

SurveyLA

Los Angeles Historic Resources Survey

LOS ANGELES CITYWIDE HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT

Context: Architecture and Engineering

Theme: Beaux Arts Classicism, Neoclassical, and Italian Renaissance Revival
Architecture, 1895-1940



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Department of City Planning
Office of Historic Resources

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PREFACE

This theme is a component of Los Angeles' citywide historic context statement and provides guidance to field surveyors in identifying and evaluating potential historic resources relating to Beaux Arts, Neoclassical, and Italian Renaissance Revival styles of architecture popularly used for the design of commercial, institutional, and industrial buildings and structures during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Refer to www.HistoricPlacesLA.org for information on designated resources associated with this theme as well as those identified through SurveyLA and other surveys.

CONTRIBUTORS

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INTRODUCTION

The theme of "Beaux Arts Classicism, Neoclassical, and Italian Renaissance Revival Architecture" examines these styles that drew inspiration from the Western traditions of Ancient Classical, Medieval, and Renaissance Classical architecture. Although earlier styles such as Greek Revival (1850-1884) and Italianate (1850-1884) also drew upon these same building forms, in the late 19th century architects became newly enamored of classical and European architecture as a result of the pervasive influence of the École des Beaux-Arts – the French school of architecture.

In Los Angeles, these styles are primarily associated with commercial and institutional property types; there are fewer examples of industrial building types. This theme does not include residential properties. Neoclassical residential properties are covered in the Late 19th and Early 20th Century Residential Architecture theme. Extant examples of Italian Renaissance Revival residential properties are already designated and there are no known examples of Beaux Arts residential architecture in the city.

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Beaux Arts Classicism, Neoclassicism, and Italian Renaissance Revival architecture emerged from Europe and quickly became popular throughout the United States. During the late 19th century and into the 20th century, the styles would be employed by architects in every major metropolitan city in America and came to dominate commercial and institutional architecture during this period. Architecture in Los Angeles at this time reflects a transformative period in the history of Los Angeles as the city transitioned from an agricultural town to a sprawling metropolis. It is characterized by an alignment with national styles rather than styles and developments unique to Los Angeles. Like other American cities, Beaux Arts, Neoclassical, and Italian Renaissance Revival architecture in Los Angeles primarily dates from the 1890s to 1930s, with a significant concentration from the 1920s.¹ Other architectural styles that were commonly applied to commercial, institutional, industrial, and residential architecture during this period are discussed in other themes within the Architecture and Engineering context, including Mediterranean and Indigenous Revival, American Colonial Revival, Exotic Revival, Prewar Modernism, Art Deco, PWA Moderne, and Late Moderne.²

The majority of commercial and institutional architecture in the Beaux Arts, Neoclassical, and Italian Renaissance Revival styles is located in Downtown Los Angeles, although there are examples located throughout the city, particularly in Hollywood. These styles became especially popular during the 1920s for tall, multi-story commercial office buildings. Other common property types include banks, churches, schools, and bridges. Industrial examples are located east of Downtown and in other areas which historically served as industrial cores.³ Although there are a few high style industrial buildings, most are simple in design with some applied ornament of the Beaux Arts, Neoclassical, and Italian Renaissance Revival styles. As the country entered the Great Depression and the construction of new buildings came to nearly a complete halt, the popularity of the styles of the late 19th and early 20th centuries began to wane. After World War II, Modernism quickly supplanted these styles inspired by historic architecture as architects broke with the past to look to the future.

There are several guides to American architecture that overlap, yet have clear differences, in descriptions and classifications of architectural styles from the late 19th and early 20th centuries. These guides include the works of Leland M. Roth, David Gebhard and Robert Winter, Marcus Whiffen, Virginia & Lee McAlester, John J. Blumenson, John Poppeliers and S. Allen Chambers, Jr., and John Milnes Baker. This theme summarizes and does not attempt to re-categorize or re-interpret the Beaux Arts, Neoclassical, and Italian Renaissance Revival styles associated with this time period.

¹ Many of the properties significant within this theme are designated Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monuments and/or are listed in the National Register of Historic Places, as indicated in the historic context narrative.

² See also the Late 19th and Early 20th Century Residential Architecture theme for styles specific to residential properties.

³ Industrial examples are primarily located in the Central City and Central City North Community Plan Areas. See SurveyLA results for these areas.

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Evaluation Considerations

This theme may overlap with other themes of the citywide historic context statement as follows:

- Properties may also represent an important association with an ethnic/cultural group or groups in Los Angeles.
- Commercial examples of the style may also be significant within several themes of the Commercial Development context – most notably the themes of Hotels.
- Institutional properties may also be significant within the context of Public and Private Institutional Development context under several sub-contexts including Religion and Spirituality and Social Clubs and Organizations.
- Industrial properties may also be significant with the Industrial Context under several themes, and in particular, Industrial Design and Engineering.
- Residential examples of the Neoclassical style are covered in the Late 19th and Early 20th Century Residential architecture theme of the Architecture and Engineering context.

HISTORIC CONTEXT

The Origins of Beaux Arts Classicism, Neoclassicism, and Italian Renaissance Revival Styles

The period between the end of Reconstruction in 1877 and the beginning of the Great Depression in 1929 was one of overall rapid expansion and industrialization in the United States. This growth in the prosperity of American businesses influenced the styles of commercial and industrial architecture, which became more richly ornamented and utilized high quality building materials as a demonstration of individual or corporate wealth.⁴ The lavish designs of new institutional buildings and ambitious infrastructure projects also demonstrated the increasing power and fortunes of the United States government. The styles of late 19th and early 20th century commercial, institutional, and industrial architecture were largely fueled by this great economic progress during this period in American history.

Beaux Arts Classicism, Neoclassicism, and Italian Renaissance Revival styles emerged in the late 19th century from the architectural curriculum taught at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, the French school of architecture. These styles became almost universal in the design of commercial and institutional buildings in major metropolitan centers across the United States by the end of the 1920s. While there are fewer examples of high-style industrial buildings, the ornament of these styles was commonly applied to industrial buildings during this period as well. Four developments led to the dissemination of these styles between 1877 and 1929. The first was the professionalization of architecture through the formal training of American architects at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris or in newly established

⁴ Leland M. Roth, *American Architecture: A History* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2001), 268.

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schools of architecture in the United States.⁵ The second was the numerous exhibitions held throughout the country between 1893 and 1915, which greatly influenced architectural style preferences. The third development was a series of technological advancements that led to the standardization of building methods and designs. The final development was the rapid construction of Federal buildings throughout the United States under the tenure of Supervising Architect James Knox Taylor between 1897 and 1912.⁶ The end result was the emergence of distinctively American architectural styles and the distribution of these styles across the continent to Los Angeles.

The École des Beaux-Arts was established in 1648 as a school of fine arts in Paris called the Académie Royal de Peinture et de Sculpture. It was renamed the École des Beaux-Arts in 1863. Richard Morris Hunt was the first American to attend the school in 1846.⁷ It was around this time that the field of architecture in the United States was transforming from one dominated by builders and gentlemen amateurs to include professionals with formal training. Because the École des Beaux-Arts was considered to be the most prestigious school of architecture in the world many Americans, like Hunt, sought their education abroad in Paris.

Several American schools soon established architecture programs of their own, beginning with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1868.⁸ American architectural programs were modeled after the École des Beaux-Arts curriculum, what would later be known as the tenets of “Beaux Arts,” a term derived from the name of the school. These tenets emphasized comprehensive design, classical proportions, and grandness of scale. The École des Beaux-Arts also stressed in their architectural education a deep understanding of European and Mediterranean architecture from ancient Greece and Rome through the Renaissance, as well as a faithful recreation of these historic architectural forms and features.⁹ As more Americans studied at the École des Beaux-Arts, and in turn trained other architects upon their return through the formation of studios and professional schools, a whole generation of architects during the late 19th and early 20th centuries became deeply influenced by the tenets of Beaux Arts Classicism and European architecture.¹⁰

⁵ Longstreth, “Compositional Types in American Commercial Architecture,” *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture* Vol. 2 (1986): 22.

⁶ Roth, *American Architecture*, 267.

⁷ Elizabeth Terry Rose, “Richard Morris Hunt: Background and Select Bibliography,” Library of Congress, accessed May 30, 2018, <https://www.loc.gov/rr/print/coll/Hunt.html>.

⁸ Roth, *American Architecture*, 211.

⁹ “Western Architecture,” Encyclopedia Britannica, accessed May 30, 2018, <https://www.britannica.com/art/Western-architecture/Late-19th-century-developments>.

¹⁰ Roth, *American Architecture*, 224.

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*Lincoln Memorial, date unknown
(Library of Congress)*

Therefore, the styles that emerged from the École des Beaux-Arts were based upon historical forms from European architecture as well as a purer reflection of the historic buildings upon which they were based. This was both a reaction against the stylistic mixtures of the previous Victorian era and a result of advances in the fields of history, archaeology, and photography.¹¹ Neoclassical-style buildings were inspired by ancient Greek and Roman architecture, and incorporated features from these classical models, such as symmetrical floor plans, symmetrical fenestration, tall exterior columns that rise to the full height of the building, triangular pediments, and a centered domed roof.¹²

Italian Renaissance Revival buildings were primarily inspired by the architecture of 16th century Italy, and mirrored the architecture of the Italian palazzo.¹³ The facades were typically organized into a tripartite composition with an articulated ground level that featured arched window and door openings, middle stories with floors often separated by string courses, and an upper section elaborately capped by an overhanging cornice. Beaux Arts Classicism combined the forms of classical architecture and Italian Renaissance architecture. Like Italian Renaissance Revival buildings, the typical Beaux Arts façade is organized into a tripartite composition that mirrors that of an Italian palazzo; however, Beaux Arts-style buildings were much more richly decorated with columns, sculptures, swags, medallions, flowers, and cartouches.¹⁴

Several large-scale public exhibitions between 1893 and 1915 disseminated these architectural styles throughout the United States and contributed to the rise in their popularity with the American public. The design of the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago was highly influential in the fields of urban planning and architecture, and the impetus for a national movement known as the City Beautiful movement.¹⁵ The fairgrounds were nicknamed the White City for its large white Beaux Arts and Neoclassical-style buildings that were arranged in an orderly manner around a lagoon in a "Court of Honor."

¹¹ Virginia Savage McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013), 406-407.

¹² Marcus Whiffen, *American Architecture Since 1780: A Guide to the Styles* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992), 167.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 154.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 149.

¹⁵ The City Beautiful movement was a philosophy of architecture and urban planning that grew out of a larger campaign for municipal reform, a public outcry against the decline in public health and general welfare of America's urban inhabitants. Architects and urban planners of the City Beautiful movement believed that through planning and design the beautification of America's cities would lead to improvements in the quality of life for urban inhabitants and combat the growth of social ills. MIG, *San Francisco Civic Center Historic District Cultural Landscape Inventory* (San Francisco, CA: San Francisco Planning Department, June 2015), 96.

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*World's Columbian Exposition, 1893
(Library of Congress)*

These styles that premiered at the Columbian Exposition soon usurped all others to become the most popular for new commercial buildings, and close to the only styles for new public buildings for over the next 40 years.¹⁶ The architects and landscape designers who contributed to the exposition, such as Daniel P. Burnham; Frederick Law Olmsted; Richard Morris Hunt; McKim, Mead & White; and George B. Post, would also become celebrated masters in their fields for their Beaux Arts, Neoclassical, and Italian Renaissance Revival style designs.¹⁷ The success of the 1893 Chicago World's Fair led to the creation of other international

expositions in other American cities, including Buffalo in 1901, St. Louis in 1904, and San Francisco in 1915. Following the example of the White City, the fairground buildings for all three of these expositions were primarily designed in the Beaux Arts and Neoclassical styles.

Spurred in part by their use in public expositions, the rising popularity of Beaux Arts Classicism, Neoclassicism, and Italian Renaissance Revival coincided with an unprecedented period of centralization and new construction in American cities. The completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869 ushered in a new age of increased mobility. Older eastern cities expanded, particularly those that emerged as regional rail centers, while new cities flourished along transcontinental railway lines in developing western states.¹⁸ Economic progress fueled changes in American business ownership as small individual or family owned enterprises gave way to national corporations with a growing number of employees.

¹⁶ David Gebhard and Robert Winter, *Los Angeles: An Architectural Guide* (Salt Lake City: Gibbs Smith, 1986, reprinted, 1994), 478.

¹⁷ Notable buildings designed by these architects include the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (Richard Morris Hunt, 1902); Washington Union Station in Washington, D.C. (Daniel H. Burnham, 1903-1914); the New York Public Library in New York (Carrère & Hastings, 1895-1902); and Pennsylvania Station in New York (McKim, Mead & White, 1901-1910).

¹⁸ Roth, *American Architecture*, 268.

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*Penn Station, 1920
(Library of Congress)*

Nineteenth century technological innovations such as electricity, typewriters, and telephones led these new corporate businesses to relocate to city centers.¹⁹ Industrial manufacturers soon followed, moving to within or closer to American cities to be near railway lines. With this influx of population as well as commercial and industrial businesses, land values in American cities began to rise stimulating denser development. Constructing buildings taller than six stories became increasingly viable, especially with the invention of the passenger elevator in the late 19th century. Architects during this period were then faced

with two new challenges in this climate of increasing vertical density: first, to develop the technology required to build taller buildings and second, to give unity to elevations of unprecedented height.²⁰

As architects began designing buildings taller than six stories, their height and design were severely restricted by the limitations of masonry-bearing wall construction. A pure bearing-wall building required thick exterior load bearing walls and interior load bearing partitions, both of which reduced interior floor space making the design of these buildings awkward for commercial or industrial use.²¹ The introduction of the new technology of cast-iron columns led to a transitional building form called the cage building. The cage building was a hybrid of bearing-wall and skeleton buildings that permitted open floor plates and thinner exterior walls.²² Further improvements in the technology rapidly increased steel production, radically reducing the cost of the material and leading to the invention of the skeleton frame building. A skeleton frame building is entirely supported by a steel frame, including the floors and exterior masonry walls.²³ This form permitted flexible interior layouts free of load-bearing walls and facades that could be constructed out of different materials with any sized window openings desired. Standardization in the design of steel beams also allowed for rapid construction. Self-contained high-rises soon became typical for commercial buildings in metropolitan areas across the United States.

To bring visual order to these soaring office towers, American architects sought a better aesthetic expression of the skeleton frame through the principles of classical architecture – balance, harmony, and decorum.²⁴ Elevations were typically divided vertically by piers into symmetrical bays with one or grouped window openings. Because the exterior masonry walls of a skeletal frame building were not load bearing, new office buildings had a greater number of window openings that were often larger in

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Whiffen, *American Architecture Since 1780*, 192.

²¹ Donald Friedman, "Building Code Enforced Evolution in Early Skeleton Buildings," *Proceedings of the Second International Congress on Construction History* Vol. 2 (Cambridge: Queens College, Cambridge University, 2006), 1175.

²² Ibid., 1175.

²³ Ibid., 1177.

²⁴ Roth, *American Architecture*, 268.

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size. In addition to its vertical organization, commercial buildings of this period were also horizontally organized into a tripartite design: base, shaft, and capital.



*Home Insurance Company,
1885
(Library of Congress)*

One of the earliest buildings in the United States to be constructed with a metal frame, the Home Insurance Company Building in Chicago, reflects the prevailing trends in commercial office building design during this period.²⁵ Constructed between 1883 and 1885, William Le Baron Jenney drew on the forms of Italy's Renaissance palazzi to unite its 12-story masonry façades. The buildings first two stories were clad in rusticated stone and had arched windows and door openings. The shaft was divided by vertical piers ornamented with Corinthian capitals. The capital was topped with a tall dentiled cornice and balustrade.

The final development in this trend was the rapid construction of federal buildings during this period as a result of the policies of James Knox Taylor, who oversaw the Office of the Supervising Architect of the Treasury between 1897 and 1912, and helped to promote the dissemination of the late 19th and early 20th century commercial and institutional styles across the United States. Established in 1852, the Supervising Architect's office was a bureau within the U.S. Treasury Department that oversaw the design and construction of federal buildings such as customhouses, courthouses, post offices, marine hospitals, mints, and large office buildings. Until the early 20th century, the style of federal buildings tended to follow the favorite style of the incumbent Supervising Architect.²⁶ Federal buildings constructed under Taylor were no exception. He favored Greek and Roman precedents over the Richardsonian Romanesque that had been in vogue, believing that classical architecture evoked America's democratic ideals.²⁷ Neoclassicism therefore became the style of choice for government buildings in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

During Taylor's tenure, a unified federal building program emerged that would come to represent the high standards of architectural sophistication in their communities. Congressmen fought for the construction of new federal buildings in their district, which often indicated that a community had developed into a major metropolitan center and signaled good prospects for continued growth. Over 400 federal buildings were constructed under Taylor, the majority designed by architects within the

²⁵ Although it was one of the earliest buildings in the United States to be built with a metal frame, the Home Insurance Company Building was not a true skeleton frame building. The exterior masonry piers were load bearing and reinforced with cast iron columns. The building was demolished in 1931 to make way for the Field Building (now known as the LaSalle Bank Building); Roth, *American Architecture*, 269; "Home Insurance Building," History.com, accessed May 30, 2018, <https://www.history.com/topics/home-insurance-building>.

²⁶ "National Register Bulletin 13: How to Apply the National Register Criteria to Post Offices," Beth M. Boland, US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Cultural Resources, accessed May 30, 2018, <https://www.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb13/part2.htm>.

²⁷ Andrew J. Schmidt, "National Register of Historic Places Nomination: United States Post Office, Minneapolis," 2010, 7-8.

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Supervising Architect's office, with some designed by private architectural firms.²⁸ The Tarsney Act, passed in 1893, authorized the Treasury Department to contract private sector architectural services through a competitive bidding process. For funding, Taylor was able to utilize the first federal omnibus public buildings law passed in 1902, which saved authorization time in Congress and allowed construction of vastly more federal buildings. Federal buildings constructed during this period became models for other public buildings at the local, county, and state levels.²⁹



*Alexander Hamilton U.S. Custom House, 1908
(Library of Congress)*

Taylor's policies promoted the dissemination of the Neoclassical style across the country, as well as the Beaux Arts design principles of comprehensive design, classical proportions, and grandness of scale. Influenced by the 1893 Columbian Exposition, Federal buildings in the late 19th and early 20th were designed with sophisticated proportioning and space planning. They were constructed out of high quality building materials such as white marble or limestone, and featured monumental entrances leading to finely finished public lobbies. One of the most iconic buildings constructed under Taylor was the Alexander Hamilton U.S. Custom House in New York

City. Designed by Cass Gilbert, the seven-story Beaux Arts building featured impressive ornament based upon classic precedents, including 44 columns decorated with the head of Mercury and seated sculptural figures sculpted by Daniel Chester French flanking the grand arched entrance.³⁰

The styles of late 19th and early 20th century commercial and institutional architecture faded from popularity with the advent of Modernism and the onset of the Great Depression. Beginning in the late 1910s and early 1920s, a number of American architects of the period began preferring a modern aesthetic over the historical trends. The prewar modern styles were a dramatic break from the past and a celebration of a new age of industrial production and the machine.³¹ This movement in American architecture gained traction during the Great Depression. Construction of buildings, structures, and infrastructure came to almost a complete halt beginning in 1929, and the few buildings constructed during that time reflected architect's growing preference for modern styles. By the time construction in the United States picked up again after World War II, Beaux Arts Classicism, Neoclassicism, and Italian Renaissance Revival had fallen out of fashion, and few postwar commercial and institutional buildings were constructed in these styles.

²⁸ "Architecture and Government," United States General Services Administration, accessed May 30, 2018, <https://www.gsa.gov/real-estate/historic-preservation/historic-building-stewardship/architecture-and-government>.

²⁹ Antoinette J. Lee, *Architects to the Nation: The Rise and Decline of the Supervising Architect's Office* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 7.

³⁰ "Architecture & History," National Museum of the American Indian, accessed May 30, 2018, <http://nmai.si.edu/visit/newyork/architecture-history/>.

³¹ Roth, *American Architecture*, 361.

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Late 19th and Early 20th Century Commercial and Institutional Architecture in Los Angeles

By the late 19th century, Los Angeles was still primarily an agricultural community with a commercial and residential district concentrated around the Old Plaza and scattered settlements in the surrounding area.³² The arrival of the Southern Pacific railroad line in 1876 provided Southern California with its first transcontinental rail connection and subsequently ushered in a period of unprecedented growth.³³ Investors rushed to the burgeoning city and poured their resources into local real estate, eager to capitalize on the area's economic potential. What followed was the explosive expansion of the city and an onset of all types of development from office buildings Downtown, to elementary schools in outlying streetcar suburbs, to single-family residences across Los Angeles.

During this period of growth in the final quarter of the 19th century, much of the city's development was concentrated in and around Downtown Los Angeles. By this time, the area surrounding the intersection of Main, Spring, and Temple Streets grew into a thriving commercial district with older low-rise adobe structures and newer Italianate-style commercial buildings.³⁴ As the population grew, doubling between 1880 and



*Junction of Main, Spring, and Temple Streets, circa 1887
(Los Angeles Public Library)*

1890 and again between 1890 and 1900, the city's commercial activity shifted south to encompass what is today known as Downtown's Civic Center, Financial District, and Historic Core.³⁵ Industrial businesses also began relocating east of Downtown to capitalize on the convenience of having their operations near rail lines.³⁶ Both as a symbol of growing wealth and because of the rising price of land, buildings in Downtown Los Angeles were becoming increasingly taller near the end of the 19th century. What resulted by the early 20th century was a dense commercial and institutional core of office buildings, hotels, banks, and government buildings with a burgeoning industrial center to the east.

³² The old plaza, was the city's center under Spanish (1781–1821), Mexican (1821–1847), and United States (after 1847) rule through most of the 19th century. It is in the oldest section of Los Angeles where the settlement *El Pueblo de Nuestra Señora la Reina de los Ángeles del Río de Porciúncula* was founded.

³³ Architectural Resources Group, "Historic Resources Survey Report: Central City Community Plan Area," *SurveyLA Los Angeles Historic Resources Survey* (Office of Historic Resources, September 2016), 16

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 15.

³⁵ The Financial District is generally defined as the 110 freeway to the west, Olive Street to the east, 3rd Street to the north, and 8th Street to the south. The Historic Core is generally defined as Hill Street to the west, Los Angeles Street to the east, 3rd Street to the north, and Olympic Blvd to the South.

³⁶ Historic Resources Group, "Historic Resources Survey Report: Central City North Community Plan Area," *SurveyLA Los Angeles Historic Resources Survey* (Office of Historic Resources, September 2016), 11.

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Commercial, institutional, and industrial buildings constructed in Los Angeles during the late 19th and early 20th centuries mirrored the forms and styles of buildings in other growing cities in the United States. This was in part because of the new ease of contact and transportation of goods facilitated by the transcontinental railroad.³⁷ It was also a result of the fierce competition among growing communities that stimulated the tendency to conform to nationwide architectural trends.³⁸ Los Angeles developers adhered closely to current fashions to establish legitimacy and promote growth at the edge of the continent. Instead of a "Wild West" town, these speculators and boosters wanted to craft a new image of an idealized, European-American city.³⁹ Architecture based on historic European forms played a significant role in manufacturing this romanticized utopian image. Lastly, the professionalization of the field of architecture, the influence of the École des Beaux-Arts, and the continual migration of architects from Europe and the East Coast to California furthered the widespread popularity of the Beaux Arts, Neoclassical, and Italian Renaissance Revival styles in California and Los Angeles. Architects practicing in California at this time were increasingly formally trained. Many California architects went to the École in Paris for their education, and it soon became a standard for professional accreditation.⁴⁰ Albert Pissis was the first architect who practiced in California to have studied at the École. He designed numerous Neoclassical and Beaux Arts-style buildings in the San Francisco Bay Area, including the Hiberian Bank completed in 1892, Emporium Department Store completed in 1896/1908, and Mechanic's Institute Library completed in 1910. Architects educated at the École who later designed buildings in Los Angeles include Stiles O. Clements, Carl Jules Weyl, Carleton Winslow, David Clark Allison, G. Albert Lansburgh, H. Harwood Hewitt, James M. Reid, John Terrell Vawter (studied at the Umbenstock Atelier affiliate of the École), Julia Morgan, and Walter Wurdeman.

Attracted by Los Angeles' building booms between the 1890s and World War I, and between the 1920s and Great Depression, architects trained at the École or on the East Coast continually migrated to California. Richardsonian Romanesque was one of the first architectural styles in Los Angeles to come from the École and be commonly applied to commercial and institutional buildings. The style is named for the architect Henry Hobson Richardson and is considered the first uniquely American style.⁴¹ Richardson developed an eponymous style of rounded arches, heavy masonry walls, and turrets topped with conical

³⁷ David Gebhard, "One Hundred Years of Architecture in California," in *Architecture in California*, ed. David Gebhard and Harriette Von Breton (Santa Barbara: University of California, Santa Barbara, 1968), 2.

³⁸ Longstreth, "Compositional Types in American Commercial Architecture," 15.

³⁹ Hadley Meares, "Sunkist Skies of Glory," *Curbed Los Angeles*, accessed May 30, 2018, <https://la.curbed.com/2018/5/24/17350622/los-angeles-history-promoted-boosters-ads>.

⁴⁰ The first school of architecture in California at the University of California at Berkley was developed by John Galen Howard, who had trained at the École in the 1890s and based his new program on the École's curriculum.

⁴¹ Henry Hobson Richardson (1838-1886) was an American who received his architectural training at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris.

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roofs. In the west, examples of the style were often near replicas of monumental civic buildings from eastern cities.⁴² The most important examples of the Richardsonian Romanesque style constructed in Los Angeles (both demolished) were Los Angeles' first City Hall constructed in 1888 and the second County Courthouse constructed in 1891 (a copy of the Allegheny Courthouse in Pittsburgh).⁴³ The style quickly fell out of fashion and few Richardsonian Romanesque buildings were constructed in Los Angeles after the 1900s. There are no surviving examples of Richardsonian Romanesque commercial, institutional, or industrial buildings or structures in Los Angeles.⁴⁴



*Second County Courthouse, circa 1892, Demolished
(Los Angeles Public Library)*



*Broadway at 7th Street, circa 1910
(Los Angeles Public Library)*

While Richardsonian Romanesque quickly fell out of fashion, Beaux Arts Classicism, Neoclassicism, and Italian Renaissance Revival became almost universal for commercial and institutional buildings in Los Angeles between the 1890s and 1930. The styles were applied to a variety of property types including banks, churches, fire stations, hotels, government buildings, office buildings, and schools. The popularity of these styles coincided with Los Angeles' building booms between the 1890s and World War I and between the 1920s and Great Depression. Their popularity also coincided with the development of Downtown. As a result, a significant concentration of surviving examples are located in the Historic Core, most especially in the historic districts listed in the National Register of Historic Places: the Broadway

⁴² Whiffen, *American Architecture Since 1780*, 140.

⁴³ The first Los Angeles City Hall was designed by Los Angeles architect S. I. Haas. The current City Hall was constructed in 1928 when the City government had outgrown the first building, and the first City Hall was subsequently demolished. The Second County Courthouse was designed by San Francisco-based architects Curlett & Cuthbertson, with Los Angeles architect Theodore Eisen. The rather distinctive red stones used in exterior construction provided the nickname, the "Red Sandstone Courthouse." When finished in 1892, the building represented an outstanding example of Richardsonian Romanesque architecture, though it was recognized as an imitation of Allegheny Courthouse in Pittsburgh, designed by Richardson in 1883. The County Courthouse was extensively damaged in the Long Beach earthquake of 1933 and razed in 1936.

⁴⁴ The Stimson House (Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument No. 212) is one of the few remaining examples of a brownstone Richardsonian Romanesque style residential building in Los Angeles County. It was designed by architect Carroll H. Brown and constructed in 1891 for Thomas Douglas Stimson, a wealthy industrialist, lumberman, and financier in Los Angeles. The building is also listed in the National Register. See the Late 19th and Early 20th Century Residential Architecture for more information.

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Theater and Commercial District and the Spring Street Financial District.⁴⁵ The examples Downtown are primarily mid- to high-rise office or hotel buildings dating from the 1920s, although a number of mid-rise commercial buildings were constructed prior to World War I. Buildings in these styles were typically designed by noted architects. Architects and architectural firms most closely associated with these styles include John C. Austin, Robert Farquhar, Hudson & Munsell, Morgan, Walls & Clements, Walker & Eisen, and John Parkinson.⁴⁶

In other American cities during this period, Beaux Arts Classicism, Neoclassicism, and Italian Renaissance Revival were often applied to early skyscraper-type buildings. However, a City-enforced maximum height allowance prevented Los Angeles' vertical rise. Passed in 1904, the height limit prohibited the construction of buildings taller than 13 stories or 150 feet.⁴⁷ This was to ensure that the city streets were aesthetically uniform without great variations in building heights. It was also to ensure that the mistakes of East Coast cities were not repeated, most especially their dark, narrow streets flanked by increasingly taller buildings. The City's height limit was not overturned until 1958, after the Beaux Arts styles had waned and the rise of Modernism prevailed. As a result, Los Angeles does not boast the same skyscraper-type buildings in the Beaux Arts, Neoclassical, and Italian Renaissance Revival styles as in cities like New York and Chicago.

Although the majority of surviving examples of commercial and institutional buildings in the late 19th and early 20th century styles are located Downtown, examples outside of Downtown remain due to the widespread application of the styles during this period. Most notably, there is a small concentration of Beaux Arts, Neoclassical, and Italian Renaissance Revival style buildings in Hollywood within the Hollywood Boulevard Commercial and Entertainment District, listed in the National Register of Historic Places.⁴⁸ Fueled by the growth of the motion picture industry, Hollywood Boulevard was transformed from a residential street of stately homes to a bustling commercial center between 1915 and 1935.⁴⁹ A number of high-style, mid- to high-rise buildings were constructed along this commercial corridor, primarily during the 1920s.

Outside of Downtown and Hollywood, commercial development in the late 19th and early 20th centuries tended to be low-scale buildings arranged in linear configurations along main thoroughfares. Though they often incorporated design motifs from high-style buildings, most were vernacular.⁵⁰ Therefore,

⁴⁵ Tom Sitton, "National Register of Historic Places Nomination: Broadway Theater and Commercial District," 1979; Teresa Grimes, "National Register of Historic Places Nomination: Broadway Theater and Commercial District Extension," 2001; Tom Sitton, "National Register of Historic Places Nomination: Spring Street Financial District," 1979; and Teresa Grimes, "National Register of Historic Places Nomination: Spring Street Financial District Extension," 1999.

⁴⁶ Gebhard and Winter, *Los Angeles: An Architectural Guide*, 326.

⁴⁷ Shelby Grad, "Downtown Los Angeles Skyline Keeps Evolving," *Los Angeles Times*, January 2, 2015.

⁴⁸ Christy Johnson McAvoy, "National Register of Historic Places Nomination: Hollywood Boulevard Commercial and Entertainment District, Los Angeles," 1985.

⁴⁹ McAvoy, "National Register of Historic Places Nomination," 3.

⁵⁰ Vernacular commercial architecture of the late 19th and early 20th centuries in Los Angeles was consistent with national trends in materials, styles, and forms. Flexibility of space was a paramount concern and many commercial buildings were planned to serve more than one function. These buildings were constructed to attract pedestrians to the ground floor

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examples of commercial and institutional buildings in the Beaux Arts, Neoclassical, and Italian Renaissance Revival are rare beyond Downtown and Hollywood.

East of Downtown, the city's burgeoning industrial core featured a range of warehouses and storage facilities as well as a wide variety of processing and manufacturing operations by the early 20th century.⁵¹ This area continued to serve as the city's primary industrial center until World War II with the majority of the industrial buildings in the district constructed in the 1910s and 1920s. Most were low-rise brick or concrete buildings that were essentially utilitarian in their outward appearance. However, as local industries flourished and national corporations expanded operations, several more established companies engaged prominent architects to design new facilities as a show of increasing prosperity. Rather than true examples of Beaux Arts, Neoclassical, or Italian Renaissance Revival styles, architect-designed industrial buildings often integrated characteristics of these styles into the building's design, such as a tripartite composition, cornices with moldings, dentils, and modillions, or decorative ornament like quoins, swags, medallions, and cartouches. Because the growth of the city's primary industrial district coincided with the popularity of these styles, the majority of architect-designed industrial buildings with Beaux Arts, Neoclassical, or Italian Renaissance Revival-style features are located in this area east of Downtown.

The late 19th and early 20th centuries marked a phenomenal growth in Los Angeles' population, industry, and commerce, fueled by diverse factors like boosterism, an agreeable climate, railroads, manufacturing, port improvements, citrus, oil production, the motion picture industry, and an extensive streetcar system. The development that was constructed to support these economic activities coincided with the popularity of Beaux Arts Classicism, Neoclassicism, and Italian Renaissance Revival architecture across the United States. As a result, Los Angeles emerged from the period with grand public buildings and sophisticated commercial development that followed nationwide architectural trends. These styles faded from popularity with the advent of Modernism, the onset of the Great Depression, and the Long Beach earthquake of 1933, which moved developers to construct buildings that were simpler in structure, materials, and ornament. While many important individual examples and groupings may remain, their numbers have decreased over the years due to destruction by earthquake, construction of the freeway system, and replacement by urban renewal project or new development.

businesses at street level. The large majority of commercial buildings were erected abutting one another on deep lots of roughly standard dimensions. Richard Longstreth, *City Center to Regional Mall: Architecture, the Automobile, and Retailing in Los Angeles, 1920-1950* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1997), 82.

⁵¹ LSA Associates, Inc., "Industrial Development, 1850-1980," *Los Angeles Citywide Historic Context Statement* (City of Los Angeles Office of Historic Resources, February 2018), 167.

SUB-THEMES

Beaux Arts Classicism, 1895-1940

Beaux Arts Classicism was the dominant type of high style architecture during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.⁵² The style was inspired by the architectural principles taught at the École des Beaux-Arts from where it derives its name. After Richard Morris Hunt became the first American to attend the École in 1846, the American architectural profession would subsequently be dominated by men who attended the École or were trained in studios or schools established by those who had.



World's Columbian Exposition, Administration Building, 1893 (Library of Congress)

Beaux Arts Classicism evolved into a distinct architectural style distinguishable from other popular historicist styles beginning in the 1890s, and became an almost universal form for commercial and institutional buildings by the early 20th century. It is characterized by its use of Greek, Roman, Renaissance, and Baroque forms and tripartite design mimicking the form of a Renaissance palazzo. Typically, Beaux Arts-style buildings were constructed out of high-quality materials, primarily limestone or marble with cast stone or glazed terra cotta ornament. Characteristics include monumental entrances, often with a grand flight of steps; coupled columns

or pilasters; arched and linteled openings; cornices with elaborate moldings, dentils, and modillions; and lavish decorative ornament that commonly includes figure sculpture and cartouches.⁵³

The World's Columbian Exposition of 1893, with its magnificent collection of Beaux Arts and Neoclassical buildings, is widely credited with popularizing the style. The focal point of the exhibition and notable early example of Beaux Arts Classicism was Hunt's Administration Building. It was situated near the train station at the entryway to the exhibition and the Court of Honor, and featured a massive white and gold gilded dome. This was followed by the Electric Tower by John Galen Howard at the Pan American Exposition, Buffalo (1901); Festival Hall and Cascades by Cass Gilbert and E.L. Masqueray at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, St. Louis (1904); Tower of Jewels by Carrere and Hastings at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco (1915); and Palace of Fine Arts by Bernard Maybeck at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco (1915).⁵⁴ Because these buildings were

⁵² Beaux Arts is also a term used by architectural historians to describe the entire period of elaborate historical styles (1885–1930) advocated by American architects who studied at the École des Beaux-Arts.

⁵³ Whiffen, *American Architecture Since 1780*, 149.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 152.

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intended to be temporary, they were often executed in plaster, permitting a great deal of flourishes and fanciful designs.

After the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, Beaux Arts-style architecture became ubiquitous in urban centers like New York, Chicago, Washington D.C., St. Louis, and San Francisco where wealth was concentrated at the turn of the century. This was because its rise in popularity corresponded with an unprecedented period of prosperity, centralization, and new construction in these American cities. The style was an almost universal form for libraries, museums, railroad stations, and high-rise office buildings constructed in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. These buildings demonstrate the evolution of American design preferences towards a distinctively urban style referencing the ornate and historical designs of European civilizations past and present. American architects most closely associated with the style during this period were Hunt, Daniel H. Burnham, Carrère & Hastings, and McKim, Mead & White.⁵⁵

The style came to California through architects trained in Paris or through training in the East Coast studios and schools established by architects who had studied in Europe. Albert Pissis, the first Californian to be admitted to the École, designed one of San Francisco's earliest Beaux Arts-style building, the Hibernia Bank completed in 1907. While there are Beaux Arts buildings located throughout the state, buildings in the style are primarily concentrated in San Francisco and Los Angeles because these cities were centers of wealth and development during the period that Beaux Arts Classicism was popular.⁵⁶

The completion of a transcontinental rail connection to Los Angeles in 1876 ushered in a period of unprecedented growth. Investors poured their resources into local real estate, triggering a boom in building construction. Following nationwide trends in architecture in the late 19th and early 20th century, Los Angeles embraced Beaux Arts Classicism to display the city's sophistication. Because Beaux Arts tripartite form was easily stretched to several stories, the style was repeatedly applied to mid- and high-rise buildings. An early example of a Beaux Arts-style mid-rise in Los Angeles is the Barclay



*Barclay Hotel, 1897
(Los Angeles Public Library)*

⁵⁵ Notable buildings designed by these architects in the Beaux Arts-style were the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (Richard Morris Hunt, 1902); Washington Union Station in Washington, D.C. (Daniel H. Burnham, 1903-1914); the New York Public Library in New York (Carrère & Hastings, 1895-1902); and Pennsylvania Station in New York (McKim, Mead & White, 1901-1910).

⁵⁶ McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses*, 478.

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Hotel (103-107 W. 4th Street, Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument No. 288).⁵⁷ Designed by the architectural firm Morgan & Walls, the Barclay Hotel was one of the finest hotels in Los Angeles when it opened in 1897. The building features a tripartite design scheme with Corinthian pilasters that rise from the second to the sixth floor and is capped with a modest cornice. Unlike typical Beaux Arts-style buildings, the Barclay Hotel is clad in cream-colored pressed brick rather than terra cotta.



*Van Nuys Building, 1926
(Los Angeles Public Library)*

The rise of Beaux Arts architecture coincided with the development of Downtown Los Angeles, resulting in a significant concentration of Beaux Arts Classicism in the Historic Core. Most of these Beaux Arts-style buildings are located in either the Broadway Theater and Commercial District or the Spring Street Financial District (both National Register districts). They are primarily mid- to high-rise office or hotel buildings dating from that 1920s, although a number were constructed prior to World War I, and typically designed by noted architects. Prominent Los Angeles architectural firms that designed Downtown buildings in the style include Morgan & Walls (also Morgan, Walls & Morgan and later Morgan, Walls & Clements), John Parkinson & Bergstrom (also Parkinson & Parkinson), and Curlett & Beelman. Exemplars of their work in this style include the Van Nuys Building (210 W. 7th Street, Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument No. 898) by Morgan, Walls and Morgan completed in 1911; Continental Building (408 S. Spring Street, Los Angeles

Historic-Cultural Monument No. 730) by Parkinson completed in 1904; Union Oil Building (215 W. 7th Street) by Parkinson & Bergstrom completed in 1911; and Sun Drug Building (700 S. Hill Street) by Curlett & Beelman completed in 1922.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ The Barclay Hotel was originally known as the Van Nuys Hotel. "Barclay Hotel," Los Angeles Conservancy, accessed May 30, 2018, <https://www.laconservancy.org/locations/barclay-hotel>.

⁵⁸ The Van Nuys Building, Continental Building, and Union Oil Building are all contributing buildings to the National Register Spring Street Financial District.

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*Citizens National Bank / Wilmington Post Office, 1934
200 E Anaheim Street (SurveyLA)*

Unlike in other American cities at this time that boasted grand Beaux Arts-style libraries, railway stations, and museums, the style was more rarely applied to institutional buildings in Los Angeles. In the early 20th century, the Los Angeles Municipal Art Commission hired Charles Mulford Robinson to make recommendations for the Los Angeles Civic Center.⁵⁹ Robinson's plan reflected the tenets of the City Beautiful movement, which arose out of the École des Beaux-Arts and the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition. The scheme that was eventually adopted for the Civic Center in 1927 combined two Beaux Arts axial plans designed by Cook & Hall and the Allied Architects of Los Angeles.⁶⁰ However, the City plans were never realized. The Beaux Arts-style Hall of Justice (211 W. Temple Street) completed in 1925 and designed by the Allied Architects Association is the only building in the Civic Center that hints at what it could have been.⁶¹



*Hall of Justice, 211 W. Temple Street, circa 1925
(Los Angeles Public Library)*

⁵⁹ Gebhard and Winter, *Los Angeles: An Architectural Guide*, 326.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 238, 238.

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Many of the Beaux Arts-style buildings constructed in Los Angeles, particularly Downtown, are designated as City Historic-Cultural Monuments and/or listed in the National Register. In addition, a number of Beaux Arts-style bridges spanning the Los Angeles River east of Downtown were built as part of a monumental bridge building program that incorporated the principles of the City Beautiful movement. These bridges are also designated Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monuments and have been determined eligible for listing in the National Register.⁶²



*North Main Street Bridge
Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument No. 901, 1910
(Office of Historic Resources)*

Examples of industrial buildings in this style include the Harris Building (110 W 11th Street) by Henry Harwood Hewitt constructed in 1923 for the Union Manufacturing Company, a local garment manufacturer.



*Harris Building, 1923
110 W 11th Street (SurveyLA)*

⁶² These bridges include the Main Street Bridge (Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument No. 901), Broadway Street Viaduct (Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument No. 907), Seventh Street Viaduct (Los Angeles Historic Cultural Monument No. 904), Olympic Boulevard Viaduct (Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument No. 902), Riverside Drive-Figueroa Street Bridge (Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument No. 908), Fletcher Drive Bridge (Los Angeles Historic Cultural Monument No. 322), North Street Viaduct, First Street Viaduct (Los Angeles Historic Cultural Monument No. 909), Glendale-Hyperion Bridges (Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument No. 164), and Washington Boulevard Bridge (Los Angeles Historic Cultural Monument No. 903).

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Eligibility Standards for Beaux Arts Classicism

Summary Statement of

Significance: A resource evaluated under this sub-theme is significant in the area of Architecture as an excellent example of Beaux Arts Classicism and exhibits quality of design through distinctive features.

Period of Significance: 1895-1940

Period of Significance

Justification: The period of significance encompasses the known examples of Beaux Arts architecture in Los Angeles, which date from about 1897 to 1936. The majority of examples were constructed during the 1920s amidst Los Angeles' largest construction boom of the 20th century. The style's popularity waned beginning in the 1930s, and, eventually, Modernism overtook Beaux Arts Classicism as the dominate style for institutional and commercial buildings.

Geographic Location: There are significant concentrations of Beaux Arts Classicism in the Historic Core of Downtown and in Hollywood. Individual examples of commercial architecture can be found citywide along major commercial corridors, particularly along former streetcar lines. Although more rare, institutional architecture in the Beaux Arts style may be found citywide. Also rare are Industrial examples which can generally be found east of Downtown in the area that historically served as the industrial core.

Area(s) of Significance: Architecture

Criteria: NR: C CR: 3 Local: 3

Associated Property Types: Commercial – Various, including: Bank, Hotel, Office Building, Retail Building
Institutional – Various, including: Church, School, Fire Station, Government
Institutional – Infrastructure – Bridge
Industrial – Various

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Property Type Description: Associated property types are predominately commercial buildings, such as office buildings or hotels. Institutional examples include churches, schools, fire stations, and bridges. High-style industrial examples are not common.

Property Type Significance: Resources significant under this sub-theme are excellent examples of Beaux Arts Classicism style of architecture in Los Angeles.

Eligibility Standards:

- Exhibits quality design through distinctive features
- Is an excellent example of Beaux Arts Classicism
- Was constructed during the period of significance

Character Defining/Associative Features:

- Retains most of the essential character-defining features from the period of significance
- Arched or linteled openings
- Axial floor plans that establish vistas through different spaces
- Cast concrete, stone, or light-colored brick sheathing
- Couple columns or pilasters
- Elaborate cornice or active roofline with roof-top sculpture
- Monumental entrance, often with a run or multiple runs of steps
- Ornamental sculpture, often figure sculpture in round or in relief
- Symmetrical design
- Tripartite form
- Wall planes that advance and recede

Integrity Considerations:

- Should retain integrity of Location, Design, Workmanship, Materials, and Feeling
- Cornice may have been removed to comply with seismic regulation
- Setting may have changes (surrounding buildings and land uses)

Neoclassicism, 1895-1940

Neoclassicism was a second revival of ancient Greek and Roman architectural forms at the end of the 19th century. Greek and Roman architectural forms in European and American architecture had been previously popular in the late 18th century and first half of the 19th century.⁶³ This earlier revival arose from a renewed interest in classical antiquity following the discovery, exploration, and archaeological investigation of classical sites. It was particularly popular in the United States; however, the Greek Revival style had largely run its course by the 1860s. The return to classical architecture in the late 19th century arose from the École des Beaux-Arts and its instruction in ancient Greek and Roman architecture. At the time, the classical world was believed to represent the Golden Age of the Western world and was idolized in Europe and the United States. During this second revival, classical architectural forms were more accurately recreated due to improvements in printing technology and increasing travel abroad to see Greek and Roman architecture first hand.⁶⁴

Because the Neoclassical style arose from the curriculum taught at the École des Beaux-Arts, it shares many of the same characteristics as the Beaux Art style. . This is especially evident in the design of mid-rise office buildings from the period, which like Beaux Arts-style buildings, are often organized in three horizontal sections: base, shaft, and capital. The Neoclassical style is primarily distinguished by its simpler treatment of classical forms, features, and ornament.⁶⁵ It applied Gilded Age opulence to the decorative elements of ancient Greek and Roman architecture admired by earlier American Colonial and Greek Revival designs. Hallmarks of the style are a rectangular building form, marked by double height front portico with Ionic or Corinthian columns (sometimes called a temple front), and a symmetrically balanced facade. Plain wall surfaces are not unusual, and they are not broken by projections, recessions, or sculpture. Dignified, severe, and unornamented, these buildings tended to favor the Greek orders, Doric and Ionic, over the Roman. Colossal columns and colonnades and flat-headed windows also characterize the style.

As with the dissemination of Beaux Arts Classicism across the United States, expositions in the late 19th and early 20th centuries contributed to the rising popularity of Neoclassicism. At the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, Charles B. Atwood designed the Palace of Fine Arts, an early Neoclassical-style building inspired by contemporary French architecture and ancient Greek designs.⁶⁶ The Palace of Fine Arts was based on Emile Bénard's Prix de Rome first-place winning design of 1867 as well as incorporating forms from ancient Greek sources, namely the Erectheum and the Porch of the Maidens. It was considered at the time to be one of the finest buildings of the exposition. George Cary's New York State Building at the 1901 Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo was another early Neoclassical-

⁶³ GPA Consulting, "Architecture and Engineering, 1850-1980: Architecture After Statehood, 1850-1884," *Los Angeles Citywide Historic Context Statement* (City of Los Angeles Office of Historic Resources, February 2016), 9.

⁶⁴ McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses*, 508.

⁶⁵ Whiffen, *American Architecture Since 1780*, 169.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 167-169.

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style building. Cary designed the building in the Greek Doric order.⁶⁷ Its south portico is a scaled-down version of the east façade of the Parthenon. The monumental scale of both the Neoclassical Palace of Fine Arts and the New York State Building ended up capturing the imaginations of architects and fair-goers alike.



Roosevelt Hall, Washington D.C., 1972
National Register of Historic Places Nomination

Following the World's Columbian and Pan-American Expositions, Neoclassicism became the style of choice for government buildings. Supervising Architect of the U.S. Treasury, James Knox Taylor supervised the design and construction of over 400 public buildings, encouraging the dissemination of Neoclassicism across the United States.⁶⁸ The Tarsney Act, passed in 1893, also authorized the Treasury Department to contract private sector architectural services through a competitive bidding process for the first time. An example of a Neoclassical institutional building constructed under the Tarsney Act is Roosevelt Hall (1903-1907) at the National War College in Washington, D.C.⁶⁹ Designed by the architectural firm

McKim, Mead & White, the building features a domed central pavilion with a temple front and symmetrical wings divided into 12 bays by Doric pilasters.

Neoclassicism also became favored for monuments, museums, and banks, the so-called “temples of finance,” during this period. The design of Knickerbocker Trust Company building constructed between 1904 and 1907 in New York City became a precedent for banks constructed across the United States in the early 20th century.⁷⁰ McKim, Mead & White designed the two-story building with full-height Corinthian columns interspaced between nonbearing curtains of metal and glass. Constructed between 1906 and 1908, the design of the Bank of California building by Bliss & Faville in San Francisco is an example of a bank building based on the Knickerbocker Trust Company.⁷¹

Because the style originated from the École des Beaux-Arts, many of the architects and architectural firms most commonly associated with Beaux Arts Classicism are also associated with Neoclassicism, such as Richard Morris Hunt, Daniel H. Burnham, and McKim, Mead & White. John Russell Pope was an early 20th century architect who is also commonly associated with Neoclassicism in the United States. Pope is

⁶⁷ Ibid., 169.

⁶⁸ Louis Craig and the staff of the Federal Architecture Project, *The Federal Presence: Architecture, Politics, and symbols in United States Government Building* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1977), 232.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 227.

⁷⁰ Roth, *American Architecture*, 295.

⁷¹ Walter D. Bliss and William B. Faville both graduated from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and trained at the architectural firm of McKim, Mead & White. Jonathan Lammers, *Landmark Designation Report: Bourdette Building* (San Francisco: San Francisco Planning Department, 2016), 18.

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most famous for the National Archives Building completed in 1935, Jefferson Memorial completed in 1943, and National Gallery of Art completed in 1941, all in Washington, D.C.



*Douglas Building, 257 S. Spring Street, n.d.
(Office of Historic Resources)*

Through architects trained at the *École des Beaux-Arts* or in the *École* curriculum, such as Julia Morgan, James W. Reid and Merritt J. Reid (Reid Brothers), as well as Walter D. Bliss and William B. Faville (Bliss & Faville), Neoclassicism came to California. In Los Angeles, its popularity coincided with the construction booms between the 1890s and World War I and the 1920s and Great Depression. The style was applied to a variety of commercial and institution property types, symbolizing the developing urban and American identity of Los Angeles. In Downtown Los Angeles, there are a number of surviving

examples of Neoclassical mid- to high-rise commercial buildings. An early example is the five-story Douglas Building (257 S. Spring Street, Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument No. 66) completed in 1898 and designed by the Reid Brothers, a leading San Francisco architectural firm. Another notable example is the ten-story Merritt Building (761 S. Broadway) completed in 1915, also designed by the Reid Brothers.⁷² The building is clad almost entirely in Colorado Yule marble and features five-story marble Ionic columns.

Neoclassicism was also favored by financial institutions during this period, and bank buildings in this style are located throughout Los Angeles. Early examples of this property type Downtown, and later examples of banks in areas outside the central business district, generally resemble a small classical temple and are often sited on a corner lot. One of the finest surviving examples is the Farmers & Merchants Bank building (401 S. Main Street, Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument No. 271) constructed in 1905.⁷³ Designed by Morgan & Walls, it features two entrances framed by paired Corinthian columns supporting pediments with raking cornices. The building is topped with a tall parapet that surrounds a barrel-vaulted skylight. Later examples of



*Farmers and Merchants Bank Building,
401 S. Main St., n.d.
(Office of Historic Resources)*

⁷² The Merritt Building is a contributing building to the National Register Broadway Theater and Commercial District.

⁷³ The Farmers & Merchants Bank is a contributing building to the National Register Spring Street Financial District.

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*Pacific Southwest Trust & Savings Bank,
National Register, Spring Street Financial District,
215 W 6th Street, 1920
(Los Angeles Public Library)*

bank buildings constructed in Downtown are typically mid- to high-rise buildings, such as the 11-story Pacific Southwest Bank (215 W. Sixth Street) by Parkinson & Bergstrom and constructed in 1910.⁷⁴

The most iconic Neoclassical church building in the city is the Second Church of Christ, Scientist of Los Angeles (946 W. Adams Blvd., Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument No. 57) by Alfred F. Rosenheim.⁷⁵ Completed in 1910, it features a colossal Corinthian portico and a 70-foot-wide copper-covered dome. The congregation of the Second Church was formed in 1890 as a branch of the Mother Church or the First Church of Christ, Scientist. Rosenheim's design is loosely modeled after the Mother Church Extension in Boston, also a Neoclassical domed structure designed by Charles Brigham and S.S. Beman.⁷⁶



*Second Church of Christ Scientist,
946 E. Adams Blvd., n.d.
(Office of Historic Resources)*

⁷⁴ The Pacific Southwest Bank is a contributing building to the National Register Spring Street Financial District.

⁷⁵ The Second Church of Christ, Scientist of Los Angeles is listed in the National Register.

⁷⁶ Christy Johnson McAvoy and Leslie Heumann, "National Register of Historic Places Nomination: Second Church of Christ, Scientist, Los Angeles," 1986, 3.

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Eligibility Standards for Neoclassical Revival

Summary Statement of

Significance: A resource evaluated under this sub-theme is significant in the area of architecture as an excellent example of the Neoclassical style and exhibits quality of design through distinctive features.

Period of Significance: 1895-1940

Period of Significance

Justification: The Neoclassical style was fashionable for a fairly long period of time; however, most examples were constructed around the turn of the twentieth century. The period of significance begins a short time after the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago when architects were exposed to the motifs of Beaux Arts Classicism.

Geographic Location: Although rare, examples of Neoclassical architecture can be found citywide, especially in neighborhoods that developed before 1920. Industrial examples are also rare and can generally be found east of Downtown in the area that historically served as the industrial core.

Area(s) of Significance: Architecture

Criteria: NR: C CR: 3 Local: 3

Associated Property Types: Commercial – Various including: Office Building, Bank
Institutional – Various including: Clubhouse, Church
Industrial – Various

Property Type Description: Associated property types are predominately commercial buildings, such as office buildings or banks. Institutional examples include churches and clubhouses. High-style industrial examples are not common.

Property Type Significance: Resources significant under this sub-theme are excellent examples of the Neoclassical style of architecture in Los Angeles.

Eligibility Standards:

- Exemplifies the tenets of the late Victorian era and the Neoclassical style
- Exhibits quality of design through distinctive features

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Context: Architecture and Engineering/Beaux Arts Classicism, Neoclassicism, and Italian Renaissance Revival Architecture, 1895-1940

- Was constructed during the period of significance

Character Defining / Associative Features:

- Retains most of the essential character-defining features from the period of significance
- Formal arrangement of architectural elements
- May range from two to fourteen stories in height
- Monumental in scale, often with pedimented porticos
- Parapets incorporating balustrades
- Represents an early or rare example of the style in the community in which it is located
- Smooth stone or masonry exteriors; stucco and clapboard in residential buildings
- Windows and doors typically linteled

Integrity Considerations:

- Should retain integrity of Location, Design, Workmanship, Materials, and Feeling
- Setting may have changed (surrounding buildings and land uses)

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Italian Renaissance Revival, 1910-1940

The Italian Renaissance Revival was a second revival of Italian Renaissance architectural forms in the United States. The Italianate style had been previously popular in the mid-19th century. Architectural pattern books of Andrew Jackson Downing primarily promoted the dissemination of this earlier architectural style, which set off a wave of Italianate homebuilding.⁷⁷ Because the style was disseminated through pattern books with drawings drawn by individuals who had no first-hand knowledge of Italian architecture, Italianate-style buildings tended to interpret historic Italian architectural forms rather than faithfully recreate them.⁷⁸

Late 19th and early 20th century Italian Renaissance Revival architecture more closely imitated the Renaissance and Baroque architecture of Italy and France that first emerged in Florence during the 1400s and spread throughout Europe thereafter.⁷⁹ By the late 19th century, the range of historical models increased and their forms were more accurately recreated in part as a result of accumulated archaeological and historical knowledge as well as improved printing technology allowing for the dissemination of photographic documentation.⁸⁰ Additionally, more Americans and American architects had also traveled to Europe and seen historic European architecture first hand.

Like other popular architectural styles in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Italian Renaissance Revival became a prevailing style for commercial and institutional buildings, in part because the American architectural profession was dominated by men who were deeply influenced by the curriculum taught at the *École des Beaux-Arts*. Charles Follen McKim, William R. Mead, and Stanford White of McKim, Mead & White were all men who either studied at the *École* or had been schooled in the *École's* curriculum.⁸¹ Their work would come to define architecture in the United States during this period and play a major role in influencing the designs of buildings across America. McKim, Mead & White's designs for the Villard Houses and Boston Public Library are credited with popularized the Italian Renaissance Revival style in the late 19th century and stimulating a nationwide movement.⁸²



*Villard Houses, circa 1890
(Library of Congress)*

⁷⁷ GPA Consulting, "Architecture After Statehood," 20.

⁷⁸ McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses*, 508.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*; and Roth, *American Architecture*, 290.

⁸¹ Both McKim and White studied the *École des Beaux-Arts*. Prior to studying in Paris, McKim studied at Harvard and White graduated from the University of New York. Mead graduated from Amherst College. Mead and McKim both began their architectural careers in an apprenticeship in the offices of Russell Sturgis. White began his career in the office of Gambrell and Richardson.

⁸² Whiffen, *American Architecture Since 1780*, 158.

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The Villard Houses in New York City opened the second revival of Italian Renaissance architecture. This group of six town houses on Madison Avenue were built for railroad entrepreneur Henry Villard in 1882-1885. McKim, Mead & White designed the Villard Houses after Italian Renaissance palaces, most notably the Palazzo della Cancelleria (1486-1496) in Rome.⁸³ The Renaissance detailing, such as a rusticated base, arched window openings, and a series of symmetrical balconies, is identical across all six buildings, making them appear as if it is only one building rather than a complex. The Villard Houses were widely praised by newspapers and architectural periodicals at the time for its the grand, but restrained design with simple Italian Renaissance features.⁸⁴ As a result of the success of the Villard Houses, McKim, Mead & White were subsequently commissioned to design the Boston Public Library. Built in 1887-1895, the building's features were based on great historical works, including the Bibliotheque Sainte Genevieve (1843-1850) in Paris, Templo Malatesta in Rimini (c. 1450), and Palazzo della Cancelleria in Rome.⁸⁵

Because the Italian Renaissance Revival style was born out of the traditions taught at the École des Beaux-Arts, commercial and institutional buildings designed in the style feature many of the same characteristics as the Beaux Arts style. Italian Renaissance Revival buildings are also organized into three horizontal sections: a rusticated base, a defined middle section that is often separated by string courses, and a cornice.⁸⁶ These three horizontal sections are based on the typical design of an Italian Renaissance palazzo, which in turn was based on the structure of the classical column: the base, the shaft, and the cornice. What distinguishes the Italian Renaissance Revival style from the Beaux Arts style is that buildings designed in the former style incorporate more traditional Renaissance forms. Italian Renaissance Revival style buildings feature a variety of late Renaissance and Baroque ornament, such as scroll patterns, broken pediments, statuary, round windows, pilasters, and balustrades. They always feature elaborate arched openings, most especially a monumental ground floor arched entry. Additionally, while Beaux Arts buildings tended to be constructed of light colored materials, Italian Renaissance Revival buildings are constructed with a range of materials in a variety of colors, including sandstone, limestone, red or light-colored brick, and stucco.

Much like with Beaux Arts Classicism and Neoclassicism, Los Angeles followed the national trends and Italian Renaissance Revival was applied to a number of different property types in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The earliest surviving Italian Renaissance Revival style buildings in Los Angeles are residences, like the Marshall-Kline Residence (Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument No. 961) constructed in 1903 or the Guasti Villa/Busby Berkeley Estate (3550 W. Adams Blvd., Los Angeles Historic-

⁸³ Roth, *American Architecture*, 290.

⁸⁴ Christopher Gray, "Streetscapes: Madison Avenue Between 50th and 51st Street," *The New York Times*, December 21, 2003.

⁸⁵ Boston Landmarks Commission, *Boston Landmarks Commission Study Report: Boston Public Library* (Boston: 2000), 5-6.

⁸⁶ Cyril M. Harris, *American Architecture: An Illustrated Encyclopedia* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1998), 186-187.

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Cultural Monument No. 478) constructed in 1910. An early example of a commercial building is Downtown Los Angeles' Palace Theater (634 S. Broadway, Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument No. 449) built in 1911.⁸⁷ The six-story Italian Renaissance Revival structure was designed by architects G. Albert Lansburg and Robert Brown Young for the Orpheum Theater & Realty Company.⁸⁸ The building is loosely styled after a Florentine Renaissance palazzo and features multi-colored terra cotta swags, flowers, fairies, and theatrical masks.

During Los Angeles' 1920s construction boom, the style became one of the most popular for midrise commercial and office building. Architects drew upon the historic forms of the Italian Renaissance to lend their designs monumentality and an aura of refinement. Most of the surviving examples of commercial and institutional buildings in the Italian Renaissance Revival style therefore date from the 1920s and are located Downtown. Examples include the Commercial Exchange Building (416-436 W. 8th Street, Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument No. 1145 by Walker & Eisen completed in 1922, the Giannini Building (aka the Bank of Italy Building, 649 S. Olive Street, Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument No. 354) by Morgan, Walls & Clements also completed in 1922, and the Petroleum Building (714 W. Olympic Blvd., Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument No. 596) by Meyer & Holler completed in 1925.⁸⁹ The architectural firm Curlett & Beelman designed a number of significant Italian Renaissance Revival buildings Downtown, including the Roosevelt Building (715-735 W. 7th Street, Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument No. 355) built in 1923, Barker Brothers Building (800-898 W. 7th Street, Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument No. 356) built in 1925, and the Mayfair Hotel (1256 W. 7th Street) built in 1926.⁹⁰



*Palace Theater, 634 S. Broadway, 1911
(Office of Historic Resources)*



*Mayfair Hotel, 1256 W. 7th Street, 2010
(SurveyLA)*

⁸⁷ Also known as the Orpheum Theater. It is the oldest surviving Orpheum theater in the world.

⁸⁸ *Landmark L.A.: Historic-Cultural Monuments of Los Angeles*, ed. Jeffrey Herr (Los Angeles, Angel City Press, 2002), 457.

⁸⁹ The Giannini Building is also listed in the National Register.

⁹⁰ The Roosevelt Building is also listed in the National Register.

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*Biltmore Hotel, 515 S. Olive Street, n.d.
(Office of Historic Resources)*

The Biltmore Hotel (515 S. Olive Street, Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument No. 60) is the most prominent Italian Renaissance Revival building Downtown and one of the most iconic buildings in Los Angeles. When it was completed in 1923, the Biltmore was a world class hotel, the largest west of Chicago.⁹¹ It was designed by the architectural firm Schultze & Weaver. The 11-story tri-tower building has a stone base with arched window and door openings, a brick shaft with quoins accentuating the corners, and a large overhanging cornice, all typical characteristics of

the Italian Renaissance Revival style. The Biltmore Hotel is located to the west of Pershing Square, which at the time the hotel was constructed was a Beaux Arts-style park designed by John Parkinson.⁹² It featured diagonal walkways that led to a circular plaza in the center with a three-tier fountain.

Because of the widespread popularity of the style, there are also a number of surviving examples outside of Downtown. One of the most notable is the Young's Market Building (1610 W. 7th Street, Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument No. 113) in Westlake by Charles F. Plummer.⁹³ It was completed in 1924 for the Young's Market Company, the oldest wholesale grocer in Southern California. There are also several institutional buildings from the 1920s and 1930s that were designed in the style. The Bob Hope Patriotic Hall (1816 S. Figueroa Street) is an example of an Italian Renaissance Revival institutional building constructed in 1926 to house services for veterans.⁹⁴ It was designed by the Allied Architects Association, a consortium of Los Angeles-based architects formed for the purpose of exclusively designing building paid for by the proceeds of public tax money.⁹⁵ The style also became an especially popular form for school buildings. Examples include the 52nd Street Elementary School by Edelman & Zimmerman completed in 1922, John Burroughs Middle School also completed in 1922, Bret Harte Jr. High School Auditorium by Krempel & Erkes completed in 1929, and Alexander Hamilton High School completed in 1931.⁹⁶ Constructed in 1939, the North Hollywood Junior High School Classroom and Administration Buildings by John C. Austin is one of the latest examples of Italian Renaissance Revival style architecture.⁹⁷

⁹¹ Colin Marshall, "Los Angeles in Buildings: The Biltmore Hotel," KCET, accessed May 31, 2018, <https://www.kcet.org/shows/lost-la/los-angeles-in-buildings-the-biltmore-hotel>.

⁹² John Parkinson re-designed Pershing Square in 1910. The park was subsequently re-designed in the 1950s. Nathan Masters, "From Plaza Abaja to Pershing Square: L.A.'s Oldest Park Through the Decades," KCET, accessed May 31, 2018, <https://www.kcet.org/shows/lost-la/from-plaza-abaja-to-pershing-square-las-oldest-park-through-the-decades>.

⁹³ Young's Market Building is also listed in the National Register.

⁹⁴ The building has been determined eligible for listing in the National Register through the Section 106 review process.

⁹⁵ Among the participating architects were Octavius Morgan, Reginald Johnson, Edwin Bergstrom, David C. Allison, Myron Hunt, Elmer Grey, Sumner Hunt, and Sumner Spaulding.

⁹⁶ Sapphos Environmental, Inc., *Los Angeles Unified School District Historic Context Statement, 1870 to 1969* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles Unified School District Office of Environmental Health and Safety, March 2014).

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 130.

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Eligibility Standards for Italian Renaissance Revival

Summary Statement of

Significance: A resource evaluated under this sub-theme is significant in the area of architecture as an excellent example of the Italian Renaissance Revival style and exhibits quality of design through distinctive features.

Period of Significance: 1910-1940

Period of Significance

Justification: The period of significance encompasses the known examples of Italian Renaissance Revival architecture in Los Angeles, which date from 1910 to 1939. The majority of examples were constructed during the 1920s amidst Los Angeles' largest construction boom of the 20th century. The style's popularity waned beginning in the 1930s, and, eventually, Modernism overtook Beaux Arts Classicism as the dominate style for institutional and commercial buildings.

Geographic Location: There are significant concentrations of Italian Renaissance Revival in the Historic Core of Downtown and in Hollywood. Individual examples of commercial architecture can be found citywide along major commercial corridors, particularly along former streetcar lines. Although more rare, institutional architecture in the Italian Renaissance Revival style may be found citywide. Industrial examples are also rare and can generally be found east of Downtown in the area that historically served as the industrial core.

Area(s) of Significance: Architecture

Criteria: NR: C CR: 3 Local: 3

Associated Property Types: Commercial – Various including: Bank, Hotel, Office Building, Theater
Institutional – Various including: Church, Fire Station, School, Library, Lodge/Meeting Hall,
Industrial – Various

Property Type Description: Associated property types are predominately commercial buildings, such as office buildings or hotels. Institutional examples include churches, fire stations, middle and high school buildings, and libraries. High style industrial examples are not common.

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Property Type Significance: Resources significant under this sub-theme are excellent examples of the Italian Renaissance Revival style of architecture in Los Angeles.

Eligibility Standards:

- Exhibits quality of design through distinctive features
- Is an excellent example of Italian Renaissance Revival architecture
- Was constructed during the period of significance

Character Defining / Associative Features:

- Retains most of the essential character-defining features from the period of significance
- Arcading on ground floor
- Arched, linteled, or pedimented window openings
- Balustrade or roof-line parapet
- Brick, stucco, or stone sheathing
- Classical columns or pilasters
- Elaborate cornice directly on top of architrave with frieze omitted or moderately pitched, ceramic tiled hopped roof
- Monumental arched entrance
- Projecting balconies with balustrades
- Renaissance ornament, such as broken pediments, dentils, modillions, quoins, scrolls, statuary,
- Rusticated masonry on ground or lower floors
- String courses of brick or stone between stories
- Symmetrical design
- Tripartite form

Integrity Considerations:

- Should retain integrity of Location, Design, Workmanship, Materials, and Feeling
- Cornice may have been removed to comply with seismic regulation
- Setting may have changed (surrounding buildings and land uses)

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