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# Broadway Place: Downtown L.A.'s Lost, Quirky Street

By Nathan Masters

December 6, 2013

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Broadway Place at its intersection with Main Street. Courtesy of the Metro Transportation Library and Archive. Used under a Creative Commons license.

For decades, Broadway Place was a quirk in downtown L.A.'s otherwise orderly street grid -- a 300-foot-long diagonal that formed a triangle-shaped block at its intersection with Main Street. Until very recently, Broadway Place was a vestige of the past, a remnant of an earlier routing of Broadway that once bustled with traffic.

Broadway Place was born in the early 1890s as part of an ambitious program to improve Broadway's stature -- one that later allowed the street to emerge as a major retail corridor. Property owners along Broadway fretted about the street's dead-ends both to the north at **Fort Moore Hill** and to the south at Tenth (now Olympic). Progress, they thought, might pass by Broadway, so they petitioned the city to make the road more accessible.

The city's solution: extend Broadway diagonally from its southern terminus so that it merged with Main Street.

Controversy greeted the proposal, which required the city to condemn private land for public use. Affected landowners sued to stop the project, but after a lengthy trial the courts ruled in the city's favor. Workers graded the new roadway and cleared any structures in its path, and by 1893 the extension was open to traffic, creating a triangle-shaped block bounded by Broadway, Main, and Tenth.

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created a complicated five-way intersection at Tenth (later Olympic) that featured multiple streetcar tracks and a raised safety island for pedestrians.

For decades, the **yellow trolley cars** of the Los Angeles Railway continued to roll down Broadway Place, which motorists also used as a shortcut between Broadway and Main. Downtown's eventual decline meant that Broadway Place would see less and less traffic, but the triangle-shaped block and the quirky five-way intersection remained a part of the cityscape until very recently.

In 2003, with the city's blessing, the owners of the underlying property began using Broadway Place as a private parking lot, incorporating it into an adjacent Joe's lot. Later, the city allowed the owners to remove the old roadway -- a project that in 2010 **briefly revealed long-buried streetcar tracks**. Finally in 2011, the city council officially **vacated** Broadway Place, permanently erasing it from L.A.'s street grid.

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Broadway Place is the diagonal street in this undated photo, which shows the triangle-shaped block created by the 1893 extension. Main Street appears on the right and Broadway on the left. Courtesy of the Photo Collection - Los Angeles Public Library.

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A view looking north up Broadway, showing the fork created by Broadway's 1919 and 1893 extensions at the bottom of the photo. Courtesy of the USC Libraries - Dick Whittington Photography Collection.

Construction of Broadway's 1919 extension is visible roughly in the center of this aerial photo of downtown Los Angeles. Courtesy of the USC Libraries - California Historical Society Collection.

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1920 view of Broadway and Tenth, looking south toward the fork between Broadway Place and Broadway's 1919 extension. Courtesy of the Security Pacific National Bank Collection, Los Angeles Public Library.

Broadway Place created a complicated, five-way intersection. The raised concrete platform allowed pedestrians to wait safely for a streetcar. Courtesy of the Automobile Club of Southern California.

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Streetcar tracks navigate the fork between Broadway and Broadway Place, as seen in this 1929 view looking north. Courtesy of the USC Libraries - California Historical Society Collection.

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Another view looking north up Broadway, showing the pedestrian island between Broadway and Broadway Place. Courtesy of the USC Libraries - California Historical Society Collection.

Broadway Place at Main Street, 1939. Courtesy of the USC Libraries - Dick Whittington

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A later view of the intersection of Broadway and Olympic, showing the surface parking lot that would eventually claim Broadway Place. Courtesy of the Metro Transportation Library and Archive. Used under a Creative Commons license.

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