A GRAND OPENING NIGHT

North Park held a gala opening night in March 3, 1925 and quickly became the place of choice for entertainment in the neighborhood. Unlike the Japanese auditorium was a balcony, full orchestra pit, and a working stage for vaudeville acts. With 1,412 seats, it had a larger capacity than the Sunbeam Theatre, located just one block over. The opening was emceed by popular film actor General Montgomery Mason, better known by his stage name, Monte Blue. Also in attendance was Canadian-American actress Norma Shearer, who thrilled the audience with a virtuoso bar of champagne. The first film shown at the theater was a silent in which Norma Shearer starred. 

THE AGE OF THE MOVIE PALACE

In the silent film era, theater architecture was important aspect of the experience and soon, the Highland Theatre, and gave the audience a filmable Monster cinema. The interior was crammed with satirical art and murals, large dining rooms, marquee, and more. Roy S. Nixon, who designed the theater, first designed large movie palaces, affecting its presence with hundreds of glowing multi-colored bulbs.

THEATER ARCHITECT, LEWIS ARTHUR SMITH

L.A. Smith as he was professionally known, was a noted and prolific theater architect. He was born in Ohio to German immigrant parents, but by 1918 was living in Los Angeles, where he designed nearly fifty movie theaters. Although many have since been demolished, and most of the rest repurposed, his work was eventually recognized. Some surviving examples include Los Feliz’s Vista, North Hollywood’s Art Theatre, Pasadena’s Grauman’s Egyptian, and South Pasadena’s Radio theatre, all of which featured either films or live entertainment.

CHANGING TIMES

The Highland Theatre was also a live performance space, and in its early days featured vaudeville acts. During World War II, the theater hosted benefits to raise money for war bonds and pay tribute to fallen soldiers. The theater was purchased from Betty & Gino by the Highland’s owners and closed, but in 1950, saw renaissance again with the arrival of two smaller theaters: the Franklin Theatre at Figueroa and Avenue, and the Park Theatre at Figueroa and Avenue. For five years, these four blocks of Figueroa formed a small but thriving theater district.

The growth of television in the 1950s killed off many movie theaters in Los Angeles. The Franklin went back in 1952. The Park lasted until 1961. The Highland weathered风暴 between into the 1950s, when the owners received a remembers an iconic sign offering its live entertainment, despite the neighborhood’s fortunes fading in the 1970s. The house was eventually boarded up and turned into storage space. In 1991, it was designated Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument. No. 34. Remarkably, none of the theater’s old murals have been destroyed, but only one.

The Highland Theatre building serves as the centerpiece for Angels Walk Highland Park. This site, which shut down in 1974, in 1970, was purchased by Arman Akopian, who restored it, and exposed the theater’s Fullerelen design. He also restored to its original Spanish-Mexico theme and installed all Spanish-language films and children’s matinees on weekends.

Afternoon, like many theater owners in the 1980s, sold out the formerly simple single-screen theatre into a small cinema. Wall curtains were hung and drop ceilings were installed. The balcony was boarded up and turned into storage space. In 1991, it was designated Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Morning No. 549. Remarkably, none of the theater’s old murals have been destroyed, but only one.

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Angels Walk Highland Park
Select Stanchions

- Highland Park Transit
- Highland Theatre
- The Commercial District
- The Arroyo Seco
- Arroyo Seco Branch Library
- York Junction
- Artists & Activists
- Public Services
- Central Highland Park
- Route 66 & Chicken Boy
- Highland Park Living
- Religious Diversity
- Occidental College
- Sycamore Grove
- Charles Lummis

AMERICA'S MOTHER ROAD
U.S. Route 66, established in 1926, was one of the original highways of the United States Highway System. It originally ran from Chicago, Illinois in the east to its western terminus at Keyes, on Route 66 in Mexico. To drum up publicity for the road, the U.S. Highway 66 Association organized the first International Transcontinental Foot Race, starting Route 66 in the town between Los Angeles and Chicago, but it was always clear that Route 66 was designed primarily for the automobile. During the Great Depression of the 1930s, many families used it to migrate from the Dust Bowl of the plains to California in search of agricultural work. It was also promoted as an easy route to travel to visit the 1932 Olympics in Los Angeles. In 1936, Route 66 was extended from Michigan Avenue to the Pacific Coast Highway in Santa Monica.

HIGHLAND PARK'S MAIN STREET
The path of Route 66 changed several times during its existence. In Los Angeles County, most alignments incorporated parts of North Hollywood, Huntington-Dune, and Colorado Flats. In Highland Park, from its inclusion on the 1921 map the route ran along Pasadena Avenue (later changed to North Figueroa Street). It was later renamed from 1935-1942.

before returning again to Figueroa. That year, the newly completed Arroyo Seco Parkway was incorporated into Route 66’s freeway. By then, the highway itself was increasingly becoming a tourist attraction, and in 1940, it inspired songwriter Bobby Thomson’s classic composition, “(Get Your Kicks on) Route 66.” In 1948, Route 66 was standardized by California. The interior route was re-imagined and altered in 1959, but remained an icon of the freedom and adventure offered by the open road. In Southern California, Route 66 route remained navigationally intact from cities and towns to streets, including Highland Park’s North Figueroa Street.

and manufactured by International Fiberglass, a Venice-based company that created tall figures colloquially known as “ruralmonsters,” as they often held mufflers. They were also custom-made to hold signs, kid’s bikes, and in the case of Chicken Boy, a bucket of fried chicken. From 1968 to 1984, he towered over a restaurant of the same name, located on Broadway in Downtown Los Angeles. After the restaurant closed, he was acquired by artist Amy Heuser. In 2007, she moved him to the corner Highland Park location to remind at one of the most loved and iconic landmarks in the community.

Any road that Route 66 ever utilized retains something of its recognizable retro charm. Route 66 encouraged the proliferation of automobile-oriented businesses like motor courts, drive-in restaurants, and motels. The Holiday Inn Camp was established in Bismarck in 1935. Drummed around 1932. Further down the road, the first McDonald’s was established in 1955 along Route 66 in San Bernardino. Various restaurants were employed to catch the eyes of the many motorists driving by. Some restaurants were unique of their time, such as one stop the Highland Theatre, outside a distance. Estimated to have been built in the 1920s.

Although the iconic Chicken Boy sculpture initially stood at its current home, it is a replica of what had been designed to draw the attention of Route 66 drivers. The original figure was designed by artist Helene Drumm around 1923. Further down the road, the first McDonald’s was established in 1955 along Route 66 in San Bernardino. Various restaurants were employed to catch the eyes of the many motorists driving by. Some restaurants were unique of their time, such as one stop the Highland Theatre, outside a distance. Estimated to have been built in the 1920s. Although the iconic Chicken Boy sculpture initially stood at its current home, it is a replica of what had been designed to draw the attention of Route 66 drivers. The original figure was designed by artist Helene Drumm around 1923.
Los Angeles’ Oldest Liberal Arts College

Venerable Occidental College is the oldest liberal arts college in Los Angeles. Although a future of the Eagle Rock neighborhood for over a century, it was founded in Highland Park for a short time. The college was founded in South Drive in 1887 by members of the Presbyterian Church. Its first year tuition was only $50 and the founding class consisted of forty enrolled students. A fire destroyed the original school, leading to a temporary relocation to Downtown Los Angeles in 1890. In 1899, under school president Reverend Guy W. Wadsworth, the college relocated to ten acres of land in Highland Park, purchased by the Los Angeles and San Gabriel Valley Railroad, and donated by Sarah Judson, wife of Highland Park developer Albert H. Judson.

Occidental Comes to Highland Park

The Highland Park campus opened in 1898, just three years after Highland Park was annexed by the City of Los Angeles. The first leading document on the property was the Academy Building, donated by the Judson family and the Judson family and the Judson family, both of which were completed in 1894. The campus was also home to several buildings including dormitories and a science lab, as well as an athletic field. Nearby Symmes Terrace, which was a short walk from campus, was known as "Professor Row" and was home to many of the school’s faculty.

Notable Alumni and Guests

During Occidental’s Highland Park period, it graduated several famous alumni including poet and environmentalist Robinson Jeffers, who wrote for the school’s literary journal and graduated in 1905. Occidental’s first Rhodes Scholar was Clarence Stimson Library and Hall of Arts and Letters can be seen. A sweeping view of Highland Park in the 1920s. Near the center of the photo, Occidental’s Boyle Heights in 1887, by members of the neighborhood for over a century, it

Occidental Leaves Highland Park

In 1993, it was decided that the campus, barely a decade in Highland Park, would look for a new location. Under new president John Wallace, the school chose to relocate to Eagle Rock in 1997, now named by developers James G. Garth, W. A. Roberts, and Ralph Roy. represents a landmark synthesis that aimed to sell residential lots with Occidental as an amenity. Construction of the new campus began in 1993, and classes commenced in the autumn of 1996.