At this corner was the main entry into what was once the Brown Derby Restaurant in Beverly Hills. Opened by Bob Cobb in 1931, at 9537 Wilshire Boulevard, the famous eatery was located across from the Beverly Wilshire Hotel. It was the third Brown Derby to open in Southern California. The original Brown Derby Café opened 1926 at the corner of Wilshire Boulevard and Mariposa across from what was once the Ambassador Hotel. The restaurant was the brainchild of screenwriter Wilson Mizner, who got the name “Brown Derby” from a restaurant of the same name in New York. Mizner became a business partner with film director Herbert K. Somborn, actress Gloria Swanson’s ex-husband, and Jack Warner, president of Warner Brothers Studio, who helped finance the beginnings of the restaurant. The building for the first Brown Derby was shaped like a derby hat because a friend remarked “If you know anything about food, you can sell it out of a hat.” A second Brown Derby restaurant was opened in Hollywood along Vine Street near Hollywood Boulevard and a fourth café opened in the Los Feliz area near Griffith Park. In 1937, the Cobb salad was invented at the Hollywood location and named in honor of Mr. Cobb.

The one-story building located at the northwest corner of Wilshire Boulevard and Rodeo Drive had previously contained several small shops, including a notable woman’s clothing store called “The Petite Shop,” but was remodeled to feature the first revolving entry door in the City and a tall prominent roof-top sign of metal scaffolding and a large lighted double sided derby shaped sign panel that read “The BROWN DERBY.” In 1938, the restaurant was expanded with a bar and private dining room decorated in the Old English style that was called “The Derby House.” Another dining area was called “The American Room” and featured charcoal portraiture by artist Nicholas Volpe of stars that won the best actor/actress Academy Award since the Academy Awards were conceived. The Brown Derby restaurants were recognizable landmarks, however, by the early 1980s few patrons and sky-high land prices the business ceased. The Beverly Hills restaurant served its last meal and closed its doors in 1982. The building was demolished shortly afterwards and the vacant property was purchased in 1986 for redevelopment. The multi-story shopping center called “One Rodeo” that later replaced it has a derby-shaped dome in honor of the legendary restaurant.

*Recommended Placement Location:* Within public sidewalk at northwest corner of Wilshire Boulevard and North Rodeo Drive, where the canted revolving door was once located.
Proposed Plaque Copy:

“The Brown Derby restaurant was opened in 1931 at this site and was third in the chain to open in Southern California. The restaurant was the brainchild of screenwriter Wilson Mizner who became a business partner with Gloria Swanson's ex-husband, director Herbert K. Somborn, and Jack Warner, president of Warner Brothers. The restaurant was closed in 1982.”

Photos:
1940s

1960s
DEMOLITION, 1983
YESTERDAY AND TODAY