

HISTORY OF JEFFERSON PARK



Historic photo of 28th St.

Jefferson Park is a vibrant community with a rich cultural history in a setting of beautiful houses. It is a reminder of an early part of Los Angeles history and of the people who have made it a special place to live. In 2011, after a nine year community grassroots effort, the City of Los Angeles recognized Jefferson Park as a historically important place both for its culture and its architecture.

A brief history of Jefferson Park:

- In the early 1800s the area of Jefferson Park fell partly within the Rancho Las Cienegas owned by Francisco Abila (an early mayor of the Los Angeles pueblo), and partly within the common lands surrounding the pueblo.
- Jefferson Park was farmland into the late 1800s. One of the original farmhouses (the Starr Farmhouse at 2801 Arlington Ave.) still stands and is restored.
- By 1903 streetcars were running down Jefferson and Adams Boulevards providing convenient transportation to downtown Los Angeles. The farmlands of the Jefferson Park area became a desirable place to build a home.
- People bought parcels in the Jefferson Park area and built houses, mostly between 1903 and the 1920s.
- Although the houses of Jefferson Park were typically built by individual owners, the style and the character of the houses in the neighborhood are remarkably consistent, giving the neighborhood a striking visual harmony.
- Most of the houses of Jefferson Park are built in the Arts & Crafts style which was very fashionable at the time. Features include fine craftsmanship and the use of natural materials, such as wood and stone, both inside and outside. An astonishing variety of beautifully detailed windows, doors, leaded glass, and wood ornament grace our neighborhood.
- From the very beginning and throughout its history Jefferson Park has always been a place of great cultural and ethnic diversity. Even today we are one of the most culturally and ethnically diverse neighborhoods in Los Angeles.
- Starting in the 1930's, and for many decades thereafter, Jefferson Park was home to a large Japanese-American community.
- African-Americans have lived in Jefferson Park since the 1930s and in the following decades Jefferson Park became an important African-American community. Western Avenue became a major corridor for African-American owned businesses and commerce, such as Golden State Mutual Life and the original Fatburger.



• Jefferson Park has a rich and important cultural history that is woven into houses in the neighborhood. Famous past residents include actress Hattie McDaniel(the first African-American to win an Oscar) , jazz musician Melba Liston, and the Mills Brothers. The Penguins recorded their 1955 hit "Earth Angel" in Jefferson Park.

• Today, Jefferson Park is widely recognized as an important neighborhood for its architectural history. American Bungalow Magazine says that Jefferson Park "offers some of the oldest and best-constructed [Arts & Crafts] housing stock, with a level of architectural detail and variation that is the hallmark of the finest bungalow neighborhoods across the country."