



R2, R3, R4 Multi-Family Survey Report

Appendix J:

**1986-87 Survey Context, prepared by Johnson Heumann
Research Associates**

**City of
West Hollywood**

Appendices

November 2008

~~when a small group of citizens formed the West Hollywood Incorporation Committee. By November of that year, studies by the Local Agency Formation Commission confirmed that incorporation was indeed economically feasible. Tenants led by the Coalition for Economic Survival, homeowners concerned with planning issues and the gay community were among the leading advocates of cityhood. Formal application was made on April 4, 1984. On November 4, 1984, by a 4:1 favorable margin, the voters approved incorporation.~~

~~One of the new city's first tasks was to begin to draft a General Plan, the land use policy document for the municipality required by State law. In January of 1985, the city began the process of preparing the Plan, noting that the physical environment, social character and quality of life within the City would be influenced by the General Plan. It was a stated goal to link land use and urban design, emphasizing the relationship between parcels and uses throughout the City. A reduction of density from those outlined in the West Hollywood Community Plan, prepared before incorporated by the County of Los Angeles, was planned.~~

~~As an integral part of this planning process, the City of West Hollywood applied for a survey grant from the State Office of Historic Preservation in November of 1985.~~

1.2 DEVELOPMENT HISTORY

The area now known as West Hollywood has played a key role in the development of Los Angeles County west of Los Angeles. As the

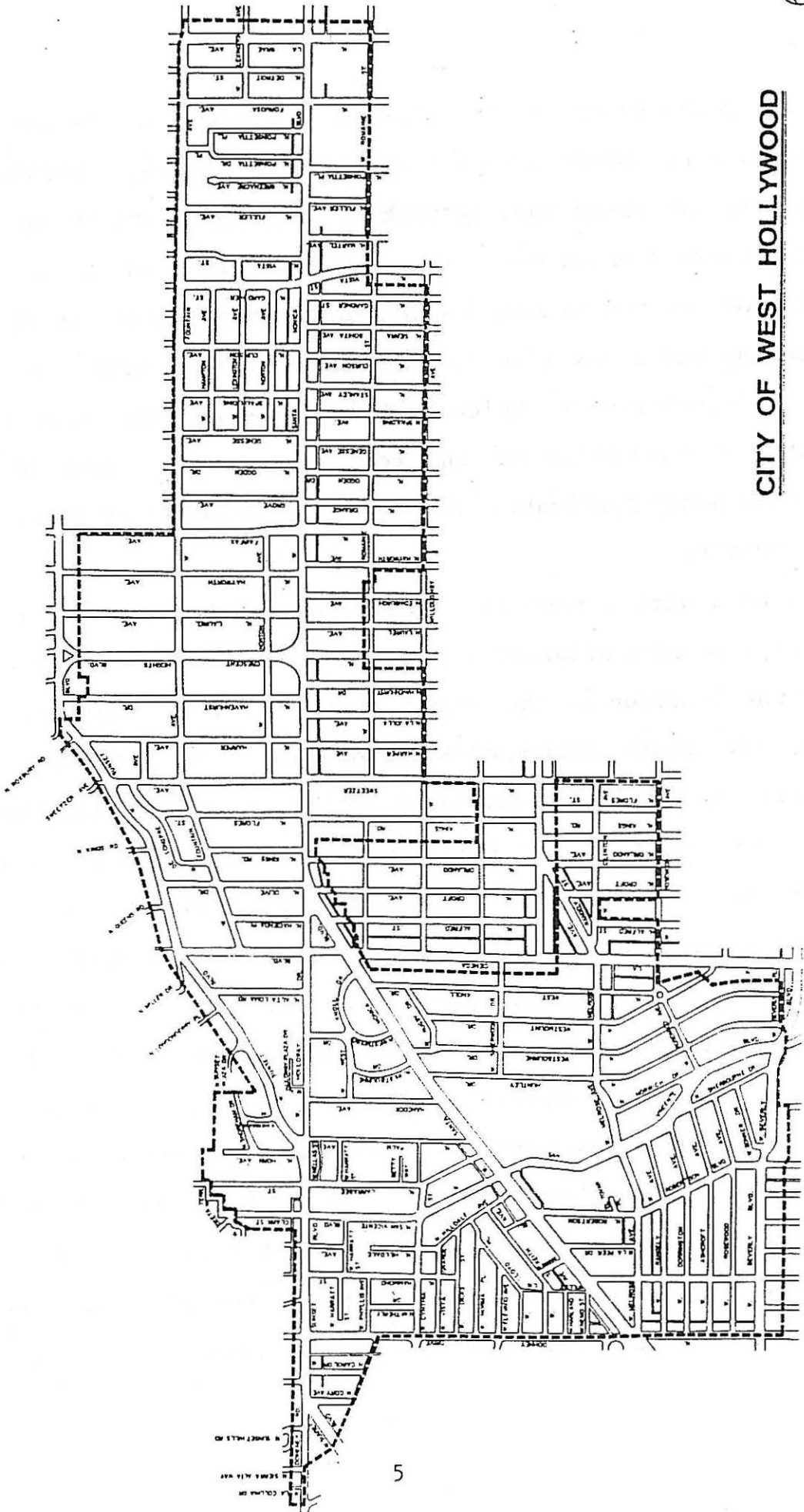
center of several rail lines, the area was the cornerstone of the Los Angeles Railway (LARR), later known as the "Pacific Electric", a suburban mass-transit system developed in the early 1890s which made possible the development of suburbs in the West Los Angeles Basin.

Prior to the era of the railroad, the land around West Hollywood was used for farming. Part of the Rancho La Brea, one of several land grant ranches originally given to soldiers of the King of Spain in payment for their service to the Crown, the 4,439-acre area had a variety of owners, including the Jose Rocha family. One of the first Anglo owners of the rancho was Major Henry Hancock, an army surveyor whose vast holdings made his family prominent players in the development of Los Angeles. Much of the rancho was incorporated into the City of Los Angeles as subdivisions sprung up west of downtown, but the area which is now West Hollywood, nestled below the foothills and immediately east of Hollywood and west of Beverly Hills, remained unincorporated, dotted with farmhouses. By the 1890s, the central portion of the city of West Hollywood was owned by Thomas and Leander Quint. A steam-powered trolley which made daily trips to the ocean stopped at their ranch for water.

The Cahuenga Valley played a vital role in the transportation network which eventually linked the scattered suburbs of Southern California to downtown Los Angeles. Subdivisions located close to the inter-urban rail line were assured of success, as tourists and prospective buyers took the "Balloon Excursion Route" through the



CITY OF WEST HOLLYWOOD



- N. CLAY DR
- N. EVELL DR
- N. LA PIER DR
- N. ALPERT DR
- N. WILSON DR

valley to the beach in Santa Monica. The owners of the Los Angeles Railway were Moses Sherman and Eli P. Clark, transportation entrepreneurs whose vast network of lines extended throughout the west. Moses Sherman was a native of New York, and was an educator in Arizona before he launched his development career in the 1880s. Expanding his activities to California in the 1890s, Sherman and various syndicates to which he belonged were instrumental in the growth of transportation and real estate. Business associates included Henry Huntington, Harrison Gray Otis, Harry Chandler, and H.J. Whitley.

Faced with a need for a main rail yard for the Los Angeles Railway, Sherman selected a location ten miles west of Los Angeles, near the junction of the Laurel Canyon Line, the Hollywood-Venice Line, the South Hollywood-Sherman Line. In 1894, he and his partner and brother-in-law Eli P. Clark negotiated with the Quints for a portion of their land, on which they intended to build a powerhouse and maintenance shops for the suburban railroad they wished to build. By July 4, 1895, the first "electric car" was running on this line, and the area was on its way to being a vital component of Sherman and Clark's rail empire. The Los Angeles Railway (which eventually was part of the Los Angeles Pacific Electric system) acquired 5.56 acres of land adjoining the Santa Monica rail line at San Vicente. The yards, located close to what is now the intersection of Melrose Avenue and San Vicente Boulevard, contained all the equipment necessary to build and repair the line's railroad cars. The facility was called the

Sherman yards, after LARR's founder, although gradually the name "Sherman" came to mean most of the area known today as West Hollywood. The Sherman yards were surrounded by rail lines in 1897 when a line was constructed from downtown Los Angeles to Beverly Boulevard, known as the Sherman Junction line. The land to the south of the main yard was somewhat swampy, but the railroad used fill dirt from the construction of other parts of the line to add an additional thirteen usable acres by 1906. Buildings in the Sherman yards included two car houses, an iron foundry, blacksmith, powerhouse, and a carpenter shop. The maintenance and repair facilities were clustered close to the main line on Santa Monica Boulevard until 1928, when some were razed during construction of the south roadway. While it appears that no records of construction exist prior to 1907, the improvements to the site were substantial. The "new" car barn, for example, completed in 1907, was approximately 130 x 220 feet, and constructed of brick at a cost of \$30,000.00. Capable of holding fifty cars, the car house was demolished in 1955. Most of the other buildings were one story and built of frame or brick construction. There were nearly six-and-one-half miles of track within the yard itself.

An enterprise of this magnitude sparked the need for nearby housing for its work force. Twelve acres of Quint's barley fields north of the tracks were sold to E.H. White in 1896 and subdivided as the townsite of Sherman. Settled by railway workers who built and repaired cars and equipment, the modest village prospered. Its first residents were the engineers, railway workers, carpenters,

conductors, and maintenance crews on the line. W.D. Larrabee, the Chief Engineer of LARR, was involved in the subdivision, which extended from the eastern border of Rancho Rodeo de las Aguas on the west to Palm Avenue on the east. The first streets laid out were Larrabee, Clark (San Vicente), Cynthia, and Sherman (now Santa Monica Boulevard). A Mr. Randall erected a commercial building which housed the post office in 1895; the first house was built on Larrabee.

The little town grew rapidly. By 1905, 21 of the 30 lots on Clark Street were improved with dwellings. Other streets had similar development. By 1912, Sherman had been nicknamed "Queen of the Foothills", and booster publications and guidebooks began to praise its beneficent climate, ideal location, and the quality of its community institutions. The expansive rhetoric of H.C. Hartley in a 1912 issue of Arrowhead is a case in point:

"When this little settlement was started some fifteen years ago, it is very probable that utilitarian reasons rather than esthetics governed its selection. But however that may be, happily no more favored spot could have been chosen for the establishment of a community of homes than that which Sherman occupies today. The foothills of the Santa Monica mountains, at this point, are thrust out into the smiling, sunlit Cahuenga Valley, and Sherman, sitting on their friendly shoulders, commands a view of the distant snow-crowned Sierras, the castellated skyline of the city, clean cut as a cameo, the broad, fertile acres of the valley and the dancing blue waves of the ocean, a view such as is not surpassed in Southern California, and that means the entire world. To those who have been fortunate enough to have stood on her streets at night have been afforded a sight whose beauty and splendor will long be a pleasant remembrance. Stretching from the limits of Hollywood on the north to as far as the eye can see on the south, the lights of the city blaze like a myriad of scintillating diamonds, making a study in illumination that words are inadequate to describe.

"To the home seeker who loves the peace and quiet of a small town and yet who is not adverse to the advantages which a big city offers in the way of amusements and shopping facilities, Sherman offers an unequalled opportunity. The Pacific Electric Railway, known the continent over as the finest interurban railway system in the world, furnishes splendid transportation facilities to the heart of the business district of Los Angeles. The running time is short and the service frequent. When the subway from the Pacific Electric station on Hill street in Los Angeles is complete to the western boundary, Sherman will be within a twenty minute ride of the center of the city, which is much quicker service than the great majority of the residents of Los Angeles or any other large city enjoy. If you seek recreation, then the beach cities of Venice and Ocean Park, with their numerous attractions and bathing privileges, are close at hand."

Whether as homesite or investment, the lots in Sherman provided the ideal. Although within easy reach of downtown, the village had a country feel. While many homes and estates in the foothills were substantial, there was ample opportunity for the working man to buy a plot of ground, build a bungalow, and plant a garden. The sloping streets were filled with turn of the century cottages, some with elegant detailing, and sturdy Craftsman bungalows, striking in their simplicity. On the Santa Monica Boulevard commercial strip, one- and two-story vernacular brick buildings sat beside wooden storefronts. Sunset Boulevard was unpaved, flanked by a poinsettia nursery, which was part of the substantial holdings of Victor Ponet, a former Belgian consul.

A few years later, a second major employer had joined the railroad in the community. The Hollywood film industry had been founded in 1911 and the industry's growth mushroomed. By 1919, there were several dozen studio plants in Edendale, Hollywood, and in nearby Culver City. At the corner of Formosa Avenue and Santa

Monica Boulevard stood the Jesse D. Hampton studio facility which occupied an entire square block. In the same year, Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks formed a partnership with Charles Chaplin and D.W. Griffith and founded United Artists. Located close to the Chaplin studio on La Brea, the Hampton facility had been used by director King Vidor and others and seemed the logical spot for Pickford-Fairbanks and United Artists enterprises. The site was also used by producer Samuel Goldwyn.

As the decade of the Roaring Twenties began, Sherman found itself caught up in the trends which were pushing the Los Angeles metropolis closer and closer. One by one, adjacent areas had been annexed to the city. Even Hollywood was no longer an independent municipality, having succumbed to the need for more water almost a decade earlier. The thriving movie, oil, and transportation industries in Sherman attracted more and more newcomers, and the population began to rise, often doubling in a single year. In 1921, more than 1,000 lots were sold. In 1922, General Sherman stated, "I am pleased, naturally, to see Sherman going ahead ... I can see in Sherman the nucleus of a larger, better town that will soon rise to the dignity of a good city". (Los Angeles Times, 12.3.22, Section 5, Page 5).

And still there was no municipal government. In the early years, inquiries regarding development or improvements were directed to the Sherman Improvement Association and to the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors. Feeling the need for direct interaction, a Chamber of Commerce was founded in 1920 and began

to function as a quasi-governmental body. It was able to extract more commitment from the County to service the area's needs. Serious problems faced the area: sanitation, flood control, street lighting and paving, and education, to name a few. One of the Chamber's first efforts centered around the widening of Santa Monica Boulevard, a project which involved the moving and rebuilding of almost every commercial structure in town. A major facelift was given to most of the major business establishments at the time. That year, the organization also conducted a promotional campaign detailing the advantages of living in Sherman. By 1924, the question of annexation to Los Angeles reached the voters, the first of several times residents of the unincorporated area would vote to annex or incorporate. The close vote, held after many mass meetings, was 814 "against" and 740 "for", the chief arguments from the pro-annexation campaign being the benefits of Los Angeles' sewage and water treatment facilities, and the anti-annexation's response that Los Angeles was over-annexed, and the proposal would generate higher taxes. Activities of the Chamber for 1924 included opposition to telephone rate hikes, organizing a community sing, obtaining sewers for the business district, and installation of street signs.

In 1925, the name of Sherman was changed to West Hollywood, in an effort to portray the changing times and to capitalize on the fame of its neighbor to the east. The unincorporated area was becoming urbanized, and because of its location between Beverly Hills and Hollywood, was a very desirable area in which to live.

New subdivisions of Spanish Colonial Revival bungalows proliferated, along with a substantial number of period revival apartment buildings. Built in close proximity to the Sunset Strip, these hillside buildings were designed by some of the region's leading architects, including Leland Bryant, S. Charles Lee, Pierpont and Walter Davis, and Arthur and Nina Zwebell. Progressive architects Lloyd Wright and Rudolph Schindler were based in West Hollywood, living and working in studios which exemplified their own personal theories of design.

Impressive streetscapes along Fountain Avenue, Havenhurst, Harper, and other boulevards were testimony to the growing wealth and sophistication of the area. Many of the fanciful and ornate apartment buildings were populated by the film industry: writers, producers, stars, set designers, and art directors, as well as technicians and cameramen, proximity to the studios was a definite advantage.

Given the transitory nature of fortunes in Hollywood, it is not surprising that any overview of the residential complexes of the 1920s and 30s will contain long lists of stars, writers, and directors, who, it is thought, occupied an apartment for six months to two years. Often these apartments were used while a star was filming a certain picture. What is important to an understanding of West Hollywood's built environment, however, is that these buildings were of extraordinary architectural quality. A collection of Spanish Colonial Revival courtyard apartments with the intriguing names of Garden of Allah, Hacienda Arms, La Ronda,

Andalusia, Villa d'Este, and Patio del Moro were designed by well-known Southern California architects, primarily by the firms of Pierpont and Walter Davis and Arthur and Nina Zwebell. Reputedly, the Spanish buildings attracted tenants such as Pola Negri (Villa d'Este); Clara Bow, Caesar Romero, Claire Bloom (Villa Andalusia just over the city line); Katharine Hepburn, Marlene Deitrich, and director Joseph von Sternberg. Bette Davis, Carole Lombard, and William Powell preferred the look of Colonial House, while the chateausque styling of Chateau Marmont (also just outside the current city limits), La Fontaine, the Voltaire, and Villa Celia were home to Harlow, Garbo, Director Billy Wilder, Boris Karloff, Ann Sothern, and Janet Gaynor, among others. Later additions to the skyline were Art Deco structures such as the Sunset Tower, designed by Leland Bryant, and the Georgian Revival Sunset Plaza Apartments executed by Paul Williams. These well-appointed buildings were often fully furnished with fine Oriental or antique pieces; many had maid service, security, and chauffeurs on staff.

But one of the major advantages, in addition to the elegant, quiet surroundings, was the proximity of these buildings to the studios, and to the entertainment areas of Hollywood Boulevard and the Sunset Strip. Due to the influence of Francis Montgomery, heir to Victor Ponet's vast holdings in the foothills above Sunset, and Billy Wilkerson, owner and publisher of the Hollywood Reporter, Sunset Boulevard was changed from a dusty, winding road into a sophisticated urban shopping and entertainment district. Just a few blocks west of the Garden of Allah and the Chateau Marmont,

the Montgomery family began to develop the commercial frontage along Sunset to "create an attractive entertainment, shopping, and business center that would allure (sic) people and large social worth and financial means". In 1930, property owners vigorously lobbied the Board of Supervisors for the necessary improvements and zoning changes that would facilitate Sunset's development. By 1934, Montgomery, with architect Charles Selkirk, had created the Sunset Plaza shopping district, an upscale retailing complex whose Georgian stores and offices housed decorators, agents, tailors, publicists, beauty salons, and other services. The location, combined with a centralized management and flexible floor plans which allowed for expansion, made the area highly desirable to retailers and professionals.

While shopping areas such as Sunset Plaza were enticing to residents, it was the nightlife of the Sunset Strip which made headlines across the nation. The portion of the famous Boulevard in the unincorporated area became the "playground of the stars", augmenting the clubs and restaurants of downtown Hollywood. By the mid-1930s, the Strip was the center of Hollywood's public social life, and the names of its nightclubs -- the Trocadero, Mocambo, Ciro's and a host of others -- were synonymous with the carefree, glamorous existence to which every starlet aspired. Despite the efforts of local law enforcement to curtail illegal gambling and drinking (Prohibition was not repealed until 1933), clubs were packed each night with celebrities, Los Angeles society, and tourists.

The first nightspot on the Strip was Maxine's, located at 9103. When it opened in the 1920s, Maxine's was surrounded by orchards and poinsettia fields. Rudolph Valentino frequented the nearby Russian Eagle before his death; the restaurant burned in 1930 and was relocated to Vine Street in Hollywood.

Three blocks to the west was the La Boheme, characterized as "a friendly French roadside saloon", (Herman, Out With the Stars, p. 61) with a stunning view of the city. Its location, on the route to Beverly Hills that many stars and moguls traveled daily, made it a popular place to be after dusk. The cheap rents, and lower taxes and license fees of the unincorporated area all combined to focus the attention of entrepreneurs catering to the Hollywood social set on the Strip. Other clubs opened on the street in the 1930s included Club Ballyhoo at 8373, the Centaur Cafe at 9191, Club Madrid, the King's Club, Bit of Sweden (9051), Ted Snyder's and Cafe Lamaze (9039).

The Trocadero and the Mocambo were located in the Sunset Plaza area at 8610 and 8541, respectively. The "Troc", as it was known, was opened in the fall of 1934 by W.R. Wilkerson, with money invested by super-agent Myron Selznick, who hosted the opening night party termed "one swelegant party" by the Hollywood Reporter the next day. Previously named the La Boheme, the roadhouse was extensively redecorated by set designer Harold Grieve in cream and gold. The Trocadero was a "must" on every star's list, and was even used in the 1937 version of "A Star is Born". Writer Kay Proctor described the ambience of the Troc in 1936:

"The Troc is divided into two parts, the street floor, or cafe proper, and the Cellar. Swank hold forth upstairs, good fellowship down ... Upstairs decorations feature plain cream walls with a touch of gold in the moldings and beautiful light fixtures. The Cellar, in keeping with its spirit, had walls paneled in stained oak and wooden ceiling with the graining set in oblique pattern. The bar itself is of gleaming, highly polished copper. Ask for "Tex" ... Drinks run from 60 cents to \$1.50. That one-fifty number, in case you are interested, is a lulu called 'French 75' or 'T.N.T.' By way of warning, it is just that -- dynamite ... Another daisy is the 'Vendome special Sling' (\$1.00) in which the bartender makes magic out of ginger beer, cherry brandy, gin and lime juice. The house special is the 'Trocadero Cooler' for 75 cents, a tall, frosted concoction".

Just steps to the east was located the Mocambo, whose sedate exterior belied the exotic decor of the interior which featured live birds in a tropical setting. Owner Charles Morrison catered to a famous clientele which included Humphrey Bogart, Lauren Bacall, and Frank Sinatra. The Mocambo opened in 1941, and was immediately lauded as an intimate and sophisticated establishment ideal for the image of the film colony of the 1940s.

8433 Sunset was the home of a gambling establishment, the Clover Club, until a major crackdown by law enforcement officials in 1937 forced its closure. It was then sold to Al Freitas, who opened it as the Club Seville, "where society and filmland will mingle". Freitas installed a huge glass dance floor which was laid over a pool filled with fish. The glass floor did not catch on with patrons, and the club was sold to the indefatigable W.R. Wilkerson, who renamed it Ciro's. Ciro's opened in 1940 after the building's facade had been given a facelift by noted architect George Vernon Russell and the interior done in a Baroque theme by interior designer Tom Douglas featuring bronze columns and walls

draped in green silk. Ciro's quickly became one of the required stops for stars seeking publicity, so much so that studios often arranged for limousines to whisk players directly from a day's shooting to the nightclub. Another late entry to the club scene was the Players Club, an enterprise of noted producer Preston Sturges. The Players, located at 8225 Sunset, opened in 1940, but never enjoyed the popularity of some of its predecessors. Off the Strip were the transplanted Colony Club, a gambling establishment on Alta Loma; and Chasen's, a "barbeque" whose six-table, eight-seat-counter restaurant dispensed chili for 25 cents a bowl and was to grow into one of Los Angeles' premier restaurants. The owner, former vaudevillian Dave Chasen, soon upgraded both the menu and the decor. Author Jim Heiman says "Hollywood now had a swanky hangout that rivaled even New York's 21 and Chicago's Pump Room". The restaurant remains a staple of the Westside dining scene today.

The beginning of World War II signaled the end of the free-wheeling extravagant "Hollywood" lifestyle. Although the image of celebrities as raconteurs was probably more myth than reality from the beginning, image-makers in the Forties opted for a more "wholesome" approach. The excesses of the Twenties and Thirties became passe. In addition, rising production costs produced fewer films; rising construction costs produced fewer and more cheaply constructed housing. In 1944, Billy Wilkerson opened the last of the true nightspots, "La Rue", in close proximity to the Trocadero and Mocambo. But just a year later, dramatic changes took place which decreased the need for the plethora of nightspots which had

developed. Although Los Angeles had experienced a population boom at the end of the war, people began to stay at home with the advent of television. Stars, no longer under the yoke of a strong studio system, also chose to socialize out of the public eye. Political reform and the McCarthy era also produced lower profiles among members of the film community. As a result, the Trocadero closed in 1946, Ciro's in 1952; The Strip, however, continued in popular television shows ("77 Sunset Strip" featured Dino's Lodge at 8524). In the 1960s and 70s, clubs began to be reopened as the music industry gravitated to the Strip. The Rainbow (9015), the Roxy (9009), Gazzarri's (9039) and others led the way. Ciro's was reincarnated as the Comedy Store, a showcase for comedians. The Players Club became a Japanese restaurant.

The more relaxed zoning regulations of the County made its mark in the 1960s and 70s with the construction of large multi-family apartments on streets once populated with single-family dwellings. Today, the population continues to rise, and development pressure continues on older neighborhoods.

After the demise of the suburban railway, another industry took root in West Hollywood. While set decorators, art directors, and other creative interior designers had lived in the area since the 1920s, it was in the mid-1950s that the design community found its focal point. Prior to World War II, the Beverly Robertson area had been a scattered collection of fields, homes, service businesses, and manufacturing. Furnishing showrooms were concentrated in downtown Los Angeles. In the early 1940s several

showrooms relocated west, to La Cienega Boulevard, prompting developers to realize the potential of the inexpensive land in Beverly Robertson. With local realtor, Bert J. Friedman and his partner Ronald S. Kates, in the forefront of the movement, a new decorating center grew rapidly in the 1950s and 1960s. Beginning modestly in 1945 with the opening of the Clark & Burchfield space, receiving impetus from the 1949 opening of the Herman Miller showroom designed by Charles Eames, Beverly Robertson is now estimated to house some 200 or more furnishings industry firms. With the building of the Pacific Design Center in 1975, the industry confirmed its strong presence in the Melrose/ Robertson area. From the late 1940s into the 1970s, on a more personal level, several designers transformed whole neighborhoods of Spanish bungalows into fanciful streetscapes with diversified facades of Classical, Regency, or Modern overtones.

Author John Chase in his book Exterior Decoration chronicles the rise of this architectural phenomenon, providing valuable insight into the personalities and trends which re-shaped many of West Hollywood's neighborhoods. Several areas, particularly that of the Norma Triangle and adjacent districts, were extensively remodelled, with added square footage, and a restoration of the interior to courtyards and enclosed gardens as the main components of a project. As Chase comments:

"... the remodeling craze has produced houses that act as altars for all the icons of respectability, Los Angeles style; as well as remodels that are more overtly eccentric. These more eccentric remodels reflect the concept of the single-family house as a private, detached temple to the self - placed squarely in public view".

The 1950s also saw the construction of larger "stucco box" apartments. Open space was deleted from the plan, or sometimes completely enclosed, the result being a blank facade on the street. These were joined in the 1960s by high-rise condominiums and apartments.

The West Hollywood landscape today is an amalgamation of architectural styles and development patterns which have been espoused over the last ninety years. Remnants of the turn of the century railroad village co-exist with 1920s luxury apartments and Spanish Colonial Revival subdivisions, Georgian commercial and Art Deco structures of the 1930s, 1950s modern apartments and newer Post-Modern buildings. As local historian Joan Penfield notes:

"In the 1.9 square mile area of this county strip are some of the most luxurious and expensive hotels, apartments, and condominiums, small homes of charm and character, trendy shops and elegant stores, fine restaurants of international cuisine, great little theatres and entertainment spots, a concentration of interior design and home furnishing showrooms, art shops, galleries, book stores and recording industry. It is the most interesting, vital area of the county embracing an incredible diversity of life styles and activities".

Cityhood has brought the opportunity for a new vision of the built environment, one which incorporates the past in its plans for the future.