

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I was born in southern California, San Marino to be precise, but returned with my family to the East after a year's residence, so while I can claim native status, I am hardly a Californian. I did not come to the region again until twenty years later, in 1966, when I had the good fortune to secure summer employment in the office of Richard and Dion Neutra. My tasks included sifting through records to identify material to be sent to the then nascent Neutra archive at UCLA, affording an unusual contact with a primary component of Los Angeles's architectural legacy. I began to sense how extraordinarily rich and varied that legacy was through the contents of the just published guide to architecture in southern California by David Gebhard and Robert Winter. Office work and field work together consumed most of my waking hours. By the end of two months, I realized the metropolitan area boasted one of the nation's greatest yields of modern architecture. Yet I did not enjoy Los Angeles as an urban setting. Like many visitors, I found it hard to accept the place as a real city.

My attitude toward the metropolis changed over the next half-dozen years. With repeated visits, I began to understand the city on its own terms and all the extraordinary things it had to offer. Los Angeles has more than a great collection of modernist and arts and crafts residences sequestered behind lush foliage. The fabric of the city, its public no less than its private worlds, possesses much from which we can learn. A central factor in this change of perspective was a rapidly growing interest in commercial architecture, in its vernacular as well as its high-style mani-

festations. Perhaps more than anything else the change stemmed from thousands of hours spent behind the wheel traversing the Philadelphia metropolitan area to gather material for a guide, and many hours more driving through other parts of the country, gradually looking at things I had been told were trivial as well as those generally considered significant. Moving to Berkeley in 1971 furthered the process. At a time when most colleagues regarded studying commercial architecture, especially that of the recent past, as sheer nonsense, I received insight and encouragement from John Beach, David Gebhard, and J. B. Jackson.

Few people possess both the great range of interests in the built environment and the depth of perception that were characteristic of John Beach. Through him I finally understood LA. David Gebhard opened many doors, conceptually, for myself and for a generation of architects, historians, and the lay public. His contribution to our understanding of California architecture is inestimable. His untimely death, like John's a decade ago, is a great professional as well as personal loss. Brinck Jackson has revealed the imperative of understanding things so commonplace as to be taken for granted and of doing so with a minimum of polemical baggage. His example has been a constant reminder that the modern metropolis is a significant part of our culture and our history. Once this project was under way, Brinck and David were both supportive in many ways, but I owe a special debt to Robert Winter for insisting that this project become a history of Los Angeles when I was making an exploratory probe of the subject in 1986. For these reasons, among others, I dedicate this book to them.

Many people have provided assistance along the way. Robert Bruegmann, Howard Gillette, Thomas Hines, Chester Liebs, and Dell Upton read an early draft and offered numerous valuable suggestions for its improvement—advice that I hope is reflected in the revisions. Ed Whittington facilitated my efforts in many ways, including permitting me to examine his vast collection of negatives—perhaps the single largest pictorial resource for the city—while they were housed in the library at California State University, Long Beach, prior to their deposit at the University of Southern California's special collections. Brent Howell of Coldwell Banker gave me introductions to a number of senior members of the real estate community, which proved invaluable to understanding the intricacies of postwar commercial development.

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The stock at the Book Castle in Burbank allowed me to acquire original copies of the Los Angeles Times, without which many of the illustrations in this book would have been impossible to use.

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INTRODUCTION

The emergence of major business centers in multiple locations within metropolitan areas represents one of the most significant changes to the structure of settlement in the United States during the twentieth century.

Large concentrations of offices, stores, and other businesses far removed from the traditional urban core, often in places that supported little development before, have profoundly affected both the shape of the land and the routine patterns of social interaction. "Suburb" in any traditional sense of the term carries little meaning in this context, for workplace no less than homeplace is likely to lie some distance from established locales of a generation ago. Moreover, movement from residence to places of employment and shopping is now seldom from outskirts toward the center but rather in multiple directions, crisscrossing the metropolitan area. Much commented on in recent years, the trend has generated reactions ranging from advocacy to derision.¹ However the results are viewed, there can be no question that the modern metropolis is very different from that of even a half-century ago and that these changes will have a basic impact for decades to come.

The creation of major retail centers on the urban periphery after World War II lay in the forefront of this business dispersal, pioneering locations as well as locational techniques subsequently used for other, more diverse forms of business development. Large new retail complexes were the first to challenge the hegemony of downtown functions, attracting a sizable share of the public away from the core on a regular basis.² While