

# SurveyLA

Los Angeles Historic Resources Survey

## LOS ANGELES CITYWIDE HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT

Context: ARCHITECTURE AND ENGINEERING, 1850-1980

Theme: Architecture After Statehood, 1850-1884



*Prepared for:*

City of Los Angeles  
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 buildings constructed after statehood in Los Angeles. Refer to [www.HistoricPlacesLA.org](http://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 "Architecture After Statehood, 1850-1884" examines a collection of five sub-themes: Late Adobe, Greek Revival, Stick Style, Second Empire, and Italianate. Buildings designed in these architectural styles reflect the early American period of Los Angeles, after California joined the union as the 31<sup>st</sup> state in 1850, but before the first major population boom of 1885–1887. Surviving examples are significant because they represent early settlement patterns and building practices. Buildings from this period were often simply constructed, using locally available materials including adobe, brick, and wood. When architectural styles were employed, they were largely based on European or American East Coast prototypes. Most of these buildings have been demolished, relocated, or substantially altered over the last century. The majority of those that survive have been identified and are designated under local, state, and national programs. These are referenced throughout the text.

## **Evaluation Considerations**

The theme Architecture After Statehood, 1850-1884 may overlap with other SurveyLA themes as follows:

- Properties may also represent important associations with an ethnic/cultural group or groups in Los Angeles such as Mexican Americans.
- Early residences constructed in the styles may also be significant in the context of Early Residential Development and Suburbanization under the theme Early Residential Development.
- Properties may also be significant in the context of Pre-Consolidation Communities of Los Angeles such as the themes of Life in Independent Wilmington and San Pedro.
- Institutional properties may also be significant in the context of Public and Private Institutional Development under the sub-contexts Social Clubs and Organizations and Military Institutions and Activities.

## HISTORIC CONTEXT

Los Angeles was founded in 1781 by the Spanish governor of California, Felipe de Neve. Only 44 people lived in the original village. Los Angeles grew slowly during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as it transitioned from Spanish to Mexican governance. Due to a conflict over the boundary of Texas, the United States declared war against Mexico on May 13, 1846. Two months later, Mexico in turn declared war against the United States. American forces entered Los Angeles without encountering military resistance on August 13, 1846. The Treaty of Cahuenga ended the war in California on January 13, 1847. Lieutenant Colonel John C. Fremont of the American forces and Governor Andrés Pico of Mexico approved the treaty on January 13, 1847 at Campo de Cahuenga. The war in the entire Southwest ended with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo on February 2, 1848. Mexico ceded all of Alta California, New Mexico, and more land in Texas. Following the original American claim, the border of Texas was set at the Rio Grande. The United States paid \$18,250,000 for the conquered land and assumed \$3.25 million debt owed to United States citizens. Thus began the American period in the history of Los Angeles.



*Ord's Survey, 1849  
(Map Collection, Los Angeles Public Library)*

The American period was initiated with a survey and sale of the common lands to the north and south of the old pueblo. Lt. Edward Ord was hired to survey the city and prepare a map with the lots and fields, which included approximately 17,000 acres. As the majority of the land was vacant and the city had no resources, it was decided that the land would be sold to encourage settlement and fund the municipal government. The first lots were sold at an auction in November of 1849. Auctions continued until 1866 when all that remained was one block, which was dedicated as a park now known as Pershing Square.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, in September 1849, the first constitutional convention convened in Monterey. The state constitution was ratified on November

13, 1849. The United States Congress debated whether California should allow slavery or not. In the Compromise of 1850, Congress admitted California as a free state. At this point, the population of Los Angeles was still only 1,610.

At the time of statehood, the predominant form of housing was the adobe structure that dated from the founding of the pueblo. It consisted of a small one- or two-room structure with unadorned adobe brick walls covered with a simple wood roof made from local trees that grew in the San Gabriel Mountains.

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Gleye, *The Architecture of Los Angeles* (Los Angeles: Rosebud Books, 1981), 32-33.

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The roofs were recovered each summer using tar from Rancho La Brea. During these hot months, the city would have the constant smell of hot tar being boiled and mopped onto the flat roofs.

In contrast with the compact plan for the pueblo dictated by the Law of the Indies, Ord's survey created a rigid grid configuration for the land outside the pueblo. Compared with other cities in the United States, and Mexico for that matter, the blocks are unusually large and resulted in low-density development in subsequent decades. Despite the sale of the city's common land, the area grew very slowly during the 1860s. The lack of irrigation limited the economy to ranching, and floods from 1861 to 1864 followed by a drought all but obliterated the cattle population. Immigration was further stymied by the Civil War from 1861 to 1865. During the late 1860s, however, Americans living in former Confederate states began to seek their fortune in California. Prior to the transcontinental railroad, immigrants to Los Angeles either arrived by overland stage routes or by steamships that arrived twice a month to the port in San Pedro.<sup>2</sup>

The commercial development of the town began to materialize in 1869 when Phineas Banning completed the Los Angeles and San Pedro Railroad. The line followed present-day Alameda Street between the pueblo and Banning's new town of Wilmington. Banning was also responsible for the first harbor improvements financed by the U.S. Government in 1871. Congress appropriated two million dollars for the project, although the work progressed slowly. In 1876, the Southern Pacific Railroad entered Los Angeles from the north, linking Southern California for the first time by rail to San Francisco and Chicago. Railroad stations became nodes for development, which contributed to the dispersed form of urbanization that was to characterize Los Angeles in the twentieth century.

By the end of the 1870s Los Angeles was still a struggling frontier town with two architectural traditions that were reflections of American and Mexican forms. As Anglos came to predominate the population, so did their architecture. The architectural styles prevalent during the era after statehood include Late Adobe, Greek Revival, Stick Style, Second Empire, and Italianate. These high styles tend to be emblematic of the lifestyles and tastes of the wealthier classes who represented only a small segment of the population. Most buildings constructed in Los Angeles during the period, however, were not high style. Rather they were vernacular buildings that were usually constructed by the owner, with or without the assistance of a carpenter, and based upon traditional notions of convenience and utility. Relatively simple structures, they were built without any conscious attempt to mimic current fashion. Most of these homes were small and built in areas that were soon overtaken by commercial development downtown or industrial development along the Los Angeles River.

Not surprisingly, construction and design trends in Los Angeles were influenced by the economic and political climates of the country as a whole. From 1857 to 1866, the United States experienced a significant lull in new construction due to the economic recession of the late 1850s, which was followed immediately by the American Civil War. During this period, significant changes in architectural theory

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid, 33-34.

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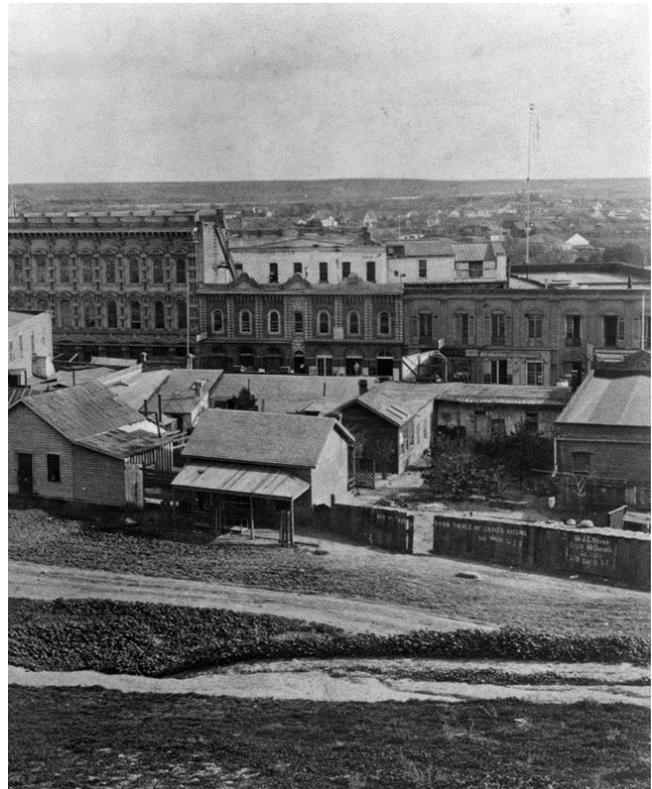
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and building technology were taking place in Europe. As such, the building forms that emerged in the U.S. after 1866 were quite different from those before 1857.<sup>3</sup>

These new building forms were directly related to certain technological developments. In particular, balloon framing replaced heavy timber framing as the preferred method of construction. Balloon framing was made possible by the mechanized, mass production of wire nails and milled lumber. The construction of walls using single-length, rough-cut 2 x 4's, laid out flat on the ground and tilted into place after nailing was comparatively a much more rapid process than creating mortise and tenon joints. As Virginia and Lee McAlester explain in *A Field Guide to American Houses*, "This, in turn, freed houses from their traditional box-like shapes by greatly simplifying the construction of corners, wall extensions, overhangs, and irregular ground plans."<sup>4</sup> In addition, a series of developments in heating systems, such as forced air heating in 1860, gravity systems in the 1870s, and a new electric power source by Edison in 1882, allowed for the construction of significantly larger homes than in previous eras.



*Panorama near Main and Ninth Streets, n.d.*  
(Los Angeles Public Library)



*Panorama near Spring Street, n.d.*  
(Los Angeles Public Library)

There were several events that led to changes in construction methods in Los Angeles. Red brick was first fired in the city in 1852, and the first brick house was built the following year. It stood until the turn of the century on the west side of Main Street, north of Fourth Street. In 1854 a firm specializing in brickmaking was established and by 1858 was turning out two million bricks per year. Another

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<sup>3</sup> Leland Roth, *A Concise History of American Architecture* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), 126.

<sup>4</sup> Virginia and Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), 239.

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significant breakthrough was the availability of Northern California redwood and other types of wood to the area via the ocean. In 1861, William H. Perry and Wallace Woodworth established a lumberyard in Los Angeles with the first regular saw and planing mills in the area.<sup>5</sup> The transportation infrastructure development in the 1870s, including railroad lines and port improvements, further increased the supply of lumber, making its use economical and practical.

In addition to the changes in building techniques, an important reason for the rampant spread of the new architectural styles was the proliferation of pattern books. Unlike the pattern books and catalogs associated with the kit homes of the twentieth century, the pattern books of the mid to late nineteenth century were geared more toward contractors, builders, and designers, than toward homeowners.<sup>6</sup> They were often published by architects or firms as a way of spreading their design philosophies and advertising their work. The pattern books of Andrew Jackson Downing in the mid-nineteenth century were particularly successful and influential in the development of American home design. He championed the work of Alexander Jackson Davis and the virtues of the Picturesque styles, which were popular in Europe at the time. It is unlikely that Downing would have been pleased by the styles that would dominate the later half of the nineteenth century after his death in 1852, even though they would promulgate the polychromes, irregular plans, and complex roof forms he so vehemently promoted.

The land boom of 1885–1887 was built on the infrastructure that was developed after statehood. Gold and cattle had produced the first American prosperity in California. The subdivision of the great Spanish and Mexican era ranchos as cattle ranges went out of existence, and the expansion of more intensive agricultural development produced the prosperity in Los Angeles, which enticed new migration. From 1880 to 1900 the population of Los Angeles grew from 11,183 to 102,479. The original settlement around the pueblo and expanding downtown area to its south remained the center for legal, political, and financial institutions, even as the majority of new immigrants moved into low density subdivisions outside of downtown. Architectural styles such as the Italianate continued to be used after the boom; however, the conservatism in the architecture after statehood was generally replaced with an exuberance that reflected the excitement of the boom.

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<sup>5</sup> Harris Newmark, *Sixty Years in Southern California: 1853-1913* (Los Angeles: Dawson's Book Shop, 1916, reprinted 1984), 81.

<sup>6</sup> Leland Roth, *A Concise History of American Architecture* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), 150.

## SUB-THEMES ASSOCIATED WITH ARCHITECTURE AFTER STATEHOOD, 1850-1894

### Sub-theme: Late Adobe, 1850-1884



*Rocha House, South Robertson Boulevard neighborhood, constructed in 1865 (Los Angeles Public Library)*

After 1850, as Americans from the East Coast and Midwest began arriving in greater numbers, the adobe structure remained the main type of housing in Los Angeles.<sup>7</sup> It was warm in the winter and cool in the summer and was easy to construct, using materials from the earth. The adobe bricks were often made from the ground on which these buildings stood. New residents, however, began to adapt the indigenous forms and materials from the Spanish and Mexican eras of settlement to their own use and introduce their own styles, objects, and social practices to Los Angeles. During this period, cooking was moved from an outdoor fireplace to an indoor kitchen. Furnishings imported from the eastern United States also served to Anglicize what

was otherwise a Mexican dwelling.<sup>8</sup>

The Fort Tejon Earthquake of 1857 and the great rains of 1860-1861 revealed the inherent weakness of adobe brick, as many came down in the quake and others essentially melted in heavy rain. Around this time, new building materials less likely to fail in these circumstances became available. The result was that the adobes of the mid-nineteenth century began to incorporate wood framing, more elaborate roof profiles, and board-and-batten siding. Many, such as the Rocha House (LAHCM #13), built in 1865, had a wood frame second story. Antonio Jose Rocha II constructed the house on what was Rancho Rincon de los Bueyes. The Shadow Ranch House (LAHCM #9) in present day Canoga Park made extensive use of Northern California redwood, as well as kiln-fired brick, when it was built in 1869-1871.

The Gilmore Adobe in the present day Farmers Market complex chronicles the history of adobe architecture from the nineteenth to the twentieth centuries. It was a humble three-room structure when Antonio Jose Rocha I constructed it in 1828. In 1880, Arthur F. Gilmore bought the land and the adobe from the Hancock family. Gilmore developed his own holdings over the years into housing tracts, oil fields and, of course, the Farmers Market, but he held onto the original adobe house, adding rooms along the way. He replaced the floor, by then covered with wood, with waxed tile and the tar roof with handmade terra cotta tiles. Then he added a second story, extended the roof to create a veranda, and planted an elaborate garden. Over the years, he and his son, Earl B. Gilmore, further enlarged the adobe with the help of architect

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<sup>7</sup> Older adobe buildings including the Church of Our Lady Queen of the Angeles (LAHCM #3), Leonis Adobe (LAHCM #1), and Rómula Pico Adobe (aka Andrés Pico Adobe, LAHCM #7) are addressed in the context Spanish Colonial and Mexican Era Settlement, 1781-1849.

<sup>8</sup> Gleye, 35.

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John Byers, making the place more stylish and more modern – adding exposed wood beams, plumbing, and electrical systems. It is now a romanticized image of Mexican culture, much like Casa de Adobe constructed in the Highland Park neighborhood by the Hispanic Society of Southern California in 1927. The use of adobe construction declined dramatically with the influx of new residents from the East Coast and Midwest during the 1880s.

### Summary Statement of

#### Significance:

A resource evaluated under this sub-theme is significant in the areas of architecture and settlement because it represents the styles and types constructed during the early development of Los Angeles, after California statehood. Mid-nineteenth century architectural styles reflect the early American period of Los Angeles prior to the first major population boom of 1885–1887. Buildings representing the early settlement patterns were often simply constructed, using locally available materials including adobe, brick, and wood. When architectural styles were employed, they were largely based on European or American East Coast prototypes. Most of these buildings have been demolished, relocated, or substantially altered over the last century. Examples of buildings from this era have become extremely rare, and may be significant at the federal, state, or local levels depending on their integrity.

#### Period of Significance:

1850-1884

#### Period of Significance

##### Justification:

The beginning of the period of significance coincides with California statehood in 1850 and closes in 1884, the last year before the first major population boom of 1885–1887.

#### Geographic Location:

Examples of Late Adobe buildings may be found within the original limits of El Pueblo. Isolated buildings that were used as ranch or farm houses may also be found in the other areas of Los Angeles. The known examples are located in the Los Feliz, Wilshire, and West Hill neighborhoods.

#### Area(s) of Significance:

Settlement and Architecture

#### Criteria:

NR: A/C      CR: 1/3      Local: 1/3

#### Associated Property Types:

Residential - Single-Family Residence

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**Property Type Description:** Associated property types in Los Angeles are generally single-family residential buildings. These buildings were relatively small historically, consisting of only a few rooms. Surviving adobes from the period may have been expanded and the use may have changed.

**Property Type Significance:** Examples of Late Adobe style buildings reflect settlement patterns during the middle of the nineteenth century and the continued use of indigenous construction methods after statehood. They are so rare today that even representative example may be considered significant.

### Eligibility Standards:

- Was constructed during the period of significance

### Character Defining / Associative Features:

- Retains most of the essential character-defining features from the period of significance
- One story in height
- Adobe walls on some or all of the structure
- May have wood frame additions or second stories
- Hipped, gabled, or flat roofs
- Asymmetrical facades
- Full-width verandas
- Inset windows in the adobe sections

### Integrity Considerations:

- Should retain integrity of Location, Feeling, and Association from the period of significance
- Because of the rarity of the remaining buildings from this era, even altered examples should be evaluated as potentially significant
- Given the age of these buildings, the replacement of some materials is expected
- Due to the modest size of some of these buildings, many have been expanded by additions and wings
- If additions are located on rear elevations and are clearly secondary to the original portion in size, scale, and height the building should remain eligible
- Buildings may have been moved for preservation purposes; however, they will not qualify under Criterion A/1/1 in the area of settlement
- Location is not a required aspect of integrity in determining significance under Criterion C/3/3 in the area of architecture
- Association is not a required aspect of integrity for determining historical or architectural significance as the use may have changed

**Sub-theme: Greek Revival, 1850-1884**



*Colton Hall, Monterey, constructed in 1847  
(Commons Wikimedia)*

The Greek Revival style began to appear in the United States in the 1830s, and remained a popular choice for public and private institutional buildings throughout the 1860s. The style developed when the world took interest in Greece as the mother of civilization due to archeological exploration and the Greek Civil War. The features of this style recall the proportions and details of ancient Greek temples and structures. The style was particularly popular in the United States, because the new American Republic was intellectually and metaphorically thought to be the inheritor of the democratic traditions of Greece. Greek Revival architecture even became known as the national style; so pervasive were the temple-fronted

façades on the nation's churches, banks, town halls, and houses. Fostered by handbooks used by carpenters and builders, the style moved west with the early settlers and acquired subtle regional differences along the way.

In California, buildings in the Greek Revival style were usually constructed of materials of local origin, namely wood, or readily available such as cement plaster. A heavy frame construction technique was used where massive timbers were joined together by mortises and tenons. The exteriors were often painted white to resemble the white marble used for public buildings on the East Coast and Midwest. Sometimes cement plaster was even scored into blocks to create the illusion the building was constructed from cut stone. Greek Revival style buildings are square or rectangular in shape and one or two stories in height with low-pitched roofs, symmetrical proportions, triangular pediments across the front façades, dental moldings, and classical columns. The trademark front-gable design continued to influence the shape of houses well into the twentieth century.

The Greek Revival style had largely run its course by the 1860s, which helps explain its limited application in California. There are only a few surviving examples in the state including Colton Hall in Monterey. Construction began in 1847 when Walter Colton, the mayor, decided the town needed a public school house and meeting hall. Although it was altered in a reconstruction in 1915, it retains a two-story portico with Ionic columns



*Banning Residence, Wilmington, constructed in 1864  
(Los Angeles Public Library)*

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supporting a simple pediment.<sup>9</sup> The Banning Residence (LAHCM #25) in Wilmington is not just the best extant example of Greek Revival domestic architecture in Los Angeles, but the state according to architectural historian Harold Kirker.<sup>10</sup> In 1864, General Phineas Banning, who was instrumental in developing the port, hired ship's carpenters to construct the house. It is a grand, but simple example of the style with plain posts instead of classical columns along the front porch and balcony. The house and surrounding twenty acres of land were acquired by the City of Los Angeles in 1927.

### Summary Statement of

#### Significance:

A resource evaluated under this sub-theme is significant in the areas of architecture and settlement because it represents the styles and types constructed during the early development of Los Angeles, after California statehood. Mid-nineteenth century architectural styles reflect the early American period of Los Angeles prior to the first major population boom of 1885-1887. Buildings representing the early settlement patterns were often simply constructed, using locally available materials including adobe, brick, and wood. When architectural styles were employed, they were largely based on European or American East Coast prototypes. Most of these buildings have been demolished, relocated, or substantially altered over the last century. Examples of buildings from this era have become extremely rare, and may be significant at the federal, state or local levels depending on their integrity.

#### Period of Significance:

1850-1884

#### Period of Significance

##### Justification:

The beginning of the period of significance coincides with California statehood in 1850 and closes in 1884, the last year before the first major population boom of 1885-1887.

#### Geographic Location:

Examples of Greek Revival architecture may be found in the areas of Los Angeles that were settled between California statehood and the 1880s boom. The only known example of the style is located in the neighborhood of Wilmington.

#### Area(s) of Significance:

Settlement and Architecture

#### Criteria:

NR: A/C

CR: 1/3

Local: 1/3

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<sup>9</sup> Harold Kirker, *California's Architectural Frontier: Style and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century* (Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith Books, 1960, reprinted 1986), 28.

<sup>10</sup> Kirker, 63.

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**Associated Property Types:** Residential - Single-Family Residence

**Property Type Description:** Associated property types in Los Angeles are generally single-family residential buildings. The only known example is two stories in height and substantial in size.

**Property Type Significance:** In Los Angeles the popularity of the Greek Revival style was extremely limited. Examples represent the lifestyles and tastes of upper- and middle-class settlers from the Midwest and East Coast of the United States. They are so rare today that even representative examples may be considered significant.

### Eligibility Standards:

- Was constructed during the period of significance

### Character Defining / Associative Features:

- Retains most of the essential character-defining features of the style from the period of significance
- Two stories in height
- Simple rectangular building forms
- Board-and-batten or shiplap exteriors
- Front gabled roofs with cornices
- Symmetrical facades
- Classical columns supporting centered porticos

### Integrity Considerations:

- Should retain integrity of Location, Feeling, and Association from the period of significance
- Because of the rarity of the remaining buildings from this era, even altered examples should be evaluated as potentially significant
- Given the age of these buildings, the replacement of some materials is expected
- If additions are located on rear elevations and are clearly secondary to the original portion in size, scale, and height the building should remain eligible
- Buildings may have been moved for preservation purposes; however, they will not qualify under Criterion A/1/1 in the area of settlement
- Location is not a required aspect of integrity in determining significance under Criterion C/3/3 in the area of architecture
- Association is not a required aspect of integrity for determining historical or architectural significance as the use may have changed

**Sub-theme: Stick Style, 1850-1884**

Although the Stick Style is one of the few modes of architecture that is uniquely American, its popularity was short-lived. Indeed, it wasn't even named until the middle of the twentieth century. The term Stick Style was coined by the architectural historian Vincent Scully in his book on nineteenth century American architecture *The Shingle Style and The Stick Style: Architectural Theory and Design from Downing to the Origins of Wright* first published in 1955. Scully traces the roots of the style to the Picturesque movement and the work of Andrew Jackson Downing, Gervase Wheeler, and Eugene Clarence Gardner. Downing in particular conflated the Picturesque movement with truth in architecture. To Downing, truth in architecture was achieved through a building that clearly expressed its purpose. In other words a house should look like a house, a church should look like a church, and so on and so forth.<sup>11</sup> Wheeler took the idea of truth in architecture a step further in his book *Rural Homes or, Sketches of Houses Suited to American Country Life*, an influential treatise on domestic architecture first published in 1851. Over several years and eight editions, the book popularized Wheeler's ideas on design, particularly his notion that buildings should be structurally truthful. Wheeler was particularly influenced by Tudor-style construction, with its exposed heavy oak framing and half-timbering, the consummate expression of structural honesty. His own creations, however, were not exactly truthful in that the structural wood framing beneath the surface was expressed by applying "sticks" to the facades.



*Griswold House, Newport, Rhode Island, constructed in 1864  
(Newport Art Museum)*

A textbook example of the Stick Style is the J.N.A Griswold House by the architect Richard Morris Hunt. Designed in 1864, the house was the first of Hunt's many notable works in Newport, Rhode Island. Hunt was the first American to graduate from the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris. After he returned to the United States in 1855, Hunt was quickly assimilated into the New York world of arts and culture and began to receive architectural commissions. The Griswold House features a multi-gabled roof, a wraparound porch supported by diagonal braces, and a decorative overlay of sticks on top of the clapboarded wall surfaces.

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<sup>11</sup> Vincent Scully, *The Shingle Style and The Stick Style: Architectural Theory and Design from Downing to the Origins of Wright* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955, reprinted 1971), xliii.

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*Point Fermin Lighthouse, San Pedro, constructed in 1874 (Water and Power Associates)*

In California, the Stick Style began to appear in the 1870s, but was rapidly replaced by the Eastlake and Queen Anne modes in the 1880s. As the Stick Style was usually applied to large rambling houses, it was more often employed in rural than urban areas. Although there are several houses in Los Angeles that have been described as Stick Style, they are more often than not Eastlake style houses with stick work that were constructed after the boom of 1885-1887.

The most fully developed example of the Stick Style in Los Angeles is the Point Fermin Lighthouse in San Pedro. The building is listed in the National Register and California Register. Constructed in 1874, it embodies most of the distinctive characteristics of the Stick Style with its steeply pitched multi-gabled roofs, overhanging eaves with exposed rafter tails and brackets, decorative trusses in the apex of the gables, horizontal and vertical wood cladding, and front porch and balcony with

crisscrossing braces. The only common trait of the Stick Style, which is not reflected in the lighthouse, is stick work.

### Summary Statement of

#### Significance:

A resource evaluated under this sub-theme is significant in the areas of architecture and settlement because it represents the styles and types constructed during the early development of Los Angeles, after California statehood. Mid-nineteenth century architectural styles reflect the early American period of Los Angeles prior to the first major population boom of 1885-1887. Buildings representing the early settlement patterns were often simply constructed, using locally available materials including adobe, brick, and wood. When architectural styles were employed, they were largely based on European or American East Coast prototypes. Most of these buildings have been demolished, relocated, or substantially altered over the last century. Examples of buildings from this era have become extremely rare, and may be significant at the federal, state or local levels depending on their integrity.

**Period of Significance:** 1850-1884

**Period of Significance**

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- Justification:** The beginning of the period of significance coincides with California statehood in 1850 and closes in 1884, the last year before the first major population boom of 1885-1887.
- Geographic Location:** Examples of Stick Style architecture may be found in the areas of Los Angeles that were settled between California statehood and the 1880s boom. The only known example of the style is located in the neighborhood of San Pedro.
- Area(s) of Significance:** Settlement and Architecture
- Criteria:** NR: A/C      CR: 1/3      Local: 1/3
- Associated Property Types:** Residential - Single-Family Residence  
Institutional - Lighthouse
- Property Type Description:** While the style was almost exclusively associated with domestic architecture, the only known example in Los Angeles is a lighthouse. In the 1880s, the Stick Style was often combined with Eastlake and Queen Anne.
- Property Type Significance:** The Stick Style does not appear to have been popular in Los Angeles and was only briefly popular in other parts of the United States. Examples represent the lifestyles and tastes of upper- and middle-class settlers from the Midwest and East Coast of the United States. They are so rare today that even representative examples may be considered significant.

### Eligibility Standards:

- Was constructed during the period of significance

### Character Defining / Associative Features:

- Retains most of the essential character-defining features of the style from the period of significance
- Two stories in height
- Thin, tenuous vertical volumes, surfaces, and details
- Multi-textured exteriors divided into panels that may be filled with shiplap, clapboard, or board-and-batten
- Steeply pitched, usually multi-gabled roofs
- Exposed structural members (in myth or fact) such as posts and corner bracing

**Integrity Considerations:**

- Should retain integrity of Location, Feeling, and Association from the period of significance
- Because of the rarity of the remaining buildings from this era, even altered examples should be evaluated as potentially significant
- Given the age of these buildings, the replacement of some materials is expected
- If additions are located on rear elevations and are clearly secondary to the original portion in size, scale, and height the building should remain eligible
- Buildings may have been moved for preservation purposes; however, they will not qualify under Criterion A/1/1 in the area of settlement
- Location is not a required aspect of integrity in determining significance under Criterion C/3/3 in the area of architecture
- Association is not a required aspect of integrity for determining historical or architectural significance as the use may have changed

**Sub-theme: Second Empire, 1850-1884**

The Second Empire style of architecture can be traced to France, specifically to the reign of Napoleon III, 1852-1870. Under the emperor's direction, much of Paris was rebuilt with wide avenues and monumental buildings replacing medieval alleys and small structures. The reconstruction of Paris in the Second Empire style had a major impact on building design throughout Europe and the United States. The Second Empire style was meant to exude wealth and stability. Buildings designed in the style were, therefore, generally large institutional or commercial buildings or residential buildings for the affluent. At its most elaborate, the look was sometimes described as a wedding cake or a confection. Yet, at the peak of its popularity in the United States (roughly 1855-1885), the style was considered both fashionable and a contemporary statement of modernity. Its popularity led to a widespread remodeling boom during which mansard roofs were incorporated into formerly pitched-roof residences.



*Renwick Gallery, Washington D.C. constructed between 1859 and 1863 (Smithsonian American Art Museum)*

The Renwick Gallery in Washington D.C. is possibly the most famous example of the Second Empire style in the United States. It was the first art museum in the nation's capital, designed to house the collection of William Wilson Corcoran. In designing the building, architect James Renwick Jr. referred to the Louvre's Tuileries addition, which is why it was known as the "American Louvre". Construction began in 1859, but was interrupted by the Civil War.

While the Second Empire style was popular on the East Coast and Midwest, it was uncommon on the West Coast. The style was mostly to those who

made their fortune in California during the Gilded Age such as Leland Stanford and Charles Crocker, two of the "Big Four" who formed the Central Pacific Railroad. These railroad magnates had no reservations about displaying their vast wealth during the economic depression of the 1870s. Both had constructed elaborate Second Empire style mansions that some described as vulgar.<sup>12</sup> Ambrose Bierce remarked "There are uglier buildings in America than the Crocker House on Nob Hill, but they were built with public money for a public purpose; among architectural triumphs of private fortune and personal taste it is peerless."<sup>13</sup> Like most of the houses on Nob Hill, the Crocker Mansion was destroyed by the Great Fire in 1906, but Stanford's mansion survives in Sacramento and is now a State Historic Park.

In 1870, the population of Los Angeles was roughly 6,000 and unlike San Francisco or Sacramento robber barons like Stanford and Crocker were few and far between. Thus, there are no known Second Empire

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<sup>12</sup> Kirker, 93.

<sup>13</sup> James Sederberg, "Crocker's Spite Fence," Shaping San Francisco's Digital Archive, accessed December 6, 2015, [http://foundsf.org/index.php?title=Crocker%27s\\_Spite\\_Fence](http://foundsf.org/index.php?title=Crocker%27s_Spite_Fence)

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style mansions constructed in Los Angeles. The prime example of the style was the Baker Block that stood on North Main Street from its construction in 1878 until its demolition in 1942. It was built for Col. Robert S. Baker who married the widow of Abel Stearns, Arcadia Bandini. Baker promptly demolished the Stearns Adobe and replaced it with a three-story building said to have cost one million dollars.<sup>14</sup> On the first floor were businesses such as Wells Fargo and Coulter's Dry Goods, on the second floor were law offices, and on the third floor were the residences of Col. and Mrs. Baker and other well to do families of Los Angeles.



*Baker Block, North Main Street, constructed 1878  
(Los Angeles Public Library)*



*Valley-Knudsen Garden Residence, constructed between 1883 and 1884  
(Big Orange Landmarks)*

Beneath their distinctive roofs, Second Empire buildings had much in common with other early Victorian era styles, especially the Italianate. Similarities between Second Empire and Italianate are found in their stylistic use of overhanging eaves with decorative brackets, and ornate door and window hoods. Without its mansard roof and tower, the Baker Block might very well be categorized as Italianate. Second Empire style buildings are usually square or rectangular in form and highly symmetrical. The only known surviving example of the style in Los Angeles is the Valley-Knudsen Garden Residence (LAHCM #65) in Heritage Square Museum. The original owner was Richard Shaw, a cabinetmaker who is believed to have been the builder. Constructed between 1883 and 1884, it was originally located on Johnston Street in Lincoln Heights.<sup>15</sup>

### Summary Statement of

#### Significance:

A resource evaluated under this sub-theme is significant in the areas of architecture and settlement because it represents the styles and types constructed during the early development of Los Angeles, after California statehood. Mid-nineteenth century architectural styles reflect the early American period of Los Angeles prior to the first major

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<sup>14</sup> Kirker, 96.

<sup>15</sup> According to other sources, the building was constructed in 1877.

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population boom of 1885-1887. Buildings representing the early settlement patterns were often simply constructed, using locally available materials including adobe, brick, and wood. When architectural styles were employed, they were largely based on European or American East Coast prototypes. Most of these buildings have been demolished, relocated, or substantially altered over the last century. Examples of buildings from this era have become extremely rare, and may be significant at the federal, state or local levels depending on their integrity.

**Period of Significance:** 1850-1884

### **Period of Significance**

#### **Justification:**

The beginning of the period of significance coincides with California statehood in 1850 and closes in 1884, the last year before the first major population boom of 1885-1887.

#### **Geographic Location:**

Examples of Second Empire architecture may be found in the areas of Los Angeles that were settled between California statehood and the 1880s boom. The only known example of the style has been re-located to Heritage Square Museum.

**Area(s) of Significance:** Settlement and Architecture

**Criteria:** NR: A/C      CR: 1/3      Local: 1/3

**Associated Property Types:** Residential - Single-Family Residence

**Property Type Description:** Associated property types in Los Angeles are generally single-family residential buildings. The only known example is two-stories in height, although most historical examples were three-stories in height.

**Property Type Significance:** The Second Empire style was only briefly popular in Los Angeles. Examples represent the lifestyles and tastes of upper- and middle-class settlers from the Midwest and East Coast of the United States. They are so rare today that even representative examples may be considered significant.

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### Eligibility Standards:

- Was constructed during the period of significance

### Character Defining / Associative Features:

- Retains most of the essential character-defining features of the style from the period of significance
- Usually two stories in height
- Simple rectangular building forms
- Shiplap exteriors, sometimes with fish scale shingles below the Mansard roof
- Mansard roofs with high pitched surfaces, sometimes with cupolas
- Eastlake detailing on symmetrical front porches
- Double-hung windows, sometimes with hoods or pediments

### Integrity Considerations:

- Should retain integrity of Location, Feeling, and Association from the period of significance
- Because of the rarity of the remaining buildings from this era, even altered examples should be evaluated as potentially significant
- Given the age of these buildings, the replacement of some materials is expected
- If additions are located on rear elevations and are clearly secondary to the original portion in size, scale, and height the building should remain eligible
- Buildings may have been moved for preservation purposes; however, they will not qualify under Criterion A/1/1 in the area of settlement
- Location is not a required aspect of integrity in determining significance under Criterion C/3/3 in the area of architecture
- Association is not a required aspect of integrity for determining historical or architectural significance as the use may have changed

**Sub-theme: Italianate, 1850-1884**

The Italianate style was first developed in Britain by the architect John Nash. In 1802, he designed Cronkhill, a small country house in Shropshire that resembled an Italian villa. This house turned out to be the model for what became known as the Italianate Villa style during the early Victorian era. The first Italianate style buildings in the United States were constructed in the late 1830s, and most surviving examples in Los Angeles date from the 1870s through the 1890s. The Italianate style in the U.S. grew out of the Picturesque movement, which was a reaction to the classical revival styles that had been popular in the eighteenth century and early nineteenth century. The style was promoted by the architectural pattern books of Andrew Jackson Downing. Widely read by designers and homeowners alike, his books *Cottage Residences* (1842) and *The Architecture of Country Houses* (1850) set off a wave of Italianate homebuilding. Architects like Alexander Jackson Davis began to transform the style into something truly American with only hints of its Italian origin. Davis' 1854 Litchfield Villa in Brooklyn is considered to be a prime example of the style on the East Coast.



*John Muir Mansion, Martinez, constructed in 1883  
(John Muir Association)*

It was Downing's friend and disciple, Henry W. Cleveland, who brought the Italianate style to the West Coast. Cleveland designed the Bidwell Mansion, a 26-room house for John and Annie Bidwell in 1868. Located in Chico, it became the social and cultural center of the Sacramento Valley. While most Italianate style houses on the East Coast were constructed of masonry, those on the West Coast were constructed of wood. In the case of the Bidwell Mansion the exterior was sheathed in cement plaster. The John Muir Mansion in Martinez is another notable example of the style in Northern California. It was completed in 1883 and incorporates key features of the Italianate style, including: quoins, wide eaves with brackets and cornices, a porch with balustrades, a square cupola, and double-hung windows capped by ornamental headers.

The people of Los Angeles may have embraced the Italianate style because of the similarities between the topography and climate of Southern California and southern Europe. The Italianate style offered an opportunity to build on these similarities. The style became popular for domestic architecture in Los Angeles, but was applied equally to commercial architecture. Building after building in downtown Los Angeles featured bracketed eaves and inset windows topped by decorative headers. The Pico House, Merced Theater, and Masonic Hall in El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historical Monument are among the few surviving commercial examples of the style. All three buildings were designed in 1870 by Ezra F. Kysor

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who is believed to be the first professional architect to practice in Southern California. After the population boom in the mid-1880s, key elements of the style such as projecting eaves supported by elaborate, three-dimensional brackets continued to be applied to commercial buildings in Los Angeles.



*William Hayes Perry House, Boyle Heights, constructed in 1876  
(Los Angeles Public Library)*

Most of the examples of the Italianate style that remain in Los Angeles are single-family residences; however, several have been moved for preservation purposes. The Mary Foy House and William Hayes Perry House are cases in point. The Mary Foy House (LAHCM #7) was constructed in downtown Los Angeles in 1876. It was moved to South Witmer Street and is now located in the Carroll Avenue National Register Historic District as well as the larger Angelino Heights Historic Preservation Overlay Zone. In 1876, William Hayes Perry hired Ezra F. Kysor and W. J. Matthews to design a home for him in Boyle Heights on Pleasant Avenue. It was moved to Heritage Square Museum and rehabilitated in the 1970s. It is known as the Mt. Pleasant House (LAHCM #98). The typical Italianate style house was two stories in height, and in Los Angeles examples frequently featured porches rather than towers. The brackets, quoins, spindled balustrades, and other wooden architecture details, made affordable by new methods for machine production, were also easily applied to vernacular cottages.

### Summary Statement of

#### Significance:

A resource evaluated under this sub-theme is significant in the areas of architecture and settlement because it represents the styles and types constructed during the early development of Los Angeles, after California statehood. Mid-nineteenth century architectural styles reflect the early American period of Los Angeles prior to the first major

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population boom of 1885-1887. Buildings representing the early settlement patterns were often simply constructed, using locally available materials including adobe, brick, and wood. When architectural styles were employed, they were largely based on European or American East Coast prototypes. Most of these buildings have been demolished, relocated, or substantially altered over the last century. Examples of buildings from this era have become extremely rare, and may be significant at the federal, state or local levels.

**Period of Significance:** 1850-1884

### Period of Significance

#### Justification:

The beginning of the period of significance coincides with California statehood in 1850 and closes in 1884, the last year before the first major population boom of 1885-1887. However, the style and features of the style continued to be employed in late Victorian era architecture during the 1890s.

### Geographic Location:

Examples of Italianate architecture may be found in the areas of Los Angeles that were settled between California statehood and the 1880s boom. The known examples are mostly located downtown and surrounding neighborhoods such as Angelino Heights and University Park.

**Area(s) of Significance:** Settlement and Architecture

**Criteria:** NR: A/C      CR: 1/3      Local: 1/3

**Associated Property Types:** Residential - Single-Family Residence  
Commercial - Theater and Hotel  
Institutional - Lodge and Military Building

**Property Type Description:** Associated property types in Los Angeles are generally single-family residential buildings. Most examples are two stories in height and substantial in size; however, one-story cottages with Italianate features exist as well. Commercial examples include a theater and a hotel, while institutional examples include a lodge and military building.

**Property Type Significance:** The Italianate style was a popular choice for the design of residential and commercial buildings in Los Angeles during the 1870s and 1880s. The construction of buildings in this style signaled the transformation of Los Angeles from a Mexican village to an American frontier town. They

are so rare today that even representative examples may be considered significant.

**Eligibility Standards:**

- Was constructed during the period of significance

**Character Defining / Associative Features:**

- Retains most of the essential character-defining features of the style from the period of significance
- Emphasis on verticality
- Usually two stories in height
- Brick or shiplap exteriors with quoined corners
- Low pitched hipped roofs, sometimes with towers
- Projecting eaves supported by elaborate, three dimensional brackets
- Frequent use of angular bays
- Narrow front porches and second story balconies with thin columns and spindled balustrades
- Heavy articulation of headers over windows and doors

**Integrity Considerations:**

- Should retain integrity of Location, Feeling, and Association from the period of significance
- Because of the rarity of the remaining buildings from this era, even altered examples should be evaluated as potentially significant
- Given the age of these buildings, the replacement of some materials is expected
- If additions are located on rear elevations and are clearly secondary to the original portion in size, scale, and height the building should remain eligible
- Buildings may have been moved for preservation purposes; however, they will not qualify under Criterion A/1/1 in the area of settlement
- Location is not a required aspect of integrity in determining significance under Criterion C/3/3 in the area of architecture
- Association is not a required aspect of integrity for determining historical or architectural significance as the use may have changed

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