave., closes Arcade Station.
- 1920 Population of Southern California surpasses that of Northern California.
- 1925 City population reaches 896,000; **Taylor Yard is opened “out of town” to deal with the immense volume of freight moving through the region. River Station is placed under this SP jurisdiction.**
- 1933 Old Chinatown is chosen as site for new Union Station. Relocation of the residents and businesses begin.
- 1935 River Station becomes a key station for SP’s daily “Overnight” Coast Merchandise Express freight trains to San Francisco and Portland.
- 1939 Union Station opens with festive three-day celebration.
- 1940-50s During and after the War, River Station serves as an early “inter-modal” facility for transfer of freight between rail and truck.
- 1953 SP starts some of the first trailer-on-flat car container transport service at River Station.
- 1964 Los Angeles becomes nation’s second most populous city.
- 1970s The railroad and industrial landscape around River Station in decline.
- 1971 **City designates River Station as Cultural Monument #82.**
- 1978 Fire destroys old freight house [a portion being part of the original Pacific Hotel].
- 1984 SP formally renames River Station as “Spring Street Intermodal Center.”
- 1985 Taylor Yard is formally closed, foretelling the fate of River Station.
- 1992 Southern Pacific begins dismantling of River Station/Bull Ring Yard and closes out the rail yard era for the site.
- 1999 **Old River Station land is slated to become an industrial park.** A local coalition now refers to the site as the Chinatown or Cornfield Yard objects. Legal challenges commence and community calls for a new park instead.
- 2001 Trust for Public Land buys “Cornfield” site, resells it to State Parks due to the historical significance of the property and location near L.A. River.
- 2002 Preliminary archaeological survey and test locates remains of River Station artifacts and features during soil remediation.
- 2003 California State Parks Cornfield Advisory Committee (formed in 2002) completes Vision Document for new park
- 2005 State Park undertakes initial archaeological investigations prior to installing interim park facilities. State Park commission approves General Plan and naming and classification as Los Angeles State Historic Park.
- 2006 **State Parks opens 13 acres for interim public use of LASHP in September, many of the landscape design elements “interpret” the site’s history and archaeological features .**
- 2007 Hargreaves Associates selected as lead design firm for long-range design/development

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