

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**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 M. H. Simon's Undertaking Chapel

and/or common Simon's Mortuary

**2. Location**

street & number 3610 Eleventh Street

\_\_\_ not for publication

city, town Riverside

\_\_\_ vicinity of

congressional district 36

state California

code 06

county Riverside

code 065

**3. Classification**

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
___ district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	___ agriculture	___ museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	___ private	___ unoccupied	___ commercial	___ park
___ structure	___ both	___ work in progress	___ educational	___ private residence
___ site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	___ entertainment	___ religious
___ object	___ in process	___ yes: restricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> government	___ scientific
	___ being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	___ industrial	___ transportation
		___ no	___ military	___ other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name Riverside County, Clerk to the Board of Supervisors

street & number 3711 Orange Street

city, town Riverside

\_\_\_ vicinity of

state California 92501

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Riverside County Assessor's Office

street & number 4080 Lemon Street

city, town Riverside

state California

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Page Survey

has this property been determined eligible? \_\_\_ yes  no

date February 1977

\_\_\_ federal \_\_\_ state \_\_\_ county  local

depository for survey records Riverside Municipal Museum Annex

city, town Riverside

state California

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## 7. Description

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<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>	
<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

The original plans for the Simon s Undertaking Chapel, dated November 22, 1924, show the building designed in the Romanesque style with pilastered piers and brick arches over the windows. These were later changed, perhaps due to expense, and made into the simpler Mission Revival style. A spindled screen planned for the window of the eastern door was also omitted. Like all of G. Stanley Wilson's buildings, the mortuary was designed to be rational in the relation of its spaces, functional, and beautiful. It was built of reinforced cast concrete walls with redwood beams, topped by an Escalona tile roof.

The ground plan is composed of three sections arranged in a U-shape around the front courtyard. The entire eastern wing is a large chapel. The central section has a front reception room flanked by an office to the left and a "consolation" room to the right. Behind the waiting room is a large casket display room occupying much of the western wing, with a large garage behind. A long hallway running behind the reception room connects the garage and casket room with the chapel, and divides the public rooms from the embalming rooms in the back of the building. On the second floor of the central section, there was originally a caretaker's apartment.

On the north, or front facade, an arched cloister fronts the recessed courtyard on the east and north sides. Five central bays are marked by arches (all architectural details appearing on the original plan are now obscured by heavy vines). Wrought-iron balconies decorate the piers of the arches, while hanging wrought-iron lamps light the cloister. Access to the chapel wing from the cloister is by three mullioned and round-headed double doors typical of G. Stanley Wilson's style. Another mullioned double door gives access to the reception room in the middle of the building.

In the chapel wing, three narrow, arched windows break the north wall. Along the east wall, there is a series of arched, leaded-glass windows. A large panelled door on the east side of the chapel gives access to a small porch supported by cast-stone columns. Above the door is an arched window with leaded glass. Original light fixtures in this porch include a square, wrought-iron lamp similar to those found at the front and south entrances. The porch provided a sheltered waiting place for friends of the family as they left for the funeral procession.

Along the south side of the chapel, two more large panelled doors lead from the family room to the limousine driveway. The "carriage drive" is sheltered by a tile roof. Cast concrete planters with a simple geometric design decorate the south side of the driveway. The driveway runs along the entire south wall and around the west side of the building. The southwest end of the building, which opens to the garage, is plain. The view from the street down the driveway is carefully planned to include the south entrance porch and a series of small wrought-iron balconies on the southern wall.

# 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/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

1924-1966

**Specific dates** Plans Nov. 22, 1924 **Builder/Architect** Builder-Waldman Architect-G. Stanley Wilson

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

Simon s Undertaking Chapel was owned and operated by one of Riverside's morticians, Melvin H. Simons, a native of Indiana. He started his Riverside business in 1911, and his new mortuary, built in 1925, soon became the fashionable place for Riverside funerals. Mr. Simons was prominent in civic affairs, a member of the powerful Evergreen Masonic Lodge (he chose to build his chapel directly beside the Temple of the Masons whose members he often served), Al Malaikag Shrine Temple, Odd Fellows, Elks, and Rotary Club, of which he was president. The family continued to own the building until 1966.

Due to Mr. Simon s prominent position in Riverside, he hired the highly esteemed architect G. Stanley Wilson to design his chapel. In 1924, Riverside was experiencing a boom in growth and wealth based on the thriving citrus industry. Riverside was becoming increasingly aware of its early Hispanic past and appreciative of its Mission-Spanish architecture. The chapel, with its low, ground-hugging design, its arches and tile roof, represents the new architectural taste at its best. G. Stanley Wilson kept abreast of developments in the new style and did much to popularize it in Riverside and surrounding cities. The building also represents his interest in designing commercial structures for greatest efficiency while maintaining the highest degree of aesthetics. All of the facilities within the building are arranged within the U-shaped plan to be accessible and convenient for both the mortuary workers and the families of the deceased. Other buildings designed by Mr. Wilson include: Lincoln School, Grant School, Casa de Anza Hotel (his home), Aurea Vista Hotel, All Saints Episcopal Church, Riverside City College Quadrangle. His residences include those of the most substantial and prominent citizens of his day. He also worked in nearby cities such as Redlands (Post Office, two elementary schools, and the original Redlands High School), Anaheim (Presbyterian Church), and Fullerton (City Hall). He was at one time president of the California State Board of Architectural Examiners. His most famous work in Riverside is the Mission Inn Rotunda.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References (Courtesy Riv. Mun. Mus.)

Gebhard, David, and Winter, Robert. A Guide to Architecture in Los Angeles and Southern California. p.404, #12.  
Riverside Press-Enterprise, April 5, 1979.  
 Original plans of the architect, courtesy Harry and Ernest Wilson, and Mabyl Wilson Bareham.

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property .87 ac. **ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED**  
 Quadrangle name Riverside East Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References (Courtesy Riv. Mun. Mus.) **UTM NOT VERIFIED**

A	<u>1</u> <u>1</u>	<u>4</u> <u>6</u> <u>5</u> <u>3</u> <u>9</u> <u>0</u>	<u>3</u> <u>7</u> <u>5</u> <u>9</u> <u>6</u> <u>6</u> <u>0</u>	B	<u> </u> <u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C	<u> </u> <u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>	D	<u> </u> <u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>
E	<u> </u> <u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>	F	<u> </u> <u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>
G	<u> </u> <u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>	H	<u> </u> <u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>

### Verbal boundary description and justification

City Block 11, R.6. Assessor: 215-281-003. Southwest corner 11th and Orange.  
 Lot size: 165' x 230'. The original boundaries of Simon's property.

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Dr. Judith S. Schaeffer and Denise Hammonds  
 organization Old Riverside Foundation date November 26, 1979  
 street & number 4049 Almond Street telephone 714-683-2725  
 city or town Riverside state California 92501

# 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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature *Km Miller*

title \_\_\_\_\_ date April 30, 1980

**For HCRS use only**  
 I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

*J. S. Schaeffer* date 6/9/80  
 Keeper of the National Register

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_ date 6-2-80  
 \_\_\_\_\_

FHR-8-300A  
(11/78)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR HCRS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED MAY 8 1980	
DATE ENTERED	JUN 9 1980

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 6

PAGE 1

Title: California State Historic Resources Inventory  
Date: 1979  
Depository for Survey Records: Office of Historic Preservation  
City, Town: Sacramento  
State: California

Has this property been determined eligible?    X No    X Local



**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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RECEIVED MAY 8 1980

DATE ENTERED

JUN 9 1980

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 2

Garages for the limousines and hearses are located in a separate building linked to the main building by a covered walkway with a tile roof. On the north and east sides of the lot, the entrance gates are made like the main building with cast concrete, redwood beams, and tile roofs. Flanking the central opening are arched openings. Around the parking lot runs a cast-iron fence of vertical rods of varying height. The supports for this fence are made of cast concrete with a tile "roof".

The richly-decorated interior of the mortuary shows G. Stanley Wilson's work at its height and brings into play the craftsman aspect which often accompanied Mission Style buildings in Southern California.

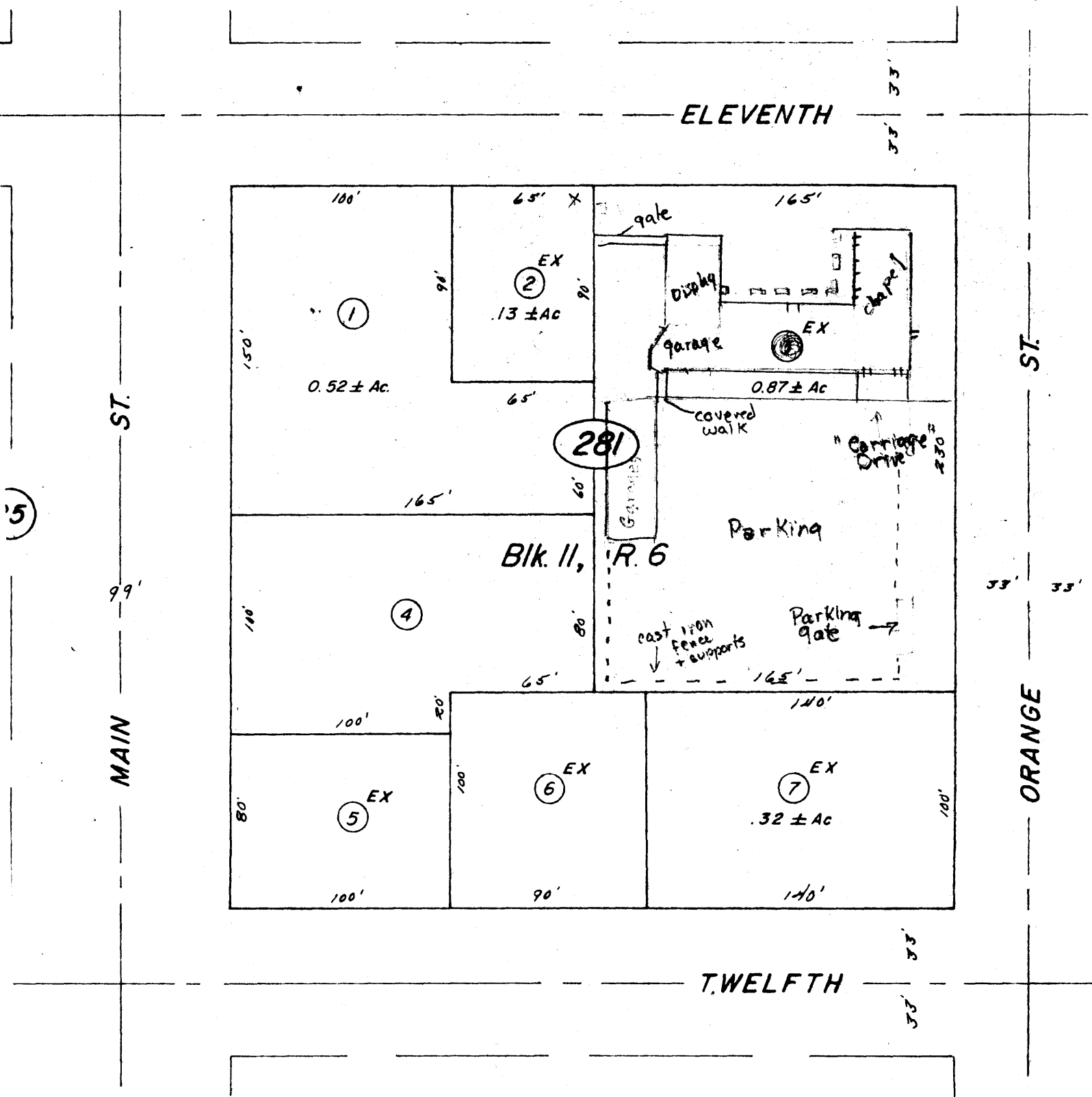
In the reception and "consolation" rooms, painted beams support the ceiling; panelled, round-headed doors open to all major rooms and areas, and wrought-iron lamps hang from the ceilings. Both rooms have small fireplaces.

Huge ceiling trusses, a hallmark of the Wilson style, support the roof of the chapel. Trusses are also used, on a somewhat smaller scale, for the roof of the casket display room.

In the chapel, the narthex screen appears in G. Stanley Wilson's original blueprints as a series of simple panels with two open and one closed above. The present grillwork between the central panels may have been added later. Huge wrought-iron chandeliers holding large, simulated candles hang from the chapel ceiling. A number of the original pews also remain. On the wall above the arch leading to the family room is a large 50-foot mural of Christ as the Good Shepherd signed by Carl Ruhnau.

The building, until recently used by Riverside County as a probation center for youthful offenders, remains unaltered inside and out. The County purchased the building in 1973, and now intends to demolish it for a parking lot. Eventually, when funds are available, they plan a Hall of Justice for the site.

11



5

ST.

MAIN

ELEVENTH

ST.

ORANGE

T.WELFTH

29