



PAUL REVERE WAS HERE

On the Trail of L.A.'s Legendary Architect
Paul R. Williams



LOS ANGELES
CONSERVANCY

the NATIONAL
ORGANIZATION
of MINORITY
ARCHITECTS



SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CHAPTER

WHY PAUL REVERE WILLIAMS, NOW?

THROUGH THE YEARS, the L.A. Conservancy and the Southern California Chapter of the National Organization of Minority Architects (SoCal NOMA) have featured buildings by Paul Revere Williams at various programs and events. Given his tremendous impact as an architect and civic leader, there is never an inopportune time for exploring his work and celebrating his accomplishments. But there is urgency in telling Williams' story *now*, in 2021.

Despite his legendary status, examples of Williams' work face increasing threats of demolition or excessive alteration. In the last few decades, numerous Williams buildings have been destroyed, vanishing from the Los Angeles landscape. With them go a piece of history.

In a time of reckoning for the United States, protecting the work of Paul Revere Williams is of special consequence. According to the National Council of Architectural Registration Boards, African Americans represent only 2% of all certified architects in the United States. The reality is that America's built environment is overwhelmingly designed by white men. With precious few buildings designed by Black architects already, demolishing even one sends a damaging message. In the 2019 PBS Paul Revere Williams documentary, *Hollywood's Architect, The Paul R. Williams Story*, Dr. Lonnie Bunch of the Smithsonian Institute put that message into words, saying, "It's very easy to be written out of history when you're not present. That erasure of our history creates the sense for many African Americans that they haven't done very much. That they haven't transformed America."

Preventing this expunging from happening any more than it already has is precisely why the L.A. Conservancy, in partnership with the Southern California Chapter of the National Organization of Minority Architects (SoCal NOMA), has created *Paul Revere Was Here*, a campaign examining the legacy of Paul Revere Williams. For more information on events connected to *Paul Revere Was Here* and to learn how to get involved in protecting his works visit: laconservancy.org/PRWasHere



PAUL REVERE WAS HERE: IN SEARCH OF A LEGACY

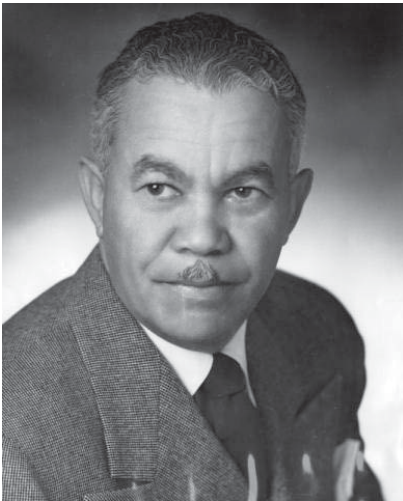
PAUL REVERE WILLIAMS was a remarkable architect. In a career that spanned nearly six decades, he designed over 3,000 buildings worldwide, 2,000 or more in Los Angeles County. His mastery of architectural styles ran the gamut, from Colonial, Spanish, Tudor and many more revivalist styles, to Modern and even Google. The types of buildings he designed were no less varied. He was known as the ‘Architect to the Stars’ for the homes he created for Hollywood’s rich and famous, such as Frank Sinatra, Eva Gabor, Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz. Yet he also designed public housing projects and a host of civic, commercial, community, and institutional buildings, even serving as an architect for the U.S. Navy during World War II. The American Institute of Architects, who posthumously awarded Williams the Gold Medal in 2017 (the highest honor given to an architect in the United States), described Williams as “...a figure whose accomplishments vaulted him into the vanguard of the profession. He stands as one of America’s foremost architects.” He was the first African American to receive the award.

For all the accolades Williams rightly deserves as an architect, his personal triumphs should not be overlooked. His story begins with adversity; by 1898 both of Williams’ parents had died of tuberculosis, leaving Williams, then four years old, and his older brother Chester Jr., alone. He was raised by Emily and Charles Clarkson, foster parents who ensured that young Paul Williams received a good education as well as the benefits of a good community at First African Methodist Episcopal Church (First A.M.E.). They supported him in becoming an architect, a goal he single-mindedly pursued despite many who believed a Black man would never succeed in such a profession. He channeled the discrimination and setbacks he endured into a ferocious dedication to push his skills further. In his 1937 essay for *American Magazine*, “I Am a Negro”, Williams wrote, “Without having the wish to ‘show them,’ I developed a fierce desire to ‘show myself.’ I wanted to vindicate every ability I had. I wanted to acquire new abilities. I wanted to prove that I, AS AN INDIVIDUAL, deserved a place in the world.”



Young Paul Revere Williams

To fully understand how extraordinarily successful Williams was at accomplishing this goal requires the will to travel. Looking at one of Williams' buildings will give you an appreciation for his sense of balance, scale, and proportion, but it is only by visiting multiple sites that his genius shines through. Even a small sampling of his prolific catalogue (such as the one contained in this booklet) demonstrates the depth of his agility in designing across categories. Furthermore, his ability to realize and prioritize his clients' visions—as opposed to his own tastes or ambitions—mean that his buildings capture the spirit of those they were meant to serve, and not, in any obvious way, Williams' personal aesthetics or opinions. His elegant projects are



Paul Revere Williams, 1951

tributes to the people that used them, not edifices to himself. It is the variety and abundance of Williams' buildings—as well as his “uncanny ability to design through someone else's eyes” (as described by curator Andrea Dietz) that makes visiting the places he created an imperative in appreciating his legacy.

This is the challenge and the adventure of a self-directed driving tour which seeks to explore the places in Los Angeles where you can find Williams' presence, and know unequivocally that *Paul Revere Was Here*. This booklet contains a selection of key sites in Williams' life and career. Historic places that trace his early development as an artist and architect are included,

as well as a selection of some of his most significant buildings. Additionally, examples of buildings by other Black architects give testimony to the trail Williams blazed.

We encourage you to visit these sites in whatever order you desire, and to see as many places as you choose—while always being mindful of resident's privacy. If there is one that strikes a personal chord, or that brings Paul Revere Williams' essence most clearly to the forefront for you, we hope you'll consider letting us and our community know. **Hold the *Paul Revere Was Here* sign (included as a printable sign on the last page of this booklet) in front of your building of choice, and post to the L.A. Conservancy's (@laconservancy) and SoCal NOMA's (@SoCalNOMA) Instagram accounts: #PaulRevereWasHere.**

We hope to see you on the trail of Paul Revere, enjoying the places across L.A. County that tell his story.

PAUL REVERE WAS HERE: THE MAN

These places played important roles in Paul Revere Williams' life.

OLVERA STREET

845 N. Alameda Street • Los Angeles, CA 90012

• *Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument #64*

Olvera Street and the Los Angeles Plaza, one of the oldest sections of downtown Los Angeles dating back to the 1820s, is often the starting place for understanding L.A.'s history and origins. It's also where Paul Revere Williams' story begins. It was here, in 1893, that his parents, Lila and Chester Stanley Williams, newly arrived in Los Angeles by way of Memphis, Tennessee, opened a fruit stand. Becoming a vendor offered the Williamses a chance to own their own business—a change from Chester's former job as a waiter at the Peabody Hotel in Memphis. Today, Olvera Street is part of El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historic Monument. Stalls selling trinkets and other wares harken back to the area's roots. Occasionally, fresh produce and vegetable stalls still make an appearance.

Los Angeles Plaza, 1890 (Security Pacific Collection/Los Angeles Public Library)





Santee Street, Circa 1930 (Dick Whittington Studio/USC Digital Library)

SANTEE STREET

(former site of Paul Williams' childhood home)

842 Santee Street • Los Angeles, CA 90014

Paul Revere Williams, the second son of Lila and Chester Williams, was born at 842 Santee Street in downtown Los Angeles on February 18, 1894. As a toddler, Williams and his mother would visit his father's fruit stand nearly every day, catching a horsecar to and from home. By the time he was four, both his parents had died, orphaning Williams and his older brother. Williams went to live with Emily and Charles Clarkson, who became his foster parents. The Clarksons lived in the neighborhood so Williams continued to grow up in this section of downtown Los Angeles, which was home to a wide variety of racial and ethnic communities. He attended the First A.M.E. Church on 8th and Towne Street, attended school on Pico Boulevard, and sold newspapers on the corner of First and Spring Street.

LOS ANGELES TRADE-TECHNICAL COLLEGE

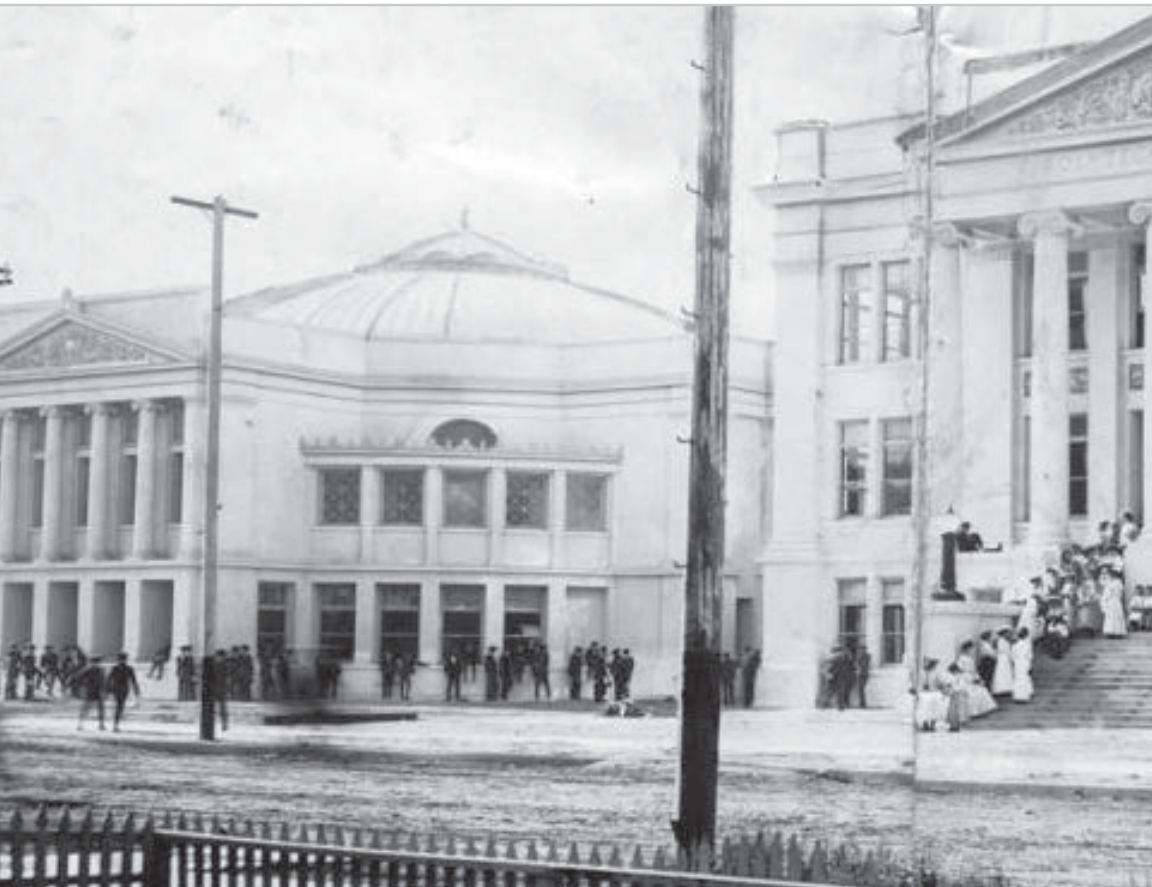
(former site of Polytechnic High School, Los Angeles)

400 W. Washington Boulevard • Los Angeles, CA 90015

Paul Williams decided to become an architect while attending Polytechnic High School, Los Angeles. His plans were not supported by his advisor, who, upon hearing of Williams' ambitions to continue his architectural studies at a university, exclaimed "Who ever heard of a Negro being an architect?" Williams graduated in 1912 with a class of 174 students.

Polytechnic High School opened in 1897 to serve as a more specialized branch of Los Angeles High School—the only dedicated high school in the city at the time. Originally located in downtown Los Angeles on South Beaudry Avenue, it moved in 1905 to Washington Boulevard and Flower Street, which is where Paul R. Williams attended classes. Today, the site serves as the campus of Los Angeles Trade-Technical College. Polytechnic High School relocated to the San Fernando Valley in 1957, where it continues today.

**Polytechnic High School, Los Angeles, Circa 1905
(Herald Examiner Collection/Los Angeles Public Library)**



WATT HALL, UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

USC School of Architecture, University of Southern California
Watt Hall, Suite 204 • Los Angeles, CA 90089

1974, Edward Killingsworth

Following his graduation from Polytechnic High School, Williams went on to study at the Los Angeles Arts School and the Beaux-Arts Institute of Design, and enrolled in the University of Southern California's architecture engineering program in 1916. He was one of the first students of what was then known as the architecture engineering program at USC, originally established in 1914. It would become its own School of Architecture by 1925. Williams' engineering program included business classes and plenty of math courses, subjects that served him well throughout his career. Williams helped pay for his education by making brass decorations for men's watches and women's handbags. Watt Hall was built in 1974 and designed by USC alumnus Edward Killingsworth. It and Harris Hall are the primary buildings of USC's current School of Architecture.



SPRING STORY LOFTS

(formerly the Los Angeles Stock Exchange Building)

639 S. Spring Street • Los Angeles, CA 90014

1919, Morgan, Walls & Morgan

• *Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument #671*

By late 1922, Williams had made enough money through design competitions and by working in various architecture firms to open his own practice, Paul R. Williams & Associates. A garden suite of what was then known as the Stock Exchange Building in downtown Los Angeles became his first office. The building, designed by the prominent Los Angeles firm Morgan, Walls & Morgan was completed in 1919. Aside from being a stunning work of Beaux Arts architecture, this building contributed to the commercial development of downtown Los Angeles and cemented Spring Street's reputation as the "Wall Street of the West." Its fame and prestige may have made it the ideal

location for a young architect ready to establish a fledgling firm. Today, the mixed-use space contains retail space and loft apartments. Later, the building would serve as the headquarters of Barclay's Bank before becoming the mixed-use space of retail spaces and loft apartments it is today. It is a contributor to the Spring Street Financial District, listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

In 1923, shortly after establishing his firm, Williams was officially admitted to the American Institute of Architects (AIA) as an Associate Member. He was the first known Black member of the AIA.



1271 WEST 35TH STREET

Los Angeles, CA 90007

1909, Architect unknown

By the time he was 25 years old, Williams had met and married his wife, Della Mae Givens. They lived with Williams' foster mother until purchasing their own home at 1271 West 35th Street, a modest house in the West Adams neighborhood in South Los Angeles. The neighborhood was home to a large Black community, in large part because it was free of the racial covenants which blanketed Los Angeles at the time.

In Williams' 1937 essay, "I Am a Negro," he wrote:

Today I sketched the preliminary plans for a large country house which will be erected in one of the most beautiful residential districts in the world. Sometimes I have dreamed of living there. I could afford such a home. But this evening, I returned to my own small, inexpensive home... in a comparatively undesirable section of Los Angeles. I must always live in that locality, or in another like it, because...I am a Negro.

Williams and Della lived at 1271 West 35th Street for 30 years.



1690 S. VICTORIA AVENUE

Los Angeles, CA 90010

1951, Paul R. Williams

• *Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument #170*

Ultimately, Williams designed and built a new home, in the affluent and influential neighborhood of Lafayette Square. Following the 1948 United States Supreme Court's landmark decision in *Shelley v. Kraemer* (334 U.S. 1) overturning discriminatory covenants, Lafayette Square, which had been restricted to white, non-Jews only, became home to Paul R. Williams and his family. It came as a surprise to some that this home, unlike many he had designed over the years, was not in any type of revivalist style, but was instead International, exhibiting clean lines, interior curves, and an embrace of California indoor/outdoor living. Williams and Della were involved in every aspect of the home. Williams designed the furniture, which was custom built, and the landscaping as well. His attention to detail and perfectionism is still on full display in this 1951, mid-century home. The home is currently undergoing restoration.





THE WILFANDEL CLUB

3425 W. Adams Boulevard • Los Angeles, CA 90018

1912, Architect unknown

Della Mae Williams was a force in the Williams household. Aside from raising two daughters, hosting social events, and supporting her husband's career, she was also a leader in Black women's groups. One of the most notable of these was the Wilfandel Club, which Della co-founded with Fannie Williams (no relation) in 1945. Fifty-one resourceful Black women came together to purchase the 1912 Mediterranean Revival home in response to the segregation that denied them access to other social groups and public spaces. The Wilfandel (the name combines Della and Fannie's first and shared last names) is one of the oldest Black women's clubs in Los Angeles. It is still active today and was awarded a grant in 2018 by the National Trust for Historic Preservation's African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund.

FIRST AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

2270 S. Harvard Boulevard • Los Angeles, CA 90018

1965, Paul R. Williams


Paul Revere Williams was a member of First A.M.E. and was involved in church life for the entirety of his life. Founded in the Spring Street living room of real estate entrepreneur and formerly enslaved Bidley “Grandma” Mason in 1872, First A.M.E. changed locations several times before landing in the prestigious West Adams neighborhood of Sugar Hill. In need of a bigger facility to serve the community, Williams was asked by church leadership to design a new building. He did so, creating a Late Modern style, 5,000-seat sanctuary and a Community Youth Center. Williams’ design for the church, while simple, features a folding plate motif along the roofline and porch of the front entrance.

When Williams passed away at age 85 in 1980, his funeral was held in the church he designed. His friend and then-pastor Cecil Murray wrote an article in the *Los Angeles Sentinel* saying, “The blood of Paul R. Williams is in the walls of this church.”



PAUL REVERE WILLIAMS: THE ARCHITECT

Following is a sampling of Paul Revere Williams' must-see work.

Visit this link to hear audio recordings of SoCal NOMA members sharing information and stories about Paul R. Williams sites. Look for this symbol  next to the buildings that have additional recorded commentary.



28TH STREET APARTMENTS (YMCA)

1006 E. 28th Street • Los Angeles, CA 90011

1926, Paul R. Williams

- *Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument #851*
- *National Register of Historic Places*

This Spanish Colonial Revival style building was designed by Paul R. Williams to serve as a YMCA for the Black community of South Los Angeles. Williams incorporated the likenesses of Frederick Douglass and Booker T. Washington into the ornate facade to remind the young people who used the building of two great Black role models. The pool was an important feature of Williams' design because it provided African Americans with swimming options during a time when municipal swimming pools were racially segregated in Los Angeles. In 1931, Judge Walter S. Gates ordered an end to racial segregation in municipal swimming pools after Ethel Prioleau, an African American widow of an Army major, sued the city, complaining that she was not allowed to use the swimming pool in nearby Exposition Park.

In 2012, the YMCA reopened as 28th Street Apartments after a renovation project that converted the original building and a new addition into forty-nine studio apartments with private kitchens and baths. The building now serves adults with low incomes and young people who formerly experienced homelessness transitioning to independent living. The 28th Street Apartments represent a remarkable reimagining of a cultural and architectural icon in Los Angeles, which earned the project a Conservancy Preservation Award in 2013.



KELLY MUSIC BUILDING

1043 Westwood Boulevard • Los Angeles CA, 90024

1929-30, Paul R. Williams

• *Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument #1201*

Commissioned by John T. Kelly to be the third retail location for his music store business the Kelly Music Company, Westwood's Kelly Music Building stands as one of Williams' earliest commercial architectural commissions. Completed in 1930, the Kelly Music Building was part of the initial development phase of Westwood Village, which officially opened in late 1929. In fitting with the planned architectural design of Westwood Village, the building was designed in the Mediterranean Revival style. The ground floor of the building prominently features five arches that form an arcade. The interior of the building contains a curving marble staircase with an ornate metal railing, as well as a decorative wood mantled fireplace.

In 2019, the Los Angeles Conservancy nominated the building for local Historic-Cultural Monument (HCM) recognition. That nomination passed, and on December 10, 2019 the Kelly Music Building was designated.



PAUL R. WILLIAMS APARTMENT COMPLEX

(formerly Angelus Funeral Home)

1010 E. Jefferson Boulevard • Los Angeles, CA 90011

1934, Paul R. Williams

- *Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument #774*
- *National Register of Historic Places*

Just as African Americans were historically denied access to financial and other social services in Los Angeles, they also struggled to find mortuaries that would assist with services and burials. When the Black-owned Angelus Funeral Home was founded in 1922, it provided an important service to the African American community. By the early 1930s, the business was thriving and needed to expand. Paul R. Williams was hired to design the new funeral home. He created a beautiful and tasteful drawing room, mortuary church chapel, private viewing room and a nursery for small children inside of the wedge-shaped Spanish Colonial Revival/Georgian Revival building. Groupings of windows gave a view of the patio, fountains, and flowers outside.

The Angelus Funeral Home kept expanding, and in 1961 moved to another location on Crenshaw Boulevard. Williams was once again hired, this time to design a building for the new location to meet the funeral home's growing needs. The earlier 1934 building was rehabilitated and became part of a new affordable housing project in 2019: the Paul R. Williams Apartments complex. It now houses management offices, community spaces, and a few residential units in this complex comprised of old and new buildings.



MUSIC CORPORATION OF AMERICA HEADQUARTERS BUILDING

360 N. Crescent Drive • Beverly Hills, CA 90210

1938/1964 Paul R. Williams

The Music Corporation of America Headquarters Building was commissioned by Jules Stein for his Music Corporation of America (MCA) talent agency. Jules Stein was a Chicago ophthalmologist who ran a side business booking gigs for local musical talent. Stein, along with business partner William R. Goodheart, Jr. founded MCA in 1924. MCA would eventually move their headquarters to Los Angeles to focus on representing Hollywood talent. MCA would go on to represent such stars as Bette Davis and Ronald Reagan. By the 1940s, MCA was the largest talent agency in the world.

Stein wanted his clients to feel at home when they visited MCA and asked Williams to create an office complex with a residential feel. The result was an English Georgian mansion complex, complete with a radio station, a projection room, and over thirty offices. In 1939, the Southern California Chapter of the American Institute of Architects awarded Williams the Award of Merit for his work on the building. MCA sold the building to Litton Industries in 1964 and Williams was brought back to design an additional three-story building and a parking lot. It was designated as a local Historic Landmark in 2020.



SAKS FIFTH AVENUE

9600 Wilshire Boulevard • Beverly Hills, CA 90212

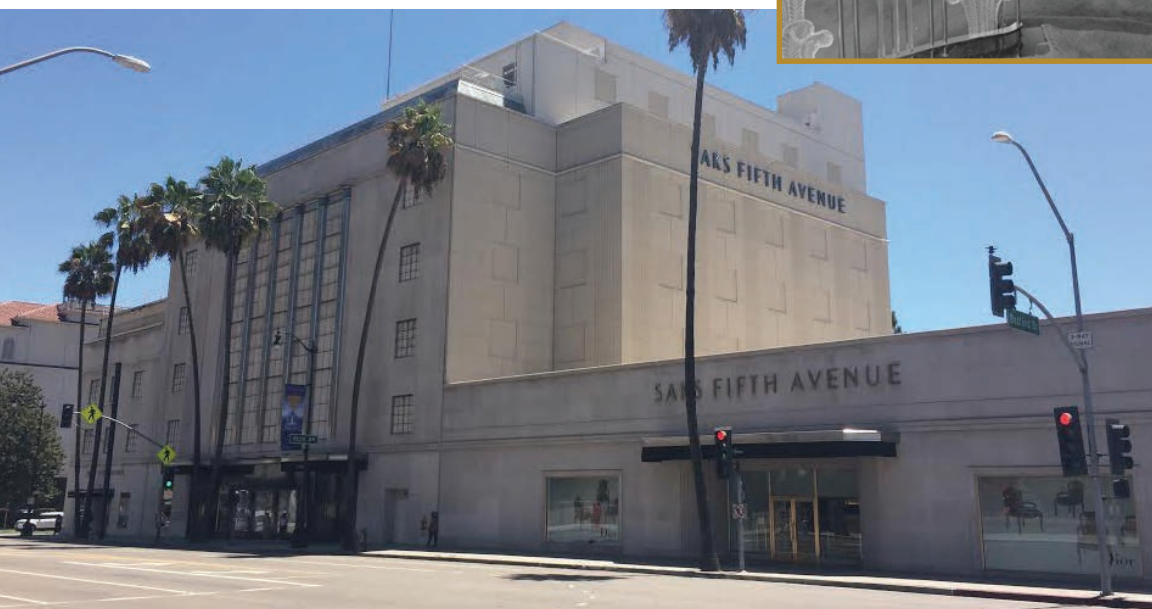
1939, Parkinson & Parkinson (exterior), Paul R. Williams (interior)

The first Saks Fifth Avenue store in Southern California opened in 1939. Father and son architecture team Parkinson & Parkinson designed the exterior of the building. They were well-known at the time for designing the famed Art Deco style Bullocks Wilshire department store located on Wilshire Boulevard.

Williams served as interior architect of L.A.'s Saks Fifth Avenue, giving the store a very unique feel. He designed each shopping area to be semi-enclosed, minimizing potential distractions for customers. Each area was decorated in a theme that complimented the clothes displayed there. The rooms were illuminated by a mix of indirect lamps and small hidden floodlights which were aimed at the clothes, a unique lighting set up for a department store. The store was very successful. Williams was brought back to design two new exterior additions to the building in 1940 and 1948.

For a time, Perino's, a restaurant on Wilshire Boulevard famous for its Hollywood clientele, operated Saks Fifth Avenue's rooftop Terrace Restaurant as an offshoot location. Williams had redesigned Perino's most well-known location in 1950, adding additional glamour to one of L.A.'s favorite eateries. Despite efforts to save Perino's structure, it was torn down in 2005.

Saks Fifth Avenue Interior, Circa 1940 (Maynard L. Parker, Huntington Library)



THE BEVERLY HILLS HOTEL



9641 Sunset Boulevard
Beverly Hills, CA 90210

1912, Elmer Grey
1941, Paul R. Williams
(renovation and addition)

- *Beverly Hills Historic Landmark #1*

With its pink and green façade and iconic signage, The Beverly Hills Hotel has become a legendary piece of Los Angeles' silver screen history. The original main structure of the hotel was completed in 1912 and was designed by architect Elmer Grey. The building was done in the Mediterranean Revival style, and in the following decades became synonymous with

Hollywood glamour. Anyone who was anyone could be seen on any given day relaxing by the pool or having a drink in the lounge.

The hotel limped through the Great Depression, but was revitalized in the 1940s, in part due to work begun in 1941 by Williams and a team of interior designers. Williams updated much of the complex, renovating existing sections of the hotel, while also designing additions. It was during this time that the building was repainted to the now well-known pink and green. In 1949, Williams completed the Crescent Wing which prominently displays the name "The Beverly Hills," in Williams' own handwriting. Despite Williams' contributions, The Beverly Hills Hotel's segregation policy meant that he was not allowed to stay or dine at the hotel. Wait staff would not seat or serve Williams at the restaurant or pool unless he was in the company of one of the white owners. (The same was true for his work on the Ambassador Hotel: although he designed the Ambassador's coffee shop in the late '40s—among other additions—it's unlikely he would have been allowed service there.) As of 2021, The Beverly Hills Hotel's Paul R. Williams suite—which retains Williams' late 1940s style—is priced at \$4,500.00 per night.



STANLEY MOSK COURTHOUSE

111 N. Hill Street • Los Angeles CA, 90012

1947, Paul R. Williams, Austin, Field & Fry, Stanton & Stockwell and Adrian Wilson

Originally known as the Los Angeles County Courthouse, the building was conceived as part of the monumental 1947 Civic Center Master Plan that transformed a large portion of Bunker Hill through the expansion of the downtown Los Angeles Civic Center. The Courthouse was designed simultaneously with the adjacent L.A. Civic Center by a team of noted, local architects and artists known as The Allied Architects, led by Paul R. Williams. In keeping with Williams' belief that government buildings should be understated, the courthouse was designed in a conservative, Late Moderne style. The building spans two city blocks and is clad in panels of ceramic veneer, with the lower floors featuring polished red granite. The Hill Street entrance features terra cotta relief sculptures depicting allegorical representations of Truth, Law and Justice designed by sculptor Donal Hord.

The Los Angeles County Courthouse was renamed in 2002 in honor of Stanley Mosk, who was the longest serving justice on the California Supreme Court and had previously served as Attorney General of California.



LEGACY PLAZA

(formerly Golden State Mutual Life Insurance Company Building)
1999 West Adams Boulevard • Los Angeles, CA 90018

1949, Paul R. Williams

- Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument #1000
- National Register of Historic Places



The Golden State Mutual Life Insurance Company (GSM) was founded in 1925 as one of the first companies on the West Coast to offer life insurance to African Americans. It quickly became the largest insurance company in its field. The Late Moderne style structure served as the company's headquarters until 2009. The building is made up of a six-story central structure flanked by two,

five-story wings which frame the main entrance. The large Moderne style letters spelling "GOLDEN STATE MUTUAL LIFE" above the main entrance are original to the building. The building was designed to hold over 300 employees and included a 150-person cafeteria and 400-seat auditorium. The upper portion of the interior lobby side walls contain two oil on canvas murals painted by either artist Charles Alston or Hale Woodruff. These murals were commissioned by Williams, and together the murals are entitled "*The Negro in California History: Settlement & Development.*"

As GSM's business began to decline in the late 1980s, the company started to liquidate many of its assets, including its extensive art collection. In 2009, the building was sold to provide a new headquarters for the South Central Los Angeles Regional Center (SCLARC), a private non-profit organization that provides services for individuals diagnosed with developmental disabilities and children with developmental delays. The L.A. Conservancy and SCLARC advocated for the lobby murals to stay with the building instead of being removed and sold to repay GSM's debts. In 2011, following a nomination submitted by the Los Angeles Conservancy, the building was designated a City of Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument, which ensured the murals would be kept in the lobby where they were originally intended to live.

UCLA BOTANY BUILDING

618 Charles E. Young Drive • Los Angeles, CA 90095

1959, Paul R. Williams

Similar to many of his residential designs, Williams purposely designed the UCLA Botany Building to conform to its landscape rather than transforming the land to fit the building. Located next door to the University's botanical garden, the Botany Building incorporates the garden into its design with its glass façade, bringing in light and allowing students a view of the garden.

During a 2018 redesign and seismic retrofit of the building, architectural firm CO Architects discovered Williams' unused hand-drawn designs for a 285-square foot wall mosaic with a leaf motif. The drawing did not include material or color notes, but by using other works by Williams as a guide, CO Architects was able to bring the 72,000-tile mosaic to life. A bronze plaque citing Williams' contributions to the building was also added as part of the redesign.

Right: Botany mural in entryway
Below: UCLA Botany Building, 1959





FOUNDER'S CHURCH OF RELIGIOUS SCIENCE

3281 W. Sixth Street • Los Angeles, CA 90020

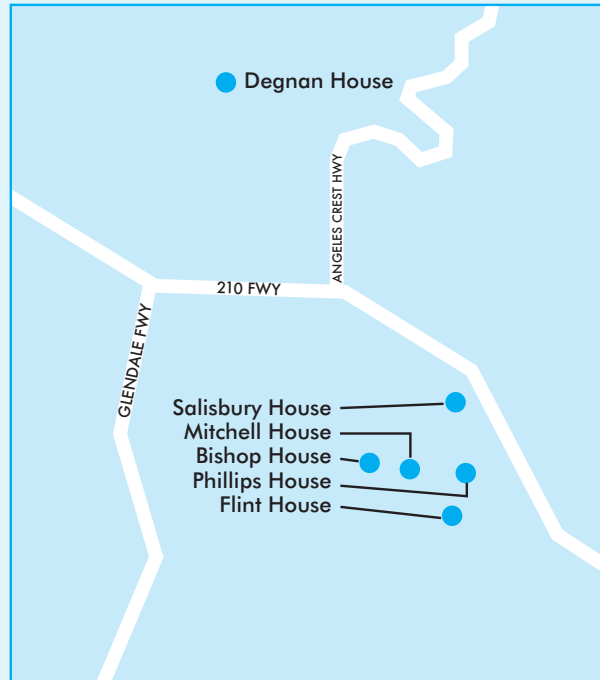
1960, Paul R. Williams

- *Los Angeles Historic Cultural-Monument #727*
- *National Register of Historic Places*

Dr. Ernest Holmes created the Founder's Church of Religious Science in 1932. By the time he died in 1960, his congregation had grown to 100,000 members across the country. As a result of this growth the Los Angeles congregation needed a new sanctuary and Williams was hired to design it. The Founder's Church is one of the few religious buildings Williams designed, and is a wonderful example of his Modern design buildings. The reinforced concrete building is topped by an enormous steel-framed dome that reaches four stories in height. The tall wall of pierced concrete block encloses the church within a lush green garden and adds depth to the unadorned main sanctuary. The wall and the domed structure together have a Moorish flavor, presented in a clean and simplified Modern style. The building received a grant from the National Trust for Historic Preservation's African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund.

PAUL REVERE WAS HERE: LA CAÑADA FLINTRIDGE

ONE OF THE greatest concentrations of Paul R. Williams homes is in La Cañada Flintridge (the two towns of La Cañada and Flintridge merged in 1976). Frank Putnam Flint, a real estate developer and former U.S. Senator founded Flintridge, a 1,700-acre segregated development that promoted racial housing restrictions as a selling point. The wealthy clients who bought Flintridge lots needed architects and one that Flint recommended was Paul R. Williams, who received his license in 1921. Williams was garnering publicity for the creative designs he was entering in architectural competitions and Flint read about his accolades. The architect surprised the developer by telling him that they had originally met when Williams was a child selling newspapers to Flint's downtown Los Angeles office. Williams later said "I got my start doing better houses...from him." Williams also said he designed 32 houses in La Cañada Flintridge. Most were custom-designed commissions, but at least ten were spec houses for the Flint company. Williams' fledgling days designing homes in La Cañada Flintridge in the 1920's gave him the financial security to open his own firm.



For a more comprehensive list of the homes designed by Paul R. Williams in La Cañada Flintridge, visit <https://www.laconservancy.org/self-guided-tours>

A Word of Caution

Much of the charm and beauty of La Cañada Flintridge is its hilly terrain offering scenic views at almost every turn. But because of the terrain, many homes are sited on curving, narrow roads with no sidewalks and limited or no parking. Others are located on relatively flat roads, some with sidewalks, and some with roadside parking.

DOUGLAS MITCHELL HOUSE

640 Berkshire Avenue • 1923

Gates open to a manicured lawn and a winding driveway that leads to a stately Colonial Revival style mansion built for an Automobile Club executive whose brother Standish lived next door. This early Williams design displays his ability to give elegance and balanced proportion to classic styles.



LOIS AND STUART M. SALISBURY HOUSE

4420 Gould Avenue • 1925

A timeless Spanish Colonial Revival, this stucco house with scalloped overhangs, terracotta roof, wood shutters and Monterey balconies sits on a 55,000 square foot lot with a casita and park-like expanses of lawn, trees and flowers. The beautiful integration of home and outdoor space is a Williams signature.



JOHN BISHOP AND LILLIAN GREEN HOUSE

4151 Commonwealth Avenue
1927

Designed as a weekend house for the family of a Long Beach real estate investor, this 7,400 square foot Tudor Revival style home has had many owners. Despite this, the ornate interior with 10 foot doors, leaded glass windows and hand-carved wood interiors has not been much altered from its original design.



JAMES AND DOROTHY DEGNAN HOUSE

5200 Alta Canyada Road • 1927

This exquisite and palatial Spanish Renaissance Revival house has an embellished cast stone entrance that opens to 7,700 square feet of ornate rooms, including a ballroom. The magical grounds, which Williams designed as outdoor living space, include two cottages, a grotto, decorative garden sculpture and tiled fountains.



IDA MAY PHILLIPS HOUSE

445 Somerset Place • 1927

Dramatically sited on a steep street and next to a Williams Tudor Revival style house at 453 Somerset, this cream-colored brick Italianate Mediterranean style home has a terrace above a Palladian window and an arched front door surrounded by a classical pediment and pilasters. The house is built on multiple levels and has a 35-foot-long living room.



KATHERINE BLOSS FLINT HOUSE

524 Dartmouth Place • 1929

Before the death of her husband Frank Flint, Katherine Flint commissioned a smaller version of the house, later demolished, where they lived. Williams, an expert in combining architectural styles, designed a Colonial Georgian Revival style mansion with sumptuous yet comfortable interior details and spacious gardens.



PAUL REVERE WAS HERE: THE LEGACY

*These sites are just a few designed by Black architects who were inspired and influenced by Paul R. Williams to create incredible architecture**

MEXICAN AMERICAN OPPORTUNITY FOUNDATION

(formerly Golden State Mutual Life Insurance Building)
4261 South Central Avenue • Los Angeles, CA 90011

1928, James H. Garrott

- *Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument #580*
- *National Register of Historic Places*

The Black-owned enterprise Golden State Mutual Life Insurance Company started out operating from a one-room office to provide what no other business did: insurance policies for the area's growing Black population. The company commissioned architect James H. Garrott to design what would become their new headquarters. Garrott was the second African American admitted to the American Institute of Architects. His application was sponsored by Paul R. Williams, the first person to achieve that distinction. Garrott's Mission Revival style building was Golden State Mutual's headquarters before it moved to its new location—designed by Williams—in 1949. The original building by Garrott now houses a location for the Mexican American Opportunity Foundation.



**For a map of over 50 projects by African American architects in Los Angeles, visit <http://bit.ly/SoCalNOMAMap>*



CHASE KNOLLS

13401 Riverside Drive • Los Angeles, CA 91423

1947, Ralph A. Vaughn, Heth Wharton

• *Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument #683*

Garden City planning principles guided the design of this postwar apartment community (1947-1949). Architects Heth Wharton and Ralph A. Vaughn, the latter a Black architect, provided tenants with open, landscaped, inner courtyards separated from perimeter storage areas, garages, and vehicular traffic. Vaughn, who was hired by Paul R. Williams in 1937, worked on notable buildings such as the Saks Fifth Avenue store in Beverly Hills during his five years with the firm. Like Williams, Vaughn designed homes for the Hollywood elite, including Tyrone Power and Bert Lahr. He also designed movie sets for MGM. In the late 1970s he assisted in the restoration of Watts Towers. Chase Knolls was designated a Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument in 2000.

EDGEWATER INN

(SeaPort Marina Hotel) - Demolished

6400 E. Pacific Coast Highway • Long Beach, CA 90803

1963, Roy Sealey

Architect Roy Sealey, who worked with Paul R. Williams before forming his own firm, designed the Googie-styled, 200-unit hotel in 1963. Its Y-shaped support piers and diamond-patterned roofline of the main building were connected to zigzag-shaped, two-story guest room wings, which afforded each room an ocean or courtyard view. Telephone booths were in the shape of giant seashells. Over time, the complex suffered from deferred maintenance. Efforts to preserve the structure, including appeals by the Los Angeles Conservancy, eventually failed and the complex was demolished and replaced by a massive retail center in 2017. Two notable structures by Sealey that still stand include the 1967 East L.A. Department of Social Services (5445 Whittier Boulevard, East Los Angeles) and the County USC Medical Center (2051 Marengo Street, Los Angeles), which Sealey expanded between 1969 and 1976.





FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF VENICE

985 Westminster Avenue • Los Angeles, CA 90291

1968, George Raymond Williams

The Venice neighborhood was created in the early 1900s as a seaside amusement park. Developer Abbot Kinney employed a sizable number of African Americans to dig the canals and build the piazzas. Those workers were permitted to live only within the nearby neighborhood of Oakwood which, in 1913, is where the First Baptist Church was founded to serve the Black community. Over time, the church occupied several buildings, including a Paul R. Williams-designed structure on Westminster Avenue, across the street from the current church. In 1972, the Williams-designed building moved to 11205 S. Vermont Avenue in South Los Angeles, where it remains today. The building that replaced it, an A-frame structure designed by Black architect George R. Williams (no relation to Paul R. Williams) was completed in 1968. However, due to rising rental costs in the area, the congregation left the building, relocated to Westchester in 2015, and the building was put up for sale. The new owners of the church have proposed a major renovation which would turn it into a private residence—but for many, the building remains a vital anchor in the memory of the community. Currently, the renovation plans are being challenged and there is a community-led effort to designate the church as a Historic-Cultural Monument.

WATTS HAPPENING CULTURAL CENTER

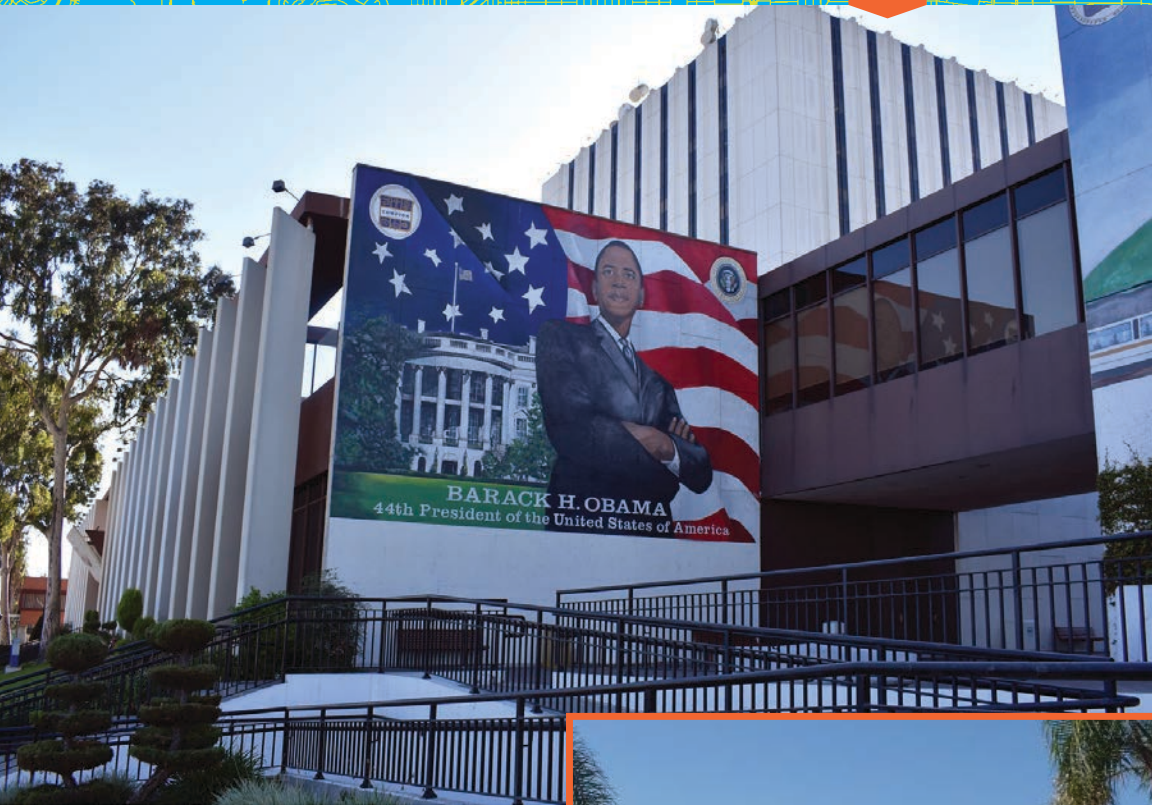
(formerly *Mafundi Institute Building*)

1845 East 103rd Street • Los Angeles, CA 90002

1969, Robert A. Kennard, Arthur Silvers

In 1957, Robert Kennard, a graduate of USC, established one of L.A.'s early Black architectural firms. Kennard was familiar with Paul R. Williams' work from an early age, having been introduced to it by a teacher at Monrovia High School. Like Williams, his career began with residential design; Kennard completed over 40 residences by the early 1960s. The firm he founded, Kennard Design Group (KDG), remains one of the largest Black-owned architectural firms in California. The Late-Modern Watts Happening Cultural Center, located within the Watts community and designed by Kennard and Arthur Silvers, an architect and social justice activist, served as a prominent center for Black art, culture, and local activism. Currently, the building is threatened by redevelopment proposals which may call for its demolition. To find out how you can support the L.A. Conservancy's efforts to save the building, visit: <https://www.laconservancy.org/WHCC>





COMPTON CITY HALL & CIVIC CENTER

205 S. Willowbrook Drive
Compton, CA 90220

1976-1977, Harold Williams

This Late-Modern style complex designed by architect Harold Williams (no relation to Paul R. Williams, but under whom he apprenticed), includes a City Hall as well as a county library, police department, post office, and courthouse. The buildings surround a plaza whose centerpiece is the King Memorial, designed by Gerald Gladstone in collaboration with the architect. As the ninth Black architect licensed in California, Williams felt his commission to design the complex gave him a chance to give back to the African American community. Chattel, a historic preservation consulting firm, earned a 2013 Preservation Award from the Los Angeles Conservancy for its respectful reglazing of the City Hall's windows.





CAAM (CALIFORNIA AFRICAN AMERICAN MUSEUM)

600 State Drive (Exposition Park) • Los Angeles, CA 90037

1984, Jack Haywood, Vince Proby

Founded in 1977, CAAM became the first state-supported museum of its kind, spotlighting the important roles African Americans have played in the American West. In 1984, while the Summer Olympics were taking place next door at the Coliseum and throughout Los Angeles, the museum opened its doors. The 44,000 square-foot building was designed by noted architects Jack Haywood and Vince Proby. Following in the trailblazing footsteps of Paul R. Williams, Proby was the first Black architect to serve on California's State Board of Architectural Examiners.

1984 Summer Olympics, Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum

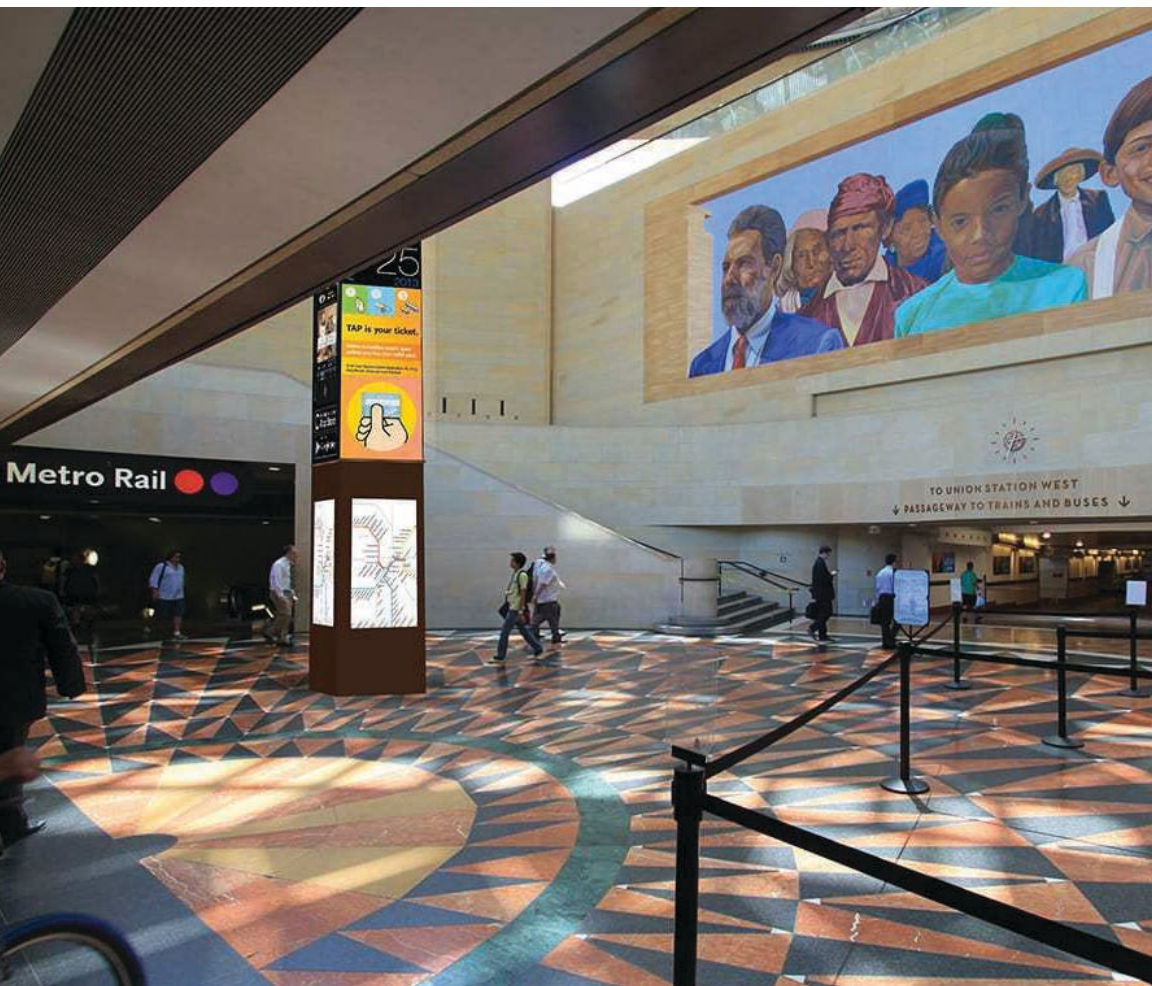


EAST PORTAL - UNION STATION

1 Gateway Plaza • Los Angeles, CA 90012

1996, RAW International, Inc.

Working in collaboration with Ehrenkrantz, Eckstut Architects, Roland A. Wiley, Founder and Principal of RAW International, Inc., designed this distinctive structure at Union Station. The four-level, intermodal transportation building erected at the east side of historic Union Station provides for the needs of regional commuter and long-distance passenger trains, local rail and bus transit, and commuter vehicles. Like Paul R. Williams, Wiley believes in projects that serve the greater public, including those in underserved areas. In the 30 years since he founded his firm, RAW International, he has made neighborhoods suffering from crumbling infrastructure a priority. A current RAW project is the design of Metro Rail's K Line (Crenshaw Line) stations.



The Los Angeles Conservancy dedicates the Paul Revere Was Here campaign to the memory of Jerome Robinson.

A longtime docent, volunteer, scholar and friend, Jerome's recent work focused on architect Robert F. Kennard, who was inspired by Paul R. Williams.

This tour was created on behalf of the Los Angeles Conservancy and the Southern California Chapter of the National Organization of Minority Architects *Paul Revere Was Here* campaign in 2021.

Special thanks to Karen E. Hudson for her advice and guidance.
Additional thanks to Lawrence Huley, Anthony B. Mack, and Roland A. Wiley.

The Los Angeles Conservancy is a nonprofit membership organization that works through education and advocacy to recognize, preserve, and revitalize the historic architectural and cultural resources of Los Angeles County.

We believe that historic places tell great stories, give us a sense of place, help us learn who we are and what we value as a culture, and embody our shared history.

SoCalNOMA seeks to advance and support the education and careers of those who have been historically under-represented in the field of architecture and various allied design/build professions.

Learn more about our work and see how you can get involved at

laconservancy.org socialnoma.org

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