

LOS ANGELES COUNTY CREMATORY HISTORY AND OPERATION

The Los Angeles County Crematory is located on the northwest corner of the intersection of 1st Street and Lorena Street, at 3301 E. First St., Los Angeles, CA 90063. The property comprises about four acres, and is planted with many large trees and shrubs. The remainder of the property on the large block is owned by Evergreen Memorial Park, a private cemetery. The Crematory is one of the few active County crematories in Southern California, as the majority of counties contract with private mortuaries to cremate the indigent dead.

The property was used by the City of Los Angeles for burials in the late 1890's, the earliest date for which there are written burial records. The County purchased the property from the City in 1917. The written record of burials is complete through the present, documented in logbooks maintained in the Crematory. After space for burial became limited, the Crematory building was constructed between 1922 and 1924, with outside chimney's added in 1946 and 1955. Currently only cremated remains are buried at the Cemetery. A caretaker's house is also located on the property. In the 1970's and 1980's the house was occupied. Today, one room of the house is used as an office, and the rest of the house is unoccupied.

A few flat headstones dating to the 1890's remain visible. The burial plots through the 1930's were identified with numbered concrete markers, of which only a few remain stable. Beginning in the 1960's, plots in which cremated remains are buried are clearly identified with markers indicating the year of cremation.

The cemetery grounds are normally open to the public Monday through Friday from 7:30 AM to 4:00 PM. Families occasionally come to visit and decorate grave sites and to review burial logbooks. They occasionally bring a plaque to place on the grave site. The public is permitted in the Crematory building, except restroom and chapel areas, without administrative authorization.

The original cremation retorts were removed in the 1960's, and replaced with three newer retorts that have been rebuilt several times since, and are still being used. The original brick chimney's remain, but are not functional. Within the Crematory building is an anteroom where remains are received and documentation is completed before cremation. A crematory room with three retorts, a storage room for cremated remains, two restrooms, and a chapel with seating, podium and antique pump organ. The panels of a storage cabinet are painted with images of people.

The 1994 earthquake damaged the 3,100 square foot brick Crematory building, and repairs were made under the auspices of FEMA in 2004 to comply with the 1999 Los Angeles County Building code. The walls and roof were strengthened, the restrooms were upgraded, and one chimney was reinforced and rebuilt. The original appearance of the building was maintained as much as possible. In 2004, the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transit Authority purchased 30 feet of property along the entire 1st Street frontage to allow the light rail Gold Line.