When asked what comes to mind when thinking about Hollywood, one of the main images people immediately recall is that of the historic “Walk of Fame.” Covering an impressive eighteen block area in the heart of Hollywood, pink and brass stars adorned with notable celebrities’, characters’, and groups’ names can be found embedded in the sidewalk. Also included, just below the name is a symbol of a film camera, a television receiver, a phonograph recorder, a radio microphone, or comedy and tragedy masks to indicate what field the individual is correlated with. The only exceptions to these categories are the Apollo 11 astronauts, basketball player Magic Johnson, boxer Muhammed Ali, and Sid Grauman, the builder of the Chinese theater.

The idea for this monument came from E.M. Stuart, the President of the Hollywood Chamber of Commerce. In 1957, a final concept for the layout was completed and a list of 1,558 nominees was discussed. It was decided that in order to obtain a star, musical nominees would have to sell at least one million records or 250,000 albums. Realizing many figures would be excluded as a result of this rule, an entirely separate award was created: the Grammy. After multiple revisions and lawsuits, the first permanent star was completed in March of 1960: director Stanley Kramer.

In 1984, a fifth category (live theater) was added, and the Walk has been expanding ever since. The stars are also often renovated by the city, receiving yearly grades of A-F to decide which need the most immediate attention. Unfortunately, the razzle dazzle image outsiders often have dreamed up in their minds of Hollywood and the Walk of Fame is not what they come to find. While the stars are still very iconic in their own right, and some are kept clean and well put-together, much of the area is littered with trash, cracked sidewalks, overpriced souvenir
stores, and an unfortunate homeless population which desperately needs to be assisted. Many people date the growing population of homeless individuals all the way back to the era of Ronald Reagan. When he was Governor of California in the 1970s, the politician deinstitutionalized mental hospitals, pushing the disproportionate amount of homeless people with mental illnesses onto the streets of Los Angeles. Once made President, Reagan developed a policy of containment which allowed for police to “dump” those without shelter into one specific area. These evil practices are still happening, and although the institutions are sometimes fined, other states have even started bringing homeless residents to the “contained” LA area. It is for this reason that many of the homeless population continuously vandalize Reagan’s star on the Walk of Fame.

The nomination process seems simple, as anybody (including the general public) can nominate who they want to, but there are complicated rules that must be followed. Every year, an average of 200 nominees are selected to be considered by the Commerce, which then narrows those down to around 20-24 recipients. Any posthumous nominee must have been dead for at least five years, and any living nominee must have been in their field for at least five years. After they are selected, recipients have up to two years to schedule an unveiling ceremony which they must attend. If these rules are not followed, they will not receive a monument. There has been one exception to this rule, as Barbra Streisand did not attend her own ceremony in 1976.

While many of the stars feature highly regarded individuals, there have been some controversial recipients leading to vandalization, protest, or theft of the monument. Some of the most scandalized stars include those of Kevin Spacey, Bill Cosby, Michael Jackson, Ronald Reagan as stated previously, and above all: Donald Trump. The star endured being sledgehammered, pick-axed, defaced with swastikas, and having a wall built around it to represent his campaign against immigrants. Finally, in 2018 the Commerce unanimously voted to
permanently remove the star, something that has never been done before. Similar protests and requests to remove other stars which have been associated with sexual assault allegations, racial controversies, and more disgraceful actions are continuing to occur, although none have been granted as the Commerce insists that once a star is put in place, the individual is never to be removed from receiving the honor. Many believe this is extremely wrong, and only adds to victim blaming and denial due to the status of the accused. Hollywood is no stranger to this kind of criticism, sweeping many allegations under the rug to protect the moneymakers of the industry. Although unfortunate, it is no surprise to those familiar with the city that the monument is a follower of these morals.

There are also many positive tributes to the stars, most often after their passings. Among the most adorned with flowers, notes, and sentiments have been Stan Lee, Robin Williams, Hugh Hefner, Whitney Houston, and Aretha Franklin. Some fan clubs even maintain upkeep of the stars by themselves: creating cleaning schedules to ensure constant adoration and respect. The area is thought to be of a community grieving center, remembrance and respect coming in abundance.

The Walk of Fame continues to be one of, if not the most, visited tourist attractions in Hollywood: pictures are taken, souvenirs are bought, and hey, you can even meet some of your favorite characters (although they may not be like what you expect). The monument is an obvious historic symbol, and I sincerely hope that it only continues to be renovated and held in a high respect.
Works Cited


