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# Five Ways Southern California Once Dressed Itself Up for the Holidays

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Private shopping malls like the Grove might orchestrate the most extravagant holiday displays today, but that wasn't always the case. From candy-cane streetcars to Broadway twinkle lights, vintage photos reveal how Southern California once decorated its public spaces for the holidays.

## 1. Trolleys Painted as Candy Canes



Courtesy of the Metro Transportation Library & Archive.

Each December from 1949 to 1953, a few of L.A.'s trolleys and buses took on the appearance of peppermint candy. To dress the cars in their holiday livery, Los Angeles Transit Lines workers painted the vehicles entirely white, applied masking tape, and then

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Courtesy of the Photo Collection – Los Angeles Public Library.

Beginning in 1928, tin trees and twinkle lights transformed a one-mile stretch of Hollywood Blvd. between Vine and La Brea into Santa Claus Lane. Street signs were even replaced to reflect the (unofficial) name change. Local merchants sponsored the elaborate decorations, hoping to attract holiday shoppers to their businesses. [Read more here on Lost L.A.](#)

### 3. Downtown Streets Basking in a 2.1 Megawatt Glow



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Courtesy of the USC Libraries – Dick Whittington Photography Collection.

Not to be outdone, merchants in L.A.'s central business district sponsored their own holiday displays along downtown's two shopping corridors, Broadway and Seventh Street. In 1939, 42,000 twinkle lights drained 2.1 megawatts from the city's power grid. [Read more at LAmag.com.](#)

## 4. An Oil Derrick Disguised as a Christmas Tree

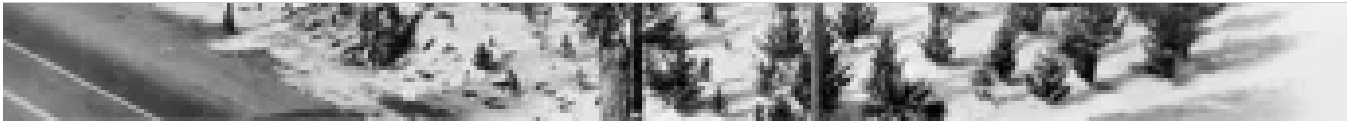


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Courtesy of the Orange County Archives.

This might be the world's most unusual Christmas tree. In 1939 and 1940, a Huntington Beach oil company attached more than 100 pine saplings to a steel derrick to create this

127-foot monstrosity. To complete the display, the company sprinkled the ground in bright-white powdered lime. [Read more at LAmag.com.](#)

## 5. A Cedar-Lined Driveway Transformed Into Christmas Tree Lane



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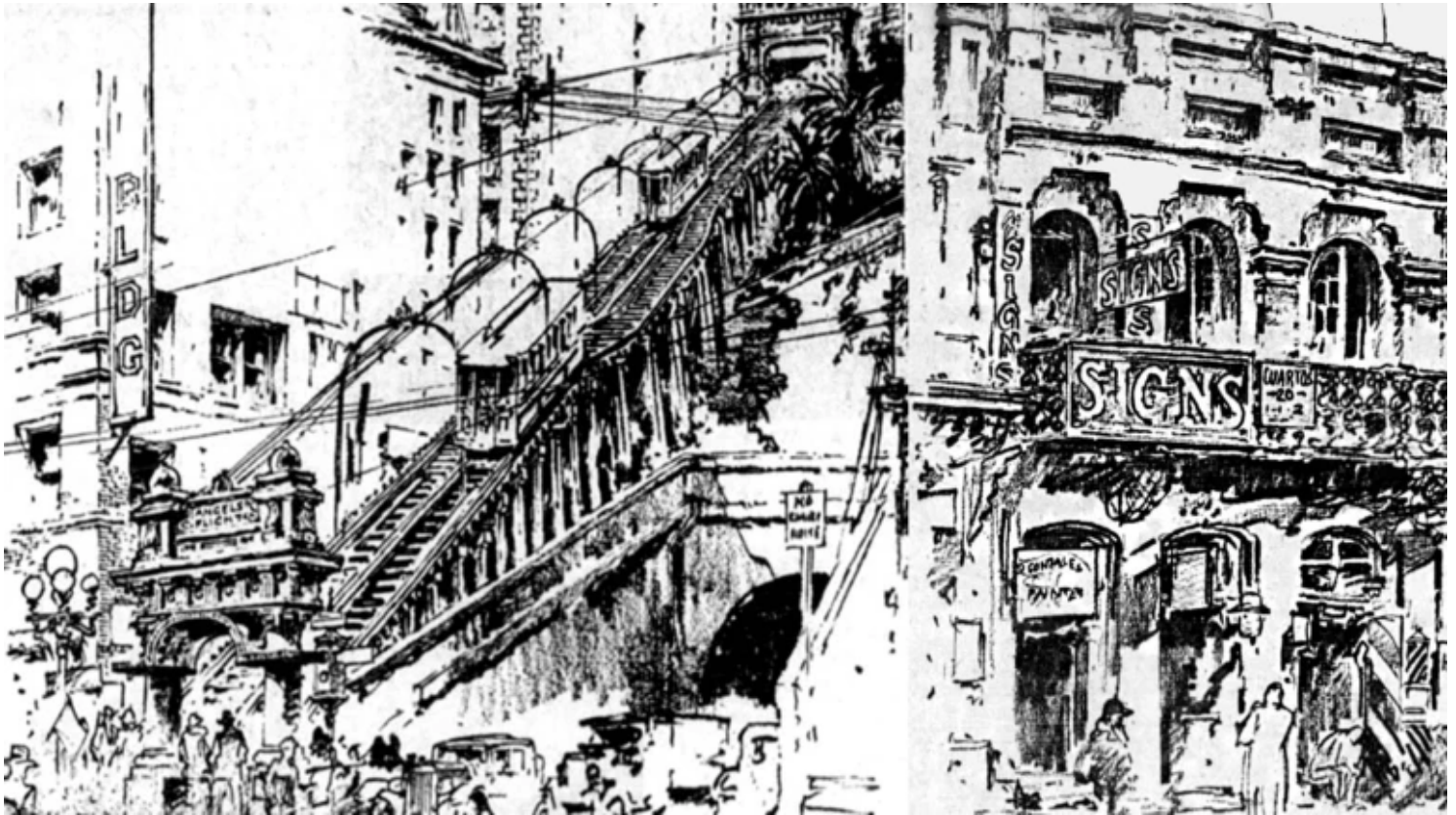
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One of Southern California's oldest holiday traditions began in 1920, when Altadena's Santa Rosa Ave. first became Christmas Tree Lane. The deodar cedars themselves date to 1885, when Frederick and John Woodbury had them planted to shade what was then a driveway to their ranch house. The tradition continues to this day, despite [concerns](#) about the cedars' health. [Read more here on Lost L.A.](#)

Top image [courtesy of the CSUDH Archives.](#)

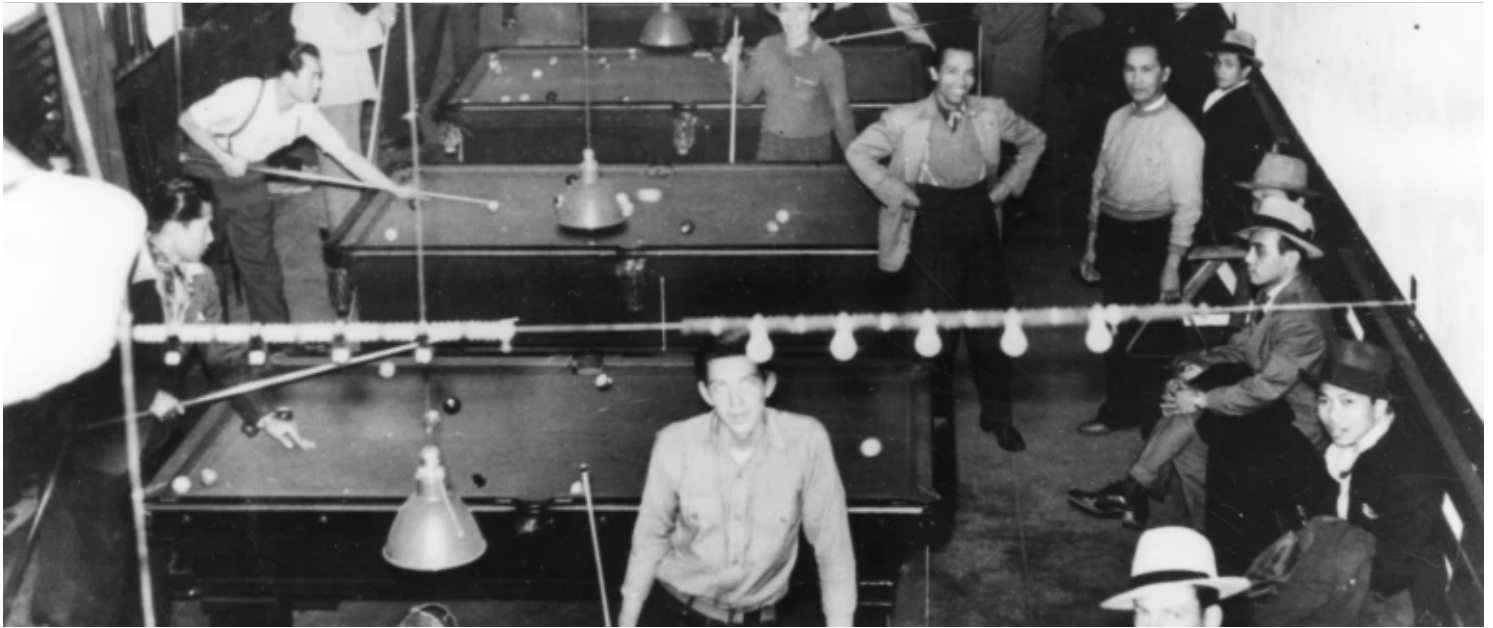
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## 1930s L.A. Illustrated: Angel's Flight, the Old Plaza, A Secret Garden and More

In November 1935, Los Angeles Times reporter Timothy Turner and staff artist Charles Owens began a year-long ramble through the historic core of downtown. The Times published more than 40 vignettes of the city's aging Victorian mansions, derelict theaters and other survivals of the

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## How L.A.'s Little Manila Disappeared Without a Trace

L.A.'s Little Manila district (around what is now Little Tokyo) bustled in the 1920s and 1930s and was a hub for Filipinos who began migrating in large numbers to Los Angeles in the early 20th century, until it was erased by redevelopment.



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read, "This land belongs to me. And if the railroad wants to run here, they will have to pay me \$10,000," she cemented herself in California culture as a symbol of resistance against the rich and powerful.

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