

PH 0507636

DATA SHEET

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED NOV 18 1977

DATE ENTERED MAR 29 1978

# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

## 1 NAME

HISTORIC

Sacramento Memorial Auditorium

AND/OR COMMON

Sacramento Memorial Auditorium

## LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

16th and J Streets

\_\_ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Sacramento

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

3

\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE

California

CODE

06

COUNTY

Sacramento

CODE

067

## CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

OWNERSHIP

STATUS

PRESENT USE

DISTRICT

PUBLIC

OCCUPIED

AGRICULTURE

MUSEUM

BUILDING(S)

PRIVATE

UNOCCUPIED

COMMERCIAL

PARK

STRUCTURE

BOTH

WORK IN PROGRESS

EDUCATIONAL

PRIVATE RESIDENCE

SITE

**PUBLIC ACQUISITION**

**ACCESSIBLE**

ENTERTAINMENT

RELIGIOUS

OBJECT

IN PROCESS

YES: RESTRICTED

GOVERNMENT

SCIENTIFIC

BEING CONSIDERED

YES: UNRESTRICTED

INDUSTRIAL

TRANSPORTATION

NO

MILITARY

OTHER:

## OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

City of Sacramento

STREET & NUMBER

915 I Street

CITY, TOWN

Sacramento

\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE

California

## LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Sacramento County Assessors Office

STREET & NUMBER

827 - 7th Street

CITY, TOWN

Sacramento

STATE

California

## 6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

None

DATE

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

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## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Sacramento Memorial Auditorium was built between 1925 and 1927, and for the past 50 years has been a beautiful and important part of the city. The three-story auditorium stands on the block between 15th and 16th Street and I and J Streets, a one-block setting, nicely landscaped with lawn, camellias, junipers and other ornamental vegetation. The grounds are also graced with 22 Dutch elms that are over 100 years old. (See attached fact sheet for standard dimensions, seating, cost, etc.).

According to James S. Dean, the City Architect at the time of construction, "wherever the development of civilization has taken place in great river valleys, there has arisen architecture of brick made possible by local alluvial deposits." Not surprisingly, the auditorium for the city of Sacramento (located at the confluence of the Sacramento and American Rivers) is principally brick of local origin. Mr. Dean goes on to state that "While brick is the predominating material, stone, plaster, and terra cotta have all been carefully worked into the design. . . after much careful study, it was decided to adopt a form of the Byzantine, as developed in northern Italy in the 5th and 6th centuries." The result has been referred to as Byzantine, Italian Romanesque, Lombardic, and even Spanish. The best collective label for the building may be southern European, Early Renaissance revival.

The diversity of exterior elements supports all of these labels. The wall finish includes five shades of brick randomly protruding and distributed in a Flemish bond with occasional rows of vertically laid brick (every 7 to 15 rows) on the upper floors. The roof is red clay tiles, with terra cotta and plaster trimmings. The roof on the main auditorium, on the wings, and on the towers is gabled with a low pitch. The main entrance portico, the lobby, and the stage area have flat roofs. Dean refers to an overall harmony of colors of the brick and terra cotta as well as in the varying design features. This harmony of design and color remains today. The building and its immediate setting are practically unaltered since the time of construction.

Arched casement windows are arranged in six groups of four each along the side of the third floor, along the second floor of the portico, and on the second floor of the wings. Rectangular casement windows surround the first floor. Three large hooded and arched blind, but ventilated, windows have been placed on the front wall of the Little Theatre wing.

The doors of the building are the original standard panel doors. Four second-floor balconies can be reached by double glass doors. These balconies with their overscaled brackets and nearby side buttressing are representative of the medieval exterior details that the architects desired. The five double front doors do not have built-in locks since the lobby into which they open was originally intended to be an open shrine for those who "made the supreme sacrifice" in the Spanish-American War and World War I.

(continued)

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The most impressive exterior feature of the building is the main portico. The portico is dominated by six stone columns topped with molded, stiff-leaf, terra cotta capitals, arches, and a corbelled entablature. Terra cotta bands and quoining are symmetrically arranged along the facade and front corners of the building. The main gable contains a large terra cotta rose window. Two brass flagpoles and benches in front were donated by the Sacramento Teachers Association at the time of construction.

The shape of the building is block I, extended slightly at the rear. It encompasses a variety of interior spaces and uses (see attached floor plans). These spaces include the main auditorium, the stage, and support rooms, as well as a Little Theatre (east wing), Memorial Hall (west wing), committee rooms, and various vestibules.

Interior

The interior design features are collectively not as important to the significance of the building as the exterior. However, some individual features are exceptional. In the main auditorium a 70-piece orchestra pit is spanned by a 57-foot long, five level, gold decorated proscenium arch that is supported by columns that repeat the design of the exterior portico. The first balcony circle is embossed with cast decorative panels. The classical interior cornice includes a simple unornamented frieze, egg-and-dart molding, and dentils. The second balcony retains the original wood seating. Large period metal and translucent glass chandeliers are suspended from a cast plaster ventilated coffered ceiling.

The ceiling of the lobby shows wood encased steel trusses with stenciled, polychromatic, naturalistic decorations. The Little Theater, which seats 300, and Memorial Hall are also treated with a variety of stylistic, applied patterns. Stair railings and other hardware vary from Spanish motif wrought iron to standard, functional pieces.

Some structural features of the building are unusual. The use of long-span trusses above the coffered ceiling over the main horseshoe shaped arena makes possible an auditorium 176 feet across without any supports to obstruct the view. Nearly 1200 concrete piles, averaging 3,560 pounds per square inch compressed strength, give the building a solid foundation. Exterior buttresses support the side walls.

The building includes a number of mechanical features considered highly developed for its time: (1) A movable floor built entirely of structural steel, with a

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heavy laminated wooden deck over which a maple floor is laid is still operable. It can be raised and lowered by means of two hydraulic jacks. The 1400 square foot floor can be tilted forward 5-1/2 feet at the stage. (2) The "thermostat-controlled, fully automatic" heating and cooling systems are interesting. Heating is accomplished by means of a combination direct and indirect vacuum return system, supplied with steam from the "best and most up-to-date boiler room." The main auditorium is ventilated with the help of the cast plaster ceiling, actually an enormous grill, through which air is drawn by two huge fans. (3) A set of chimes, donated by the War Mothers of Sacramento, and a pipe organ can be operated by a console keyboard. The chimes are now inoperable after being disconnected during World War II. (4) It is the electrical system, however, that was credited at the time as being "the most advanced installation on the Pacific Coast to date."

K-2/513

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES 1925 - 27

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Sacramento Memorial Auditorium is significant for its architectural style and its unaltered condition, as well as for the diverse events and people associated with the building.

The building is a fine example of theater and auditorium architecture of the period. It is a significant representative of the brick commercial and institutional buildings that boomed in Sacramento and throughout the central valley in the 1920's. Byzantine, Lombardic Romanesque, and southern European Renaissance Revival elements, as well as the landscaping, have been merged in an attractive manner.

The building's interior and exterior have changed little since the time of construction. The building was considered structurally and mechanically advanced for its day and still serves the community quite functionally. Alterations for comfort have been made but they have not affected the building's design integrity. These include new seats on the ground floor and first balcony and a new air cooling system in 1960.

Although city personnel oversaw the construction, well known consultants assisted. City Engineer Allan J. Wagner was assisted by Structural Engineer George J. Calder and by Construction Engineer H. V. Grant of the State Department of Public Works. City Architect James S. Dean was assisted by Arthur Brown, Jr., consulting architect, and G. Albert Landsburgh, collaborating architect. Landsburgh was the designer of many auditoriums and theaters throughout the U.S.; Brown was a member of the architectural firm of Bakewell and Brown, which designed Berkeley City Hall and Stanford University Library.

Nearly \$1 million, funded mainly by municipal bonds, was spent on the project in the 1920's. The entire expenditure went exclusively for the above mentioned consultants and for the construction itself, since the site was free to the city.

The site was originally donated to the city by John A. Sutter, founder and pre-Gold Rush empire builder in the Sacramento area. In 1872 the Mary J. Waters Grammer School, possibly the first three-story brick building in Sacramento, was constructed on the site. When the City decided to raze the building, in the interest of civic progress, and build the auditorium, many citizens objected. A suit was brought

(continued)

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

1. Sacramento City and County Library, Business Dept., "Memorial Auditorium" file
2. Sacramento Bee July 17, 1925
3. Sacramento Bee February 21, 1927
4. Sacramento Bee March 16, 1927
5. Sacramento Bee January 29, 1927
6. Interview, Suki Lee, Architect, February 1977

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 2.5 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A 

1	0
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6	3	2	0	0	0
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4	2	7	0	9	4	0
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ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B 

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ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C 

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ZONE EASTING NORTHING

D 

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ZONE EASTING NORTHING

## VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The auditorium and grounds cover one city block that is 320 feet by 340 feet in size. The block is bounded on the south (front) by J Street, on the west by 15th Street, on the north by I Street and on the east by 16th Street.

## LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	N/A	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE		CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Christopher P. Taloff/Student Intern and Robert R. Selway III/Historic Preservation

ORGANIZATION

Office of Historic Preservation

DATE Specialist

September 1977

STREET & NUMBER

1416 - 9th Street

TELEPHONE

(916) 445-8006

CITY OR TOWN

Sacramento

STATE

California

# 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

*K. M. Selway*

11-17-77

TITLE State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

*W. M. Selway*

DATE

3-29-78

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST:

*W. M. Selway*

DATE

3-26-78

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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against the City by one of Sutter's heirs, who held the land had been donated for park and school use only. However, in July 1925, U.S. Senator Hiram Johnson, former Governor of California and former pupil at the school, presided at the ground-breaking exercises. He expressed regret at the loss of the old school and commented that "inconceivable though in now seems, another group may gather . . . to dedicate a new building here". On February 21, 1927, the new auditorium opened with symphony and choral music, and with speeches, keynoted by Lieutenant Governor Burton R. Fitts.

The Sacramento Bee covered the opening, calling the auditorium "a most significant step in the growth of Sacramento". Congratulatory advertisements heralded the auditorium as a community meeting house and object of great civic pride. The prominent Weinstock's Department Store's advertisement stated "It is a memorial to our patriots. It is a monument dedicated to the arts." All ads, reflecting the interest in more business, praised the auditorium as a way of bringing "famous entertainment, artists and conventions to Sacramento." The auditorium was to put Sacramento on the business and cultural map. The diversity of events in the first 50 years would have surprised even the auditorium's most exuberant proponents.

The opening was followed quickly by an Odd Fellows Dance, A Saturday Club concert, and Verdi's Aida. The use of the auditorium for athletic events must have begun soon after, since an article in the Bee a few months later was entitled "Boxing Fans Must Leave Cigars Outside." Wrestling and basketball have been popular. Sports events, however, are only a small part of the diverse activities staged in the auditorium. These events include ballets, auto shows, lectures, jitterbug contests, folk dances, square dances, flower shows, snow festivals, graduations, gimmicky fund raisers, ice follies, rock concerts and conventions.

A number of notable people have performed at the auditorium. The San Carlo Grand Opera and the Chicago Grant Opera Companies included Claudio Muzio and Mary Garden. Contemporary folk and rock singers have suffered as well through the auditorium's one drawback, a below average acoustical system. Many distinguished actors, such as Henry Fonda and Tyrone Power, have performed here. On March 15, 1927, Will Rogers philosophized on stage.

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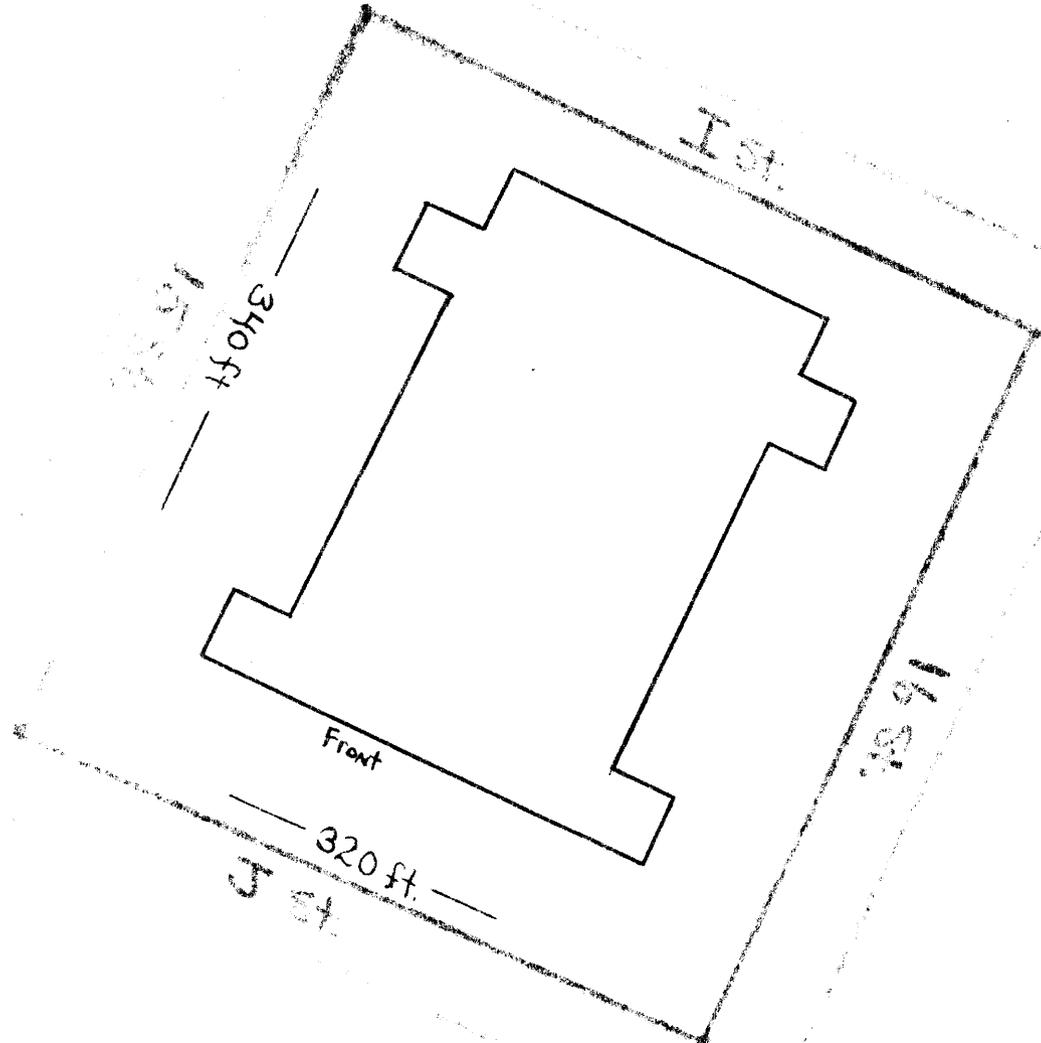
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Inauguration balls were held for Governor Rolph, Merriam, and Olson. In 1932 the auditorium celebrated the George Washington Bicentennial Birthday. During World War II the auditorium housed troops. A Harry James concert drew over 8,000 during the war.

Sacramento Memorial Auditorium is a beautiful and unaltered building that makes a significant contribution to the cityscape and has been a significant part of the community's history. In the late 1960's a new community center was built a few blocks away and many of the events that may otherwise have been staged in the auditorium now take place there. However, Memorial Auditorium still serves the community in a variety of ways, much as it has for 50 years. Today, arriving early for a concert or a graduation, one can easily picture the people and events that have come before.

K-2/513



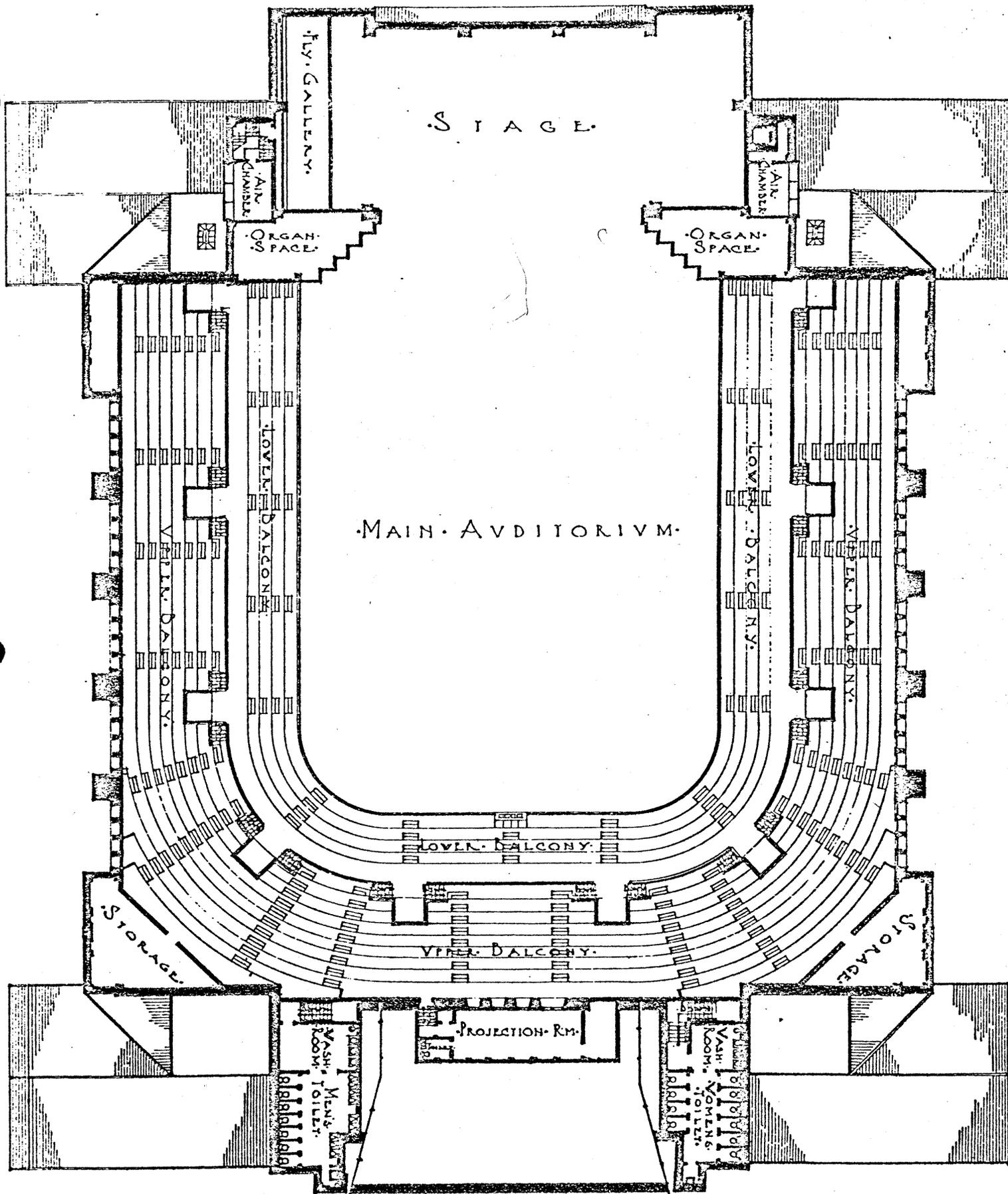
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150 ft.  
340 ft.

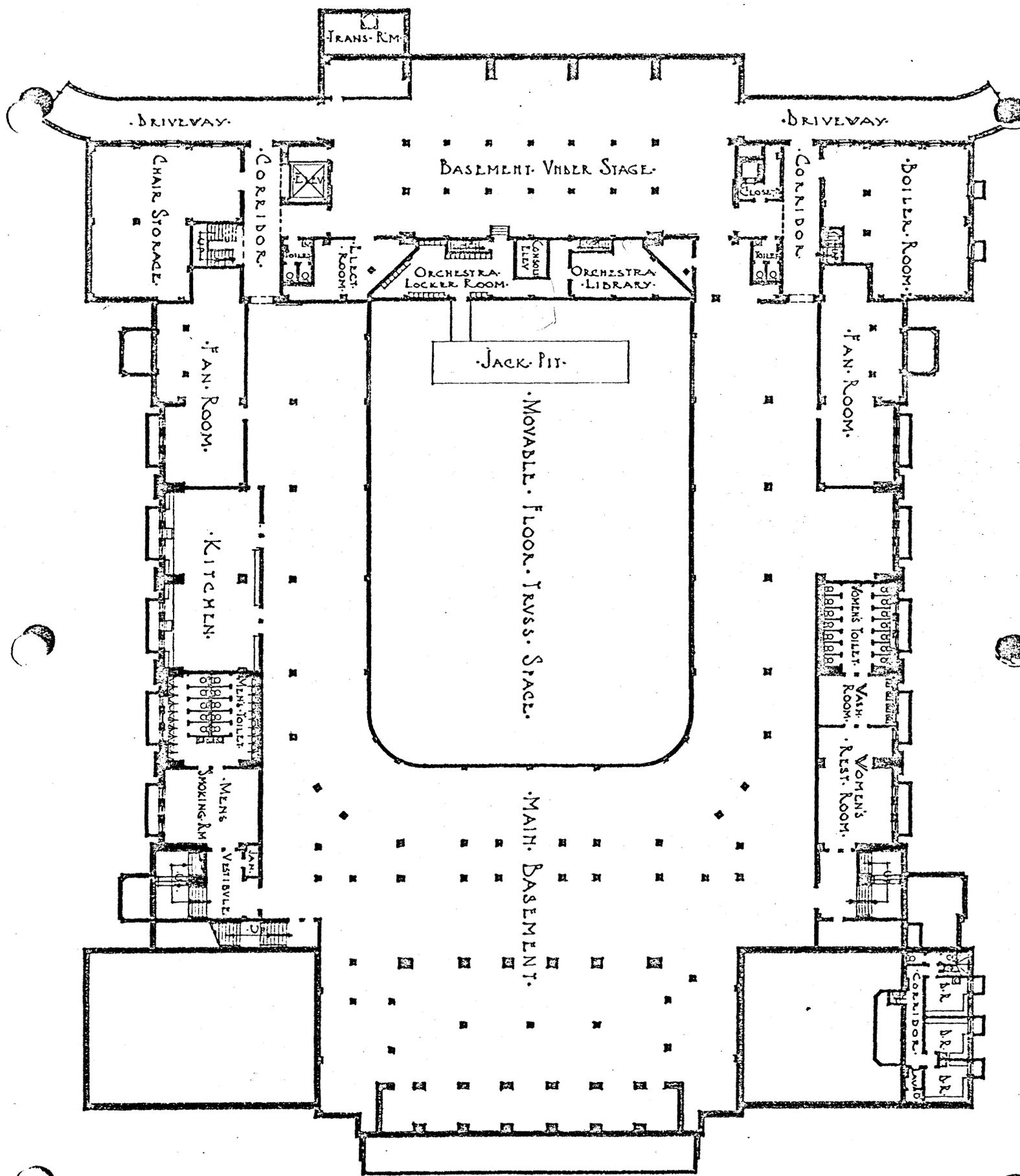
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Front

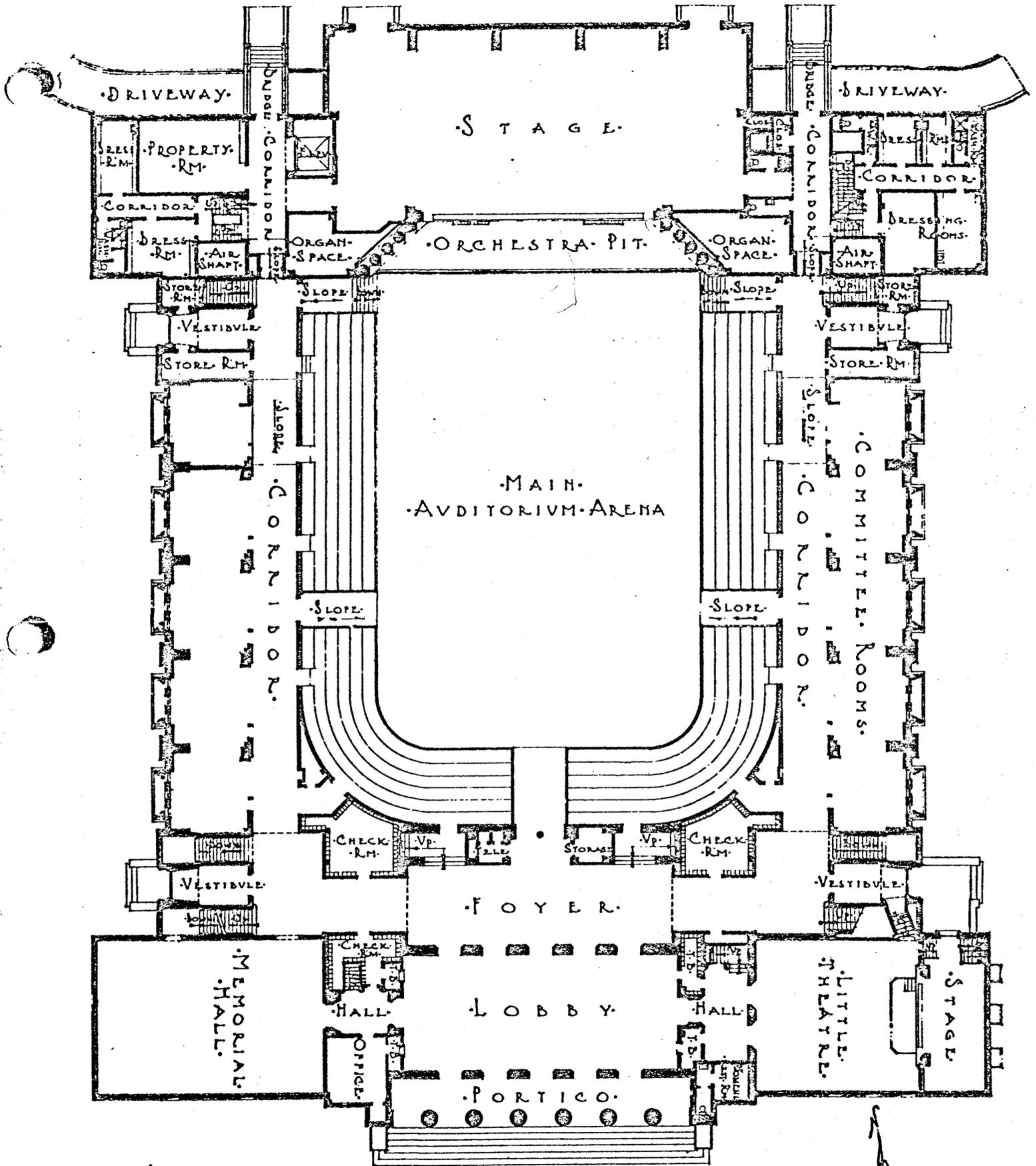
320 ft.  
J St.



·BALCONY·PLAN·



BASEMENT PLAN.  
 SCALE 1/4" = 1'-0"



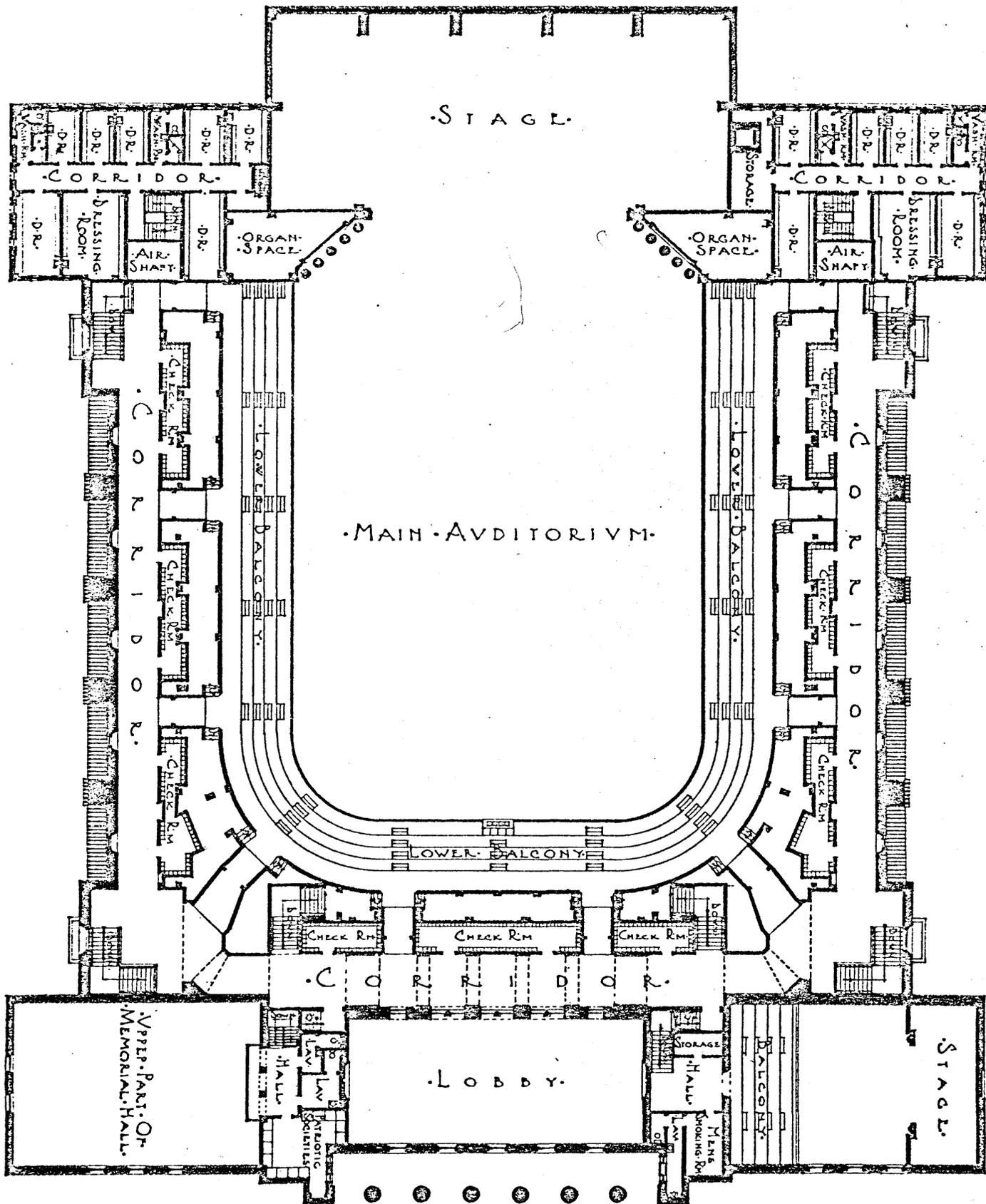
AUDITORIUM  
SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA

11-24-31

FIRST FLOOR PLAN

SCALE 1/4" = 1'-0"

CITY PLANNING COMMISSION



MEZZANINE PLAN

Scale 1/4" = 1'-0"