

Site Context for the LA Plaza de Cultura y Artes Project, Los Angeles, California

Prepared for:

The County of Los Angeles

Prepared by:

SWCA Environmental Consultants

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SITE CONTEXT
FOR THE LA PLAZA DE CULTURA Y ARTES PROJECT,
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

Prepared for

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INTRODUCTION

SWCA Environmental Consultants (SWCA) was retained by the County of Los Angeles (County) to conduct several studies related to the former cemetery associated with *La Iglesia de Nuestra Señora de Los Angeles* (Plaza Church) in Los Angeles, California. The scope of work includes fieldwork, laboratory processing, and the preparation of a technical report and boundary map indicating the scope of a “no-dig zone” to protect the historic cemetery resources. This site context was developed in the course of those studies.

The LA Plaza de Cultura y Artes property consists of approximately 1.2 hectares (ha; 3.08 acres) located in the City of Los Angeles in Los Angeles County (Figures 1 and 2). As shown in Figure 3, the property consists of a portion of the Antique Block (the 500 block of North Main Street). This area is bounded by the Plaza Church and rectory, North Main Street, Republic Street, and Spring Street. The property is identified by County Assessor’s Parcel Numbers (APN) 5480-006-900, 5480-007-901, 5480-007-902, and 5480-007-904, which are owned by the County of Los Angeles.

The property is located within El Pueblo de Los Angeles State Historic Park, portions of which have been designated the Los Angeles Pueblo Historic National Register District (Reference No. 72000231, listed on the NRHP in 1972). The area was designated a state historic monument in 1953 and comprises California Historical Landmark No. 155.

The Los Angeles Pueblo Historic National Register District, as defined in 1972, includes nine named contributing properties within a 16-ha area: the Plaza Church (1822), the Pico House (1869), the Pelanconi House (1855), the Sepulveda House (1860), the Firehouse (1884), the Avila Adobe (1818), the Merced Theater (1869), the Masonic Hall (1858), and the Garnier Building (1890). In 1981, five additional contributors were added to the district: the Vickrey-Brunswick Building (1888), the Brunswick Annex (1897), and the Plaza House (1883) (all within the property prior to project implementation), as well as the Plaza Methodist Church (1926) and the Plaza Community Center (1926). The Plaza Church and the Avila Adobe represent the earliest phase of city development, dubbed the Mission Adobe period (1818–1846) on the 1972 NRHP nomination form. To date, the district does not include a named archaeological component.

The SWCA project team was led by John Dietler, Ph.D., Registered Professional Archaeologist (RPA). Dr. Dietler managed the project and served as principal investigator and lead author. Historian Steven Treffers, M.H.P., contributed to the report as well. SWCA GIS Manager William Hayden prepared the figures in this report, and John Pecorelli served as technical editor. Dr. Dietler meets the Secretary of the Interior’s Professional Qualifications Standards in historic archaeology.



Figure 1. Project vicinity map.

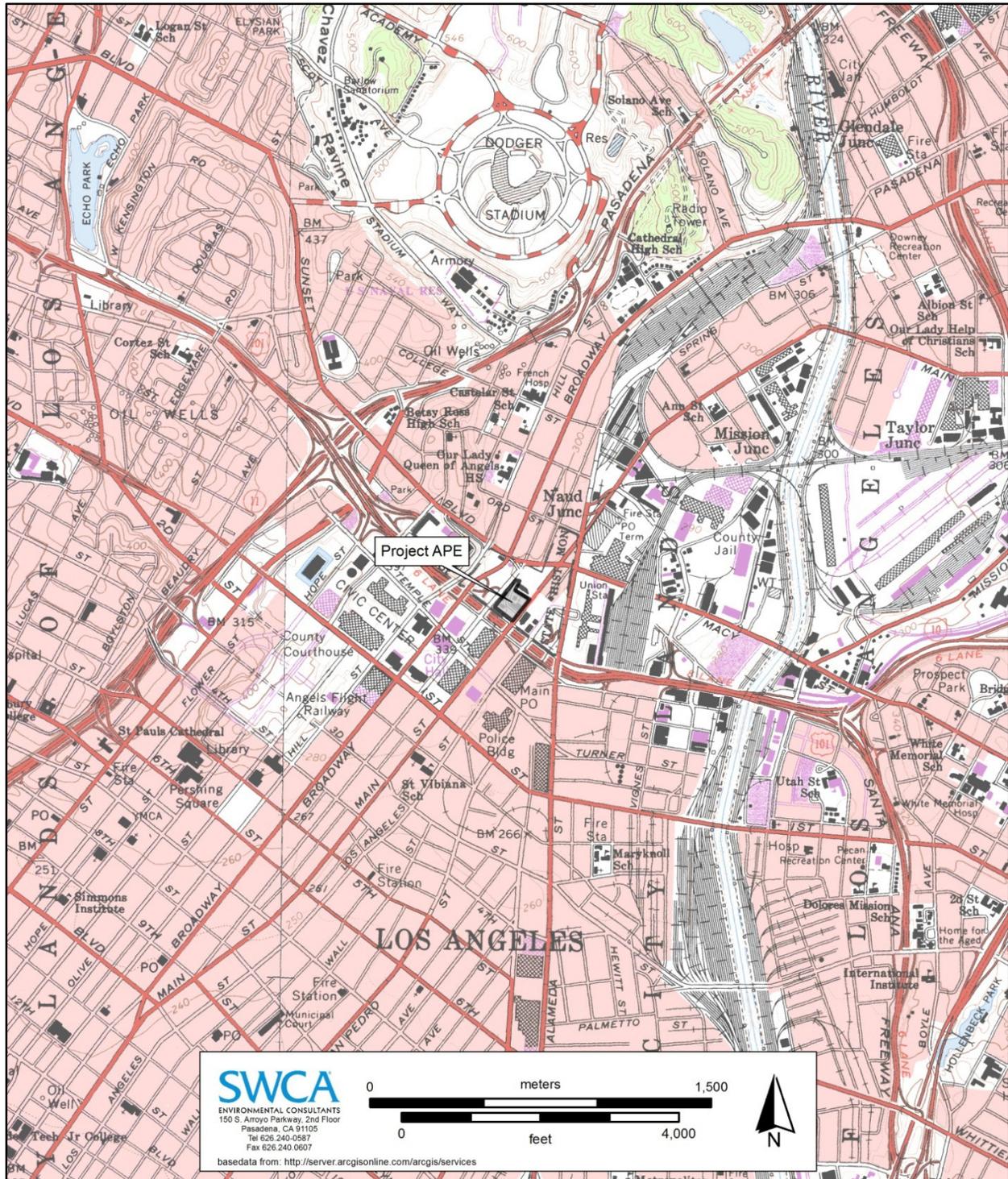


Figure 1. Project location map.

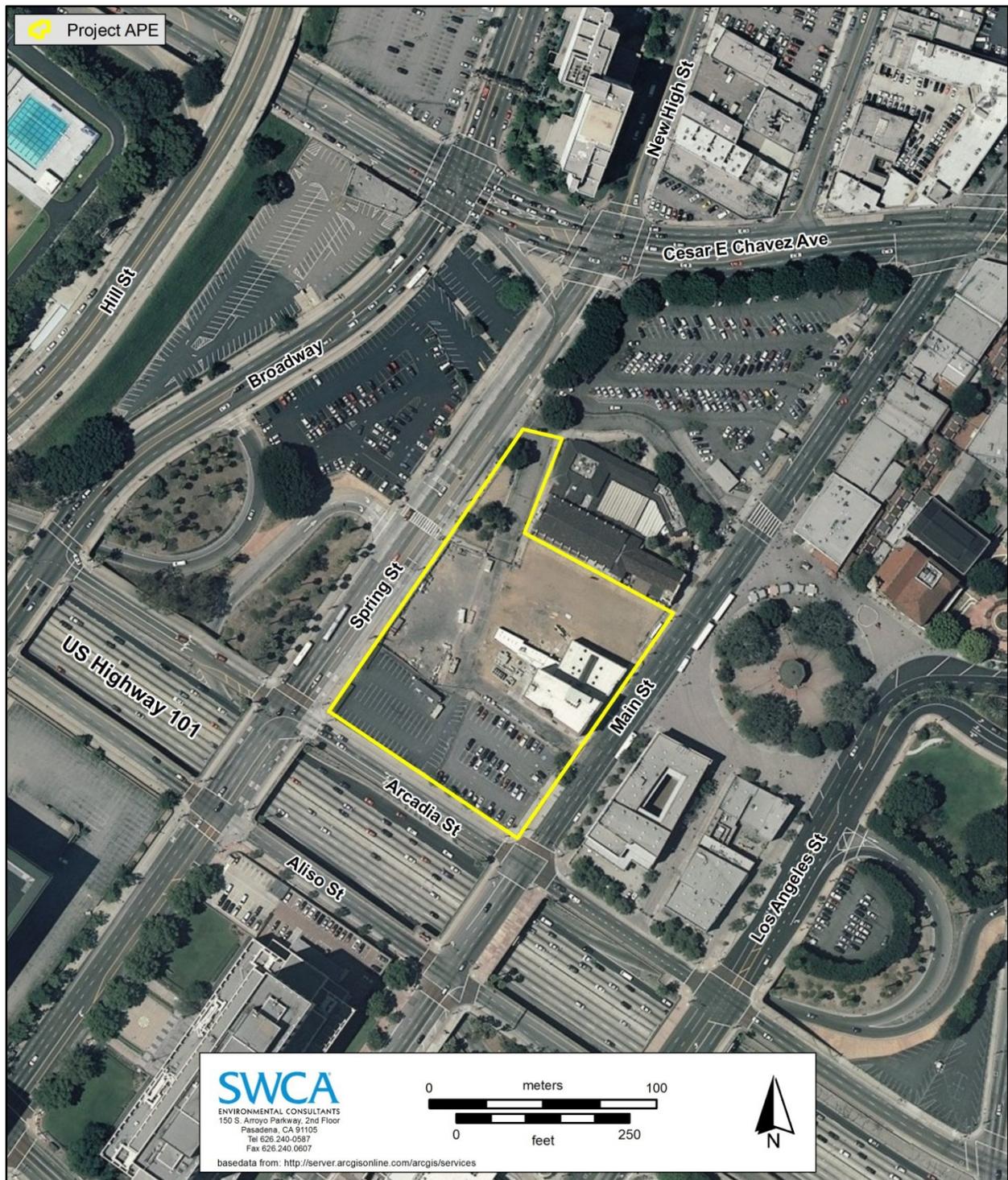


Figure 2. Project location aerial photograph.

SITE CONTEXT

Natural Setting

The property is located in the Los Angeles Basin, a broad, level plain defined by the Pacific Ocean to the west, the Santa Monica Mountains and Puente Hills to the north, and the Santa Ana Mountains and San Joaquin Hills to the south. This extensive alluvial wash basin is filled with Quaternary alluvial sediments. It is drained by several major watercourses, including the Los Angeles, Rio Hondo, San Gabriel, and Santa Ana rivers. The project is located at an elevation of approximately 91 meters (m; 300 feet) above mean sea level.

The property is located just south of the confluence of the Los Angeles River and the Arroyo Seco. Largely thanks to the reliable flow of water from these sources, the location has been ideal for human habitation, both before and after the arrival of European settlers. Historically, the Los Angeles River shifted course with frequency across the basin, flooding the project area through the nineteenth century. The now-channelized course of the Los Angeles River is located approximately 1.2 kilometers (km; 0.75 miles) east of the project area.

The project area vicinity is highly urbanized, with development ranging from commercial to public and institutional uses. All the native vegetation has been replaced by ornamental vegetation. Historically, the project area supported a wide variety of plant and animal life. During the first recorded visit to the spot by people of European descent, under the leadership of Spaniard Gaspar de Portolá in 1769, it was described as follows by one of the party's priests, Father Juan Crespi (Bolton 1927:146–147):

Wednesday, August 2.—We set out from the valley in the morning and followed the same plain in a westerly direction. After traveling about a league and a half through a pass between low hills, we entered a very spacious valley, well grown with cottonwoods and alders, among which ran a beautiful river [the Los Angeles River] from the north-northwest, and then, doubling the point of a steep hill, it went on afterwards to the south. Toward the north-northeast there is another river bed [the Arroyo Seco] which forms a spacious water-course, but we found it dry. This bed unites with that of the river, giving a clear indication of great floods in the rainy season, for we saw that it had many trunks of trees on the banks. We halted not very far from the river, which we named Porciúncula. Here we felt three consecutive earthquakes in the afternoon and night. We must have traveled about three leagues to-day. This plain where the river runs is very extensive. It has good land for planting all kinds of grain and seeds, and is the most suitable site of all that we have seen for a mission, for it has all the requisites for a large settlement.

The climate in the project area is typified by hot, dry summers with moderate winter precipitation. Summers are influenced by a high-pressure zone associated with descending dry air from the upper atmosphere. This persistent high pressure generally prevents rain-bearing storms from entering the area, keeping summers dry. Summer temperatures can be hot, commonly reaching 32 degrees Celsius (90 degrees Fahrenheit). Autumn brings the Santa Ana winds, which blow from the Mojave Desert westward toward the Pacific Ocean. Winter is generally characterized by sporadic rainstorms alternating with warm and sunny days (Schoenherr 1992).

Cultural Setting

Prehistoric Overview

Numerous chronological sequences have been devised to aid in understanding cultural changes in southern California. Building on early studies and focusing on data synthesis, Wallace (1955, 1978) developed a prehistoric chronology for the southern California coastal region that is still widely used today and is applicable to near-coastal and many inland areas. Four periods are presented in Wallace's prehistoric sequence: Early Man, Milling Stone, Intermediate, and Late Prehistoric. Although Wallace's 1955 synthesis initially lacked chronological precision due to a paucity of absolute dates (Moratto 1984:159), this situation has been alleviated by the availability of thousands of radiocarbon dates that have been obtained by southern California researchers in the last three decades (Byrd and Raab 2007:217). Several revisions have been made to Wallace's 1955 synthesis using radiocarbon dates and projectile point assemblages (e.g., Koerper and Drover 1983; Mason and Peterson 1994; Koerper et al. 2002). The summary of prehistoric chronological sequences for southern California coastal and near-coastal areas presented below is a composite of information in Wallace (1955) and Warren (1968) as well as more recent studies, including Koerper and Drover (1983).

HORIZON I – EARLY MAN (CA. 10,000–6,000 B.C.)

The earliest accepted dates for archaeological sites on the southern California coast are from two of the northern Channel Islands, located off the coast of Santa Barbara. On San Miguel Island, Daisy Cave clearly establishes the presence of people in this area about 10,000 years ago (Erlandson 1991:105). On Santa Rosa Island, human remains have been dated from the Arlington Springs site to approximately 13,000 years ago (Johnson et al. 2002). Present-day Orange and San Diego Counties contain several sites dating to 9,000 to 10,000 years ago (Byrd and Raab 2007:219; Macko 1998a:41; Mason and Peterson 1994:55–57; Sawyer and Koerper 2006). Although the dating of these finds remains controversial, several sets of human remains from the Los Angeles Basin (e.g., “Los Angeles Man,” “La Brea Woman,” and the Haverly skeletons) apparently date to the middle Holocene, if not earlier (Brooks et al. 1990; Erlandson et al. 2007:54).

Recent data from Horizon I sites indicate that the economy was a diverse mixture of hunting and gathering, with a major emphasis on aquatic resources in many coastal areas (e.g., Jones et al. 2002), and a greater emphasis on large-game hunting inland.

HORIZON II – MILLING STONE (6000–3000 B.C.)

Set during a drier climatic regime than the previous horizon, the Milling Stone Horizon is characterized by subsistence strategies centered on collecting plant foods and small animals. The importance of the seed processing is apparent in the dominance of stone grinding implements in contemporary archaeological assemblages; namely, milling stones (metates) and handstones (manos). Recent research indicates that Milling Stone Horizon food procurement strategies varied in both time and space, reflecting divergent responses to variable coastal and inland environmental conditions (Byrd and Raab 2007:220).

HORIZON III – INTERMEDIATE (3000 B.C.–A.D. 500)

The Intermediate Horizon is characterized by a shift toward a hunting and maritime subsistence strategy, along with a wider use of plant foods. An increasing variety and abundance of fish, land mammal, and sea mammal remains are found in sites from this period along the California coast. Related chipped stone tools suitable for hunting are more abundant and diversified, and shell fishhooks became part of the toolkit during this period. Mortars and pestles became more common during this period, gradually

replacing manos and metates as the dominant milling equipment, signaling a shift away from the processing and consuming of hard seed resources to the increasing importance of the acorn (e.g., Glassow et al. 1988; True 1993).

HORIZON IV – LATE PREHISTORIC (A.D. 500–HISTORIC CONTACT)

In the Late Prehistoric Horizon, there was an increase in the use of plant food resources in addition to an increase in land and sea mammal hunting. There was a concomitant increase in the diversity and complexity of material culture during the Late Prehistoric, demonstrated by more classes of artifacts. The recovery of a greater number of small, finely chipped projectile points suggests increased use of the bow and arrow rather than the atlatl (spear thrower) and dart for hunting. Steatite cooking vessels and containers are also present in sites from this time, and there is an increased presence of smaller bone and shell circular fishhooks; perforated stones; arrow shaft straighteners made of steatite; a variety of bone tools; and personal ornaments such as beads made from shell, bone, and stone. There was also an increased use of asphalt for waterproofing and as an adhesive. Late Prehistoric burial practices are discussed in the Ethnographic Overview section below.

By A.D. 1000, fired clay smoking pipes and ceramic vessels were being used at some sites (Drover 1971, 1975; Meighan 1954; Warren and True 1961). The scarcity of pottery in coastal and near-coastal sites implies that ceramic technology was not well developed in that area, or that ceramics were obtained by trade with neighboring groups to the south and east. The lack of widespread pottery manufacture is usually attributed to the high quality of tightly woven and watertight basketry that functioned in the same capacity as ceramic vessels.

During this period, there was an increase in population size accompanied by the advent of larger, more permanent villages (Wallace 1955:223). Large populations and, in places, high population densities are characteristic, with some coastal and near-coastal settlements containing as many as 1,500 people. Many of the larger settlements were permanent villages in which people resided year-round. The populations of these villages may have also increased seasonally.

In Warren's (1968) cultural ecological scheme, the period between A.D. 500 and European contact is divided into three regional patterns: Chumash (Santa Barbara and Ventura counties), Takic/Numic (Los Angeles, Orange, and western Riverside counties), and Yuman (San Diego County). The seemingly abrupt introduction of cremation, pottery, and small triangular arrow points in parts of modern-day Los Angeles, Orange, and western Riverside Counties at the beginning of the Late Prehistoric period is thought to be the result of a Takic migration to the coast from inland desert regions. Modern Gabrielino/Tongva, Juaneño, and Luiseño people in this region are considered to be the descendants of the Uto-Aztecan, Takic-speaking populations that settled along the California coast during this period.

Ethnographic Overview

The project area is located in the heart of Gabrielino/Tongva territory (Bean and Smith 1978:538; Kroeber 1925:Plate 57). Surrounding native groups included the Chumash and Tataviam/Alliklik to the north, the Serrano to the East, and the Luiseño/Juaneño to the south. There is well-documented interaction between the Gabrielino and many of their neighbors in the form of intermarriage and trade.

The name Gabrielino (sometimes spelled Gabrieleno or Gabrieleño) denotes those people who were administered by the Spanish from Mission San Gabriel. By the same token, Native Americans in the sphere of influence of Mission San Fernando were historically referred to as Fernandeño (Kroeber 1925:Plate 57). This group is now considered to be a regional dialect of the Gabrielino language, along with the Santa Catalina Island and San Nicolas Island dialects (Bean and Smith 1978:538). In the post-

Contact period, Mission San Gabriel included natives of the greater Los Angeles area, as well as members of surrounding groups such as Kitanemuk, Serrano, and Cahuilla. There is little evidence that the people we call Gabrielino had a broad term for their group (Dakin 1978:222); rather, they identified themselves as an inhabitant of a specific community through the use of locational suffixes (e.g., a resident of Yaanga was called a Yabit, much the same way that a resident of New York is called a New Yorker; Johnston 1962:10).

Native words that have been suggested as labels for the broader group of Native Americans in the Los Angeles region include *Tongva* (or *Tong-v*; Merriam 1955:7–86) and *Kizh* (*Kij* or *Kichereno*; Heizer 1968:105), although there is evidence that these terms originally referred to local places or smaller groups of people within the larger group that we now call Gabrielino. Nevertheless, many present-day descendants of these people have taken on *Tongva* as a preferred group name because it has a native rather than Spanish origin (King 1994:12). Consequently, the term Gabrielino/*Tongva* is used in the remainder of this study to designate native people of the Los Angeles Basin and their descendants.

Gabrielino/*Tongva* lands encompassed the greater Los Angeles Basin and three Channel Islands: San Clemente, San Nicolas, and Santa Catalina. Their mainland territory was bounded on the north by the Chumash at Topanga Creek, the Serrano at the San Gabriel Mountains in the east, and the Juaneño on the south at Aliso Creek (Bean and Smith 1978:538; Kroeber 1925:636).

The Gabrielino/*Tongva* language, as well as that of the neighboring Juaneño/Luiseño, Tataviam/Alliklik, and Serrano, belongs to Takic branch of the Uto-Aztecan language family, which can be traced to the Great Basin area (Mithun 2004:539, 543–544). This language family's origin differs substantially from that of the Chumash to the north and the Ipai, Tipai, and Kumeyaay farther south. The language of the Ipai, Tipai, and Kumeyaay is derived from the California-Delta branch of the Yuman-Cochimi language family, which originated in the American Southwest (Mithun 2004:577). The Chumash language is unlike both the Yuman-Cochimi and Uto-Aztecan families, and may represent a separate lineage (Mithun 2004:390). Linguistic analysis suggests that Takic-speaking immigrants from the Great Basin area began moving into southern California around 500 B.C. (Kroeber 1925:579). This migration may have displaced both Chumashan- and Yuman-speaking peoples, but the timing and extent of the migrations and their impact on indigenous peoples is not well understood. The Gabrielino/*Tongva* language consisted of two main dialects, Eastern and Western; the Western included much of the coast and the Channel Island population (King 2004). Lands of the Western group encompassed much of the western Los Angeles Basin and San Fernando Valley, northward along the coast to the Palos Verdes Peninsula (McCawley 1996:47).

Gabrielino/*Tongva* society was organized along patrilineal non-localized clans, a characteristic Takic pattern. Clans consisted of several lineages, each with their own ceremonial leader. The chief, or *tómyaar*, always came from the primary lineage of the clan/village. One or two clans generally made up the population of a village. Even though the Gabrielino/*Tongva* did not have a distinctly stratified society, there were two general classes of individuals: elites and commoners. The elites consisted of primary lineage members, other lineage leaders (who maintained a separate ceremonial language), the wealthy, and the elite families of the various villages who commonly married among themselves. The commoner class contained those from “fairly well-to-do and long-established lineages” (Bean and Smith 1978:543). A third, lower class consisted of slaves taken in war and individuals, unrelated to the inhabitants, who drifted into the village.

The Gabrielino/*Tongva* established large, permanent villages in the fertile lowlands along rivers and streams, and in sheltered areas along the coast, stretching from the foothills of the San Gabriel Mountains to the Pacific Ocean. A total tribal population has been estimated of at least 5,000 (Bean and Smith 1978:540), but recent ethnohistoric work suggests that a number approaching 10,000 seems more likely

(O'Neil 2002). Several Gabrielino/Tongva villages appear to have served as trade centers, due in large part to their centralized geographic position in relation to the southern Channel Islands and to other tribes. These villages maintained particularly large populations and hosted annual trade fairs that would bring their population to 1,000 or more for the duration of the event (McCawley 1996:113–114).

Houses constructed by the Gabrielino/Tongva were large, circular, domed structures made of willow poles thatched with tule that could hold up to 50 people (Bean and Smith 1978). Other structures served as sweathouses, menstrual huts, ceremonial enclosures, and probably communal granaries. Cleared fields for races and games such as lacrosse and pole throwing were created adjacent to Gabrielino/Tongva villages (McCawley 1996:27).

The Gabrielino/Tongva subsistence economy was centered on gathering and hunting. The surrounding environment was rich and varied, and the tribe exploited mountains, foothills, valleys, and deserts as well as riparian, estuarine, and open and rocky coastal eco-niches. As with most native Californians, acorns were the staple food (an established industry by the time of the early Intermediate period). Acorns were supplemented by the roots, leaves, seeds, and fruits of a wide variety of flora (e.g., islay, cactus, yucca, sages, and agave). Fresh- and saltwater fish, shellfish, birds, reptiles, and insects as well as large and small mammals were also consumed (Bean and Smith 1978:546; Kroeber 1925:631–632; McCawley 1996:119–123, 128–131).

A wide variety of tools and implements was employed by the Gabrielino/Tongva to gather and collect food resources. These included the bow and arrow, traps, nets, blinds, throwing sticks and slings, spears, harpoons, and hooks. Many plant foods were collected with woven seed beaters, several forms of burden baskets, carrying nets, and sharpened digging sticks, sometimes with stone weights fitted onto them. Groups residing near the ocean used ocean-going plank canoes (known as a *ti'at*) and tule balsa canoes for fishing, travel, and trade between the mainland and the Channel Islands. The ocean-going canoes were capable of holding six to 14 people and were also used for travel and trade between the mainland and the Channel Islands. The tule balsa canoes were used for near-shore fishing (Blackburn 1963; McCawley 1996:117–127).

Gabrielino/Tongva people processed food with a variety of tools, including portable and bedrock mortars, pestles, basket hopper mortars, manos and metates, hammerstones and anvils, woven strainers and winnowers, leaching baskets and bowls, woven parching trays, knives, bone saws, and wooden drying racks. Food was consumed from a number of woven and carved wood vessels. The ground meal and unprocessed hard seeds were stored in large, finely woven baskets, and the unprocessed acorns were stored in large granaries woven of willow branches and raised off the ground on platforms. Santa Catalina Island steatite was used to make comals, ollas, and cooking vessels that would not crack after repeated firings. In addition to cooking vessels, steatite was used to make effigies, ornaments, and arrow straighteners (Blackburn 1963; Kroeber 1925:629; McCawley 1996:129–138).

The Gabrielino/Tongva participated in an extensive exchange network, trading coastal goods for inland resources. They exported Santa Catalina Island steatite products, roots, seal and otter skins, fish and shellfish, red ochre, and lead ore to neighboring tribes, as well as people as far away as the Colorado River. In exchange they received ceramic goods, deer skin shirts, obsidian, acorns, and other items. This burgeoning trade was facilitated by the use of craft specialists, a standard medium of exchange (Olivella bead currency), and the regular destruction of valuables in ceremonies that maintained a high demand for these goods (McCawley 1996:112–115).

At the time of Spanish contact, the basis of Gabrielino/Tongva religious life was the Chinigchinich cult, which centered on the last of a series of heroic mythological figures. Chinigchinich gave instruction on laws and institutions, and also taught the people how to dance, the primary religious act for this society. He later withdrew into heaven, where he rewarded the faithful and punished those who disobeyed his

laws (Kroeber 1925:637–638). The Chinigchinich religion seems to have been relatively new when the Spanish arrived. It was spreading south into the Southern Takic groups even as Christian missions were being built, and may represent a mixture of native and Christian belief and practices (McCawley 1996:143–144).

Deceased Gabrielino/Tongva were either buried or cremated, with inhumation reportedly being more common on the Channel Islands and the neighboring mainland coast, and cremation predominating on the remainder of the coast and in the interior (Harrington 1942; McCawley 1996:157). Remains were buried in distinct burial areas, either associated with villages (e.g., Altschul et al. 2007) or without apparent village association (e.g., Applied Earthworks 1999; Frazier 2000). Cremation ashes have been found in archaeological contexts buried within stone bowls and in shell dishes (Ashby and Winterbourne 1966:27), as well as scattered among broken ground stone implements (Altschul et al. 2007; Cleland et al. 2007). Archaeological data such as these correspond with ethnographic descriptions (e.g., Boscana 1846:314) of an elaborate mourning ceremony that included a wide variety of offerings, including seeds, stone grinding tools, otter skins, baskets, wood tools, shell beads, bone and shell ornaments, and projectile points and knives. Offerings varied with the sex and status of the deceased (Dakin 1978:234–235; Johnston 1962:52–54; McCawley 1996:155–165). At the behest of the Spanish missionaries, cremation essentially ceased during the post-Contact period (McCawley 1996:157). For inhumations, the deceased was wrapped in a covering, bound head to foot, with hands crooked upon their breast (Dakin 1978:234). Archaeological examples of human remains in the Gabrielino/Tongva region dating to the Late Prehistoric and protohistoric periods are dominated by flexed or extended inhumations, with a smaller number of cremations. Grave goods associated with burials/cremations varied in quantity and content and included projectile points, beads, steatite objects, and asphaltum (Frazier 2000:175). Well-preserved burial features have evidence of wrappings of net, hide blanket or cape, or a mat of tule reeds or sea grass (McCawley 1996:157). At least one formal grave marker, an elaborately etched sandstone slab, was reported at a site between Los Angeles and the coast, near San Pedro, in 1885 (Blackburn 1963:35).

YAANGA AND OTHER NATIVE AMERICAN COMMUNITIES IN LOS ANGELES

Ethnohistoric data indicate that the Gabrielino ethnographic village of *Yaanga* (also spelled *Yang-na*) was originally located in or near the Pueblo of Los Angeles, on the west bank of the Los Angeles River. In 1852, Hugo Reid indicated that Yang-na and Los Angeles were one and the same (Dakin 1978:220). Gabrielino informant José Zalvidea told ethnographer J. P. Harrington that Yaanga “is the old name of the site of the Los Angeles plaza” and the name means “it is alkali, like the earth is salty” (McCawley 1996:57). Alternate names associated with the community include *Iyakha* (meaning “poison oak” in Luiseño) and *Wenot* (meaning “river” in Gabrielino) (Johnston 1962:122; McCawley 1996:57).

The village and its inhabitants were described as follows by Juan Crespi, a member of the 1769 Portolá expedition (Bolton 1927:147):

This plain where the [Los Angeles] river runs is very extensive. It has good land for planting all kinds of grain and seeds, and is the most suitable site of all that we have seen for a mission, for it has all the requisites for a large settlement. As soon as we arrived about eight heathen from a good village came to visit us; they live in this delightful place among the trees on the river. They presented us with some baskets of pinole made from seeds of sage and other grasses. Their chief brought some strings of beads made of shells, and they threw us three handfuls of them. Some of the old men were smoking pipes well made of baked clay and they puffed at us three mouthfuls of smoke. We gave them a little tobacco and glass beads, and they went away well pleased.

This initial mutual good will disappeared with the founding of the Pueblo of Los Angeles on the site, and the community of Yaanga was forcibly relocated at least twice during the early historic period, occupying several locations on the edge of town during the early 1800s. It was reportedly moved to the corner of Commercial and Alameda Streets in 1836 and given the name *Rancheria de los Poblanos*, accepting ex-neophytes from recently shuttered missions. The village was moved a second time in 1845 to the east side of the river, taking the name *Pueblito*, and it was finally razed in 1847 (McCawley 1996:202; Singer et al. 1981:8–9). The community of *Geveronga*, which contributed 31 neophytes to the San Gabriel Mission between 1788 and 1809, may have been located nearby (McCawley 1996:57).

The precise location of Contact era (late seventeenth century) Native American communities within downtown Los Angeles, including Yaanga, Geveronga, and related settlements, is unclear. Historical records place Yaanga in the vicinity of the pueblo plaza, although historians and archaeologists have presented multiple possible village locations in this general area. Like the plaza itself, it is likely that the village was relocated from time to time due to major shifts of the Los Angeles River during wet years. Dillon (1994) presented an exhaustive review of the potential locations, most within several blocks of the current plaza. Johnston (1962:122) concluded that “in all probability *Yangna* lay scattered in a fairly wide zone along the whole arc [from the base of Fort Moore Hill to Union Station], and its bailiwick included as well seed-gathering grounds and oak groves where seasonal camps were set up.” This arc includes all of the current plaza area.

Little direct, indisputable archaeological evidence for this village has been produced to date. Archaeological materials reportedly were unearthed during the construction of Union Station in 1939 and “considerably more” during the rebuilding of the Bella Union Hotel in 1970 (on the 300 block of N. Main Street, two blocks of the project property) (Johnston 1962:121; Robinson 1959:12). Contact period Native American burials identified immediately south of Union Station are contemporary with Yaanga, but excavation of these did not reveal archaeological deposits that were indicative of a village, and it is unclear whether this cemetery was adjacent to or affiliated with Yaanga (Applied Earthworks 1999:154–159). The preponderance of the available evidence indicates that one or more early historic Native American communities were situated west of the Los Angeles River in the vicinity of the current plaza site; the precise location of these communities remains unknown, however, and it is likely that at least some of the archaeological deposits associated with these communities have been removed by floods and construction activities in the years since their occupation.

Historic Overview

The post-Contact history of California is divided into three periods that are defined by the ruling national government: the Spanish period (1769–1822), the Mexican period (1822–1848), and the American period (1848–present). Each period is briefly described below. Some chronologies include the Mission period (1769–1834), defined by the active span of those Spanish, and later Mexican, Catholic institutions. The Protohistoric or Contact period are alternate names for the era of initial interaction between Native Americans and European explorers and settlers, ranging from 1542 through the early 1800s in outlying areas, where a mixture of native and nonnative cultural traits can be observed archaeologically.

SPANISH PERIOD (1769–1822)

The first Europeans to observe what became southern California were members of the 1542–1543 expedition of Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo. When sailing past Santa Monica Bay, Cabrillo noted the numerous campfires of the Gabrielino/Tongva and thus named the area the Bay of Smokes. Cabrillo and other early explorers sailed along the coast and made limited expeditions into Alta (upper) California between 1529 and 1769. Although Spanish, Russian, and British explorers briefly visited Alta California during this nearly 250-year span, they did not establish permanent settlements (Starr 2007).

Gaspar de Portolá and Franciscan Father Junipero Serra established the first Spanish settlement in Alta California at San Diego in 1769. Mission San Diego de Alcalá was the first of 21 missions built by the Spanish between 1769 and 1823. Portolá continued north, passing through the project area on August 2, 1769, and reaching San Francisco Bay on October 31. The process of converting the local Native American population to Christianity through baptism and relocation to mission grounds was begun in this region by the Franciscan padres at the San Gabriel Mission, which was established in 1771 (Engelhardt 1927a). The San Fernando Mission was founded 26 years later, its location chosen as a stopping point between the San Gabriel and San Buenaventura missions (Engelhardt 1927b). Most Native Americans from the Los Angeles Basin were persuaded to settle in the vicinity of the two missions. These included the Eastern Gabrielino of the plains as far south as the Santa Ana River and west to the Los Angeles River. The padres also proselytized the Serrano of the San Gabriel and San Bernardino Mountains, as well as the Vanyume Serrano of the Mojave Desert; many of the western Cahuilla in the Coachella and San Jacinto Valley; some Luiseño of the San Jacinto Valley; and Western Gabrielino of the plains west of the Los Angeles River, San Fernando Valley, and the southern Channel Islands. The missions were charged with administering to the Native Americans within their areas. Although mission life gave the Native Americans the skills needed to survive in their rapidly changing world, the close quarters and regular contact with Europeans transmitted diseases for which they had no immunity, decimating their populations (McCawley 1996).

MEXICAN PERIOD (1822–1848)

After the end of the Mexican Revolution against the Spanish crown (1810–1821), all Spanish holdings in North America (including both Alta and Baja California) became part of the newly formed Mexican Empire, and shortly thereafter, a constitutionally based United Mexican States. Under Mexican rule, the authority of the California missions gradually declined, culminating with their secularization. Events leading up to the secularization of the California missions spanned many years and much political upheaval, after which the Mexican Congress passed the Secularization Act in August 1833. Not only did the action divest the Franciscans of property, it also opened both of the Californias to colonization. The first 10 of the missions were secularized in 1834, San Gabriel among them.

Historic documents suggest that what followed was a period of intrigue, revolution, and lawlessness. With a disruption in trade came an increase in the number of American interlopers. Political resistance erupted on every front as Mexican citizens in California (*Californios*) vied for control of their ranchos against American intruders and Mexican authority. Although the Mexican government directed that each mission's lands, livestock, and equipment be divided among its neophytes, the majority of these holdings quickly fell into non-Indian hands. As mission landholdings passed into private hands, neophyte workers, who had become dependent on the missions, were left to fend for themselves.

If mission life was difficult for Native Americans, secularization was worse. After two generations of dependence upon the missions, they were suddenly disenfranchised. After secularization, “nearly all of the Gabrielinos went north while those of San Diego, San Luis and San Juan overran this county, filling the Angeles and surrounding ranchos with more servants than were required” (Dakin 1978:282).

Former mission lands were quickly divided and granted to private citizens for use as agricultural and pastoral land. Most of the land grants to Californios were located inland, a policy intended to increase the population away from the coastal areas where the Spanish settlements were concentrated (Dakin 1978).

John Russell Bartlett, visiting Los Angeles in 1852, reported the following (Sugranes 1909:76):

I saw more Indians about this place (Los Angeles) than in any part of California I had yet visited. They were chiefly mission Indians, i.e., those who had been connected with the mission and had derived their support from them until the suppression of those establishments. They are a miserable, squalid-looking set, squatting or lying about the corners of the streets, with no occupation.

With no work at the mission, there was a far greater labor force in the region than could be employed.

After years of surreptitious commerce, the first party of American immigrants arrived in Los Angeles in 1841, including William Workman and John Rowland, who soon became influential landowners. As the possibility of a takeover of California by the United States loomed large in the 1840s, the Mexican government increased the number of land grants in an effort to keep the land in Mexican hands (Wilkman and Wilkman 2006). Governor Pío Pico and his predecessors made more than 600 rancho grants between 1833 and 1846, putting most of the state's lands into private ownership for the first time (Gumprecht 1999). Trade in the region changed as well. British and American trade displaced supply ships from Mexico and, in 1841, the first party of American immigrants arrived at the Pueblo de Los Angeles.

AMERICAN PERIOD (1848–PRESENT)

The United States took control of California in 1846, seizing Monterey, San Francisco, San Diego, and Los Angeles with little resistance. Los Angeles soon slipped from American control, however, and needed to be retaken in 1847. Approximately 600 U.S. sailors, marines, Army dragoons, and mountain men converged under the leadership of Colonel Stephen W. Kearney and Commodore Robert F. Stockton in early January of that year to challenge the California resistance, which was led by General Jose Maria Flores. The American party scored a decisive victory over the Californios in the Battle of the Rio San Gabriel and at the Battle of La Mesa the following day, effectively ending the war and opening the door for increased American immigration (Harlow 1992).

Hostilities officially ended with the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848, in which the United States agreed to pay Mexico \$15 million for the conquered territory, including California, Nevada, Utah, parts of Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico, and Wyoming. This represented nearly half of Mexico's pre-1846 holdings. California joined the Union in 1850 as the thirty-first state (Wilkman and Wilkman 2006).

LOS ANGELES: FROM PUEBLO TO CITY

The Spanish Governor of California, Felipe de Neve, recognized the need to establish a pueblo north of the Mission San Gabriel to help supply Spain's military forts (presidios) in California and to help maintain Spain's control over the region. On September 4, 1781, twelve years after the Portolá's initial visit, 44 settlers from Sonora, Mexico, accompanied by the governor, soldiers, mission priests, and several Native Americans arrived at the site alongside the *Rio de Porciúncula* (later renamed the Los Angeles River), which was officially declared El Pueblo de Nuestra Señora de los Angeles de Porciúncula, or the Town of the Our Lady of the Angels of Porciúncula (Robinson 1979:238; Ríos-Bustamante 1992; Weber 1980a). The site chosen for the new pueblo was elevated on a broad terrace 0.8 km (0.5 mile) west of the river (Gumprecht 1999). As a planned pueblo (one of only three in California), 4 square leagues (about 75 square km, 28 square miles) of land were set aside for the settlement, and included 12 house lots surrounding a common square, or plaza, and 36 fields laid out south of the plaza (Figure 4; Gumprecht 1999; Robinson 1979). The area's rich, well-watered soils created an ideal locale for a town meant to supply livestock and feed to the presidios of San Diego and Santa Barbara, and to

serve as a home for retired Spanish soldiers. The soldiers were given vast tracts of land to start farms and ranches. To expand their herds of cattle, colonists enlisted the labor of the surrounding Native American population (Engelhardt 1927b). By 1786, the flourishing pueblo attained self-sufficiency, and funding by the Spanish government ceased. Fed by a steady supply of water and an expanding irrigation system, agriculture and ranching grew, and by the early 1800s the pueblo produced 47 different agricultural products (Gumprecht 1999).

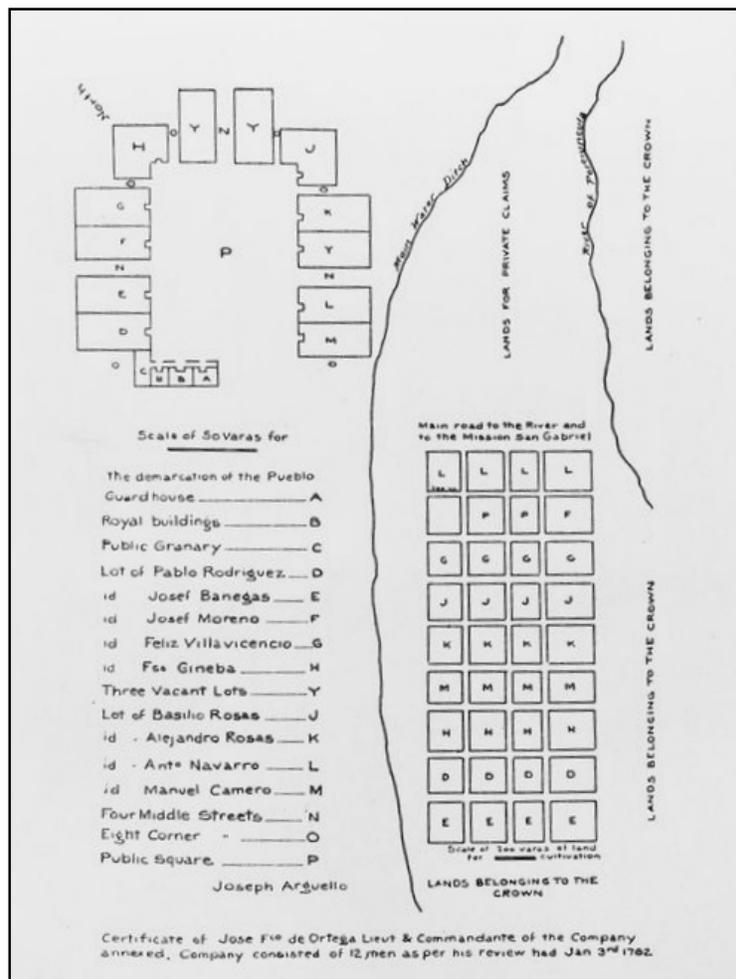


Figure 4. Plan of El Pueblo (USC Digital Library: California Historical Society Collection, 1860–1960).

Efforts to develop ecclesiastical property in the pueblo began as early as 1784 with the construction of a small chapel northwest of the plaza. While little is known about this building, it was served by a priest from the San Gabriel Mission and was located near the corner Buena Vista Street and Bellevue Avenue, or present-day West Cesar Chavez Avenue and North Broadway (Newcomb 1980:67–68; Owen 1960:7). It was developed as an *asistencia*, or assistant mission; one of five such institutions along El Camino Real built between 1784 and 1818, and the only one to eventually achieve autonomy (Weber 1980b). However, as the population of the pueblo grew in the early nineteenth century, so did its religious needs, and permission for the erection of a new church was soon granted. Although varying reports place the start of construction between 1814 and 1815, the new church was never completed due to a flood of the *Rio de Porciúncula* in 1815, which washed away any progress that had been made in addition to much of the existing pueblo (Newcomb 1980:68; Owen 1960:8–9).

With the relocation of the pueblo to its current location on higher ground, a new church site was also chosen adjacent the newly developed plaza. Citizens donated cattle in support of construction costs; however, this was appropriated by Governor Pablo Vicente de Solá with the assurance that the costs would be included in the following year's territorial budget (Newcomb 1980:68; Owen 1960:9). Promises left unfulfilled, padres from the surrounding missions donated brandy and wine in 1819, and again in 1821, to help fund the project. Development of the church was further helped by Joseph Chapman, an American who had been arrested near Santa Barbara in 1818. Chapman quickly proved his usefulness with the construction of a grist mill at the Mission Santa Inés, and by 1822 was in the pueblo of Los Angeles directing Native American laborers in the erection of the roof of the nearly completed church (Owen 1960:15). Following this final phase, the new Plaza Church was dedicated on December 8, 1822.

Alta California became a state in 1821, and Los Angeles selected its first town council (*Ayuntamiento*) the following year. Independence and the removal of economic restrictions attracted settlers to Los Angeles, and the town slowly grew in size, expanding to the south and west. The population nearly doubled during this period, rising from 650 to 1,250 between 1822 and 1845 (Weber 1992). Until 1832, Los Angeles was essentially a military post, with all able-bodied males listed on the muster rolls and required to perform guard duty and field duty whenever circumstances required (Los Angeles County 1963). The Mexican Congress elevated Los Angeles from pueblo to city status in 1835, declaring it the new state capital (Bancroft 1886; Robinson 1979).

Surrounded by miles of ranchos, Los Angeles was the center of a vibrant cattle industry throughout the nineteenth century. The city served as a trading hub for southern California's "cow counties," and at mid-century the plaza was lined with the shops and town homes of ranch owners (Robinson 1979). In 1835, Los Angeles County had approximately 75,000 to 100,000 cattle, 1,700 horses, and 13,000 sheep, and produced about 4,000 bushels of cereal and legumes each year (Los Angeles County 1963). Agricultural interests were gradually supplanted by more urban industries, with about a third of Los Angeles residents supporting themselves with non-agricultural pursuits by 1836 (Weber 1992).

On April 4, 1850, only two years after the Mexican American War and five months prior to California earning statehood, the City of Los Angeles was formally incorporated. Los Angeles maintained its role as a regional business center in the early American period and the transition of many former rancho lands to agriculture, as well as the development of citriculture in the late 1800s, further strengthened this status (Caughy and Caughy 1977). These factors, combined with the expansion of port facilities and railroads throughout the region, contributed to the real estate boom of the 1880s in Los Angeles (Caughy and Caughy 1977; Dumke 1944). When the Southern Pacific Railroad extended its line from San Francisco to Los Angeles in 1876, it signaled the beginning of Los Angeles' first major growth spurt. Newcomers poured into the city, nearly doubling the population between 1870 and 1880. The completion of the second transcontinental line, the Santa Fe, took place in 1886, causing a price war that drove fares to an unprecedented low, including a promotional one-way ticket from Kansas City that sold for one dollar. More settlers continued to head west and the demand for real estate skyrocketed. As real estate prices soared, land that had been farmed for decades outlived its agricultural value and was sold to become residential communities. The large ranchos that surrounded the city were each annexed, subdivided, and developed in turn. Los Angeles' population more than quadrupled in a decade, from 11,183 in 1880 to 50,395 by 1890 (Meyer 1981; Robinson 1979; Wilkman and Wilkman 2006). During the first three decades of the twentieth century, more than two million people moved to Los Angeles County, transforming it from a largely agricultural region into a major metropolitan area (Gumprecht 1999).

Successive waves of immigration from the east, as well as overseas, transformed Los Angeles' demographic from predominantly Californio and Native American prior to the American takeover in 1848 to predominantly Anglo-American thereafter. Census data, which lump Californios and Anglo-Americans into the category "white," show a steady decline in the "Indian" population from 1860 to 1880, despite a

dramatic increase in total population. The population of “Colored” people increased slowly during this period, while that of Asians (primarily Chinese and Japanese) exploded, particularly in the 1860s and 1870s. Virtually no Asians resided in Los Angeles prior to 1848, and by 1850, only two Chinese men were listed in the census data. Intolerance and bigotry abounded during the late nineteenth century, both officially and unofficially. California passed laws targeting fugitive slaves (in 1852) and Chinese immigrants (1882), and Los Angeles experienced its first race riot with the massacre of more than 20 Chinese men and boys in 1871. Chinatown, a crowded and dangerous ghetto located just off the plaza, was burned twice—in 1871 and again in 1887 (Gibson and Dietler 2012:21–22; Greenwood 1996:9–12).

Los Angeles continued to grow in the twentieth century in part due to the discovery of oil in the area and its strategic location as a wartime port. The military presence led to the aviation and eventually aerospace industries having a large presence in the city and region. Mines Field, which would become Los Angeles International Airport (LAX), was established in 1928. The complexion of this multicultural city continued to change; however, the process was frequently painful for new and often unwelcome ethnic groups (Garcia et al. 2004). Hollywood became the entertainment capital of the world through the presence of the film and television industries, and continues to tenuously maintain that position. With nearly four million residents, Los Angeles is the second largest city in the United States (by population), and it remains a city with worldwide influence, while continuing to struggle with its population’s growth and needs.

LOS ANGELES PLAZA CHURCH CEMETERY

Active Years (1822–1844)

Prior to completion of the Plaza Church, the pueblo’s residents were forced to transport their deceased 9 miles to Mission San Gabriel to receive a Catholic burial. Although a cemetery at the Plaza Church would not be consecrated until 1822, a small number of interments may have been placed on the church property before this date. According to some historians, at least three burials were undertaken in the “cemetery of the pueblo church” as early as January 31, 1820 (Carpenter 1973:12, citing a typescript by Thomas Workman Temple). The data behind this assertion were not located during the course of the current study, however.

Novelist Helen Hunt Jackson (1903:169) provides the following description of Los Angelenos’ funerary customs in the 1830s:

Looking forward to death, the greatest anxiety of these simple souls was to provide themselves with a priest’s cast-off robe to be buried in. These were begged or bought as the greatest of treasures; kept in sight, or always at hand, to remind them of approaching death. When their last hour drew near, this robe was flung over their breasts, and they died happy, their stiffening fingers grasping its folds. The dead body was wrapped in it, and laid on the mud floor of the house, a stone being placed under the head to raise it a few inches. Thus the body must lie till the time of the burial. Around it, day and night, squatted, praying and singing, friends who wished not only to show their affection for the deceased, but to win indulgences for themselves; every prayer said thus, by the side of the corpse, having a special and specified value.

A strange demarkation [sic] between the sexes was enforced in these ceremonies. If it were a woman who lay dead, only women might kneel and pray and watch with her body; if a man, the circle of watchers must be exclusively of men.

A rough box, of boards nailed together, was the coffin. The body, rolled in the old robe whose virtues had so comforted its last conscious moments, was carried to the grave on a board, in the centre of a procession of friends changing and singing. Not until the last moment was it laid in the box.

Most of the burials at the Plaza Church cemetery are recorded in the Plaza Church burial journal, while a handful of additional burials are recorded in the burial journals of nearby missions, including San Gabriel. These records have been digitized by the Huntington Library's (2006) Early California Population Project (ECP) Database. The first recorded burial at the Plaza Church's cemetery in the ECP Database took place on January 6, 1823. The decedent was a Native American named Jose Maria, who is recorded as being of "Diegueno" (Kumeyaay) origin (Huntington Library 2006; burial record SG:04645a). Interments at the Plaza Church Cemetery were initially recorded on the burial register of the San Gabriel Mission, and during those early years, the first burials were located directly to the north of the church (de Packman 1944:65). A doorway in the north wall of the church opened out onto the cemetery (Owen 1960:17). Some graves were reportedly situated outside the front (east side) of the church, perhaps those of people who died without absolution (de Packman 1944:65).

However, the primary burial area was located south¹ of the church, which according to de Packman began accepting interments in 1826 with the enclosure of a square by an adobe wall (de Packman 1944:65). Referencing an early image of the Plaza Church and cemetery from 1847, this adobe wall had a curvilinear opening and separated the cemetery from the main plaza (Figure 5). The long flat adobe seen to the south of the cemetery, known as the Baric Adobe, was constructed prior to 1841, and appears to have provided a southern border for the cemetery (Dan Peterson A.I.A. & Assoc., Inc.1985:26).

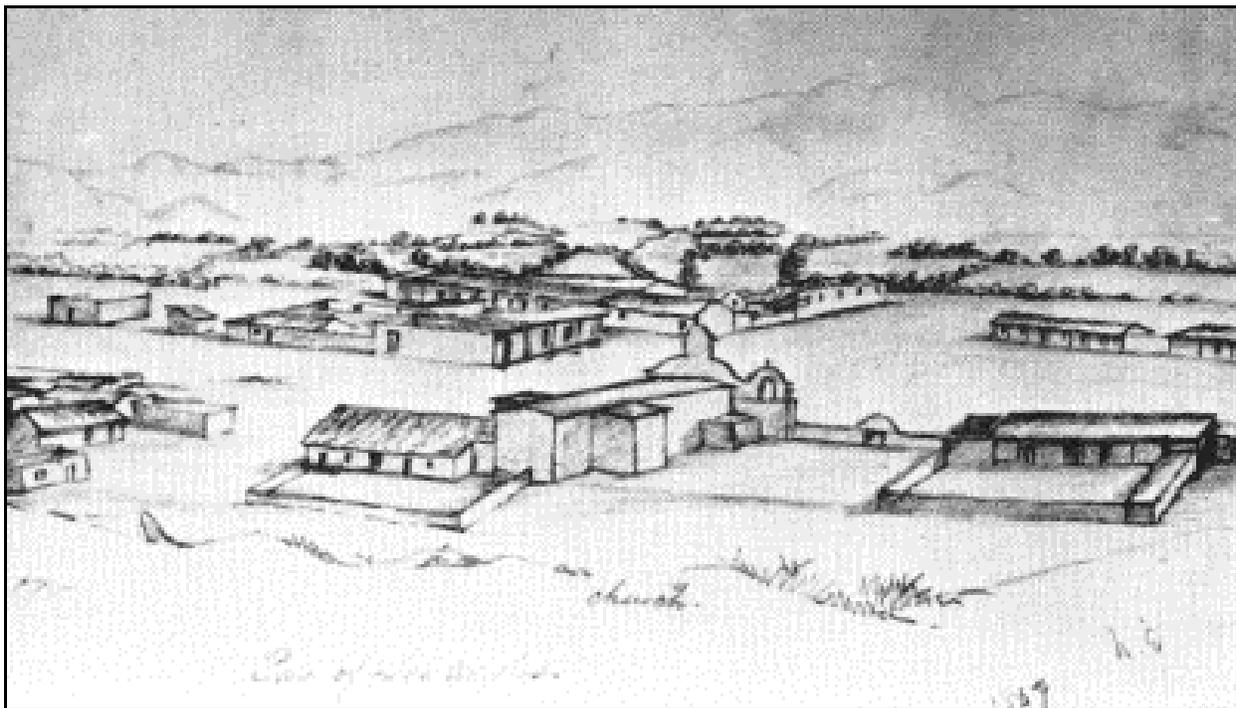


Figure 5. View from Fort Moore Hill by William R. Hutton in 1847 (USC Digital Library: California Historical Society Collection, 1860–1960).

¹ Note that the church is not aligned cardinally; its long axis is closer to southeast /northwest than east/west.

The construction of the wall coincides with the start of the Plaza Church's burial register, the first being that of Angeleno Pedro Garcia on March 3, 1826 (Huntington Library 2006, Los Angeles [LA] Burial Record 00001). The officiant and recorder of Garcia's interment was Father Gerónimo Boscana, a padre from the San Gabriel Mission. Initially, the Plaza Church did not have a resident priest, and fathers from the mission would travel the approximately 9 miles to Los Angeles to perform mass, baptisms, and burials (Owen 1960:21). An examination of baptismal and burial records suggests that Father Boscana primarily filled this role for the residents of the pueblo, overseeing the interment of approximately 156 individuals at the cemetery before his own death in 1831 (Huntington Library 2006).

It would be nearly 10 years after the completion of the Plaza Church before the pueblo of Los Angeles received its first resident minister, Juan Alejo Bachelot, a missionary formerly assigned to the Sandwich Islands (Hawaii). Bachelot's name first appears on the Plaza Church's burial and baptismal records in November 1832, and during the nearly five years he served the pueblo, he witnessed significant demographic and population changes in Los Angeles. A census from 1836 lists the pueblo's population as 2,228, marking roughly a 100-percent increase in a period of only six years (Charles 1938; Register of the City of Los Angeles 1836).

Significant to this rapid population growth is the origin of the pueblo's new residents. Prior to Bachelot's arrival in 1832, the inhabitants of Los Angeles consisted primarily of settlers and soldiers of European origin, in addition to a lesser number of local Gabrielino/Tongva laborers who worked for the *pobladores* (Hackel 2012:16–19). While economic relationships between the settlers and Native Americans were discouraged by the Franciscans at the San Gabriel Mission, the settlers were dependent on the native labor force. For many Gabrielino/Tongva, life at the pueblo was preferable to life at the mission, which often included the renouncement of certain aspects of native life (Hackel 2012:19).

These numbers shifted dramatically as the population of Los Angeles rapidly grew following the secularization of Missions San Gabriel, San Diego, San Juan Capistrano, and San Luis Rey in 1834. Faced with difficult prospects at the missions, many Native Americans – including Gabrielino/Tongva, Luiseño, Juaneño (Acjachemen), and Diegueño (Kumeyaay) people – migrated to Los Angeles in hopes of employment, perhaps to work in the expanding vineyards (Hackel 2012:20). The Native American population of the pueblo increased significantly in a short period, from approximately 200 in 1830, to 553 in 1836 (Hackel 1997; Register of the City of Los Angeles 1836). Further contributing to the population growth of Los Angeles was the steady influx of settlers of European origin, including a growing number from the United States.

With a population that surpassed 2,200 in 1836, concerns began to rise among the residents of Los Angeles regarding certain elements of the pueblo's infrastructure. On February 25, 1837, a member of the *ayuntamiento* (city council) reported to the council on behalf of the Father Bachelot that the small cemetery at the Plaza Church was close to being filled and that it should be enlarged to accommodate the needs of the rapidly growing city (Ayuntamiento Vol. II:281). By that time, the burial records indicate that some 344 burials had occurred at the Plaza Church Cemetery since opening (Huntington Library 2006).

In response to Father Bachelot's concerns, the *ayuntamiento* “decided to invite the public to cooperate in this work as soon as possible, it being a public necessity” (Ayuntamiento Vol. II:281). No action appears to have been taken, however, and following an additional 63 burials, a group of prominent residents once again called attention to the state of the cemetery on August 5, 1838. As evidence of the growing concerns, a petition was read to the council that day “asking that the cemetery be removed from inside the city and establishing same in some distant places, as the place where it is now situated is very injurious to the health” (Ayuntamiento Vol. II:375). The petition was approved the following week by a special committee to which the matter had been referred.

Once again, there appears to have been no response to this petition because the following year a group of 26 citizens addressed the *ayuntamiento* regarding the matter. Similarly, a communication from August 24, 1839, stated that the present cemetery was too small and should be closed “on account of the odor continually emanating from the cadavers for lack of dissection, and which must be previously removed from their *sepulcros* (tombs)” (Ayuntamiento Vol. II:483). The matter was referred to the Police Commission for the preparation of a report; however, this appears to have never been completed.

The reason no action may have been taken despite the repeated concerns regarding the cemetery is the lack of a local self-governmental body in Los Angeles during the early 1840s. No city council was elected between 1841 and 1844, with the primary election of December 1844 canceled “due to a lack of voters” (Rudd 2007:28). Two prefectures were in place in Mexican California during this period, one north from Santa Barbara, and the other south to San Diego. Governmental control on the local level was enforced by constables, who at least in the case of Los Angeles, appear to have been rather ineffective (Rudd 2007). Regardless of the state of Los Angeles’ local government, interments at the Plaza Church cemetery continued.

Closure and Transition to Calvary Cemetery (1844)

The continued use of the cemetery into the early part of the 1840s must have led to less than desirable conditions, and when the city council was re-established in 1844, it was one of the first matters on the agenda. By this time there was no discussion of expanding the Plaza Church Cemetery, but rather of constructing a new one at a site outside the city boundaries. On February 5, 1844, the president of the *ayuntamiento* proposed that the council provide part of the expenses for construction of the new cemetery, and the following week, they decided upon a 100-square-vara (72 square m) portion of land located a short distance to the north of the city (Ayuntamiento Vol. II:552–53). In addition to the obvious need for a new cemetery, part of the reason the council appears to have undertaken this matter was to construct a cemetery that was owned by the city and not the Catholic Church. In a letter addressed to the priest at San Gabriel, the *ayuntamiento* wrote that “the cemetery shall be used by the residents of this city free of any cost or duty, without paying for their burying ground or that used for vaults built within the said cemetery” (Ayuntamiento Vol. II:557).

Construction of the new cemetery began shortly after, but it progressed slowly according to the multiple reports from the *ayuntamiento*. The city council minutes from June 3, 1844, state “the four corners of the same (cemetery) have been raised to a height of seven lines or layers of adobes; that adobes are being made, as they are scarce, laborers also are few” (Ayuntamiento Vol. II:589). Progress moved forward nonetheless, and on November 2, 1844, the new cemetery, which would eventually be named Calvary Cemetery, was blessed by Father Tomas Estenaga from Mission San Gabriel. Within a week, burials appear to have stopped at the Plaza Church Cemetery. The last recorded burial, placed on November 8, 1844, was Juan Bautista, a Native American whose origin was recorded as “Sierra” (Serrano?; burial number LA:00163a). The next (and last) burial listed in the Los Angeles Plaza Church burial register (burial number LA:00164a) was at the new cemetery on November 9 (Huntington Library 2006). While some historians (e.g., Estrada 2008; de Packman 1944) have stated that the Plaza Church cemetery accepted burials as late as 1853, no records were identified to verify these claims. In total, the burial records of the Plaza Church and Mission San Gabriel list 693 interments at the Plaza Church Cemetery, which occurred between 1823 and 1844 (Huntington Library 2006).

According to some reports (e.g., Kealhofer 1991:275; Singer et al. 1981:11), most or all of the bodies of those interred at the Plaza Church Cemetery were exhumed and moved to what would become Calvary Cemetery upon its completion. No records were identified in the course of the current study to confirm this, and nearly all the discussions of exhumation that do exist are vague in their details. Early complaints about the Plaza Church Cemetery suggested that the cemetery be “removed” for the sake of public health.

This same language is again seen upon the completion of the new cemetery in 1844. When addressing the *ayuntamiento* on October 28, 1844, council president Manuel Requena said that it was now possible to “remove the small one (cemetery) from the center of the city,” and he later discussed how the “removal of this deadly poison...was left to your (the *ayuntamiento*’s) philanthropy” (Ayuntamiento Vol. II:637). However, given complaints some months earlier regarding a lack of available labor for construction of the new cemetery, it remains unlikely that many, if any, bodies were exhumed and moved.

Later historians and archaeologists repeated and apparently distorted these ambiguous phrases. Discussing the early petitions for a new cemetery in his widely cited book *History of California*, H. H. Bancroft (1886:632) wrote, “They (citizens) ask that a suitable site for a new burial place be selected, and the *ayuntamiento* and the priest consider the matter of removing all remains from the old campo santo. The *ayuntamiento*... approved its report in October in favor of a new cemetery... but nothing was accomplished for 5 years.” Although this statement does not explicitly say whether exhumations actually took place, its vague wording is open for reinterpretation by later historians. The first to directly discuss the removal of remains was Thomas Owen (1960:23, emphasis added), who wrote, “When the remains *had been removed*, the northern side of the church became a garden, and remained so well into the twentieth century. But the southern plot vacillated between orange trees in the ‘seventies and century plants during the ‘nineties.” Although it is not clear from this statement which remains were removed (those north of the church, or all of them), it is clear that Owen felt that at least some of the burials had been disinterred in the nineteenth century. Subsequent scholars appear to have erroneously interpreted Owen’s statement to indicate that all the remains had been exhumed and reburied at Calvary Cemetery. Again, no primary evidence for such a move was identified during the current study.

Post-cemetery Use of the Property (1844–2010)

Although depictions of the Plaza Church cemetery during its active period have not been identified, the following description of the Mission San Gabriel cemetery in the 1890s gives one a sense of the appearance of a Catholic cemetery in southern California during its declining years.

Rather a desolate little spot is the *campo santo* of San Gabriel; rather desolate, and very dusty. The ramshackle wooden crosses stagger wildly on the shapeless mounds; the dilapidated whitewashed railings, cracked and blistered by the sun, look much as though they might be bleached bones, tossed careless about; and the badly painted, misspelled inscriptions yield up their brief announcements only to a very patient reader (Chase and Saunders 1915:103).

Following the opening of the Calvary Cemetery, an orange grove was planted on the site of the Plaza Church Cemetery, most likely by the church, and it can be seen with mature growth in a photograph from 1869 (Figure 6). Also seen in this photograph is a small wood-frame gable building, and this small fenced in area was used as a corral according to an 1888 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map. The earliest detailed maps of the former cemetery, one delineated by Frank Lecouvreur and surveyed by M. Kelleher and dated March 5, 1872 (Figure 7), and one prepared by surveyor A. G. Ruxton on March 12, 1873 (Figure 8), shows rows of trees on the property, probably corresponding to the orange grove mentioned in contemporary descriptions. The fence seen in the 1869 photograph (Figure 6) that separates the cemetery from the corral appears to define the western boundary of the cemetery, and it corresponds with the boundary outline in the 1873 map (Figure 8). It is noteworthy, however, that these images conflict with the 1872 map (Figure 7), which shows the fence and gate defining the western cemetery boundary as extending south from the western end of the Plaza Church, rather than the small outbuilding to the west. As the 1869 photograph corresponds more closely with the 1873 map, the western boundary depicted on the 1872 map is likely to be erroneous. The two maps have several additional inconsistencies, including the angle and position of the plaza and gas tanks (see below) relative to the church. A photograph from

1876 (Figure 9), after the gas works were built, also shows the tree-filled area extending west of the church. Thus the larger east-west dimension of the 1873 map appears to be accurate, assuming that the area of the orange grove corresponds to that of the former cemetery. By about 1890, the orange grove was no longer present and the wall along Main Street was reconstructed with masonry bricks (Figures 10 and 11); the century plants mentioned by Owen (1960:23) are visible in this image.

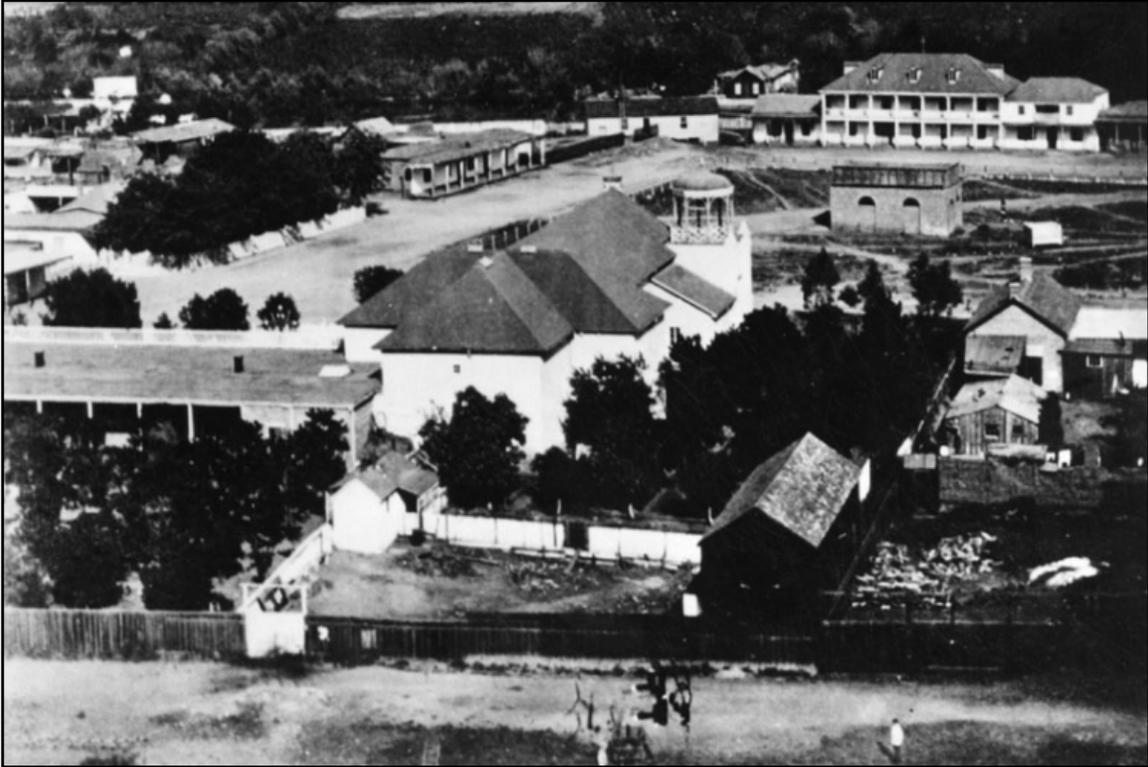


Figure 6. The Plaza Church in 1869, view east (El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historical Monument: El Pueblo Monument Collection).

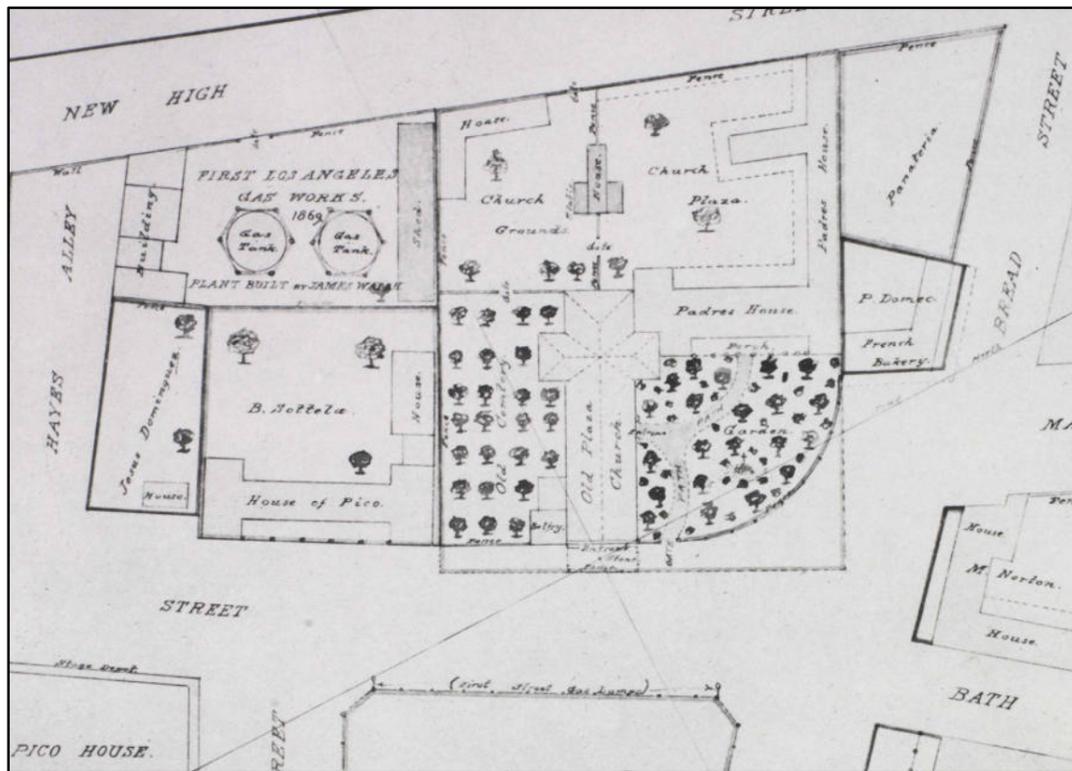


Figure 7. Kelleher and Lecouvreur's 1872 map "Showing the Location of the First Los Angeles Gas Works" (Detail; Huntington Digital Library: Solano-Reeve collection).

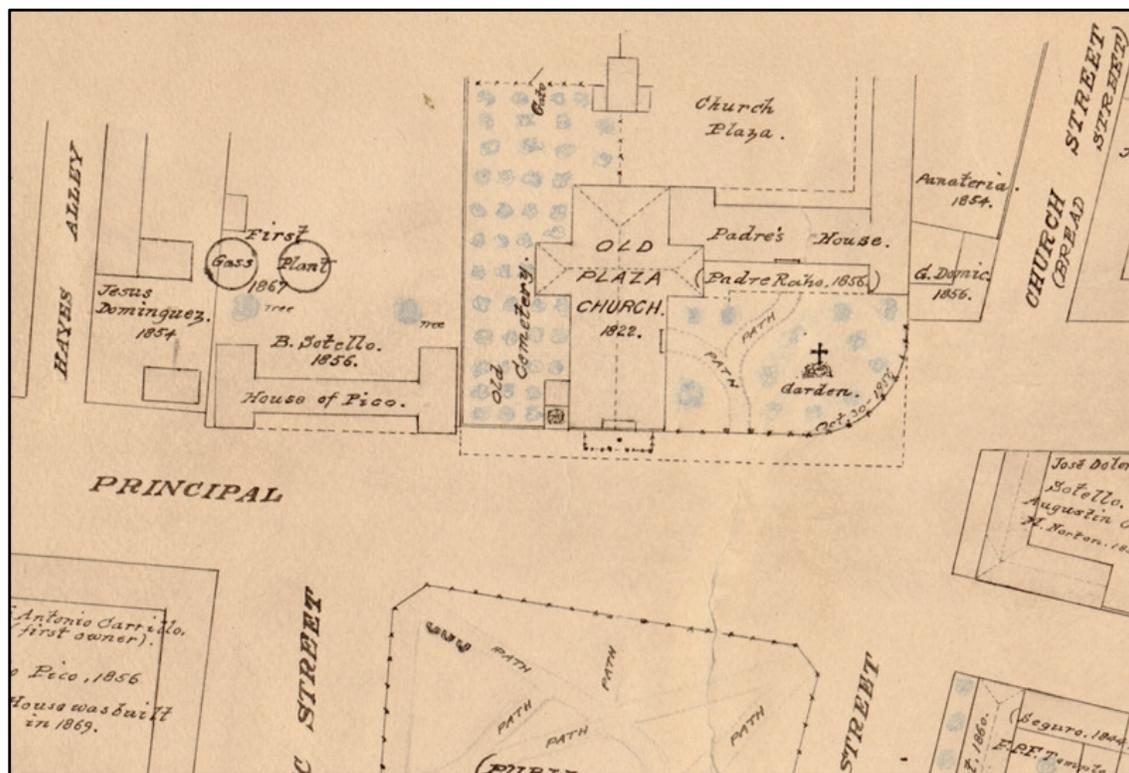


Figure 8. Ruxton's 1873 "Map of the Old Portion of the City Surrounding the Plaza" (Detail; Huntington Digital Library: Solano-Reeve collection).



Figure 9. The Plaza Church in 1873, view southeast (Water and Power Associates 2012).



Figure 10. The Plaza Church in 1890, view east (Water and Power Associates 2012).

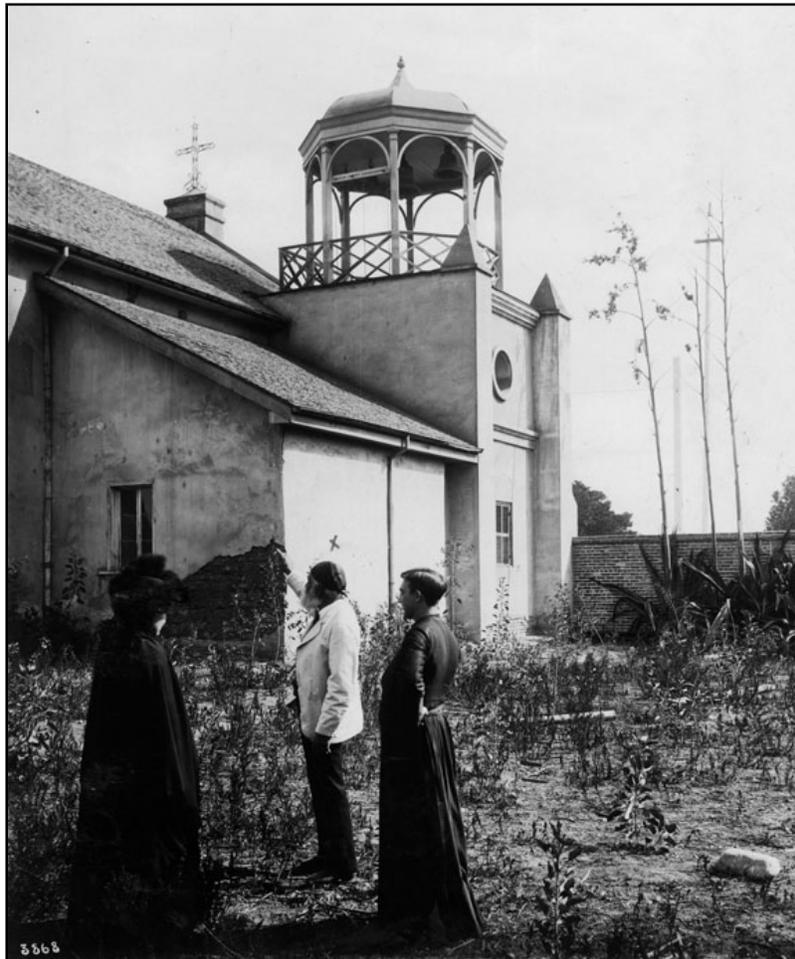


Figure 3. Grounds of the former Plaza Church Cemetery circa 1895 (Los Angeles Public Library: C.C. Pierce & Co. Photographers).

Beginning in the 1860s, the area immediately south of the former cemetery area began to experience increased activity, starting with the demolition of the northern portion of the Baric Adobe. As can be seen at the southern border of the cemetery (right) in the 1869 photograph (Figure 6), this section was replaced with a small-gabled building with two chimneys sometime between 1862 and 1869, which was temporarily inhabited by Pio Pico and has been referred to as the Pico Townhouse (Dan Peterson A.I.A. & Assoc., Inc. 1985:30). Also south of the church, the First Los Angeles Gas Works began operation in 1869, and initially consisted of two gas tanks and a small building located west of the Pico Townhouse and Baric Adobe. In 1882–83, the southern half of the Baric Adobe was demolished for development of the Garnier Block Building, later renamed the Plaza House, an Italianate-style building that housed commercial and lodging functions. Originally known as the Vickrey Building, the five-story Vickrey-Brunswick Building was built south of the Plaza House in 1888. Both the Plaza House and Vickrey-Brunswick Building were constructed with basements, which no doubt caused significant ground disturbance. Following the demolition of the First Los Angeles Gas Works building, the two-story Brunswick Annex was constructed directly behind the Vickrey-Brunswick Building in 1897, with a third story added in between 1897 and 1909.

The church appears to have leased the Plaza Church Cemetery site and adjacent corral area sometime around 1900 (Figure 12). Although the exact date of and reason for this sale could not be determined, newspaper articles from the turn of the century offer an opportunity for speculation. *Los Angeles Times* articles from 1898 and 1899 discuss efforts by Bishop Montgomery to reduce the assessment of the Plaza Church's property through the Board of Equalization (*Los Angeles Times* August 6, 1898, and August 4, 1899). Additionally, an article from 1900 also discusses certain improvements to the Plaza Church, including the enlargement of windows, angular corners changed to curves, and the frescoing of walls (*Los Angeles Times* October 18, 1900). Although none of this is concrete evidence relating to the sale of the cemetery site, the Plaza Church was financially strapped in the early twentieth century, and the sale of the property may have been an attempt to raise funds (Estrada 2008:127).

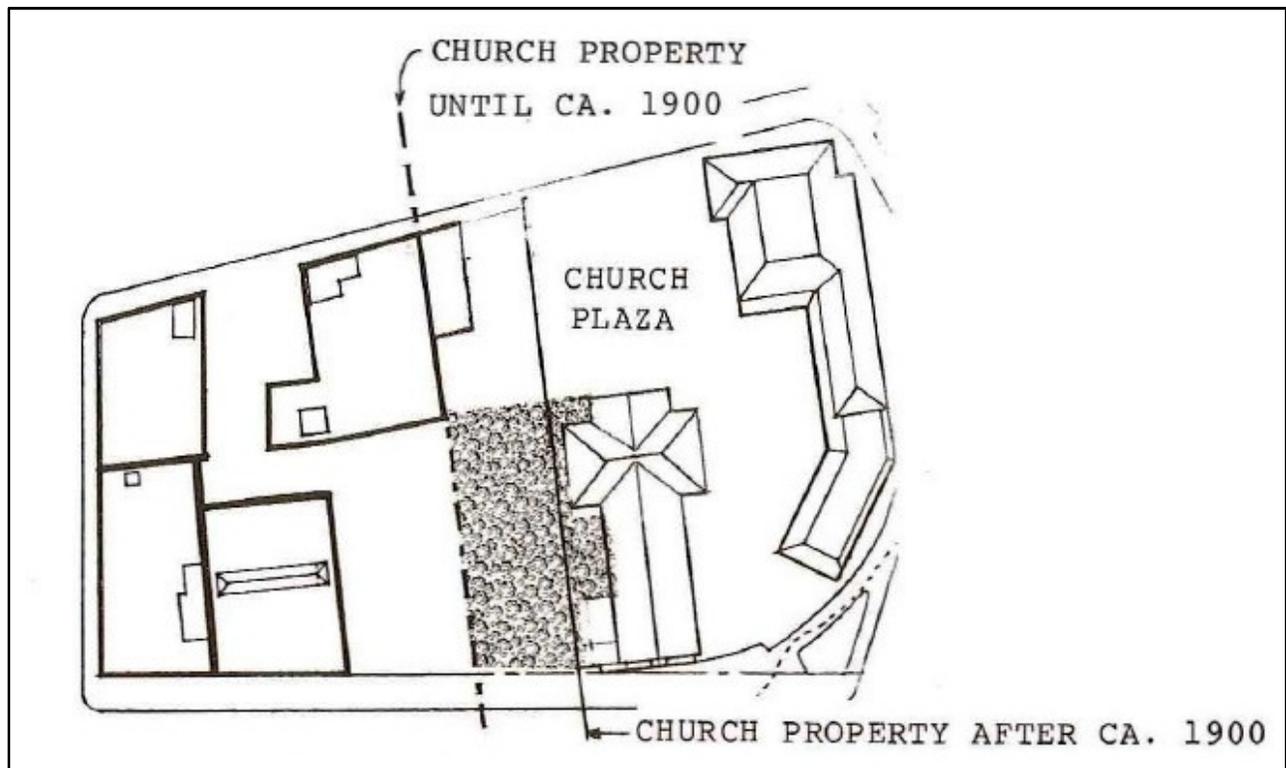


Figure 12. Church property before and after the lease of the cemetery site (Dan Peterson A.I.A. & Assoc., Inc. 1985:Plate I-K).

By 1905, historic maps and photographs show a small, commercial building located on the cemetery site and facing onto Main Street. Measuring approximately 15 × 15 m (50 × 50 feet), the brick building at 519-523 N. Main Street had three individual storefronts that extended the length of the building, with the two exterior units featuring small additions at the rear (Figure 13). Because the building did not have a basement, ground disturbance would have been restricted to what was undertaken during the construction of the foundation (Dan Peterson A.I.A. & Assoc., Inc. 1985:Plate I-K).



Figure 14. The Plaza Church ca. 1924, aerial view (Water and Power Associates 2012).



Figure 15. A view of the Plaza Church and adjacent commercial buildings in 1946 (El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historical Monument: Marc Wanamaker Bison Archives).



Figure 16. The Plaza Church Cemetery site as seen in 1950, with the Brunswig Drug Warehouse in background (Los Angeles Public Library: Herald-Examiner Collection).

On March 20, 1964, the Los Angeles Cultural Heritage Board listed the cemetery site as Historic-Cultural Monument #26. The board urged the County of Los Angeles Board of Supervisors that the blacktop on top of the lot be removed, and the property landscaped and marked with a plaque or monument (*Los Angeles Times* March 21, 1964). These efforts were unsuccessful and similar attempts to remove the parking lot and recognize the site would continue into the following years. These included two proposals in 1976 and 1985, which suggested that the area become a monument and site for exhibits (*Los Angeles Times* 29 May 1978; April 26, 1985).

The parking lot was removed in 2001, coinciding with the demolition of the Brunswig Drug Warehouse (which can be seen in Figure 13). Following the removal of the parking lot and the Brunswig Drug Warehouse, the area was landscaped with grass and enclosed with a fence. This area remained in that state until construction activities began in 2010 as part of the LA Plaza de Cultura y Artes center.

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