

A Wallace Fountain from the South of France is in LA



Elliot and Michael Lewis were responsible for acquiring and installing this Wallace Fountain in Westwood Village, an established business district in Los Angeles, California USA and located immediately south of the famed UCLA (University of California, Los Angeles) campus. The Lewis brothers were originally from London and descended from prominent charitable families. The brothers owned a large portfolio of properties in Westwood, including the oldest and most historically significant structure in the village, known as the Janss Investment Corporation "Dome" Building which they acquired in 1971.

In 1976, Elliot and his wife Penny were vacationing in the south of France. In Villeneuve-Loubet, a small town west of Nice, they spotted this Wallace Fountain outside an antique store. They were told it came from Paris. They purchased the fountain and made arrangements for it to be shipped to California. The brothers gifted it to the Village, wanting to create something really interesting and beautiful for Westwood. It was installed in 1976 in front of the Janss Building and has become a beloved fixture situated at a crossroads of three major streets.

The fountain is painted a metallic grey, the same color as it was when purchased. Unfortunately, its provenance is unknown, as there is no information about how the antique store acquired it. Because of the "door" that provides access to the plumbing in the pedestal of the fountain and the elephant head loops at the feet of the caryatids, this fountain was most likely manufactured by the foundry GHM sometime after 1931 using the original casting molds from the sculpture created by Charles-Auguste Lebourg in 1872.

This gift of a Wallace Fountain from the Lewis brothers is certainly in keeping with the philanthropic spirit of Sir Richard Wallace, who donated 50 fountains to the people of Paris in 1872 in order to give everyone access to clean drinking water. Two of the caryatids on the fountains represent kindness and charity, virtues Wallace hoped to encourage when he designed the fountains. Elliot Lewis remarked, "I think if you are fortunate to be in a position of giving something back, it is rewarding just doing that.....there is a Chinese saying: If you want happiness for an hour, take a nap. If you want happiness for a lifetime, help someone else!"

Sources: Elliot Lewis and Steven Sann, Westwood Community Council. Photos by Steven Sann. Research by Suzanne Vyvyan.