A SILENT LEGACY:

THE INFLUENCE OF GIN D. WONG’S WORK ON THE LOS ANGELES BUILT ENVIRONMENT

By

Nirali Sheth

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ABBREVIATIONS

1. AIA – American Institute of Architects
2. FAIA – Fellow of the American Institute of Architects
3. USC – University of Southern California
4. B. Arch. – Bachelor of Architecture
5. GWA – Gin Wong Associates
6. CBS – Columbia Broadcasting Studio
7. LAX – Los Angeles International Airport
8. NASA – National Aeronautics and Space Administration
9. HVAC – Heating, Ventilation, and Air-Conditioning
10. P & L – Pereira & Luckman
11. USC SOA – University of Southern California School of Architecture
12. SC – Southern California
13. USSR – Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
14. UN – United Nations
15. China – Republic of China (1912-1949); People’s Republic of China (post-1949)
16. WWII – World War II
17. WLP – William L Pereira & Associates
18. ARCO – Arco Petroleum Products Co.
19. TDC – Transpacific Development Co.
20. LAWA – Los Angeles World Airports
ABSTRACT

Gin D. Wong, FAIA, is a Chinese American architect whose work influenced the architecture of Los Angeles in the late twentieth century, yet his name remains largely unknown. Wong was born into a modest housebound in Guangzhou, China, in 1922. He moved to Los Angeles soon after. Gin received his architecture degree from the University of Southern California School of Architecture in 1950. After graduation, he worked under his mentor William Pereira, first at Pereira & Luckman (where he became the Vice President of design) and later at William L. Pereira & Associates (which he helped found). There he became the president and partner-in-charge of design. Both firms were corporate big-business architectural practices. In 1974 he founded his own firm, Gin Wong Associates. Over his career, spanning over sixty years, he worked on numerous well-known buildings, including the Los Angeles International Airport and Union 67 Gas Station in Beverly Hills. He served as a USC Board of Trustees member from 1983 till his death, and his name is commemorated on a classroom at the USC School of Architecture, now known as the Gin D. Wong conference center. He received many awards and was one of the youngest architects (at the time) to be granted a fellowship by the American Institute of Architects (AIA). Despite many contributions, his name is little known beyond a select few due to the fact that he worked under a firm of a different name for most of his career. This thesis examines Gin Wong’s life and career and maps out his work’s significance and influence on Los Angeles’ built environment.
INTRODUCTION

THE SETTING

If we view cities as records of history, architecture is one of the essential visual materials archived in this vast collection of cultures, events, and aspirations. In the case of post-war Los Angeles, a city hailed for its experimental spirit, the mid-century institutional buildings, the playful Googie-style coffee shops, the modern Case Study houses, and the high-rise corporate headquarters are just a few examples of the countless styles that prevailed during the period. The construction demands that arose due to the post-war economic boom also gave rise to many corporate architectural firms. These buildings are widely known, discussed, and generally credited to a single architect or firm (often with eponymous architects).

While it is challenging to paint Gin D. Wong’s architecture career in a single stroke, he captured the essence of a city in his work. His architectural career spanning more than six decades continuously evolved. The range of his works demonstrates his love of design, from large commercial projects such as hotels and office complexes to modest restaurants and single-family homes. Distinguished amongst his peers and one of the least recognized designers who influenced the modern architectural movement in Southern California, Wong is responsible for some of the most iconic buildings in Los Angeles. His architectural legacy is clouded by two socio-political complexities – he was a person of color, and he worked in large architectural firms for much of his career. Both play an essential role in understanding the significance of his career.

CHINESE-AMERICAN BACKGROUND:

The Civil Rights movement and the subsequent Civil Rights Act, signed in 1964, led to a significant social change in the United States, bringing into focus the stories and struggles of marginalized communities. Asian American communities, especially the youth, were active

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in this struggle. Scholarship on their history has continuously shed light on their immigration, discrimination and displacement, and resilience that shaped the built environment and cultural landscape of Los Angeles (and the country).

The United States saw a regular influx of Chinese immigrants searching for work, with the earliest migration traced back to the 1850s. Their disposition to work for low pay and work on demanding and undesirable jobs concentrated them in various work occupations like building railroads or working at farms and mines. These workers, primarily men, faced regular discrimination and violence because of labor competition and the visual presence of a large number of Chinese workers, forcing them to congregate and stay in ethnic enclaves or 'Chinatowns.' Chinatowns provided them protection and a support system against these anti-Chinese sentiments and allowed them to open small businesses creating job opportunities. In the case of Los Angeles, areas between North Spring Street, Cesar Chavez Avenue, Alameda Street, and Arcadia Street marked the earliest Chinese Settlement or Old Chinatown. The area became a center of the Chinese community in the city, providing homes, meeting halls, and places of work. Unequal access to amenities like medicine and burial grounds led the community to continue practicing their cultural and religious traditions like herbal medicine and maintaining small shrines in homes and businesses. Community organizations and family associations (based on shared familial kinship or geographical location) emerged and functioned as banks, employment centers, educational centers,

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5 Chinatowns were places of shared culture, language, and experiences for the Chinese immigrants.

6 The city razed Old Chinatown in 1933. The following chapter elaborates on this subject.

7 Liu, The Transnational History of a Chinese Family; Moshier et al., “Los Angeles Citywide Historic Context Statement: Chinese American Historic Context Statement, 1850-1980.” While benevolent associations played a positive role within the community there were organization that relied on violence and public altercations (usually with each other) which received more attention. This added to the anti-Chinese sentiment.
medical centers, and a source of news and welfare for the Chinese. Unsurprisingly, the
Chinese were a closely-knit community with a robust support system that developed over the
decades.

Another excellent example of this strong network and community bond is the practice
of chain migration, where socially related individuals or households migrate through a mutual
help system - one member (usually male) of the family immigrates, gains a foothold, and then
calls for other family members.\(^8\) They share information and experiences and provide initial
assistance and accommodation to newer arrivals. In her book *The Transnational History of a
Chinese Family*, Haiming Liu describes another facet of chain migration, “…once human
migration is set into motion, ties among family, kin, and friends form the social networks to
sustain momentum regardless of legal restriction… Chinese migration is essentially a socially
embedded, group-oriented, and family-supported movement.”\(^9\) Chain migration extended
beyond family ties to social circles. Due to legal restrictions like the Chinese Exclusion Act, the
Chinese could only bring their family over. The non-eligible Chinese (especially children)
often immigrated by becoming related on ‘paper.’ Wong immigrated under a similar process
as a ‘paper son’ to Lee Shee Wong, a friend of Gin’s mother, and her husband, Shoo Tan
Wong, who previously immigrated to Los Angeles.\(^10\)

While the community kept growing, the area severely lacked public amenities like a
proper sewage system and paved roads. Additionally, city officials allowed prostitution, opium
use, and gambling in the area (in part to keep them out of the desirable areas of the city).
Legislations such as the California Alien Land Law of 1913 barred the Chinese from owning
property.\(^11\) As a result, Old Chinatown was under constant threat of demolition. In 1933, the
city razed Old Chinatown, and thousands of Chinese Americans were forced to relocate to
areas like City Market Chinatown and East Adams. Wong stayed at City Market Chinatown

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\(^8\) Liu, *The Transnational History of a Chinese Family*.
\(^9\) Liu, *The Transnational History of a Chinese Family*.
\(^10\) Wong-Healy, Janna (professor at USC Marshall), Gin Wong’s daughter, interview by author, Personal
Interview, January 10, 2022; Janna Wong-Healy, “My Father Gin Wong,” Gom Benn Scholarship Fund (blog),
\(^11\) “May 3, 1913 | California Law Prohibits Asian Immigrants from Owning Land,” Equal Justice Initiative, 3,
accessed August 28, 2022, https://calendar.eji.org/racial-injustice/may/03.
with his adoptive parents. The advent of World War II would dramatically change how the city viewed Chinese Americans from being discriminated against to a ‘model minority.’ Many Chinese Americans served in the armed forces, including Wong. Their veteran status allowed them to be naturalized citizens and get a university degree. The naturalization process would make the ‘paper relations’ legal.

Gin never discussed much about his Chinese heritage, save how it influenced his designs. He always looked to the future, finding solutions rather than discussing problems. He maintained relationships with those in his community, drawing and designing their homes and restaurants throughout his architectural career. However, it is essential to study Wong’s background as a Chinese immigrant to discern the intermingled lives of immigrants, the changing political and social forces of the time, and their influence on his work and life.

BIG BUSINESS ARCHITECTURE FIRMS:

In the early twentieth century, Modernism came to Southern California with the works of Irving Gill, Frank Lloyd Wright, and R. M. Schindler. Although we can see examples of the archetype during the early 1920s, it was still an avant-garde idea. The economic boom post both World Wars brought about a shift in American culture and the traditional architecture of the time.

After World War I, the United States became a rich and powerful nation and began the 1920s with steady economic and cultural growth. A rise in new technologies made cars and radios accessible to everyone, and public taste for ornamentation and luxury skyrocketed. As a result, an eloquent and somewhat hedonistic aesthetic language was developed. Styles like Art Deco and Art Nouveau, associated with opulence, became popular across the country, including in Southern California. Los Angeles buildings like Bullocks Wilshire, and the Eastern Columbia Building are good examples of architecture during this period. The 1930s saw the Great Depression, and architecture transitioned to less opulent styles like Streamline Moderne. The elaborate aesthetic was toned down to match this loss of

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prosperity. Streamline Moderne was less ornate, used basic shapes, and focused on practicality and functionality, combining Art Deco with the modern principles of the Bauhaus. Nevertheless, the use of using traditional forms and materials persisted.

World War II would change the course of architecture. Wartime manufacturing was a major driving force behind the transformation in the economy, especially in Los Angeles. Cheap land, labor, and a temperate climate helped make Los Angeles a locus for industrial production. To keep up with the demands (wartime), these manufacturers had to utilize innovative methods to make production efficient and economical. They used newer materials like plastic and aluminum to reduce costs. These plants increasingly hired women, African Americans, and minorities previously excluded from working. There was rising demand for housing in the region. These conditions persisted even after the war. Pre-war architecture styles faded, and the modernist International Style, with its hard edges and machines, replaced it, sowing the seeds of the future and progress. By the 1950s, modernism had established itself as the go-to style, and Los Angeles cemented itself as an essential proponent of this style. Using cost-effective materials, innovative construction technologies, and unorthodox forms, architects transformed the city into a forward-looking metropolis. Styles such as –Corporate International, Mid-Century Modern, and Googie flourished in the city.

The freeway transportation network’s development in the mid-century era accommodated the rising population’s demands. Cities spread outward, and people were not restricted to downtown. The suburban tracts surrounding Los Angeles offered the same amenities as people living downtown and became top social gathering places. More people started living in the suburbs, and even more, people were driving. Businesses and services

14 Horak et al., “Los Angeles Citywide Historic Context Statement: Architecture and Engineering, L.A. Modernism, 1919-1980”; Blue Sky Metropolis: Wings, Documentary [PBS SoCal, 2019], https://www.kcet.org/shows/blue-sky-metropolis/episodes/wings-ixvufq. They were hired for skilled jobs (and positions) like engineers, or laborers. Traditionally if hired, they worked as janitors. There was a gap in demand and supply of workforce since men went to fight the war.
started opening in strips of commercial buildings like motels, gas stations, coffee shops, bowling alleys, and car washes across the city in the Googie Style. The rising entertainment industry and the need for purpose-built production facilities led to a technology and efficiency-focused studio-building typology constructed in the city. War also brought about the invention of the jet engine, and postwar this invention transformed commercial airlines and the travel industry. The late 1950s and early 1960s saw a shift of focus in the aviation sector, with numerous airports, aircraft manufacturing plants, and research centers cropping up in the region, eventually expanding to accommodate the emerging aerospace industry as well.

Along with these manufacturing enterprises, various insurance companies, oil companies, and banks set up their headquarters and offices in Los Angeles. A turning point in the City’s construction history was the repeal of the 150 feet downtown height limit. As a result, the 1960s saw many developer-commissioned corporate high-rise offices and complexes built. Various civic and cultural buildings like the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and the Music Center, and educational campuses’ master planning like Pepperdine University and UC Irvine added to California’s growth, with many universities looking to modernize and expand their existing campuses.

Local architecture firms adapted to gain expertise in designing and planning these buildings and complexes. They were large-scale corporate entities with a strict organizational structure that maintained different departments for architecture, structure, building services, interiors, and production, to name a few. They had a top-down structure with a board of directors, a president, vice presidents, and department heads, much like their clients. The design staff, separate from the head of the firm, was responsible for the project’s architectural design. Hence it is critical to note which design team member took the lead. Firms like Welton Becket and Associates, A.C. Martin, and Pereira & Luckman (and their respective firms post-split in 1958) are excellent examples. They did not design just

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specialized buildings but offered diverse services like master planning, research, architecture, surveying, site analysis, interiors, and zoning assistance. Owing to their operation in a highly consumer-driven environment with mass-produced aesthetics and the sheer volume of projects they managed, they are often overlooked and harshly criticized.


Nevertheless, they reflect the era, and their contributions to Los Angeles’s architectural history must not be ignored. A need also arises to attribute these designs more elaborately after considering all persons involved, just like the credits at the end of a movie. Recent legal cases between architectural firms and one or more lead designers over project design credit make it a relevant issue today.19 In 2004, the American Institute for Architects, a professional organization, introduced rules that mandated architectural practices to recognize and state the contributions of significant team participants (at a minimum).20

Wong worked at Pereira & Luckman and, later, William L. Pereira & Associates. He started as a designer and was soon promoted to Director of Design. He eventually became the Vice President of planning and design. His standing in the firms would allow him to become a lead on many projects, but on more than a handful of notable projects, his contribution was never documented. There are also cases where Wong was wrongly credited for a design like that of the Theme Building at Los Angeles International Airport. Similarly, Wong held a prominent position at William L. Pereira & Associates and worked in a supervisory capacity on projects, but other than the few (major) recorded projects, there are not many projects indicating his role. This thesis tries to identify Wong’s contributions to these famous corporate firms.

The legacy of Wong’s work is a silent one often overshadowed by more prominent and public ones, partly due to his modest and quiet disposition. Wong spent more than two decades working under another firm’s banner. His contributions to those firms are overlooked because the project displays the firm’s name (both named after architects). This thesis aims to study Gin’s architectural legacy and the forces influencing the same.

To discern this, the thesis is divided into two parts – Wong’s life and journey to architecture and his architectural career. The first chapter traces his ancestry, his life as an immigrant, his schooling, and his military service, all examined through the lens of his Chinese heritage. It further examines the factors that led to his joining the University of Southern California School of Architecture, his architectural education, and meeting William Pereira, who would hire Wong to work in his newly established firm of Pereira & Luckman. The following three chapters examine and compare Wong’s career over the years. For ease of understanding, they are divided into three crucial milestones in Gin’s life – working at Pereira & Luckman, working at William L. Pereira & Associates, and setting up his firm, Gin

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21 Wong was the director of design for the Airport and a lead designer on behalf of the firm, but he was not the author for the Theme building. However, he worked on its restoration in 1972. There are a few black and white photographs of Wong in front of the Theme Building. It is possible due to him being mistakenly credited.

Wong Associates. Each chapter dwells on selected works by the forward-thinking architect during each period to understand his design sensibilities, style, and methodologies.

An attempt to study and document his life work helps us understand the changing socio-political and architectural landscape in the post-war twentieth century, its influences, and the road to contemporary architecture. At the same time, it helps us understand the difficulties facing an architect of color during a time of widespread racial discrimination. This thesis writes in favor of Wong’s work, making a case for its conservation.
Gin Wong belonged to a generation of Chinese American architects that came of age in the 1930s and 1940s when the country faced the Great Depression, and the threat of another World War loomed. (Figure 1.1) He was born Jeen Dop Wong in Gom Benn village, located a few miles north of Toishun in the Kwangtung province of South China, on September 17, 1922. His father died soon after, and he experienced the realities of poverty.

23 Wong-Healy, “My Father Gin Wong.”; “Florida, U.S., Naturalization Records, 1847-1995,” database with images, Ancestry. Although the record states Toishun, Kwantung, China, Taishan is Romanized as Toishan or Toisan or Toishun. Similarly, Guangdong Province is alternatively called Canton Province or Kwangtung. Some sources also state that he was born in Guangzhou, which is the capital of Guangdong Province. This record also shows that he changed his name from Gin Dop Wong (Jeen Dop Wong) to Gin Dan Wong.
at an early age. However, Wong always looked to the future. Reflecting on the years spent in China, he once stated, “…to us, there was no depression. We saw bread lines, but at least there was bread.”

Fearing a constant threat of displacement, Gin’s mother, Ng Pui King, sent him to the United States with her best friend, Lee Shee (Wong), so that he could have a better life. When he set off for Los Angeles, Wong was nine years old, arriving on January 1, 1932. They immigrated with the help of Shoo Tan Wong, Lee Shee’s husband, who was already in Los Angeles. At the time, a law in the United States, the Chinese Exclusion Act, restricted immigration based on race. The act allowed Chinese merchants in America to bring (only) their family members over legally. To this end, Wong came over as their ‘son’ along with Lee Shee’s children Gim Way and Jeen Keung, and Ging Ching (another boy not biologically related). Most Chinese Americans then lived around Old Chinatown and the Old Plaza area located north of Downtown, or East Adams and the City Market Chinatown located south of the downtown area. (Figure 1.2)

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24 Wong-Healy, Janna (professor at USC Marshall), Gin Wong’s daughter, interview.
26 Wong-Healy, “My Father Gin Wong.”
27 “California, U.S., Arriving Passenger and Crew Lists, 1882-1959,” database with images, Ancestry. Wong’s name is mentioned as Jeen Dop Wong here. He left from a Hong Kong port on December 8, 1931, on the ship S.S. President Coolidge. His place of birth is mentioned as Sunning, a former name of Taishan.
30 “US World War II Draft Cards Young Men, 1940-1947,” database with images, Ancestry. Shoo Tan Wong’s records show he lived at 717 E 9th place Los Angeles, CA, and he worked at (next door) a grocery store on 956 S. San Pedro St. Los Angeles, CA.
At the time, Los Angeles itself was undergoing profound changes. Only one year earlier, in 1931, the City finalized plans to construct the Union Station Passenger Terminal on the site of Old Chinatown, necessitating its complete demolition. Despite being the fourth largest Chinese American community in the United States, Old Chinatown severely lacked public services and amenities (including a lack of paved streets, electricity, proper ventilation, and sewage systems that led to deteriorating health conditions). Additionally, Laws (such as the California Alien Land Law of 1913) barred Chinese Americans from owning property in California. As a result, the area became a target for land clearance by city officials, and the

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residents were always under the threat of displacement. With the plans for the new station finalized, the residents had to relocate elsewhere over the next few years forcibly. Due to restrictive covenants that prevented them from buying land across most parts of the city, they had limited options for housing.\textsuperscript{32} The existing neighborhood of City Market was one of the few communities that welcomed these displaced people.

By the late nineteenth century, Chinese farmers played a significant role in the Los Angeles economy, with most of the City’s produce cultivated and sold by them as vegetable peddlers or truck farmers.\textsuperscript{33} About a quarter of the Chinese Population in California was involved in agriculture.\textsuperscript{34} With the increase in population (and the subsequent rise in demand for produce) came a need for regulation to curb congestion and the informal nature of the activity. The city eventually started leasing out vacant lots for regulated market spaces. Many Chinese farmers started selling at these wholesale markets. Of the many wholesale markets established, like Hewes Market, and 746 Market Court, City Market was significant to the Chinese American community because it highlighted the community’s transition from truck farmers to wholesale produce businesses. City Market or Market Chinatown, sandwiched


\textsuperscript{33} Moshier et al., “Los Angeles Citywide Historic Context Statement: Chinese American Historic Context Statement, 1850-1980.” As the railroad and mining industry began declining Chinese began to cultivate and sell produce. By the 1880s, these entrepreneurs made up almost 90\% of truck and market farmers in the city. Anti-Chinese sentiments and discriminatory policies led to a city-wide boycott of Chinese-owned businesses in the late 1880s. This boycott was opposed by the truck farmers, who managed to stop it, showing these entrepreneurs’ extensive network and power. In 1906, the city council passed an ordinance that increased licensing fees for the produce peddlers and restricted the areas where produce can be sold.

between San Pedro and San Julian Streets and 9th and 11th streets, was set up during the first decade of the twentieth century. (Figure 1.3)

![Figure 1.3: View of Los Angeles City Market. Photo downloaded from Wikimedia Commons, (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:City_market_of_Los_Angeles,_Cal.,_9th_and_San_Pedro_St.,_Aug._8th_1910_LCCN2007660460.tif).](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:City_market_of_Los_Angeles,_Cal.,_9th_and_San_Pedro_St.,_Aug._8th_1910_LCCN2007660460.tif)

City Market resulted from a consortium of traders of different ethnicities catering to local individuals, restaurants, and hotels. In 1909 the firm Morgan and Walls designed the City Market in the Mission Revival style. (Figure 1.4) The market spread across 6.7 acres and consisted of brick and reinforced concrete buildings surrounding a central loading dock. (Figure 1.5) It soon became a thriving market with merchants and vendors moving in due to its location and (then) talks of the demolition of Old Chinatown. Various lodgings, houses, apartment buildings, and restaurants began cropping up, catering to the neighborhood. Service structures such as supermarkets, pharmacies, offices, and religious institutions soon followed.

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36 Predominantly Chinese immigrants but people of other ethnicities also lived there including, Japanese, African Americans, Italian Mexicans, Jewish, and Russians. Most of the workforce was primarily single men.

37 Moshier et al., “Los Angeles Citywide Historic Context Statement: Chinese American Historic Context Statement, 1850-1980.” Chinese Immigrants maintained their religious traditions. They built shrines within in their shops and houses or built small temples in Old Chinatown. There were a few Christian churches and missionaries who converted Chinese immigrants. This was not always seen as a terrible thing. Some viewed it as a means to counteract xenophobia. Churches provided welfare and education and supported the youth.
Figure 1.4: Photographs showing City Market. Image downloaded from USC Dornsife, Downtown Los Angeles Walking Tour (https://dornsife.usc.edu/la-walking-tour/city-market/), Downloaded on April 4, 2022.

After an influx of people in the late 1920s and early 1930s in the wake of the construction of Union Station, City Market became the Chinese community’s essential economic and social support system. Institutional buildings such as schools and churches with exclusive Chinese membership appeared by the late 1930s. The primary focus of these establishments was on political causes, business interests, or recreational activities. Like many immigrant communities, the Chinese community was also close-knit. The produce market primarily hired Chinese, so the community remained afloat even during the Depression years. Workers involved in and around Market Chinatown would live in lodges or homes in the vicinity or single-family homes in one of the nearby bedroom communities.

Shoo Tan Wong lived just off San Pedro street, and this is where Gin lived along with his adopted family. (Figure 1.6) U.S. Federal Census records for 1940 indicate that Wong’s household consisted of eleven plus a lodger, with the head of the household (Shoo Tan) owning a grocery store. Shoo Tan was one of three founding partners at the Ying Chong Lung Co. store. (Figure 1.6, Figure 1.7) Such grocery stores that catered to Chinese customers were not uncommon at the time. According to Janna Wong, Gin’s daughter, he helped operate the grocery store.

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38 With Market Chinatown becoming more populated, residents started moving towards south and east towards East Adams Boulevard and San Pedro Street.
39 Fickle, “A History of the Los Angeles City Market.” They followed chain migration. Hiring was based on association and kinship (based on what province or village one came from). One had to know someone to be hired. They followed the Hui system, where families pooled their money together (related by kinship) and would lend it to individuals in need. This played a significant role during the depression years.
40 Fickle, “A History of the Los Angeles City Market.” These boarding houses and homes were owned by Caucasians who rented out spaces. Until the first few decades of the twentieth century, they were generally a group of men who stayed together (family households started well into the 1930s). There were instances where the vegetable sellers were forced to live in shoddy, quickly made residences adjacent to the market due to long working hours.
44 Moshier et al., “Los Angeles Citywide Historic Context Statement: Chinese American Historic Context Statement, 1850-1980.” Many Chinese Americans used the grocery stores near the city market due to its proximity (than old Chinatown). These grocery stores often had a small area designated for living quarters.
45 Wong-Healy, Janna (professor at USC Marshall), Gin Wong’s daughter, interview.
Figure 1.6: Sanborn Map of Wong’s neighborhood when he first came to Los Angeles. Image showing Wong’s residence (red) and grocery store (green) opposite the city market. Image downloaded from Library of Congress (Sanborn Map Company. “Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Los Angeles, Los Angeles County, California; 1906 - Jun 1950; Vol. 2,” 1950. Map. (https://www.loc.gov/item/sanborn00656_009/). (accessed November 15, 2021).

Figure 1.7: Photograph of Ying Chong Lung Co. Image downloaded from Gom Benn Scholarship Fund (https://gombenn.org/7-ying-chong-lung/). Downloaded on April 4, 2022.
The decades of the 1930s and 1940s saw a dramatic shift in demographics of the Chinese American community from bachelor households to family households. While most schools did not admit immigrant children, a few public schools, such as Belmont, Lincoln, or Polytechnic high schools, admitted them. Since these schools were racially diverse, students could meet and interact with peers from various backgrounds and cultures. The youth were engaged in various extracurricular activities, sports, and academic activities. They even published their own newsletters. Many Chinese teenagers regularly helped at stores and restaurants near their homes. Outside of these areas, they interacted with the city differently than their parents. This evolved into a culture different from the previous generation, an identity unique to these young Chinese Americans.

Wong enrolled in the first grade when he was nine. Although he did not know English due to his schooling in China, he was a quick learner. Drawing, painting, math, and science came easily to him. In an interview with the Los Angeles Times, he stated that drawing came more naturally than spelling. Later, Gin attended Los Angeles John H. Francis Polytechnic

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46 There was a decent population of first and second-generation Chinese Americans by then. Children who stayed behind (in China) also came to the United States during the Japanese invasion of China around 1937. Sometimes the families sent their children to China to complete their schooling, and then they returned to attend college.

47 “Episode 1, Lesson 4: The Fight For School Desegregation by Asian Americans,” Asian Americans Advancing Justice - L.A., September 8, 2020, https://archive.advancingjustice-la.org/what-we-do/curriculum-lesson-plans/asian-americans-k-12-education-curriculum/episode-1-lesson-4-0; “The Quest for Education - Separate Is Not Equal,” Separate Is Not Equal: Brown v. Board of Education, accessed December 17, 2021, https://americanhistory.si.edu/brown/history/2-battleground/quest-for-education-2.html; William Gow, “Youth Activities in Los Angeles Chinatown,” Chinese Historical Society of Southern California (blog), accessed December 17, 2021, https://chssc.org/los-angeles-chinatown-remembered-project/youth-activities/. These schools are a part of Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) now. Prior to 1961 they were a part of Los Angeles High School District. In 1884, Joseph and Mary Tape tried to get their daughter admitted to a local public school in San Francisco. The school denied their request citing school policy against admitting Chinese children. Tapes took the case to court, and the California State Supreme court ruled in favor of Tapes (Tape v. Hurley), saying that public education should be open to all children. However, a legislation was passed soon allowing schools to segregate/ establish separate facilities. It would take about sixty years more for courts to deem segregated schooling based on race unconstitutional (Mendez v. Westminster (1947) and U.S. Supreme Court case Brown v. Board of Education (1954)). Many a time, racial minorities attended the same schools due to not having enough students. Schools such as Walnut Grove Oriental School was for Asian and Pacific Islanders.

48 Berges, “Home Q&A.”
High School for five years, graduating in 1942. While studying there, he was a part of two extracurricular clubs – the Civil Engineering Society (of which he was president) and the Chinese Club. (Figure 1.8)

Figure 1.8: Gin D. Wong’s School Yearbook Photo. Image (cropped) downloaded from Ancestry.com, "U.S., School Yearbooks, 1900-1999," database with images, Ancestry.

When the United States entered the Second World War (December 1941), it became allies with China, and many Chinese Americans joined the armed forces. The war effort bought about a transformative change in the lives of the Chinese American community. Whether they served for patriotic or monetary reasons or to help the war effort in China, they returned with a sense of pride and belonging to the country. This endeavor helped pave the

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49 Wong, Gin Dan, Membership Files, The American Institute of Architects Archives, The AIA Historical Directory of American Architects, s.v. “Wong, Gin Dan,” (ahd1049376). The school’s campus then was in Downtown Los Angeles. The curriculum of his schools (due to the ongoing war) propagated patriotism and serving military. (As seen in the yearbook, found on ancestry.com).

50 Annie Leong, “Los Angeles Chinatown and World War II,” Chinese Historical Society of Southern California (blog), accessed October 3, 2021, https://chssc.org/los-angeles-chinatown-remembered-project/los-angeles-chinatown-and-world-war-ii/. They were not allowed to enlist prior to WWII. 15000-20000 Chinese Americans served in the Military (About 19-25% of all the Chinese population in U.S.). They were assigned a variety of jobs from cooks to pilots and ranks ranging from Private to Major. While some were drafted, others volunteered and raised funds. Many Chinese (American) women were also actively involved in the war industry while the men were sent off to war.

51 William Gow, “The Youth of L.A. Chinatown,” Chinese Historical Society of Southern California (blog), accessed December 19, 2021, https://chssc.org/los-angeles-chinatown-remembered-project/the-youth-of-la-chinatown/. This did not stop the racism they faced. Many were not allowed to enlist citing, “only whites allowed.” (Especially during early years of the war). With the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, anyone who looked ‘oriental’ was “fair game.”
way to repeal the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1943, allowing the Chinese to enter via a quota system.\footnote{Moshier et al., “Los Angeles Citywide Historic Context Statement: Chinese American Historic Context Statement, 1850-1980.” The act had restricted immigration based on race. By the way of Magnuson Act, Chinese immigration was permitted (105 per year) and already resident Chinese were allowed to be Naturalized.} Congress further passed the War Brides Act (1945) and the Fiancées Act (1946) that admitted spouses and children of the returned soldiers.\footnote{Moshier et al., “Los Angeles Citywide Historic Context Statement: Chinese American Historic Context Statement, 1850-1980.” There was still a quota system (only 105 people could immigrate every year). Most of the people who were admitted were women and children. Of the 5,687 Chinese admitted, 5,099 were women, 583 were children, and the remaining five were men. This accounted for a positive shift in the demographic ratio of the Chinese Americans.}

During World War II, Wong signed up to join the army and served in the Army Air Corps. (Figure1.9) He was a B-29 navigator for the 20\textsuperscript{th} Air Force, participating in battles as a lead crew navigator and radar bomber.\footnote{Wong, Gin Dan, Membership Files, The American Institute of Architects Archives, The AIA Historical Directory of American Architects, s.v. “Wong, Gin Dan,” (ahd1049376); “Gin Wong - WWII Serviceman - 9BG - 99BS,” accessed September 16, 2021, https://www.20af.org/wong-gin-w6804-9bg.cfm. He was stationed on Tinian Islands in the pacific. He served as a lead navigator with the 9\textsuperscript{th} Bombardment group according to Army Air Corps Library and Museum. The record at National Archives (for his enlisted serial number 39549327) misspells his name as GI D G due to a technical error (https://www.archives.gov/research/aad).} (Figure 1.10) During his time as an airman, a fellow platoon member noticed Gin’s skills in drawing and described his father’s prosperous career in architecture back home in Oklahoma, suggesting Wong study architecture (Gin used to create posters for the platoon).\footnote{Alison Martino, “The Story Behind L.A.’s Coolest Looking Gas Station,” Los Angeles Magazine (blog), February 16, 2015, https://www.lamag.com/citythinkblog/story-behind-l-s-coolest-looking-gas-station/.} This piqued his interest in the field. While serving, he became a naturalized citizen, officially changing his name to Gin Dan Wong.\footnote{“Florida, U.S., Naturalization Records, 1847-1995,” database with images, Ancestry.}
<table>
<thead>
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<th>SERIAL NUMBER</th>
<th>L. NAME (Print)</th>
<th>ORDER NUMBER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>179</td>
<td>GIN DOP WONG</td>
<td>12856</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Place of Residence (Print):
954 S. SAN PEDRO ST. LOS ANGELES LA-CALIF

3. Mailing Address
SAME

4. Telephone

5. Age in Years
19

6. Place of Birth
CANTON

7. Name and Address or Person Who Will Always Know Your Address
SHOE SALE WONG

8. Employer's Name and Address
SAME

9. Place of Employment or Business

I Affirm That I Have Verified Above Answers and That They Are True.

D. S. K. POOL
(Leased 6-3-43)

Figure 1.9: Gin Wong’s World War II Draft Card.

Figure 1.10: Wong with the William Allen White crew.
Wong is seen second to left in the top row. Image downloaded from Gom Benn Scholarship Fund (https://gombenn.org/7-ying-chong-lung/). Downloaded on April 4, 2022.
The years during and immediately following the end of World War II saw policies that encouraged Chinese students to complete their studies vis-a-vis financial grants. The Servicemen’s Readjustment Act of 1944 (GI Bill) allowed many war veterans to attend college, resume their education (and pay for their entire education), provide loans to buy houses, or start businesses. Through the GI bill, veterans could attend universities and earn a degree. In California, they attended universities such as the University of Southern California, the University of California, Los Angeles, and the University of California, Berkley. Upon discharge with a newfound interest in architecture, Gin decided to pursue a career in the field. He studied architecture at J. Milkin University, Illinois (for a year) before joining the University of Southern California’s School of Architecture in Los Angeles (USC SOA). Wong explained that his early years and education in China, which was visual and three-dimensional, directed his inclinations towards art and later his design.

USC was the only school to offer a professional architecture course until the 1960s in Los Angeles. The architecture program pedagogy embraced the ever-changing social, cultural, and economic conditions of the region (and the world) and focused on issues of the present day. The curriculum reflected contemporary, real-life design principles and

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57 During the war years, aero-space industry had taken a center stage and it continued to have its importance during the cold War. Many Chinese students became academics, or technology professionals (especially in the aerospace field), or doctors.
62 Deborah Howell-Ardila, “Writing Our Own Program’: The USC Experiment in Modern Architectural Pedagogy, 1930 to 1960” (University of Southern California, 2010), Order No. 1484253, http://libproxy.usc.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/writing-our-own-program-usc-experiment-modern/docview/847226614/se-2. USC SOA became the fifth out of forty-five schools (teaching architecture), in the U.S., to shift from a Beaux-Arts based curriculum to a contemporary program with site and region driven principles (‘…. practical rather than exclusively historic…’ (El Rodeo Yearbook, 1947)). Gilbert Lester Leong was the first Chinese American architecture graduate (1936) from USC SOA.
encouraged engaging allied fields like planning, industrial design, and landscape design. Wong’s work would reflect this multi-disciplinary, present-day design ideology.

While studying, Gin honed his skills by working as a draftsman under Architect A. B. Gardner and associates (A. Wolfe and Anthony Thormin) from 1946 to 1948. Showing a flair for design and drawing, he joined Daniel, Mann, Johnson, and Mendenhall from 1948 to 1950 as a draftsman designer. Wong’s eagerness to learn proved helpful, winning first place in the Producer’s Council Design Competition in 1949. He graduated a year later. (Figure 1.11) He was a member of USC’s chapter of SCARAB, a national professional architectural fraternity, when he graduated (1950). (Figure 1.12)

Figure 1.11: Gin Wong’s photo in USC Yearbook, El Rodeo, 1950. Wong (red) is seen last on the right. Image (cropped) downloaded from Ancestry "U.S., School Yearbooks, 1900-1999," database with images, Ancestry.

63 Howell-Ardila, “Writing Our Own Program.” Planning and Landscape design was incorporated into the curriculum with supplemental courses in 1937. Then dean, Arthur Gallion, had hired Simon Eisner to lead the in-house planning curriculum in 1946. Similarly, by 1946 a separate landscape architecture program was designed and led by Garett Eckbo.

64 Wong, Gin Dan, Membership Files, The American Institute of Architects Archives, The AIA Historical Directory of American Architects, s.v. “Wong, Gin Dan,” (ahd1049376); Berges, “Home Q&A.” His AIA membership file (fellowship application) lists down the places he worked at along with his role in the firm.


67 “U.S., School Yearbooks, 1900-1999,” database with images, Ancestry (page 480). Scarab was an Architecture Fraternity founded in 1909 at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Only students who were skilled were allowed to join. It was reserved for white-male students at the time. But post war saw a change in this rule. USC joined SCARAB in 1927.
Figure 1.12: Gin Wong’s photo as a member of SCARAB in USC Yearbook, El Rodeo, 1950. Wong is seen third from left. Image (cropped) downloaded from Ancestry "U.S., School Yearbooks, 1900-1999," database with images, Ancestry.

Amongst the faculty teaching at USC, Gin met William Pereira, who would become his employer and later business partner. Pereira was a fifth-year design critic who taught at the USC School of Architecture from 1949 to 1957. His firm was known to hire recent graduates for apprenticeships regularly. Wong’s association with Pereira would start when the latter hired Wong.

On February 4, 1948, Gin married Louise Y. Tom, a fourth-generation Chinese American from San Diego. (Figure 1.13) They held two wedding ceremonies. Louise worked as a secretary until the birth of their eldest daughter. In an interview with Marshall Berges, both talk about their shared heritage, with Gin reflecting on the influence of two

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68 Breisch, “Professional and Educational Discourse: Training the Next Generation of Architects in Los Angeles.”
71 Berges, “Home Q&A.”
cultures on his work. Together they had three daughters, Terrina, Janna, and Kimberlee. (Figure 1.13) Wong lived in Los Angeles most of his life, moving around the city before eventually moving to an elegant and contemporary home in Beverly Hills, where he lived until his death. Wong’s home mirrors the significant influences in his life. Ironically, he did not design this home, over which he later expressed regret. He fashioned the interiors in a simple yet elegant design highlighting his lifestyle using black (furniture) and white (walls and carpets), with paintings and plants adding color to the rooms. This subtle aesthetic is a manifestation of his time in China. He states in an interview that as a part of his education in China, he learned to write with pictures, which helped develop his visual sensibilities.

Figure 1.13: Wong with his family. From left: Gin with Louise; (from left) Terrina, Gin, Janna, and Louise (pregnant with Kimberlee), 1950. Image downloaded from Gom Benn Scholarship Fund (https://gombenn.org/7-ying-chong-lung/). Downloaded on April 4, 2022.

72 Berges, “Home Q&A.”
74 Berges, “Home Q&A.”
75 Berges, “Home Q&A.”
The next few decades saw rapid transformations in the City’s social and cultural fabric and the built environment, to which Wong quickly adapted. Over the years, he worked on diverse projects and experimented with assorted styles, always keeping in mind future transformations. He effectively fused technology and design sensibilities for impactful buildings. Wong’s work was greatly influenced by his dual heritage and the changing times. Explaining his design sensibility of quality (design) over quantity, he was once quoted in an interview, "...less is better than most, and the least is the most." 

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76 Berges, “Home Q&A.”
CHAPTER 2: EXPERIMENTS IN PRAGMATISM (1951-1958)

The blossoming economy and population allowed for creativity and innovation in architecture across the Southern Californian region in the 1950s. During the post-war period in Los Angeles, agriculture declined, and many farmlands were subdivided for suburban residential development to meet the demands of a steadily rising population. Residential architecture in Los Angeles gained international recognition, especially the Case Study program by Arts + Architecture magazine.\textsuperscript{77} Due to the development of the new freeway system, the city saw the advent of car culture. Modernism was rising, and people (and the city) shed their traditional ways to meet the blooming lifestyle.\textsuperscript{78} With the construction of New Chinatown (1938), the significance of Market Chinatown decreased.\textsuperscript{79} First and second-generation Chinese Angelenos were coming of age. As commercial and suburban development boomed throughout the region, Chinese American developers established commercial institutions like banks and publishing houses and owned businesses like noodle shops and bakeries. Many Chinese youths that returned from war now attended professional colleges and started working in their respective fields, including architecture.

Two Chinese American architects, Gilbert Lester Leong (USC, 1936) and Eugene Kinn Choy (USC, 1939), set up their own firms, paving the way for future architects, including


\textsuperscript{78} Wit and Alexander, “Introduction: Provoking New Perceptions of Los Angeles.”

\textsuperscript{79} Moshier et al., “Los Angeles Citywide Historic Context Statement: Chinese American Historic Context Statement, 1850-1980.” Chinese businessman and community leader, Peter Soo Hoo, Sr. along with a few other businessmen, pooled their finances to purchase land for a New Chinatown. Chinese leaders and businessmen wanted to break free of the stereotype that Chinatowns were dangerous and undesirable areas of the city. They wanted New Chinatown to be mixed use tourist destination that romanticized China that could become an economic driving force for the city. They hired architects Erle Webster and Adrian Wilson to design a Master Plan. The architects designed a low scale commercial center aligned around a central plaza with a system of pedestrian streets. Many buildings were adorned with elements from Chinese architecture (upturned rafters with elaborate eaves, bright colored facades, clay tile roofs, decorated brackets). Traders and entrepreneurs relocated to New Chinatown to open retail stores (even before the construction was completed since it catered to tourists along with the Asian Community). By 1950, only 25 Chinese families stayed in Market Chinatown, most engaged in produce business. New Chinatown became the first Chinese commercial enclave to be owned, funded, and managed Chinese Americans.
Wong and designer Helen Liu Fong. They are responsible for architecture and infrastructure in and around Chinatown. These architects and designers took inspiration from traditional Chinese designs and combined them with modern forms, creating unique buildings (later called the Asian Eclectic style). (Figure 2.1) The designs were a mix of modern with Asian details like glazed clay tiled roofing, flared eaves, and upturned rafters. Before this, Chinese architecture was considered exotic and was widely appropriated, by white designers and architects, especially in the entertainment industry. The style reflected the sentiment felt by the Chinese community to embrace American life without losing touch with their cultural heritage. Choy became the second Chinese American architect in the U.S. to become a member of the American Institute of Architects and the first in California. The post-war population boom resulted in tremendous growth in Los Angeles communities of color, which led to ethnically mixed neighborhoods, especially in the Westside and South L.A., with middle-class Asian American families moving into formerly white-only neighborhoods. These families would hire Chinese American architects to design their homes.

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80 This is referring to Los Angeles. In 1950, Leong along with a partner opened one of the nation’s first Chinese American architectural firms and in 1954 he opened his own practice. (Moshier et al., “Los Angeles Citywide Historic Context Statement: Chinese American Historic Context Statement, 1850-1980.”).

81 Moshier et al., “Los Angeles Citywide Historic Context Statement: Chinese American Historic Context Statement, 1850-1980.” They were not restricted to this style. They designed structures in Modern-Style too.

82 AIA is a professional organization founded in 1857 in Washington D.C., dealing with the advocacy, education, and improvement of the architecture fraternity. They have strict code of ethics and professional conduct that their members must follow. To be a member (and to practice architecture (1919) one had to be a licensed architect. IM Pei was the first Chinese American to join the AIA.

83 Prior to 1940, Asian Americans were excluded from Federal Housing Administrations’ home loan programs. This coupled with restrictive covenants lead to starkly segregated neighborhoods across the city. The next two decades saw residents with different ethnic backgrounds using legal means to take action against this. Shelley v. Kraemer (1947), an important victory for Chinese American Civil Rights – In 1947 Thomas Amer was prevented from purchasing property in South Los Angeles citing deed restrictions.

84 Moshier et al., “Los Angeles Citywide Historic Context Statement: Chinese American Historic Context Statement, 1850-1980.” A significant factor in this shift were the Chinese American architects. Eugene Choy faced deed restrictions that prevented him from buying property in Silver Lake. He had to go door to door seeking support from this neighborhood and eventually constructing his residence. He would later go on to design houses for other affluent Chinese Americans in his neighborhood.
Along with commercial establishments, benevolent associations also set up their headquarters in New Chinatown. These associations were set up before the twentieth century to support the welfare of the Chinese American communities by providing medical assistance, educational programs, spreading news within the community, and funeral services. Initially, they shared space with boarding houses or shops, but with the turn of the century, they constructed official buildings housing meeting halls, boarding rooms, shrines, and even a tiny jail. After the war, they established permanent headquarters, often hiring Asian architects like Gilbert Leong and Eugene Choy. Along with these associations, religious institutions played an essential role in the community and set up their structures in New Chinatown. While many second and third-generation Chinese Americans practiced Christianity, these associations and religious structures served those who followed traditional Chinese practices.

Around 1947, political and ideological tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union (USSR) led to the Cold War. Although this was not an all-out war between the nations, they however engaged in proxy wars.\textsuperscript{85} There was a general fear in the U.S. that communism was taking over and Soviet spies had infiltrated the country. During these years,

\textsuperscript{85} Proxy Wars can best be explained by the idiom ‘Shoot one’s gun from someone else’s shoulder.’
a new phenomenon had taken hold in the U.S. called McCarthyism, where people accused
an individual or a community of treason without any just evidence.\textsuperscript{86} After World War II, the
allied forces (U.S. and USSR) divided Japan-annexed Korea into two zones.\textsuperscript{87} The northern
half was administered by the Soviet Union, and the southern by the United States. As a result
of the Cold War, both zones became separate sovereign states fighting for their right over the
whole of Korea.\textsuperscript{88} On June 25, 1950, the northern forces forcibly occupied South Korea,
much to the dismay of the United Nations (UN), which soon dispatched forces to repel the
invasion.\textsuperscript{89} The majority of the deployed troops were American.

When the Chinese Communist Party led by Mao Zedong took over China, it entered
the Korean war to support the North.\textsuperscript{90} The actions and politics of the Chinese American
communities were again under scrutiny. Vandals attacked Chinese-owned businesses; many
businesses withdrew their advertising in community newspapers that seemed to support the

\textsuperscript{86} “Episode 3, Lesson 2: McCarthyism,” Asian Americans Advancing Justice - L.A., November 1, 2020,
https://archive.advancingjustice-la.org/what-we-do/curriculum-lesson-plans/asian-americans-k-12-education-
curriculum/episode-3-lesson-2. On February 9, 1950, senator Joseph McCarthy claimed he had a list of
communist party members in the State Department which caused mass panic. The term originally was a
reference to Senator McCarthy’s (and his allies) practices and policies which called for the persecution of anti-
national, left-wing individuals who are trying to influence the ‘American way’. By the mid-1950s he lost his
credibility, and his accusations were deemed baseless by the Supreme Court.
\textsuperscript{87} In 1910 Japan took over Korea and ruled for over 35 years till its defeat in the World War.
\textsuperscript{88} Socialist southern state or the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea and the totalitarian north or the
Republic of Korea. The subsequent war for Korea lasted until mid-1953.
\textsuperscript{89} At the time USSR was boycotting UN for recognizing Taiwan and China was not recognized by the UN. Both
were allies of North Korea.
U.S. initially accused Owen Lattimore, A U.S. wartime advisor to Chiang Kai-shek (president of Republic of
China) and other aids in China for the ‘…loss of China and its four hundred million inhabitants, to Soviet
Russia…’ Only those Chinese Americans who were associated with the U.S. Communist Party leftist groups were
persecuted. But when China entered the Korean war, actions of Chinese Community in America were
scrutinized.
Communist takeover of China. Crippled with fear, many scrambled to demonstrate their loyalty to the U.S. Anyone different was termed a ‘potential security threat’ and faced abuse. Nevertheless, the Chinese community continued to thrive.

The rise of big businesses and industries like oil, aerospace, entertainment, and finance defined the decade following World War II. New buildings and offices to accommodate them started popping up across the city. Major commercial architectural firms catering to such clients were set up, such as Welton Becket & Associates and Victor Gruen Associates, while previously established practices like A.C. Martin and Associates adjusted to cater to the demand. One such firm was Pereira & Luckman.

PEREIRA & LUCKMAN

The turning point in Gin Wong’s career was joining the firm Pereira & Luckman after graduation from USC. William Pereira, FAIA, and Charles Luckman, FAIA, former classmates at the University of Illinois School of Architecture, founded the firm. A combination that was considered equal parts skillful and indomitable by many, Pereira & Luckman shaped the Los Angeles cityscape in the 1950s. Here, Wong would hone his design sensibilities and grow from a junior designer fresh out of school to Vice President of Planning and Design in less than a decade.

After graduating in 1931 from the University of Illinois, both Pereira and Luckman had successful individual careers. After getting his degree, Luckman worked as a draftsman and designed pamphlets for Colgate-Palmolive-Peet company. The Great Depression led him

91 “Episode 3, Lesson 2”; Brooks, “Numb with Fear.” Many Chinese Americans supported the fall of western regime in China when Zedong took over. They were for Chinese independence and not the communist agenda. At the time, Chinese newspapers, and other organizations like China Daily News (started to advocate for and inform the Chinese community) usually relayed news from China. Since many within the community had family and friends living in China it was only natural for them to want to be informed. When China Daily kept reporting news even after the takeover, it was labeled as a ‘communist paper.’ When an advertisement (for a Chinese bank) allowing Chinese to remit money to their families in China was printed, people believed China Daily violated the Trading with the Enemy Act (1917). Subsequently, the editor was imprisoned, anyone working for or reading the newspaper was suspected and kept under surveillance. It was not uncommon to send money back home and this act affected thousands of ordinary Chinese Americans. Their families in China faced pressure from the Communist Party to ask for money and were targeted by increasing taxes or seizing their land. As a response many Chinese Americans had to unlawfully send money adding on to the panic and despair.

92 Brooks, “Numb with Fear.”

93 Work was scarce and although he was a registered architect he had to work at a corporate office.
away from architecture to the corporate sector. He worked in sales, eventually becoming president of Lever Brothers and landing on the cover of Time magazine as the “Boy Wonder of American Business.”94 Pereira, a Chicago native, moved to Los Angeles in 1938. He first worked as a motion picture photographer and art director, which led to his designing the Motion Picture Country Home in 1941.95 He worked with his brother Hal at his firm William L. Pereira. With multiple projects commissioned to him, Pereira decided to partner with Luckman. Around mid-August 1950, they set up their firm – Pereira & Luckman.96 Known to hire promising graduates, Pereira hired Wong as a designer.

Post-war prosperity brought a boom across the urban and suburban built environment – a boom in suburban and tract housing, corporate headquarters, shopping malls, and roadside architecture.97 Explaining the architecture of the era and the firm, architect and historian Alan Hess has stated –

…cast out because of their sometimes bombastic, unrepentant Modernism and occasional lapses into gargantuan scale and corporativism… their best work defined a state of profound innovation, energy, charisma, and influence. With self-assurance, they addressed the critical issues of enormous scale, public space in a consumer society, and mass aesthetics that still confront us.98
Best known for its modern and innovative corporate architecture, the partnership would become extraordinarily successful and one of the country’s busiest architecture firms. (Figure 2.2) It specialized in designing large-scale institutional and commercial projects such as office buildings, airports, air force bases, and hotels.99 Owing to his work in the corporate sector, Charles brought with him many defense department projects.100 At its peak, the firm employed over 300 architects.101 They worked on J. W. Robinson Company Stores, Los Angeles International Airport (from 1952 till the end of the partnership), and the University of California Santa Barbara Campus (1951). (Figure 2.3) A marketing expert with natural business instincts, Luckman’s designs were always business over art. Charles once told a writer for The New Yorker, "I am firm in my belief that architecture is a business, not art."102 This is probably one of the reasons that many corporate executives and government officials who regularly worked with business people would prefer working with Luckman over his artistically centered peers. On the other hand, Pereira was a planning genius, and his master plans conveyed futuristic designs. Citing differences in ideologies, the firm dissolved in 1958, with the principals opening their respective firms – William L. Pereira & Associates and Charles Luckman Associates.103

101 “Exploring the Legacy of Midcentury Architectural Firm Pereira & Luckman | National Trust for Historic Preservation.”
103 Luckman, “Charles Luckman Papers 1908-2000.” As a businessperson Charles focused on meeting budget estimates. He would prefer cheaper materials over quality design.

Figure 2.3: Campus Plan – Pereira & Luckman, 1952. Image downloaded from Calisphere (https://calisphere.org/item/a1b8d6956b745157f27fc131f22 78a12/), crediting UC Santa Barbara, Architecture and Design Collection, Art, Design and Architecture Museum, downloaded on November 12, 2021.
Charles took over the firm Pereira & Luckman, renaming it Charles Luckman Associates. A press release indicates the former partners agreed for Luckman to retain the staff (most) and facilities in Los Angeles and New York and would also retain existing client contracts.\footnote{Luckman, “Charles Luckman Papers 1908-2000.”} His archives, \textit{Charles Luckman Papers 1908-2000}, have typewritten notes on his life and work, including his partnership with Pereira. However, owing to his business-minded nature, the materials focus on contract documents, speeches, press releases on projects, newspaper clippings, brochures, and client details over drawings and design details. Gin might see Pereira as his design mentor, but he almost certainly learned entrepreneurial and networking skills from Luckman.

Wong started with Pereira & Luckman in the design department\footnote{Wong, Gin Dan, Membership Files, The American Institute of Architects Archives, \textit{The AIA Historical Directory of American Architects}, s.v. “Wong, Gin Dan,” (ahd1049376); “New Partners of Planning, Architectural Firm Named,” \textit{Los Angeles Times} (1923-1995), January 18, 1959, sec. PART 6, http://search.proquest.com/docview/167390874/abstract/A2178BE2EC944DB4PQ/439.} and was promoted to Vice-President of Planning and Design on February 16, 1958.\footnote{Wong, Gin Dan, Membership Files, The American Institute of Architects Archives, \textit{The AIA Historical Directory of American Architects}, s.v. “Wong, Gin Dan,” (ahd1049376). Prior to applying for AIA, Wong was a registered architect in California (California State Board of Architectural Examiners).} (Figure 2.4) He played a vital role in the firm, leading design teams that worked on significant projects. On August 15, 1955, Wong was certified as an AIA Southern California Chapter member.\footnote{Luckman, “Charles Luckman Papers 1908-2000.”} Both Luckman and Pereira functioned as references for the same. As one of the earliest employees, Wong maintained a good relationship with his colleagues. They went on social outings together. Wong, along with John Majdick, Charles Stanton, and two others, won the La Cienega Lanes’ team bowling trophy in 1956.\footnote{Luckman, “Charles Luckman Papers 1908-2000.”}
Gin was responsible for numerous groundbreaking designs at Pereira & Luckman. The following pages describe three of Gin’s significant projects at Pereira & Luckman that highlight important economic and cultural trends in Los Angeles history and his design sensibilities during the decade.

PROJECTS

1. CBS TELEVISION CITY

7800 BEVERLY BOULEVARD, LOS ANGELES, 1952

A significant part of Los Angeles’s identity is its association with the entertainment industry, which has been a primary driver of its cultural and economic growth. Throughout the twentieth century, new forms of entertainment developed and evolved. With progress in science, the motion picture industry gave birth to radio and television production. Television came to the city in 1927 when inventor Philo T. Farnsworth developed the first electronic...
television system in East Hollywood.  Although the growth was slow, the post-war years saw an explosive consumerism boom due to better technology and lower prices. The television industry was an exaggerated extension of its precursor, radio broadcasting, which needed purpose-built facilities. It directly benefited from the existing technologies and innovations in the film and radio industries. However, by the mid-twentieth century, the industry was steadily growing, and the radio sector stagnated. With the production increase in volume, there was a need for special facilities.

CBS was one of the earliest networks created (1927), and with the rise of television as a national medium, CBS became one of the early leaders in broadcast television. When the television industry entered its golden age in the 1940s, the need for a purpose-built facility was evident when CBS (and other networks) started to feature live productions. These major television networks started looking into the potential of such facilities. CBS hired Pereira & Luckman to evaluate this issue. They concluded that television production had a different efficiency and economic philosophy than the motion picture industry. Thus, CBS hired the firm to design an intensive production facility with highly flexible spaces, efficient circulation, and provisions for expansion. CBS purchased fifteen acres of land at the southeast corner of

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113 Horsak, Ringhoff, and Torres-Gil, “CBS Television City, Los Angeles, Historic Resource Assessment.”

114 Horak, Ringhoff, and Torres-Gil, “CBS Television City, Los Angeles, Historic Resource Assessment.”
Fairfax Avenue and Beverly Boulevard for their new facility, CBS Television City, dubbed “the first large-scale purpose-built facility in the U.S.”\textsuperscript{115} (Figure 2.5) It reflected Los Angeles’s becoming a Mecca for television broadcasting.

![Figure 2.5: CBS Television City View.](Image Downloaded from USC Libraries Special Collections/ Dick Whittington Photography Collection,1924-1987/ Getty Faces of L.A., 1936-1958, Legacy Identifier: DW-V6-4-1-ISLA.tif, Unique Identifier: UC12073100)

The project, comprised of a main studio complex and service building, completed construction in late 1952 and soon became a landmark in the Beverly Fairfax area. Wong was credited as the chief designer (along with others) and project coordinator for CBS Television City.\textsuperscript{116} Archives for Charles Luckman show two memos that indicate Wong was part of the design team and worked on sketches for the project during the early stages.\textsuperscript{117} Millard Lee, principal at Gin Wong Associates, who worked closely with Wong for over forty years, says Gin was involved in the designs (with someone supervising his work).\textsuperscript{118} Wong and

\textsuperscript{115} Harry Ackerman, “Radio-Television: If You’ll Pardon a Cliche, The Show’s Still the Thing,” Variety (Archive: 1905-2000) (Los Angeles, United States: Penske Business Corporation, November 12, 1952), http://www.proquest.com/docview/963156994/citation/4BB3D42EEC74D1BPQ/1. The site was occupied by the Gilmore Stadium at the time of its purchase which was razed prior to constructing CBS Television City.


\textsuperscript{117} Luckman, “Charles Luckman Papers 1908-2000.”

\textsuperscript{118} Millard Lee, (former Principal, Gin Wong Associates), interview.
fellow USC graduates James Langenheim and Charles Stanton were part of the team. Gin Wong returned to Television City (under his own firm Gin Wong Associates) to add annexes in 1976 and 1992 and minor construction in 1996.

The design blended the practical needs of the profession (entertainment) with the boisterous post-war attitudes. Out of the extensive master plan developed for the project, only the first phase came to fruition. (Figure 2.6) The master plan was a series of box-like service buildings and studio complexes forming a massive plant that featured a high-rise office building, a long retail front along Beverly Boulevard, and twenty-four studios. When the architects were ready with the designs and drawings, Dale Clark and Associates built a two-ton scaled model of the complex. (Figure 2.7)

Figure 2.6: Proposed master plan for CBS Television City. A series of boxed facilities surrounded by commercial shops. Image downloaded from Television City L.A. (https://televisioncityla.com/gallery) crediting “CBS Photo Archive.”

120 Permits searched through LABDS website.
121 The expansion was planned based on the 150 feet height restriction set forth by the city. An extension was planned in 1956 with Pereira & Luckman as architects but it never materialized. Similar plan was proposed in 1961 with Charles Luckman Associates that never materialized. Over the years there was minor construction seen across the structure. In 1969, S.B. Barnes & Associates worked on the construction of two additions to the east façade. The reason for not completing the master plan would relate to less live and live-to-tape programs.
122 Horak, Ringhoff, and Torres-Gil, “CBS Television City, Los Angeles, Historic Resource Assessment.”
Since there was no typology to follow, exhaustive research was needed. The architects had to reconcile the needs of various elements in the entertainment industry (actors, producers, technicians) with the efficient planning and economic restraints needed for mass-producing television shows. For one of Pereira’s architecture studios at USC, students designed a television studio; a few designs from this studio were part of the numerous design iterations the team went through.124 Wong worked on some of these sketches and iterations.125 After many client consultations and trial and error, they devised a strategy based on a ‘Sandwich Loaf’ principle.126 The architects aimed to create a pattern or a blueprint that could be repeated (and modified) throughout the country, thus creating a precedent for future projects.127

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127 Pereira and Luckman, “Radio-Television.”
The team came up with a ‘production-line’ design modifying the existing film-studio typology into a factory-like system. Traditionally a studio is a large walled plot with standalone structures like studios, sets, and office buildings, but this project was a single, self-contained structure.\(^{128}\) The structure itself emphasized the horizontal axis with asymmetrical massing of two rectangular volumes creating an irregular plan.\(^{129}\) The design focused on two factors - change in size (facility could expand) and change in technology (accommodate future technological advancement).

The two masses were a studio building housing the studios, rehearsal halls, and technical areas, and a support building that primarily contained the craft workshop. The building, constructed of steel framework and reinforced concrete, is raised on pilotis, giving the structure a feeling of a ‘lightweight glass box.’\(^{130}\) (Figure 2.8) Three of four exterior façades hinged on steel connections at each supporting point in the structural framework, making them removable. When the need arose to expand the building, the walls could detach from its frame, and additional construction work could occur.\(^{131}\) The façade was either glazed curtain walls or clad with smooth stucco painted black or white.\(^{132}\) (Figure 2.9) A dramatic red-colored bridge-like entrance, designed by Charles Stanton, adorned the building.\(^{133}\) (Figure 2.9) Ramps running across the periphery provide access to service areas and warehouses from the outside without a need for elevators.\(^{134}\) Additionally, the support buildings had an open interior, allowing trucks to enter the building.

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\(^{128}\) Horak, Ringhoff, and Torres-Gil, “CBS Television City, Los Angeles, Historic Resource Assessment.”

\(^{129}\) Pereira and Luckman, “Radio-Television.”

\(^{130}\) “Television City” with Edward R. Murrow (Originally Broadcasted November 1953) - Part 1, Video (YouTube, 2012), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q5YdyY81M9M&t=3s.

\(^{131}\) Pereira and Luckman, “Radio-Television.”

\(^{132}\) Wherever there was a curtain wall, that façade could come down; they were permanent wherever the façade was stucco. Curtain walls at ideal locations in the support building provided ample light into the spaces, whereas the studios blocked light to allow artificial lighting necessary for filming.


\(^{134}\) “Television City” with Edward R. Murrow (Originally Broadcasted November 1953) - Part 1.
Figure 2.8: Image showing building under construction. Image downloaded from Television City L.A. (https://televisioncityla.com/gallery) crediting "CBS Photo Archive.") Downloaded on August 21, 2021.

Figure 2.9: Photo showing the curtain wall façade with the red-colored entrance. Image downloaded from Los Angeles Conservancy (https://www.laconservancy.org/locations/cbs-television-city) crediting "CBS Photo Archive.") Crediting Tom Gardner, downloaded on October 28, 2021.
The internal layout was simple, with two studios on each side bisected by a central service corridor connecting the four. The service corridor terminated at a giant craft shop housing carpenters, painters, and scenery. (Figure 2.10) A level above the studios were rehearsal halls, and below were storage and service areas. Rehearsal and the performance areas could be reconfigured with the amount of space increasing or decreasing, thus altering the size and shape of the studio.\textsuperscript{135} Transportation of scenery, props, and pedestrian traffic to the production areas was separated, thus improving the efficiency of production.\textsuperscript{136} Pereira quoted in an interview, “We felt the real distinction was the matter of time. Time could not be wasted in moving equipment, sets, and people.”\textsuperscript{137}

\textsuperscript{135} Pereira and Luckman, “Radio-Television.”

\textsuperscript{136} Pereira and Luckman, “Radio-Television.” Transportation of scenery, stored below, was done either through the central corridor or outside on runways that encircle the building not to disturb production. During production, the actors rehearsing on the upstairs halls would come down to the studios, whereas the scenery stored in warehouses below would go up from the basement.

\textsuperscript{137} Pereira and Luckman, “Radio-Television.”
space for lights and cameras.\textsuperscript{138} Even the workshop was adapted for efficiency - a painter would stay in place, and the scenery would move for ease of painting.\textsuperscript{139} The audience seating array was worked out after much research.\textsuperscript{140} Cameras on platforms placed amidst and at the sides of the arrangement made the audience feel like a part of the production.\textsuperscript{141} The platform was flexible and portable, providing maximum horizontal camera movement. The audience seating was made to be dismantled in the future and covered up using floorboards without needing any structural renovation.\textsuperscript{142} (Figure 2.11)

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure211.jpg}
\caption{Live broadcast showing audience seating and stage. Image downloaded from Television City L.A. (https://televisioncityla.com/gallery) crediting "CBS Photo Archive." Downloaded on October 28, 2021.}
\end{figure}

The property was designated as a Historic-Cultural Landmark by Los Angeles in 2018. It is a testament to the Los Angeles entertainment and broadcasting industry setting a

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{138} "Television City" with Edward R. Murrow (Originally Broadcasted November 1953)- Part 1, 1.
\textsuperscript{139} "Television City" with Edward R. Murrow (Originally Broadcasted November 1953)- Part 1.
\textsuperscript{140} The designers produced a 350-seater audience between the center camera and the stage floor. The height of the arrangement never went above the stage. This allowed for maximum seating without disrupting the camera positioning required for production.
\textsuperscript{141} Pereira and Luckman, “Radio-Television.”
\textsuperscript{142} Pereira and Luckman, “Radio-Television.”
\end{flushright}
precedent and an excellent example of corporate international style architecture. Its design reflected the optimistic post-war attitude while effortlessly keeping intelligent planning at its core. CBS Television City was one of the earliest projects of Wong. Although he was not the primary author, his contributions as a designer in producing the various design iterations and as a project coordinator were crucial for his career at Pereira & Luckman. It not only gave the partners confidence in Wong’s work, trusting him with his projects in the future, but at the same time, Wong honed his minimal and modern design sensibilities. CBS Television City, as a project, set a foundation for Gin’s understanding of intelligent circulation planning and using present technology, which he would replicate in his future projects.

2. LOS ANGELES CENTER STUDIOS (FORMERLY UNION OIL CENTER)
451 S BEAUDRY AVENUE, LOS ANGELES, 1958

The post-war rise of corporations and their high-rise office buildings brought a significant shift in the kind of architectural projects commissioned. These national or local corporations, usually banks, insurance, or oil companies, looked to leave their mark on the City through architecture. They wanted to proclaim themselves as instruments of progress and modernity. Zoning and urban planning played a vital role in developing and massing of the City’s commercial districts. The City of Los Angeles followed height restrictions limiting heights to 150 feet or thirteen stories during the early 1950s. City authorities also restricted these resources to areas in Los Angeles – the downtown business district and outlying commercial districts like Wilshire. Downtown buildings were massed together on rectangular plots, filling the site due to space constraints. The projects away from the city center could be free-standing, separated from the street and neighboring buildings, allowing for projects that

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143 Prosser, “Los Angeles Citywide Historic Context Statement: Commercial Development, 1850-1980, Rise of Corporations and Corporate Types, High-Rise Corporate Office Buildings, 1945-1975.” Owing to the logos displayed, people generally believed these corporations owned the buildings. These corporations could own and occupy the whole building or be the largest leaseholder in a building constructed by others.

144 Prosser, “Los Angeles Citywide Historic Context Statement: Commercial Development, 1850-1980, Rise of Corporations and Corporate Types, High-Rise Corporate Office Buildings, 1945-1975.” Due to safety concerns and to restrict the scale of building vs streets, Los Angeles had limited the heights 150 feet in 1911. This law also applied to neighboring districts such as Wilshire Boulevard. Only the city hall was permitted to be above 150 ft. In late 1950’s this rule was abolished but the effects on the city skyline were seen post 1960.
stand out. These tall, glass and steel structures were generally associated with a single corporate entity, and its logo displayed clearly, advertising its brand. Architects hired to design these buildings were large corporate entities themselves. They had previous experience in handling the scale and planning requirements. They had a distinct Modern post-war design accentuated by advancements in construction technology and (sometimes iconic) logo. They are now categorized as ‘High-rise Corporate Style.’

Such were the conditions when Union Oil Center was conceptualized. When hired, the firm of Pereira & Luckman had already worked on multiple large-scale commercial projects. This five-acre complex was the highest structure in the city during its completion. Located west of downtown, next to Harbor Freeway (110), the main building stood taller than City Hall due to the site’s elevation of 165 feet. True to the typology, the project utilized (then) modern technologies like escalators. The construction of this complex started in mid-1955. It contains one million square feet of floor space. The building housed the headquarters for Union Oil Company, later known as Unocal (until Chevron took over), a major petroleum products producer. Wong was the assistant director of design during the project overseeing the design process with the help of Charles Kratka, the chief interior designer, and Patrick L. Lawless, the project manager. Wong’s fellowship nomination from his AIA membership file indicates Wong presented Union Oil Center as one of his “… achievements in architectural design.”

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145 The design of the building and its various complex engineering systems – structural, mechanical electrical and plumbing.
147 Their firm already had designed some famous corporate high-rises across the U.S. by 1955. These clients preferred hiring architects who have experience and through contacts.
149 Hill, “Los Angeles Gets Business Center.”
The building provided a panoramic view of the Los Angeles cityscape. After much deliberation, a location that was central and accessible was chosen. (Figure 2.12) Reports claim that all employees lived within a nine-kilometer radius of the site. The cost of construction was roughly $20,000,000.153 Wong’s master plan for this modern complex comprises four buildings interconnected through pedestrian channels. At the center was a hexagon-shaped main building flanked by two long perpendicular buildings, which enclosed a wide and open plaza.154 (Figure 2.13, Figure 2.14) The tall main building, standing thirteen stories, displayed the branding for Union Oil. The two perpendicular buildings were three and two stories at Fifth Street and Maryland Avenue, respectively, with provision for additional three stories.155 (Figure 2.14) The fourth building on the opposite street connects the main complex through pedestrian bridges. (Figure 2.14) Local trees and shrubs with terrazzo planters adorned the plaza adding to the beauty of the place.156 The design is an early example of Corporate International architecture.

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154 The three-story building, Fifth Street Building, housed Brea Chemicals, a subsidiary to Union Oil. The two-story building was called Maryland building. Both named after the streets they are located on.


156 “Union Oil Center, Historic District.” Keeping in mind the local climate and seasons the plants were chosen.
Figure 2.13: Union Oil Center Rendered View by an architect. Image downloaded from Los Angeles Center Studios (http://lacenterstudios.com/about-us). Downloaded on October 15, 2021.
Figure 2.14: Ground floor plan shows the main building, plaza, and two lower wings. Image from Pereira y Luckman, Arquitectos. “Union Oil Center - Los Angeles (USA).” Informes de la construcción 12, no. 111 (1959): 23–32. Image modified by author.
The main structure contains private offices and clerical spaces. It has a flat hexagonal plan connected to the rest of the complex via a circulation-service core towards the west end. Like the rest of the structures, the main building has a steel framework enclosed in a reinforced concrete structure. (Figure 2.15) In the original design, Wong intended the lobby to be open to the public, an extension of the street devoted to a museum, and lined with storefronts with glass displays. Glass and aluminum line the façade with decorative fins (or brise solei) that doubled as a way to control sunlight entering the interior spaces.157 (Figure 2.16) The parking and the main building connect through a vertical, terracotta-clad (glazed) projection, housing elevators on one end and escalators on the other. (Figure 2.17) Wong foresaw the future need for ample parking in a rapidly transforming Los Angeles and thus dedicated four stories for subterranean parking with a capacity for 1400 cars. A peculiar feature of this parking is the absence of circular ramps. Instead, a system of flat ramps with a maximum slope of 4% accommodated parking, thus increasing the number of cars that can be parked.158

Figure 2.15: Main Building under construction. Image downloaded from Los Angeles Center Studios (http://lacenterstudios.com/about-us). Downloaded on October 15, 2021.

157 “Union Oil Center, Historic District.”
158 Pereira y Luckman, Arquitectos. “Union Oil Center - Los Angeles (USA).”
Figure 2.16: Fins as seen on the façade. Image downloaded from USC Libraries Special Collections/ Legacy Identifier: CHS-39549.tiff, Unique Identifier: UC126178.

Figure 2.17: Section through the main complex. Image from Pereira y Luckman, Arquitectos. “Union Oil Center - Los Angeles (USA).” Informes de la construcción 12, no. 111 (1959): 23–32. Image modified by author.
A fourth building (formerly called the Beaudry Building), located on the opposite side of the street, is connected to the main building via two pedestrian bridges. Wong designed these pedestrian bridges not to interrupt (vehicular) traffic flow while connecting the two sites. (Figure 2.18) This attempt was the first time in Los Angeles that a group of buildings was connected using bridges.\textsuperscript{159} Beaudry building was a hexagonal two-story multipurpose structure housing the cultural and social cores of the complex. It had a 550-person auditorium and a restaurant with two large terraces, all open to the public.\textsuperscript{160} (Figure 2.18)

Figure 2.18: Views from Beaudry Building.
From left: View under Pedestrian Bridge; View of terrace cafeteria. Image from Pereira y Luckman, Arquitectos. “Union Oil Center - Los Angeles (USA).” Informes de la construcción 12, no. 111 (1959): 23–32.

The whole complex had central air-conditioning with provisions for regulation within each room. Separate circulation for upper and lower floors controlled the flow of pedestrian traffic in the main buildings – a series of escalators throughout the lower seven floors controlled most of the traffic, and escalator-free elevators served the upper floors, thus minimizing circulation times between departments.\textsuperscript{161} This circulation core, built to withstand

\textsuperscript{159} Pereira y Luckman, Arquitectos. “Union Oil Center - Los Angeles (USA).” Bridges were constructed of pre-stressed concrete and assembled on site.
\textsuperscript{160} Hill, “Los Angeles Gets Business Center.”
seismic forces also sheltered all the engineering functions, such as HVAC ducts, conduits, and plumbing.\textsuperscript{162} Union Oil Center was the only office building to employ escalators during construction.\textsuperscript{163} Furniture and interiors were consistent with the grandeur of the building. Marble, granite, and terracotta made up most of the surface finish.\textsuperscript{164}

Unocal moved its headquarters to El Segundo in 1996, leaving the building to an uncertain fate.\textsuperscript{165} With many Hollywood films using downtown as a setting, a group of developers saw an opportunity to convert the complex into a studio. Three years later, the structure was re-opened as a studio that adopted the spaces into six large stages, a theatre, streets, and ancillary facilities.\textsuperscript{166} Union Oil Center is one of the successful adaptive reuse stories in downtown Los Angeles.

Gin’s work at Union Oil Center is noteworthy as it is one of the earliest buildings, with evidence supporting his lead role in its design. The statement project met success and bolstered Wong’s position within the firm, with Wong becoming vice principal in charge of planning and design.\textsuperscript{167} The groundbreaking use of technology and its master planning won Gin an AIA merit award in 1960.\textsuperscript{168}

3. LOS ANGELES INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

LOS ANGELES, 1961

One cannot address the Southern Californian built environment without discussing the aerospace industry. The early 1900s saw multiple aviation meets with crowds flocking to see

\textsuperscript{162} “Union Oil Center Unique in Design - ProQuest.”
\textsuperscript{163} Pereira y Luckman, Arquitectos. “Union Oil Center - Los Angeles (USA).”
\textsuperscript{164} Hill, “Los Angeles Gets Business Center.”
\textsuperscript{166} Los Angeles Center Studios. “About Us.”
\textsuperscript{167} Wong, Gin Dan, Membership Files, The American Institute of Architects Archives, The AIA Historical Directory of American Architects, s.v. “Wong, Gin Dan,” (ahd1049376). Press release for Pereira and Luckman naming Wong as Vice President list Union Oil Center as one of his key projects. After completion the building was in the news frequently for its design. (Luckman, “Charles Luckman Papers 1908-2000.”)
the new winged machines and their enigmatic pilots taking off on the unobstructed (undeveloped) Southern Californian landscape. Owing to open-labor laws, pleasant weather, and a culture that cradled entrepreneurship, many aircraft manufacturers, opened plants across Los Angeles.\textsuperscript{169} Although the industry declined during the depression years, it regained its vigor during World War II as defense contractors. Thousands of people came to Los Angeles searching for work in these plants.\textsuperscript{170} Many returning war veterans, predominantly single men, took advantage of subsidized housing loans, low-cost mortgages, and educational and vocational studies subsidies.\textsuperscript{171} They settled in urban or suburban areas and started their families. During the war years, people seldom spent money.

When the war ended, there was a demand for consumer goods, and many previous defense manufacturers turned to production for consumer markets. A substantial amount of federal money went into constructing public infrastructure, most notably an extensive network of freeways and highways.\textsuperscript{172} This was especially true for Southern California. By the 1950s, Los Angeles had made a name for itself as a rising metropolis reflected in the modernist urban landscape of the city. This post-war modernism was expressed in architecture in a range of styles—Mid-Century Modern, A-Frame, Corporate International Style, Googie, and New Formalism.


Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) is a brilliant example of transportation architecture that addresses the logistical issue of the massive amount of people (traveling). Due to rapid advancement in aviation technology and the introduction of the Boeing 707, analysts predicted that there would be a steep rise in the number of passengers traveling. The rising entertainment and aviation industries further pushed Los Angeles to the center, with another influx of people (tourists and residents alike). The City was redesigning the old airport southwest of Inglewood, known as Mines Field (1928) (Figure 2.19) Construction began in 1957, and when it re-opened, it was considered an ultramodern state-of-the-art facility. The design for this ‘Jet Age’ terminal was a joint venture between Pereira & Luckman, Welton Becket & Associates, and Paul R. Williams. Gin Wong, vice-president of design, was the lead architect on behalf of Pereira & Luckman. In his interview with Transpacific magazine, Wong explains that he was the Supervising architect, and he collaborated on the designs of the airport.

175 “Building Your Airport from the Ground up: Some ‘Believe It or Not’ Facts,” Los Angeles Times (1923-1995), November 15, 1961, http://www.proquest.com/docview/167974944/citation/CC2E9CFC8DDC457BPQ/1. Before the construction began it was proceeded by eighteen months of paperwork on the part of the development team.
177 “Ageless Elegance.”
Wong considered two primary factors for the planning – free circulation and security. The master plan consisted of unit terminals arranged around a central parking area. (Figure 2.20) These terminals led to individual ‘satellite’ buildings connected through underground tunnels. These buildings allowed individual airlines to hold passengers while they waited to board the aircraft. This reorganization proved revolutionary and is still implemented in airport design today.\textsuperscript{178} An early iteration of the airport included a system of trains interconnecting the terminals over the car park centered by a vast steel and glass dome.\textsuperscript{179} The Theme Building constructed in its place became the airport’s focus. The development was estimated to cost seventy million and handle twenty-three million passengers by 1970.\textsuperscript{180}

\textsuperscript{178} \textit{Breaking Ground: Chinese American Architects in Los Angeles (1945-1980).}


Six of the seven terminals proposed were constructed with provisions for the seventh in the future. Each terminal had airside facilities for arrivals and satellite boarding facilities. (Figure 2.21) These airside terminals were arranged in a loop around a 5000-car rectangular parking lot lined by palm trees and were placed close to the parking lot for convenience when passengers checked in. They were highly flexible, with possibilities to expand an additional two stories lengthwise.\(^{181}\) They connected to the satellite buildings via underground pedestrian tunnels for passengers. (Figure 2.22) Each satellite building had a different décor and featured a glass façade for viewing decks, gift shops, coffee shops, restaurants, and waiting for lobbies and boarding ramps.\(^{182}\) These buildings have provisions for ten aircraft boarding gates. The aircraft could freely circulate to the gates from taxiways. A 162-foot control and administration tower near the central area’s entrance housed the Department of

\(^{181}\) Groot, “Special.”  
\(^{182}\) “#1 WORLD WAY The Story of the New Los Angeles International Airport.”
Airport and Federal Aviation Agency offices, air traffic controllers, and equipment. The facility featured state-of-the-art services like conveyor belts, automatic doors, air-conditioning, heating, and loading bridges. The design of satellite buildings is now standard and applied across the world. Talking about the designs, Gin said, “An airport is not a static building; it has to be flexible for change.”

Figure 2.21: Internal photographs of the terminal.

Figure 2.22: Photographs showing the underground tunnels.

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183 "#1 WORLD WAY The Story of the New Los Angeles International Airport." The tower was highest in the nation when constructed.
184 "#1 WORLD WAY The Story of the New Los Angeles International Airport."
185 “Ageless Elegance.”
Cliff Moore, former executive director at the Los Angeles Department of Airports, and William M Schoenfeld, former deputy executive at LAWA and a former colleague of Gin’s at Pereira & Luckman (who worked on the original designs), selected Wong (Gin Wong Associates) for work on the airport expansion in the 1970s. The remodel accommodated growth and retrofitted newer technologies. With the advent of the Boeing 747, analysts predicted the number of passengers traveling would double. Larger aircraft carrying a more considerable number of passengers upset the organization and logistics of arrival and departure. Wong added a second floor to change the circulation patterns in the remodel. (Figure 2.23, Figure 2.24) Interestingly the original design for the airport had two levels, but due to budget restrictions, clients modified the plans. The upper story would lead passengers into the plane, whereas the lower story would lead passengers out of the terminal to the baggage area. (Figure 2.23, Figure 2.24)

Figure 2.23: Renderings for the Remodel.

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186 Millard Lee, (former Principal, Gin Wong Associates), interview.  
188 Millard Lee, (former Principal, Gin Wong Associates), interview.
One of the notable features of the central parking area was the Theme Building. Constructed in 1961, this space-age-inspired building is recognized worldwide as a modern landmark. It quickly became an icon for the new ‘jet-age’ airport and the City of Los Angeles. The current building is a scaled-down version of the original design, with a giant glass dome acting as a central hub for the terminals. Its design is credited to James Langenheim (on behalf of William L Pereira & Associates). Wong is sometimes mistakenly credited due to his returning to work on its repairs in 2007.

The building was supported on 135-foot parabolic arches giving it its distinct spider-like look. These arches support a cylindrical restaurant that is suspended seventy feet in mid-air. The structure was the first in the United States to use supporting steel arches. Constructed steel and clad with stucco, the restaurant had a rooftop observation deck that offered a 360-degree panoramic view of the airport.\textsuperscript{189} Although the restaurant is closed, the observation deck is open during weekends with limited access. A screen wall made of perforated concrete blocks surrounds the building. Although Wong was not the original designer of the building, in 2007, the building underwent a seismic retrofit carried out by Gin Wong’s firm.\textsuperscript{190} The city


\textsuperscript{190} Early design sketches are credited to James Langenheim, Wong’s colleague at WLPA. Paul R. Williams (a part of the airport design collaboration) is also credited at times, but further research needs to be conducted to clarify these stakeholders’ involvement.
and airport authorities approached the firm after portions of the skin on the arches fell due to corrosion. They collaborated with Miyamoto International (seismic team) and VCA engineering for the work, adding a tuned mass damper to counteract any seismic activity.\textsuperscript{191} Since the building is designated as a Historic-Cultural Monument, the damper was first approved by the Office of Historic Resources before its installation.\textsuperscript{192}

The partnership between Pereira and Luckman ended in 1958. Their work was a response to the trends in the city that favored wealthy and prominent clients. In his interview with \textit{Time Magazine}, Pereira stated that Charles was a sly businessman and his strength lay in salesmanship, whereas he focused on architectural design and innovation. Explaining their ideological differences, he quoted, “…the businessman who hires us, does not need another businessman to do the work – he needs an architect.”\textsuperscript{193} Working in a famous, nationally recognized firm garnered a considerable volume of large-scale (primarily commercial or institutional) projects. This proved to be an essential factor in the separation because Pereira believed their designs became too mechanical and felt factory-produced, and the divided attention among the various projects did not allow for their best work.

Work is delegated to various teams in a firm like Pereira & Luckman. With over three hundred employees and a top-heavy organization, principals oversee projects and client negotiations, and project design falls on the people who work under them. Often, smaller projects or projects of lesser significance are wholly handled by project architects. However, the design is still credited to the firm or its principals. This raises questions about the contributions of the project architects in these designs. If Charles’s prowess was as a businessman and Pereira’s was that of a planner/designer, Gin (and the other project architects/vice-principals) were the minds behind the design who detailed and molded these ideas and plans. Going through the archives to find Wong’s contribution to the firm proved


\textsuperscript{192} Millard Lee, (former Principal, Gin Wong Associates), interview.

\textsuperscript{193} “The Land: The Man with The Plan,” \textit{Time Magazine}, September 6, 1963, http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,870487-6,00.html; Luckman, “Charles Luckman Papers 1908-2000.” Luckman wanted the project to be constructed within the budget irrespective of the quality or actual costs, whereas Pereira preferred to focus on design despite the costs.
difficult because there is not much-documented evidence of his roles on projects. Most of the information is not in the public domain. Thus, these architects working in large corporate firms are not well known beyond the architecture community. This problem is more relevant today than ever.
CHAPTER 3: PLANNING COMES FIRST (1959 -1972)

Japanese Americans were seen as a threat to national security during the war and imprisoned. In contrast, Chinese Americans who fought in the War hoping to be accepted by American society (and the newfound sense of patriotic duty amongst the youth) were stereotyped as ‘ideal.’ This phenomenon magnified what is known as the ‘model minority myth.’ Although the term refers to a minority group perceived as better than others (minority groups), it often applies to Chinese Americans. Americans considered them as ideal minorities, representing the ‘American dream.’ They were often perceived to be more successful than the other minorities academically, economically, and socially. It was believed that Chinese Americans “capitalized on the American dream (during the war) with their work ethic and emphasis on education.” This statement is misguided in its observation and intended to create a wedge between different disadvantaged communities, especially African Americans, during the Civil Rights movement. The premise also does not address the discrimination that Chinese Americans faced, some of which persists today. Many in the community were not accepted into specific neighborhoods or did not get service and government attention when needed. It was a myopic view of all the minority groups.

Until 1965, various laws limited Asian Americans from immigrating and getting citizenship, especially Chinese Americans. The Emergency Quota Act of 1921 established a numerical limit to immigration that favored Eastern European immigrants over the ones from Asia and Africa. Although in 1943, Congress repealed any exclusion act not allowing Chinese Americans to be naturalized, the quota system still prevailed. The African

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196 “Episode 3, Lesson 1.”
197 Chinese Exclusion Act later included all Asian ethnicities.
American community's efforts led to the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which outlawed discrimination based on race, color, nationality, religion, or sex. As a result, immigration policies came under review, and in 1965 the Immigration and Nationality Act removed the quota system. Under the new act, immigration to the United States depended on labor skills or family relations. Over the next ten years, the population of Asian immigrants would double. The civil rights efforts would also bring about a cultural shift in the coming decade with an elevated focus on Chinese American narratives – a week in May is designated Asian/Pacific American Heritage Week (later the month of May), and academic institutions start offering courses in ethnic (including Asian American) cultures.

At the same time, Los Angeles (and California) became one of the most prosperous regions in the country, with its trends, architecture, and fashion coveted across the globe.200 The City’s growing population continued its expansion into previously agricultural areas of San Fernando Valley and San Gabriel Valley, and even areas of neighboring Ventura and Orange Counties.201 Historian Alan Hess explaining modernism in California (and subsequently the city of Los Angeles), said, “California was a nation-state in itself, and its Modern architecture perfectly reflected the wealth, reach, and self-confidence of this empire.”202 The region’s growth manifested not only in the manufacturing facilities, corporate headquarters, master-planned cities, and educational campuses that cropped up but also in the various cultural and civic institutional buildings (like museums, stadiums, and airports). With it came the demand for architectural firms with expertise and a workforce to design these large-scale and complex institutions. William L Pereira & Associates was one such firm these large corporations and organizations would hire.

WILLIAM L. PEREIRA AND ASSOCIATES –

William Pereira split with Charles Luckman to start a more modestly scaled practice and opened William L Pereira & Associates (WLPA) with its offices at Union Oil Center in

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200 As a result of boom in aerospace, entertainment, tourist, and oil industry during the 1950’s.
201 Planned residential communities and tracts were still practiced.
November 1958. Wong stayed with Pereira helping establish the new firm and joined as the President and partner-in-charge of the firm. Although Luckman kept the clients, Pereira’s experience and esteem in the community ensured they never lacked new clients. Even before the split, Lockheed Aircraft Corp. hired him to design a master plan for their research center. The firm’s work reflected the region’s growth and transformation in the numerous corporate offices, institutional campuses, and intelligent master plans in both their scale and design. Some famous buildings and campuses designed by WLPA are the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (1965), the Transamerica Pyramid in San Francisco (1969), the master plan for the city of Irvine (1960), the Geisel Library at the University of California, San Diego (1968), and the master plan for the University of Southern California (1960, 1966). Pereira’s designs and planning projects would land him on the cover of Time magazine (“The Land: The Man with the Plan”) in September 1963.

William L. Pereira & Associates is an exemplar for corporate architecture firms. It worked on multi-disciplinary projects in the fields of planning, including land use and urban planning, design, conceptual development, architecture, and interiors. One of the main reasons Pereira gave for his split with Luckman was the need to focus on design over the number of projects. To this end, Pereira had a strict policy to restrict its projects to provide unrestricted attention to those at hand and set up eight ‘Project Centers’ across the U.S. Each project would be under the supervision of a Project Director, supported by the staff based in a Project Center closest to the job site. Archival data for the firm indicates that it also had a research department, a publication department, and a ‘Concepts Workshop,’ all focused on supporting the quality of work. The firm also had a Policy Board comprised of Pereira, Wong, James M. Sink, and William P. Fickler that established and oversaw policies.

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204 “New Partners of Planning, Architectural Firm Named.” Los Angeles Times (1923-1995). January 18, 1959. At this point Wong had known Pereira for a decade. Gin Wong along with James H. Langenheim and Jack L. Campbell were named partners. All three were former vice presidents at Pereira & Luckman prior to this.
205 “The Land: The Man with The Plan.”
206 “The Land: The Man with The Plan.”
207 “The Land: The Man with The Plan.”
209 “William L. Pereira & Associates Records.” They also had a monthly newsletter to update the staff on projects and their lives.
and operation standards. They were directly involved in every project undertaken. Their role was both of an advisor and supervisor, and they also assumed responsibility for that project.

In his essay about William Pereira for L.A. Forum, Scott Johnson quotes architecture critic Allen Temko, “…Pereira was Hollywood’s idea of an architect.” Designs produced by the firm did not strictly adhere to the modern language and evolved with time. However, they were simple, well-planned structures with geometric volumes. Wong’s future work would be synonymous with this simple yet efficient design. While the firm (WLPA) handled diverse projects, including large-scale master plans, the bulk of the work that they are known for lay in civic and commercial buildings. Antonio Pacheco, a preservationist and writer, described Pereira’s buildings as follows: “...(they) are these types of buildings—grand statements of their time, first and foremost, and icons of capitalism, commerce, and development….” He further added, “...(they are) often relics of periods of economic expansion and growth, are treated as relatively disposable, their cultural utility viewed more through an economic lens than an architectural or civic one.” Some of the firm’s notable projects became icons of capitalist sentiment and profit-driven construction. For this reason, perhaps, his work is often criticized and overlooked.

WLPA archives, in contrast to the business-oriented archives for Luckman, concentrate on recording the design and planning aspects of its work in the form of reports and documentation. The publications department would record every significant planning and architectural commission in book form (reports). In addition to relevant project data (research data, site studies, planning methodologies, concepts, drawings, and kind), these reports named the people who worked on these projects (though they did not indicate their contributions). City of Santa Fe Springs Public Library (1961), Hunt Food and Industries Inc. Headquarters in Fullerton (1962), and Transamerica Pyramid in San Francisco (1972) are

some of Gin’s notable projects. (Figure 3.1, Figure 3.2) Wong was also a part of the team responsible for the master planning of the University of Southern California campus in 1961. When Wong opened his own firm, its internal organization and project planning reflected that of WLPA, especially when choosing the right persons for a project. The following pages describe three of his notable projects at WLPA.

PROJECTS

1. UNION 76 GAS STATION
   BEVERLY HILLS, 1965

   The development of good transportation infrastructure, mass-produced cars, and suburban housing post-war meant more people living in the suburbs and even more driving. Cities spread outward, leading to the decentralization of downtowns. The City’s suburban ranch tracts offered the same commodities as downtown and became top social gathering places. People embraced modern technologies, and war-driven technological advancements and inventions were brought into the consumer market to keep busy. Stable incomes implied that people were less focused on ‘necessities’ and started spending money

Electricity, refrigerators, telephones, household appliances, office machines, and other gadgets were all made available to the public to improve their lives. Businesses and services catering to this techno-car culture started opening in strips across the roadside, like motels, gas stations, coffee shops, bowling alleys, drive-in theatres, and car washes, all designed to be easily accessed by car. Visual communication became of prime importance to capitalize on motorists, and hence buildings became more noticeable and expressive. They used attention-grabbing buildings and signs that captivated the car owners. These buildings were designed as collages of materials and colors illuminated by attractive neon signs. They had eccentric, eye-catching forms utilizing modern materials like glass, chrome (steel), and plastic, resembling spaceships, missiles, and power plants. They looked like gravity-defying abstracts with unconventional geometrical features. The style’s signature is in its sweeping arches, reverse cantilevered roofs, angular lines, and bold colors and lighting. All these features made up the new gaudy design style of Googie architecture.

An icon of Los Angeles Architecture, Union 76 gas station is one of the most recognized Googie-style buildings in the region. (Figure 3.3) Located at the corner of Crescent Drive and Little Santa Monica Boulevard, this landmark gas station was initially intended to complement the Theme Building near the entrance of Los Angeles International Airport. Around the time LAX was under construction, the airport authorities put out a triangular piece of land near the west end of central parking for a bid inviting architects to design a gas station in 1960. Wong, working at WLPA, proposed the design for Union Oil company, but they lost the bid. Union 76, a brand owned by Union Oil (then), loved the design. Fred Hartley, former CEO and chairman of Union Oil, was a huge fan of Gin

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216 Horak et al., “Los Angeles Citywide Historic Context Statement: Architecture and Engineering, L.A. Modernism, 1919-1980.” The name was coined much later when an article in House and House magazine referenced a (generally credited as first building of the style) John Lautner designed coffee shop as ‘Googie Architecture.’
217 Millard Lee, (former Principal, Gin Wong Associates), interview.
Wong’s designs (then recently completed Union Oil Center), and when the company was looking to set up a gas station, he recommended Wong.\textsuperscript{218}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{image.png}
\caption{Photographic view of the Gas Station. Image downloaded from Creative Commons (“ PentaxSP_76Station1” by “J Jakobson,” licensed under CC BY-ND 2.0.) Image downloaded on April 23, 2022.}
\end{figure}

Los Angeles was hailed as a ‘city of the future,’ and Wong’s design demonstrated these sentiments. The structure replaced an original gas station operating on the site (constructed in 1924).\textsuperscript{219} The design was a simple rectangular building overlooking the pumps, both topped by a concrete canopy supported on three piers. (Figure 3.4) The building, located towards the lowest section of the canopy, contained snacks and a cashier’s station. A striking feature of the gas station is its dominating red roof that soars upwards towards the sky, appearing ready for take-off, an inspiration from the airport. This Googie-style canopy is decorated with simple square-shaped tiles at its edges and illuminated by fluorescent lights on its underside, making it look like a spaceship. These tiles, originally painted in orange, the

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{218} Millard Lee, (former Principal, Gin Wong Associates), interview.
\textsuperscript{219} Lain “Jack Colker’s Union 76 Gas Station.”
\end{flushright}
signature color for Union 76, are now painted red. A pole with the trademark “76” ball, also painted orange (now red), provided eye-catching signage. (Figure 3.5)

Figure 3.4: Sketch for Gas Station.

Figure 3.5: Photograph of the gas station showing original colors.
Image downloaded from Creative Commons (“Union 76 Gas Station” by “Mark Van Slyke,” licensed under CC BY-ND-SA 2.0.) Image downloaded on April 23, 2022.
The City of Beverly Hills declared the structure a historic Landmark and placed it on the Beverly Hills Register of Historic Properties in 2018.\textsuperscript{220} Wong’s design served its purpose of attracting automobile drivers. The simple yet striking design was hard to forget and served as a perfect branding for Union 76.\textsuperscript{221} The station was company-owned rather than operating under license under the care of its employee Jack Colker.\textsuperscript{222}

2. OCCIDENTAL CENTER TOWER (Now South Park Center (USC Tower))

LOS ANGELES, 1965

Discussions about eliminating the 150-foot height restrictions in Los Angeles started as early as the mid-1950s, with a law that favored site area ratio in late 1956.\textsuperscript{223} It took two years for the City to work out the regulations for the law and a few years before its effects were noticeable. Repealing the height limit brought about a change in the downtown real estate, with several tall towers dominating the skyline. Over the next fifteen years, many high rises would crop up, typically in the Corporate International style. This boom in downtown high-rise office buildings would last till the mid-1970s.\textsuperscript{224}

In addition to towers, developers and companies also invested in complexes or ‘ensembles’ like Union Oil Center.\textsuperscript{225} These ensembles comprised one or more towers and lower buildings within the same complex. Occidental Tower, located south of downtown along the north side of Twelfth from Hill to Olive Streets, is a good example. (Figure 3.6) The developer, Occidental Life Insurance Company, a subsidiary of Transamerica Corporation,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{221} Millard Lee, (former Principal, Gin Wong Associates), interview.
\item \textsuperscript{222} Millard Lee, (former Principal, Gin Wong Associates), interview.; Lain “Jack Colker’s Union 76 Gas Station.”
\item \textsuperscript{223} “The Building Height Limit Question,” Los Angeles Times (1923-1995), August 11, 1956, http://www.proquest.com/docview/166988849/abstract/587BDD056C2241D0PQ/1. Site area ratio – a building could go as high as it wished as long as the total square foot area of the building did not exceed thirteen times that of the site.
\item \textsuperscript{224} There were several factors for this decline – density of downtown, traffic, vacant offices spaces (and buildings), shift of financial cores towards outlying cities, and a decline in the Country’s economy.
\end{itemize}
had its offices a block away and owned the site. They awarded WLPA the project’s design.226 Archival records and Wong’s AIA fellowship files indicate that he was part of the team that worked on the designs.227 A 1962 article in the Los Angeles Times, “Skyscraper of 32 stories started five years early,” states that Wong and Pereira personally took charge of the project.228 Given his role in the firm, Wong would have also played a supervisory role.

Figure 3.6: Photographic views of the completed structure.
Left: Image downloaded from Calisphere (“Occidental Center Building,” Order No. 00058207, HE box 5051, Herald Examiner Photo Collection, Los Angeles Public Library.) Image downloaded on 23 April 2022.

The complex is dominated by a single tall tower connected (via an underground tunnel) to a lower structure and parking garage with a capacity of more than five hundred cars. Construction for the lower eleven-story structure, which housed the company’s electronic data processing equipment, began in 1961. Plans for the tower, topped by a restaurant and connected to the lower building, were approved in 1963. (Figure 3.7) A two-level auditorium was later added to the complex (1964). The tower featured a landscaped observation deck open to the public and a two-story dining facility enveloped in alternating glass and column skin on the 30th floor. Polished black marble broken by aluminum louvers and light brown ceramic tile panels clad the façade. A high-ceiling lobby featuring terrazzo adorned with plants emphasized the entrance to the building. The tower also featured a helicopter landing pad. Its distinct height, steel and glass structure, high ceilings, viewing observatory, and glass restaurant all made it a landmark building since its construction.

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233 Cameron, “Center Presages Rebirth of Area”; “Skyscraper of 32 Stories Started Five Years Early.”
The location for the site was favorable due to its proximity to the freeways (Santa Monica (10) Freeway and Harbor freeway (110)), availability of public transport, and low land values. With many tall buildings concentrated mainly in downtown, the thirty-two-story Occidental Tower stood out from its vicinity buildings. (Figure 3.8) It was the second-tallest building in Los Angeles at the time of its construction. A Los Angeles Times writer described the building as “Mt. Everest of Office Buildings.” Another article described the building as the “largest non-government, non-civic complex...(that) will dominate the downtown area.” The location, however, is an issue of debate as development in its vicinity was slow, and the

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234 “William L. Pereira & Associates Records”; Hebert, “New $25 Million Center Planned by Occidental Life.” Accessibility was a major factor as the employees came from all compass directions.
237 “Work Starts on 32-Story Office Center.”
structure remained an isolated enclave for a long time. Wong would return to work on repairs on the main building after a fire in 1977.\textsuperscript{238} Since 2015, the University of Southern California has owned the tower, displaying its signage.\textsuperscript{239}

Figure 3.8: Photographic View of the tower under construction. Image showing the tower's height compared to the buildings in its vicinity. Downloaded from L.A. Magazine (https://www.lamag.com/citythinkblog/citydig-the-loneliest-skyscraper-in-los-angeles/) citing USC Libraries – Dick Whittington Photography Collection. Downloaded on 23 April 2022.

\textsuperscript{238} Dfktar, “325 Firemen Fight Blaze in Los Angeles High-Rise”; Millard Lee, (former Principal, Gin Wong Associates), interview.

Figure 3.9: Sketch views of the site.

3. OLIN HALL OF ENGINEERING, UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA
LOS ANGELES, 1963

Educational campus master planning was another factor that added to California’s growth, with many universities looking to modernize and expand their existing campuses (or set up new campuses). Local architecture firms adapted to gain expertise in planning these large and complex campuses. In response to the widespread use of modern styles like the international style and the case study program, which were ‘overly formulaic,’ architects started using newer iterations of the style.\(^{240}\) New formalism is one such style that emerged at the time. The style blended the ideals of modernism with classical forms and motifs. Large volumes perched on a podium, colonnades, classical details blended with geometric forms, and symmetrical facades often articulated with formal landscaping are some of the features of the style. The new formalism style was usually used in civic and institutional buildings that needed to be formal and monumental. The style proved perfect for academic buildings and campuses aiming to express a formal yet progressive outlook.

In the 1960s, the University of Southern California (USC) went through a series of on-campus construction that sought to modernize its facilities and accommodate its growing population. Dr. Norman Topping, then USC President, hired William Pereira to create a master plan for its University Park Campus (in 1960 and later in 1966).²⁴¹ (Figure 3.10) Pereira and his team combined garden city principles with traditional ‘quadrangles’ for the campus, emphasizing outdoor learning and recreation.²⁴² They proposed a plan to create pockets of academic buildings built around quadrangles around which future related buildings could be built. Furthermore, they proposed that all land bounded by Jefferson Boulevard, Figueroa Street, Exposition Boulevard, and Vermont Avenue be university owned with ownership over all the public right of way within that boundary. (Figure 3.11)

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²⁴¹ Pereira was first hired to create a report (indicating growth patterns, intended size of the campus, housing etc.) and later to create a master plan.

Additionally, they added two rings – an inner core with academic facilities and an outer ring with ‘student housing villages,’ parking, and service facilities.\textsuperscript{243} They separated pedestrian (in the inner core) and automobile (in the outer ring) circulation patterns across the campus, making it a ‘pedestrian-friendly campus.’\textsuperscript{244} Along with the master plan, the team also designed several buildings (built over the years), like the Ahmanson Center (1964), Stauffer Hall (1965), and Olin Hall of Engineering (1963). Two reports from William Pereira’s

\textsuperscript{243} “William L. Pereira & Associates Records.”

\textsuperscript{244} “William L. Pereira & Associates Records.”
archives associate Wong as associated with the campus master planning project. Gin’s AIA fellowship application from his AIA membership file quotes his involvement in the design of Olin Hall as “…(Gin’s) achievement in architectural design,” further stating, “… he has made significant contributions to university architecture, as evidenced by the buildings he has designed for the University of Southern California, and has made dramatic innovations in the design of research and development facilities.” Two articles in the Los Angeles Times name Wong as a Project Architect and partner in charge, respectively, for the structure.

The form comprises five interconnected rectangular volumes arranged in a pinwheel formation—two five-story buildings housing classrooms, laboratories, administrative offices, and a student lounge, two one-story buildings containing a library and an auditorium, and a central service core. These buildings sit on a podium and are connected through concrete walkway bridges at each level that meet the open-air corridors across the perimeter. The facade featured brick cladding and steel windows with rows of concrete frames or screens with steel railings hanging on the east and west elevations. (Figure 3.12) These screens in abstracted rounded form give the buildings their distinct formal aesthetic. Lush soft scape adorned the plaza around the building. (Figure 3.13) It was the first high-rise building on campus. In 2014, the City of Los Angeles named Olin Hall of Engineering as an L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No 1054.

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Figure 3.12: Olin Hall of Engineering in 1966. 

Figure 3.13: Present-day photographs of the building. 
Image downloaded from USC News (https://news.usc.edu/17588/USC-Viterbi-Ranks-12th-in-the-World/) 
Downloaded on 29 April 2022.
All three projects described here would become markers in Los Angeles's architectural history. Two buildings (Olin Hall of Engineering and Occidental Life Insurance Company headquarters) were among the various projects considered when Wong was inducted into the AIA College of Fellows in 1966.\textsuperscript{248} He was one of the youngest architects to be elevated to Fellow.\textsuperscript{249} The architectural community started recognizing his design contributions, with many

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{248} Wong, Gin Dan, Membership Files, The American Institute of Architects Archives, \textit{The AIA Historical Directory of American Architects}, s.v. "Wong, Gin Dan," (ahd1049376).
\item \textsuperscript{249} Wong, Gin Dan, Membership Files, The American Institute of Architects Archives, \textit{The AIA Historical Directory of American Architects}, s.v. "Wong, Gin Dan," (ahd1049376). AIA has five levels of membership offered depending on the profession, age and where the architect holds their professional license. AIA’s also offers a fellowship to its members who have made significant contribution to the profession nationally – Fellow of the American Institute of Architect (FAIA). It is the most prestigious honor designated by AIA. About 2% of the total members gave been granted a fellowship. For his application he indicated that he was NCARB certified under the license NCARB 3140 and in State of California under license number C1900. He was elected on May 14, 1966.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
buildings he worked on winning awards.\textsuperscript{250} In 1962, Gin was a part of the Preceptorship Program at Rice University, Houston, Texas.\textsuperscript{251} Wong was one of ten nominees to mentor fifty students from various universities in a Design Fete where they studied the need for junior colleges in the United States and designed an ideal Junior college layout.\textsuperscript{252} He served on the Membership Committee board at AIA, Southern California Chapter for two years. He also served as the Architectural Guild president at the USC School of Architecture (1971-1972).\textsuperscript{253}

While Wong supervised and led many projects at WLPA, Pereira’s or the firm’s name went on its works. In his book Architecture of the Sun, Thomas Hines quotes AC Martin, “the firm is not a single individual,” to describe corporate architectural practices like that of Pereira’s.\textsuperscript{254} The quote reflects the complexity in structure, division of workforce, and scale and volume of projects of these post-war ‘big business practices.’\textsuperscript{255} Newspapers often reported significant or groundbreaking architecture by these firms, but less than a handful named the project lead. Labor on projects divided across a team raises questions about the credit and contributions of each member. WLPA recorded (only) significant projects in reports (some now archived), which state the names of people who were part of that project but not their roles. However, this record is vital irrespective of the kind and quantity of projects recorded.


\textsuperscript{250} Around 1965 he had received ten awards from various professional organizations. A list of his awards is given in Appendix I.
\textsuperscript{252} Wong, Gin Dan, Membership Files, The American Institute of Architects Archives, The AIA Historical Directory of American Architects, s.v. “Wong, Gin Dan,” (ahd1049376); “PCAD - Gin Dan Wong.”
\textsuperscript{254} Hines, Thomas S. “Building Big.”

The decade of 1970 saw an elevated focus on the lives and narratives of Asian Americans. Following the Civil Rights struggle, students of color in California began to question the education system, demanding representation in teaching and a curriculum that reflected their lives. Seeing their shared experiences and struggles, Asian American students asked for similar reform. Many minority grassroots youth and student organizations, including the Asian American Political Alliance (AAPA), started at the University of California, Berkeley, embraced their identity, and fought for diversity in education in the Southern Californian region.256 (Figure 4.1) These organizations later joined the Third World Liberation Front (TWLF), a coalition of various ethnic student groups that initiated and led the Third World Liberation strikes of 1968 and 1969.257 The strikes were not peaceful and were met with force. However, they helped launch the first ethnic studies department (with one of its four units on Asian American Studies) at a handful of universities in California, inspiring other universities across the U.S. in 1969.258 A pan-Asian American sentiment was on the rise. The momentum carried onto the following decade, with arts and culture acting as a catalyst to highlight Asian American stories and identities. Artists, academics, and youth used creative mediums to exhibit their histories and experiences of the Asian American cause in the fight for racial justice.

257 Anthony Gilmore and Kai Nham, “The Third World Liberation Front,” The Berkeley Revolution, accessed February 19, 2022, https://revolution.berkeley.edu/projects/twlf/. TWLF started at San Francisco State University in 1968 calling for a campus wide educational reform. Another TWLF was formed at UC Berkeley in 1969 with similar struggles and demands. Both were born out of a long history of struggle and resilience against the larger structural oppression. Both were a coalition of various minority student organizations who led protests and strikes across their respective campuses. Although the strike at UC Berkeley started a few months after the one at San Francisco State University there was prior unrest.
258 “History | College of Ethnic Studies,” San Francisco State University | College of Ethnic Studies, accessed February 19, 2022, https://ethnicstudies.sfsu.edu/history; “The Original AAS Department in the Country!,” San Francisco State University | Asian American Studies, accessed February 19, 2022, https://aas.sfsu.edu/. University of California, Berkeley, University of California, Los Angeles, and San Francisco State University were some of the first universities to introduce an Ethnic studies course.
GIN WONG ASSOCIATES

In the early 1970s, the country faced a recession which ended the postwar economic expansion. The popularity of the International Style and modernism was waning, and alternative architecture theories were rising. The oil crisis and the spread of the preservation movement brought about a need for judicious use of resources and energy consumption. It influenced the Los Angeles architecture landscape. Under these socio-political conditions, Wong decided to leave William L Pereira and Associates (around 1973) to start his practice, and in 1974 he set up Gin Wong Associates (GWA). At the time of leaving WLPA, Wong was the President and on the policy review board; his role in the projects was supervisorial.

He would oversee all the projects in the Los Angeles office, but his name was not on them. According to Millard Lee, former Principal at GWA, Gin had solid entrepreneurial instincts. “Wong’s love for design and due to business reasons, he decided to leave WLP,” he further explains. In his discussion with Transpacific Magazine, Wong described this move to set up his firm as “challenging” yet ‘fortunate.” He reasoned that when demand for construction is higher than supply, the architecture, design quality, and workmanship tend to deteriorate. Whereas during a recession, the demand for construction is less, developers tend to build what is needed. Thus, he explained, intelligent and good architecture became a priority, making this period (the recession) an excellent time to start his practice.

Charles Gable, a project architect at WPA, helped set up the firm with Gin Wong as the President. When it started, the firm had only five people working, recalls Bailey, former Executive Architect at GWA. He added that the office moved around the city a lot during its term. The first office was at 5900 Wilshire building, owned by a former client (Walter Shorenstein, who rented out the space to him) and designed by Pereira’s firm. When the firm grew to ten, they moved to an office building in DTLA. GWA opened a branch in San Francisco four years later. They also had offices in Korea town, Beverly Hills, and Century City before returning to the Wilshire area, where they stayed until the firm dissolved. GWA was responsible for various commissions worldwide, including a building at 1055 W 7th Street (formerly known as ARCO Tower) (1989), a Four Seasons Hotel at Beverly Hills (1987), and expansions to LAX (1984). When asked if he specialized in a particular typology of buildings, Wong stated, “I’m one of the few who is a generalist.” This belief allowed him to work on a

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260 Millard Lee, (former Principal, Gin Wong Associates), interview.
261 “Ageless Elegance.”
262 “Ageless Elegance.”
263 Bruce A. Bailey, (former VP, Executive Architect, Gin Wong Associates), interview. He started working with GWA in 1974. A few months after the firm was set up.
265 Bruce A. Bailey, (former VP, Executive Architect, Gin Wong Associates), interview.
266 “Ageless Elegance.”
broad range of buildings like large office complexes, hotels, and retail and commercial complexes. The firm had projects across the U.S. and the Asia-Pacific region.

Over his career, Wong maintained strong relations with his clients, a trait he picked up working with Luckman.²⁶⁷ His close connections with his former clients and networks within the industry proved helpful, especially during the early days of GWA. According to Bailey, their first project was through Wong’s former client, Walter Shorenstein, a well-known businessman and developer. The project involved a proposal for a thirty-three-story office building in Kansas City, Missouri, for Mutual Benefit Life. The project eventually went to another architect, but this was the first paying project for GWA.²⁶⁸ Wong’s colleagues described him as very amiable and someone people loved talking to. Former clients like Los Angeles World Airports (LAWA) and Occidental Life Insurance frequently called upon Gin for any expansion work or new projects. Charles ‘Cappy’ Cappleman, former executive vice president at CBS, was impressed by the Television City design and awarded GWA with the commission for new studios to be added to the facility.²⁶⁹ Similarly, William M. Schoenfeld, former deputy executive at LAW and a former colleague of Gin’s at Pereira & Luckman, selected GWA for work on the airport expansion.²⁷⁰

Additionally, developers like Transpacific Development Co. and Irvin Daniels hired GWA frequently. Pragmatic designs and excellent client relationships were the main reason for rehiring him.²⁷¹ Talking about his clients, Gin described an intelligent client as one who would not waste good advice and would constantly accumulate knowledge and appreciate design and aesthetics.²⁷²

The firm itself was organized traditionally, with Wong as the president. The head of design and the head of planning worked under him.²⁷³ They overlooked the production,
design, and administrative departments. Whenever GWA started a new project, Gin prioritized understanding the client’s needs and putting together the right people to work on the project. He first selected the lead architect, and they put together the rest of the team. The team translated the clients’ needs into sketches. Considering efficiency (cost and planning) and simplicity, the team would draw these into designs and models for review. Gin’s fingerprints were seen all over the project, from conception to design. However, he would hand off the fine-tuning of designs and production drawings to his senior staff. Given his age, it was difficult for him to visit sites frequently, but he made sure to visit them during essential stages.

Nevertheless, his love for design was evident in the many rolls of drawings kept beside his desk that he sketched during his free time. Some of these were ideas for his own home or restaurants for his friends and family living in San Diego; not all were realized. The office was scattered with countless drawings, sketches, and models of completed and ongoing projects. His peers described him as humble and polite, and his office was no bigger than his associates.’ He stated in an interview, ‘Everyone in the firm works hard to (create) good designs and their successful construction. Therefore, everyone in the firm is responsible for its success.’

![Figure 4.2: Wong’s designs for his friends’ restaurants.
From left: Design for fellow immigrant Sun Woo and her husband Gim Hong Lee’s Lotus Garden Restaurant in Downey, 1957; Design for a friend’s Great Wall Restaurant, 1965. Image Downloaded from Gom Benn (https://gombenn.org/my-father-gin-wong/) Downloaded on 25 July 2022.](image)

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274 “Ageless Elegance.”
275 Bruce A. Bailey, (former VP, Executive Architect, Gin Wong Associates), interview.
276 “Ageless Elegance.”
Wong’s designs over the course of GWA were minimal and straightforward aesthetically, yet they still retained the efficiency and strong planning sense of his previous work. An appreciation for nature and the focus on the indoor-outdoor relationship was especially evident in his work. Cusumano Plaza in Burbank (1989) and The Center in Beverly Hills (1985) are good examples. (Figure 4.3) His ideology that a building must be flexible to withstand future artistic style and technological changes was still evident in his designs at GWA. Commenting about the types of projects that GWA worked on, “Most of the projects commissioned to GWA were straightforward, lacking any gimmicks,” says Bailey, “There were no hardcore design projects that needed to stand out.” In his interview with Transpacific Magazine, Wong said he was lucky to be a part of the post-war building boom, calling it “…a time when men with deep pockets wanted to create buildings to enhance their own images, unique structures that would define them and stand as their mark.”

Figure 4.3: GWA rendering for Cusumano Plaza. Image courtesy Mr. Kenneth Lee.

Comparing the post-war boom period with the post-1970s, Gin explained the lack of opportunities to create unique designs because most clients needed approval from a board of
directors whose values and priorities did not always align with good architecture. Wong envisioned a better environment for office complexes: wide open spaces, two-story high glass windows, and structures cut at distinct angles. Another exciting project GWA worked on was the Crean Tower at the Crystal Cathedral. GWA constructed the tower (and produced construction drawings), which another team of architects designed. (Figure 4.4) The following narrative discusses some of his notable projects at GWA and tries to compare these with his earlier designs.


277 “Ageless Elegance.”
278 “Ageless Elegance.”
1. ARCO CENTER (now 1055 W 7th)
1055 W 7th STREET, LOS ANGELES, 1989

One of the recognizable buildings in the Los Angeles cityscape stands as the second tallest building in the Westlake area and the thirty-eighth in Los Angeles. The development of this building west of the harbor freeway, then undeveloped land, was a gamble for Transpacific Development Co. (TDC). Developers were pulling out of downtown projects due to congestion and overbuilding. By buying real estate at a low price, TDC saw an opportunity for the future. At the time, Shurl Curci of TDC commissioned GWA to design the office tower. The gamble paid off as the area soon developed as an extension of downtown.

Wong designed the building as a thirty-three-story six-sided office skyscraper. The building was named after its biggest tenant (then), Arco Petroleum Products Co. (ARCO). The name was changed to 1055 W 7th in 1998 when ARCO relocated. GWA designed this modernist high-rise with 660,000 sqft of office spaces. Constructed in steel and enveloped in a carmine red granite and bronze solar window façade, giving the building its distinct reddish-brown look. (Figure 4.5)

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280 Millard Lee, (former Principal, Gin Wong Associates), interview.

Figure 4.5: ARCO Center when constructed.
Image courtesy Mr. Kenneth Lee.
Like his past projects, Gin focused on planning circulation within and around the site, foreseeing future density challenges. For a building close to the city’s business core and a freeway, Wong focused on access to freeways and the movement of vehicular traffic. To solve this problem, he added a separate 1200-space parking structure attached to the building and situated it such that east-flowing traffic (towards the freeway) moved smoothly. The garage design ensured that the structure did not take away from the main tower. The garage provided easy access to the lobby, allowing smooth pedestrian circulation. The lobby itself has twenty-four-foot-high ceilings. Granite-clad interiors and alternating high windows allow for an open, bright, and luxurious interior near the entrance. Green plants and nature accented the interiors. Wong used his modernist sensibilities to provide a transition from public to private spaces. Emphasizing the indoor-outdoor relationships, he added a broad stepped fountain with a palm-lined entrance court. The court guides one into a forty-foot-long colonnade that leads into the lobby. (Figure 4.6)

Figure 4.6: Rendering of the Plaza.

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Clean and minimal aesthetics with efficient planning, a key feature of all Wong’s designs, is seen in the design for 1055 W 7th. The building being a developer-driven corporate office, the design was straightforward, lacking any groundbreaking design. Nevertheless, it was well-planned and designed. It offered 20,000 sqft of office space and fourteen corner offices on each level.283 The idea to plan pedestrian and vehicular movement within the building to improve circulation efficiency is another feature of Wong, seen since his earliest office designs like the Union Oil Center. (Figure 4.7) Density and parking are major problem areas in downtown Los Angeles. The addition of the garage allowed twice the amount of parking generally found in downtown offices.284 (Figure 4.7) Like his previous work, he used local plants to contrast with the design’s hard edges in both the lobby and plaza. Like the design, the interiors, too, were kept muted and simple. In his previous designs, Wong often played with the colors and textures of the interior material. (figure 4.8)

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283 Wolfe, “Daring Leap Into City’s West Bank.”
284 Wolfe, “Daring Leap Into City’s West Bank.”
Figure 4.7: Section through the parking and tower.
2. THE CENTER (UNITED TALENT AGENCY HEADQUARTERS)
9336 CIVIC CENTER DRIVE, BEVERLY HILLS, 1985

According to the GWA staff interviews, the Center was one of the few projects at GWA with a developer that allowed the architects to experiment with the design.\textsuperscript{285} The development, located at Alpine Drive and Santa Monica Boulevard intersection, was planned by Irwin Daniels of Daniels Services Inc./Culver City.\textsuperscript{286} (Figure 4.9) Wong and Daniels knew each other, with Wong having worked on a few of his projects. Hilton Hotel Corps. was the primary tenant using it as their corporate headquarters. The design brief for this office complex demanded a four-story building, but the city of Beverly Hills had a height restriction of forty-five feet or three stories.\textsuperscript{287} To overcome this challenge, the team designed the bottom

\textsuperscript{285} Millard Lee, (former Principal, Gin Wong Associates), interview; Bruce A. Bailey, (former VP, Executive Architect, Gin Wong Associates), interview.
\textsuperscript{286} Millard Lee, (former Principal, Gin Wong Associates), interview.; Terence M. Green, “Project Can’t Go Up So Goes Down,” Los Angeles Times, November 11, 1984.
\textsuperscript{287} Green, “Project Can’t Go Up So Goes Down.”
floor of offices below the street level, allowing the building to meet the height restrictions. These offices opened into walled patios that allowed natural light into the office spaces.

![Figure 4.9: Satellite view of the original complex. Image downloaded from Google Earth, 2007.](image)

The office complex was divided into two buildings connected by a bridge at the second level. To meet the requirements of a corporate office building, Wong decided to serrate the floor plans increasing the number of corner offices. In addition to the subterranean patios, floors are staggered back to provide landscaped terraces at each level. (Figure 4.10) The façade was a play of alternating granite and bronze solar window lines. (Figure 4.10) The twin buildings house about 180,000 sqft of office spaces combined. Softscape played a vital role throughout the complex. Taking inspiration from the Southern Californian plants, Wong added a series of interconnected courts lined with trees, shrubs, and sculptures surrounding the buildings. (Figure 4.10) The landscape and terraces contrasted the minimal, modern language of the architecture. A three-story, 550-capacity

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288 Kenneth Lee, (former Project Architect, Gin Wong Associates), interview.
289 Green, “Project Can’t Go Up So Goes Down.”
underground garage met the parking needs of the complex. The interiors were kept open with fewer columns to adapt in the future.

The Center was the first building to use this technique in Los Angeles.\textsuperscript{290} The Beverly Hills city urban planning guidelines emphasized open spaces and human-centric design. The proposal was approved. According to Wong, ‘The project received enthusiastic approval of the city’s Architectural Review Board.’\textsuperscript{291} GWA had offices in this complex for a few years.\textsuperscript{292} Around the early 2010s, United Talent Agency brought the buildings for their headquarters. New construction significantly changed the original building and plaza in 2013. (Figure 4.11, Figure 4.12).

\begin{figure}[h]
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\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure410.jpg}
\caption{Rendering of The Center by GWA. Image courtesy Mr. Kenneth Lee.}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{290} Millard Lee, (former Principal, Gin Wong Associates), interview.; Green, “Project Can’t Go Up So Goes Down.”

\textsuperscript{291} Green, “Project Can’t Go Up So Goes Down.”

\textsuperscript{292} Bruce A. Bailey, (former VP, Executive Architect, Gin Wong Associates), interview.

Figure 4.12: Present-day views of the Complex. From left: View showing the subterranean patio; View from the entrance showing new additions. Image downloaded from The Location Portal (https://thelocationportal.com/uta-plaza/). Downloaded on June 23, 2022.

Gin’s colleagues described him as an ‘incubator of talent.’293 For Gin, design sensibility came first, and he hired architects who were talented designers over heritage or standing. A few of his hires, like Scott Beck (Scott Beck Architects, past director of architecture, GWA), would go out and establish their firms, and many would go out and work for big named firms like AC Martin (Millard Lee) after the dissolution of the firm.294 According to Kenneth Lee, a former project architect at GWA, despite the traditional hierarchy of the firm, the office atmosphere was friendly and inspiring. He recounts the frequent dinners and picnics the team held together, with respective families also participating. Wong was not

293 Interviews by author.
294 Bruce A. Bailey, (former VP, Executive Architect, Gin Wong Associates), interview.; Millard Lee, (former Principal, Gin Wong Associates), interview.
always a part of these outings; however, Bailey described them as excellent team-building exercises. Known to keep calm under pressure, Wong believed patience (to stay till the end) is the key to any successful project.

In 1979 Gin was elected to the Board of Directors of the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce (for a year).295 He was known to golf on weekends to relax. Although his wife firmly believed he was always thinking ahead and planning his projects, even while golfing. Learning from his time in the Army Air Force, where one had to be careful of fuel quantity and gauging the amount and time to make a trip, Wong believed in planning ahead.296 In the interview with Marshall Berges, when asked about his way of finding peace in the hustle and chaos of life, the master architect explained, “A little planning produces a lot of serenity.”297

Wong also maintained a strong relationship with his alma mater, USC. His AIA membership files indicate that he was on the Board of Councilors of the Andrus Gerontology Center at USC and a member of the USC General Alumni Association Board. During the 1961 master planning of the University Park Campus, he was responsible for designing various buildings such as Olin Hall of Engineering and Stauffer Hall of Science. Gin restored the original USC building, Widney Alumni House (rededicated), in 1977.298 In 1983 he was elected to the USC Board of Trustees.299 As a part of his duties as a Trustee, he oversaw and considered various architectural and design proposals for the USC campus. It was common for Gin to bring these proposals to his office and oversee them with his staff.300 Wong’s association with the university inspired the school to dedicate his namesake auditorium at the School of Architecture, the Gin D. Wong, FAIA Conference Center.301 USC School of Architecture also has a Gin Wong Scholarship fund that supports fourth- and fifth-year architecture students.302

296 Berges, “Home Q&A.”
297 Berges, “Home Q&A.”
298 37926515, “Annual Guild Dinner,” Issuu.AA/V
300 Bruce A. Bailey, (former VP, Executive Architect, Gin Wong Associates), interview.
301 The 60th Anniversary Architectural Guild Dinner, “Annual Guild Dinner.” Issuu.
302 Lipinski, “In Memoriam.”
Adding to the long list of merit and awards, Gin was honored with the USC Alumni Association’s Merit Award in 1986, a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce in 2007, and the Judge Ronald S.W. Lew Visionary Award at the Chinese American Museum’s 15th annual Historymakers Awards ceremony in 2011. The Los Angeles Conservancy, an organization advocating for preserving historic and cultural resources in Los Angeles, honored Wong with a Modern Masters award in 2013. (Figure 4.13) An exhibition, "Breaking Ground: Chinese American Architects in Los Angeles (1945-1980)," at the Chinese American Museum in Los Angeles opened in early 2012. The exhibition celebrated the contributions of four largely unknown architects, including Gin Wong, and brought forward the challenges faced in the field. The exhibition showcases the architect’s technical and design skills and the hope for a progressive future.

303 Lipinski, “In Memoriam.”
306 The exhibition was a part of Pacific Standard Time Shows funded by Getty Museum. Eugene Choy, Gilbert Leong, and Helen Liu Fong were the other architects a part of the exhibition. Gin was the only one alive at the time.
Many senior architects, like Wong, face the risk that their design sensibilities appear dated. Wong’s designs evolved to keep up with the times, from modern hotels to high-rise corporate-styled offices. His projects featured state-of-the-art security and fire systems. Although involved in designing, as a proprietor, Wong dedicated much of his time and efforts at GWA to marketing. A vast majority of the clients were corporate organizations or recurring contracts. The projects were also not local and spread across the U.S. and the Asia-Pacific region. (Figure 4.14) Given his age, it was difficult for Gin to travel as much. Owing to these factors, much of GWA’s later workflow slowed.

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307 Millard Lee, (former Principal, Gin Wong Associates), interview.
Figure 4.14: Renderings of offices designed by GWA.
Image courtesy Mr. Kenneth Lee.

Around the late 1990s, there were talks within the firm if Wong would make someone a senior partner, but these talks never went beyond discussion. The interviews conducted with the firm members indicate they convinced Wong and collectively worked with him to close the doors (on GWA) without leaving any clients hanging. During the dissolution, on-call contract-based projects were transferred to other firms that would hire employees working on those projects. Millard Lee, who overlooked the aviation projects at GWA, explained that AC Martin, who did not have the necessary credentials to work on LAX, hired him and the staff working on the project. With Millard as a part of the team, the client was happy to give the project to the firm (AC Martin); at the same, it cushioned the former GWA staff from the dissolution.

After a career spanning more than six decades, Wong retired in 2015. With no named successor or plans to transfer the proprietorship, Gin Wong Associates closed its doors. Two years later, on September 01, 2017, he died in his Beverly Hills home, leaving

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308 Bruce A. Bailey, (former VP, Executive Architect, Gin Wong Associates), interview.
behind a legacy of excellent projects. His peers described him as dedicated to his work, working till the last day in the office. He was awarded the inaugural Lifetime Achievement Award by the USC Architectural Guild posthumously in 2019. His wife of sixty-nine years, Louise Wong, accepted the award on his behalf. He would always look toward the future. When asked which is his favorite project from all his work, he replied, “The next one.”

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310 Millard Lee, (former Principal, Gin Wong Associates), interview.
312 Gin D. Wong, interview by Steven Y. Wong, September 19, 2011.
CONCLUSION

Wong died in 2017, leaving behind a legacy of some of the most recognized buildings in Los Angeles (and Asia-Pacific) shaping its skylines. His designs gather praise from peers and clients alike. The range of his works demonstrates his love of design. In an interview, he described how it is easy as an architect to get "...carried away by the big picture and forget that people are going to live in those (spaces)...." He involved himself with the tiniest details, from colors and materials to everyday functional details, stating, "It is impressive to announce you are the architect of a two-million square-foot building, but you are not successful unless the person who sits inside a little cubicle in that building, is comfortable in the environment you have created." He reveled in designing large projects like production studios, office complexes, and military bases to modest single-family homes.

This research endeavor aimed to shed light on Gin Wong’s work, identify the factors that influenced Wong’s design ideology and evaluate his work over the years. It concentrated on two lenses to determine this – Wong’s history as a Chinese American architect and the authorship of an individual in a big corporate architecture practice.

To speak about Wong’s work and not his history of immigration and the socio-political events that led to his joining architecture, falls short in its understanding as they reflect the intermingled lives of immigrants and their influence on his work and life. A direct influence of Gin’s Chinese heritage is evident in all his simple yet well-planned designs. As a child educated in China, Wong learned to visualize a three-dimensional picture on a two-dimensional plane, a trait that would prove helpful during his architecture schooling. He once compared his minimalist ideology to traditional Chinese paintings, where the artist uses a few precise strokes and dots in minimal colors over a white canvas. He combined this understanding with the post-war modern technological advancements to create utilitarian buildings that maintained an artistic flair. Los Angeles became a center for the aerospace and entertainment industry. A rapid increase in population coupled with the advent of highways and automobiles added to this growth. His work captured the zeal and energy of changing

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313 Berges, “Home Q&A.”
314 Berges, “Home Q&A.”
315 Berges, “Home Q&A.”
Los Angeles. Union 76 Gas Station is an excellent example that shows his minimal yet precise design. As an immigrant growing up in Los Angeles, Wong was pragmatic and eager to learn. His design always allowed for expansion or future change due to the rapidly changing architectural, cultural, and technological climate post-war, something many contemporary architects aim for in their work.

Starting his career as a designer at Pereira & Luckman, Wong quickly rose to a prominent position. He later helped set up Pereira’s firm, William L Pereira & Associates, becoming the partner in charge. Both the firms were corporate big-business firms with a structured hierarchy. In such a practice, most work is divided amongst various specialized departments, with a team lead spearheading and supervising the design work. Wong took the lead on countless projects in both firms. However, most projects credit the firms or their namesake architects. After going through the various archives (Pereira & Luckman and William L Pereira & Associates), newspaper reports, Wong’s AIA files, and interviews, this thesis could find and name at least some of his works.

Recently, professional architecture organizations have mandated that all architecture practices name the team members with significant contributions to the design. However, questions about crediting employees who left the practice and authorship in a highly collaborative design process remain unanswered. Further research is needed to determine its implications in the contemporary world and relook at how assignment of credits.

The archives of Gin Wong Associates are stored at the University of Southern California Fine Arts Library but are yet to be processed and cannot be accessed. Additionally, all interviewees worked with Wong at Gin Wong Associates. Architects and employees working at Pereira & Luckman and William L Pereira & Associates were hard to locate as many of them are deceased or have worked with them for a very brief period. Hence this thesis had to rely on archives from both firms.

Wong’s work combined the aesthetics of modernism and futurism with the sensibilities of contemporary architecture. Nevertheless, his work cannot be associated with a single distinct style. One can say that Los Angeles was Gin’s laboratory, and he experimented with various styles. While working with Pereira & Luckman, his designs broke new ground by utilizing ultramodern technologies, materials, and aesthetics. They were well-planned at their
core. Over the years, especially at Gin Wong Associates, his design language evolved to meet the demands of corporate clients and developers. However, his buildings maintained their strong planning and future-focused designs. Even though the public did not recognize his name as readily as Pereira’s, Gin was well known amongst people within the industry with multiple repeat clients. Always planning for the future, his buildings met with tremendous success. Gray Driggs, the former mayor of Phoenix, Arizona, and the owner of Western Financial Corporation, quotes this nicely in an interview,

…I’ll never forget a remark by the chief designer of William Pereira, who was working on a high-rise building on Central Avenue that we never built. I asked Gin Wong if he was going to make a mistake that we heard he made in a particular building, and he said, “No, in your building, we are going to make new mistakes.” It was a very honest and appropriate answer, for when you are trying to break new ground in architectural design, as we try to do in our buildings, mistakes will crop up.316

Wong’s contributions to the city reflect a thorough understanding and interpretation of two intermingled worlds. His vast portfolio of works stands as a silent testament to the many political and economic forces that shaped the post-war modern movement and forever changed the built landscape of Los Angeles.

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1942; citing "U.S., School Yearbooks, 1880-2012"; School Name: John H Francis Polytechnic High School; Year: 1942.


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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I : AWARDS*

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<th>NAME</th>
<th>PROJECT</th>
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<td>of Southern California</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*To be noted, the list is by no means exhaustive.
APPENDIX II : IMPORTANT EVENT TIMELINE*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EVENT</th>
<th>YEAR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Born in Guangzhou, China</td>
<td>1922</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigrated to the United States</td>
<td>1931</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduated from John H. Francis Polytechnic High School, Los Angeles</td>
<td>1942</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joined the Army Air Corps as a navigator</td>
<td>1942</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naturalized in Tampa, Florida</td>
<td>1942</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended J. Milkin University, Illinois</td>
<td>1943</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joined USC School of Architecture</td>
<td>1945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worked at AB Gardner and Associates</td>
<td>1946-1948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married Louise Y. Tom</td>
<td>1948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worked at Daniel, Mann, Johnson, and Mendenhall</td>
<td>1948-1950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduated from USC</td>
<td>1950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elected to SCARAB</td>
<td>1950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joined Pereira &amp; Luckman</td>
<td>1950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daughters Janna, Terrina, and Kimberlee born</td>
<td>The 1950s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Became Director of Design for LAX</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Became Vice President at P &amp; L</td>
<td>1958</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helped set up WLPA / Partner of planning and design/ President</td>
<td>1958</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Become a Policy board member at WLPA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elected as a member of the newly formed Urban Advisory Unit by California</td>
<td>1965-1970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member of Membership Committee, AIA</td>
<td>1968</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chairman of Triennial Awards Committee</td>
<td>1969</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rice University – Seminar Director</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member of NCARB</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USC School of Architecture Guild President</td>
<td>1971-1972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Founded Gin Wong and Associates</td>
<td>1974</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview in the L.A. Times,</td>
<td>1974</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opened SF Branch</td>
<td>1978</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board of Councilors for Andrus Gerontology Center at USC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L.A. Chamber of Commerce- urban advisory council</td>
<td>1979</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elected to the USC Board of Trustees</td>
<td>1983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gin Wong Scholarship set up at USC SOA after donation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name Commemorated at USC SOA Conference Center</td>
<td>1986</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Article in the Sunday Today</td>
<td>1987</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview in the Transpacific magazine</td>
<td>1996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breaking Ground</td>
<td>2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired and Closed Firm</td>
<td>2015</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*To be noted, the list is by no means exhaustive.
### APPENDIX III : LIST OF BUILDINGS AT PEREIRA & LUCKMAN*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROJECT NAME</th>
<th>INVOLVEMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beverly Hills Hotel Addition, 1952</td>
<td>Design Sketches/Model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBS Television City, 1952</td>
<td>Chief Designer/ Project Coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electronic and Radio Propagation Research Laboratories</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camp Pendleton, CA, 1954</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marineland of the Pacific, Palos Verdes, 1954</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jet Production and Testing Center, Palmdale, 1955</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. Air and Naval Bases, Spain, 1956</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bullock’s Fashion Square, Santa Ana, 1958</td>
<td>Design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grossmont District Hospital, 1958</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union Oil Center, Los Angeles, 1958</td>
<td>Design/Overseeing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signal Oil Headquarters, 1958</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valley Presbyterian Hospital, Van Nuys, 1958</td>
<td>Designing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Los Angeles International Airport, 1958</td>
<td>Design/Overseeing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prudential Tower, Boston</td>
<td>Early Designs (before split)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountain Park Development</td>
<td>Design Sketches</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*To be noted, the list is by no means complete. These buildings have been located in archives/ Wong’s AIA application with written evidence to show involvement by Wong in some capacity.*
# APPENDIX IV : WILLIAM PEREIRA & ASSOCIATES*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>INVOLVEMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lockheed Basic Science Laboratory, Saugus (First official project for WLPA)</td>
<td>Design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunt Food and Industries Inc. Headquarters, Fullerton</td>
<td>Design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Santa Fe Springs Civic Center/ Santa Fe Springs Library, Santa Fe Springs</td>
<td>Design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Astropower, Inc., Orange County</td>
<td>Design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoffman Electronics, Santa Barbara</td>
<td>Design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ventura Saving &amp; Loan Association, Ventura</td>
<td>Design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transamerica Pyramid, San Francisco</td>
<td>Design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USC Master Planning</td>
<td>Design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occidental Life Insurance Co. Headquarters, Los Angeles</td>
<td>Design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USC Olin Hall of Engineering, Los Angeles</td>
<td>Design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USC Ahmanson Center, Los Angeles</td>
<td>Design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security Pacific National Bank, Los Angeles (Crocker-Citizens National Bank)</td>
<td>Design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union 67 Gas Station, Beverly Hills</td>
<td>Competition bid/ Design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Library, UC San Diego, La Jolla</td>
<td>Design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutual Benefit Life Plaza</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahaka Valley Inn and Country Club</td>
<td>Design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Los Angeles International Airport</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*To be noted, the list is by no means complete. These buildings have been located in archives/ Wong’s AIA application with written evidence to show involvement by Wong in some capacity.
**APPENDIX V : GIN WONG ASSOCIATES***

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>YEAR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Occidental Center Tower, Los Angeles (now South Park Center)</td>
<td>1977</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>333 Market Street, San Francisco</td>
<td>1979</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LAX</td>
<td>1984 expansion, Continuous contract</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Coast Metro Center (Costa Mesa Office Towers), Orange County</td>
<td>1985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meridien Newport Beach Hotel (now Renaissance Newport Beach Hotel),</td>
<td>1985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newport Beach</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Center, Beverly Hills (now United Talent Agency Headquarters)</td>
<td>1985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stouffer Concourse Hotel (now Westin Hotel)</td>
<td>1986</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Engineering Building at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL),</td>
<td>1986</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flintridge-La Cañada.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2600 Michelson (Citicorp Tower), Irvine</td>
<td>1986</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four Seasons Hotel at Beverly Hills</td>
<td>1987</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cusumano Plaza, Burbank</td>
<td>1989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARCO Tower, Los Angeles (now 1055 W Seventh)</td>
<td>1989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beverly Hilton, (Renovating Interior Spaces)</td>
<td>1989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific Park Plaza, Honolulu</td>
<td>1989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beverly Place (9242 Beverly Blvd), Beverly Hills</td>
<td>1990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crean Tower at Crystal Cathedral, Garden Grove (production drawings</td>
<td>Early 1990s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and construction only)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Hood Chapel Crystal Cathedral Complex, Garden Grove (production</td>
<td>Early 1990s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>drawings and construction only)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pan Pacific Plaza (1132 Bishop Street), Honolulu</td>
<td>1991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Research Library, Inha University, Incheon, South Korea</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hyatt Regency, Incheon International Airport, Seoul, South Korea</td>
<td>2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme Building, LAX</td>
<td>2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tom K. Lai Residence (Wong’s Father-In-Law)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Brotherhood of Carpenters International Training Center, Las</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Automobile Club of Southern California, Orange County</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*To be noted, the list is by no means complete. These buildings have been identified by employees of GWA that were interviewed (GWA archives were inaccessible at the time this thesis was written) or in historic newspapers. Additional research needs to be conducted for a comprehensive list.