

SIGNIFICANCE



The Hermitage camphor trees clearly represent “Monument” as defined in Section 22.171.7 of the Cultural Heritage Ordinance. The Hermitage trees have been an intrinsic part of the neighborhood since their planting during the cities **Ten-Year planting proposal** in the 1930’s. Serving as the local gathering place for community, local activities and children, the enormous canopy has also provided shade through countless sweltering Valley summer days. The corner on which the trees stand has brought people together for almost a century, which continues to this day. They are unique in their health, size and history. The trees have defined the character of a community and are unequivocally, representative of what makes the Valley “the Valley.”

In 1991 residents stated what attracted them in the first place to Valley Village was the then country atmosphere and the trees. - That it were specifically those elements, that gave the neighborhood a sense of identity. This generational, non-transient community is proudly populated by renters and homeowners who enjoy their shady streets, taking advantage of the cultural heritage from which they came. This is certainly another example of how these trees embody particular social and cultural significance to the City. They continue to represent the broad, cultural and economic social history of the nation, State and community by linking the introduction of the camphor tree into California, and into the city of Los Angeles.

When the public was notified Council was to create a 5-member board on cultural heritage in 1962, it was specifically reported how the **“city’s culture is not only defined through her buildings . . .but through her great trees.”** That it is **“these things that have helped to shape the color, character and culture of our city, and they should continue to do so.”** Defining Cultural-Heritage by **“the buildings, monuments and sites which have played a part in the city’s growth and culture.”**

The Hermitage camphor trees continue to be the tool used to represent the broad, cultural, economic and social history of our city, State and very much the community. They have proven to be identified with fundamental and incredibly valuable events in the main currents of National, State and Local History, by becoming the species that **“transformed from being a once imported experiment, to what wound up creating the foundation and character of the city and so many of its neighborhoods.”**

Jan 16, 1962 ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles

Forestry Manager for the city of Burbank, Jeff Zoumbaris has said:

“One of the most astonishing facts about Valley trees, is that they have survived for decades--sometimes centuries--in often adverse conditions.” “To survive within the confines of all the construction, cars and pollution, is incredible.” “It's truly amazing that they're even around. There are very few left.”

How the Hermitage Camphors meet this criteria is hereby explained in great detail.
All of the following statements are supported by the documentation in your packets.

SIGNIFICANCE

In 1890 a meeting held by the **California State Horticulture Society** announced “The Camphor Tree- One of the most beautiful, useful and valuable trees is now in this state, and has attained the height of twenty feet or more, with beautiful foliage, having the odor of the camphor gum of commerce.”

Jan 11, 1890 | Jan 12, 1890 | June 21, 1891 ProQuest Historical Newspapers

“An earnest attempt is now being made to domesticate the camphor tree in the United States.”
“For nearly thirty years The Department of Agriculture has been distributing the seeds of camphor, sent from Japan; to grow and raise this valuable tree in the nurseries of the Department.” The goal, for “its cultivation in the United States will lead to a new and profitable industry.”

June 21, 1891 ProQuest Historical

Los Angeles Herald May 29, 1892

“The United States Department of Agriculture had announced: The Camphor tree is expected to be a lucrative industry for our region, attracting more than usual attention. The United States Government, expects that American enterprise, coupled with our superior inventive genius, that Southern California may yet produce the growing of the camphor tree.”

Los Angeles Herald October 21, 1897

The Department became “heavily engaged in promoting the planting of camphor trees to farmers throughout the San Fernando Valley”, describing the trees as “remarkably vigorous and thrifty.”

That it was: “..the earnest hope of the Department, that before a very great while, we may be able to say that the plants and trees that we are at the present time endeavoring to introduce have proved successful, and that hereafter they may be counted as our home-grown products of agriculture.

We desire the camphor to be extensively grown and in this way, the department will have succeeded in its aim.”

May 28, 1895 ProQuest Historical

Jan 5 1898, ProQuest Historical Newspapers

This was the beginning of Cultural, Social and Economic significance for the Camphor tree and how its role in the history of Los Angeles / The San Fernando Valley developed, from a package of seeds sent from Japan.

The Department Of Agriculture cultivated the very first batch of home grown camphor trees, made available to the public in 1892.

This supply was distributed throughout various parts of Los Angeles and the San Fernando Valley, with continuous reports, carefully gauging their health and ability to grow in our climate.

The Times has referred on several occasions to the opening which exists for the growing and manufacture of camphor in Southern California. The camphor trees which are found scattered here and there through the city and surrounding section are remarkably vigorous and thrifty. Who will be the first to give this new industry a fair test?

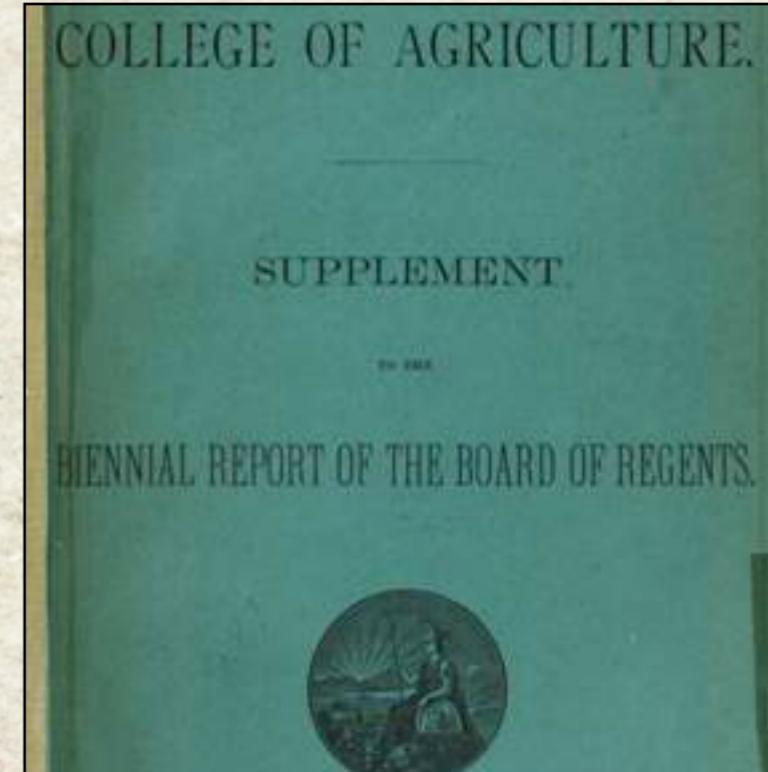
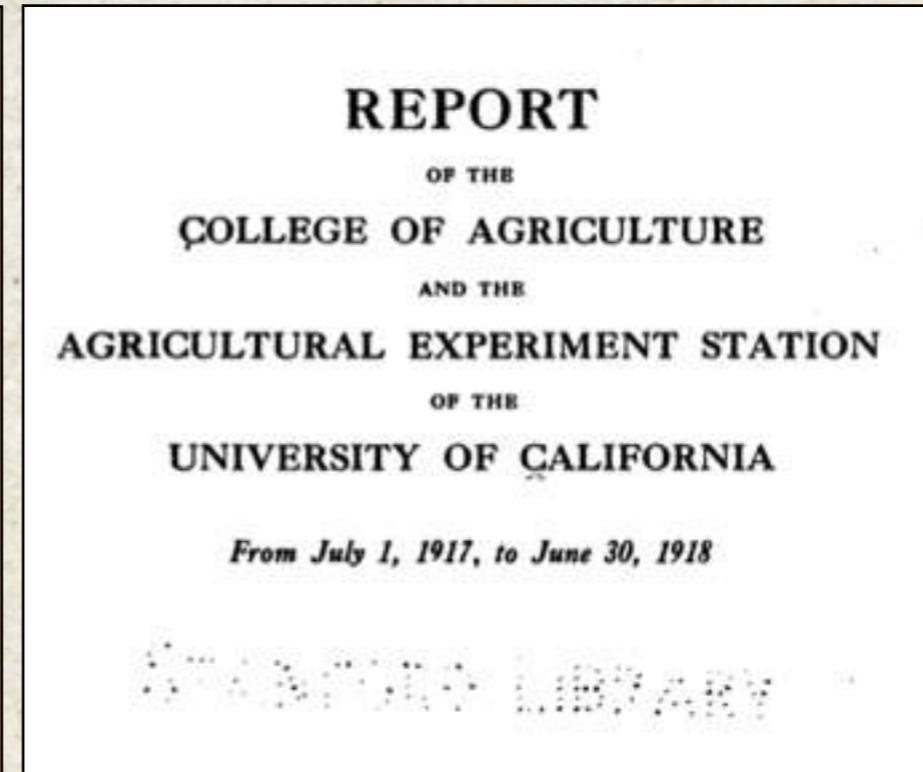
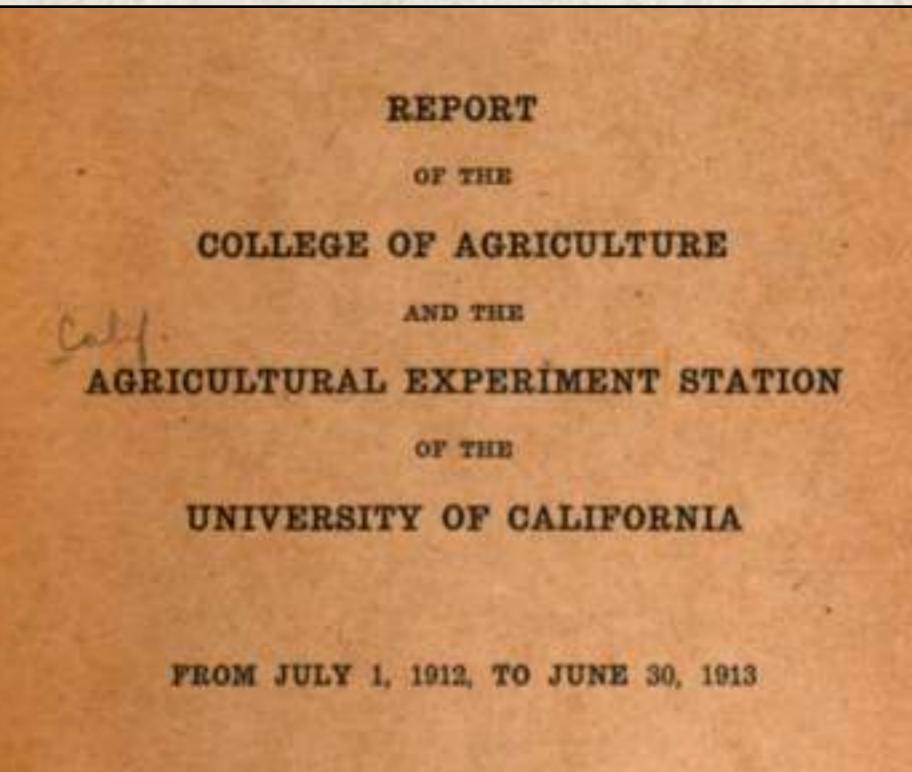
SIGNIFICANCE

According to Publications released by the **California Agricultural Experiment Station: "Results warranted the publication of the wide adaptation of California to camphor growing. Camphor tree has given great satisfaction with characteristics of considerable importance and has shown adaptation for growth in the states with considerable industrial value."** Reports on camphor tree's progress continued for 4 decades.



Report_of_the_Agricultural_Experiment_St-1913

Report_of_the_Agricultural_Experiment_St-1913



This is another example of how the camphor trees exemplify the broad cultural, economic or social history of the nation, State or community is reflected or exemplified; or which is identified with important events in the main currents of national, State or local history.

SIGNIFICANCE



The beginning of the 20th Century, City Council identified these shade trees as being "a principal attraction and valuable opportunity." Stating: "It is easily possible to make Los Angeles one of the most beautiful cities in the world. Thorough protection of shade trees would go a long way toward the accomplishment of that result." "It is to be hoped that the protection afforded to these trees will be continuous and adequate, not spasmodic and perfunctory." Councilman Farish stated: "I see no reason why every residence street in the city should not be lined with magnificent shade trees. Should one of them be from the sprout of the Camphor, even better."

June 28, 1904, LA Times ProQuest

June 29, 1904, LA Times ProQuest

Shortly thereafter, The United States Government had realized "Americans purchased an estimated \$1,000,000 a year of camphor gum, none of which was produced in this country." **The growing concern the war in the Far East would have on the effects of the industry,**" sparked the notion as to "**why we shouldn't consider turning our growing collection of trees into a profitable account.**"

Dec 27, 1904, LA Times ProQuest

CAMPHOR AND ITS INDUSTRY

WAR IN THE FAR EAST LIKELY TO AFFECT MARKETS.

Manufacture of Camphor is a Government Monopoly in Japan—Distilling the Camphor—Synthetic Camphor—Menthol and its Value. Some Interesting Facts.

1904

ONE INDUSTRY WE OVERLOOK.

DRUG PLANTS WOULD THRIVE WELL IN CALIFORNIA.

Farmers Could Realize Excellent Profits from Camphor Trees. Japan Now Makes Much Money Out of Them, and Has Monopoly. Licorice and Belladonna Do Well.

1906

The Department Of Agriculture had succeeded in its goals of naturalizing the Camphor tree in Los Angeles, now considered to be profitable, with best efforts to ensure the planting of the camphor tree secured its future, of becoming a permanent fixture to our city. Camphor crops were now being raised throughout the Valley for medicinal use, as well as the opening of a U.S. market for camphor gum and smokeless gunpowder. This turning point was a National, Local, and State event in the main currents in the State of California. It also reflects and exemplifies the broad cultural, economic and social history of the nation, State or community by introducing new economic outlets for farmers, residents and businessmen.

The Hermitage trees represent the broad cultural, economic and social history, as the example of a Department giving birth to a species whose contributions escalated into what resulted in the original landscape of the city. This species and its value had been Identified as an important event in the main currents of national, State and local history during Pre and Post War periods.

SIGNIFICANCE



By 1907 the Departments quickly proclaimed the need to get local farmers and residents growing the tree.

"With the Japanese Government controlling the world's supply of camphor, and the recent scarcity, the Tree had now gotten the attention not only of the U.S., Government, but of all the leading foreign Governments interested in Los Angeles' plans and ability, to grow the tree successfully."

A CAMPHOR FARM.
1907

Feb 10, 1907 LA Times ProQuest

Feb, 1907 LA Times ProQuest

"The Government continued to distribute broadcasts, a bulletin of immense import, setting forth the excellent results of a prolonged series of experiments in camphor raising."

"Every citizen of the peninsula, whether rural or urban, was urged to set out as many camphor trees as the ground around the home would allow."

May 1915, LA Times ProQuest

What ultimately changed the camphor industry forever, and how this tree continued to influence and affect Los Angeles, was when **"the Department of Agriculture with the help of scientists of this country, discovered a ground-breaking method of extracting camphor without sacrificing the tree, leaving well established trees to flourish."** They wanted to "establish the U.S. industry in contrast of wasteful methods prevalent in Japan."

Sept 15, 1907 LA Times ProQuest

This was never done before and would not have been possible without the years spent propagating camphor seeds, and all of the Departments years of experimentation on the growing and the nursing of the tree.

Becoming Nationally acknowledged as **"an important discovery made, to ensure every type of industry, farmer and citizen could benefit from having camphor trees in our city."**

Feb 1909, Imperial Valley Press

CAMPHOR COMES FAR.
Los Angeles Good Market for Product of Formosa, Where Japs Control Industry.
"Los Angeles is a good market for camphor, and I am now importing large quantities for the local market and also for other parts of California," said W. M. Milne of this city, who has extensive commercial relations with the Orient. "It is exported from Formosa, off the coast of China. That island is the richest camphor field in the world, and to get these immense camphor-tree forests is one of the causes why Japan waged war with the Chinese." 1907

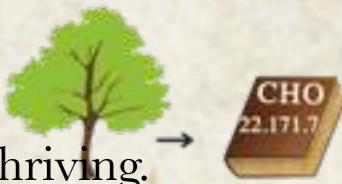
MUST RAISE
CAMPHOR.
In Case of War With That Country We Would Be Handicapped in the Manufacture of Smokeless Powder, Which Is so Necessary in Modern Warfare.
1907

Scarcity of Camphor
ACCORDING to an official of the Department of Commerce and Labor, the world's supply of camphor is steadily decreasing each year. The greater part comes from Japan and its colony, Formosa. Of late years the demand has begun to exceed the supply, and the question has arisen how the latter can be maintained. One of the reasons why camphor is becoming scarcer and dearer is said to be that it is extensively used in the manufacture of celluloid. At present camphor is mainly produced from the so-called camphor tree, which attains a gigantic size in Japan, one specimen recently measured being 115 feet tall and having a trunk over fourteen feet and a half in diameter. The tree is common in China, but as yet the production of camphor in that country is very limited. 1906

The historic and cultural significance to the City and the broad cultural, economic and social history of the nation, State and community are herein exemplified and reflected as such.

Observations made of the camphors progress, were reported as a topic of interest Nationally, Locally, and was a main current event in the State of California.

SIGNIFICANCE



Camphor trees had grown and established themselves as more than just capable of surviving in Los Angeles, but thriving. Now referenced as "**one of the cities most important shade trees,**" and cited as an "**evergreen that has demonstrated its worth.**"

Jan, 1911 LA Times ProQuest

"With already two-thousand acres in Camphor trees and in a dozen years Trade will be Revolutionized."
"The outlook now is that with another dozen years or less the camphor trade of the United States will be revolutionized. The monopoly of Japan will be a thing of the past."

May 1915 LA Times

CAMPHOR RAISING IN AMERICA

Already there are over Two Thousand Acres in Trees and in Dozen Years Trade will be Revolutionized.

CAMPHOR TREE CULTURE

Trees Coming From Formosa For Planting in Coachella Valley—New Industry May Be Established.

1909

Another decade of events follow the species in the 1920's now known as "**CAMPHOR CULTURE.**"

Oct, 1928 LA Times

Now considered to be a common shade tree throughout Southern California. In 1921, one nursery alone, reported selling between 8,000 and 10,000 camphor trees a year.

Attaining titles such as "**The South Land Titan**", "**Best Named Tree**" and a "**Magnificent Specimen**" for reaching unusual size in our climate, camphor was also celebrated for its girth. **It became the most utilized tree in the promotion of designing the perfect farm home in the Valley.**"

CAMPHOR CULTURE

The camphor shade tree is a common sight in Southern California, and in some parts of the Southern States. There are also hedges made of camphor trees which are very desirable. The shade tree is the camphor tree of commerce, and actual distillations of camphor from the leaves and branches of Southern California trees have been made in experiments which go to show that the California camphor tree is high in camphor gum and oil. One nursery alone sells 8000 to 10,000 camphor trees.

1921

Citizens were encouraged to plant as many camphors as possible, while working closely with the Department of Agriculture who defined the planting pattern throughout the city, by advising the public "**to avoid monotony and create diversity in landscape.**" The San Fernando Valley does not have long stretches of camphor trees. The city was intentionally planting a variety encouraging diversity, thus making the Hermitage Camphor trees that more valuable in how they reflect the cultural, economic and social significance of the city and to our community.

Jan 1911, LA Times ProQuest

By the 1920's the species of tree was classified as having its own "Culture". It is clear how that that culture is emblematic of the historic and cultural significance to the City of Los Angeles, and the broad cultural, and social history of the State and community have been exemplified. This was also a consistently followed topic in the main currents of national, State and local history. Every step the camphor made had gotten the attention of the United States Government and Foreign Government leaders, who acknowledged the years of combined efforts, struggles and the ground breaking method that now exists in our country and lines our city streets and lawns. This is definitely a reflection of our broad cultural, social and economic history.

SIGNIFICANCE

The 1930's was a cornerstone for Los Angeles and its trees. **"The Big Tree Planting Program"** was announced with camphors as the **top choice to be planted**. This was integrated with a community program known as **"Dress-Up-The-City"**, where the Forestry Division assisted homeowners in the layout and planting of trees in their neighborhood.



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CITY-WIDE TREE PLANTING URGED AS REALTY ASSET

Significance of Trees

0241020 LA Times ProQuest

TEN-YEAR TREE PLANTING PROPOSAL MADE KNOWN

Forestry Division Details Plans to Make Los Angeles Famous; Enhanced Realty Values Seen

FEB 1932



1932

PERMANENT TREES URGED

In advocating public participation in the program at this time, the City Forester said it was the intention of the division to urge only the planting of the more permanent type of trees, selections of which have been specified by the city for certain streets, according to a master plan stipulated by city ordinance.

Nov 1932

Camphor Tree Rich in Color, Shade Value

BY L. GLENN HALL
City Forester



1933

As part of the city beautification campaign, the Forestry Division had announced:

"Permanent Trees Urged." It is the intention of this division to urge only the planting of more permanent types of trees, selections which have been specified according to the Master Plan stipulated by city ordinance." "The Best broad-leaved evergreen tree for lawn use is the Camphor." "This is the theme underlying the City Division Of Forestry's new campaign - to produce residential charm and character."

Feb 1932, Nov 1932, LA Times ProQuest

The programs initiated by the Departments, how they were hands-on with the community, going into each and every neighborhood to ensure property owner plantings were consistent with street planting, is reflecting our cultural heritage and is an excellent example of social history. These were times when every selection was choice and specific to the area, chosen for a reason.

SIGNIFICANCE

Los Angeles gave tribute to a collection of trees in a published story called

"The Whole World Gives Trees to Southern California." This was to recognize the variety of unique species; camphor being first on the list, and described as "the one that had transformed from being a once imported experiment, to what wound up creating the foundation and character of the city and in so many of its neighborhoods."

1930's camphor culture continued when the TIMES concluded its twenty-four article series,
Oct 1929, LA Times ProQuest

"Southland Holds Record for Variety of Trees."

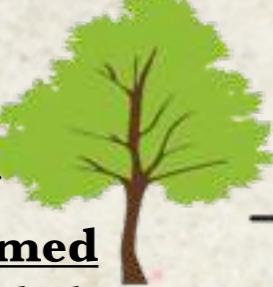
Prepared by City Forester L. Glenn Hall who declared the **camphor BEST TREE** in the final article of the series;

City Forester L. Glenn Hall states:

"The purpose of this series on trees has been to describe their history, romance, habits, manner of growth, appropriate use and special requirements. IT IS SIGNIFICANT. Due consideration of the world-wide origin of these trees, including the camphor, will help in developing the architecture and landscaping of Southern California along the most appropriate and satisfying lines."

May 21, 1933 LA Times ProQuest

May 21, 1933 LA Times ProQuest



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MAY 21, 1933
**'TIMES' SERIES
ON TREES ENDS**

Southland Holds Record for Variety, Says Expert

Systemized Planting Held Vital to Beauty

Many Species Suitable to Soil Around Here

(This is the concluding summary of a series of twenty-four articles prepared for The Times and published weekly in this department by Mr. Hall, former city forester, on trees suitable for street planting in Southern California. It has been one of the most widely read features of this department.—Ed. Note.)

Homes in the valley were advertised using the camphor tree as an absolute must when laying out your farm home, making it the perfect retreat. City Forester L. Glenn Hall also specified what he called "**Systemized Street Planning**" identifying the perfect example of a Los Angeles home as having a twenty-foot parkway and a front lawn of Camphor trees.

The planting of camphor trees was the most recommended and appreciated species of the post-World War II era. It is what exemplifies the historic and cultural significance of the City of Los Angeles and the broad cultural, economic and social history of the nation, State and community, as living by example by these trees.



Example of Systematized Street Planting

SIGNIFICANCE

In 1943 there were “15,000 mature camphor trees reported flourishing in Los Angeles, some of them fifty years old.” By now there was an established camphor-oil program, first one in the United States. The 15,000 camphors were part of 500,000 growing throughout the State and provided thousands of jobs in the oil industry, the drug industry, as well as city, State and County Departments.

Feb 8, 1943, Los Angeles Times



Valley Beautification Projects Speeded City Camphor Trees

County's Camphor Trees May Fill Vital War Need

State Expert Points to Flourishing Source Here
of Drug We Once Obtained From Japan and Italy

Japanese privet hedges.

Ten Years Hence

Ten years from now it will be an avenue of such loveliness as to excite the gardening world of the nation. By then the 5000-odd trees now going into the 2½ miles of parking will have become sizable rows and groves.

1966

- Through the 1950's the camphor tree continued to be used as the template for Landscape designs for houses throughout the Valley.
- Los Angeles Valley College Historical Museum encourages all governing bodies to ensure the historical elements of the San Fernando Valley are well protected. Their **Urban Forest Master Plan includes the protection of 7 Camphor trees due to their Historical significance. They are listed as the having the highest priority of protection for their exemplification of local history.**
- Works Progress Administration defines the camphor by saying:
“you will agree that it is truly one of the real aristocrats among trees.”
- California State Parks Office of Historic Preservation Monument 1038 is “an old 50-foot high camphor tree (and) is a rare remnant...”
- In 1990 the Cultural-Heritage Commission designated the Lakme Trees, which at that time were sixty-years old. They were about one-third the size of the Hermitage Trees when given Monument Status. The applicants alleged to have the “oldest, the largest and the most well maintained camphors in Wilmington.” No tree report, no arbor consult, no supportive letters, nothing of the like was submitted in the nomination.
A single hand written page described a neighborhood, dependent on its historic trees to define their identity. They were designated because of what they represented. Because at the time of planting, the camphor tree was the most used tree in creating neighborhood character. Now, twenty-five years later, the Lakme trees are about the same age as the Hermitage Trees, which are still more than double the size. *HCM # 509.0 Designated 1990; (File 90-2405)*

TREE OF THE WEEK



Fragrant
Camphor

SIGNIFICANCE

Fellow of the American Society of Landscape Architects (FASLA) Professor Robert Perry reminds us: “Monumental scale trees often become the most distinguishing feature of natural and ornamental landscapes. They can mature into landmarks and become celebrated as heritage elements that generations of people can enjoy. Such trees can often become the cornerstone of a sacred space as well as become a symbol of community values to celebrate the lives of people and historic events.”

Which is exactly what these trees have done for the community of Valley Village.



In 1926, a camphor tree originally planted in Pomona was cited as the largest camphor in Southern California, having a height of 45 feet and a spread of 90 feet, originally planted in 1883.

The tree became diseased, and after numerous efforts to save it failed, it was removed in 1978.

The Pomona Historic Society reveals they attempted to plant another camphor in its place which died after a couple of years. In 2005 the Society purchased a \$3,000 tree to plant in the camphors original location which has not exceeded 15 feet in ten years.

There is currently no evidence of any other camphor trees in Los Angeles representing the age, health and spread as the Hermitage Camphor trees. They appear to be the two oldest and tallest camphor trees left in Valley Village. The last of their kind to be the example of their era. We continue to be encouraged to keep the trees we have “That the trees and greenery which our previous agricultural way of life in California has already provided, are what should be priority.”

City beautification is moving from word to deed throughout the San Fernando Valley.

Projects to spruce up older business districts, break concrete monotony with greenery and soften the impact of galloping urbanization are picking up pace.

And if James R. Greathouse, city beautification coordinator, prevails:

“We'll have a beautified city and tree-shaded streets throughout the Valley in 15 or 20 years.

As coordinator of the city beautiful program, Greathouse points with pride to the quiet manner in which the municipal tree program has been advancing.

Tree Plantings



New Leases on Life

Getting new leases on life at present is the imposing Security Bank Building on Spring Street, which is being converted into a theater center, and the marvelous Moderne Pan Pacific Auditorium, into a hotel, cinema and commercial complex.

Meanwhile, across the city, an increasing number of residents are discovering the architectural heritage of their neighborhoods, if not just the ambiance and value that pleasant streetscapes and trees lend their properties, and are rallying to protect them from avaricious speculators, mercenary developers and insensitive city officials.

**As of April 2015, the Historic-Cultural Monument (HCM)
List / City Declared Monuments Totals 1,084 Monuments.**

This number is the total for the entire City of Los Angeles including the San Fernando Valley.

**There are approximately 70 Historic-Cultural Monuments that have been designated throughout the San Fernando Valley, since 1962.
(Some of which include Crescenta Valley)**

**Valley Village has a total of ONE designated Historic-Cultural Monument,
which earned designation status ten years ago. (HCM #793)**

**The San Fernando Valley and its history are being chipped away every single day.
There is a world of history going unnoticed in a valley, whose estimated population for
the decade of 1924, was expecting to support 500,000 people within years to come.**

**Now, home to 1.8 million people,
select few work endlessly on ensuring each and every pocket of community has something to use...
something telling our stories...something significant.**

**In 1943 there were 50,000 camphor trees.
The current count estimated is 480 camphor trees left to represent the century.**

mapla.org

Santa Barbara honors its Moreton Figs, as does San Diego.

**With only an estimated 480 camphor trees left in Los Angeles County, the health of which is unknown, this is our chance to honor the camphor, where it came from, and what our officials went through to secure its future in Los Angeles and the Valley.
These are emblematic of our cities heritage.
Communities cannot embrace their values, they cannot treasure their historic landmarks and they cannot truly appreciate the environment in which they live, if they are not provided opportunities to do so.**

CONCLUSION



They meet the criteria of the **broad cultural, economic** and **social history** of the **nation, State** and **community** as well as **important events in the main currents of national, State or local history.**

- They do so by representing the first half of the twentieth century when the neighborhood flourished with already fruit baring trees, farmers and growers; which was improved upon by making plantings of their own, like these Camphors.
- The Camphor Tree was referred to as the tree of commerce and revolutionized the manufacturing of camphor forever.
- This was done by years of research and testing to determine the camphor trees ability to grow in Los Angeles which proved the tree grew double the size here than it did in its native land of Japan.
- It was the first in the United States to manufacture camphor oil, powder and gum, as a result of experimentation of growing of the species.
- It was the first and only city to have invented a method of camphor extraction that did not kill off the tree. That alone changed the camphor industry permanently.
- The camphor trees meet the criteria by being the example of the "ideal home" as well as the "perfect farm retreat" was the camphor tree on the front lawn from their era.

In doing this research and reviewing hundreds of old newspapers, articles and magazines, throughout all of those decades of change, there was one unchanging language. The one thing repeated time and time again was (and I quote): "The pity of it is that this resolution was not passed months ago."

"That if action had been taken sooner, some of the most beautiful streets in the city might have been protected against a form of vandalism that is inexcusable from any point of view."

"That the city's architecture heritage is so frail, if one does err, it should always be on the side of preservation."

"That the trees and greenery which our previous agricultural way of life in California has already provided, are what should be priority."

June 28 1904; ProQuest Historical Newspapers

July 1985; ProQuest Historical Newspapers

Support for the Hermitage Camphor Trees has included 430 petition signatures, Letters From:

Historians, Civic Organizations, Arboreal experts, the Neighborhood Council of Valley Village, the Valley Village Homeowners Association, Professors, Agriculturalists, Residents, Land Trusts, Teachers, Well-Respected Authors, a few who grew up on the property or in the neighborhood, Tree Societies, Preservation Groups and Organizations, Film companies, The San Fernando Valley Historical Society and the people who know the Valley best, furthermore, the people who live in the community.

Historical Designation should not be abused to advance other agendas. The history of the Camphor is unique to our city, state and country. It's health and prosperity reflect its accomplishments throughout our neighborhoods.

It is what makes them different from the other trees - who have a different story.

On behalf of my fellow community members who could not escape the day job to be here today, I respectfully implore you to embrace the expertise, judgment and recommendations of the experts and residents, and grant Monument status to the Hermitage Camphor Trees.

Thank you.