

# IMPORTANT MILESTONES IN THE LIFE OF MONROVIA

## Prologue

- 1770 Founding of Mission San Gabriel.
- 1805 Construction of a new church at Mission San Gabriel and the use of the sawpit.
- 1866 Malcolm D. Beall moves his family to Cloverleaf Canyon. Beall farms and establishes a colony of bees for honey.
- 1874 The Rankins Family establishes residence in Emerson Flats. They sell wood in Los Angeles for a living and produce honey to increase their income.
- 1875 E.J. "Lucky" Baldwin purchases Rancho Santa Anita.
- 1883 Baldwin subdivides the eastern portion of Rancho Santa Anita.  
Lewis L. Bradbury purchases the western portion of Rancho Azusa de Duarte.
- 1884 William Monroe purchases land from Baldwin and established residence in Monrovia.  
Beginnings of the Citrus Era in local history.
- 1885 Spence, Bicknell, Crank, and Falvey purchase land from Baldwin and Bradbury.
- 1886 A number of Black families from South Carolina arrive in Southern California to live on Baldwin's ranch. Family names include: Adams, Cuoton, Graham, Hollins, McClain, McCoy, McQueen, Moore, Morris, and Shaw. Many of these pioneers are buried at Live Oak Cemetery

## Birth and Formative Years (1886 - 1888)

- 1886 The Monrovia Land and Water Company is formed.  
The first lots in the new Town of Monrovia were sold on May 17.  
Monrovia's first public school opened in Barnes Hall at Myrtle and Lemon.  
Monrovia's first newspaper, the "Planet", began publication.  
The First Baptist Church moved from Duarte.  
The Monrovia Methodist Church was organized.  
Shiloh AME Zion Church was gathered from former members of the church in South Carolina. The church has been in the same location for 120 years.
- 1887 The Myrtle Avenue Street Railway was established.  
The first celebration of Monrovia Day took place.

The First Congregational Church was organized. It joined the Presbyterian Church in 1917.

Monrovia's first public school building, the Orange Avenue School, was constructed.

Monrovia was first served by a transcontinental railroad.

The Holiness Church was established. It became the Assembly of God and later moved to Duarte.

The election to incorporate the City of Monrovia took place on December 8.

1888 Monrovia had a population of 2,500.

The First Presbyterian Church was organized.

The Monrovia City School District was formed.

Monrovia's first fire-fighting equipment was purchased--a hose cart!

The San Gabriel Valley Rapid Transit Railway began service. It later became part of the Southern Pacific Railroad.

### **Collapse of the Boom and the Grim Nineties (1889 - 1900)**

1890 Monrovia had a population of 907.

The Great Drought of the 1890's began.

1891 The Saturday Afternoon Club was organized. Their first goal: a public library.

1893 Monrovia City High School District was formed in July.

The Duarte-Monrovia Fruit Exchange was established at Myrtle and Duarte Road on the Santa Fe Railroad.

1894 The Spence Fruit Company was established.

Monrovia's first Library Board was elected. The men who were elected promptly resigned so that women could be appointed in their places.

1895 Monrovia's first public library opened. Rent was \$2.50 per month and the librarian was paid \$1.00 per day.

The Monrovia Heights Association was packing local lemons and oranges.

1899 Monrovia was finally assured of an adequate water supply with the purchase of the Chapman Wells for \$3,973.

Passage of City Ordinance No. 120 ended the era of Monrovia being known as the "Free Water Town".

The Monrovia Electric Light and Power Company built a power plant near Emerson Flat, using water from Monrovia Canyon to operate the generator.

1900 Monrovia had a population of 1,207.

Monrovia's first street lighting was provided by the Monrovia Electric Light and Power Company.

Monrovia Telephone & Telegraph Company was organized.

The Federal Census of 1900 reflects a number of African-American and Mexican-American families.

### **The New Century and the Great War (1901 - 1918)**

- 1901 Aunt Kate Wright begins her ministry to the ill and indigent of Monrovia.
- 1902 Willie and Pinkey Watkins moved to Monrovia and the Second Baptist Church had its beginnings.
- 1903 The Pacific Electric Railway began service on March 1. Monrovia could leave Myrtle and Olive and arrive in downtown Los Angeles 53 minutes later.  
Monrovia Police Department was created.  
The Ivy Avenue School opened where Clifton School is today. Monrovia High School moved into the building.  
The Pottenger Sanatorium opened for tuberculosis patients and Monrovia became known as a health center.  
Immaculate Conception Parish was established.
- 1905 Monrovia received a \$10,000 grant for a library building from the Carnegie Foundation.  
Bonds were authorized for the purchase of the Granite Bank Building, home of the Monrovia City Hall, and the creation of Library Park.  
Gas mains were installed in Monrovia and service began. The Piedmont Gas Company manufactured gas at a location on South Magnolia.  
The original Immaculate Conception Church was dedicated, a gift of the Bradbury family.
- 1906 Second Baptist Church was formally organized the Col. Allen Allensworth.
- 1907 Monrovia's first movie theater opened.  
The Charlotte Avenue School opened.
- 1908 Monrovia's first public library building opened in Library Park.  
The Linwood Avenue School opened.  
Lucinda Garcia and her family arrive in Monrovia.
- 1909 The first light standards were installed on Myrtle Avenue.
- 1910 Monrovia had a population of 3,505.

Monrovia Fire Department was created with the adoption of Ordinance No. 491. Monrovia received its first piece of motorized fire equipment--a converted automobile.

- 1911 The road to Emerson Flats in Monrovia Canyon Park was constructed. The Great Hiking Era in Southern California began. Deer Park Lodge and Camp Clover Crest catered to those wanting an adventure in the San Gabriel Mountains. The old mule drawn street car was spirited away by the Pacific Electric under the cover of darkness.
- 1912 The "new building" at Monrovia High School opened.
- 1914 The Monrovia Day Association began as the Ten Thousand Club. Second Baptist Church constructed its first church building. The Post War Boom and the Roaring Twenties (1919 - 1929)
- 1919 The first of the Monrovia City Wells was drilled on South Myrtle. It was the first truly successful effort to find abundant water. The wells also made for the unusual outline of the Monrovia City Limits.
- 1920 Arcadia and Duarte join the Monrovia City High School District.
- 1922 Monrovia Chamber of Commerce was formed from the Board of Trade. The Kiwanis and Rotary Clubs of Monrovia were chartered.
- 1923 Monrovia Civic Center was purchased. Cost: \$30,000. The citrus groves of Monrovia begin to be subdivided for residential lots.
- 1924 Bonds were authorized to create Recreation Park. Cost: \$1,100 per acre. The Municipal Auto Park was established on Mountain Avenue. It later became the Monrovia City yard. Bethel AME Church was established on South Shamrock.
- 1925 The Aztec Hotel had its grand opening. Sid Grauman of Grauman's Chinese Theater attended opening night festivities. The first fire station was completed on E. Lemon Avenue. The first police station was completed on E. Lime Avenue. The Monrovia Municipal Plunge opened. It is now the Monrovia Historical Museum. The first Mayflower School opened.

- 1926 The American Legion Building in Recreation Park was dedicated. It is now the Boys and Girls Club.  
Route 66 through Monrovia was designated along Shamrock Avenue and Foothill Boulevard. Arcadia successfully lobbied for a second route through their community.
- 1927 Santa Fe' School opened as an elementary school. It became an intermediate school in 1970.  
Sawpit Dam was placed in service.  
The Rotary Band Shell in Library Park was placed in service.
- 1929 Monrovia-Arcadia-Duarte Union High School was dedicated.
- The Great Depression and World War II (1930 - 1945)
- 1931 Economic woes impact all school teachers and public employees.
- 1933 A heavy earthquake, centered in Long Beach, rocks all of Southern California.
- 1936 Monrovia celebrated its 50th birthday with a big celebration.  
The Monroe Monument in Library Park was dedicated.
- 1937 The rebuilding of Wildrose, Huntington, Clifton, and Monroe Schools was completed as a result of condemnation following the Long Beach Earthquake.
- 1938 A new post office in Monrovia was dedicated. It received two bear murals painted by Katherine Forbes.  
The Aztec Hotel re-opens for business.
- 1939 CCC labor is used for construction in Monrovia Canyon Park. Much of the stonework survives.
- 1941 Outbreak of war with Japan on December 8, 1941.
- 1942 Local Japanese families are re-located to internment camps. There are no Japanese seniors pictured in the 1942 Monrovia High School Annual. That was not true a year earlier.  
Upton Sinclair arrives in Monrovia from Pasadena.  
Wartime activities and controls are put into place.

### **The Post War Boom, Stagnation and Decline (1946 - 1976)**

- 1945 War ends in Europe and the Pacific

- The Citrus Era ends as orange groves are replaced by new housing.
- 1947 The World War II Memorial was placed on the fountain in Library Park.
- 1952 Plymouth School was built.  
The Granite Bank Building was demolished after the Tehachapi Earthquake in July.
- 1953 The Granite Bank memorial in Library Park was dedicated.  
The Santa Anita Municipal Court was completed.
- 1954 Monrovia City Hall was dedicated.
- 1955 Bradoaks School was built.  
Immaculate Conception Church was greatly increased in size with new construction.
- 1957 The second Monrovia Public Library building was dedicated.  
Pottenger Sanatorium closes its doors. The era of Monrovia as a health center ends.
- 1960 Olive Avenue Park was created. It is now designated as Lucinda Garcia Park.
- 1961 The second Monrovia Police Station was dedicated.  
The Monrovia Unified School District was formed.
- 1964 The Main Station of the Monrovia Fire Department was dedicated.  
The Monrovia Arts Festival began.
- 1965 Grand Avenue Park opened.  
The Monrovia Post Office was expanded, and the bear murals went into hiding.
- 1967 The original buildings at Santa Fe and Mayflower Schools were replaced.  
The Pacific Electric Depot at Myrtle and Olive was demolished.
- 1969 Rotary Park was created in place of the former Chapman Wells Reservoir.
- 1970 Monrovia's public schools were finally integrated.
- 1973 The Monrovia Redevelopment Agency was created.
- 1974 Bartlett, Faith, and Ostrye were elected to the Monrovia City Council.  
The Monrovia "News-Post" ceased publication locally.

### **The Renaissance (1977 - Present)**

- 1977 Monrovia Community Center was dedicated.
- 1978 The Myrtle Avenue streetscape was revitalized.
- 1979 The Howard Johnson Hotel opened and West Huntington revitalization began.  
The George H. Anderson House was dedicated.  
The Monrovia Service Center at the City Yard was dedicated.
- 1980 MOHPG was founded to assist the owners of historic homes and to promote historic preservation.
- 1981 Julian D. Fisher Park was created to honor his memory. Julian served as a reserve sergeant with the Monrovia Police Department and was active with the Monrovia Day Association and the American Legion. The Rev. G. G. Bailey of Second Baptist Church said of Julian, "He bridged the chasm in Monrovia between the races. He had a way of bringing people together."
- 1982 The Huntington Oaks Shopping Center opened.
- 1983 The M.U.S.D. offices were dedicated, and East Huntington revitalization began.
- 1984 The new Santa Anita Family YMCA opened.  
The Trammell Crow development at Myrtle and Huntington assured the South Anchor of success.
- 1986 Pavilions opened and the North Anchor was assured of success.
- 1987 The Monrovia Centennial Plaque and Time Capsule was dedicated in Library Park.
- 1992 The Monrovia Historical Museum was dedicated.
- 1994 The Boys & Girls Club was dedicated.
- 1996 The Vietnam Memorial in Library Park was dedicated.
- 1998 Fire Station #2 was dedicated on January 17.
- 2001 The Krikorian Theaters opened.

- 2002 Monrovia Skatepark was dedicated on June 29.
- 2003 The Mark Twain Statue in Library Park was dedicated. "The man who does not read good books has no advantage over the man who can't read them."  
The Mary Wilcox Youth Center was dedicated.
- 2007 Fire Station #1 was re-dedicated in September.  
The Monrovia Service Center at the City Yard was re-dedicated in September.  
Myrtle Avenue was revitalized.
- 2009 Dedication of the new Monrovia Public Library and a revitalized Library Park  
The restored mural from the Monrovia Post Office is later placed in the main reading room.
- 2011 Monrovia celebrates the 125th Anniversary of its founding.
- 2012 The Monrovia Redevelopment Agency passes out of existence.

### **Conclusions**

Everything goes in cycles. The pendulum always swings back.

Monrovia is a solid community that has withstood the cycles of 126 years.

The commitment, diversity, and innovative thinking of our citizens are our greatest assets.

Our greatest enemy is complacency. What we achieve can be long-lasting, but it is not permanent. We need to re-invent ourselves and our community as the need arises, building on the strengths of the past. The more things change, the more they are the same. As our past has shaped our present, so what we do today will shape our future and our destiny.

*By Steve Baker, City Historian*  
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