

CARTHAY CIRCLE HISTORY

The Carthay Circle has often been considered circular but about the only thing that was round in the circle was the dome of the grand old Carthay Circle Theatre which bore the name of the subdivision. The boundaries of the circle are Fairfax Avenue to the East; La Cienega Boulevard to the West; Olympic Boulevard to the South; Wilshire Boulevard to the North with San Vicente Boulevard (formerly Eulalia Boulevard, named for a mid-wife) cutting a diagonal path throughout her domain. Geographically on a grid, Carthay Circle resembles more of a jigsaw piece in search of a puzzle than the puzzle she is.

Planned and developed in the glamorous era of the exciting '20's, it was J. Harvey McCarthy's hope that this sub-division would be in of a "high class" caliber. In 1924 he hired and directed his architects, Curlett and Beelman to follow his instructions in the planning of this community. The streets were laid on a diagonal.

Land cost at that time was at a premium and fifty (50) foot lots sold for \$7,500.00!!! The sub-division was the first to have underground utilities, making the area free of unsightly telephone poles and electric wires.

The zoning for the land was primarily for single family structures one story in height. West of McCarthy Vista on Warner the houses should be one story while to the East the homes should be 2 stories. On Del Valle single family and a one story height was the limit. San Vicente on the north side boosts both one and two story structures and the south side is limited to one story even though some of those are duplexes. The duplexes were to continue the single family look of the neighborhood. The same requirements prevailed for Commodore Sloat Drive and the north side of Hayes Drive. Schumacher Drive and Moore Drive were to continue in the single family one story tradition as was the north side of Olympic Blvd.

A portion of Carthay's face to the world is comprised of mini-Mediterranean villas or less than imposing spacious Spanish colonial homes (Mission Revival as some curators are likely to label early California architecture - a lure to prospective investors and residents as an invitation to the sunny side of life in Southern California). To round out the architectural theme, there are a trickle of post-WWII homes. Sliding glass doors are conspicuous by their absence.

A gas station was allowed at the corner of Schumacher Drive and Olympic Boulevard and a service station was permitted on Commodore Sloat Drive near a two story business structure which housed Figarts Radio Supply. These businesses faced the Carthay Circle

Theatre which was in the center of the sub-division. There was a small market, a bank, a cleaner, a restaurant, and a beauty shop in close juxtaposition to the theatre with walkways and lots of grassy areas, and all were designed to provide convince to the circle residents.

Land was donated for a public elementary school and a small church building both facing Olympic Boulevard and apartments were permitted to be built east of the church. The apartment building at the intersection of Commodore Sloat Drive and Olympic Boulevard was built in the era of WWII to ease the housing shortage. A special re-zoning was called for to accomplish this.

Carthay Circle commands respect. Subtle. Stable. Sleepy. As J. Harvey McCarthy is not around to answer questions (deceased circa 1935), one speculates who put the extra "a" into Carthay? For phonetic purposes, perhaps?

Looking back McCarthy, developer of the 136-acre tract, had visionary glasses some of us need a prescription for as he had the foresight to forward an architectural survey of the homes in the course of construction or contemplated design, to Washington, D.C. These were included as part of a permanent exhibit of model homes which were added to the National Advisory Council of Better Homes in America archives. Furthermore, a panel of prominent architects at that time considered Carthay, "one of the finest examples of subdivision planning that Los Angeles and Southern California possesses." J. Harvey McCarthy was also responsible for the planning and development of the exclusive Fremont Park Place Area, one of Los Angeles' few gated communities and another prestigious neighborhood.

In connection with the Carthay Center development, and to carry out the architectural features he had in mind, McCarthy employed a staff of architects under the direction of H. W. Bishop, a well known Boston architect of that period. Architecturally the area is filled with significant homes and almost 95 percent of the structures remain unchanged.

Although the some of the pioneers probably never set foot below the Humbolt County Line, Carthay Circle streets bear the names of California pioneers. Forty-niners of the Gold Rush are represented by streets named in their honor:

Foster Drive:

Stephen Foster, born in Maine in 1820, a Yale graduate, arrived in Los Angeles with Col. Philip St George Cook's Mormon Battalion in 1846-7 after the Treaty of Cahuenga. He worked as an interpreter for the Americans. With Abel Stearns he helped with the founding of the first state government. He served as the first

city archivist and was first alcalde (mayor) prior to the incorporation of Los Angeles on April 4, 1850. Later, he was mayor of Los Angeles and superintendent of schools. He died January 28, 1868.

Hayes Drive

Benjamin Hayes, born in Baltimore, Maryland in 1815, was an attorney in the early 1850's and later a district judge (1855) in Southern California. He was judge during a trial that year when two black women, Biddy Mason and Hannah who were former slaves were brought to California by their former owner Robert Smith and he wanted to return to Texas. Texas was a slave state and these two women did not wish to return to their former slavery. Judge Hayes ruled in their favor that they were free and could remain in Los Angeles. Able Stearns, assisted Judge Hayes in this case. Judge Hayes died in Los Angeles in 1877, leaving valuable historical manuscripts to California State University.

Moore Drive

Benjamin Moore, born Alabama, 1824, fought against the Californios during the Mexican American War. He was a leader of the criminal bar, a member of the first California legislature, and helped frame the State Constitution. He was an uncle to J Harvey Mccarthy and came to California from Florida and once jumped into a bull ring and killed the bull with a Bowie knife. He died in battle by the hand of Andres Pico in Stockton in January 2, 1866.

Commodore Sloat Drive

John Drake Sloat, born in Rockland County, New York 1781, American naval officer (1761-1867) commander of the Pacific squadron 1844-1846 and commander of the celebrated frigate "Constellation". A great fighter and patriotic American, in 1846, when war with Mexico was threatening he took possession of California for the United States when he raised Old Glory at Monterey, California July 7, 1846 on the grounds that the British were about to do so. In the war he took San Francisco, and

held it until relieved by Robert F. Stockton. He retired in 1861 but was promoted commodore in 1862, and rear admiral in 1866 on the retired list. Sloat was responsible for a proclamation to have land titles guaranteed. Many rancheros lost title to their lands as a result of this edict. He died on Staten Island, New York in 1867.

Schumacher Drive

John Schumacher was a gold prospector during the big gold rush days of the mid 1800's. Member of Stevensons Regiment, US Volunteers for Mexican War Service. He came to California in 1847, mined gold on Sutter Creek then came to Los Angeles, where he served as a City Council person. Later, he became involved with and was responsible for the inception of the California grape growing industry (without irrigation.) He was born 1816 and died March 2, 1885.

Stearns Drive

Don Abel Stearns, born in Salem, Mass. in 1799, was a cattleman and an early pioneer who came to California in 1829 and arrived in Los Angeles in 1841 by way of the Santa Fe trail. He ran a warehouse in San Pedro for the skin trade that the Mexican government accused him of smuggling. The charges were dropped and Stearns was made the Administrator of Customs for Los Angeles. He fought on the side of the Californios to end Mexican rule. Don Abel latter owned Rancho Los Alamitos (Little Cottonwoods). He lived here with his wife Arcadia Bandini, who he married when he was 43 and she was 14. Through his skin trade he became wealthy, loaned money and when necessary foreclosed the property thus acquiring more rancheros. A merchant, a large land owner, member of the First State Constitutional Convention and a member of the State Assembly, he sent the first California gold to the Philadelphia mint in 1842. He was the first alcalde and with Stephen Foster indexed and developed the first city archives. His land holdings stretched from Laguna to Pomona. By 1868, due to drought, his livestock died and he was bankrupt. He put land into a trust and it was

subdivided by the Los Angeles and San Bernardino Land Company. This began the Americanization of the Southland. Don Abel died in 1871, debt free having received \$1.50 an acre for his land. Arcadia Stearns remarried and died in 1912 at the age of 84.

Del Valle Drive

Ygnacio del Valle who was born in Mexico July 1, 1808, came to California in 1825 built one of the first homes on the downtown Los Angeles plaza. A Lieutenant in the California Mexican Army from 1828-1840, Commissioner on Secularization of Missions in 1834. He inherited the Rancho San Francisco in the Santa Clarita Valley from his father. In 1850 he became the second alcalde under Abel Stearns and they were the last two alcaldes. He was also the owner of Rancho Camulos, the home of Ramona. Rancho San Francisco was the setting for Helen Hunt Jackson's novel "A Century of Dishonor" about the mistreatment of the American Indians. This home is still standing. Ygnacio Del Valle who was the father of the Honorable R. F. del Valle, died in 1880

Warner Drive

John J. Warner, AKA John Jose Warner, born November 20, 1807, was a pioneer, a fur trapper, vigilante, and historian who came to California in the 1830's. He was an early advocate of and workers for a railroad to link the Great West with the East. Consul to California under Mexican rule, and owner of famous Aqua Caliente Rancho, he befriended Pio Pico in his later years and let him live at his home on the Plaza in Los Angeles. John Warner died April 11, 1895.

Carrillo Drive

Don Jose Antonio Carrillo was born in San Francisco in 1706. He fought for the Californios in the Mexican American War (1846). His claim to fame was his trickery during a battle near Palos Verdes. His army was smaller than the American army but he and his men had the horses gallop in a circle stirring up enough dust to look like a major threat. The Yankees retreated. Carrillo and Augustin Olvera were the Peace

Commissioners who met with John Fremont on January 13, 1847. At this time a treaty was signed with Andreas Pico of the National Forces of California. Don Jose was Alcalde of Los Angeles in 1834 and hosted the wedding of Pio Pico and Senorita Maria Ygnacio Alvarado in February, of that year, at the Pico House. In 1835 and 1836 he was a member of the Mexican Congress from California and for 23 years was prominent in territorial and state politics. He died in 1863.

Barrows Drive

Henry D. Barrows, born February 23, 1825, was an educator and instructor at the La Puente ranch which was owned by William Workman, an early pioneer. Workman lost this ranch in 1875 after giving "Lucky" Baldwin the mortgage. Barrows was a U S Marshall under President Lincoln from 1861-1865, a successful merchant and as a noted historian, was President of the Historical Society of Southern California. Barrows became Los Angeles Schools superintendent in 1875. He died August 7, 1914.

Olympic Boulevard

Olympic Boulevard was formerly known as Country Road Drive and was officially changed after the 1930 Olympic Games in Los Angeles. The area south of Olympic Boulevard was bean fields.

McCarthy Vista

Daniel O. McCarthy was a forty-niner who became a publisher. Carthay Center, a real estate subdivision, was named for him by his son J. Harvey McCarthy who died in 1935. Carthay, according to one historian, was a deliberate euphonious corruption of Carthy. The center strip of McCarthy Vista and the area now called Carthay Circle Park was donated to the City of Los Angeles and two memorials along with the bronze statue were also donated by the Native Sons of the Golden West (NSGW). Daniel McCarthy was an outstanding figure in perilous times he worked tirelessly, and courageously to save California to the Union. He fought secession with pen and pistol, he published the "American Flag" at San Francisco, a Unionist paper that seceders

burned. This miner, merchant, born in Raleigh NC, August 24, 1830, came to California 1850, San Diego, 1869, and died Los Angeles, August 13, 1919.

San Vicente Boulevard

San Vicente Boulevard was originally named for Eulalia Perry, M.D. and mid-wife. She was born in Lower California in 1735, came to California with the founders of San Diego Mission in 1769 and to San Gabriel Mission in 1771. She was secretary and accountant to the padres, mid-wife and doctor to the native women and lived a self sacrificing life to the age of 136 years. Eulalia Perry is buried at San Gabriel.

Fairfax Avenue

Fairfax Ave was the route that the elephants of the famous Barnum and Bailey Circus were marched. The boxcars were parked in Carthay Circle and the elephants marched to the circus grounds where the tents and the other animals were housed. This is now the site of the May Company Wilshire

Wilshire Boulevard

Wilshire Boulevard was itself only two lanes wide leading from downtown Los Angeles to Santa Monica and the beaches. The area was suburban and covered with barley fields on both sides of Wilshire Boulevard. The zoning on Wilshire was changed from residential to commercial because of the changed use of Wilshire Boulevard which was widened to 6 lanes. It is also interesting to note that Wilshire Boulevard was planted with Palm trees.

La Cienega Boulevard

While La Cienega Boulevard is the official West boundary of the Carthay Circle there are no homes on that street. There are however, some impressionable sites such as the La Cienega Park (recently re modeled by the City of Beverly Hills).

In addition to the streets named for important people in the early days of Los Angeles and California history, Carthay Circle has six

charming walkways that are within the Circle boundaries, going north and south from Wilshire to Olympic for easy access throughout the community. These walkways represent a unique feature of the neighborhood not found in other areas of Los Angeles. They are named for California Missions or important California Historical personalities. The historical aspect of Carthay Center is further emphasized by the naming of the pedestrian ways that cut the long blocks for old California Missions.

Capistrano Way	Named for the Mission San Juan Capistrano, founded November 1, 1776 by Father Junipero Serra:
Carmel Way	Named for San Carlos de Carmel Mission, founded in 1770 Father Serra and Father Juan Crespe:
San Diego Way	Named for the San Diego Mission, founded July 16, 1769 by Father Serra:
San Gabriel Way	Named for the San Gabriel Mission, founded September 8, 1871 by Father Pedro Benito Cambon and Father Angel Somera:
Santa Ynez Way	Named for Mission Santa Ynez, founded September, 1804 by Father Serra:
Ramona Court	Probably named for Ramona Parlor 109 - Native Sons of the Golden West who were appointed to select the names of the of the streets of the Carthay Center which honored the worthy pioneers of the State, County and City.

When the original Carthay Center lots were sold in the early 1920's they were so desirable they went for double what their counterparts in Beverly Hills cost. Dubbed the gateway to the west side Carthay Center had the distinction of being the first Los Angeles subdivision with underground utilities.

The Carthay Circle is over 65 years old and was planned as a single family, duplex or small apartment dwelling area. The Carthay Center district was the scene of an impressive building start in 1924. With appropriate ceremonies, officers of the Native Sons of the Golden West laid a corner stone for the first group of buildings the Carthay Center shopping district. The new building was built for D. C. Dunn, a Hollywood capitalist, and the anchor tenants were to be Sam Seelig with a large market and Carl Stadler with a drug store. In 1923 in memory of his mother, Amanda Anderson McCarthy, McCarthy erected a community inter-denominational church building that he called Amanda Chapel. The

bell in its belfry was lost from the Mission Dolores, after the great fire of San Francisco. The church is now a Episcopal denomination and remains active in the community. The late Governor Goodwin Knight was married to his second wife in this chapel.

In the opinion of a jury of leading architects, landscape architects, and city planners, Carthay Center, was designed by Cook and Hall, was considered "ONE OF THE FINEST EXAMPLES OF SUBDIVISION PLANNING THAT LOS ANGELES AND SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA POSSESSES." Their reasons were described as follows: "It offers good connections with streets in contiguous areas, provides good trunk-line arteries, and an excellent interior development. The ornamental, business, and educational allotment areas are excellently arranged; the protection to the ultimate resident owners against depreciating and antagonistic occupation by a different standard than initially started is well controlled".

The CARTHAY CIRCLE THEATRE was built in 1926 and it opened with a concert in 1927. An early faded photograph shows the quaintness and beauty of the area with theatre reflected in a large pond with large boulders and an aquatic plantings centered with a slightly larger than life statue of a "forty-niner".

The bronze figure that now sits in a park-like area at McCarthy Vista and San Vicente Boulevard is long-haired and booted, and formerly a small stream of water poured from his gold pan onto a boulder. The granite boulder, which weighs thirteen tons, was named for Jedediah Strong Smith, a fur trapper, scout, and pathfinder of the Rockies. Smith was the first white man to reach California by a cross-continental route in 1826 and the boulder was brought from the Cajon Pass close to that old trail Smith followed to the Golden State. The award winning statue of the gold prospector was designed by Henry Lion and dedicated to the men of the first gold rush and to Daniel O. McCarthy, a forty-niner in whose likeness, from an old daguerreotype, the statue was fashioned.

Nearby, a mighty Sequoia tree was planted in memory of "Snowshoe Thompson," a pioneer of the postal service, who traveled the mountains on home-made snowshoes, to deliver mail to the gold miners in the mountains and distant places.

PREMIERES AT CARTHAY CIRCLE THEATRE-----

Throughout Los Angeles there a many who remember the dazzling film premieres during the thirties, forties, fifties, and sixties, which were staged with fanfare, fans and klieg lights, heralding the event as movie stars stepped from their limousines onto the red-carpeted theatre entrance. Such premieres as "Snow White", "The Great Ziegfeld", and the re-issue of "Gone With The Wind". "Shoes of the Fisherman" was the last film to be shown before the wrecking crews moved in to dismantle the white and blue concrete structure,

with its multi-colored tiled high tower.

Most of the residents of Carthay Circle still mourn the loss of their beloved landmark - the Grand Old Carthay Circle Theatre - which stood at Carrillo Drive and San Vicente Boulevard and for 40 years was one of Los Angeles prime entertainment centers. Normally a highly vocal group, the homeowners in this little west side community which fits snugly between Hancock Park and Beverly Hills, claim they never had a fighting chance to save the little theatre when it was torn down in 1969. Public pressure in those days was not quite as effective in preserving special buildings as it is now, they maintain. The real estate surgery done in the name of progress in the late 1960's to make way for twin office buildings may have taken some of the glamour and mystique away from this small community, not an ounce of its individuality.

The theatre was something of a repository of early California. In the lobby hung a painting, "California's First Theatre" by Frank Tenney Johnson, depicting the Eagle Theatre built in Sacramento in 1849, and painted on the drop curtain was "An Emigrant Train at Donner Lake" also by Johnson, a tribute to the ill-fated Donner party.

The commitment to the theatre's existence was demonstrated by A. E. Weatherbee who, in keeping with the lease agreement which stipulated, that the lease would remain effective so long as a ticket a day was sold at the box office. He daily acted as ticket agent, and audience during the lean times.

Carthay Circle residents have always been civic minded as was evidenced by a very active Carthay Circle womens' group which was part of the neighborhood scene since the early years and traditionally held sewing circles and canasta parties to raise funds for the California Babies and Childrens Hospital.

The Carthay Circle Homeowners Association (CCHOA) was founded when the tract opened in 1924. Carthay Circle Homeowners Association has contributed to Carthay Center Elementary School. The Association has been active in tree planting, maintenance of park areas within the Circle, erecting distinctive neighborhood signs on the islands of McCarthy Vista and San Vicente, and obtaining street closures along Fairfax Ave to protect the character of Warner, Del Valle, and Barrows Drives. Through the efforts of the Association the Carthay Circle was the 7th district in the City of Los Angeles to get permit parking.

There was an attempt by the State Division of Highways to build a freeway parallel to Fairfax Ave through Crescent Heights/McCarthy Vista which would have completely destroyed the viability of this beautiful residential area. CCHOA in cooperation with other homeowner groups was successful in defeating the plan for the Laurel Canyon Freeway.

When the sub-division was developed the deeds were for periods of sixty years and provided that no buildings could have a flat roof, property could be owned only by caucasians, clothes lines had to be three feet from the property sidelines, property had to be kept in a sightly manner, and that plans for any structure had to be submitted to the homeowners association for review. The association has revised and updated the deeds to all single family and duplex properties and has brought the deeds into conformity with existing zoning and codes.

Also at the time of its development, Carthay Center was judged to be one of the most perfect developments in Southern California. The jury included Sumner Hunt, fellow of the American Institute of Architects, president of the City Planning Commission of Los Angeles, architect of many of the finest buildings in Los Angeles such as the Automobile Club Building; James G Langston fellow of the American Society of Landscape Architects and former member of the Fine Arts Commission, City of Washington, DC; and John R Prince, Myron Hunt, and Emil T Mische who were also noted in architecture and planning. Carthay Center won the First Award and the judges stated, in part, "the areas are excellently arranged so the protection to the ultimate resident-owners against depreciating and antagonistic occupation, by a different standard than initially started, is well controlled."

A mass meeting of some 600 families was held at Carthay Circle in 1959 to protest re-zoning of one of the residential streets for commercial use. That rally was sponsored by the Carthay Circle Homeowners Association, which was protesting an application by an Eastern Investment Firm (Diners Club) to re-zone several lots in the 6200 block on Warner Drive.

Carthay Circle represents a unique location and represents an established feature of the City of Los Angeles which must be preserved. The Carthay Circle Homeowners Association will continue to work for the preservation of our Historical Residential Area.

THE CARTHAY CIRCLE THEATRE

The design of the Carthay Circle Theatre embodied many unusual features including a huge lighted tower which was visible for many miles. It boasted of many interior innovations such as a circular auditorium which afforded splendid sight lines and at the same time giving a feeling of intimacy which is, even today, lacking in many large theatres. The ceiling was surmounted by Spanish wood and which incorporated thousands of combinations of lighting effects. The lighting system, designed by Claude D. Seaman, was thought to

be the most perfect in America.

CHURCH

October 29, 1920 Headlines read -

CHURCH PLEADS BROTHERLINESS...

AMANDA CHAPEL BUILDING UP CARTHAY CENTER - INTERDENOMINATIONAL RITES ARE IMPRESSIVE - PASTORS CALLED FROM OTHER FLOCKS TO OFFICIATE...

Behold it in the center of a large real estate tract, surrounded by bustling automobiles and real estate signboards, a delightful little church dedicated to human brotherliness and taking for its arch motto John xv:12, "This is my commandment that ye love one another as I have loved you."

It was called Amanda Chapel and is still located in the Wilshire Fairfax area where a then new community and new community spirit was coming into being. The church was dedicated to the memory of Amanda Anderson McCarthy, deceased mother of J. Harvey McCarthy. The chapel was inter-denominational and was erected by the promoters, was well built, artistic, and was free of debt. The dedication of Amanda Chapel was planned by Herman C Lichtenberger, Past President of the Native Sons of the Golden West who was in charge of the ceremony and assisted by other high officers of that organization. The Native Sons ritual was used and adapted to the occasion so that divines of many denominations could participate. William Jennings Bryan delivered the principal address to leading city officials and prominent citizens.

The dedication of Amanda Chapel boasted of an impressive host of dignitaries including, Rabbi Ernest R. Trattner of the Jewish Temple Emmanuel, Edgar F Magnin of Temple B'nai B'rith and the Rev. Joseph P. McQuade of San Francisco, a Roman Catholic priest who was the donor of the chapel bell. There were representatives of 30 Protestant creeds and representatives of the city including Boyle Workman, President of the Council and Acting Mayor and other members of the council, Col John A Griffin, City Engineer, Senator R F Del Valle, President, Board of Public Commissioners, G Gordon Whitnall, City Planning Commission and many others. Admission to the interior was by ticket only because of the space limitation of 250 persons but the principal features, including Mr Bryan's address and the presentation of the corner stone inscribed with the name of Amanda Anderson McCarthy on the south wall of the Chapel took place outside. Among the prominent citizens who were expected to be present were W G McAdoo, father of William G McAdoo, Jr, a Carthay Center resident, L C Brand, President Title Guarantee and Trust, E W Sargent, Vice President of Title Guarantee and Trust, John T Cooper, Vice President of Security Trust & Savings Bank, William F. Hunsaker, Judge Benjamin F Bledsoe, Marco H and Irving

H Helman, President and Vice President of the Helman Bank, T B Cosgrove, Irwin J Muma and Mr and Mrs Harold Lloyd.

The ceremony began with the ringing of the Chapel bell thirty one times, once for each State in the Union at the time California was admitted. The bell which had formerly hung in the Mission Dolores at San Francisco but disappeared after the great fire. It was recovered by the Rev Joseph B McQuade of that City who presented it to Ramona Parlor NSGW of Los Angeles. Because of its interest in Amanda Chapel, Ramona Parlor gave the bell to J Harvey McCarthy.

School

Carthay Center school was opened in the 1923 - 24 school year to meet the demands of a growing community. The school opened with a total of three (3) teachers and 60 students. The superintendent of schools at that time was Susan M Dorsey, for whom the Dorsey High School in another area of the city, is named. By the end of the 1990 - 91 school year Carthay Circle had 22 teachers and 560 students. This is still a thriving community and these numbers substantiate that fact.