

Eagle Rock: Community Pride Through Triumphs and Tribulations



By: Jean Won
Edited by: Professor Jan Lin

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*Front cover photo of Eagle Rock residents, photo undated
courtesy, Eagle Rock Valley Historical Society Archives

*Back cover photo of the Eagle Rock
courtesy, John Miller, president of the Eagle Rock Valley Historical Society

Introduction

Eagle Rock is a small neighborhood in northeastern Los Angeles, California. Although humble in appearances, this place serves as a significant sociological laboratory because the residents of Eagle Rock have always held great pride in their neighborhood. An examination of this pride will take place using the sociological concept of “place memory,” a topic discussed later in this work. However, in order to truly understand the character of Eagle Rock today, an exploration of Eagle Rock history must first take place. Historians such as Betty Welcome have traditionally broken the history of Eagle Rock into five periods: these periods include: (1) a Native American era, (2) a Spanish/Mexican and Anglo Pastoral age, (3) a small farming era, (4) a period of Eagle Rock being a suburban portion of a tiny municipality, and finally (5) an era of being a small suburb of the larger city of Los Angeles.

Native American era

Information about this era is scarce – however, the original Native American tribe in the Eagle Rock area is believed to belong to the Shoshone language group (Figure 1). The Shoshone Native American tribe is now referred to as the Gabrieleno tribe because of their affiliation with the San Gabriel Mission. There has been evidence of the Gabrieleno settlement found near the present day sites of Eagle Rock High School, Glendale Adventist Hospital, and the Arroyo Seco. A nomadic people, the Gabrieleno tribe used animals, berries, seeds, roots, and acorns as a primary source of subsistence. Their homes were made of wooden sticks called willow wands made permanent by reinforcing them with mud (Figure 2).

Spanish/Mexican era

This era is said to have started with Father Francisco Garces, a priest at the San Gabriel Mission, who passed through the Eagle Rock Valley in April of 1776. Three years later in 1779, José María de Verdugo and his wife, María de la Encarnación López, got married at the San Gabriel Mission. Verdugo was a soldier of the King of Spain and the Corporal of the Guard, who



Figure 1 – The Gabrieleno people, who are believed to have settled in Los Angeles, including Eagle Rock.
Courtesy: Eagle Rock Valley Historical Society Archives, photo donated by the Southwest Museum to the historical society.



Figure 2 – An early Gabrieleno home made of willow wands
Courtesy, Eagle Rock Valley Historical Society, picture donated by the Southwest Museum

decided to supplement his income by grazing cattle. Verdugo petitioned for land rights from Governor Pedro Fages, and in 1784, was given a huge amount of land bounded by the areas of Devil's Gate, the Arroyo Seco, the Los Angeles River, Elysian Park, Sun Valley, La Crescenta and Griffith Park. Verdugo's brother, Marino, was appointed to plant crops on the land, and soon the rancho included the present day areas of Eagle Rock, Glendale, Burbank, Mt. Washington, Flintridge, Montrose, Highland Park, as well as portions of Pasadena, La Crescenta and La Cañada. However, Julio, José Verdugo's son, took a mortgage that he was unable to pay due to high interest rates, leading to the loss of all of his property except for 200 acres. The rest of Julio's land was divided among 28 people. The Verdugos are remembered by areas surrounding Eagle Rock – Glendale, for example, holds an annual parade to commemorate the Verdugos. Dora Verdugo (Figure 3), great-granddaughter of José Maria Verdugo, has been recognized in various community events in memory of LA's Spanish/Mexican past.



Dora Verdugo, direct descendant of Don Jose Maria Verdugo, is greeted at picnic by Don Packer, out-going president of Old Timers Association.

Dora Verdugo is a native daughter of Glendale and greeted many of her old friends. *Star, Glendale 9/7/67*

Figure 3 - Dora Verdugo in 1967

Courtesy, Eagle Rock Valley Historical Society Clip Files, from Glendale Star, 9/7/67.

Farming

An anecdotal flood is said to have filled the Eagle Rock valley to the brim in 1884: this flood is credited with making the valley's soil incredibly fertile, beginning the third era of small farms. Pictures of the Eagle Rock valley around the year 1900 indicate the rural nature of the region (Figure 4). Eagle Rock's J.J. Broomall Dahlia Farm was world renowned for its hybrid dahlias, which were shipped to various countries. J.J. Broomall, the owner of the Dahlia farm, was said to be a "genius at grafting, cross-pollination, and creating hybrid dahlia bulbs" (Harsh 1). Another famous farm, the Gates Strawberry Ranch, covered Eagle Rock from Eagle Rock Boulevard to Maywood Avenue, from Yosemite Drive to Colorado Boulevard. The Gates Strawberry Ranch hired Chinese laborers who trained to become officers for the Chinese Revolutionary Army on weekends from 1903 – 1909. These men were trained by Sgt. Ansel O'Banion, under the command of Lt. General Homer Lee. Lee was a military genius with an



Figure 4 – The Eagle Rock Valley in about 1900
Courtesy, Eagle Rock Valley Historical Society

education from Occidental College and Stanford University. According to Eagle Rock: Then and Now, “what is interesting is that O’Banion with his blue uniformed Chinese would often ride the big red street cars of the Pacific Electric to Highland Park and then hike up what is now Figueroa street to the hills of Eagle Rock for some of their field training (Smith & Friezer 4).” These soldiers contributed to the creation of the Chinese republic in 1911, resulting in Dr. Sun Yat Sen as China’s first president.

As a small suburb

The fourth era of being a small suburb of a tiny municipality begins sometime near 1909. This era is commonly represented by streetcars (Figures 5 and 6), because during this time, Los Angeles had the best and most expansive public transportation system in the United States. Miller commented that “these Red Cars were fantastic – The #5 car took us from Eagle Rock straight to the ocean.” Jack Tritch, a long time resident and business owner in Eagle Rock commented on streetcars saying, “We loved them. They got us around pretty easy and were fun.”

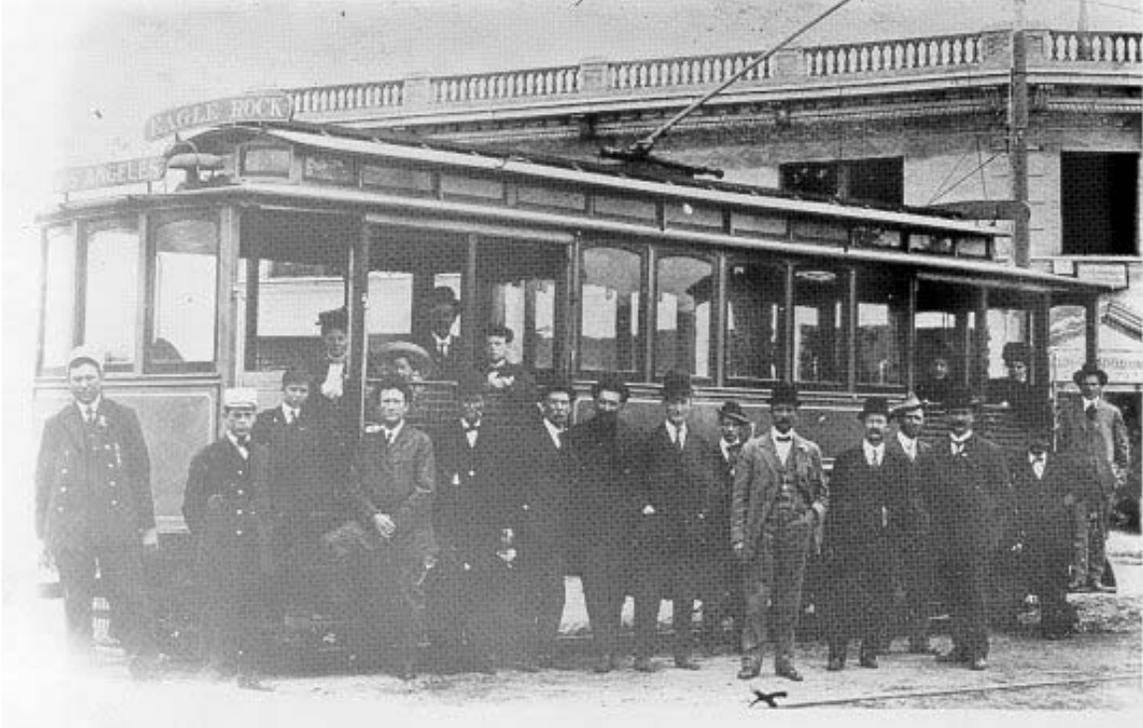


Figure 5 – Early Eagle Rock streetcar and passengers, approximately 1910
Courtesy, Eagle Rock Valley Historical Society Archive



Figure 6 – Eagle Rock streetcar traveling south on Eagle Rock Blvd. in the 1940s, just prior to their removal
Courtesy, Eagle Rock Valley Historical Society Archive, photo donated by Alan Weeks

Nicknamed “the galloping goose” and “the dinky,” the streetcars were efficient and popular - that is, until the automobile put them out of commission. According to a October 24, 1909 edition of the Los Angeles Herald Sunday Magazine,

The pretty little suburb of Eagle Rock is only three years old. It was awakened into life by the magic wand of Huntington’s Trolley System in August 1906. Those who knew Eagle Rock at that time will recall it was a picturesque bit of country scenery, tucked away by itself, far from the main roads of travel. Although as the crow flies but six miles from Los Angeles, it might just as well have been a hundred miles distance as far as its availability for suburban life was concerned. (Welcome 3)

It was during this era that the first concrete roads were beginning to take shape. Colorado Boulevard was paved at this time, along with Hill Drive, amongst others. Eagle Rock continued to be isolated even after the trolley system was placed because “Eagle Rock has always been a sleepy, backdoor community. The reason people have always settled in Eagle Rock is to get away from the hustle & bustle of LA” (Miller, 12/6/98). Eagle Rock was its own city for approximately 2 years. However, like many other towns, Eagle Rock became a part of Los Angeles due to the threat of water shortage in the 1920’s.

Part of Los Angeles

In 1923, the fifth portion of Eagle Rock history was started with the neighborhood becoming a part of the city of Los Angeles. According to John Miller, historian and president of the Eagle Rock Valley Historical Society, Eagle Rock became a part of Los Angeles because of the need for adequate water, schools, and sewers. After incorporation into Los Angeles, Eagle Rock High School was opened in 1927 with 690 students. Sewers were put in, and ironically enough, Sparkletts Drinking Water Corporation was founded right on York Boulevard 2 years after annexation in 1925 (Figure 7). Still the headquarters for the company, the three wells the corporation was built on are located right underneath York Boulevard. Now Sparkletts is one of most prosperous water bottling companies in the world.

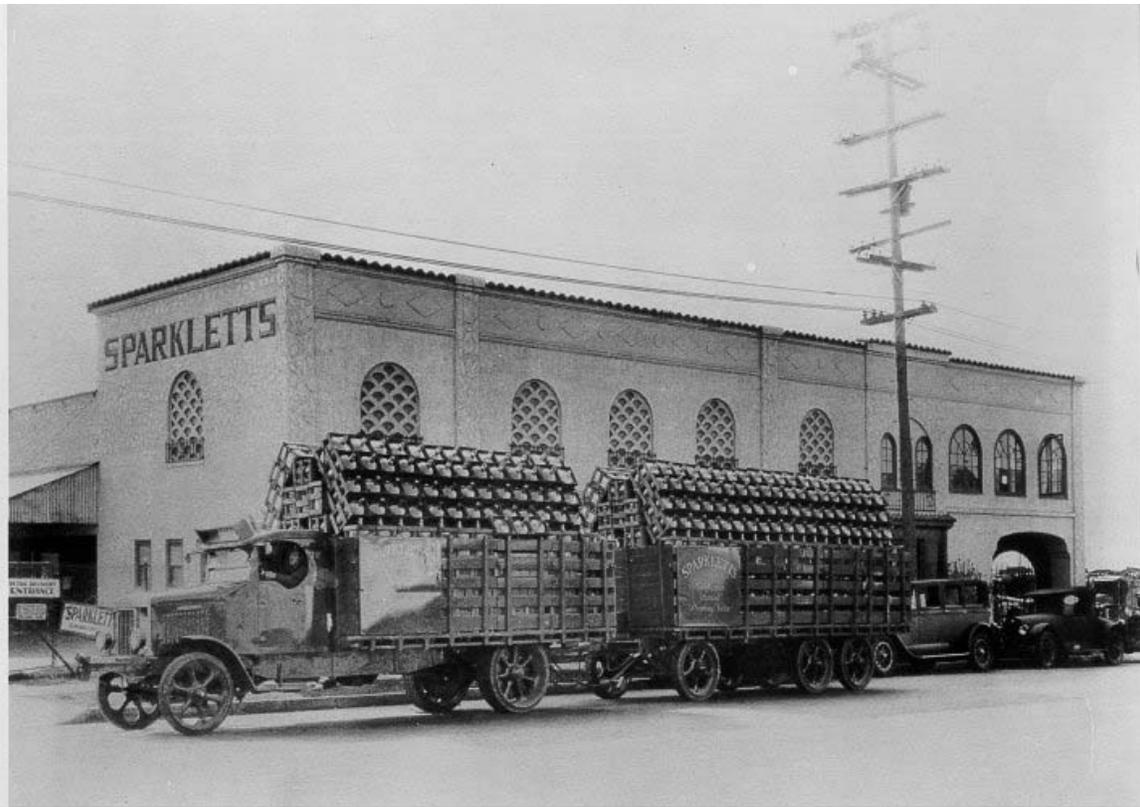


Figure 7 – Sparkletts Water Company soon after its founding
Courtesy, Eagle Rock Valley Historical Society Archives

This era, of Eagle Rock being part of the city of Los Angeles, is now the focus of this paper, for Eagle Rock history does not end with streetcars and old buildings. History is rather a continuous chain of events that dramatically shape the character of a place. The following is an examination of a small part of Eagle Rock in recent years through a sociological perspective.

“The City,” Place Memory, and Eagle Rock

The city as a whole, is inaccessible to the imagination unless it can be reduced and simplified. Is it surprising, therefore, that people will literally step back and away from the city to gain perspective on it? Distance clears the field of vision, even if it means losing some of the rich detail (Wohl & Strauss 524).

In their work entitled Symbolic Representation and the Urban Milieu, Wohl & Strauss elaborate upon the idea that the city is too complex for a person to comprehend in its entirety. As a result, cities are often represented by a chosen number of sites within the city, as depicted by material representations of cities such as maps (Figure 8). For example, the Statue of Liberty can immediately associate itself with New York City. The Statue of Liberty also signifies freedom, or a refuge for immigrants from all parts of the world. In much the same manner, Eagle Rock, a small community located just six miles northeast of Downtown Los Angeles, can be understood and represented by several sites. Such sites would include the Eagle Rock (Figure 9), the Eagle Rock City Hall (Figure 10), the Eagle Rock Community Cultural Center (Figure 11), or the Women’s Twentieth Century Club (Figure 12), all of which have been designated as Historical Landmarks by the Los Angeles Cultural Heritage Commission.

Often, representative sites have a strong sense of place memory attached to them. “Place memory” as studied by sociologists, is a concept in which sites may be used to stimulate social memory. To members of a community, a select number of sites serve as “storage spaces” of accumulated positive or negative experiences in a larger urban area. “It is the key to the power of historical places to help citizens define their public pasts; places trigger memories for insiders, who have shared a common past, and at the same time places often can represent shared pasts to outsiders who might be interested in knowing about them in the present” (Hayden 46). When the sites are threatened, even a usually disjunctive community can become intensively cohesive in order to save the significant sites. A strong sense of community consensus is uncommon in an urban area due to the impersonal and heterogeneous nature of urban spaces. Determinist social

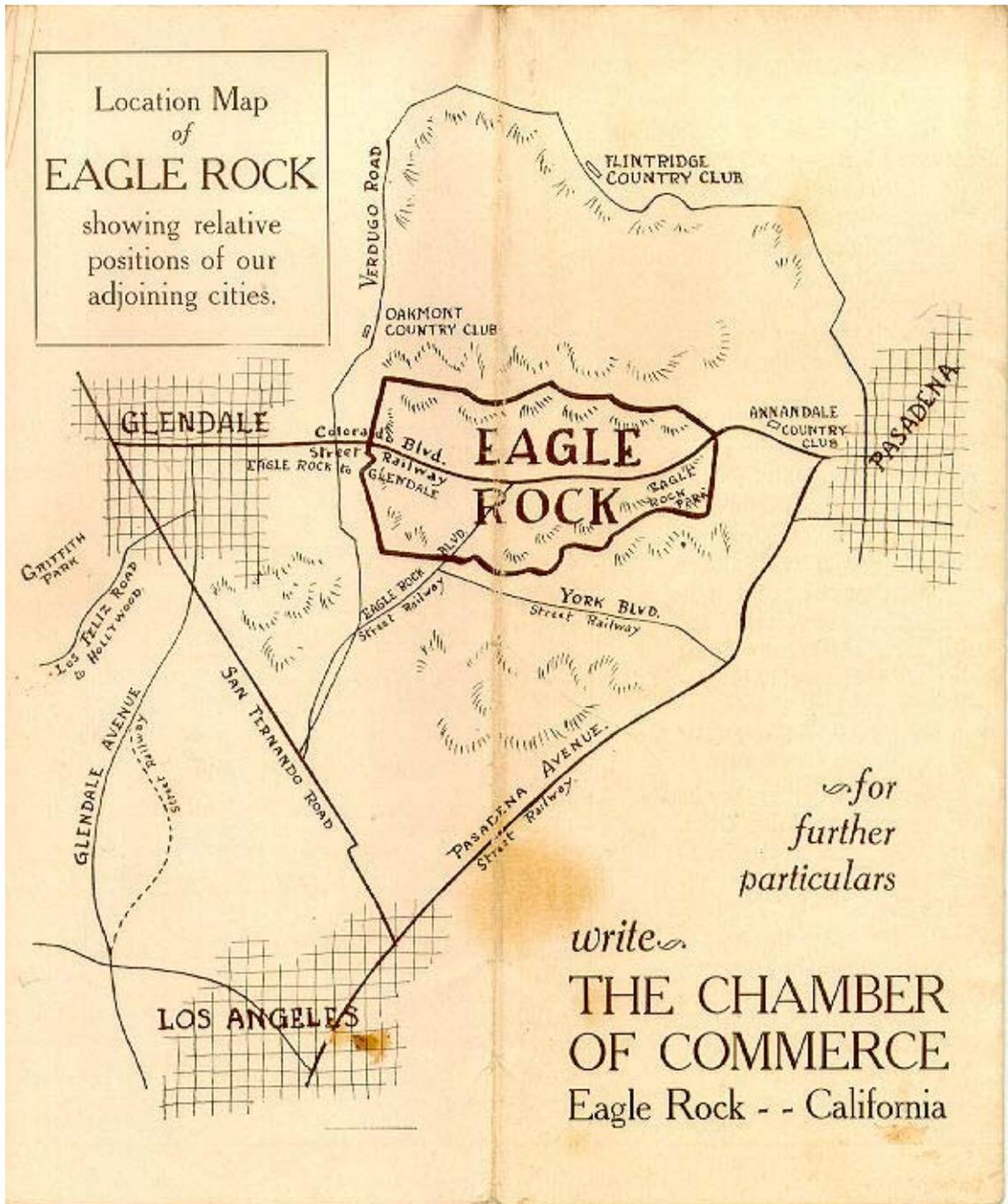


Figure 8 - Early map of the town of Eagle Rock
Courtesy, Eagle Rock Valley Historical Society Archives

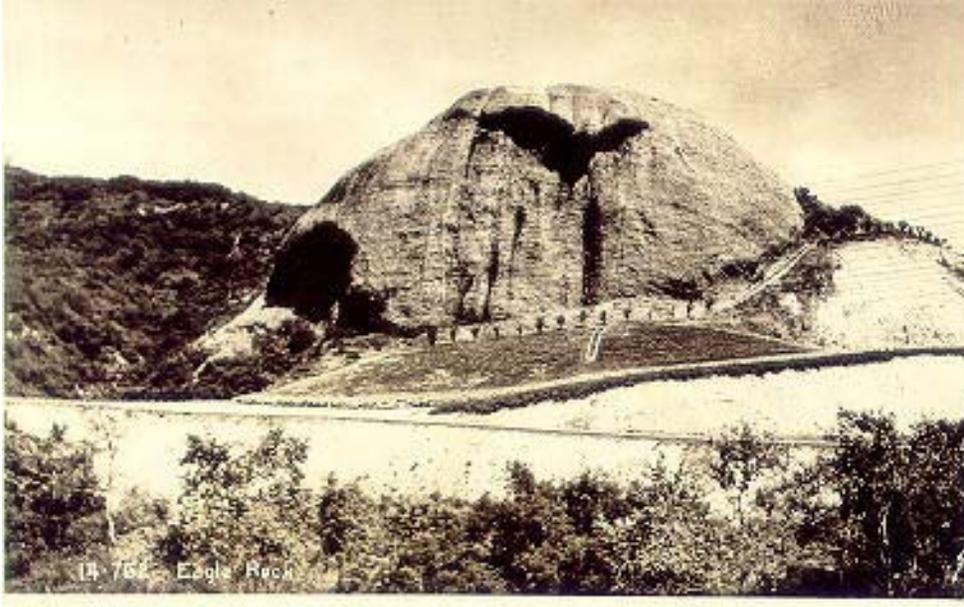


Figure 9 – The Eagle Rock, Los Angeles Historic Cultural Monument #10, declared 11/16/62
Courtesy, Eagle Rock Valley Historical Society Archives



Figure 10– The Eagle Rock City Hall, Los Angeles Historic Cultural Monument #59, Declared
2/26/69
Photo taken by author, 7/15/99.



Figure 11 – The Eagle Rock Community Cultural Center, formerly the Eagle Rock Branch Library. Los Angeles Historic Cultural Monument #292, Declared 6/18/85
Photo taken by author, 7/15/99.



Figure 12 – The Eagle Rock Women's Twentieth Century Clubhouse, Los Angeles Historic Cultural Monument # 537, Declared 7/2/91
Photo taken by author, 7/15/99.

theorists believe that the intensification of nervous stimulation, that is, an excess of sights and sounds in the city, causes people to become apathetic and disinterested. In turn, apathetic people compose an impersonal atmosphere in an urban place, which leads to a state of anomie, or normlessness. If anomie lasts for an extended period of time, a segmented city results.

Determinist social theorists such as Georg Simmel assert that,

At the community level, people differ so much from each other in such things as their jobs, their neighborhoods, and their life-styles that moral consensus becomes difficult. With divergent interests, styles and views of life, groups in the city cannot agree on values or beliefs, on ends or on means. As community-wide cohesion is weakened, so is the cohesion of the small, intimate, “primary” groups of society, such as family, friends and neighbors – the ones on which social order and individual balance depend on. Thus, by dividing the community and by weakening its primary groups, differentiation produces a general loosening of social ties (Fischer 63).

Although Simmel’s analysis of urban social life is applicable to various urban areas, the threatening of community sites by urbanization and economic development has often fostered urbanites’ ability to form new unified groups in order to work for a common cause. Two sites in which this has happened in recent years include the Eagle Rock and the building at the intersection of Townsend and Colorado Boulevards.

The Eagle Rock

Perhaps the most commonly used site to represent the community of Eagle Rock, a large sedimentary rock with the imprint of an eagle in flight known as The Eagle Rock has been threatened twice. The Rock is the landmark that the community of Eagle Rock was named after. Formerly known as *La Piedra Gorda* (translating to “Fat Rock” in Spanish), the Eagle Rock served as an important landmark and an early tourist attraction in Los Angeles. Named as “the most distinctive natural landmark in the City of Los Angeles” by Carl Dentzel, former Director of the Southwest museum, the Eagle Rock was also home to the first sunrise Easter service in California in 1917. The Eagle Rock has served as the emblem of the old community newspaper, The Eagle Rock Sentinel, as well as been used in the slogan of, “Eagle Rock: The community founded upon the Rock.” According to a Los Angeles Times article, Shirley Minser, a 40 year

citizen of the community, said “The Eagle Rock to this community is like Mt. Rushmore is to South Dakota” (Goldman 1). The Eagle Rock originally was used by Native Americans who inhabited the area as a type of fort because it was a good location to see movements of settlers in the area. The bandit Tiburcio Vásquez was said to have used the rock as a hideout before he robbed people in 1874. An alcoholic French beekeeper also used to live in one of the 2 caves in the rock. Jim Beckham, who was a former president of the Chamber of Commerce for Eagle Rock, said, “I think that’s my favorite story. There was really someone living there” (Goldman 2).

The Rock Threatened

Although the Eagle Rock has historically been embraced by the town as its emblem, the Rock did not actually belong to the community until 1995 when the city of Los Angeles officially purchased the Rock for close to \$700,000. Appraised at \$250,000 in 1962 by James Real, the Rock was named a cultural monument in November of 1962. With this status, “the owner of the monument was forbidden to demolish, alter, or remove it unless it constitutes a public health hazard” (Los Angeles Times 1962). Real instead placed apartments along the east side of the Rock (Figure 13). Although citizens protested, the community was unable to stop Real’s apartment developments. 1962 was a period in which Eagle Rock residents did not yet have the organizational ability to effectively fight against such development.

When the Rock was again threatened with development in 1988 by owner Fred Heim, the people of Eagle Rock took action. A “Save our Eagle Rock” campaign was headed by Katie Smith, resulting in rallies to raise money in order to purchase the rock from Heim. A large pancake breakfast was held in the parking lot of the Eagle Rock Plaza on November 5, 1988, with Mayor Tom Bradley, Councilman Richard Alatorre, and an excess of 3,000 people supporting the event (Figure 14). Several thousand dollars were donated by community organizations. The large turnout at the event, as well as the amount of money raised and donated by the community



Figure 13 – Residential development in back of the Eagle Rock
Photo taken by author, 7/15/99.

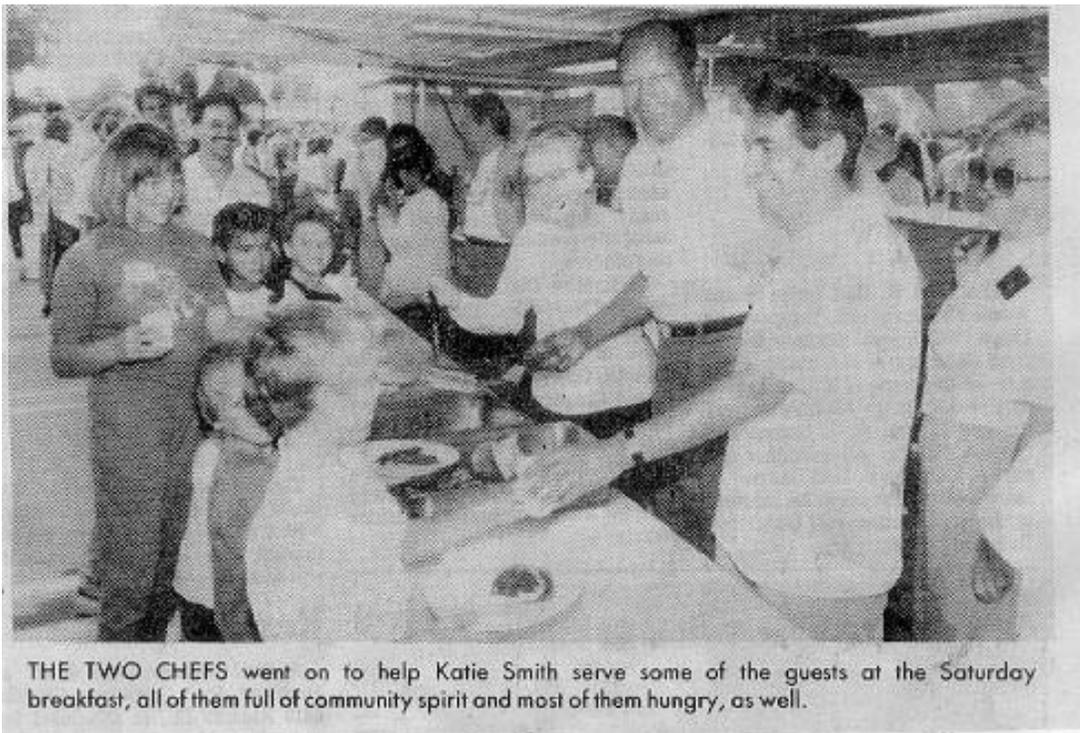


Figure 14 – Former Councilman Alatorre and Mayor Tom Bradley helping to serve pancakes at the “Save our Eagle Rock” fundraiser pancake breakfast, 11/5/88.
Courtesy: Eagle Rock Valley Historical Society Archives, taken from The Eagle Rock Sentinel

displays an intensive amount of cohesion within the community. However, perhaps even more incredible is the fact that the city of Los Angeles paid so much in order to purchase the Rock. The Eagle Rock, after years of struggle, is now a publicly-owned landmark.

The Struggle at Townsend

A second site in which residents of Eagle Rock have taken an active role in preservation were a series of pre-WWII brick storefront buildings located at the intersection of Colorado and Townsend Boulevards (Figure 15 and 16). Popularly known as one of the three traditional downtowns of Eagle Rock (the other two being located at the intersection of Eagle Rock & Colorado and the other at Townsend & Yosemite [referred to as “happyland”]), the brick storefronts were threatened with demolition in 1986 by a developer, intent on building a new mini-mall. Upon hearing about this, an Eagle Rock resident named Kathleen Aberman decided to take action. “Those buildings were the best looking half-block area on Colorado Blvd, Eagle Rock’s main street. When I found out that another parking lot was going to face the sidewalk instead of the wonderful storefronts, I was disappointed” (Aberman 7/14/99). However, when Aberman tried to get historical status for the structure at the LA Cultural Heritage Commission, the developer’s lawyer deceived Aberman, promising her that the storefronts would be preserved. Instead, bulldozers arrived at 5 a.m. the following morning, before the community could protest (Figure 17). Although Aberman tried to talk the constructors out of bulldozing the building from the rooftop, she was instead arrested by police and the building was torn down (Figure 18).

A story significant enough to make the front cover of the local news section of the Los Angeles Times on November 9, 1990, Aberman’s stand atop the roof of the building is an example of how intensely people associate sites with the larger city. Not only was the building attractive, but it was also a site to which citizens attached strong memories and rituals to. Although the attempts to save the building were unsuccessful, the community became more organized after the fact. The demolition of the Townsend/Colorado buildings led to the founding



Figure 15 – The corner of Colorado and Townsend Boulevards, approximately 1942.
Courtesy: Eagle Rock Valley Historical Society Archives, photo taken by: Alan Weeks

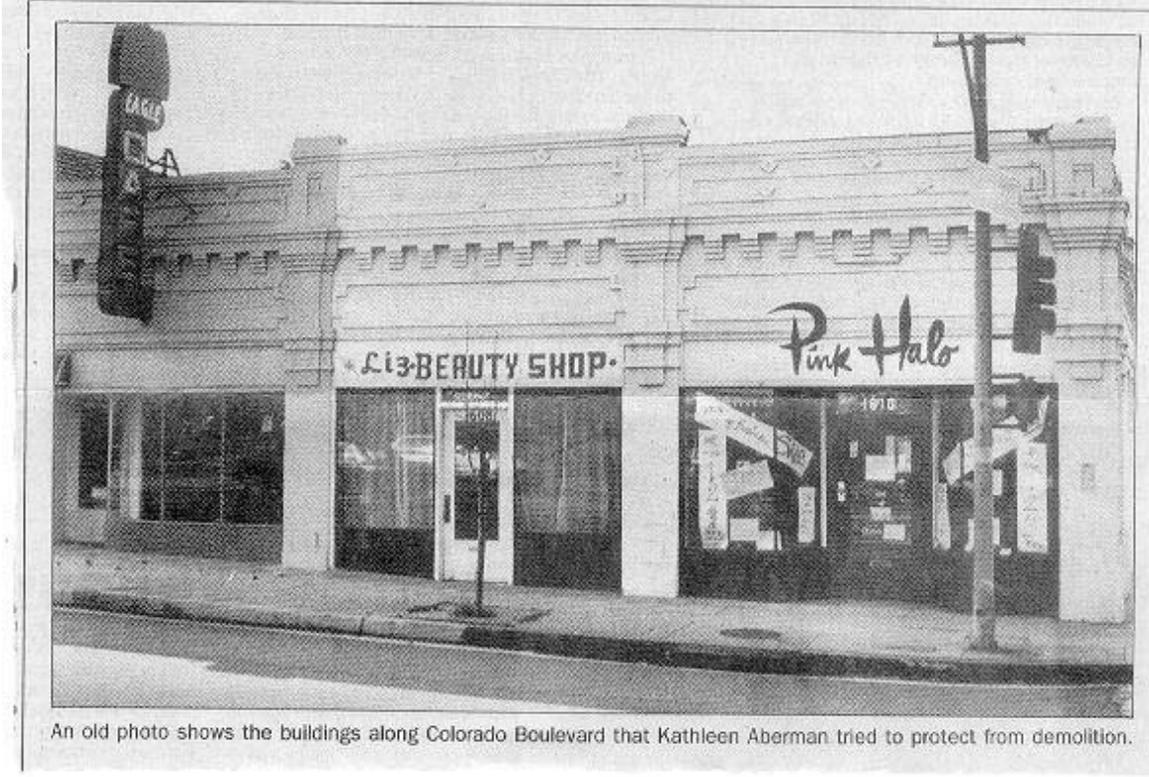


Figure 16 – Close-up of stores on the intersection of Townsend and Colorado Blvds.
Courtesy: Eagle Rock Valley Historical Society Archives, taken from The Los Angeles Times, 11/9/90



Demolition begins

Demolition crews have started work at 1606, 1608 and 1610 Colorado Blvd. (at Townsend Ave.), ripping out the asphalt parking area (above) behind the existing buildings. Crews also gutted the buildings and removed the roofs, but the skeletons of the structures remain. Valencia and Associates, developers of

the site, are currently studying proposals from the Eagle Rock Community Association to preserve the style of the existing structures. The developers will present their responses at a public meeting on March 12 at the Eagle Rock Recreation Center at 7 p.m.

Figure 17 – Demolition of the corner of Townsend/Colorado
Courtesy: Eagle Rock Valley Historical Society, taken from The Eagle Rock Sentinel, 3/4/87



Efforts to shape development have come a long way since Kathleen Aberman was arrested on a rooftop of a Colorado Boulevard commercial building in 1986 for trying to block the demolition crew.

Figure 18 – Kathleen Aberman being arrested from atop of the roof of the Townsend/Colorado buildings.
Courtesy: Eagle Rock Valley Historical Society, taken from a Los Angeles Times article, 11/9/90

of TERA (an acronym for The Eagle Rock Association) and the Colorado Boulevard Specific Plan. TERA, a group comprised mainly of homeowners, now contributes its input into various urban development and community issues. The Colorado Boulevard Specific Plan is now official law due to its approval by the Los Angeles City Council. The Specific Plan regulates development along Colorado Boulevard, forbidding the building of new structures such as mini-malls, motels, and auto-related businesses. The Townsend/Colorado building is significant for the community struggle involved to preserve the building as well as for the various organized outcomes of the demolition.

A Different Battle

The power struggle involved at this site was the resulting battle between historical preservation and economic development. The installation of the mini-mall is a display of the unregulated economic interests on the boulevard common throughout the 1980's (Figure 19). In the 1980's any type of business was seen as "good business" without regard to its effects on Eagle Rock's pedestrian environment or overall appearance on the boulevards. TERA now seeks to regulate what types of businesses can be allowed to enter or expand on Colorado. Sadly enough, despite the rush of redevelopment attempts along the boulevard throughout the 80's, Colorado Blvd. continues to look economically depressed.

However, the formation of TERA does not necessarily indicate a state of stability or equilibrium in the community of Eagle Rock. TERA stands for the causes of historical preservation, community beautification, and zoning and planning issues. However, to counter their interests, the Eagle Rock Chamber of Commerce, a merchant's group interested in economic development, continues to push for economic interests. The feuding of these two groups has been long-standing and intense. It has been said that, "They used to fight about everything. Once, ladies from each group started fighting because a lady from one group did not get their hair dressed in Eagle Rock" (Miller 7/15/99). Another Eagle Rock citizen stated that "The two groups are essentially different in basic philosophies" (Warren 5/27/99). The battle between



Figure 19 – The corner of Townsend and Colorado Boulevards in modern days, with the installation of a mini-mall.
Photo taken by author, 7/15/99.

economic interest and historical preservation raging, the feud led by these two groups often prevented coordinated planning from being carried out in the community.

New Community Efforts

In order to stop the feuding and lead the community with a unified action group, the ERCPR, an acronym for the Eagle Rock Community Preservation and Revitalization Corporation (formerly known as the Eagle Rock Revitalization Coalition), has been formed. ER CPR is a representative group of various interests throughout the community, including TERA, the Historical Society, the Chamber of Commerce, business owners, and members from Occidental College. The two feuding interests in the community, historical preservation and economic development, have been acknowledged in the ER CPR through the formation of its two task groups, business enhancement and image enhancement. The image enhancement committee is primarily concerned with the up-keeping of the two main commercial Boulevards in Eagle Rock

(Colorado and Eagle Rock Boulevards), looking into ways to keep the boulevards attractive. The business enhancement committee is concerned with improving the condition of businesses on the boulevards so that the vacancy rates in the commercial parts of Eagle Rock will stay down. In a November 1998 Chamber of Commerce Newsletter, it was said that a few years ago, 50% of Eagle Rock's business district was vacant. "The problem," Jack Tritch, a community businessman commented, is that Eagle Rock has "too many empty stores" (12/2/98).

Among others, the Coalition's plans are to attract "mom & pop" business that have been displaced due to revitalization efforts in Old Town Pasadena, Glendale, and South Pasadena while enhancing the appearance, safety, and parking capacity of Eagle Rock. Ed, a member of the business enhancement committee, brought a bit of humor to a meeting saying "I think we should put a huge statue right in the middle of the intersection of Eagle Rock & Colorado Boulevard that looks like the Statue of Liberty. It should say 'Give me all your tired, displaced "mom & pop" business from Pasadena, Los Feliz, and Glendale'" (12/7/98).

Turning Old Buildings into New Ideas

However, the debate between economic development and historical preservation can no longer be seen as purely antagonistic. Rather, the two now support each other. As proven by the experience of such as Old Town Pasadena, old buildings and storefronts can now be used to create unique and attractive shopping environments. Capitalists have learned that popular shopping places can be advanced through the preservation of old historic buildings. ER CPR is also planning on using this idea to revitalize Eagle Rock businesses. Architectural prototypes have been drawn for the southeastern corner of Eagle Rock & Colorado Boulevard as an example. Formerly known as the Edwards and Wildey Building (Figure 20), this general area is now commonly referred to as the Duffy Building. This area is considered "the center of Eagle Rock. It's really the focus of everything. The Duffy Building is one of the oldest buildings in the city. It was a considerably nicer looking building than it is now, but we all feel the building is restorable (Figure 21)" (Warren 5/27/99). By using the pre-WWII building's architectural uniqueness, ER

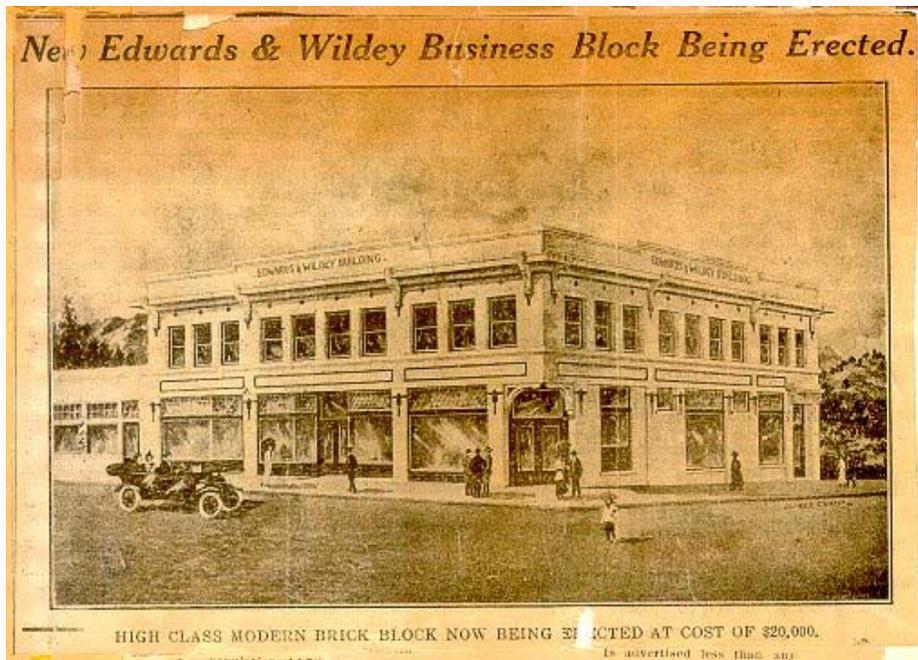


Figure 20 – Old newspaper clipping of Edwards and Willey Building being built on the southeastern corner of Eagle Rock and Colorado Boulevards. Newspaper clipping courtesy of Eagle Rock Valley Historical Society Archive, name of newspaper and date unknown.



Figure 21– The southeast corner of Colorado and Eagle Rock today, proposed site for Eagle Rock revitalization
Photo taken by author, 7/15/99.

CPR is hoping to restore the building and give Eagle Rock a shopping area with a “hometown” feeling. The architectural prototypes include a sign that states “Eagle Rock: LA’s Hometown (Figure 22).” However, the Duffy Building itself is not without its problems. Small lot size and the absence of parking have made it difficult for a keystone developer to come into the area. Also, the new parking lot located at the posterior of the building belongs to the city of Los Angeles, and each parking spot, if purchased from the city, currently has a price tag close to \$17,000. With the opportunity to rent the parking spot if a developer became interested, the Duffy building remains unaffected due to the absence of an interested developer. An additional obstacle is the current vacant lot in the Duffy Building, formerly the site of Jerry's Television Repair Store (Figures 23 and 24). The old site of Jerry’s is essential to the possibility of the architectural renderings of the Duffy building to become reality because the ER CPR would like that space to be torn down in order for pedestrian traffic to become circular throughout the building (Figure 25). Eric Warren commented that,

Jerry’s got sold at auction for about 10 thousand dollars, and the guy that owns it now wants about 150 thousand for it. The city was auctioning it off, and some people pay attention, some don’t. We should have been paying attention, but it was before efforts were really organized, I mean, the coalition has only really happened in the last couple of years. Before that, there were various revitalization efforts, but there was conflict in the community then too (5/27/99).

Referring to the conflict between the Chamber of Commerce and TERA, Eagle Rock now has the hope of the ER CPR to lead the community towards a healthy balance of both historical preservation and economic interests. Although the complete revitalization of Eagle Rock can take well up to 10 years, Tom Topping, chairman of the Coalition, stated that, “We’re going to do more than just talk” (12/7/98). Exactly what to do now, however, is still in a state of limbo. The coalition must decide on exactly what types of businesses would flourish in Eagle Rock. The debate between large chain stores such as Blockbuster’s and Rite Aide and small ‘mom and pop’ stores is still hotly debated.

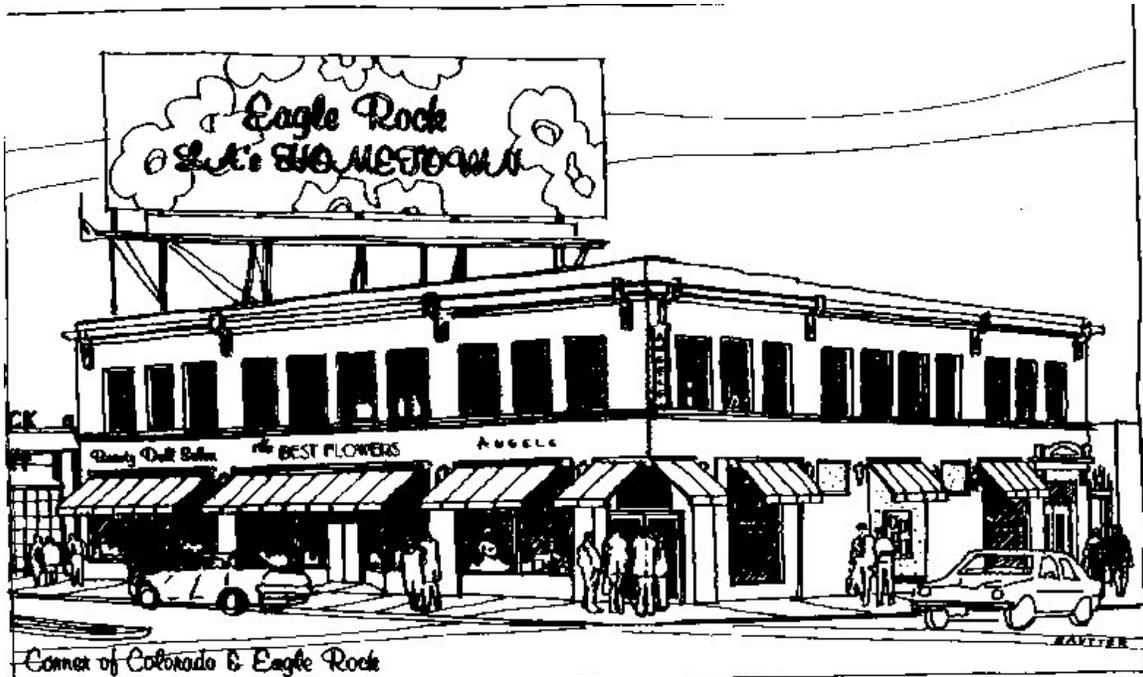


Figure 22 – Prototypes for the revitalization of the Duffy building by the ERCPR
Courtesy: ERCPR



Figure 23 – Former site of Jerry's Television Repair store viewed from Colorado Blvd.
Photo taken by author, 7/15/99.



Figure 24 – Back of Jerry’s Television store site in the Duffy building
Photo taken by author, 7/15/99.

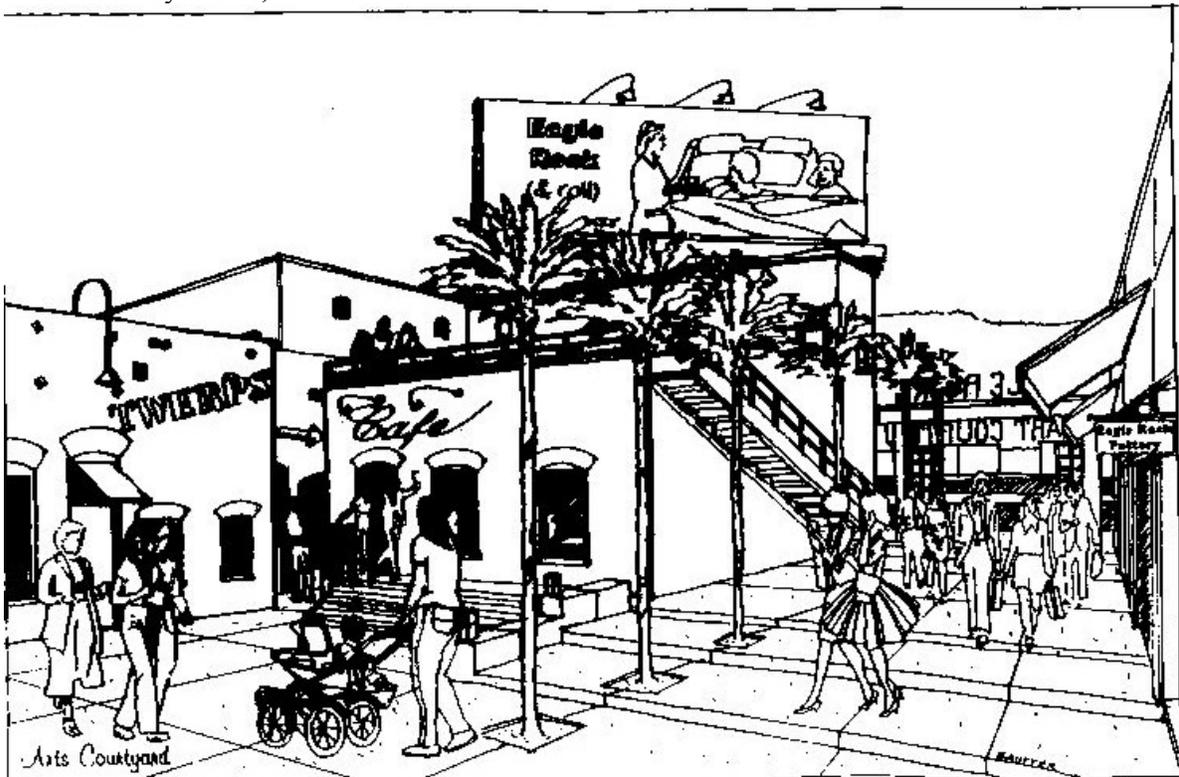


Figure 25 – Prototypes of the back of the Duffy Building, showing how the site of Jerry’s will be eliminated in order to accommodate circular pedestrian traffic
Prototype courtesy of ERCPR

New Issues

However, now that the relationship between economic development and historical preservation have become more positive, a new conflict arises – race and multiculturalism as a barrier to creating community. While some embrace the new multiculturalism of Eagle Rock, others feel threatened by the recent influx of minorities. Even 25 years ago, “Eagle Rock had the reputation of being an almost entirely white, very conservative area, populated by many families of policemen and firemen seeking an easy commute to work and a refuge from inner-city troubles” (Gordon 2). According to 1990 census information gathered in zip code 90041, Eagle Rock was home to 26, 864 people, with 31.2% classified as White, 32.3% classified as Hispanic, 19.2% classified as Asian, 1.8% as Black, and 0.3% as Native American. Henry Welcome, long time historian and founding president of the Eagle Rock Valley Historical Society, stated that, “I came to Eagle Rock in 1927 when I was 11, and we had almost entirely what’s known as WASPs. Now it’s gone the other way, the place is changing all the time” (6/16/99). While the politically-correct generation of today may state that race is unimportant in forming community, others are subtly bitter about the increasing diversity. According to a Caucasian woman who has been a resident of Eagle Rock for 68 years, “I think the neighborhood’s gone downhill. It used to be a big family, but not anymore. Now there’s a lot of break-ins and graffiti” (5/27/99). Going back to social theorist Georg Simmel, the heterogeneity of urban places is a contributing factor in the increasingly impersonal and detached nature of social groups and residential communities. Race and ethnicity, therefore, are essential in understanding places and communities. Dolores Hayden's The Power of Place, states that, “Ethnicity, as well as race, class, and gender, can be uncovered as a shaping force of American urban places, provided one looks at the production of social space carefully” (Hayden 34). Race and ethnicity are powerful forces in analyzing urban places. The effects of such factors are subjects for further research.

Through the exploration of public history of publicly contested sites in Eagle Rock, we are better able to understand Eagle Rock’s community and its struggles between preservation and

economic development. “Place memory” and the notion that certain sites serve as “containers” of memories of the area serves to further strengthen the relationship between the two. Although the hope is that such spaces will not be threatened in future years, the contestation of such spaces have brought the community to unite for the common good of the entire neighborhood. Our hope is that the ER Community Preservation and Revitalization group can lead us in the right direction.

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