

RESIDENCES--WILMINGTON--
BANNING, PHINEAS

The General Phineas Banning Residence Museum



A Facility of the Los Angeles City Recreation
and Parks Department

Banning Park

401 East 'M' Street

Wilmington, California 90744

(213) 548-7777

General Phineas Banning and the Residence

Phineas Banning, designer and builder of this historic house, came to California in 1851, drawn by the excitement of the Gold Rush. Grandson of a Revolutionary War patriot and founder of the state of Delaware, he was an experienced business man at the age of 21. He engaged in staging and freighting, convinced of the potential of the Los Angeles area for agriculture and commerce, and impressed with the possibilities for developing a harbor to serve the area at San Pedro. His commercial routes soon extended as far as Yuma and Salt Lake City and he traveled about the Southwest, a bold and daring driver and rider.

The early stage routes are now freeways, and metropolitan Los Angeles today owes much to her pioneers for laying the commercial foundations of the city, and developing its harbor. Phineas Banning designed and promoted the construction of the first breakwater which sheltered the shipping so vital to our growth as a commercial center. He also served as the contractor for the first telegraph line connecting Los Angeles to San Francisco and the eastern states.

This home was built in 1864 during the Civil War, adjacent to the headquarters of the United States Army of the Southwest, and it was a center

for rallies and meetings supporting the cause of the Union. The sovereignty of the United States during this crucial period in our nation's history was supported by pioneers who gathered in this house.

Phineas Banning's grandfather was a member of the nation's first Electoral College, and voted for George Washington. The political tradition of the family was continued when Phineas was elected to the California State Senate in 1867 and 1869. His signature appears on the California ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, abolishing slavery. In the Senate, he worked to promote the first railroad to be built in Southern California, linking Los Angeles to the sea at Wilmington, a town which he had founded. He later worked to negotiate the entry of the Southern Pacific Railroad, the giant of its era, into the Los Angeles basin. The connections of Los Angeles to both sea trade and the eastern markets by rail were thus assured in 1876 when Southern Pacific sent its first trains to our city and federal assistance to harbor development increasingly improved possibilities for shipping. The economic base made it possible for subsequent population booms to occur on the Pacific Coast as the nation expanded westward.

The House serves as a focal point for the growing interest in the development of Los Angeles — especially the first decades following statehood in 1850 — and is a center for the interpretation of the activities and qualities of character of our pioneers.

The House is built in the Greek Revival style and is considered the best extant nineteenth century example in Southern California. Originally a thirty-room home, it now contains twenty-four rooms.

Restoration of the interiors was begun in 1972 under professional guidance. Friends of Banning Park are raising the funds for this restoration. The decorative styles of the rooms principally span the latter half of the nineteenth century. The House was occupied by members of the Banning family until 1925. Two years later the twenty-acre grounds, the House, the original coach barn containing numerous horse drawn vehicles, and other outbuildings became a Los Angeles City Park.

The Park grounds contain a number of interesting botanical specimens including nineteenth century eucalyptus trees and an early twentieth century wisteria vine. The giant bamboo and the jacaranda trees are additional attractions.

City of Los Angeles

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Recreation and Parks Commission

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Designations

National Register of Historic Places, as approved
by Congress of the United States, May 26, 1971.

California State Historical Landmark # 147.

City of Los Angeles Historical Cultural
Monument # 25, October 11, 1963.

Long Beach Parlor #154 of the Native Daughters
of the Golden West, March 19, 1937.

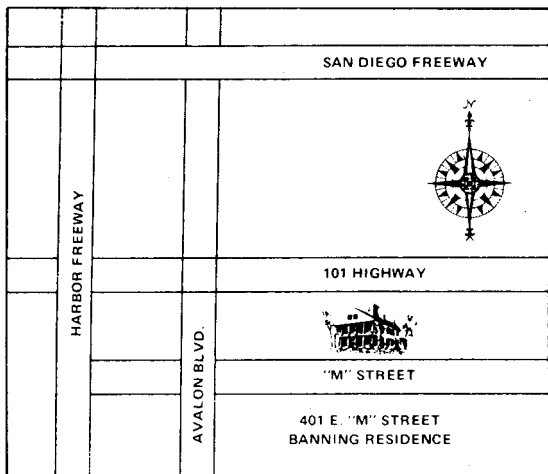
Donations

Contributions toward the restoration and
programs at the Banning Residence Museum
are gratefully accepted by the Friends of
Banning Park and are tax deductible to the
extent of the law.

c/o Director, Marian Winter

Directions

Take the Harbor Freeway south to Pacific Coast Highway. Exit and turn left. Proceed one mile east to Avalon Boulevard. Turn right two blocks to 'M' Street. Turn left two blocks to Banning Park.



Tour Schedule

Tours are conducted for the benefit of the general public on Wednesday, Saturday, and Sunday afternoons at 1, 2, 3, and 4 p.m.

Group tours are conducted by arrangement.

Interpretive program established by the Junior League of Los Angeles in cooperation with the Friends of Banning Park and the Los Angeles City Recreation and Parks Department.