

Birth of a City

The first Europeans to come to Beverly Hills were the Spanish explorers of the Gaspar de Portola party who passed through the area in 1769. Around 1822, Mexican settlers Maria Rita Valdez and her husband Vicente Valdez were granted the Rancho Rodeo de las Aguas by the Mexican government. Its boundaries included roughly all of present-day Beverly Hills, as well as territory that is now part of the cities of Los Angeles and West Hollywood to the east and south.

In the 1870s, much of the rancho passed into the hands of Henry Hammel and Charles Denker. Managers of the United States Hotel in Los Angeles, Hammel and Denker farmed the land and raised cattle until Southern California entered a land boom in the late 1880s. At that time, when the two men proposed their own town site for the area, to be called "Morocco."

In 1900, Burton Green, along with several partners, purchased "Morocco" for the Amalgamated Oil Company and commissioned a new round of oil exploration. After drilling many unproductive wells, they reorganized as the Rodeo Land and Water Company in 1906. Green hired the landscape architect Wilbur D. Cook who, influenced by landscape designer Frederick Law Olmstead, created wide curving streets that hugged the hills. Horticulturalist John Reeves was hired to oversee the planning and planting of trees in the City; and is credited with the unique street tree planning concept which specified that a different species of tree be planted for the full length of each street.



Post Office, 1934

CITY OF BEVERLY HILLS HISTORIC WALKING TOUR DOORS OPEN 2024 - CPF



City Hall, 1932

In 1912, the Beverly Hills Hotel was constructed at the site of the Gathering of the Waters. The hotel became the center of community life, serving as theater, meeting place and church. The City of Beverly Hills was incorporated in 1914, electing to remain independent from the City of Los Angeles primarily around the issues of water resources and schools.

A Modern City

The City experienced a rapid and significant transformation in the 1920s and 1930s. Development during this period created the basic form and architectural character of Beverly Hills as we know it today. Commercial development in the downtown core and multi-family residential development in the area south of Wilshire and Santa Monica Boulevards completed the transformation of the city.



Anderton Court, 1954

From the 1950s onward, Beverly Hills continued to gain prominence as a center of commercial and retail activity. The construction of Welton Becket's International style Beverly Hilton in 1956 was a sign of the city's continued commercial vitality and importance.

During the 1960s and 70s, Beverly Hills' downtown urbanization continued until the westernmost section of the downtown triangle was the most densely developed office cluster outside of downtown Los Angeles.

By the 1980s, new construction in Beverly Hills was scattered throughout the City on undeveloped properties in the hills and on redeveloped parcels in both the residential and commercial sections.

Source: Beverly Hills Historic Resources Survey, 1985-1986 Report, prepared by Johnson Heumann Research Associates



City of Beverly Hills

Historic Preservation Program

Adopted by Ordinance January 25, 2012

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www.beverlyhills.org/preservation

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