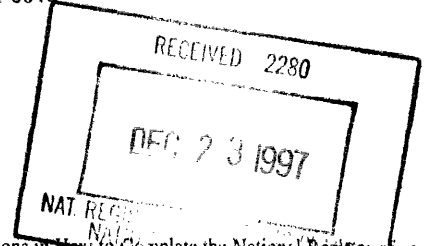


1660

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM



This form is for use in nominating or requesting determination for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Bulletin 16A. Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "NA" for "not applicable". For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a) Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete the items.

1. Name of Property

historic name: PADUA HILLS THEATRE

other name / site number:

2. Location

street & number: 4467 Via Padova

city / town: Claremont

not for publication: NA

state: CA

county: Los Angeles

code: 037

zip code: 91711

vicinity: NA

3. State / Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments).

[Handwritten Signature]

December 10, 1997

Signature of certifying official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

California Office of Historic Preservation

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register see continuation sheet
- determined eligible for the National Register see continuation sheet
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register

Edson H. Beall

1/23/98

other (explain)

Signature of Keeper

[Handwritten Signature]

Date of Action

see continuation sheet

(PADUA HILLS THEATRE)

Los Angeles County, CA

5. Classification

Ownership of Property:

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property:

(Check only one box)

- buildings
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of resources within the property:

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

CONTRIBUTING	NONCONTRIBUTING	
3		buildings
1		sites
1		structures
2		objects
7		Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register:

0

6. Function or Use (enter categories and sub-categories from instructions)

HISTORIC

REC. & CULTURE sub theater

CURRENT

REC. & CULTURE sub theater

7. Description

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION

Spanish Colonial Revival. sub

MATERIALS

FOUNDATION:

concrete

ROOF:

terra cotta tile (barrel)

WALLS:

BRICK

OTHER:

steel casement windows; wood doors

Narrative Description

Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets

(PADUA HILLS THEATRE)

Los Angeles County, CA

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Areas of Significance

Enter categories from instructions

Performing Arts
Ethnic Heritage / Mexican American
Entertainment / Recreation

Period of Significance

1930-1947

Significant Dates

Significant Person

Cultural Affiliation

Architect / Builder

Marston & Maybury, Architects
Storm & Mahoney, Contractors

Criteria Considerations

Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply

- A** Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B** Removed from its original location
- C** A birthplace or grave
- D** A cemetery
- E** A reconstructed building, object or structure
- F** A commemorative property
- G** Less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years

Narrative Statement of Significance

Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets

9. Major Biographical References

Bibliography

Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets

Previous Documentation on file (NPS):

preliminary documentation of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
previously listed in the National Register
previously determined eligible for the National Register
designated a National Historic Landmark
recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other (specify repository)
Claremont Heritage

(PADUA HILLS THEATRE)

Los Angeles County, CA

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property: approx.6.6 acres

UTM References:

A	11	435400/3778930	B				
C			D				
	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing	

____ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description:
Parcel No.23690

____ See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification:

The boundary includes the parcel historically associated with the property. See Detail A Map.

____ See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared by

Name/Title	Ginger Elliott, Exec. Director	Date	July.29, 1997
Organization	Claremont Heritage	Telephone	(909) 621-0848
Street & Number	590 W. Bonita P.O. Box 724	State	CA Zip 91711
City or Town	Claremont		

Additional Documentation

Maps

- A USGS map indicating the property's location
- A Sketch map of floor plan and site

Photographs

- Representative black & white photographs of exterior, exterior details (2 copies)

Property Owner

Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO

NAME City of Claremont

STREET & NO. 207 Harvard Avenue

CITY or TOWN Claremont

STATE CA

ZIP CODE 91711

TELEPHONE 399-5440

United States Department of the Interior
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(PROPERTY NAME)
Padua Hills Theatre
Claremont, CA

CONTINUATION SHEET

The Padua Hills Theatre Complex, includes three buildings-- a theatre and restaurant building, an adjacent apartment, and a studio/ residence -- grouped around a central courtyard . The landscaping of olive trees and rock walls and curbing is a contributing site feature and the sign and statue described below are contributing objects. In addition the outdoor stage structure at the south of the central courtyard is a contributing structure. The buildings spread over a terraced mesa covered with olive trees in the hillsides north of the city of Claremont. The complex covers approximately six acres in an open, untouched setting. Built in the Spanish Colonial Revival style, in 1930, by the Pasadena architectural firm of Marston and Maybury, there have been very few alterations over the years. The site and the buildings maintain an integrity of construction, design, materials and setting.

The theatre is approached from a large parking lot (to the east of the complex) and identified on the right of the entry walkway by a red brick sign displaying the theatre's logo, a pair of Mexican folk dancers, and ceramic letters - "Padua Hills Theatre." The entrance to the complex is along a stepped, brick walkway which is covered by a wood roofed pergola supported by eight circular brick columns.. Approximately 12 feet along the walkway and to the left is a small courtyard with a life-sized terra cotta colored statue of an Indian maiden, which was created in the 1940s by local resident artist and Scripps College professor, Albert Stewart.

Located further along the pergola and next to this statue is a caretaker's apartment which was originally built as a residence for the director of the theatre. A simple rectangular building, it consists of a living room, bedroom, and bath, and covers approximately 500 square feet.. Constructed of brick, the apartment has a red tile roof with exposed rafter ends and the pergola is attached to its northern roofline. This building has metal casement windows, with wooden boxed grilles on the southern facade, and wrought-iron lighting fixtures similar to the ones found elsewhere in the complex. Protruding from the north wall of the apartment are two built-in wall cabinets which display glass and pottery products These product displays have remained undisturbed since the full operation of the theatre.

This apartment is joined to the main theatre building by an arched brick opening covering a red quarry tile patio. The patio has three wrought-iron glass-topped tables set into the tile floor and a built-in drinking fountain with a simple tile basin. To the left of this archway, which marks the end of the pergola entryway, are the public restrooms, which are connected to the west end of the caretaker's apartment. West facing stairs lead from this patio area to a dirt walkway that wanders through the olive groves surrounding the complex. The olive trees predate the theatre and were planted in the 1880s.

To the right of the pergola walkway (the north side of the caretaker's apartment) enclosed by the east wall of the theatre building is a terraced outdoor courtyard area .Rock lined steps define three levels of this stamped earth patio and rows of tall olive trees arch over the area. On the south east corner of this courtyard there is a small brick barbecue with a tile roof which was used for outdoor cooking, and a wooden stage for outdoor fiestas.

The entry pergola ends at the door to the largest and most significant building found on the property , which holds the theatre, dining room and kitchen. It has a basic rectangular plan. The tall theatre section is constructed of poured-in-place concrete . Brick was used for the dining room and kitchen area. A low-pitched red tile roof covers the dining room,, and theatre seating areas. On the eastern elevation is a small shed roof section built as a ticket

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office.

The dining room entry, located on the east side near the ticket office, consists of double oak doors, each fitted with long, single panes of glass. The lobby, dining room, and kitchen cover 2,800 square feet of the complex's total square footage of 6,700. To the left of the doorway inside the lobby is a carved, built-in, drop-leaf, wooden shelf, which held the guest register for the theatre. Two sets of double doors leading to the auditorium open off the right wall of this lobby. Opposite these doors, across the lobby is an inglenook with a large fireplace. The ceiling of this lobby area is flat with wooden cross beams and boasts a distinctive "star"-shaped colored glass and wrought-iron chandelier. This first section is separated from the dining room by three steps and a masonry wall with a large arched opening. Metal casement windows and a gabled roof distinguish this second section. Some of the window panes display hand painted pictures of Mexican symbols and scenes. The kitchen area is reached through the dining room.

There are also two doorways leading to both side and back patios. The back patio is off the southwest corner of the dining room and is an elevated outdoor terrace made of brick walls which form a railing with a pierced brick decorative pattern and a red tile floor.

The interior walls of both the lobby and the dining room are made of painted brick, and the floors consist of wide-planked, pegged oak boards. A small, free-standing serving counter under a metal hood has inlaid tile placed in a geometric pattern. Behind the serving counter is another built-in counter with colored tiles. The walls of the dining room and lobby have wall sconces of wrought-iron and unusual blown glass colored plates which serve as shade coverings for light bulbs. All of this wrought-iron work was done by Hayrold Glick in his studio at Padua. Some of his work can also be found at the Ojai Valley Inn. The dining room and kitchen are currently used by a catering company.

The theatre section is accessible through the two doors in the lobby area. From the exterior this theatre section has two roof lines, one red tile gable roof which cover the seating area and then a very tall rectangular section that rises at least three stories above the seating area and has only two decorative details, a decorative crest about six feet below the cornice of the flat roofline and a row of canales high on the south elevation. Also located on the east side towards the back (north) end of the theatre is an outside entry which was used by employees. Attached to the back of the stage is a rectangular unit with a shed roof made of stucco and brick, which contained storage rooms, dressing rooms, and bathrooms. This section of the theatre has two metal casement windows with wooden frames. The east side of this rear section has a porch entry with several windows.

Inside the seating area of the theatre is divided into three sections by two aisles on a gradually sloping floor. The two side sections have four individual seats per row, while the middle section has nine seats per row, all of which extend back seventeen rows. This seating area is about 1,800 square feet. A very tall pitched gable ceiling with exposed beams and cross-bracing approximately every thirty feet characterize the theatre's interior roof system. The stage, covering 1,300 square feet, is built in a proscenium style with no orchestra pit. Its most distinctive feature is a very thick, flat asbestos curtain which displays a map of Mexico painted by Alfonso Gallardo, one of the Mexican Players who performed at the theatre. The backstage area rises up over three stories. A door at the side of the theatre near the stage leads to the 760 square foot storage area.

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To the east of the theatre building and north of the pergola walkway is the third building of the complex.. Although originally an artist's studio and residence built between 1930 and 1933 , this free standing L-shaped structure served mainly as a craft shop for imported and locally made Mexican glass and pottery while the theatre remained in operation. This is a 1,000 sq. ft. Spanish Colonial Revival cottage in an L shape and is constructed of brick with a low-pitched, red tile roof and wood-frame casement windows.It is currently unoccupied.

The complex is enhanced by a narrow entry road with a row of olive trees dividing the single vehicle lanes. On the east side of this road is elaborate ground-level fieldstone rockwork defining stamped earth walkways and concrete steps that provided pedestrian access to two other studios, now demolished.

Before his death in 1981, Herman Garner willed the Padua Hills Theatre and his portion of the surrounding hillsides to Pomona College, his alma mater. His widow, Irene Garner, later donated the remaining portion of land to Pomona College. The city of Claremont acquired the 1220 acre parcel which includes the theatre complex as part of a preservation effort to maintain the open hillside space that was the goal of the early investors and to ensure the maintenance of the theatre complex as a place that brought the Mexican and Anglo communities together

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Built in 1930 in the foothills of the Sierra Madre Mountains north of the small town of Claremont as a community playhouse, the Padua Hills Theatre soon became the home for a unique theatrical group called the Mexican Players. For over forty years this group, performing Spanish language folk dramas, attracted thousands of visitors to the hillside theatre and did much to educate Americans on the rich and diverse culture of Mexico. In a setting of extraordinary peace and natural beauty, the Theatre buildings have maintained their integrity for over 60 years.

It was not unusual that such a unique cultural experiment would begin in Claremont. Founded in 1887 as a town on the Santa Fe railroad line, Claremont became the home of Pomona College in its first year and by the 1920's the birthplace of an experiment of associated colleges known as the "Oxford in the Orange Belt." Its citrus ranchers were also pioneers in the citrus industry as the founding members of the Sunkist cooperative movement. Led by college professors, the town soon developed a reputation as a cultural center in the Pomona Valley. Early Congregational church influences also encouraged cooperation in other aspects of community life and the theatre complex was an outgrowth of community effort and the developing affluence of the valley in the 1920s.

Concern over undesirable real-estate development originally prompted a group of over 20 Claremont residents, led by Mr. Herman H. Garner, to purchase nearly 2,000 acres of land in the Mt. San Antonio foothills. In 1928, they formed a corporation to manage the property, naming it Padua Hills, Inc., after San Antonio's patron Italian village and university town, Padua. Claremont had a strongly supported arts community in the late 1920s and in 1928 a local theatre group, the Claremont Community Players, began to develop. Padua Hills and the Community Players had members in common, and both groups envisioned the foothill land as an ideal location for an arts community of homes and central theatre and dining room. In 1929, the Padua Hills corporation chose a corner in the northern section of the foothills for the theatre. They hired the Pasadena architectural firm of Marston & Maybury to construct a Spanish Colonial Revival style theatre. This firm had designed the Pasadena Post Office, and the Claremont Public Library. Although the Garners, who were the principal investors, chose the then popular Spanish Colonial Revival architectural style, for the building, the plays were not at that time planned to be Mexican or Spanish dramas.

Opening in 1930 the theatre was home to the Claremont Community Players who performed standard British and American plays such as *Our American Cousin*, *Little Women*, and *The Importance of Being Earnest*, during the first years. Before each performance, Mexican American teenagers from the area would serve dinner and sing in the dining room. Six months after the theatre opened the Mexican children presented their own play during a lull in the Community Players' season. *Noche Mexicana*, which included a fiesta scene with Mexican folk dances and songs, was a charming surprise for the audience. In 1932, when the summer Olympic Games came to Los Angeles, the Garners suggested that the Mexican performers produce a musical play for tourists visiting the games. *Serenata Mexicana* was performed with the help of Bess Garner, and being critically acclaimed by the *Los Angeles Times*, the group then produced another play entitled *El Rancho San Antonio*, named after a nineteenth century ranch that had been just south of the Padua Hills. As the Great Depression of the early 1930s progressed, the Community Players began to face much financial hardship. Many members could no longer afford the time or financial commitment to the group, which could not survive without strong community support. In 1933, the Pasadena Playhouse came to fill in the gap. The Pasadena group performed Monday through Thursday, reserving the weekends for the increasingly

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popular Mexican Players' productions, but by 1935, the Mexican Players occupied the theatre on a full-time basis. Coming from both Southern California and Mexico, these Players were chosen for their strengths in dance, singing, and ability to appear natural on the stage and at ease with the guests. Many of the Players already had acting experience, and had attended theatrical schools.

In 1935, the Padua Institute, a non-profit organization to foster tolerance and acceptance between Americans and Mexican-Americans, was founded by the owners of the theatre, Herman and Bess Adams Garner. Actors and educators were exchanged with Mexico and cultural perspectives were broadened. Mrs. Bess Garner traveled to Mexico often to bring back costumes, music and ideas for authentic dramas. Her travel accounts were published in a local newspaper and then published as Mexico; Notes in the Margin. The complex also served as a community focus for other arts as studios were built for iron work, weaving, and pottery. A group of residences was built on the road leading up to the theatre where many of the artists who taught at the Claremont Colleges made their home. Millard Sheets, Milford Zornes, Albert Stewart, Jean and Arthur Ames and Harrison McIntosh all worked and lived in the community. Few sites can claim such a rich combination of artistic, social, historical, and architectural value as can the Padua Hills Theatre and its surroundings. Such a complex was a reflection of the early educational and cultural richness of the Claremont community with its grouping of liberal arts colleges, its highly educated citizenry and its cohesive college and citrus social structure.

During their formative years between 1932 and 1935, the Mexican Players developed many of the traditional plays for which they were later remembered. Las Posadas, a Christmas fiesta set in a Mexican village on Christmas Eve, was extremely popular, as was their spectacular Easter sunrise service, which did not continue after World War II. Ysidro, an Aztec legend, began each May and celebrated rain returning to the land of the droughts. In 1934, the Players traveled throughout California, performing at the California missions to commemorate the anniversary of the death of Father Junipero Serra. That year the Mexican Ministry of Education also sent the first of a number of guest artists to Padua Hills to teach songs and dances, design costumes, and assist in creating play scripts. In 1935, the Garners envisioned a new role for the Players: to foster positive relations between the United States and Mexico through community education, and support of Mexican-American young people. As a result, they established the Padua Institute, a non-profit educational corporation.

Beginning in 1936, the players produced a yearly average of six or seven plays, each originating in a variety of settings: fishing villages, markets, and plateau towns, to name a few. Early California plays were also part of the broad scope of the Mexican Players' productions. Each play's costumes and sets were carefully designed and often collected by Bess Garner. Charles Dickinson was resident director for many years, assisted by Kathryn Dickinson, Alfonso Gallardo and Eligio Herrera. The continuing schedule of guest teachers from Mexico contributed to the plays' authenticity. The Players gained theatrical recognition when Stage magazine named them as one of the ten best little theatre groups in the United States.

Although Padua Hills limited its performances during the World War II years, after the war it established a regular schedule that continued for thirty years. Every Sunday, the dining room offered five sittings for a fiesta, while the

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Players provided entertainment. The Padua Institute also held parties at the theatre.

- Padua Hills also served a unique purpose for thousands of students from the Los Angeles schools who attended matinee performances. According to the Padua Institute, Mexican-American students who had been reluctant to discuss details of their family heritage often enthusiastically shared stories with teachers and students after attending these plays. The Los Angeles school board also recognized the value of Padua Hills for contributing to teachers' understanding of Mexico.

- The Padua Institute tried to enhance its dinner-theatre guests' understanding of Mexico as well. Because the Players served and entertained in the dining room, they were able to establish a friendly sense of connection with the guests. The theatre curtain featured a large painted map of Mexico, helping guests to locate the site of each play and gain a sense of the size and geography of the states of Mexico. A synopsis in the playbill explained the background of the story, enabling the Players to perform with authentic Spanish dialogue. After many performances, the visitors were included in a fiesta called Merienda in winter and Jamaica in summer. Guests were invited to meet the Players, request songs for them to sing, and to sample desserts and items cooked on the indoor and outdoor tortilla ovens.

The complex also attracted practicing artists. Many built their homes on Via Padova - the winding, hillside road leading to the theatre. Hayrold Russ Glick of Pasadena operated an iron forge, and Southern California ceramic artist, William Manker, opened a studio there in the 1930s. During World War II, the weaving studio contributed to the war effort by producing a fiber cloth traditionally imported from France that was crucial in making champagne. Original, hand-crafted works of pottery, glass, and other crafts from local Padua Hills artists such as Betty Davenport Ford and Millard Sheets were also available in the art craft shop near the theatre. Only one such studio remains on the theatre site from those days but the homes on Via Padova still house many of those artists and their studios.

In 1967, Sunset magazine called the Padua Hills Theatre a "California Institution" for the Mexican food, dancing, theatre, and shopping. "A play in its small theatre is the nucleus of an afternoon or evening visit, but dining to the sound of Mexican music, shopping for imports or pottery made on the premises, meeting the Players, strolling in the olive-shaded setting...all contribute to the flavor."

The dedicated members of the Padua Institute, the Garners, various directors, and the Players themselves were the source of the Mexican Players' success. By the 1960s the Padua Hills theatre had become a regionally well-respected institution. Governor Ronald Reagan wrote to Herman Garner in 1973 that "the unique service the Mexican Players of Padua Hills theatre has rendered in preserving and presenting the musical and dramatic arts of Mexico, which underlies California's cultural heritage, deserves the appreciation of us all."

The Padua Hills Theatre promoted Mexican-American understanding in California for over forty years, but it had become too costly to operate and in 1974 the theatre closed. Pomona College inherited the theatre complex after Mr. Garner's death in 1981. Currently, the City of Claremont has acquired the buildings and approximately 1,300 acres of the surrounding hillsides to preserve the land and the theatre .

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The Padua Hills Theatre illustrates one of the most distinctive regional architectural trends of the twentieth century in its Spanish Colonial buildings, its olive tree lined patios and its still peaceful and serene setting. It is also one of the most unique theatrical and social experiments in the cultural life of Southern California as an expression of the Mexican-American culture in Southern California. This beautiful site houses buildings and an idea which are well worth preserving.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

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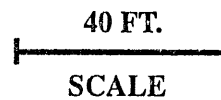
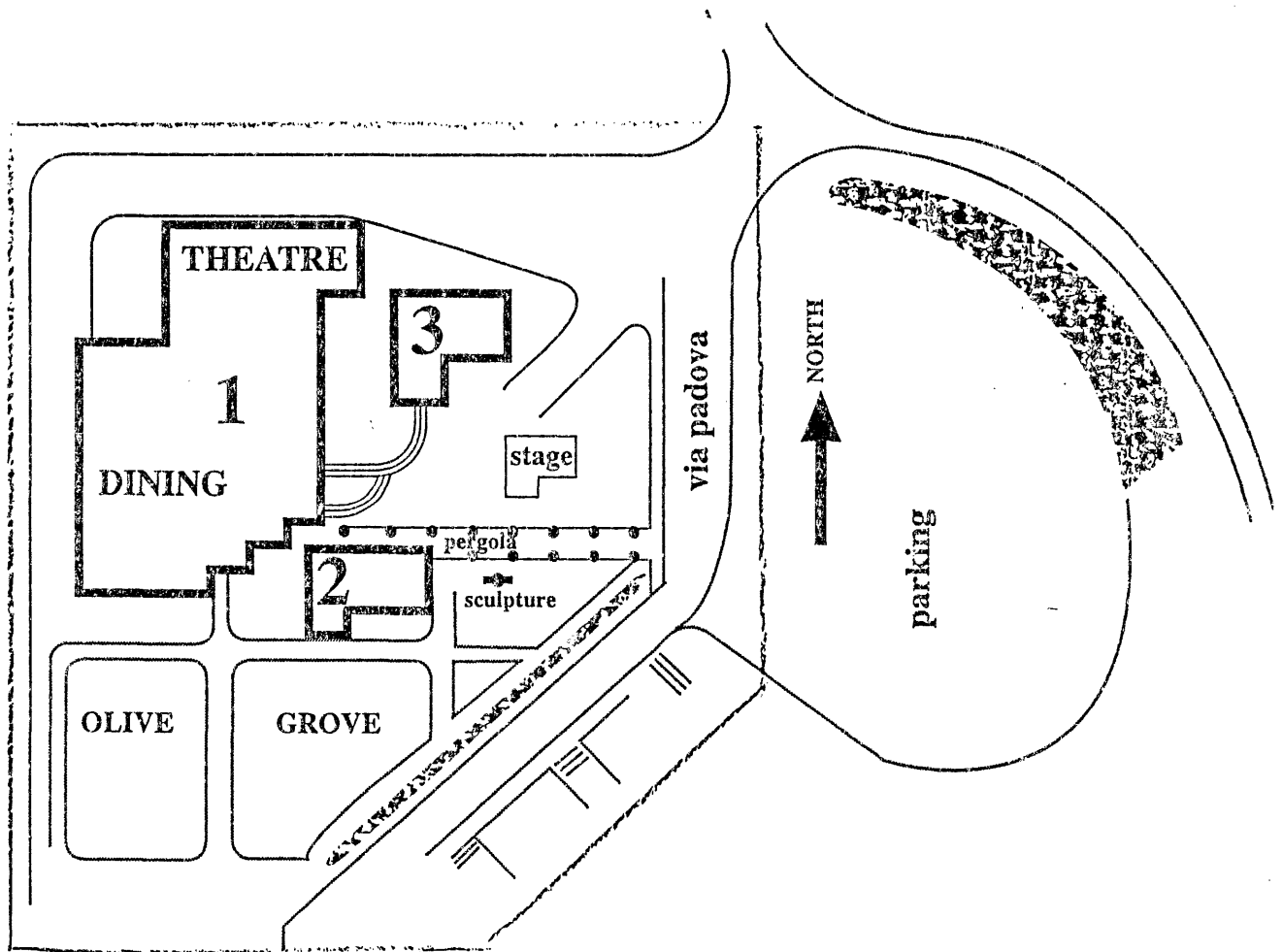
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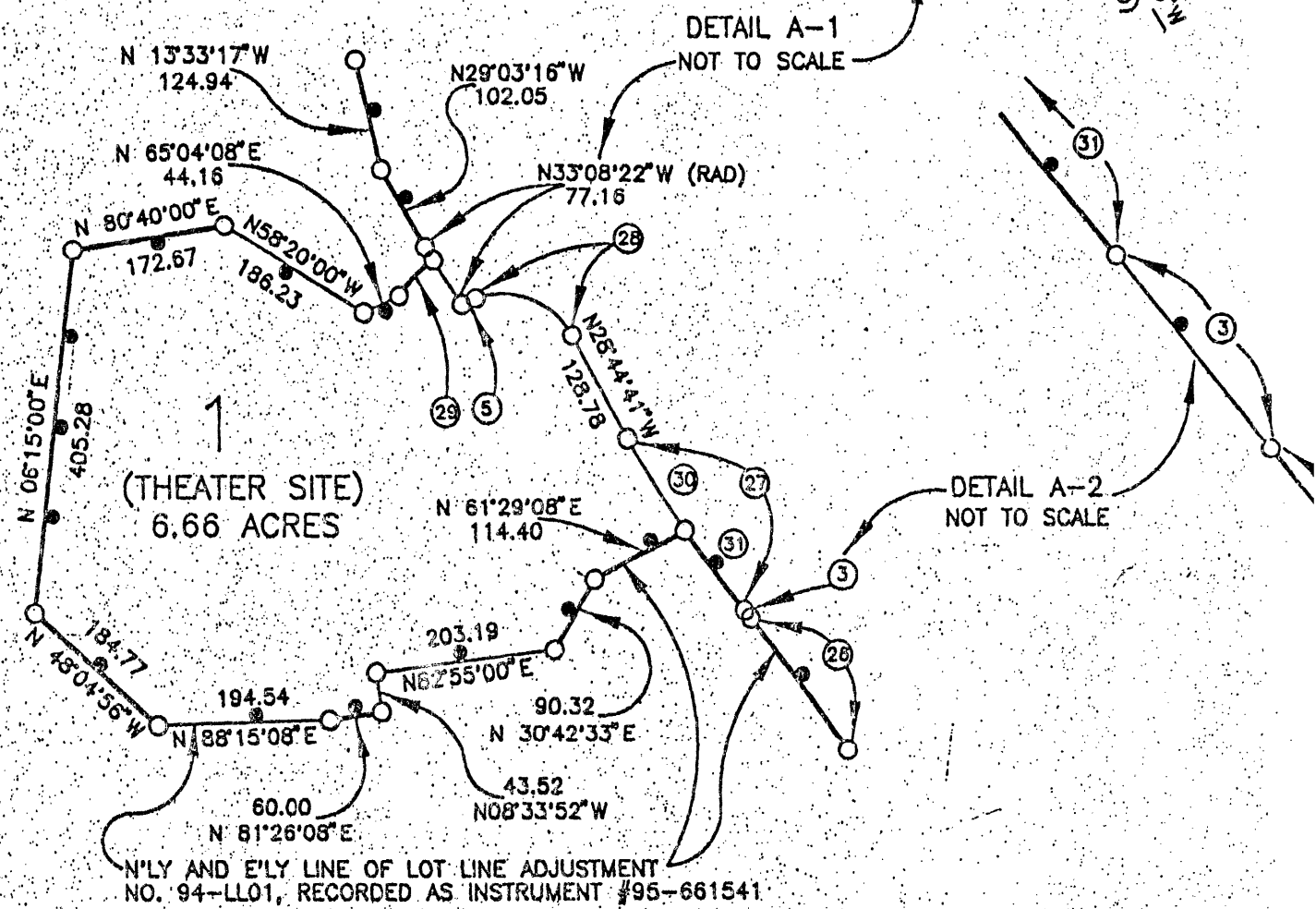
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Padua Hills Theater
Claremont, CA

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N 33°08'22"W		17.16	
13°59'52"	70.00	17.10	8.59
06°42'00"	1570.00	183.59	91.90
10°39'11"	1280.00	237.99	119.34
80°23'49"	90.00	126.29	76.05
24°44'36"	130.00	56.14	28.51
05°22'04"	1280.00	119.92	60.00
05°17'07"	1280.00	118.07	59.08



DETAIL A
 SCALE 1" = 200'

Padua Hills Theatre
 Claremont CA
 Los Angeles Co.



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PADUA HILLS THEATRE

4467 VIa Padova

Claremont, California

Photographer - Mary Stoddard, AEGIS (1994)

Original Negatives - Claremont Heritage, Claremont, California

DIRECTION

CAMERA

1 A.	Entry road- Complex to left, fieldstone hardscape to right	Northwest
2 A.	Entry road - Complex to right	Southeast
3 A.	Parking lot and Pergola entry	West
4 A.	Brick entry sign	West
5 A.	Sculpture by Albert Stewart	South
6 A.	Sculpture by Albert Stewart	North
7 A.	Pergola	West
8 A.	Dining Room entry at west end of pergola (bldg 1)	West
9 A.	Arch connecting dining room to caretakers residence (bldg2)	Northeast
10 A.	Pergola and parking beyond	Southeast
11 A.	Caretakers residence, pergola, dining room- from terrace	Southwest
12 A.	Caretakers residence, east facade (bldg.2)	West
13 A.	Caretakers residence, south facade (bldg.2)	North
14 A.	Caretakers residence,from raised patio swestfacade (bldg.2)	Southeast
15 A.	Dining room, south facade (bldg.1)	North
16 A.	Cottage, west & partial south facades (bldg. 3)	Northeast
17 A.	Cottage, south facade (bldg.3)	
18 A.	Dining room, corner of east facade, theatre tower beyond (bldg1))Northwest
19 A.	Dining room terrace wall, south and west facades (bldg.1)	Northeast
20 A.	Theatre tower, west facade (bldg.1)	East
21 A.	Theatre tower, north facade (bldg.1)	South
22 A.	Kitchen wall behind tower, north facade (bldg.1)	South