MEDIA PACK

“An Introduction to Los Angeles Transportation, Geography, and History”

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IS THIS ALL OF YOU?” asked the young lady. “For the tour?"

There were only five of us waiting in the lobby of the new Crocker-Citizens National Bank Building for the guided tour at noon. We were two small boys, two middle-aged ladies from Oklahoma and myself, a native son.

“Well, then,” said our guide, “come along with me.”

As our little group ascended in the elevator of the 42-story tower, I reflected on the traditional attitude toward downtown Los Angeles: One wouldn’t go there even to see a miracle.

It was a miracle, or at least a spectacular phenomenon, that we were about to see. Downtown Los Angeles rising from the dead.

The top floor of the tower was vacant, an empty cavern with glass walls and a view in all directions. Later this year, we were told, this room in the sky would be a restaurant. At the moment, it was our spaceship.

Downtown Los Angeles lay all about us. We could see, as one cannot see from the ground, that downtown is not so much a place as an event. It is a happening.

Flattened and diminished by the height, it resembled a great Monopoly board on which the hazards were parking lots, clogged streets and run-down buildings, and the goals were gleaming new glass-and-marble skyscrapers.

It was evident that the game will finally be won. The big money is in. The corner has been turned. Downtown Los Angeles is saved.

Rooted at Sixth Street and Grand Avenue, the Crocker-Citizens building is the hub of the new Center City. Around it we could see half a dozen new spires from 19 to more than 40 stories high and the razed blocks from which even higher ones will rise.

Bunker Hill was peeled raw, except for the new bronze towers to the northwest. Straight below us was the Public Library, with its two precious squares of green, so small they looked painted on. East of us, over the top of the Biltmore, another block of green survived, Pershing Square.

“How much did this building cost?” one of the small boys asked our guide.

“Thirty-seven million dollars,” she said, underlining each word.

“It’s getting to look like New York,” said the other boy, who probably had never been east of Pomona.

Down on the street again I stood on the sidewalk and looked up, tipping my head back to see the top of the Crocker-Citizens.

“Yes,” I thought, “it is getting to look like New York.”
That was only a momentary illusion.
Looking up at a building that is 42 stories high can give you a touch of vertigo. Nobody wants Los Angeles to look like New York. But it is on its way to looking like Somewhere, which is a long way from what it used to look like, which was Nowhere.

Downtown Los Angeles is not a place one ordinarily walks in for pleasure. It is not Fifth Avenue, nor the Champs Elysées nor Via Veneto. Some say it doesn’t have the sophistication of downtown Long Beach or the charm of Santa Ana.

But today a walk downtown is at least enlightening; a study in prodigious urban transition. It is a Phoenix rising not from ashes but from apathy. For anyone with a sense of nostalgia for the downtown that was, be it ever so humble, there isn’t much time to take a last look. It is going.

I lived in the downtown district as a youth. I knew it like a Maine boy knows the woods. So I went looking for the old landmarks, more than the new. The Crocker-Citizens and the Union Bank and the One Wilshire buildings will be around for a while. My places won’t.

Hope Street deadends at the library, a fact with philosophical implications that are rendered more poignant by the library’s impending doom. This architectural treasure, among all the structures in Los Angeles, is my favorite. But it stands in the dead center of the boom; ground zero. Sentiment will not save it.

Nor will God, though he may reside close by. The Church of the Open Door faces on Hope just south of the library. Its great electric sign has been there as long as I can remember, burning its two-word sermon redly into the night:

**JESUS SAVES**

That sign always seemed to set the tone of downtown. Los Angeles was the westernmost outpost of the Bible Belt. Its character was evangelical. A man needn’t go to church on Sunday; merely walking down Seventh Street to see Ted Lewis at the Loew’s State Theater exposed him to a dozen messages of sin and redemption.

Get-ready-men still cry their warnings of Judgment Day from downtown street corners. I caught one at Seventh and Olive, in front of an Innex shoe store. His shirt was gold, his necktie
black. He wore steel-rimmed bifocals through which he kept glancing at a gold wristwatch. He held a tattered open Bible.

"Believe on Jesus Christ," he admonished me, checking his watch, "and ye shall be saved."

I wondered if there were some special hurry.

A block away another preacher was holding down a corner of Pershing Square, competing for souls with an angry prophet who harangued a row of dispirited loafers on a bench beside the ornamental pool.

Pershing Square is not the raucous forum it used to be in the Depression, for instance, when the dispossessed were the mainstream, not the backwash. It is still an oasis, though, for flawed men, old and young, who march to a different drum than their affluent brothers idling in the Byzantine splendor of the Biltmore lobby across the street.

The square's old monuments are sad and comical, celebrating dead causes and forgotten values. There is the bronze doughboy, holding up the Colors—erected in honor of the sons and daughters of Los Angeles who participated in the World War, 1917-18; and not far away the mustachedio Spanish-American War trooper, at parade rest, a pigeon on his rakish campaign hat.

On the south lawn a scabrous old iron cannon from the frigate USS Constitution aims point-blank across Sixth at the doorway of Fowler Brothers, the only bookstore left on a street once known as bookellers' row, which used to be strewn with dusty cubbyholes.

Reminders, both temporal and spiritual, look down upon the square from the Pacific Mutual Life Building and the Temple Baptist Church. "Time to Insure," reads one: "Come Worship the Lord," the other.

Pershing Square will always be in peril. After all, they say, it is nothing but a refuge for discarded people and grubby pigeons. I hope they let it be, though. We should be reminded now and then that there are discarded people and birds, no matter how grubby.

The neighborhood around the square is a cultural center of sorts. There is the library, and the galleria of the Biltmore, which keeps alive the genre of the western landscape. The bookstores have been replaced by the ticket offices of the world's major airlines, each equipped with chic furniture and girls and posters of faraway places.

Around the corner on Hill is the newsstand that sells papers from all over the world. Here one can pick up the Sioux Falls Argus Leader or the Wichita Eagle and Beacon, Le Monde or the Berliner Morgenpost, as well as the hottest tip sheets from Hialeah and Hollywood Park.

Off Hill on Fifth is an all-night paperback bookstore, a haven for night people and insomniacs. The New Pussycat Theater on Hill is also open all night. It was showing Scarlet Negligee, which the lobby posters touted as "an adult motion picture in sensual, shocking color." Admission $2.00. I saw Hedy LaMarr in White Cargo at the New Pussycat, only then it was called the Top Hat, as I remember, and it cost only a quarter.

Up a block, at Fifth and Olive, the old Philharmonic Auditorium, now replaced by the Music Center, has been reclained as a house of worship by the Temple Baptist Church, with a large gold cross above its entrance.

And up another block, at Grand, there is a parking lot where the Biltmore Theater used to be. I saw Macbeth at the Biltmore in the thirties, and 30 years later, Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?

Hill Street between Second and Fourth streets used to be "downtown" for the residents of Bunker Hill, in its declining years. They rode the Angel's Flight down for a nickel, stuffed their shopping bags at the Grand Central Market, drank beer in the Astor bar and struggled back to their lodgings in the old Victorian rooming houses on the hill.

Angel's Flight is gone. Bunker Hill is bare. The Astor bar is boarded up. But Grand Central Market seems as busy as ever. It is a kind of poor man's Farmer's Market, though its proud entrepreneurs will resent that epithet.

In Grand Central one can not only load up on meats, fish, fruits and vegetables, but also have his choice of Chinese and Mexican snack bars, not to overlook a health bar that offers vitamins, juices, yogurt shakes, alfalfa chews, soya noodles and a 35-cent blood pressure test given by a gentle-

man in a white tunic, Mr. Ivan T. Jones, technician.

Grand Central runs the length of the block, opening onto Broadway in a section that is downtown to many Mexican-Americans. Mariachi music rolls out of open shops and cafes. Se habla español. The Million Dollar Theater, a splendid relic of American baroque theater architecture, offers Mexican movies and the last of the Broadway stage shows.

For 20 cents I had a glass of sarsaparilla at the Grand Central hot dog stand on Broadway. Not elegant, perhaps, but it is the closest thing to a sidewalk cafe in downtown Los Angeles that I know of.

Thus fortified, I crossed the street and entered the Bradbury Building. Outside, the Bradbury seems indistinguishable, a five-story pile of brick and sandstone.

Inside, it is another century; another world.

Wrought iron and pink marble stairs and balconies climb four flights around a court to a glass roof through which pours an ambient light. The building's rooms are reached from balconies that circle this sunlit core.

Two open wrought iron birdcage elevators make the ascent to the fifth floor, where I found the new headquarters of the local chapter, American Institute of Architects. The architects have taken up residence in the Bradbury, I imagine, to enhance its prestige and bring in other tenants of quality.

I walked into the Inner City Art Gallery, which occupies another suite on the fifth floor. There was an excellent exhibition of prints; but the rooms were

(Continued on page 45)
• More than 100,000,000 passengers have made the 315-foot trip since the service began in 1901.

• A 1908 photograph, above, shows an archless Angels' Flight and the now-vanished Angels' View.

• The old Victorian mansions on Bunker Hill will be razed soon in a massive redevelopment project.

• The cars travel up and down the 35 percent grade shuffling shoppers between home and the city stores.
Angels' Flight is the shortest railway in the world, but it will take you on a long journey, back to the days when women's skirts reached their ankles and everybody was talking about the wireless, Marconi's astounding invention.

Third and Hill, in downtown Los Angeles, was a quiet intersection with horses, Victorian ladies on bicycles, an occasional motor car, and a funny little funicular called Angels' Flight.

Now the streets roar with the nervous hustle of our modern world, but the cable railway still carries passengers to the top of Bunker Hill, where life has changed very little since December 31, 1901, when the original sixteen-seat cars rolled along the incline on their first trip.

The flight was built by James W. Eddy, Illinois attorney and politician who came to California in 1875. Bunker Hill was then known as Olive Heights, and already had several Victorian mansions on its crest. Eddy could see that the hill was going to develop into a first class residential section, but it was a tough climb for either horse or human. So he built Angels' Flight alongside the Third Street tunnel and watched his passengers increased every day to more than 7,000 each day. In 1900, during the week of the Elks convention, 60,000 passengers rode the flight. The Hill Street Arch was built shortly before the convention, and the end of the car, pass the operator's window and put their nickel in the box or push a commuter ticket through the little round hole in the glass.

The building that houses the operator and the machinery was built about 1908.

Originally the roof extended through an elaborate system of archways and gingerbread to cover the whole upper landing. It was known as Angels' Rest, and Mr. Eddy put out cards advertising: "Rest pavilion, overlooking city, Eddy Park, and fountain. Free. Easy chairs. Come and bring your friends and enjoy yourselves."

To increase the tourist attraction of the flight, Eddy built a tall tower on the hillside directly below the pavilion. He called it Angels' View, and charged a nickel, including the camera obscura on top which "puts a beautiful living picture of Third Street and vicinity on canvas before you." The tower was declared unsafe in 1914 because of its sagging foundation, but was not removed until 1938.

Next to the upper terminal is the Hill Crest Hotel, a fine old hotelry in its day and the residence of Mr. Eddy. The dining room sold its regular dinner for 50 cents, but on January 1 they went all out with a "special New Year's dinner," for 75 cents. And this included free tickets on the flight.

On top of the hill are many reminders of the Victorian Age, including sharp points on fence rails to discourage loungers. Down Olive Street to the south are four tall old homes with ornate railings, porches, and sharply peaked roofs, standing like silent guardians of the past.

West two blocks on Third Street to Bunker Hill Avenue are windows with lace curtains, ornamental iron work, and flambouyant examples of the gingerbread era. Most of the old places are still occupied, and in respect for people's privacy all sightseeing and picture taking must be done from the sidewalk or street.

The Lovejoy Apartments at Third and Grand was the residence of several people who were on the Angels' Flight car that broke loose and crashed in 1913. A broken collarbone was the most serious injury in that accident, the only time any passengers were injured in the whole history of the flight. This is a remarkable record when considering that the flight has carried over 100,000,000 passengers, more per mile than any other railroad. The cars now have a safety cable with a brake, which prevents any repetition of the 1913 accident.

In 1912, Mr. L. W. Moreland, bought the flight after commuting on it for thirty years to his job in downtown Los Angeles. Many people still park their cars on the hill and take the flight down to work, more for the fun of it than out of necessity. The original cars were named Sinaí and Olivet, but when the present cars were installed in 1914, somebody lost the signs.

Angels Ride for a Nickel

By Miles Schofield

The hill was proud of its little railway, and several businesses used the name Angels' Flight. Many of the shops are closed now. The Hill Crest Hotel is a decaying hulk, with not even a hint of its glamorous early days. Scalloped-shingled homes still have their stained glass windows, but now ugly fire escapes clutter up their beauty in order to make them safe for roomers.

Bunker Hill is due to be redeveloped in a massive community project. The old homes will be destroyed, and even the flight will go. That will be a sad day for many an old-timer, and even some youngsters who have fallen in love with the railway.

The operator sells color postcards of the flight, but for a real souvenir, get a commuter booklet of forty tickets for $1.00. Some tourists take four or six trips on the faithful old funicular, and enjoy it more each ride. After their last trip down, many people stand on the sidewalk for a final wistful glimpse at the flight.

The early days of the century, when six-day bike races were the rage, ladies wore lace ruffle aprons, and the greatest worry in anybody's mind was how to get more spikes on the top fence rail, would be forgotten if it were not for Angels' Flight, a delightful link with the past.