

## HOLLYWOOD SIGN, MT. LEE AND CAHUENGA PEAK

(Adapted from an article in the LA Times by John McKinney)

5/27/09

4.5 miles round trip

900 feet elevation change - start to peak

Leader: John Morton

**HISTORY:** To make sure that everyone knew about their new real estate development, a group of investors, including Los Angeles Times publisher Harry Chandler, ordered a huge wooden sign built atop Mt. Lee. The sign read: "HOLLYWOODLAND." The Beachwood Canyon development was advertised as "above the traffic, congestion, smoke, fog and poisonous gas fumes of the lowlands." Looking back now, it's hard to believe Angelenos were worried about pollution in the early 1920s.

The letters -particularly the "H" frequently blew down and, in 1923, a depressed actress leaped from the sign. During a 1949 gale, the "LAND" part of the sign blew off. Finally, in 1978, celebrities among them rock star Alice Cooper, Hugh Hefner and Gene Autry pledged \$27,777.77 per letter to restore the HOLLYWOOD sign, sans LAND, to its former glory. Besides the sign, 1,640-foot Mt. Lee has another claim to fame: L.A.'s first television signals were broadcast from the peak in the 1940s. From the Mt. Lee Trail, your window on the world is similar to the huge picture windows of the residents who make their homes in the hills, a combination of rustic slopes and the city beyond.

### DIRECTIONS TO THE TRAILHEAD:

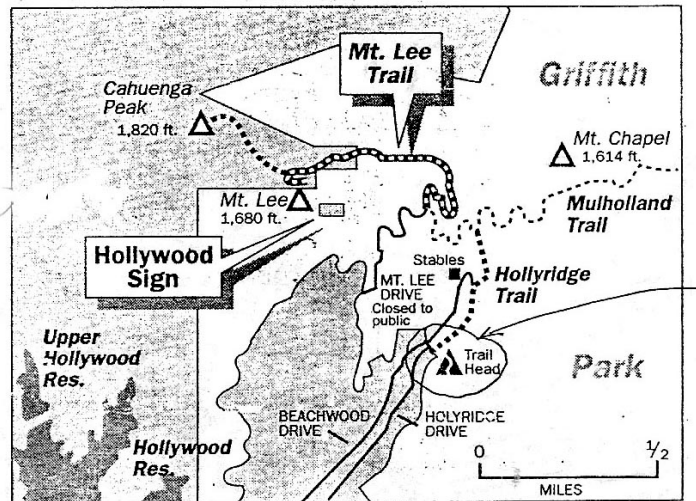
From the Valley: Exit US 101 (Hollywood Freeway) at Vine St. Do not take Vine St. Go directly to Beachwood Dr. via Franklin Ave and turn left. From the South Bay: Exit US 101 at Gower St. Do not take Gower St. Make a right turn onto Beachwood Dr. Continue up Beachwood Dr. about 1.7 miles to the point where Hollyridge Drive merges with Beachwood from the right. Continue on the narrow road beyond the intersection (the road to the stables) until the terrain widens out allowing you to park off the street to the right at the foot of the hill. The Hollyridge trail begins at the right with a traverse up the hill, around and behind the peak.

**THE HIKE:** The trail follows a ridge just east of the stables. Your views of the Hollywood sign begin almost immediately. Off to the right, looking very "sci-fi" from this angle, is the dome of the Griffith Park Observatory. Ignore the bridle path on your left coming up from the stables, and continue your ascent to an unsigned junction with the Mulholland Trail. A right turn would lead toward the main part of Griffith Park and eventually intersect Mt. Hollywood Drive, but you should turn left on the fire road and wind west to an intersection with Mt. Lee Drive. As you ascend paved Mt. Lee Drive, you'll enjoy excellent clear day views of the San Fernando Valley beyond (don't forget to look for Dave Lillback's house, or to turn around and look for Catalina Island).

Just short of the summit, as the trail (road?) makes a sharp left bend, look for a rough, narrow trail leading westward; it climbs steeply a bit more than a quarter-mile to the summit of Cahuenga Peak, the king of the Hollywood Hills at 1820 feet. Access to this trail can be made either by skirting a fence, or crawling under it.

### Hollywood Hills

Mt. Lee Trail



Returning to Mt. Lee Rd., continue up to the fence crossing the road and preventing you from standing on the actual summit of Mt. Lee. There is a large County radio facility behind the fence, and the last time we were there, a lonely guy was willing to talk to us hikers via an intercom setup.

**THE PARTY:** We retire to a picnic area in Griffith Park up Brush Canyon: Drive back down Beachwood Dr. to Franklin Ave., turn left and continue on Franklin to Bronson or Canyon - turn left. Drive north about 1.5 miles to picnic area located to the right off Brush Canyon Rd. (Bronson and Canyon both merge onto Brush Canyon Dr.).