

**ATTACHMENT B:**  
**Pacific Electric Substation #2**  
**Description, Photographs & Documentation**

## **1154 S. FAIR OAKS AVENUE**

### **Description**

The Pacific Electric Railway Station building at 1154 S. Fair Oaks Avenue, constructed in 1893, is located at the extreme southern end of the same 7-acre property as the Glenarm Power Plant, at the northeast corner of South Fair Oaks Avenue and East State Street. The one-story building is rectangular in plan and is a utilitarian brick warehouse structure with a gabled roof. The building was constructed with unreinforced masonry and has not been seismically braced as required by state law.

The building has been altered over time to the extent that the existing building is half the size of the original building. Sanborn Maps from 1903, 1910 and 1930 depict the building as twice the size of the current structure, with a repair shop attached to the northerly portion of the building. The Sanborn Map from 1951 depicts the northerly half removed with the repair shop remaining in place. Historical photographs indicate that the building was originally larger and that the northerly portion was demolished prior to the 1950's<sup>4</sup>.

Historical photos also indicate that the building originally had a stepped parapet on the South Fair Oaks elevation which hid the pitched roof behind it. This parapet has been removed, revealing the gabled roof form of the building. On the State Street elevation, however, the parapet remains intact. At the peak of the gable is a structure identified as a ventilator on the Sanborn Maps. The facades of the building are highly symmetrical with pilasters separating the façade into bays, some of which have rectangular or arched window openings (which have all been boarded-up or bricked-in). The gabled portion of the building, which contains two narrow arched vents, is separated from the lower floor by a belt course, which becomes an articulated cornice on the side elevations. The openings on the S. Fair Oaks Avenue elevation have brick keystones above. Historical photos indicate the presence of additional vents, which remain evident but reduced due to the roof form alteration. All window openings and vents have brick keystones above. The rear of the building differs from the front in that the brick pilasters extend from the ground to the roofline and the belt course and arched vents are not present.

The building "began life as a steam power plant for the Pasadena and Los Angeles Electric Railway in 1893 and after a few re-buildings and street re-locations the remaining half of the building became the Pacific Electric's power substation No. 2. The PE operated the building until service to Pasadena was abandoned in 1951 and the building and adjacent car house site came to [Pasadena Water & Power]"<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> Berman, Mindy, Celebrate Pasadena's Vision: 100 Years of Community Owned Power, Pasadena Water and Power. The Donning Company Publishers, 2006, pages 40, 73-75.

<sup>5</sup> Email from John Heller, Vice President of the Electric Railway Historical Association of Southern California, to Phyllis Currie, June 2, 2006.

HABS \_\_\_\_\_ HAER \_\_\_\_\_ NR 2 SHL \_\_\_\_\_ Loc \_\_\_\_\_  
UTM: A \_\_\_\_\_ B \_\_\_\_\_  
C \_\_\_\_\_ D \_\_\_\_\_

**HISTORIC RESOURCES INVENTORY**

**IDENTIFICATION**

1. Common name: 1154 S. Fair Oaks Avenue
2. Historic name: Substation No. 2, Pacific Electric Railway Company
3. Street or rural address: 1154 S. Fair Oaks Avenue  
City Pasadena Zip 91105 County Los Angeles
4. Parcel number: Washburn Subdivision, Lot 5
5. Present Owner: Pasadena Power and Light Dept. Address: 100 N. Garfield  
City Pasadena Zip 91109 Ownership is: Public  Private \_\_\_\_\_
6. Present Use: Warehouse Original use: Substation, electric railway system

**DESCRIPTION**

- 7a. Architectural style:
- 7b. Briefly describe the present *physical description* of the site or structure and describe any major alterations from its original condition:

This is a large one story, gable-roofed warehouse structure of brick construction. The building is characterized by an overall simplicity of design and sturdiness of construction. The few design features include corbelling, keys over some of the brick openings, and pier/pilaster treatment. Other features include a two-course water table along the lower portion of the south wall and a gable-roofed clerestory along the roof ridge line. The principal entrance is on the gable end of the building, fronting Fair Oaks Avenue (west). The principal facade is roughly symmetrical in organization, and has five bays across. Each of the openings on both the front and sides of the structure are either bricked-in or boarded-up. Situated on the corner of State and South Fair Oaks Avenue, the structure is isolated from the other city-owned structures on the lot.



8. Construction date: 1922/23  
Estimated  Factual \_\_\_\_\_
9. Architect Unknown
10. Builder Unknown
11. Approx. property size (in feet)  
Frontage 60 Depth 164  
or approx. acreage \_\_\_\_\_
12. Date(s) of enclosed photograph(s)  
June 1990

13. Condition: Excellent \_\_\_ Good X Fair \_\_\_ Deteriorated \_\_\_ No longer in existence \_\_\_
14. Alterations: \_\_\_\_\_
15. Surroundings: (Check more than one if necessary) Open and \_\_\_ Scattered buildings \_\_\_ Densely built-up \_\_\_  
Residential \_\_\_ Industrial \_\_\_ Commercial X Other public utility
16. Threats to site: None known X Private development \_\_\_ Zoning \_\_\_ Vandalism \_\_\_  
Public Works project \_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_
17. Is the structure: On its original site? X Moved? \_\_\_ Unknown? \_\_\_
18. Related features: \_\_\_\_\_

**SIGNIFICANCE**

19. Briefly state historical and/or architectural importance (include dates, events, and persons associated with the site.)

In 1902, business mogul Henry E. Huntington (1850-1927) and his Pacific Electric Company established an interurban trolley line in Pasadena, which brought business activity to the city. In 1911, the "PE" was purchased by the Southern Pacific Railway, along with eight other small Southern California lines, and formed the world's largest railway system, the Pacific Electric Railway Company. The PERC built this structure, typical of the company's attractive and functional railroad architecture in the 1920s and 1930s, utilizing it as a substation into the 1950s. (Fair Oaks Avenue was a route line for the company.) Since the 1960s, the structure has served as an annex for the Municipal Power and Light Department. Aside from the bricked-in or boarded-up openings, the building appears intact and contains fine details.

20. Main theme of the historic resource: (If more than one is checked, number in order of importance.)  
Architecture 2 Arts & Leisure \_\_\_  
Economic/Industrial 1 Exploration/Settlement \_\_\_  
Government \_\_\_ Military \_\_\_  
Religion \_\_\_ Social/Education \_\_\_

Sources (List books, documents, surveys, personal interviews and their dates). City of Pasadena records; Charles Seims, Trolley Days in Pasadena; Woods, Pasadena: Historical and Personal, p. 347-49.

21. Date form prepared June 1990  
By (name) D. Richey  
Organization Urban Conservation Dept,  
Address: City Hall  
City Pasadena Zip 91101  
Phone: 818 405-4228

