

2.2.26 R Street Historic District



Ordinance # 85-076
July 30, 1985
Updated by Ordinance # 2019-0052
December 10, 2019

Updated 2020

SACRAMENTO REGISTER OF HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

R Street Historic District

The R Street Historic District is a former industrial corridor whose development is closely tied to the evolution of railroads in the city of Sacramento. In 1855, the City of Sacramento granted a right-of-way on R Street to the Sacramento Valley Railroad, the first common carrier and first steam carrier railroad west of the Mississippi. Railroad companies were required to construct and maintain levees along their rights-of-way to assist the young city's efforts to protect itself from periodic flooding. In accordance, the Sacramento Valley Railroad constructed a levee along R Street prior to laying its tracks along the corridor. However, the levee did not have the intended effect and, in fact, exacerbated the effects of flooding in Sacramento. During particularly devastating floods in the winter of 1861-1862, the levee trapped floodwaters within the downtown area for months, and parts of it had to be removed to allow the waters to drain from the city.

When it opened in 1856, the Sacramento Valley Railroad's route was the first rail line in California. The 22-mile route stretched from the Sacramento Valley Railroad depot on the waterfront at Front Street, south along the Sacramento River, and then east along R Street to Folsom (then known as Granite City). The route was surveyed by Theodore Judah, who later helped complete the first transcontinental railroad as chief engineer of the Central Pacific Railroad. The Central Pacific Railroad purchased the Sacramento Valley Railroad in 1865, and later sold it to the Southern Pacific Railroad in 1884. The Sacramento Valley Railroad continued to operate a rail line on R Street.

By the turn of the century, the City had completed the construction of a new system of levees and flood improvement, and the levee on R Street was no longer necessary. In 1903, the levee was removed and the Southern Pacific Railroad's tracks were rebuilt at grade. Three years later, in 1907, a competing railroad company, the Western Pacific Railroad, opened a separate, parallel line on the Q/R Alley (Quill Alley), half a block north of the Southern Pacific's tracks. The concentration of rail lines on and around R Street transformed it into a center of industrial activity so that by 1914, it was recognized as the industrial hub of Sacramento. Warehouses, commercial distribution centers, and light industrial businesses, ranging from one to six stories in height, sprang up along the R Street corridor to take advantage of the unparalleled availability of shipping and transportation opportunities there. These buildings were typically clad in brick or concrete blocks and featured open, rectilinear plans that reflected their utilitarian use. Many were served by spurs of the neighboring railroad tracks: buildings on the south of R Street used the tracks of the Southern Pacific, while those on the north used the tracks of the Western Pacific. Industrial development continued along R Street through the end of the nineteenth century and into the early twentieth century in response to the growth of domestic shipping, increase in local manufacturing and commercial development, and demands of World War I.

R Street remained Sacramento's center for freight shipping through World War II. After the war, commercial transportation began to shift away from the railroads toward truck-based shipping as an increasing number of state highways were completed. In Sacramento, the businesses along R Street reoriented themselves to accommodate this new type of transportation. While earlier buildings were oriented toward the railroad tracks and had loading docks on R Street, buildings constructed in the mid- to late twentieth century featured loading docks that fronted the surface streets to give trucks easier access. This reorientation allowed R Street to remain an active shipping and distribution center until the 1960s.

The period of significance for the R Street Historic District begins with the removal of the R Street levee and reconstruction of the Southern Pacific Railroad's tracks at grade in 1903 and ends with the opening of the Port of Sacramento in 1963, which diverted shipping activity away from R Street.

Architectural Styles: Vernacular, Commercial Styles: (One-Part Commercial Block, Two-Part Commercial Block, Two-Part Vertical Block)

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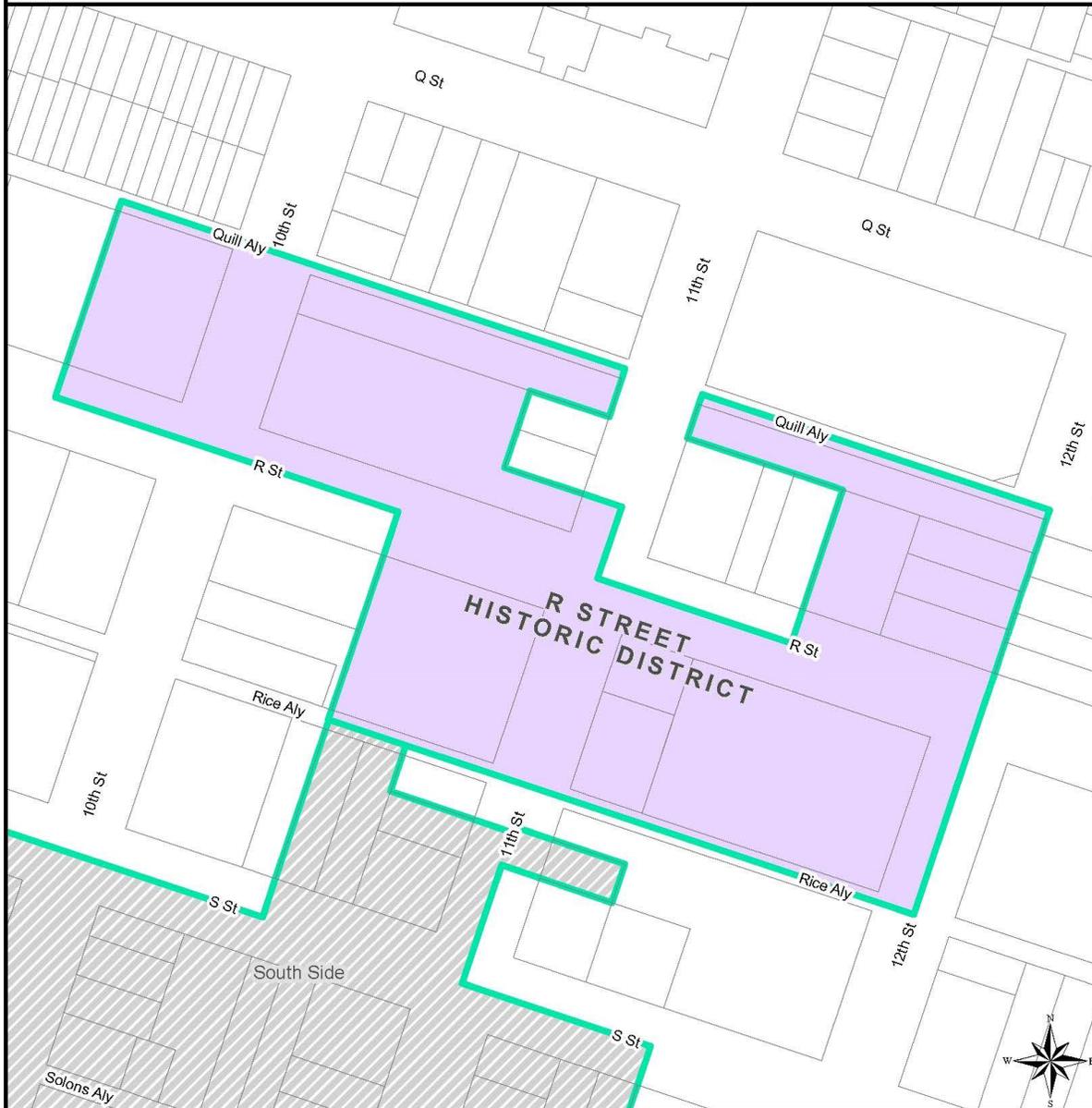
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City of Sacramento Historic Resources



Geographic Information System

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- Parcel
- R Street
- Other Historic District

SACRAMENTO REGISTER OF HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

Contributing (C) and Non-Contributing (NC) Resources

Address	Parcel Number	Historic Status
0 10TH ST	006-0274-010	Contributing
1724 10TH ST	006-0272-023	Contributing
1801 11TH ST	009-0075-011	Contributing
11TH ST	006-0276-010	Non-Contributing
1720 12TH ST	006-0276-011	Non-Contributing
1726 12TH ST	006-0276-012	Non-Contributing
1730 12TH ST	006-0276-013	Contributing
0 R ST	009-0075-012	Non-Contributing
1026 R ST	009-0073-004	Contributing
1015-1021 R ST	006-0274-013	Contributing
1108 R ST	009-0075-009	Contributing
1113-1119 R ST	006-0276-014	Contributing

Note: Addresses of properties may not be all the addresses associated with the property; address shown reflect the address assigned to the parcel by the Sacramento County Recorder's Office.