

Venice Landmarks

A landmark is any site (including trees/plants), building or structure of particular historic or cultural significance that meets at least one of the following criteria: (1) is identified with important events or exemplifies significant contributions to cultural, economic or social history, (2) is associated with the lives of historic personages important to history or (3) embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period style or method of construction; or represents a notable work of a master designer, builder or architect.

The two ways of attaining official landmark status are through the National Register of Historic Places under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service of the US Department of the Interior and as a Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument under the jurisdiction of the Los Angeles Cultural Heritage Commission of the Office of Historic Resources.

The National Register of Historic Places is the official list of the nation's historic places worthy of preservation. Authorized by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the National Register of Historic Places is part of a national program to coordinate and support public and private efforts to identify, evaluate and protect America's historic resources.

Website: <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/index.htm>

The City of Los Angeles Cultural Heritage Ordinance, enacted in 1962, has made possible the designation of buildings and sites as individual local landmarks. There are currently over 1200 Historic-Cultural Monuments, providing official recognition and protection for Los Angeles' most significant historic resources.

Website: <https://www.planning.lacity.org>

Our landmarks weave a story of Venice's past. The Warren Wilson Beach House and Sturdevant House represent an era from 1905 to 1922 when many beach homes were built in Venice illustrating beach area settlement patterns and early 20th century vacation customs. The Potter and Winn Apartments are associated with early 20th century leisure tourism in Venice. The Venice City Hall (now Beyond Baroque) and the Venice Police Station (now SPARC) were early municipal buildings in the development of Venice and its former independence. The Kinney Tabor House tells the tale of racial discrimination. Lincoln Place Apartments documents the need for affordable housing after WW II. The former site of the Venice West Café served as a local symbol of the growing counterculture movement in the 1960s and the bohemian spirit imparting a social and cultural significance that continues. The Irvin Tabor Family Residences and the Monday Women's Club exemplify a fight against gentrification with the hope to preserve neighborhood history. 1110-1116 Abbot Kinney Boulevard reflects the arrival of creative spirit that has become part of Venice's heritage. Never a need for a reason why is pride of ownership as exemplified with the Venice of America House and Morris Abrams Chateau des Roses.

Venice Canals

The existing canals are significant as a unique example of early-20th century residential development oriented around the original Venice canals developed by Venice of America founder Abbot Kinney.

The canals that we know today (Carroll, Howland, Linnie, Sherman, Eastern and Grand) are the Short Line Canals built on land owned by the Los Angeles Pacific Railroad. When this canal district was developed in 1905, it was assumed that it would be made as captivating as Abbot Kinney's Venice of America canals, but this never happened. Purchasers of lots waited for landscaping and even safety measures. Material and workmanship were inferior. Lots sold poorly because the area was a blight and gas, electric and sewer lines were not available. In 1929, the canals were only partially completed, and the residents could not afford the city assessment for fill-in costs. As Venice declined in the '30s and '40s, this neighborhood became neglected. In the 1940s, it was removed from public access due to crumbling banks, sewage pollution and a backup of oil brine from drilling operations. By the late '60s, the canals had deteriorated into stagnant, murky pools. But because of its location, uniqueness and cheap rent, the area became a haven for hippies and other counterculture enthusiasts. It took five decades for Los Angeles to finally rehabilitate the deteriorating conditions. The Venice Canals are now a joy to behold and famous worldwide ... a unique remembrance of Venice history.

The Venice Canal District was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1982 and the Venice Canal System became Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument #270 in 1983.

Warren Wilson Beach House – 15 30th Ave.

Warren Wilson, owner and editor of the Los Angeles Daily Journal, built the Warren Wilson Beach House in 1911 as a summer home for his wife and eight children where it stood among the sand dunes south of the commercial center of Venice. Among the strong family ties to the community were the marriages of two of his daughters to two of Abbot Kinney's sons.

The Warren Wilson Beach House is a two story 4373 square foot Craftsman Bungalow with many fine architectural elements. The exterior has a multi-gabled roof, wide overhang, stucco clad first floor, shiplap-clad second floor, porches, pergola, many sets of multi-paned casement windows and Craftsman decorative details. The interior contains many fine Craftsman details such as boxed beam ceilings, picture rails, plate rails, built-in bookcases, brick fireplaces and wide woodwork with corner block accents.

The Warren Wilson Beach House is now a bed-and-breakfast inn giving guests a visual reminder of the early days of Venice. It was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1986.

Venice Branch Library – 610 California Ave.

The first Venice Branch Library was in a large storefront building at 1110 Washington Blvd. (later West Washington Blvd. and then Abbot Kinney Blvd.) at which time it was under the jurisdiction of Los Angeles County. After annexation of Venice to Los Angeles, the branch was

added to the Los Angeles Library System. In 1930, the branch moved to a building designed by Witmer and Watson at 610 California Ave. In 1995, the Venice-Abbot Kinney Memorial Branch at 501 S. Venice Blvd. was built to provide more space. The original branch is now used as the Vera Davis McClendon Youth and Family Center.

The Venice Branch was designated as a Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument in June 1984. In 1987, the Venice Branch and several other branch libraries in Los Angeles were added to the National Register of Historic Places as part of a thematic group submission. The application noted that the branch libraries had been constructed in a variety of period revival styles to house the initial branch library system of the City of Los Angeles. With respect to the Venice Branch, the application described the building as a building in the Spanish Colonial Revival style made of masonry construction. The front entry has oak double doors with diamond-shaped panes and small wrought-iron lamps flanking the entrance.

Venice Division Police Station – 685 Venice Blvd.

In 1906, with the City of Venice growing, the Ocean Park Trustees formed a new police department, hiring officers for \$65 per month. Officers maintained a daily journal, commonly known as a “blue book”, in which they recorded their daily activities. After annexation to Los Angeles, Venice police officers who could pass the City of Los Angeles Civil Service Examination were allowed to join the LAPD. The original division consisted of 4.10 square miles with 30 assigned police personnel. By 1929, the division had grown to 19.44 square miles and 46 sworn personnel.

A new police station was built in 1930. It is the only Art Deco police station in the city and the first public building constructed in Venice after annexation. By 1950, the facility was so small that the night watch would have to stand in the hallway while the day watch was getting ready to go home. Eventually the Detective Bureau moved to the city hall next door. The new Venice Police Station located at 12312 Culver Blvd. opened in 1973. In 1982, the LAPD and community leaders agreed to rename Venice Division as Pacific Division to reflect the entire community it served.

The former Venice Division Police Station now houses SPARC (Social and Public Art Resources) a cultural arts center specializing in public art. Some interior features still intact include mahogany reception desk, division offices and jail cells.

The Venice Division Police Station became Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument #595 in 1994.

“Binoculars” – 340 Main St.

The “Binoculars” was designed by Frank Gehry and built between 1985 –1991 for advertising agency Chiat/Day. The building is notable for three different architectural styles that make up the façade. Anchoring the outer two disparate structures is a sculptural pair of binoculars

designed by Claes Oldenburg and Coosie van Bruggen, best known for public art installations typically featuring large replicas of everyday objects. This type of novelty, postmodern architecture is called mimetic, also known as programmatic architecture, characterized by unusual building designs that mimic the purpose or function of the building. Another example would be the original Brown Derby restaurant.

Today, the “Binoculars” building complex is home to Google, with the top part of the binoculars used as a conference room and the area between the lenses used as both a pedestrian entrance to the building and a vehicle entrance to the garage. It became Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument #656 in 1998.

Venice of America House – 1223 Cabrillo Ave.

Officially designated the “Venice of America House” by the Department of the Interior, this late Victorian residence built 1904-05, features a byzantine dome and stacked double arched front porches. The home, one of the oldest in Venice, achieved status as both a National Historic Landmark as well as a Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument for its rare architecture, which blends Queen Anne with Colonial Revival.

Because early city and county records of home ownership did not include Venice of America, the original owner or perhaps renter, is a mystery. However, the home was built by the Abbot Kinney Company, which later sold it for a land swap plus a ten-dollar gold piece. The first record of purchase is in 1918 to John Fonnell. Vintage photos show the two-story Victorian already standing as the canals were being built. Period postcards indicate the presence of a foot bridge near the house, spanning Cabrillo Canal.

Honored for preservation by the Venice Historical Society, the Venice of America House was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2000 and became Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument #270 in 2002.

Venice City Hall – 681 Venice Blvd.

In 1906, there was a power struggle between Abbot Kinney and Ocean Park’s Board of Trustees. When the residents passed a bond issue to finance a city hall, Kinney offered several parcels of land as a possible building site. Instead, the trustees accepted a remote site far removed from the commercial district. The city hall was called the imperial palace at Tokio because it was a long way to go for civic activities.

The Venice City Hall, designed by architects Garrett and Bixby in the Spanish Mission style, opened in 1907. Architectural details included tiled cross gable roofs, tower, parapet and double hung windows topped by a transom. Historic photographs show ornate mission style detailing that was removed after the 1933 earthquake. The building is now the home of Beyond Baroque, a literary center.

The Venice City Hall became Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument #749 in 2003.

Lincoln Place Apartments

Lincoln Place Apartments, a garden-style complex on 38 acres east of Lincoln Blvd., was designed by Ralph Vaughn, an early African American architect, and Heath Wharton featuring International Style and Moderne architectural elements. The 795 units were built between 1949 and 1951 in response to the shortage of low to moderate rental dwellings after World War II. It was the biggest housing project in California under the historic FHA program.

Today, the combination of old and new architecture is a testament to the determination, perseverance and tenacity of a group of people who, through more than 20 years, fought for the right to stay in their homes and to preserve affordable housing stock for others.

Lincoln Place Apartments was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2003 and became Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument #1008 in 2011.

Temple Mishkon Tephilo – 206 Main St.

In 1914, a group of Ocean Park Jews got together for the first time to hold High Holy Days service and incorporated in 1917, making the Temple Mishkon Tephilo the oldest operating synagogue on the Westside.

The growing congregation dedicated its new location in 1948. Founded as an Orthodox community, Mishkon joined the Conservative movement in 1952. It became the first Conservative synagogue in the Western United States to be led by a female rabbi in 1989.

In the 1950s and 1960s, the synagogue served as many as 1,000 local families. Venice was then a haven for Jewish retirees and families, who flocked to the beachside known as “the Coney Island of the West.” Although the neighborhood and condition of the temple have changed through the years, the indomitable spirit of the congregants remains the same.

The Temple Mishkon Tephilo became Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument #767 in 2003.

Kinney-Tabor House – 1310 6th Ave.

Abbot Kinney built the oldest part of the Kinney -Tabor House circa 1906 as a bunkhouse for canal workers. It was then leased by the Cosmos Club for a women’s group, used as a grade school and as a meeting place for a fraternal organization known as The Owls.

In 1917, Abbot Kinney added on to the structure to make a large clapboard house as his family home at One Grand Canal. After Kinney’s death in 1920, Irvin Tabor, his black chauffeur, friend and confidante, inherited the house arranged through an oral agreement.

Tabor moved into the house in 1925, but neighbors did not like the idea of a black man living among them. Racism was strong enough that, although he went through great effort to stay there, he never felt at home. Eventually, he decided to move and took the house with him. The Tabor brothers pooled their talents, resources and knowledge to transport the house in three pieces to its present location where Irving Tabor lived until his death on January 9, 1987, at the age of 93.

The property was purchased in 2003 by local restoration enthusiasts and became Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument #926 in 2008.

Sturdevant Bungalow – 721 Amoroso Pl.

The Sturdevant Bungalow is one of a grouping of homes that were built on spec by William G. Laueson in the Venice Annex Tract. Laueson had been building homes in Venice, Ocean Park and Santa Monica and was one of the early developers of the San Fernando Valley. The house is essentially unaltered since its construction and serves as a near-pristine example of the simple Craftsman Bungalow. While it appears to be a stock set of plans that Laueson used, the quality of design and workmanship is high and the house displays a high degree of integrity making it an excellent example for the study of the Craftsman style and the methods of construction that were used at the time it was built.

The Sturdevant Bungalow is the most intact of the five in Venice Annex and it is a prime example of the design of the single-story front-gabled Craftsman Bungalow. The builder is important because of his early work in the Venice area and his later impact in the development of the San Fernando Valley. It appears that Mrs. Sturdevant, a Christian Science Practitioner, used this house as a weekend retreat, while living in Hollywood. By 1920, it was owned and occupied by the Whyler family as the demographics of Venice began to change from a vacation community to a suburb of Los Angeles.

The Sturdevant Bungalow at became Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument #927 in 2008.

Researched and written by historian Charles J. Fisher.

Venice West Café – 7 Dudley Ave.

Before the hippies of the '60s, Venice was home to the Beats of the '50s. It was a cherished lifestyle that enabled struggling poets, musicians and artists to escape from conventional codes of behavior to express their own brand of creativity. The Venice West Café opened in 1958 by Stuart Perkoff to cater to the emerging counterculture movement. The bohemian scene of "Venice West" received national exposure in "The Holy Barbarians" written by Lawrence Lipton in 1959. The café closed its doors in 1966 after battles with the community and an eviction attempt by the building owner.

Built in 1922, the rectangular commercial vernacular building is low slung with a flat roof and rounded corner at Ocean Front Walk at Dudley Ave. The exterior features the original coarse brick with “steers head” ornamentation in white glazed brick accentuating the roofline.

Although no longer here, the Beat Generation spirit of “Venice West” continues to influence the ambiance of Venice.

The former site of the Venice West Café became Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument #979 in 2010.

Irvin Tabor Family Residences – 605-07 Westminster Ave.

The Irvin Tabor Family Residences, a multifamily residential courtyard property spanning two lots, was developed between 1916 and 1926 as housing for extended family. Tabor and his immediate family lived in the property until the late 1920s, but it remained under ownership by the Tabor family until 1977. It is a representative example of residential properties associated with the African American community in Venice during the early 20th century. The property is identified with a historic personage through its association with Irvin Tabor, the chauffeur of Venice founder Abbot Kinney, and one of the first African Americans to settle in the Oakwood neighborhood.

The subject property consists of eight buildings (four on each lot) situated around a central courtyard. Most of the buildings have board and batten or clapboard siding and gabled roofs with composition shingles, except for at least two that have stucco cladding. Fenestration across the buildings vary from fixed single-lite and divided-lite windows to jalousie, vinyl single-hung, and vinyl sliding windows. When Tabor purchased the property in 1916, there was at least one existing building and in 1922, Tabor relocated two bungalows to the site from Abbot Kinney’s St. Mark’s Island, later called the United States Island. Several of the other buildings were constructed by Tabor from recycled lumber from the old Venice boathouse, gondolas, and the amusement park.

The Irvin Tabor Residences became Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Landmark #1149 in 2017.

The Potter – 1305 Ocean Front Walk

The Potter, a four-story residential hotel building designed with Neoclassical-style elements, is associated with early 20th century leisure tourism in Venice. It is a rare example of a 1910s apartment house in Venice. The opening of Venice of America in 1905 was made possible by the emergence of a middleclass with the time and money for leisurely activities, and the construction of a streetcar to deliver them from downtown Los Angeles. By 1911, business in Venice was booming and to accommodate the large influx of leisure seekers flocking to the seaside resort, several brick apartment houses were built along Ocean Front Walk. The Potter (1912) was among the first built, boasting a prime location, four blocks from the Venice streetcar station, three blocks from Venice Pier, and across the street from the Venice Surf

Bathhouse. With the 1960s demolition of many Venice of America era buildings, The Potter is not only one of Venice's oldest remaining apartment houses, but it is one of the few buildings in Venice left from that period.

The Potter became Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Landmark #1156 in 2018.

Winn Apartments – 417 Ocean Front Walk

The Winn Apartments, built in 1921, is a four-story, 32-unit apartment building with a partial basement and partial roof deck. The Italianate architectural style building was originally constructed for J.R. and Lulu A. Winn as an apartment house offering short- and long-term stays. It is currently in use as a hotel known as Venice Suites.

As with The Potter described above, the Winn Apartments is associated with early 20th century leisure tourism in Venice. In this case, it is a rare example of a 1920s apartment house in Venice. Again, as with The Potter, the Winn Apartments is not only one of Venice's oldest remaining apartment houses, but it is one of the few buildings in Venice left from that period.

The Winn Apartments became Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument #1170 in 2018.

1110-1116 Abbot Kinney Boulevard

1110-1116 Abbot Kinney Boulevard exemplifies significant contributions as a rare, intact example of early commercial development located along the former Venice Short Line and for its association with postwar musical and visual arts in Venice, especially the emergence of West Coast Minimalism and the Light and Space movements.

Starting in the 1960s, the building was occupied by various post-war period artists and musicians. In 1967, architect Frank Gehry designed a live/work plan for 1110 which has continuously served as the studio and residence of artist Frederick Eversley since 1969.

Rectangular in plan, the subject property is of brick construction with a flat roof. The primary, north-facing elevation features six distinct storefronts with divided-lite transoms and mostly off-centered entries. All the storefronts are wood, except for a replacement steel frame storefront at 1116. The façade has buff-colored fluted brick with white-glazed brick window surrounds and a geometric motif in buff glazed brick along the roofline.

1110-1116 Abbot Kinney Boulevard became Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument #1176 in 2019.

Morris Abrams Chateau des Roses – 515 Rose Ave./254 Rennie Ave.

The Morris Abrams Chateau des Roses is a two-story multi-family residence built in 1946 and designed in the Late Chateausque architectural style by Los Angeles architect Max C. Drebin

for Morris Abrams, a local baker. It exemplifies a rare example of a multi-family building designed in the Late Chateausque architectural style in Venice.

Irregular in plan, the subject property is of wood frame construction with smooth stucco cladding and has a steeply pitched, mansard roof with composition shingles. The primary, southeast-facing elevation is asymmetrically composed into two bays with the eastern bay protruding slightly. The southwest elevation is asymmetrically composed with individual entrances to each unit and balconies on the second floor. There are corbeled turrets with conical roofs and quoins decorating the corners of each street-facing elevation, and a string course between the first and second floors. Fenestration includes multi-lite wood casement windows and multi-lite wood bay windows. There is a landscaped courtyard on the southwest-facing elevation and a detached garage at the rear of the property. Interior features include original hardwood floors, kitchen and bathroom tile, kitchen cabinetry, and moldings.

The Morris Abrams Chateau des Roses became Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument #1197 in 2019.

Monday Women's Club – 1206 6th Ave.

The Monday Women's Club, a one-story institutional building, is a rare example of an African American women's clubhouse building in Venice, important for its role in the social history of the African American community in Oakwood.

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, Los Angeles has had a large women's club movement. Following a nationwide trend, the organization of clubs grew to cope with community problems. Local African American women's organizations grew out of churches, mutual aid societies, and literary clubs. As in the case of the Monday Women's Club, many of these organizations were affiliated with the National Association of Colored Women, which formed in response to heightened racism, a need for social services within the African American community, and exclusionary policies of many white-run organizations. While African American and white women's clubs had similar missions and activities, they operated separately. It is estimated that approximately 20 African American women's clubhouses once existed in Los Angeles; however, the subject property appears to be one of only two buildings remaining.

The club was located at this site from the 1920s until approximately 1947. While the club and their trustees held the property until 1971, in 1947, Bethel Tabernacle Church of God in Christ moved into the space, which they purchased nearly 30 years later. In 2014, the property was sold to a private entity and is currently vacant.

The Monday's Women's Club became Los Angeles Historic Cultural Monument #1203 in 2020.

Venice Landmarks We Cannot See

Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument #490 designated in 1990 is Sa-anga at 4231-4363

Lincoln Blvd. at Admiralty Way. The site was a major village and burial ground circa 1540 of the Tongva/Gabrielino Native Americans and contains remains of tools, jewelry and weapons.

Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument #532 designated in 1991 is the Venice Arcades, Columns and Capitals at 67-71 Windward Ave. constructed in 1904 by Abbot Kinney as part of his Venice of America development. The arcades were patterned after those surrounding the Piazza San Marco in Venice Italy and were the visually unifying element of the architectural landscape.

As we know, there are few remaining arcades, so it is important to keep the exiting ones. In 1991, the Cultural Heritage Commission approved a nomination by the Venice Historical Society of the above colonnade section prior to construction of a new building on Windward Ave. But do you see it now? Technically, historic monument status allows the Cultural Heritage Commission to object to the issuance of a demolition permit for 180 days, with an additional 180-day extension possible upon approval of the city council to evaluate preservation alternatives. This timeline did not happen with the Windward Ave. colonnade. An important reminder of Venice's history was gone before anyone could object to the ultimate demolition.