

# Building La-La Land: Fascinating pictures trace life in Los Angeles from rural outpost to bastion of American fame and fortune

By Louise Boyle

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It was a city constructed from the imaginations of brave pioneers and determined industrialists, where even its now ubiquitous palm tree was transported and planted in a growing labyrinth of streets.

A new, 500-page collection - *Los Angeles, Portrait Of A City* - follows the evolution of the city from a dusty village in the San Fernando valley to the beginnings of a global centre of business, entertainment, culture and technology.

The history of Los Angeles stretches back to the settlement of a Native American tribe, the Tongvas, thousands of years ago. A Portuguese sailor named Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo was the first European to settle in the area around 1542.



Spanish settlers from New Spain in Mexico arrived in 1781, quickly incorporating Los Angeles into Mexico. California became part of the U.S. in 1848 following the Mexican-American War and the city of Los Angeles began to spread rapidly.

With the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad in 1876, the city prospered economically and industrially. In the 1870s, Los Angeles was still little more than a village of 5,000 but began to emerge as an important farming region. By 1900, there were more than 100,000 occupants as immigrants sought their fortunes out West.

Oil was discovered in 1892 and as the 20th century got underway, filmmakers turned Hollywood into the movie-making capital of the world. By the 1930s the population of LA had grown to more than two million.

The Second World War played an important role in the growth of Los Angeles as the city became a leading manufacturer of weaponry, airplanes and tanks.

However the rapid expansion was not without trouble - the history of Los Angeles is scarred by ethnic and class conflicts. Suburban sprawl, cramped living conditions, urban poverty, crime, air pollution and racial strife became catalysts to violence.

Major riots in 1965 and 1992 fostered distrust between the city's police department and various ethnic groups. However in May 2005, Angelenos elected Antonio Villaraigosa, the city's first Latino mayor since 1872, a welcome signal that perhaps times of major racial tension were over.

Jim Heimann, executive editor for TASCHEN America, has written a number of books on the culture and history of Los Angeles and the West Coast, drawing on his vast personal collection of images.

He sums up the history of Los Angeles, referring to the image of a palm tree being brought to be planted on Central Avenue in 1889.

Mr Heimann told Life Magazine: 'This picture wonderfully captures the effort in the late 19th century to make Los Angeles what it really wasn't.