



A brief History of Los Angeles

Los Angeles, Spanish for "the angels")

The old city plaza, 1869

The Los Angeles coastal area was first settled by the Tongva (or Gabrieleños) and Chumash Native American tribes thousands of years ago. The first Europeans arrived in 1542 in an expedition organized by the viceroy of New Spain and commanded by Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo, a Portuguese-born explorer who claimed the area of southern California for the Spanish Empire. However, he continued with his voyage up the coast and did not establish a settlement. The next contact would not come until 227 years later, when Gaspar de Portolà, along with Franciscan missionary Juan Crespí, reached the present site of Los Angeles on August 2, 1769. Crespí noted that the site had the potential to be developed into a large settlement.

In 1771, Franciscan friar Junípero Serra built the Mission San Gabriel Arcangel near Whittier Narrows, in what is now called San Gabriel Valley. In 1777, the new governor of California, Felipe de Neve, recommended to Antonio María de Bucareli y Ursúa, viceroy of New Spain, that the site noted by Juan Crespí be developed into a pueblo. The town was officially founded on September 4, 1781, by a group of forty-four settlers known as "Los Pobladores". Tradition has it that on this day they were escorted by four Spanish colonial soldiers, two priests from the Mission and Governor de Neve. The town was named *El Pueblo de Nuestra Señora la Reina de los Ángeles del Río de Porciúncula* (The Town of Our Lady the Queen of the Angels on the Porciúncula River). These pueblo settlers came from the common Hispanic culture that had emerged in northern Mexico among a racially mixed society. Two-thirds of the settlers were mestizo or mulatto, and therefore, had African and Indian ancestry. More importantly, they were intermarrying. The settlement remained a small ranch town for decades, but by 1820 the population had increased to about 650 residents. Today, the pueblo is commemorated in the historic district of Los Angeles Pueblo Plaza and Olvera Street, the oldest part of Los Angeles.

New Spain achieved its independence from the Spanish Empire in 1821, and the pueblo continued as a part of Mexico. During Mexican rule Governor Pío Pico made Los Angeles Alta California's regional capital. Mexican rule ended during the Mexican–American War: Americans took control from the Californios after a series of battles, culminating with the signing of the Treaty of Cahuenga on January 13, 1847. Los Angeles was incorporated as a municipality on April 4, 1850, five months before California achieved statehood.

Los Angeles City Hall, shown here in 1931, was built in 1928 and was the tallest structure in the city until 1964, when height restrictions were removed. Railroads arrived when the Southern Pacific completed its line to Los Angeles in 1876. Oil was discovered in 1892, and by 1923 Los Angeles was producing one-quarter of the world's petroleum.



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In 1984, the city hosted the Summer Olympic Games for the second time. Despite being boycotted by 14 Communist countries, the 1984 Olympics became the most financially successful in history, and only the second Olympics to turn a profit – the other being the 1932 Summer Olympics, also held in Los Angeles.

Voters defeated efforts by the San Fernando Valley and Hollywood to secede from the city in 2002.

Los Angeles is home to renowned institutions covering a broad range of professional and cultural fields, and is one of the most substantial economic engines within the United States. As the home base of Hollywood, it is known as the "*Entertainment Capital of the World*", leading the world in the creation of motion pictures, television production and recorded music. In the 1920s, the motion picture and aviation industries flocked to Los Angeles, with continuing growth ensuring that the city suffered less during the Great Depression. In 1932, with population surpassing one million, the city hosted the Summer Olympics.

Hollywood, California

Though the district is now called home to an estimated 300,000 people, it began around 1853 with nothing more than one adobe hut. However, by the 1870s, an agricultural community had grown in the area. In the 1887 Harvey Wilcox, who had made a fortune in real estate, relocated to the area from Kansas along with his wife Daeida and soon bought 160 acres of land west of where Hollywood would soon be born.

When Daeida Wilcox went on a trip to the East, she met a woman on the train that spoke of her country home in Ohio named after a Dutch settlement called "Hollywood." Daeida liked the sound of it and when she returned to Southern California she gave the name to her and her husband's ranch.

Though Wilcox had lost the use of his legs due to typhoid fever, it did not stop the ambitious real estate investor. Before long, he drew up a grid map for a town, which he filed with the county recorder's office on February 1, 1887. Soon, Prospect Avenue, which would later be called Hollywood Boulevard, "*Walk of Fame*" was lined with large Queen Anne, Victorian, and Mission Revival houses. Mrs. Wilcox worked with other residents to raise funds that were used to build churches, schools and a library.

Hollywood quickly became a prosperous community, sporting a post office, a newspaper, a hotel and two markets by the turn of the century. Lying seven miles east of Hollywood, through the citrus groves, was the already well established city of Los Angeles. A single-track streetcar connected the two cities, but service was infrequent and the trip took two hours. An old citrus fruit packing house was soon converted into a livery stable, improving transportation for the inhabitants of Hollywood.



The famous Hollywood Hotel, the first in hotel in Hollywood, was opened in 1902 by a developer who was selling residential lots along the foothills. The hotel's initial objective was to house the many people that he was trying to sell his lots. Flanking the west side of Highland Avenue, the structure fronted Prospect Avenue, which was then, just a dusty, unpaved road.

Today the Kodak Theatre, home of the Academy Awards stands where the old hotel once stood.

The community incorporated in 1903, but its independence was short-lived, as the lack of water forced annexation with the city of Los Angeles in 1910. During its seven years as a self-supporting town, several ordinances were passed which included outlawing the sale of liquor the driving of cattle through the streets in herds of more than two hundred.



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