

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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20. FELIPE DE NEVE BRANCH LIBRARY

2820 W. 6th Street

Significance:

The Felipe de Neve Branch Library is historically significant because it is the first building in Los Angeles named for the Spanish Governor who founded the City. It is a notable example of architecture designed by architect Austin Whittlesey, and it is part of a thematic grouping of branch libraries nominated to the National Register of Historic Places.

Often called the George Washington of California, de Neve, governor of California from 1776 until 1782, is considered by many historians to be the greatest of all the California Spanish governors. In 1781, de Neve established Los Angeles on the banks of the Porciuncula River. He wanted the town to be the agricultural center of California. On September 4, 1781, he certified the founding of the new town and named it El Pueblo de Los Angeles.

De Neve's contribution to the city remained unrecognized by any public monument until almost 150 years after its founding. In the late 1920's the Board of Library Commissioners determined a new branch was needed in the Westlake (now MacArthur Park) and Lafayette Park areas. The library board asked the Board of Park Commissioners for permission to construct the branch on a site facing Wilshire Boulevard, but the park commission would consent to this only if a \$100,000 library was built. The library board chose to build the branch on Sixth Street instead.

Architect Austin Whittlesey and General Contractor Harry J. Rinnert were commissioned to build the new branch. Austin Whittlesey was a local architect who began his career in 1924, and worked with the firm of Allison and Allison. Later he worked with the firm of Austin and Ashley.

According to news clippings from the period, the library was built during the spring of 1929 at a cost of just under \$40,000. The branch was designed to house 25,000 books, with its original book budget set at \$10,000. The branch opened July 1, 1929, but the library commissioners held off formal dedication ceremonies until September 4, 1929 -- the 148th anniversary of the date de Neve founded Los Angeles. A crowd of 400 persons, some dressed in Spanish costumes, attended the ceremonies. There were story hours for children and refreshments served in Lafayette Park. In the evening, a string orchestra entertained guests in the nearby Elks Building.

Over the years, the library has been an important cultural center of the local community. It has featured art exhibits, lectures, book reviews and activities directed toward the senior citizen populace. The fiftieth anniversary of the building was celebrated two years late, in 1981 to coincide with the City's Bicentennial celebrations.

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BRANCH LIBRARIES, LOS ANGELES, CA
#20 Felipe de Neve Branch
2820 W. 6th St.
1 inch=60 ft.

