

120 S. Myrtle Avenue

The 'Leven Oaks Hotel

John L. Wiley had this to say in the history of Monrovia he wrote in 1927, "Monrovia had been talking hotel, thinking hotel and dreaming hotel for years, and seemed no nearer to getting one, when Louis B. Vollmer made an offer which solved the problem and secured the erection of the 'Leven Oaks Hotel." Mr. Vollmer, a retired ornamental iron manufacturer from St. Paul, Minnesota, was the owner of 50 lots in the Loftus-Vollmer Tracts No. 1 and No. 2, located in the western part of Monrovia. He promised the citizens of Monrovia that he would erect a new tourist-class hotel if they would buy those lots at a price sufficient to generate thirty-two thousand dollars. The challenge was met with great civic pride, and the sale concluded successfully in March of 1911. The hotel was completed in November of 1911, and the grand opening was on December 11. The hotel received its name from the eleven oak trees that were located on the hotel site at the time it was built. Several of those original oaks remain to adorn the site today.

The hotel was designed by Frank O. Eager, a local architect, in a California bungalow-Swiss Chalet style. It was subsequently redesigned in the popular Spanish Colonial Revival style, probably in 1927 when the store fronts were added along Myrtle Avenue, by Fredrick H. Wallis, a Los Angeles architect who had designed Vollmer's personal residence in 1923. The interior of the hotel was not changed, however, and the Craftsman inspired lobby, painstakingly restored to its original appearance, is a wonderful step back in time. The informational brochure of the 'Leven Oaks states, "Mr. Vollmer oversaw the operation of the hotel until 1939 when his son, Alvin, took over the operation." Six years later, the hotel was sold to Mr. and Mrs. William Hunter and Mrs. Hunter's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Thompson. The hotel remained in the family until 1966, operating the last few years as a retirement hotel for senior citizens." Among the subsequent owners of the 'Leven Oaks was another prominent Monrovia, William Ryan. The present owner of the hotel has been active in its management and in the business community for the over twenty years.

In response to a growing population of seniors, the 'Leven Oaks has taken a major step forward by becoming a facility licensed to provide assisted living. As James Russell Lowell once wrote, "New occasions teach new duties." The 'Leven Oaks has responded to one of the emerging challenges of our times by providing needed care in a gracious and historic setting.