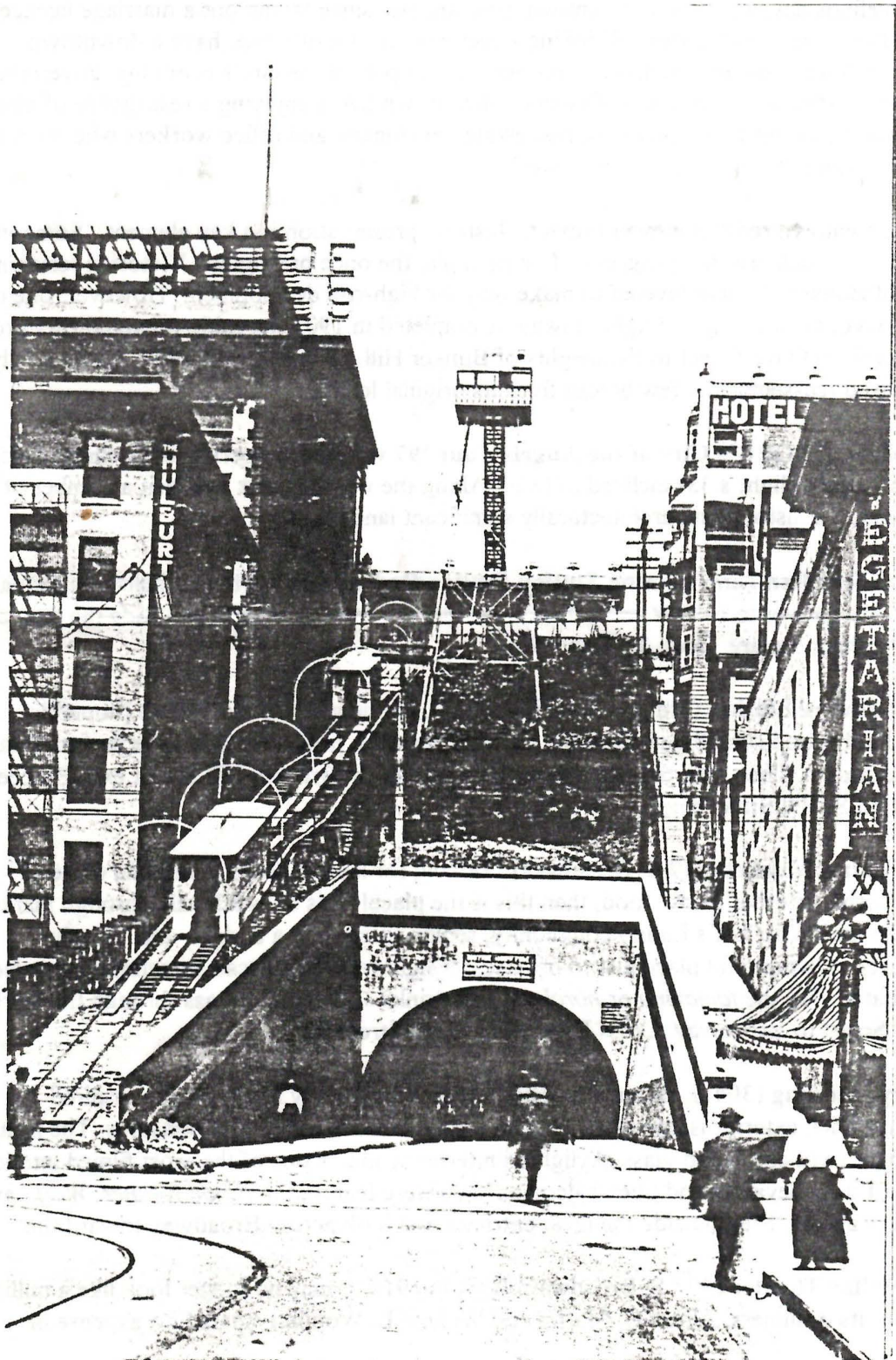


Angels Flight, Hill and Third Streets, ca. 1909





## SOHO City of the Angeles Tour '97

by

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Most Angelinos haven't been to downtown Los Angeles since taking out a marriage licence at city hall. Post-war suburbanites half-jokingly feel that LA doesn't even have a downtown. However, LA's the urban core has always been a vital part of the city's economy, government, and culture. After suffering years of neglect, downtown LA is enjoying a resurgence of attention for urban and transportation planners, real estate developers, and office workers who wish to enjoy the advantages of living closer to work.

As in all downtown redevelopment projects, historic preservation is a key element. Sometimes history takes a back seat to "progress." For example, the once prestigious Victorian residential districts of Bunker Hill was leveled to make way for high-rise development. However, one of the area's survivors is the Angels Flight railway. Completed in 1901, its cable-powered cars provided a short cut from Olive Street to the heights of Bunker Hill. Dismantled in 1969, it was finally relocated and reassembled a few blocks from its original location.

The highlight of SOHO's **City of the Angels Tour '97** will be to experience the thrill of riding along the Angels Flight's 33° inclined railway. Along the way the tour will visit a number of downtown LA's historic and architecturally significant landmarks.

**LA Metro Rail Red Line's Union Station** Redundancy thirty feet below earthquake central! LA's answer to New York subways--minus the smell of stale urine. Ride the fast, clean train to Pershing Square. Cost: \$.25 one-way.

**Pershing Square Station** (3rd and S. Hill) Part of LA's new metro rail system [hopefully reaching Hollywood sometime before the next millennium], proceed toward the far [northeast] end of the station. Then take the stairs or escalator up to the 3rd and Hill Street exit. Proceed northeast on S. Hill Street to:

**Grand Central Market** (317 S. Broadway) Looking for lamb's heads, mountain oysters, aromatic herbs, or other exotic food, then this is the place! This colorful walk-through market place is the mecca for LA's Latino community, senior citizens on a budget, and "trendy" suburbanites. A wonderful place just to browse, its sights and smells can sometimes overwhelm the uninitiated. Try the *tamarino* or *horchata* soft drinks--¡fantastico! Pass through the market from Hill Street to Broadway. Cross Broadway at 3rd Street to:

**Bradbury Building** (304 S. Broadway) Hidden behind a slightly Romanesque-inspired nondescript brick exterior is one of downtown LA's hidden architectural treasures. The iron, glazed brick, terra cotta, and glass-skylighted interior atrium is one of the most filmed interiors in LA. Its cast iron elevators and open balconies have been featured in *Blade Runner*, *Wolf*, and countless tv shows. Step outside the main entrance and look across Broadway toward the:

**Million Dollar Theater** (397 S. Broadway) Built in 1918, it may no longer look like a million dollars, but its designers, Albert C. Martin and William L. Woollett, spared no expense in

adapting its lush, Churrigueresque exterior to William L. Woollett's sumptuous and mysterious Baroque interior. Continue west on Broadway to:

**Biddy Mason Memorial Wall**

Interpretive wall memorializing one of LA's pioneer Afro-American settlers.

Continue West to the corner of 4th and Broadway; proceed north on 4th to the:

**Angels Flight Funicular Railway** (4th and S. Hill St.) Built by local developer Col. J. W. Eddy, in 1901, it originally operated from the foot of 3rd and Hill Streets. The shortest operating railway in the nation [335-feet], its two opposed wooden cable cars [*Olivet* and *Smai*] ran along each other in opposite directions. As a motorized winch pulled one of the cars up the 33° incline, the weight of the other car acted as a counter weight. Widened turnouts kept both cars from scraping their sides as they passed each other midway. Considered a non-scheduled rail line by the State of California, the city of Los Angeles classified it as "an elevator?" on the original operating permit. The cars ran from 6 a.m. to a half-hour after midnight. On a typical day, they made between 435 to 876 trips up and down the hill. If you couldn't cough up the nickel fare, you could walk up the ramp and steps which ran along the opposite side of the hill. Dismantled on May 19, 1969 to make way for a massive redevelopment project, it was supposed to be reinstalled at a future date. Twenty-seven years later, due in part to the efforts of the Los Angeles Conservancy, the Angels Flight Railway is back in operation. Renovated by the non-profit Angels Flight Railway Foundation, the bright red arch on Hill Street once stood as part of the line's upper station/engine house. Downtown planners and merchants hope that Angels Flight will help breath life into the old commercial district by linking it with the newly built California Plaza. Cost: \$.25 one-way.

While waiting for the car to travel up the hill, look toward the west at the:

**Pacific Electric Subway Terminal Building** (417 S. Hill St.) According to its architects, Schultz and Weaver, they based their design on a 16th century Italian Renaissance prototype. Its rusticated masonry lower floors support the main block, capped by a two-story palazzo. From the northwest, the building's four, twelve-story bays appear as four separate buildings. The headquarters for the Pacific Electric Railway, it served as the rail terminus for five separate electric interurban lines. Arriving from as far away as Santa Monica and the San Fernando Valley, they entered an underground station through a massive mile-long tunnel. In operation from 1925 to 1955, the tunnel is now closed. Exit the car and proceed to the:

**California Plaza** Wait here for the tour to reassemble. If we find some interesting places to eat, the group will break for lunch here. If not, it will proceed north to Flower Street. Then west on Flower Street to the:

**Wells Fargo Building** (NE corner of South Flower and West 5th) Designed by Albert C. Martin & Associates in 1979, it was built to replace the handsome Sunkist Building (Walker and Eisen, 1935). The 48-story skyscraper emphasizes horizontality through its stepped-back rectangular volumes. Its palm tree-lined plaza is equally mixed with public sculpture by Michael Hiezer, Bruce Nauman, Robert Raushenberg, Frank Stella, and Mark di Suvero.



Break for lunch: 1 hour.

During the lunch break, take the time to visit the following [all are less than one block away on 5th Street]:

**Southern California Edison Building [now One Bunker Hill]**. Another monument to the Art Deco movement, its deep-cut 12-story tower section creates a strong vertical statement. Above its Classical/Moderne canted entry main lobby entry are three relief panels. Done in high relief by Merrell Gage, they depict: *Hydro Electric Energy, Light, and Power*. Inside the formal entrance, in the elevator lobby, is the mural *Apotheosis of Power* by Hugo Ballin.

At the opposite corner [5th and S. Flower] are the following:

**Atlantic Richfield Plaza** (505 S. Flower St.) On this site was one of LA's lost Art Deco monuments, the Zig-Zag Moderne Richfield Building. Designed by Morgan, Walls, and Clements in 1928-29, the black, gold, and terra cotta marvel was replaced in 1972 by the present twin towers [Albert C. Martin & Associates]. Beneath their dark, polished-stone-sheathed walls is an underground shopping mall [Bidlski & Associates]. Its two levels are usually packed with office workers during the workweek, deserted on weekends. In front of the building's entrance is fountain sculpture, *Double Ascension* (1973) by Herbert Bayer.

Look northeast at the:

**Westin Bonaventure Hotel** (404 S. Figueroa St.) One of the most unique skyscrapers in LA's downtown skyline, its five shimmering cylindrical towers evoke futuristic visions of Frank R. Paul's 1940's *Amazing Stories*' cover art. Designed by John Portman & Associates and built between 1974-76, there isn't a 90° angle in sight! While there is only one elevator available for non-guests, it rises through the lobby roof and soars through the air outside to a revolving restaurant and bar [very expensive] on the 35th floor.

Look to the west on Flower Street to:

**The California Club** (238 S. Flower St.) Robert D. Farquar's use of warm brown Roman brick and tufa trim provides an atmosphere of Beaux Art Classicism to this 1929-30-built club building.

After lunch the tour will meet in the:

### **Los Angeles Central Library Gardens**

Designed to resemble a romantic Persian garden, this 1½-acre garden features axial walks, pools, fountains, and trees leading up to the library's north entrance. Impressive as it is, it was subordinate to the library's main garden facing the western entry. However, that garden was torn up to provide parking for the library's employees. When touring through the library, be sure to glower at the librarians. After counting heads, the tour will divide into three groups, then proceed inside the:

**Los Angeles Central (Downtown) Public Library** (SE corner of South Flower and West 5th) Along with the Nebraska State Capitol Building, this is one of Bertram G. Goodhue's most significant works. Assisted by Carleton M. Winslow, Goodhue sought to allegorically bring the past and present together in a single readable image. The past is expressed in forms borrowed from Egyptian, Assyrian, Roman, Byzantine, Islamic, and Spanish cultures. All of this is transformed into the present [1922-25] through the building's skyscraper form [the phallic symbol of the modern business world], utilitarian planning, and the use of 20th century building materials [poured reinforced concrete]. Besides housing one of the largest collections of books in the world, the library is a showplace for art. The main rotunda's interior walls are lined with murals depicting the history of California by Dean Cornwall. Within the Spanish Colonial Revival-influenced Children's Room is the fresco *Stampeding Buffalo* by Charles M. Kassler, and scenes by Julian Garnsey and A. W. Parsons depicting scenes from Sir Walter Scott's novels.

After experiencing two near-disastrous fires, the library was completely renovated and expanded. Ride the escalator down into the bowels of the new, multi-million dollar addition. Ironically [or purposefully], the new history section is down at the bottom-most level. That's ok, because here you can take the elevator back up to the main lobby. While riding the elevator, look out the narrow viewing window. Here you can read some of the discarded index cards [remember when library's had index cards?] glued to the elevator shaft walls.

Reassemble in the garden in front of the library's north entrance. The tour will proceed south on 5th, past the **Southern California Edison Building** [hope you saw it during the lunch break], to the:

**Biltmore Hotel** (SW corner of South Olive and West 5th) We only have time to walk through this unbelievably ornate hotel lobby. But don't fail to look up at the intricate Spanish Churrigueresque/Mediterranean-Revival ceilings, painted by Giovanni Smeraldi. Only when viewed from across the street in Pershing Square Park can the architects' [Schultz and Weaver] use of decorative brickwork and terra cotta detailing be truly appreciated. Exiting the hotel's South Olive Street lobby, walk west to the:

**Pacific Mutual Building** (523 W. 6th at S. Olive St.) Originally resembling a 6-story, glazed, white terra cotta Corinthian temple [designed in 1908 by John Parkinson and Edwin Bergstrom], it was combined with an adjacent 12-story Beaux-Arts office tower [designed by Dodd and Richard, 1922], and a 3-story parking garage [1926]. In 1937 Parkinson and Parkinson remodeled the Corinthian temple into an unassuming Modern building. Continue west along South Olive to the:

**Oviatt Building** (617 S. Olive St.) Essentially Italian Romanesque in form, it was the Art Deco/Zig-Zag Moderne details that attracted attention after it was completed in 1928. Described by its designers, Walker and Eisen, as "Ultra-Modern," they made extensive use of Lalique glass in the external store front, marquee, interior lobby, and sales room. Reportedly, the building's owner imported the shop front, marquee, and all of the other decorative work from France, along with five French engineers and architects to supervise their installation. On top of the building was a rooftop "bungalow," which featured "Modern" French-imported Art Deco furnishings.



Backtrack east on S. Olive Street to 6th Street. Cross S. Olive to:

**Pershing Square** (Between S. Olive, S. Hill, W 5th, and W 6th) Formerly known as La Plaza Abaja [the lower plaza], Public Square, and Central Park, this 5.02-acre park [part of the original Los Angeles pueblo lands] was set aside as a public park in 1866. Known for its lush vegetation, among which were many palm trees, it was a favorite "hobo haunt" during the Depression. In 1950-51 the city had the entire park dug up and installed an underground parking garage. Designed by Stiles Clements, it is similar to what was done to Union Square in San Francisco. The park's surface is a melange of Post-Modern sculpture, walks, and plantings.

From the square, look east at the:

**Philharmonic Auditorium and Office Building/Temple Baptist Church** (427 W 5th St.) One of LA's earliest reinforced concrete buildings [designed by Charles F. Whittlesey in 1906], this 9-story auditorium building featured some of the most exuberant Sullivanesque ornamentation in Southern California. However, this was removed in 1938, replaced by a Moderne façade. Immediately to the south is the:

**Title Guarantee Building (Guarantee Trust)** Completed in 1929, this 12-story Zig-zag Moderne skyscraper was designed by John and Donald B. Parkinson. During the night, floodlights dramatically accentuated the building's light buff terra cotta and granite exterior. Its neo-Gothic-inspired tower, with its flying buttresses, was used as the haunted penthouse suite in the film *Ghostbusters*. Inside the lobby is another Hugo Ballin mural, *The Treaty of Cahuenga*. Behind this building, along S. Hill Street, is the:

**National Bank of Commerce** (439 S. Hill St.) Walker and Eisen's 1929-30 Zig-Zag Moderne interpretation of Beaux Arts formalism. Over the building's main entry are three impressive high relief panels. The message under the right-hand panel just about sums up the late 1920s [which echoed throughout the 1980's]: "Wealth means power, it means leisure, it means liberty."

Proceed to the cave-like west entrance to the **Pershing Square Metro Blue Line Station** for the return trip to the:

**Los Angeles Union Station Passenger Terminal** (E side of Alameda, bet. Aliso and Macy) One of the quintessential buildings that seemed to define LA to moviegoers during the 1940's, it is another of downtown LA's landmarks designed by a consortium of architects [John and Donald B. Parkinson, J. H. Christie, H. L. Gilman, R. J. Wirth, color consultant Herman Sachs, and landscape architect Tommy Tomson]. The station's 135-foot high observation and clock tower conveys both the tradition of the Spanish Colonial Revival, and the contemporaneousness of the Streamline Moderne. Built upon the site of LA's original Chinatown, it was the last large-scale metropolitan passenger depots built in the U. S. [1939]. Its basilica-like interior is one of the most impressive public spaces in the nation. Once the terminus of the Union Pacific, Southern Pacific, and Santa Fe Railroads, it will continue to serve as an important rail transportation hub well into the next century.

Before walking through the terminal, make sure that you know where and when to wait for the return trip back to San Diego. The tour will meet in the east waiting lobby in front of the doorway that says: *San Diegans* [It refers to the trains, not us]. Make sure that you arrive some **30 minutes before** the train's departure time to guarantee that we all board together.

Proceed through the terminus to the west [main] entrance. From here look toward the southwest at one of downtown LA's most famous landmarks, the:

**Los Angeles City Hall** (SW cor. Temple and Main) The only one of downtown LA's skyscrapers allowed to go over the 150-foot height restriction [earthquakes, you know], it was completed in 1926. Its designers, John C. Austin, John Parkinson, and Albert C. Martin, were influenced by Goodhue's design for the Nebraska State Capitol, and the LA public library. A monumental Moderne tower placed on an Italian Renaissance base, it is capped by the architects' interpretation of the Mausoleum at Helicarnassus. The interior public spaces, especially the central rotunda, were designed in a slightly Byzantine feeling by Austin Whittlesey. The inscription at the top of the reception room basically sums up LA: "The city came into being to preserve life, it exists for the good life." Well known to movie and TV fans, the building was the Daily Planet Building in the 1950s *Superman* TV series. Its embossed relief on an LA police sergeant's badge was also the first thing you saw at the beginning of the *Dragnet* show [Dum, de dum dum].

Proceed across the intersection in front of the terminus to the:

**El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historical Monument** (Olvera Street, bet. Main and Los Angeles) The cultural heart of Hispanic LA., it is centered around a charming Mexican-style park shaded by a huge Morton Bay fig tree. Although, this is not the original site of the 1781 Spanish-era plaza [that site, somewhere to the northeast near Sunset Boulevard, was filled in by early settlers], it was the commercial heart of LA until the 1870s. After then, the city's business center moved south near Pershing Square. Nevertheless, it is surrounded by some of the only remaining pre-1900 buildings in the city. Interest in the plaza was rekindled when it became trendy and fashionable to restore old "Spanish" California homes and churches. During the 1920s buildings along Olvera Street, particularly the Avila Adobe, and on several adjoining streets were restored. Between 1949-50, the plaza narrowly missed being obliterated by the construction of the nearby Santa Ana Freeway.

The plaza should be packed with thousands celebrating the Cinco de Mayo festivities. If you can make your way through the throng, the plaza area offers some notable historic buildings. Among these are the:

**La Iglesia de Nuestra Señora la Reina de Los Angeles (The Church of Our Lady the Queen of the Angels)** (535 N. Main) Although the church was built in 1818 as the pueblo's chapel, its present "Mission" style church dates from 1861 on.

**Avila Adobe** (10 Olvera Street) Built ca. 1818, this is the oldest dwelling still standing in LA. However, like the chapel, it has undergone several "restoration interpretations."



**Sepulveda House (Visitors Center)** (622 N. Main) This red brick commercial block, with its Eastlake balconies, was built in 1883 as a hotel and restaurant.

**La Casa Pelanconi** (17 Olvera Street) Late Greek Revival in style, this two-story 1855-structure is LA's first all-brick house. The ground floor once housed a winery, while the upper floors served as living quarters. It has been the home of the *La Golondrina* restaurant for over 60 years.

**Garnier Block** (415 N. Los Angeles) What remains is the north half of the original 1890 Romanesque commercial building. The south half was destroyed by the Santa Ana Freeway construction.

**Masonic Temple** (416 N. Main) Completed in 1858, this Italianate building's cast iron balcony poses over the triple-arched street-level opening below. Notice the paired bracketed cornice.

**Merced Theater/Theatro Mercedes** (420-22 N. Main) The first [1869] theater building in LA. Credited to Ezra F. Kysor, like the nearby Masonic Temple and Pico House, this 3-story commercial block is Italianate in style. Balconies on the third floor provided for its arched windows.

**Pico House** (430 N. Main) Commissioned by Don Pio Pico, the last governor of Mexican California, in 1868, it was the first 3-story masonry building built in LA. Designed by Ezra F. Kysor, all of its arched openings are deeply cut into the building.

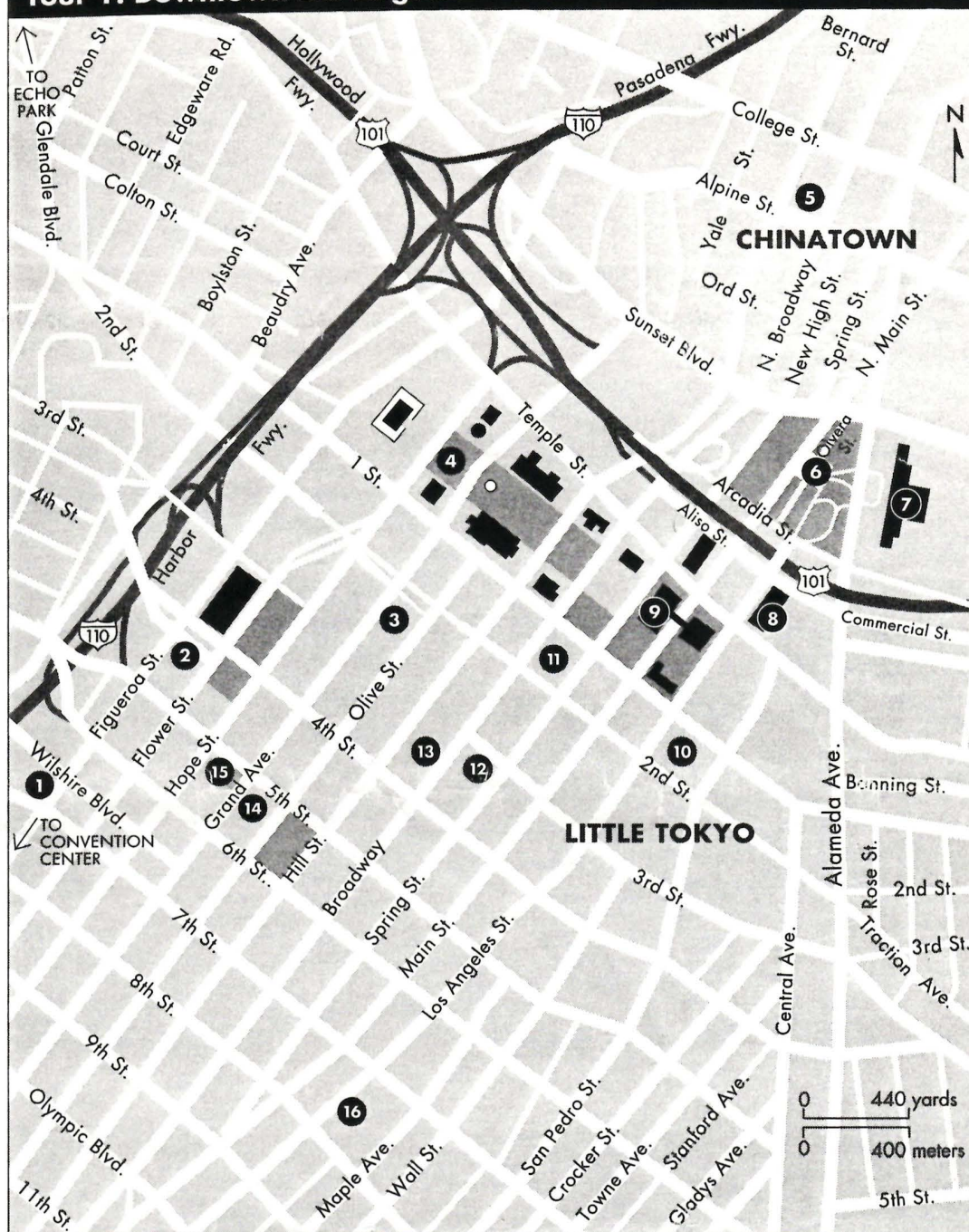
**Old Plaza Firehouse** (SW cor. Old Plaza and Los Angeles) This 2-story 1884 brick firehouse [LA's first] features an Eastlake balcony over a high entrance bay.

Under the Merced, Garnier Block, and the Masonic Temple are underground passageways once used by Chinese immigrants when the plaza was part of LA's:

**Chinatown** (North Broadway, bounded by Yale, Bernard, Ord Streets, and Alameda) Originally developed during the 1870s to the east of the Plaza, it shifted north after 1933 to make way for the building of the new Union Station. Beyond the tourist hokum are exotic markets and restaurants catering to the area's more than 15,000 Chinese and Southeast Asian population.



## Tour 1: Downtown Los Angeles



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|--|---|
| Biltmore Hotel, <b>14</b>                              | Los Angeles City Hall, <b>9</b>                     |
| Bradbury Building, <b>12</b>                           | Los Angeles Times, <b>11</b>                        |
| Central Library, <b>15</b>                             | Los Angeles Visitor and Convention Bureau, <b>1</b> |
| Chinatown, <b>5</b>                                    | Museum of Contemporary Art, <b>3</b>                |
| El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historical Monument, <b>6</b> | Music Center, <b>4</b>                              |
| Garment District, <b>16</b>                            | Union Station, <b>7</b>                             |
| Grand Central Market, <b>13</b>                        | Westin Bonaventure Hotel, <b>2</b>                  |
| Little Tokyo, <b>10</b>                                |   |
| Los Angeles Children's Museum, <b>8</b>                |   |