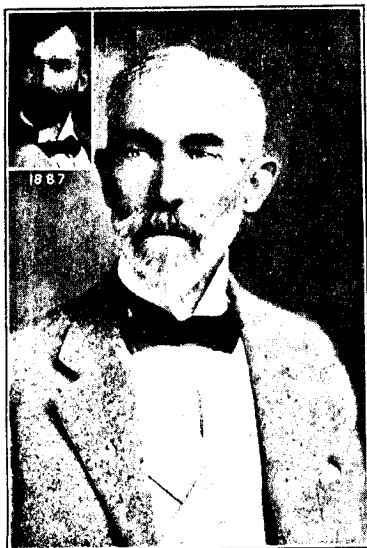


Who put "Wilshire" into Wilshire?

By GAYLORD WILSHIRE, originator Wilshire Boulevard



Gaylord Wilshire

ALTHOUGH the WILSHIRE DISTRICT of Los Angeles and the WILSHIRE BOULEVARD running from Los Angeles to the Pacific Ocean are of world wide fame, the reason of the Wilshire baptism is generally unknown. The explanation is simple enough. I laid out the first 1,200 feet of the present boulevard running west from Westlake Park and named it Wilshire after myself. This was along about the year 1896. I had bought for \$52,000 (today worth \$10,000,000) the 35-acre block lying immediately to the west of the park, away back in 1887, the Wilshire Boulevard bisects this block. I held the property nearly ten years and finally when it seemed ready for subdividing I named it Wilshire Boulevard Tract and took in with me as partner my brother, William B. Wilshire, since deceased. I spent a large sum of money grading streets, laying the present cement sidewalks and planting shade trees and palms. That it was destined to be the best part of Los Angeles was just as obvious to me then as it is to everybody now in 1924. It was very hard in 1896 to get people to agree with me. I sold lots at \$15 per foot then, which now sell for \$1250. In fact it was not till along about ten years later, say in 1906, that there came to be a realization of the possibilities of the Wilshire District.

When I commenced operations Westlake Park was merely a 35-acre mudhole. I myself contributed the first thousand dollars to the city to inaugurate its improvement. I also inaugurated the agitation which resulted, after much narrow-minded opposition, in the widening of Seventh Street from 60 feet to its present width of 80 feet. It was a civic tragedy that our city forefathers did not make it conform to the 120-foot width I had made the Wilshire Boulevard. However, in those early days we considered ourselves lucky in winning the struggle for the 80 feet. I have always been a great believer in wide streets. I laid out the 120-foot Benton Boulevard to the west of my tract. I was the head of the syndicate which originated the town of Fullerton, California, and insisted upon laying out Commonwealth Avenue which traverses the town 100 feet wide. Wide streets have contributed very much to the success and growth of Fullerton.

There seems to be no doubt but that the logical thing now for the City of Los Angeles to do is to immediately widen Wilshire Boulevard to 200 feet from the west city limits and carry it straight through to Olive Street, bridging Westlake Park and connecting with Orange Street. Incidentally I may say that the improvement of this great artery to the Wilshire District is of far more importance to the present financial centre of Los Angeles than it is to the Wilshire District. It's vital in fact. There is no question about the future of the Wilshire District but there may be quite a question as to where the future financial centre of Los Angeles is to be.

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1887—"founders Wilshire District"—1924

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