



## **The Hollywood Sign Fast Facts**

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In 1978, Hugh Hefner sponsored a gala event at the Playboy Mansion where each of the Sign's nine letters was ceremonially "auctioned" off for \$27,700 (enough to cover the entire refurbishment job). Some big entertainment names stepped up to save the Sign, including Alice Cooper, who sponsored an "O" in honor of Groucho Marx and later claimed that his name was "Alice Coper" (since he had donated an "O"). Singing cowboy and Angels baseball owner Gene Autry sponsored an "L," crooner Andy Williams sponsored the "W," and Hef himself sponsored the "Y." Here's a list of the sponsors of each of the Sign's 9 letters:

- H Terrence Donnelly, Publisher, Hollywood Independent Weekly
- O Giovanni Mazza, Italian movie producer
- L Les Kelly, originator of the Kelly Blue Book
- L Gene Autry, with his TV station, KTLA, which affords a magnificent view of the sign
- Y Dedicated to Hugh Hefner
- W Andy Williams, singer
- O Alice Cooper, rock singer, in honor of Groucho Marx
- O Warner Brothers Records
- D Dennis Lidtke

The Sign now stands at:

- H 45 ft. high by 33 ft. 6 inches wide
- O 45 ft. high by 33 ft. wide
- L 45 ft. high by 31 ft. wide
- L Same as above
- Y 45 ft. high by 35 ft. wide
- W 45 ft. high by 39 ft. 9 inches wide
- O 45 ft. high by 33 ft. wide
- O Same as above
- D 45 ft. high by 33 ft. wide



## **A Timeline of Significant Events**

### **1923**

The Sign is built as a huge, illuminated advertisement for the upscale real estate development, Hollywoodland. The Sign costs \$21,000 and includes thirteen 50-foot high letters constructed of 3' X 9' panels and painted white. Using mule teams and tractors, the panels are hauled up Mt. Lee and secured to frames constructed of pipes, wires, and telephone poles. Four thousand 20-watt light bulbs are mounted on the letters and spaced 8" apart. In late 1923 the Sign is turned on and the result is dazzling. The developers expect the Sign to last about a year.

### **1923-1931**

The Sign become somewhat of a West Coast phenomenon and a tourist attraction. The Sign endures and becomes a glamorous symbol for Hollywood.

### **1932**

On a Friday evening in 1932, struggling young actress, Peg Entwistle, 24, climbs up to the top of the letter H, and takes a swan dive into the mountain, achieving in death the fame that eluded her in life.

### **Mid-1940's**

By the mid-1940's the Sign has begun to deteriorate. It is in such a state of disrepair that the neighborhood, now thriving, wants the Sign out. The developers decide to unload their last 450 acres, which include the Sign, and turn it over to the City of Los Angeles. The Sign becomes a part of Griffith Park.

### **1949**

The Hollywood Chamber of Commerce enters into a contract with the City of Los Angeles' Department of Parks and Recreation to repair and rebuild the Sign and remove the "land" so that it would spell "Hollywood." The cost is estimated at \$4,000. The light bulbs are long gone and the City stipulates that any new illumination would be at the expense of the Chamber. The Chamber gives the Sign a complete makeover. Over the next 30 years the Sign would require constant repairs, and sometimes celebrities would help.

### **1973**

Gloria Swanson sponsors yet another complete makeover of the Sign. The 50-year-old Sign is declared a Historical Landmark by the City's Cultural Heritage Board.

### **1978**

Five years after the Swanson makeover, termites have infested the wood and an "O" has tumbled down the mountain. Arsonists set fire to the bottom of an "L." The City decides the Sign would have to be completely rebuilt at a cost of \$250,000, ten times the cost of the original.

Hugh Hefner steps in and throws a lavish fundraiser at the Playboy Mansion to raise funds for the rebuilding costs. The party raises \$45,000. To raise the



additional funds needed to restore the Sign, celebrities and community leaders sponsor individual letters at \$27,500 a piece. Alice Cooper sponsored an "O" in honor of Groucho Marx. Other letters are sponsored by Andy Williams and Gene Autry, among others.

In August 1978 when all nine letters are paid for, the old Sign is demolished and for the first time in more than 50 years, Angelenos are without the Sign for three months.

Workers pour 194 tons of concrete to anchor the Sign, and helicopters drop a massive new steel frame in place. Placing on the corrugated baked enamel letters was the final step. The new Sign, four stories high, 450-feet long and weighing 480,000 lbs., is unveiled on Hollywood's 75th Anniversary celebration in November 1978 live to a television audience of 60 million.

The Hollywood Sign Trust is established to maintain and protect the Sign.

#### **1984**

The Sign is lit to celebrate the 1984 Summer Olympics in Los Angeles.

#### **1999**

Panasonic Corporate Security Systems installs a state-of-the-art security system to protect the icon.

#### **2000**

In a spectacular display, The City of Los Angeles lights up the Sign in an extravagant millennium countdown on New Year's Eve 1999. The lighting of the Sign marks the launch of the Sign's official web site, [hollywoodsign.org](http://hollywoodsign.org). The Sign endures as the City of Los Angeles enters the 21st Century.

#### **2003**

The Sign celebrates its 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary at the opening night of AFI Fest 2003. The ceremony was hosted by AFI and the Hollywood Sign Trust and featured the iconic film star, Esther Williams.

#### **2005**

The Hollywood Sign Trust teams up with BayCal Painting and Red Diamond Coating to provide the Sign with its first major refurbishment in a decade. At a capacity-filled press conference, Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa rappelled down the hillside and applied the final strokes of coating himself – a fitting tribute from the city of Los Angeles to its oldest and most important 'ambassador.'

#### **2010**

Thirty-two years after the Sign was rebuilt, the Sign's #1 fan, Hugh Hefner, presented the Hollywood Sign Trust with the closing gift to 'Save the Peak', capping efforts to raise funds to purchase and protect the 138 acres behind the Hollywood Sign. Thanks to Mr. Hefner's contribution, grants from The Tiffany & Co. Foundation and Aileen Getty, along with contributions from Hollywood leaders and fans around the world, the view that is inseparable from this cultural landmark will be protected.