

[Dr. Chandler's](#) vision for the newly founded town of Chandler included a grand resort hotel where wealthy visitors could spend the winter months. To make this hotel a reality, he hired [Arthur Burnett Benton](#), a well known Los Angeles architect who specialized in [Mission Revival architecture](#). Benton was known for designing the Los Angeles YWCA, otherwise known as the [Mary Andrews Clark Memorial Home](#), and perhaps his greatest and most enduring work, the [Mission Inn](#) in Riverside, California.



Personal Life

Benton was born to Ira Eddy Benton and Caroline A. (Chandler) Benton in [Peoria Illinois](#) on April 17, 1858. This primarily agrarian community was where he spent all of his formative years and ultimately graduated from Peoria High School in 1877. Two years after graduating, he tried his hand at farming in [Morris County, Kansas](#). It was there that he met Harriet Phillipina Von Schilling, a native of Pennsylvania, and nine years his senior. The couple was married on May 17, 1883. On October 26, 1884, Benton and his wife welcomed the birth of their only child, a daughter named Edith May Benton. Following the birth of their child, Harriet saw that Benton had a drive and vision that could take him far beyond his agrarian roots. She convinced him to enroll at the Topeka, Kansas, School of Art and Design in 1887 in architecture. In 1891, he moved to Los Angeles, CA and remained there for the next 36 years of his life. In 1926, an illness led Benton became bedridden. He continued to work, but Sunday, September 18, 1927, Arthur Benton passed away at the age of 69, leaving a rich architectural legacy in Southern California.

Early Architectural Career: The Railroad Years

In 1888, Benton began his architectural career as a draftsman in the architectural department of the [Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad](#). He worked here for two years while attending the Topeka, Kansas School of Art and Design. After he graduated in 1890, he relocated to Omaha, Nebraska, where he worked as a draftsman in the office of [Virgil G. Bogue](#), chief engineer of the [Union Pacific](#).

California Architect

In 1891 Arthur Benton resigned his position in the engineer's office of the Union Pacific, and moved, with his wife and young daughter to Los Angeles. He began work as a draftsman for Sidney I. Haas and later for William Cleveland Aiken. Haas had worked with Eugene Caulkin to design the Los Angeles City Hall (1887-1888). Both Haas and Aiken were leaders in the Los Angeles architectural community.

Aiken and Benton, Architects

In 1893, Benton went into an architectural partnership with William Cleveland Aiken. The firm completed six projects including including the [Unitarian Church, Pomona, CA](#) in 1893, [Arthur Dart Bissell House, Claremont, CA](#) in 1894, A.M. Ease House, Claremont, CA in 1894, a renovation of the front facade of [St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Los Angeles, CA](#) in 1894, W. K. Butts House, Moravia, CA in 1895, and [Westlake Band Shell, Los Angeles, CA](#) in 1895. In 1896, Aiken and Benton were commissioned by Mrs. Mary E. Stilson, the widow of William W. Stilson, to design a Shingle Style spec house in Angeleno Heights. Benton soon opted to purchase that house, which was located at 900 Kensington Road. The following year, the addresses on Kensington Road were redone and the house became [801 E. Kensington Road](#). This house was to be his home for the rest of his life. In 1896, Benton bought out his partner's interest and remained solo for the rest of his career.

To see all the know works of Aiken and Benton, Architects, click [HERE](#)

California Landmarks Club

In 1896, [Charles Fletcher Lummis](#) founded the California Landmarks Club. This organization was created assist with the restoration and preservation of the old Spanish Colonial Missions in California. Benton and [Sumner P. Hunt](#), another noted California architect, were members of the founding board, Benton also served as the club's recording secretary and consulting architect. The Club actively oversaw the repair of several missions. Benton himself oversaw the restorations of both the San Juan Capistrano and San Diego Missions. In a 1911 American Institute of Architects Proceedings, Benton discussed criticism of the Club's work.

"Some artists have waxed indignant at the "vandallism"of the [Landmark] Club in "destroying" as they term it, the picturesqueness of the Missions by stopping the holes in the roofs and otherwise prolong their existence. We have had to do some things not in tune with the old spirit, because of lack of money and of workmen who could do the old work, but as far as we could we have kept to the old mehods." ¹

Prior to meeting Lummis, Benton had become intrigued with the Missions and soon became a vocal proponent for Mission Revival architecture. Lummis obliged him by publishing many of his articles on the subject in his magazine, "The Land of Sunshine."

Besides the Landmarks Club, he was also a founding member of the Southern California Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, for which he served as president several times; the Engineers and Architects Association of Southern California, which he also presided over; and the Sons of the Revolution, for which he also served as president, just to name a few of his many allegiances.

Arthur B. Benton, Architect

In 1900, Benton received the commission for the [First Church of Christ, Science](#), in Riverside, CA. This building caught the eye of [Frank Augustus Miller](#), who ran a nearby adobe tourist hotel known as the Glenwood Inn. Miller had a vision of a great Mission Style hotel, and in Benton, he saw the man to make his vision a reality. In 1902, work began on the first phase of the [Mission Inn](#), under Benton's supervision. This addition would be later known as the Mission addition. He did several other additions to the sprawling complex, including the "Cloister Wing" which was modeled after the Mission in Carmel, the Arches that line the 7th St. (Mission Street) side of the hotel, and the employee wing. Frank Milller enjoyed Benton's work so much, that he had Benton design a beach house, known as "Mariona," for the Miller family in Laguna Beach, CA in 1918.

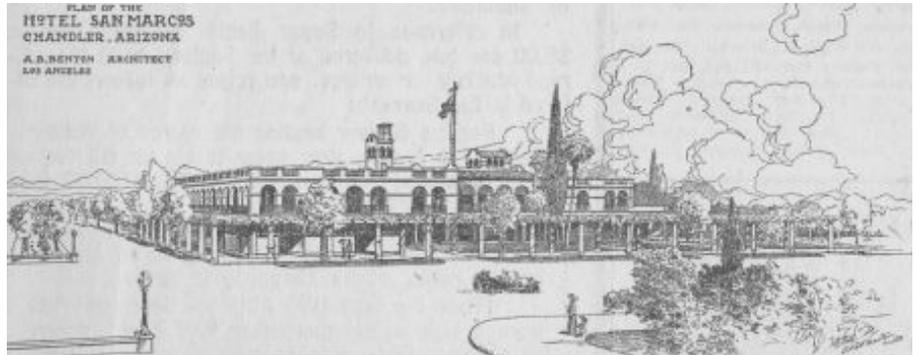
Benton also had a number of significant institutional commissions, such as several for both the YMCA and the YWCA. His best-known and most lavish work in this area is his 1912 [Mary Andrews Clark YWCA home](#), in Los Angeles.

Another out of town commercial commission was the one-story Mission Revival "[Plaza Center Building](#)," which was constructed in Patterson, California, in 1910. The building originally housed developer's offices and the town's Post Office. Today it serves as the local museum.

At least three other major hotels were part of his resume. The Mission Revival 1910-12 Arlington Hotel in Santa Barbara, which was virtually leveled in the [1925 Santa Barbara Earthquake](#); the Arrowhead Hotel,

located in the foothills north of San Bernardino; and the San Marcos Hotel, which opened in Chandler Arizona.

San Marcos Hotel



Above is an architectural rendering of what Benton planned the [San Marcos Hotel](#) to look like.

That town was founded by Dr. Alexander J. Chandler, who may have been a relative on his mother's side. Dr. Chandler was an entrepreneur who was involved in the "City Beautiful" movement and envisioned his town as the ideal city in the desert south of Phoenix. He had Benton design the entire town, with broad boulevards and grand vistas. The Mission Revival themed San Marcos was to be the centerpiece of the perfect town. With the exception of the hotel, very little of Benton's original design was ever built there.

On a smaller scale, Benton designed a neighborhood known as Berkeley Square, in which he designed large homes for the wealthy in the fashionable West Adams area. That development was wiped out by the building of the Santa Monica Freeway.

John Stephen McGroarty, the poet laureate of California, was well known for his Mission Play. He commissioned Benton in 1922 to design the Mission Playhouse in San Gabriel to supply a permanent venue for the play. Benton used a re-creation of the front of the Mission San Antonio, at twice its original scale, as the façade of the building. It was later purchased by the city and became the San Gabriel Municipal Auditorium until it was damaged in the 1987 Whittier Narrows Earthquake. It has since been repaired and reopened under its original name. In 1923, Benton designed a home in Tujunga for McGroarty.

In 1926, Benton designed a small Craftsman cottage, which he had built on top of a concrete garage he had earlier constructed at the rear of his property, possibly to be used as his architectural studio. It was originally built as a Japanese tea house. It was not too long after that was completed that he became bedridden. His last major work was the Riverside Municipal Auditorium, which was completed in 1927.

Obituaries: [Here](#)

Courtesy of [Echo Park Historical Society](#).

To see all of Arthur Burnett Benton architectural works, click [HERE](#).

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