

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

MAR 31 1992

OHP

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Ralphs Grocery Store

other names/site number 1142-54 Westwood Boulevard Building

2. Location

street & number 1142-54 Westwood Boulevard

N/A not for publication

city, town Los Angeles

N/A vicinity

state CA

code

county Los Angeles

code

zip code 90024

3. Classification

Ownership of Property

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
<u>1</u>		Total

Name of related multiple property listing: _____

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet

Stacy N. Ortega

June 22, 1992

Signature of certifying official
California Office of Historic Preservation

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register.
- See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain:)

Melaine Byers

entered in the
National Register

7/30/92

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Commerce/trade/specialty store

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Commerce/trade/specialty store

Commerce/trade/restaurant

Recreation & Culture/theater

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Mission/Spanish Colonial Revival

Materials(enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete

walls stucco

brick

roof terra cotta

other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

Utilizing its corner site to its fullest, the historic Mediterranean-styled Ralphs Market Building on the northeast side of the intersection of Westwood Boulevard and Lindbrook Drive is dominated at its apex by a stout cylindrical tower. The L-shaped building was constructed in 1929. The principal facades were finished in stucco scored to resemble random coursed pattern bond ashlar stone masonry, smooth stucco, and cast-stone ornament. Rear utilitarian elevations are constructed of natural brick.

The tower is ringed by an ornate corbel table and a denticulated cornice at the eave line and topped by a shallow octagonal cupola for ventilation. At the base of the tower, the main entry has a classical surround consisting of pilasters crowned by a full entablature and denticulated pediment. The wing extending from the tower on the Westwood elevation features a five-bay arcade formed by molded compound arches springing from stout Tuscan columns. The archways were once framed with awnings. Inset into the arches are storefronts with central entries and plate glass showcase windows on bulkheads which further define the building base. The upper part of each arch contains a fixed divided light transom. Seven of the eight bays in the Lindbrook elevation wing originally featured the identical styling and detail of the Westwood elevation arcade with the eighth, easternmost bay facade being a flush wall with an ashlar stone masonry finish. The three western bays are articulated in similar fashion to their counterparts on Westwood Boulevard, while the next three bays to the east have been altered by the addition of a projecting metal theater marquee and theater entrance. The final, easternmost bay contains auxiliary theater doors. Each wing is capped by overhanging eaves supported by brackets; the terminating wall of each wing features a stylized Mission Revival parapet.

The main street elevations of the shallow barrel vaulted roof and the entire tower roof are finished in regularly laid red tile. Mechanical equipment has been installed and a clerestory element, an original feature, has been reconstructed.

The interior of the building has undergone repeated alterations and as a result contains no original historic fabric. The structure originally contained a partial mezzanine. A portion of the southwest corner which contains a restaurant remains essentially a large open space. The theater and storefronts along Westwood Boulevard have been altered to suit that particular occupancy. New features include an office lobby, stairs, fire-rated corridors, toilet rooms, a reconfigured mezzanine, lighting, and an HVAC system.

One of the very first buildings constructed in the new Westwood Village, the Ralphs Market building served as a model for a cluster of low-rise commercial structures subsequently built along Lindbrook Drive and Glendon Avenue. The Mediterranean appearance of this gateway structure provided the focal point of the streetscape. It continues in this role today.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)	Period of Significance	Significant Dates
<u>Architecture</u>	<u>1929-42</u>	<u>1929</u>
<u>Commerce</u>	_____	_____
<u>Community Planning & Development</u>	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Cultural Affiliation

Significant Person

Architect/Builder

Collins, Russell E.

Benjamin, S.N.

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas of significance noted above.

The southern anchor of the Westwood Village shopping district, the Ralphs Grocery Store building retains a high level of integrity. The scored stucco exterior of the brick building accentuates its prominence among the high concentration of brick structures in the immediate area of the Village. The structure, one of the first six buildings constructed in Westwood, served as one of the most important retail establishments in the most ambitious and successful planned district in the Los Angeles area. The building exhibits the original architectural style of Westwood, and is associated with a major Southern California business. The period of significance for the building is from 1929, the year of construction, to 1942, fifty years ago, because exceptional significance is not evident.

The land that is now Westwood Village was originally part of the 1843 Rancho San Jose de Buenos Aires land grant. In 1884 John Wolfskill, a former state senator and rancher, bought the property and built a home on what is now the site of the Mormon Temple on Santa Monica Boulevard. When Wolfskill died in 1913 the ranch was still intact. Six years later Arthur Letts bought the entire property for \$100 an acre. Letts, an Englishman, was a prominent member of Los Angeles retail circles, having founded the Broadway Department Store and later becoming an initial investor in Bullock's Department Store. He was attracted to Wolfskill Ranch because of its diverse geography, and planned to develop estate parcels on the northwestern edge of the rancho. His son-in-law Harold Janss, vice-president of the Janss Corporation, saw potential in another portion of the land, and in 1922 the corporation purchased the area south of Wilshire Boulevard from Letts.

Founded in 1893 by Peter Janss, Harold's father, the Janss Corporation was one of Southern California's most successful development companies. The developers' legacy in Southern California includes the founding of subdivisions in Monterey Park, Boyle Heights, and the San Fernando Valley. In Westwood, the Janss Company envisioned a model planned community for the middle class. In order to retain control of design and planning, the firm employed its own architects and engineers, implemented its own public improvements and grading, and planned parks and school sites. No building project was initiated before Janss approved the plans.

When Arthur Letts died in 1923, the Janss Corporation became executors of his estate, which included the still-undivided rolling hills. Upon acquiring the land, the Corporation eagerly lobbied the Regents of the University of California, who were searching for a site for the school's southern branch. UCLA considered seventeen sites for the new university; in March 1925, the Regents chose the Janss land because of its ideal climate, the large site, and its proximity to Los Angeles. The cities of Beverly Hills, Santa Monica, and Los Angeles passed bond issues, and the \$1.3 million in proceeds enabled the three cities to buy the land and deed it to the university. Alphonso Bell, the developer of Brentwood and Bel Air, donated another eight acres, thus beginning a public/private partnership designed to master plan the area between Wilshire and Sunset Boulevards, with the University serving as the focal point of a neighborhood which was to include a village devoted to retail establishments and homesites of varying price ranges.

See continuation sheet

Continuation Sheet 1142-54 Westwood Boulevard Building

Statement of significance continued (p. 1 of 3):

Once the University bought the land, the Janss Corporation began to develop the property immediately adjacent to the south and east. The new campus did not have any neighborhood support services: no housing, shops, restaurants, markets, or entertainment facilities. Westwood Village, a Janss development, would solve that problem --it would become a "town for the gown." Urban planners Harlan Bartholomew of St. Louis and L.D. Tilton of Santa Barbara were hired to work in cooperation with the Los Angeles Planning Commission and Bureau of Engineering to create the business district. The planners designed a triangular plan with a principal axis culminating at the entrance to the university, and central parkways with lawns, flowers, and palm trees. They also recommended a uniform Mediterranean architectural theme, emphasizing Spanish or Classical influences. Building heights were limited to two or three stories, and a balanced color scheme of red tile roofs, ivory-colored walls, and blue and green tile prevailed.

All the buildings in Westwood Village were approved by an architectural jury, which ensured that diversity among individual buildings did not preclude overall unity in the district. Corner buildings such as the Ralphs Grocery store were designed to be the visual reference points for the Village. Accessible from two streets, these corner buildings generally had towers, which were designed to attract attention from people in passing automobiles. At least a dozen towers in the Village served to orient motorists as they proceeded north toward UCLA. One of these was the Ralphs Grocery Store building, constructed in 1929 close to the main southern entrance of Westwood Village at 1142-54 Westwood Boulevard. With its cylindrical tower at the corner of Lindbrook and Westwood, it was a focal point for anyone entering the area.

The principal facades of the L-shaped building were finished in stucco scored to resemble random coursed pattern bond ashlar stone masonry, smooth stucco, and cast-stone ornament. The tower is ringed by an ornate corbel table and a denticulated cornice. The wing extending from the tower on the Westwood elevation features a five-bay arcade formed by molded compound arches springing from stout Tuscan columns. Thus, the architectural design of the Ralphs Market building became one of the early examples of Spanish Colonial Revival/Mediterranean styling in the Village and one to be emulated in future construction.

The Westwood Ralphs was the 16th in the fast-growing chain of locally owned grocery stores which had been founded as Ralphs Brothers Grocers in 1875 by brothers George A. and Walter Ralphs at the corner of Sixth and Spring Streets in Los Angeles. George later bought out his brother and the company changed names, incorporating as the Ralphs Grocery Company in 1909. The operation grew steadily, with the first branch store opening in 1911, a move that launched a national trend. With five branch stores by 1918, the Ralphs Grocery Company was considered a national leader in the chain store strategy. In 1928, when there were ten Ralphs stores throughout Los Angeles, the company abandoned home delivery and instituted a policy of self-service, cash-and-carry, and ample parking, thus becoming one of the earliest forerunners of today's supermarkets. All Ralphs stores were self-service by the time the Westwood store opened. During the same period, stores became more streamlined with unobstructed curved roofs, large plate glass windows, wider aisles and bigger parking lots, moving the grocery store even closer into the supermarket class. Many of the Ralphs branches of this period, including Westwood, were known for ornate architectural styling.

Continuation Sheet 1142-54 Westwood Boulevard Building

Statement of significance continued (p. 2 of 3):

The Westwood Ralphs was built for a total of \$300,000, which included \$100,000 for the land, \$75,000 for the building, \$25,000 for the fixtures, and \$100,000 for the stock. According to the local newspaper at the time of its opening, the store boasted "every modern scientific enterprise" so that the refrigeration systems for meat and dairy products were "superior in every way". In addition to the complete line of groceries, vegetables, meat and fruit, the store carried a complete line of household hardware. Customer comfort was also provided with restrooms and telephone service.

The importance of the Ralphs Grocery chain is expressed by M.M. Zimmerman in his book The Super Market:

Southern California is generally referred to as the cradle of the large market...a history of Super Market development in this country demands a review of some of these great, scattered, early operations, which remain in the vanguard of Super Market operations even to this day.

One of these operations is Ralphs Grocery Company of Los Angeles, who have been pioneering in the food business since 1873. Starting, as all pioneers do, in a modest way, Ralphs developed some of the finest markets in Los Angeles. As far back as 1930 they were operating markets -- really Super Markets-- which would have been a credit to any community.

The building originally faced a landscaped park and was designed to serve the pedestrian as well as the motorist. Architect Russell Collins designed the Mediterranean style structure to conform with the architectural guidelines of Westwood Village. Born in 1893 in Beaverton, Oregon, Collins was educated at the University of Oregon, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the University of Southern California, and Columbia University. He was president of the firm of Russell E. Collins, whose offices were located at 541 South Spring Street in 1929, just down the street from the Ralphs Grocery Company headquarters. S.N. Benjamin, a building contractor, built the first 16 Ralphs branch stores, including the Westwood store. Active in Westwood civic affairs, Benjamin was the contractor of many buildings in Westwood, including the original Bullock's Westwood (at the corner of Westwood and Weyburn).

The store opened in November of 1929, two months after the first students enrolled at UCLA's new campus. Local papers announced the three-day grand opening celebration and gala festival of the Westwood Ralphs as one of the most "auspicious occasions ever witnessed in the community". The papers went on to say that no expense would be spared and that 250 food experts were expected to demonstrate 1000 nationally advertised products and to distribute gifts. According to the Santa Monica Evening Outlook, the store had a ten thousand square foot floor area plus a large stock and store room and was built to serve 10,000 customers daily.

When the Westwood Ralphs opened, only a few buildings existed in the new Village and there were approximately 2000 residences in the immediate area. The new supermarket served as a model for a cluster of brick structures, many with courtyards, that were subsequently built along Lindbrook and Glendon. By 1933, the block housed three grocery stores and several specialty food stores to serve the residential community being built around the Village.

Continuation Sheet 1142-54 Westwood Boulevard Building

Statement of significance continued (p. 3 of 3):

The building was identified as potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places in a historic resources survey of Westwood Village in 1985 and is listed as an Historic Cultural Monument by the City of Los Angeles. It is listed in Gebhard and Winter's A Compleat Guide to Architecture in Los Angeles.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property Less than 1.

UTM References

A

11	3	6	6	7	8	0
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3	7	6	9	5	6	0
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Zone Easting Northing

B

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Zone Easting Northing

C

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Lot 11 and the west 45 feet of Lot 12 in Block 10 of Tract No. 10600, in the city of Los Angeles, county of Los Angeles, state of California, as per map recorded in Book 161 Pages 1 and 2 of Maps, in the office of the County Recorder of said county.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundaries are those historically associated with the property.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Christy Johnson McAvoy/Principal

organization Historic Resources Group date November 29, 1991

street & number 1728 North Whitley Avenue telephone (213) 469-2349

city or town Hollywood state CA zip code 90028

Continuation Sheet 1142-54 Westwood Boulevard Building

Major Bibliographical References (p. 1 of 1):

Aplet, Jo Anne, Historic Resources Inventory form for
"Bratskellar/Egyptian Theatre", 12/1/84, pp. 1-6.

Johnson Heumann Research Associates, "Westwood Village: A
Development History", Cultural Resource Documentation
Report: Westwood Village, Section III, November 30,
1985.

Los Angeles Building Permits: #30053/1948; #13361/1954;
#19063/1967; #19235/1968; #82120/1970; #83179/1970;
#88261/1971; #55674/1972; #54478/1972; #40231/1983.

Naylor, Nancy, "The Way We Were: The Westwood Story", UCLA
Magazine, Fall 1989, pp. 39-47.

"Ralphs history spans more than 100 years in the grocery
business", Los Angeles Times, Special Advertising
Supplement, c. 1975.

"Ralphs Opening 16th Store", Santa Monica Evening Outlook,
November 1929, p. 14.

"Ralphs Store", Westwood Village Evening Outlook, November 20,
1929, p.1.

Southwest Builder and Contractor, 7/5/29, p. 48 col. 1-2.

Southwest Builder and Contractor, 7/12/29, p.60 col. 1 and p.62
col. 3.

Southwest Builder and Contractor, 7/26/29, p. 65 col. 1.

Southwest Builder and Contractor, 8/2/29, p. 57 col. 2-3.

Zimmerman, M.M., The Super Market", McGraw-Hill Book Co., pp. 24-
25.

Photograph Collections

Bison Archives, Beverly Hills
Johnson Research Associates, Los Angeles
Security Pacific Photograph Collection, Los Angeles Central
Public Library