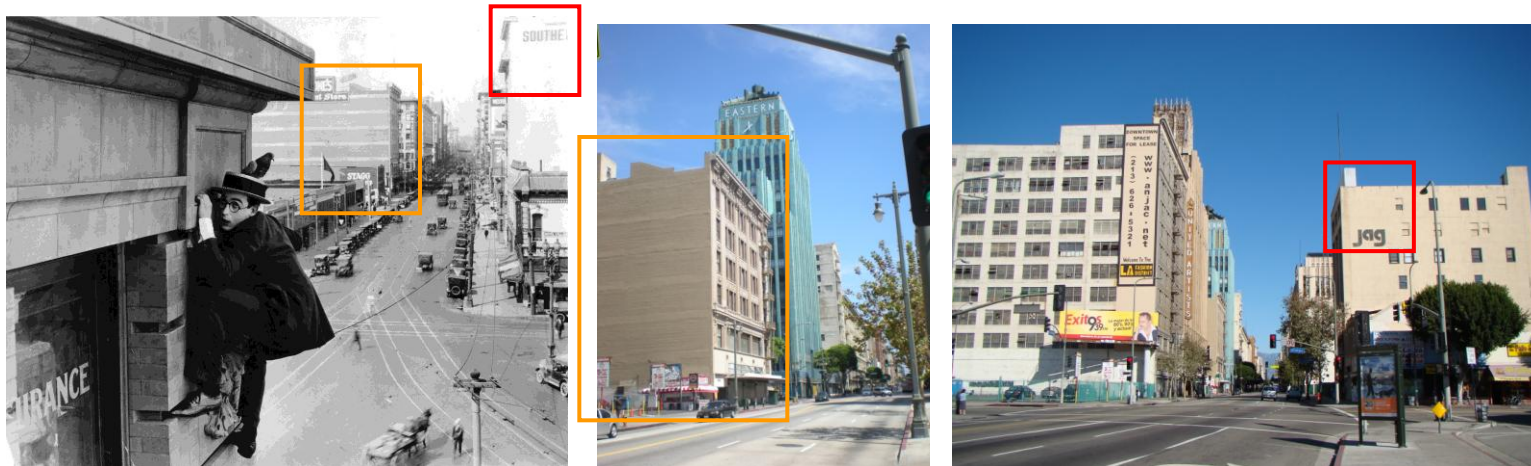


HAROLD LLOYD *Safety Last!* Los Angeles Conservancy Film Location Tour A *SILENT VISIONS* Tour of Downtown Los Angeles

Harold Lloyd filmed his first feature-length thrill comedy *Safety Last!* (1923) in the Historic Core of downtown Los Angeles during the summer of 1922. The following tour is provided by author John Bengtson in association with the Los Angeles Conservancy's June 25, 2016 presentation of *Safety Last!* at the Orpheum Theatre, where John will be introducing the film, and signing his Harold Lloyd film location book *Silent Visions: Discovering Early Hollywood and New York through the Films of Harold Lloyd*. Lloyd staged the famous skyscraper climbing sequence using special sets constructed atop three increasingly taller buildings, and repeated this formula for his final thrill picture *Feet First* in 1930. A photo page following this tour reveals how Lloyd accomplished the effect.

1. The tour begins at the Orpheum Theatre at 842 S. Broadway. Walk south from the theater, cross 9th Street, and continue to W. Olympic. At one time Broadway split here (see *split tracks left below*), creating a small triangular lot between Broadway and Broadway Place (now lost), where there once stood a two-story building. Atop this site Lloyd built the first of his three climbing sets for both *Safety Last!* and *Feet First*. The Blackstone's Department Store (orange box), appearing prominently in the background during the early scenes, is still standing, although now blocked from view by tall neighbors built after 1923. The extant Southern California Gas Company building (red box) can also be seen.



2. From this vantage point, you can also look south towards the dome tower of the Herald Examiner Building, that appears during chase sequences from Lloyd's later feature film *Girl Shy* (1924).

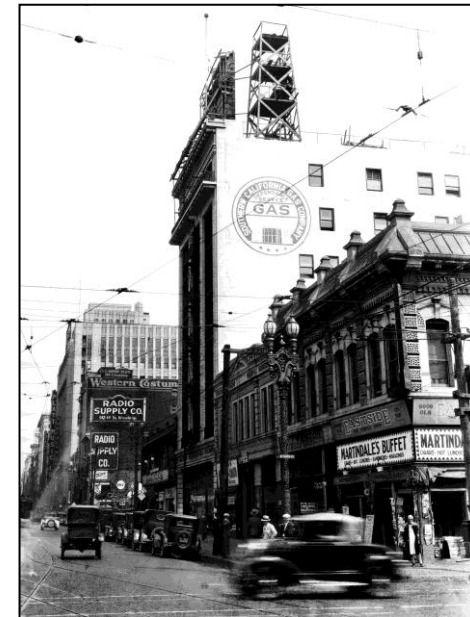


The first climbing set was built atop this now lost two story building (left).

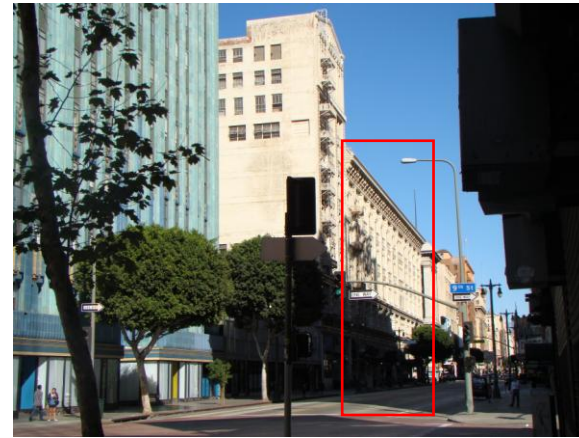
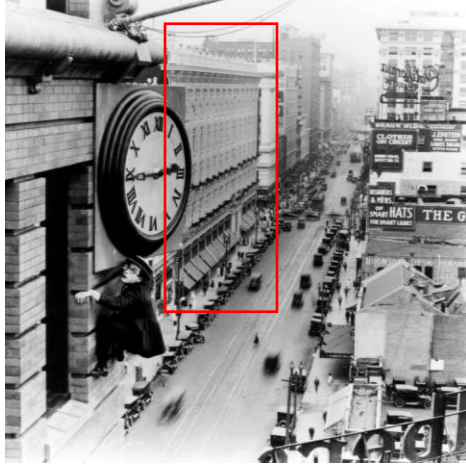


Girl Shy

3. Return north up Broadway, crossing Olympic, and pause at 950 S. Broadway. This former Southern California Gas Company building was used for the second stage of Harold's stunt climb in *Feet First*. As revealed on the final page of this tour, Lloyd built a climbing set and camera tower on the roof of this building.



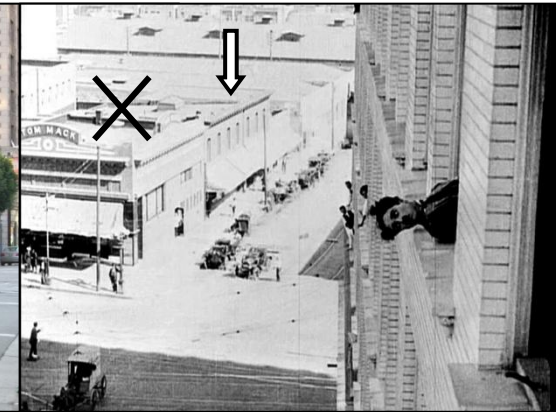
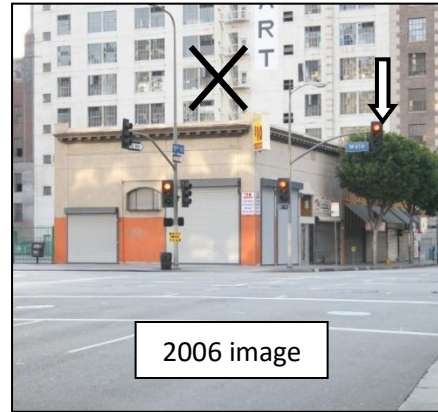
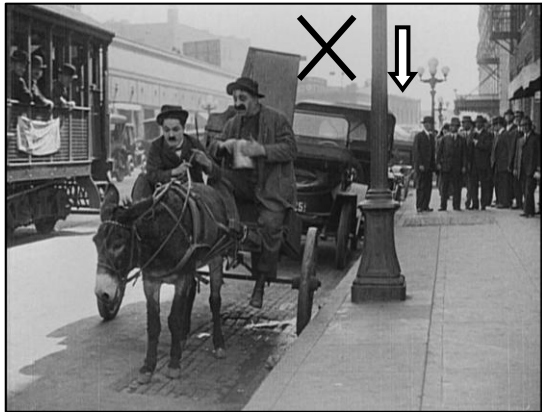
4. Continue further north to 908 S. Broadway, where Lloyd built the famous clock set on the eight-story tall roof. The extant Hamburger's (later May Co.) Building (red box) appears in the background.



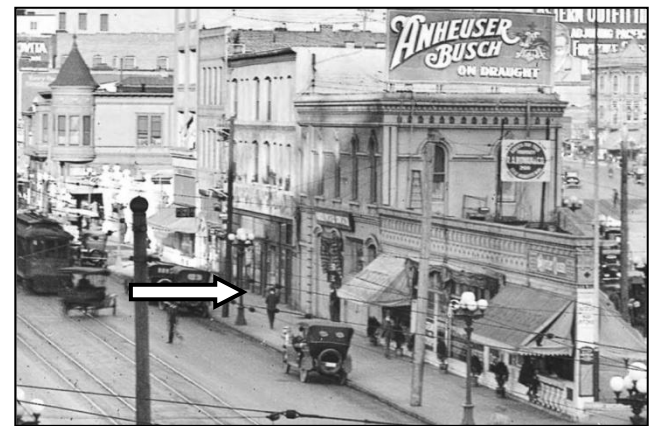
5. Continue north and cross 9th Street. The corner Ninth and Broadway Building portrayed the real life building that torments Harold during *Feet First*.



6. Return back to the south corner of 9th and look east. Charlie Chaplin loaded a piano onto a mule cart at this SE corner in *His Musical Career* (1914), and stuck his head out of the extant Marsh Strong Building at the SW corner of 9th and Main in *The New Janitor* (1914), mostly likely six floors up, and two windows east of the fire escape from where the cameraman must have stood while filming. The former Tom Mack Café building at the NE corner of 9th and Spring appears in both films (X), but was demolished in 2008. The building further east, at 111-115 E. 9th (arrows), still remains.



7. Walk east down 9th and turn north up Spring Street. 826 S. Spring Street (the middle of the shorter three story building, arrow) was the Herman R. Wismer jewelry store where Harold stops to purchase a chain for his girl, standing next door to Ross R Seibert's bicycle repair shop. The ground floor has been 'modernized' beyond recognition.



8. Continue north to the NE corner of 8th and Spring Street. The Great Republic Life Insurance Building (1923) at 756 Spring, now residential lofts, is where Lloyd filmed the final stage of his climb during *Feet First*, filming looking both west down 8th Street (*below left*) and north up Spring (*below right*).



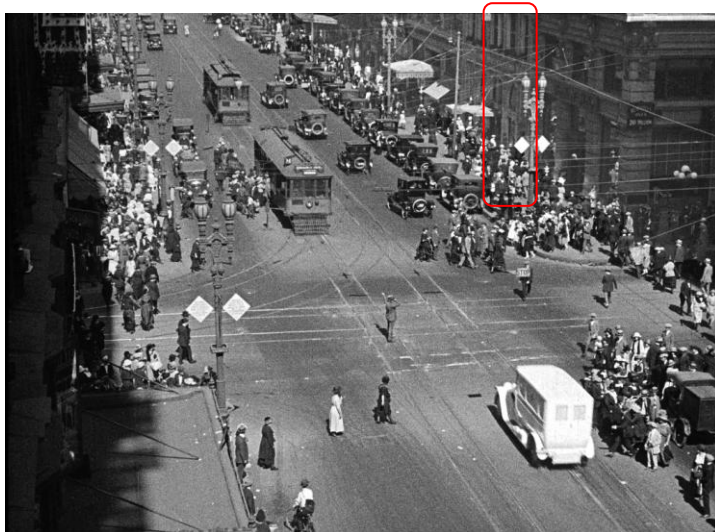
9. Continue north up Spring Street to the NE corner of 6th Street. The Merchants National Bank building at 548 S. Spring Street, now residential lofts, is where Lloyd filmed the final stages of his climb during *Safety Last!*, looking north along Spring towards the Alexandria Hotel (*below left*) and south (*below right*) along Spring towards the extant Stock Exchange, Union Oil, and Van Nuys Buildings.



10. For a detour, return south down Spring Street and turn west along 7th Street two blocks until Olive Street. Lloyd filmed his short thrill picture *Never Weaken* (1921) atop the red and white Ville de Paris Department Store (LA Jewelry Mart Building) on the SE corner, with views of the former Pantages Theater (Diamond Center Building) (*lower left*) and the Los Angeles Athletic Club (*lower right*) across the street in the background. The Ville de Paris appears during a scene from Charlie Chaplin's *City Lights* (1931), and its interior was used for the department store scenes in *Safety Last!*



11. From either point 9 or 10 of the tour, return along 7th to the NE corner of Broadway. The NE corner, looking north, appears in *Safety Last!* as Harold rides an ambulance to work. The prominent corner building has been modernized. The site of Clifton's Brookdale (*box*), 648 S. Broadway visible just up the street, was a Boos Bros. cafeteria at the time

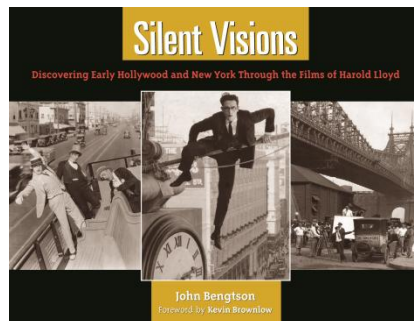


Clifton's

12. Continue south down Broadway, and study the painted wall signs on the side of 820 S. Broadway. You can still make out a ghost sign for “HIGH GRADE LADIES TAILOR SIXTH FLOOR” as it appeared during *Safety Last!*



13. Continue south returning to the Orpheum, which concludes the tour.



Visit the author's blog at
<http://SilentLocations.WordPress.com>

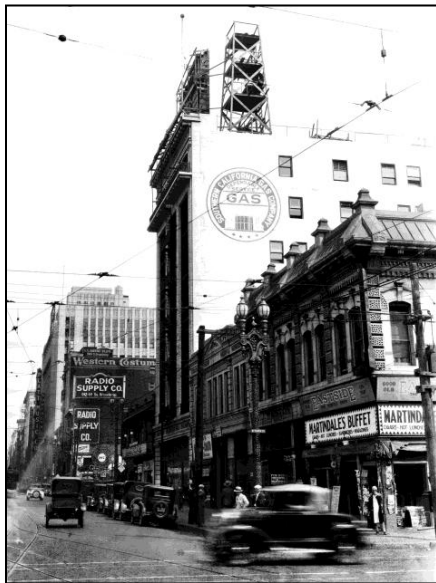
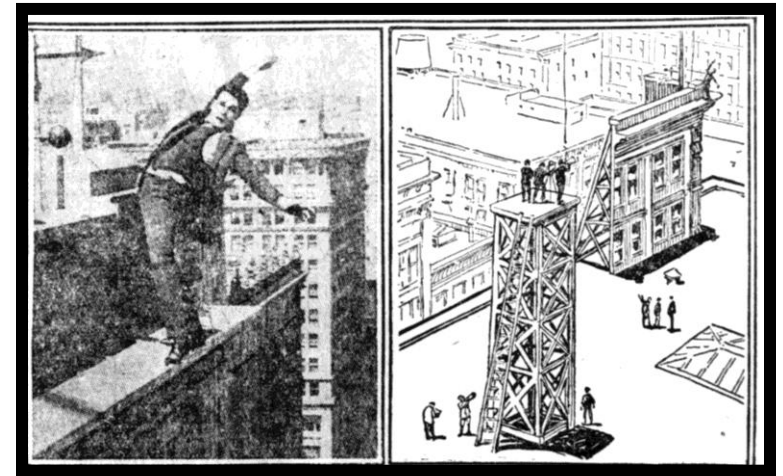
The concluding shot of *Safety Last!* was also filmed atop 908 S. Broadway, the site of the clock sequence. Thanks to Tarina Tarantino and Alfonso Campos (pictured at right).



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How Harold filmed *Safety Last!*

Although the danger was minimized, Harold Lloyd was just as high in the air as he appeared to be during his climbing stunts. Wishing secrecy, Lloyd did not photograph the stunt climbing sets built for *Safety Last!*, and in later years was coy about how it was filmed. One newspaper revealed the secret in 1923, although the graphic to the right depicts Harold on a set nearly four stories tall! As shown, Lloyd built a façade set on the roof of a tall building, and placed a camera tower nearby. The camera looked down on the set from the tower, while excluding the real building's rooftop from the bottom of the movie frame. The tower allowed the cameraman to create different illusions of height by changing the vantage point. Because the camera recorded exactly what was there to be seen, these scenes crackle with authenticity that computer generated effects fail to replicate.



These production images from Lloyd's final thrill picture *Feet First* (1930) reveal how Lloyd constructed a rooftop climbing set and camera tower to create the illusion of great height. Lloyd used the same technique for *Safety Last!*

