

# Walk in the History of Commerce

## Stop #1

Corner of Harbor St & Commerce Way  
Rosewood Elementary School

- The City of Commerce does not have its own school system. Instead, it is a part of the Montebello School District.
- Judging from the scores on the Stanford 9 Test in 2003, these students are not getting the best of education.

<u>City</u>	<u>7<sup>th</sup> Grade Math</u>
Beverly Hills	85%
Torrance	73%
Santa Monica	71%
Culver City	53%
<b>Commerce</b>	<b>33%</b>

## Stop #2

Corner of Commerce Way and Jardine St

- What is now Commerce was once an oak forest dotted with cottonwoods, walnut and sycamore. When the Spanish arrived, they were shocked to see most of the men and children walking around naked. The Indians were appalled that the Spanish only bathed once a month, where they bathed every day. 6
- The Gabrielino Indians did not get very far technologically. They never developed what we consider agriculture, never developed any pottery, any metal working or wood carving. But, in some respects such as knowing how to live, they were ahead of us. Most of you work hard 5 days a week to enjoy 2 days off (Saturday and Sunday). They worked only 2 days and rested for 3. Who had the best system?

## Stop #3

Corner of Jardine St and Senta Ave

- Abel Stearns acquired a fortune as a smuggler for 20 years. Then he started acquiring land and, from 1859 to 1871, he acquired most of what is now Commerce.

- Upon his death, his wife, Arcadia Bandini, inherited it. She spoke no English and could not even write her own name. But she did hire an honest and brilliant attorney, Henry O'Melveny, who leased her land for agriculture. At the age of 84, she died owning most of the city of Commerce, an estate of \$7,000,000. 7

#### Stop #4

Midway between Jardine St and Jillsen on Senta Ave

- Note the modest neatly kept homes on both sides of the street. Note the absence of graffiti and absence of trash.
- In 2003, the price of the homes and the median rent is low compared to other southern California cities.

#### Mean Rent

Beverly Hills	\$1,171 per month
Torrance	\$903
Culver City	\$887
Santa Monica	\$792
Montebello	\$698
<b>Commerce</b>	<b>\$623</b>

#### Home Sales

Santa Monica	\$1,845,000
Beverly Hills	\$1,460,000
Westchester	\$ 535,000
Culver City	\$ 535,000
<b>Commerce</b>	<b>\$ 267,000</b>

#### Stop #5

Corner of Senta and Jillson St

- In 1905, the principal industry here was the Simons Bros brickyard. This was a company town with company store, post office, railroad station, church and school. Mexican laborers toiled there for \$2.25 per day for 12 hours work, 7 days per week. In 1952 the brickyard closed, being replaced by wallboard and stucco.
- In the 1920's and 1930's, this area was part of the central manufacturing district, manufacturing steel, autos, tires, etc. In 1960, Commerce still housed heavy industry, but free trade spelled the end of these basic industries.

1971	Chrysler plant closed
1974	Fluor Corp moved to Orange County
1976	Lockheed Electronics left
1978	Uniroyal closed tire manufacturing
1980	U.S. Steel American Bridge division closed
1990	The furniture manufacturer left

- These basic industries were replaced by printing and paper and 40 trucking companies. Commerce is now the Graphic Arts center of Los Angeles County.

### Stop #6

2555 Commerce Way  
Senior Center

- Note the large and spacious building with all sorts of entertainment for senior citizens, including card games, billiards, bingo, potluck dinners and dancing.

### Stop #7

2535 Commerce Way  
City Hall

- In 1960, the City of Commerce incorporated to end the poor garbage collection and endless delays from Los Angeles County.
- At present, the city is 91% industrial and 7.5% residential.
- The residents of this city have all sorts of advantages from living here. Some of those advantages are:
  - No city residential property tax
  - No utility tax
  - Free employment services
  - Free local bus Monday thru Friday
  - Free trash collection
  - 40% rebate on home improvements
  - Excellent parks
- One disadvantage is car theft. Auto theft is down in Los Angeles due to anti-theft devices and computer use by the police. So the thieves have shifted to Commerce where 14% of the drivers leave their keys in the ignition. There are no police stations in Commerce. The nearest Sheriff Station is at 5011 East 3<sup>rd</sup> St.

- Commerce also does not have its own fire department. Fire protection was contracted to the County but in 2004 that was contracted to the city of Montebello.

**Stop #8**

5655 Jillson St.  
Central Library

- This is an excellent law library. In fact, it is second only to the Los Angeles County Law Library. It is the most complete library on paint technology in the Western U.S. Every year, the Paint Industry donates additional books. Now the library has volumes on every ingredient in paint, including books on both pigments, resins, solvents, plasticizers, cellulose esters and ethers. It also has back issues of all the magazines that serve the paint industry. All this has been acquired since 1961 when it had nothing.

**Stop #9**

5600 Harbor St  
Rosewood Park

- The City of Commerce provides four municipal parks. Each has a different program. In Bristow Park, there are classes in firearms and pistol matches. Also, there is a 3-hour class in boxing. There are also dance classes. 10 11
- In the Community Center in Bandini Park, there are four kilns used to teach ceramics and porcelain mold casting. Also, there are classes in knitting and crochet.
- In Veterans Park there are both basketball courts and racquetball courts. There is also a marksmanship range.
- In Rosewood is the aquatorium, which has a 36 meter warm-up pool, a wading pool and a 36-meter pool with underwater speakers. Competitive swim lessons are given. In another part of the building are many body building machines.
- The City of Commerce owns Camp Commerce at 465 S. Highway 173 in the San Bernardino mountains. The lodge is available for summer use together with 10 two-story cabins and a swimming pool. These provide Commerce youth with nature study, hiking, swimming and instruction in crafts.
- On rainy days, the city staff walks the kids to Rosewood Park under large umbrellas.

**Stop #10**

The Outer Wall of the Citadel  
5675 Telegraph Road

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- In 1930, Samson Tire was the largest tire manufacturer west of the Mississippi. By 1932 business dropped 50% due to the Great Depression and competition with more durable tires. So it sold out to U.S. Tire, which later became Uniroyal.
- In 1948 Michelin in France developed radial tires, which were much more durable than the bias built tires manufactured in the U.S. The American manufacturers did not want to invest in the completely different machinery required to make radial tires, so they kept radials a secret from the American public.
- In 1973 came the oil crises. Americans, unable to find American tires, bought imports. They were surprised to find the imports lasted longer than the domestic. So began the shift to radials. By 1983, all new U.S. cars came with radials. Uniroyal did not want the expense of converting this factory to radials so they closed this factory and shifted its production to their plants in Spain, Australia and Brazil (1978).
- Superior tires enabled foreign owners to penetrate the U.S. market. Goodyear is still the largest tire manufacturer in the world with 28.8% of the market. But if you add together the sales here of all the foreign owned companies, the total is 51.1% of the market.

**Stop #11**

5675 Telegraph Road  
Inside the Citadel

- For ten years, the City of Commerce tried in vain to find another customer for this former factory. After 10 years they realized they were unlikely to find another large tenant. So in 1978 they split the property in two, renting one half to the Wyndham Hotel and the other half split into many factory outlets direct to the customer.
- At first, the factory outlet portion was a great success with all sorts of bargains. But recently sales have declined. So to counter the decline, the city planned to expand in 2004 to 100 stores to rival the other nearby malls.
- As you roam through these many stores, note the absence of salesmen. There is nobody to advise or measure size. Instead the whole lure is price.

**Stop #12**

6131 E. Telegraph Road  
Entrance on Tubeway  
Crowne Plaza Hotel

- Inside the hotel on the first floor are 200 gambling tables operating 24 hours per day. This is the largest gambling operation in California. 19

- Under California law, it is illegal to pit players against the house. So players are pitted against each other.
- California is now the third largest gambling operation behind only Nevada and New Jersey. 20
- This particular hotel provides 40% of the revenue that operates the present city of Commerce.

### Stop #13

3910 Sheila St  
Refuse Energy Plant

- In most cities garbage disposal is an expense. But in this city of Commerce it is instead a source of income. In this plant, 420 tons of waste are burned here each day to generate 115 megawatts of electricity.
- Commerce is the first California city to use garbage as a source of energy.

### Stop #14

5200 Sheila St  
Unified Western Grocers  
(formerly Certified Grocers)

- For years small grocers were eliminated by competition from the chain stores. They tried to outlaw chain operations and failed. They tried to get special taxes on chain operations and failed. Then they tried joining together to purchase collectively in volume. Here 2,000 small markets joined together first as Certified Grocers and now as Unified Western Grocers. The association has made them competitive. 21 22 23

### Stop #15

5303 E. Washington Blvd  
L&M Footwear Inc

- In the late 1970's, 50% of the shoe sales were in independent stores. By 2003, only 20% of the sales were still from independent stores. By 2001, a full 90% of the shoes sold are imports.

## **Stop #16**

Harbor and Commerce Way  
Rosewood Park

- Free trade is eliminating most of the U.S. basic industries. In Commerce these have been replaced by graphic arts, warehousing and trucking.
- The revenue from gambling has enabled Commerce to provide its citizens with a free bus service, free employment service, a 40% rebate on all home improvements, free trash collection, and eliminate the need for either city residential property tax or a utility tax. They also made possible four excellent city parks, each with special programs not ordinarily provided by other neighboring cities.

## Comparable Statistics 2004

### Population

Glendale	202,700
Pasadena	142,200
El Monte	121,900
Downey	111,700
Compton	97,000
Alhambra	88,000
Whittier	86,400
Bellflower	76,400
Pico Rivera	65,900
Montebello	64,700
Gardena	60,100
Bell Gardens	45,750
Bell	38,250
Maywood	29,150
South Pasadena	25,250
Santa Fe Springs	17,100
<b>Commerce</b>	<b>13,200</b>
Industry	800
Vernon	95

### Area

Glendale	30.6 miles
Pasadena	23.1 miles
Whittier	14.6 miles
Downey	12.4 miles
Industry	11.7 miles
Compton	10.1 miles
El Monte	9.6 miles
Santa Fe Springs	8.8 miles
Pico Rivera	8.3 miles
Montebello	8.2 miles
Alhambra	7.6 miles
<b>Commerce</b>	<b>6.6 miles</b>
Bellflower	6.1 miles
Gardena	5.8 miles
Vernon	5.0 miles
South Pasadena	3.4 miles
Bell	2.5 miles
Bell Gardens	2.5 miles
Maywood	1.2 miles

### Per Capita Income

Bell	\$59,905
Bell Gardens	\$58,415
South Pasadena	\$32,728
Pasadena	\$28,186
Glendale	\$22,227
Whittier	\$21,409
Downey	\$18,197
Vernon	\$17,812
Alhambra	\$17,350
Gardena	\$17,263
Bellflower	\$15,982
Montebello	\$15,125
Santa Fe Springs	\$14,547
Pico Rivera	\$13,011
<b>Commerce</b>	<b>\$11,117</b>
Compton	\$10,382
El Monte	\$10,316
Industry	\$ 9,877
Maywood	\$ 8,926

### Educational Rank Stanford 9 - 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Math

South Pasadena	81%
Glendale	63%
Downey	46%
Industry	46%
Bellflower	43%
Pasadena	37%
Alhambra	34%
Pico Rivera	33%
Vernon	26%
Maywood	26%
Gardena	26%
Bell	26%
<b>Commerce</b>	<b>25%</b>
Bell Gardens	25%
Montebello	25%
Compton	23%

## Comparable Statistics 2004

### Date of Incorporation

Pasadena	1886
South Pasadena	1888
Compton	1888
Whittier	1898
Alhambra	1903
Vernon	1905
Glendale	1906
El Monte	1912
Montebello	1920
Maywood	1924
Bell Gardens	1927
Bell	1927
Gardena	1930
Downey	1956
Santa Fe Springs	1957
Industry	1957
Pico Rivera	1958
<b>Commerce</b>	<b>1960</b>

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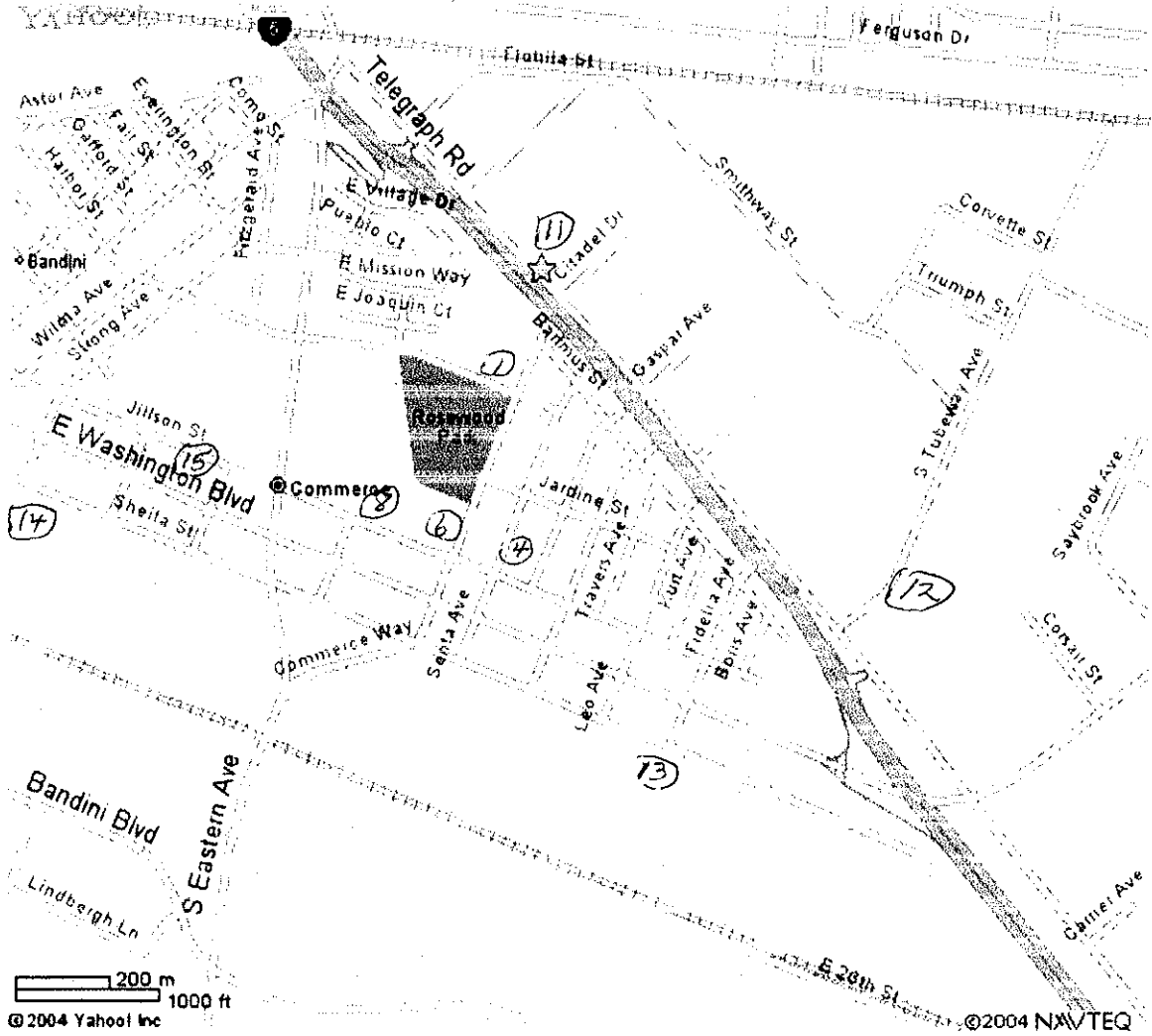
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When using any driving directions or map, it's a good idea to do a reality check and make sure the road still exists, watch out for construction, and follow all traffic safety precautions. This is only to be used as an aid in planning.

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