

The Douglas Building History

The Douglas Building is a remarkable presence on the corner of Third and Spring Streets in this historic Downtown neighborhood. Just a block from the notable Bradbury Building, the Douglas Building is the legacy of T.D. Stimson, (1827 - 1898) a lumber baron turned real estate mogul who fostered commercial development in Los Angeles during the 1890s. As one of the few remaining vestiges of Los Angeles' 19th century architectural treasures, the Douglas Building still stands out, bold and elegant in the midst of glass and steel.

Designed in 1898 by San Francisco architects, James and Merritt Reid, the Douglas Building was conceived by Stimson as a flagship office building. The abbreviated five-story structure was markedly subdued and modern in comparison to its Victorian neighbors. Across the street was the Stimson Block, an impressive 42-room boarding house, and on either side, ornate two and three-story structures with retail establishments on the ground floor.

At the turn of the century Spring Street bustled with activity and commerce, horse-drawn carriages and bicyclists skirted noisy street cars transporting shoppers and businessmen up and down the wide streets of Downtown. These days of prosperity and growth ushered a twenty year building boom, the first of three during the 20th century.

When completed, the Douglas Building was dedicated as a memorial to Stimson, a generous, hard-working man who had won the respect of Angelenos. Of the many accolades printed following his unexpected death, one of the most generous appeared in Greater Los Angeles, a weekly tabloid. "He it was who built so liberally and so handsomely on Spring Street as to create a permanent business heart to our city filled with the hum of traffic and industry and say, 'this is his monument.'"

At Stimson's funeral service, the Reverend Bert Estes Howard's words echoed the sentiment: "In days to come, when one shall inquire for the monuments of Thomas Douglas Stimson, men may point to our busy streets and to our city filled with the hum of traffic and industry and say, 'this is his monument.'"

The Douglas Building "was considered among Los Angeles' greatest office buildings and commanded the highest rentals. In its early years, it housed the chief ticket office of the Southern Pacific Railroad." ² During that time many travelers would have passed through its doors to purchase a ticket.



The Douglas Building is significant in the area of West Third Street, the former heart of Downtown, for several reasons: its association with Thomas Douglas Stimson, the Stimson Estate and the architects; and for its remarkable architectural design and structural system.³ Wholly restored, the Douglas Building will once again be the pride of the neighborhood and certainly one of the most impressive buildings in Downtown. ³ 50 new homeowners started making this their new home in 2005.

This history is from the developer's website.

¹ Kreisman, Lawrence, *The Stimson Legacy: Architecture in the Urban West* (Seattle, Washington: Willows Press, 1992)

² Ibid

³ From the Historic Resources Evaluation of the Douglas Building prepared by Chattel Architecture, Planning & Preservation, Inc., Sherman Oaks, California.