

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 determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" 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 all items.

=====

1. Name of Property

=====

historic name St. John's Episcopal Church

other names/site number

=====

2. Location

=====

street & number 514 West Adams Boulevard not for publication
city or town Los Angeles vicinity _____
state California code CA county Los Angeles zip code 90007

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3. State/Federal Agency Certification

=====

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this x 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 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X 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.)

[Signature] March 3, 2000
Signature of certifying official Date

California Office of Historic Preservation
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

=====

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

other (explain):

Edson A. Beall 5/5/00

[Signature]

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

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)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u> 1 </u>	<input type="checkbox"/> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> sites
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> structures
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> objects
<u> 1 </u>	<u> 0 </u> Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

=====
6. Function or Use
=====

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Religion: Religious Facility

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Religion: Religious Facility

=====
7. Description
=====

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Romanesque

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete

roof terra cotta

walls concrete

other _____

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.) See continuation sheets.

=====
8. Statement of Significance
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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.

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 a 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.

=====
10. Geographical Data
=====

Acreage of Property Less than one acre

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	11	382310	3765700	3	_____	_____
2	_____	_____	_____	4	_____	_____

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

=====
11. Form Prepared By
=====

name/title Portia lee Ph.D & Jeffrey B. Samudio
organization Design Aid Architects date June 6, 1999
street & number 1722 N. Whitley Avenue telephone (323) 962-4585
city or town Hollywood state CA zip code 90028-4809

=====
Property Owner
=====

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name _____
street & number _____ telephone _____
city or town _____ state CA zip code _____

=====
Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).
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Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture
Art

Period of Significance 1925

Significant Dates: 1925

Significant Person:

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above) _____

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder Davis, Walter and Pierpont /Hanson, Luis

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.) See continuation sheet.

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9. Major Bibliographical References
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(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.

previously listed in the National Register

previously determined eligible by 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

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Name of repository:

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 7 Page 1

**St. John's Episcopal Church
Los Angeles, California**

Narrative Description

Summary

St. John's Episcopal Church is a two-story, gable front, rectangular, basilica plan Romanesque style house of worship constructed in classical proportions to be twice as high and three times as long as its width. Concrete walls on the sides and rear are board-formed. The north-facing gable front wall of carved tufa stone has a tripartite organization. Hammered bronze doors in the compound arch entry are surmounted by a wall passage of ten columns. Above the columns is a rose window flanked by paired ajimez windows. The triangular gable peak is unornamented above a dentilled course. A small cross is placed at the apex of the gable. Small one story pents extend outward from the main structure on the ground story level on the east and west sides.

The main sanctuary is entered through a narrow narthex whose central dome is flanked by barrel vaults. The nave floor plan is in the shape of a Latin cross with the upright beam running south down the main aisle from the narthex double doors, past the central altar at the midpoint of the transept arms to the high altar in the apse. Massive piers and Corinthian columns support clerestories along the side ambulatories; both clerestories and ambulatories contain stained glass windows. Wrought iron light fixtures are suspended from the wood paneled ceiling. Floor tiles are clay.

Mosaics and art glass windows decorate the transepts and the Liberty and Baptistery chapels. At the impost of the transept arch is a massive carved oak rood beam. The chancel is elaborated with a ceiling mosaic, marble floors, columns and wainscoting, and a carved oak triptych on the high altar. The original 1925 organ built for St. John's stands below mosaics in the west arcade.

Parish offices to the east of the main structure surround a cloistered courtyard. Public facilities and offices circle the courtyard and are connected to the main sanctuary. A separate entrance on the northeast corner of the property leads to a parking lot. The main sanctuary and courtyard wing have kept almost complete integrity of design, materials,

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 7 Page 2

**St. John's Episcopal Church
Los Angeles, California**

Narrative Description (continued)

workmanship and feeling on the exterior of the structure. The interior of structure is largely unchanged, although the chancel was elaborated in marble in the 1940s through a large bequest. The Liberty Chapel, which was redecorated after World War II, has lost integrity of materials and feeling, although it has remained true to its original memorial association with parish members in wartime service. Buildings behind the main sanctuary and courtyard are later additions and do not appear to have equivalent historic significance.

Architectural Description

The Exterior and the West Facade

St. John's Episcopal Church exterior, Romanesque in style, was modeled after the 11th century church of San Pietro in Tuscania, Italy. Its architect J. Pierpont Davis, after traveling to Italy to observe the early church, modified its scale, proportioning St. John's basilica plan to the classical aesthetic which called for a structure to be twice as high and three times as long as its width. Reinforced concrete board-form walls in the natural color on the sides and rear are two and one-half inches thick with support pillars placed 16 feet below ground level. The gable-front north entrance wall is stone block in a random pattern; a tile roof supports a small cross at the front apex.

The elaborately carved gable front of tufa stone follows a common Romanesque four-part organization. 1) At street level, the compound arch entrance is supported by elaborated engaged Corinthian piers radiating outward from the portal which is inscribed with a quotation from Revelations above the hammered bronze double doors. The figure of an angel holding an orb and cross appears at the center of the tympanum. At the northeast corner is an outdoor pulpit also decorated and inscribed with quotation from Corinthians. 2) Above the ground story section, a narrow arcaded wall passage of 10 columns has a shallow dentilled overhang and guardian angels carved on square blocks at the corners. 3) The third section, whose height is proportional to the ground story section, is the most

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 7 Page 3

**St. John's Episcopal Church
Los Angeles, California**

Narrative Description (continued)

elaborated. It features a rose window at the center, set on a square block; at the corners of the block are bas reliefs: four winged figures - man, ox, lion and eagle - symbolizing the four Gospel writers. Flanking the rose wheel are two Mudejar ajimez windows, narrow double lights separated by twin columns. These are set in a rectangular frame; the head of Christ in the top center right frame and the Lamb of God in the left. Figures representing prophets, martyrs, cherubim and floral designs decorate the borders. 4) A corresponding dentilled course distinguishes the fourth section whose triangular tympanum at the top of the facade is undecorated. Cartiano Scarpitta, an Italian sculptor, who ultimately supervised a crew of 14 carvers in executing the St. John's project, directed the facade carving

Small one-story wings with sloping tile pents extend outward from the main structure on the ground story level on the east and west sides. On the wings and on the side walls of the main structure above, the board-formed concrete wall surface is divided into bays by pilaster strips connected horizontally by ranges of small blind, round-head arches which signal the location of the stained glass of the clerestory and ambulatories.

Interior

The Narthex

The narrow rectangular narthex has three outside entrances, double main entry doors on the north and single side doors on the east and west, which are surmounted, by small stained glass windows. Side ambulatory doors and arched, double center doors afford passage into the nave. These have small, Art Nouveau style, diamond-shape leaded glass lights with a delicate center cross. All narthex doors have finely carved stone surrounds. Similar stone carving in modified egg-and-dart and acanthus patterns is carried out along the cornice line. The narthex ceiling has a small central dome flanked by barrel vaults. In the mid-twenties designs by artist Charles Lawford, designer of the ceiling of nearby Shrine Auditorium, were stenciled onto the narthex ceiling as patterns to be finished in

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 4

St. John's Episcopal Church
Los Angeles, California

Narrative Description (continued)

mosaic. This intention was not carried out and the original designs, though somewhat faded, remain intact.

The Nave

St. John's generally follows the Romanesque basilica scheme with columns and piers connected by arches, side ambulatories and a nave with a timber roof. The center double doors from the narthex open to the center aisle. Above them appears a lunette with an inset carving of the Angel of the Resurrection by Cartiano Scarpitta. The organ loft above the doors is set into an open arch. The back wall is pierced to bring into view the rose window.

The nave floor plan is in the shape of a Latin cross with the upright beam running south down the main aisle from the narthex double doors, past the central altar at the midpoint of the transept arms to the high altar in the apse. Along each of the side ambulatories four massive piers and twelve cement columns with hand-carved stone Corinthian capitals support the arcades below the clerestories. A symbol for each of the apostles is on the impost block above the capitals, e.g. the eagle of John, the crossed keys of Peter, the pilgrim staff and shell of James.

As a result of architect Davis' modifications to the proportions of its eleventh century counterpart, San Pietro, Tuscania, the side aisles of St. John's were narrowed and the nave lengthened, resulting in a clear view to the central altar. In addition, the entrances from the side aisles into the transepts were arched and elevated and a niche created in the sanctuary for the altar and triptych.

Ten stained glass windows in the ambulatories depict events from the life of Christ. Beginning with the west aisle nearest the altar are the Annunciation, the Nativity with Shepherds, the Presentation in the Temple, Flight into Egypt and Jesus in the Temple.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 7 Page 5

**St. John's Episcopal Church
Los Angeles, California**

Narrative Description (continued)

Continuing from the back of the church above the east ambulatory are Jesus and the Children, The Transfiguration, Crucifixion, Resurrection and Ascension. These round-head windows, reportedly made in England for St. John's, exhibit Art Nouveau style.

The clerestory windows of the nave depict the patriarchs, prophets, apostles and martyrs of the church. In a typescript history of St. John's prepared in 1956, "A Pilgrimage Through St. John's Church," Rector Davidson describes them as "bold in design, well executed and in English colored glass of various harmonious colors." As each column represents one of the twelve apostles, six of the clerestory windows depict the Apostles and are placed above their corresponding columns. On the west side of the nave, beginning nearest the altar are depictions of the Prophet Isaiah; two apostles, John the Evangelist and James; Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. as a contemporary martyr; and a third apostle, Thomas. On the east side of the nave, beginning nearest the altar, windows show the prophet Jeremiah, the apostles Andrew and Peter, St. Stephen Martyr, the Apostle Philip, Saint Bartholomew, and the patriarch Moses.

The panels of the wood ceiling of the nave were finished with natural burlap. Massive support beams of Oregon pine were painted in an identical pattern to that in the eleventh century church of San Miniato in Florence. The single deviation in the ceiling pattern from the Italian original, whose first beam had the portrait of the local cardinal, is the appearance of the likeness of Doctor George Davidson - the rector who guided the construction and decoration of St. John's - on the third beam from the back of the nave. An oil portrait of Reverend Davidson is placed at the north end of the east ambulatory.

Original wrought-iron light fixtures are suspended from the ceiling by a single chain; four balance chains support the fixtures, which feature ornamental glass shades. Pews in the nave were constructed of black walnut. Rector Davidson reported that the pews were not installed at the time the Church was dedicated due to the difficulty encountered by the Wisconsin manufacturer in finding sufficient black walnut for pews seating 700 people.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 7 Page 6

**St. John's Episcopal Church
Los Angeles, California**

Narrative Description (continued)

Clay floor tiles were fashioned and fired on the site during construction. One of these tiles, located in the tenth row of pews from the back near the west aisle is legendary. It carries the footprint of a small child and dog, imprinted when the child of one of tile workers and his dog stepped onto an unfired tile. It was retained and installed, wrote Dr. Davidson in his pamphlet, *Art and Architecture Notes*, since "some said it was a symbol of Man's imperfection before God; others said it was a sign of good luck."

The Transepts and Chapels

Above the transept arch at the south end of the nave, a large gold-background mosaic depicting the transfiguration continues the thematic references to Christ, the prophets and the apostles. The mosaic, designed and installed by Judson Studios in 1951, has the figure of Christ in the center with Moses and Elijah on either side; the Apostles Peter James and John regard the upper figures from the spandrels. On the intrados of the arch itself are life-size figures of the four Gospel writers with the dove of the Holy Spirit. The extrados of the arch is embellished in a pattern of red and gold mosaic. This mosaic composition is original.

At the impost of the transept arch is a massive oak rood beam with a centered crucifix carved by Oberammergau artist Adelbert Zwink. It was designed to be reminiscent of 11th century ecclesiastical crucifixes through the use of the symbolic Alpha and Omega and Lamb of God. The rood beam carries the inscription, 'He was wounded for our transgressions.'

In 1967 in response to changes in liturgical practice emphasizing community, a central altar was placed at the transept crossing. Designed by a member of St. John's, J. Todd Campbell, it is the altar in use presently. The altar itself is made of wood and painted. On the front of the base, which is shaped as a foundation stone, is a large Greek cross surrounded by the twelve apostles. The design from the figures is taken from a stained glass window of the 12th century cathedral at Poitiers, France. On the congregation side

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 7 Page 7

**St. John's Episcopal Church
Los Angeles, California**

Narrative Description (continued)

the altar carries inscriptions from the Book of John and the New Testament along with the burning bush of Moses and the broken stalk of wheat. On the priest's side, symbols are a door with the key of David and a center inscription of the letters Chi and Rho. At the ends of the table are the monograms Alpha and Omega.

The North Transept and the Baptistry Chapel

The three windows of the north transept features three women memorialized for their religious devotion. The central window depicts St. Mary and carries a quotation from the Magnificat. The flanking window on the south shows St. Hilda, the Abbess of Whitby; the window to the north exhibits St. Elizabeth of Hungary.

The Baptistry Chapel on the west side of the chancel is largely unchanged from its appearance at the end of the church's construction with the exception of two entrance columns which were redone in marble as a memorial thank-offering. Above the aisle entrance are carved into the stone symbols of the Trinity, the hand of God, the Lamb of God and the dove. The large painting in the north transept is a copy of Corregio's 16th century Nativity. The white marble Baptismal Font, standing on a patterned marble floor, is somewhat unusual in that it has a bowl for the baptism of persons by the pouring process and is also large enough for the baptism of infants by immersion. The octagonal bowl is carved from a block of Botticini marble. It is supported by an octagonal block of red Verona marble enclosed in an arcade of eight carved columns of Botticini marble. When the oak canopy over the font is raised a brass dove descends from the overhead crown counterbalanced by pulleys and a brass ball

At the back of the chapel is the polychromed oak Baptistry altar. Fashioned in the Arts and Crafts style, it was the original altar of Old St. John's, the predecessor church on the site. Reverend Davidson notes in "A Pilgrimage" that the altar "being a memorial could not be removed from the care of the congregation." The onyx in the chapel credence table

National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 7 Page 8

**St. John's Episcopal Church
Los Angeles, California**

Narrative Description (continued)

was part of the altar of Christ Episcopal Church on Flower Street in downtown Los Angeles that Dr. Davidson obtained when that church was demolished.

A niche in the west wall of the Baptistry Chapel holds an illuminated Book of Remembrance, which lists the memorial gifts to St. John's over the years. Ornamental Eucharist floor candlesticks and two wrought iron lighting standards, from Mexico and England respectively, illuminate the space along with a small rose window in the east wall of the Baptistry, representing the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist in the River Jordan. An antique tapestry that originally hung behind the altar has been replaced by a contemporary painting.

The South Transept and the Liberty Chapel

The South Transept

The theme of the three circular south transept windows appears to be that of guardianship and the family. The center light shows Jesus with Mary and Joseph together with their animals, a donkey and a cow. One flanking window shows St. George slaying the dragon and the other the guardian Archangel Michael. The oil painting nearest the Chapel is a copy of Raphael's Sistine Madonna, and is reported to have been brought to California in a covered wagon. The other paintings in the south transept are a copy of Murillo's "Madonna and Child" and one of Corregio's "Holy Night."

The Liberty Chapel

The Liberty Chapel has been altered significantly from its original appearance. To honor the 192 men from Old St. John's who served in World War I, the congregation raised \$10,000 which was ultimately dedicated to the new structure. Originally the walls were finished in the same board-formed concrete as the nave walls. The white marble altar designed by the Reverend Davidson had been part of the chancel furnishings of Christ Church on Flower Street. Originally an altar of Gothic design, the Christ Church piece

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 7 Page 9

**St. John's Episcopal Church
Los Angeles, California**

Narrative Description (continued)

furnished the onyx for the Baptistry Chapel credence and the mensa and retable of the Liberty Chapel altar. The front of this reconstituted altar was recarved with a copy of the high altar figure of Thorwaldsen's Christ and the Greek letters Chi and Rho, symbolizing Christ. In 'A Pilgrimage,' Reverend Davidson reports that when Trinity Methodist Church bought the property of Christ Episcopal Church on Flower Street, it sold the chancel furnishings for movie props. When Dr. Davidson learned this, he bought back the altar for the subsequent reuse.

It appears that the Liberty Chapel was furnished from 1924 to 1968 with the communion rail and bronze lectern of Old St. John's. Only the marble altar remains. The 1968 remodeling was done in a style suggesting Byzantine chapels of the 11th century. Gold mosaic and brightly colored tile are used to depict a figure of the Virgin and Child set into a tall arched apse with a decorated extrados. An angel appears in each of the upper corners flanking the figure. On the west chapel wall appears the figure of Christ as Judge and on the east is a figure of Christ as Good Shepherd rendered in the Ravenna style. To the right of the Good Shepherd mosaic, a short stairway leads to the choir.

The original wood coffered ceiling remains. Judson Studios of Los Angeles crafted the three stained glass windows on the west wall when the chapel was remodeled. They honor the men and women who fought in World War II and represent all three branches of the armed services. The central window exhibits battleships with a protective angel. The theme of the guardian angel is repeated in the window nearest the transept, which shows airplanes in action, watched over by an angel. The flanking window on the south depicts soldiers in action with Christ in their midst as a consoling figure.

The Choir, Chancel and High Altar

The Choir

The stained glass clerestory windows on both sides of the choir relate the theme of sacred music. In the east window, eight angels proclaim words from the Te Deum. The arch of

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 10

St. John's Episcopal Church
Los Angeles, California

Narrative Description (continued)

the west window inscribes the next verse of the hymn. Mosaics in the west arcade show choirs of angels singing hymns and playing early musical instruments. Below the mosaics is the console of the 1925 E.M. Skinner organ built for St. Johns.

The Chancel

Calvert, Herrick and Reidinger of New York executed the marble and mosaics of the chancel, including the altar and triptych. The mosaics came from The Vatican Company in Rome. These furnishings were shipped to New York, assembled as complete designs, then brought to Los Angeles for installation by members of the firm. Wainscot walls and floor of the Chancel are of Sienna marble in a multicolor, geometric panel design. The central arch of the dome is executed in mosaics that depict the Four Evangelists. A prominent feature of the chancel are the eight silver sanctuary lamps, hung in front of the altar and just above the communion rail. Rector Davidson reports that he purchased the single model lamp, several centuries old, in a small village in Italy after World War I. Marbles of various colors quarried particularly from different countries form the small columns of the altar rail which has bronze gates.

The High Altar and the Triptych

The High Altar

The high altar and triptych are located in the domed apse at the south end of the sanctuary. The high altar is of tan Roseta marble with inlay of Verona red and Verdis green marble, and Venetian gold mosaic. Five crosses have been carved on the altar table. The center panel of the altar front is inscribed *Ecce Agnus Dei*. On the altar are two retabes and a bronze tabernacle. A hammered bronze cross inset with rock crystal, lapis lazuli and malachite stands on the tabernacle. Six candlesticks stand on the retabes: three on either side of the cross along with two larger Eucharist candlesticks. The medieval-style hammered bronze candlesticks and altar cross set with rock crystal, lapis lazuli and malachite were commissioned for St. John's. Behind the altar cross is a gilded design of roses and pomegranates.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 11

St. John's Episcopal Church
Los Angeles, California

Narrative Description (continued)

The Triptych

The carved oak triptych depicts the risen Christ reaching out to the people. "Art and Architecture Notes" reports that the figure is based on a 19th Century neo-classical style painting by the Danish artist Bertel Thorwaldsen. The inscription beneath the figure reads, "I am the way, the truth and the light." Flanking the Christ are statuettes of four fathers of the early church. Upper left: St. Ambrose of Milan; lower left, St. Gregory the Great; upper right, St. Augustine of Hippo; lower right, St. Jerome. Beyond the figures are six shields surmounted by crowns, which contain symbols, representing the crucifixion. A seventh shield above the Christ exhibits a pelican feeding its young. At the top of the triptych is the inscription *IHS*. A pair of angels at the outer corners completes the composition. The flanking lateral panels carry decorative designs in variegated colors and gold.

On the dome of the apse above the triptych, a mosaic sunburst has been crafted featuring a triangle set in a clover-shaped trefoil. At the center is inscribed *Deus*. The angles of the triangle point to the words *Pater, Filius, and Spiritus*, part of a circular inscription which has the words *non est* separating the Trinity symbols. On the arch above the altar and triptych appear the words, "I am come into the world not to condemn the world but to save it."

The Organ

Rector Davidson reported in "A Pilgrimage" that during construction St. John's organ donor, Kate Van Nuys Page requested him to telegraph an invitation to E.M. Skinner of the Skinner Pipe Organ Company of Boston to come to Los Angeles in order to build an organ for St. John's Episcopal Church. Davidson states that Skinner supervised the organ loft and built the organ itself, "stating that it was the finest organ he ever built."

St. John's organ was designated as the firm's Opus 446. Contracted in 1923, installed in late 1924, the organ was dedicated in 1925 by the church's organist, Roland Diggle.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 7 Page 12

**St. John's Episcopal Church
Los Angeles, California**

Narrative Description (continued)

Diggle was well known in Los Angeles and nationally as a composer for the organ and the writer of a monthly column in the organ journal, *The Diapason*. According to organ historian Jonathan Ambrosino, Opus 446 and Opus 430, the organ of Pasadena First Methodist Church, were Skinner's first high-profile installations in the Los Angeles area. St. John's organ "enjoyed great success and led to many other Skinner contracts in the region."

The Skinner organ at St. John's has been somewhat modified over time. Skinner added mixture stops to the Great and Swell organs and a Doppel Flute to the Solo in 1926. In the early 1970's the Abbot & Sieker Company reconceived the organ in Neo-Classical style. To assist congregational singing, an antiphonal division was provided in the rear gallery. The parts for this addition came from the organ of St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Los Angeles. St. John's organ console was recently renovated with modern features to facilitate the organist's recital. Ambrosino reports that these changes have compromised some historic integrity. However, restoration to a closer approximation of the Skinner console and sound is quite feasible. The Vestry of St. John's has now decided to make plans for such a restoration.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 8 Page 13

**St. John's Episcopal Church
Los Angeles, California**

Narrative Statement of Significance

Summary

Within the context of Period Revival Church Building in the West Adams Neighborhood of Los Angeles, 1925-1951, St. John's Episcopal Church, constructed between 1922 and 1925, and consecrated in 1925, qualifies for the National Register of Historic Places at the local level of significance under Criterion C - Design/ Construction - as an outstanding example of a structure embodying the distinctive characteristics of the Italian Romanesque Revival style in ecclesiastical architecture. It is also significant for the artistry and execution of its stained glass, mosaic decoration and marble ornamentation. The church represents the work of influential Los Angeles master craftsmen in the field of art glass and mosaics, the Judson Studios. St. John's possesses high artistic values as exemplified by its architects, Pierpont and Walter Davis, and its principal stone carver, Cartaino Scarpitta. Using Italian models and their European training, the architects and sculptor adapted the architectural and decorative scheme of Italian Romanesque churches to create a house of worship in the West Adams neighborhood that reflected the desire of St. John's donors and trustees for a church displaying a classical historic exterior and opulent interior, a building that would be an anchor of gentility and solidity in a continually growing and changing Los Angeles society. The outdoor pulpit, an uncommon feature of churches in Los Angeles in 1924, symbolized St. John's role as a religious institution within and of its community.

St. John's Episcopal Church was surveyed in 1997 as part of the Los Angeles County survey of the downtown Los Angeles area and found eligible for designation as a local landmark. It was declared eligible by the Keeper of the National Register of Historic Places as part of a 1982 project that widened Adams Boulevard and Flower Street for the Harbor Freeway on ramps. The structure is Historic Cultural Monument #516 of the City of Los Angeles. The church has an entry in successive editions of Gebhard and Winter, *Architecture in Los Angeles: A Compleat Guide*.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 8 Page 14

**St. John's Episcopal Church
Los Angeles, California**

Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

Historic context

St. John's Episcopal Church, located at 514 West Adams Boulevard in Los Angeles, first organized as a congregation in 1890. In that same year the cornerstone was laid. The congregation built a modest, wood-shingled Gothic Revival building in an orange grove several miles south of downtown Los Angeles. Old St. John's was consecrated in 1894. The wisdom of building a church in the remote West Adams neighborhood was questioned. Rector George Davidson, who presided over the building of the second St. John's in 1924, noted in the church pamphlet, Endowment, "No one, it was said, will ever attend a church so far from the city. But those who advocated the plan were men of long vision. They predicted rapid expansion and development and increase in population. They foresaw future greatness for Los Angeles."

St. John's was indeed in the right place at the right time. The church had over 2000 members by the end of World War I; 192 members of the congregation served in that conflict. By 1924 development had moved south down Figueroa Street from the central business core and the West Adams was a settled residential district of choice famous for its palatial homes and prominent residents. St. John's had become too small for its congregation and the Vestry and Rector decided it was their mission to build a much larger and more elaborate house of worship on the same site, a structure befitting its well-endowed parishioners and exclusive location. Over time, with this purpose in mind, the church had purchased several adjoining lots.

Present day St. John's church was dedicated on the third Sunday in Advent, 1925. Reverend Davidson reported that the Vestry and congregants of new St. John's determined "not to turn a spade of ground" until the sum of \$200,000 was in the bank. Although it was understood the church would cost more, its builders expected to raise the necessary money as they built. However, when the shell of the church was built and roofed, all money in hand had been spent and no further construction took place for a

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 8 Page 15

**St. John's Episcopal Church
Los Angeles, California**

Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

year. At this point, William Andrews Clark 2nd came forward with \$45,000 for the facade. This announcement got the project moving again and other St. John's parishioners donated sufficient money to complete the project. Six weeks after its dedication, the church, whose construction costs amounted to over \$280,000, was consecrated free of debt.

he list of donors whose memorial contributions made the lavish interior of St. John's possible indicate the prominence of its place in Los Angeles social, professional and business community. Philanthropist William Andrews Clark founded the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra and became its major patron. An avid book collector, his rare book collection is housed in the library he built on his West Adams estate and later donated to the University of California at Los Angeles. Dr. Walter Jarvis Barlow, the founder of the Barlow Sanitarium, which later became an important research institution in the study of respiratory disease, was an early influential donor. St. John's marble and mosaic altar, triptych and altar cross comprise the Isaac Milbank Memorial. Milbank, a wealthy businessman, developed the exclusive Country Club Park Estates nearby. Closely associated with St. John's were the families of Albert Hodges Crutcher and Hugh Livingstone Macneil. Crutcher was one of the founding partners of Gibson, Dunn and Crutcher, Los Angeles' pioneer law firm influential in politics and corporate affairs, and attorneys for Collis, Arabella and Henry Huntington. Crutcher's wife, Kate donated St. James' organ in memory of her mother, Kate Van Nuys Page. The brass tag on Pew 4 in St. John's reads, "Kate Porter Page Crutcher, 1869-1954, from the Altar Guild in memory of 50 years of devoted service."

Hugh Livingstone Macneil was the cashier of the Main Street Savings Bank and one of the oldest and best friends of the founder of another pioneer law firm, Henry O'Melveny, a civic leader extremely influential through his law practice and his interest in the Spanish/Mexican era of the city's history. Macneil's wife was Louise Slauson Macneil, the daughter of Jonathan Sayre Slauson. Slauson, the pioneer landowner for whom Slauson Avenue in Los Angeles is named, was a founder and developer of the town of Azusa. Louise Macneil also became an important donor of artifacts in the chancel in memory of her husband, Hugh Macneil.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 8 Page 16

**St. John's Episcopal Church
Los Angeles, California**

Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

Despite its wealthy congregation and debt-free financial solidity, St. John's was not immune from the Depression and changing population patterns in the city. By 1931 it was apparent that the descendants of the West Adams land developer, entrepreneurs and professionals, who had built and attended St. John's, had begun to move west seeking to build smaller and more modern, though equally valuable, homes in fashionable neighborhoods of Hancock Park and Los Angeles' West Side. In 1931 the Vestry and Endowment Committee published the pamphlet, "Endowment," in a massive effort to raise \$500,000 to fund an endowment for St. John's. The anonymous author summed up the situation facing "downtown" churches:

Today our church is strong, but it will not always be so, unless financial provision is made now for its future. As business moves outward and residential districts become more distant from the city, St. John's will be left without dependable supporting power...St. John's is already a downtown church. Before many years have elapsed its income will fall off. Transient worshippers will not furnish adequate financial support and, without sufficient care, the beauty of this church will be dissipated...Eventually its walls would crumble and be no longer a shrine for its superb memorials.

St. John's did raise an endowment. It has survived and kept its identity. The church building itself remains substantially unchanged, although it has lost property as a result of widening of Figueroa and Adams Streets and the encroachment of a freeway approach on its east boundary. The character of the congregation today reflects the multi-ethnic character of the surrounding neighborhood and its outreach to families of diverse origins, income levels, and alternate lifestyles. In 1994 the church celebrated 100 years of religious and social service to the City of Los Angeles.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 8 Page 17

**St. John's Episcopal Church
Los Angeles, California**

Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

Architectural History

The story of the architectural competition for the design of St. John's, which began in 1921, involves prominent architects in California, north and south, and one of the most famous church architects in the United States, Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue. As a partner in the firm of Cram, Goodhue & Ferguson and in his independent practice begun in 1914, Goodhue had become synonymous with church architecture and artifacts, particularly in the Episcopal denomination. In February of 1920, Goodhue received the commission for St. John's from the Vestry Committee. It was to be of Gothic design, fronting on Figueroa Street, with the altar in the east. According to Vestry minutes, all appeared to go well with Goodhue presenting sketches for the approval of the Vestry Committee and the Rector. However, in March of 1921 a dispute arose, as Goodhue did not feel his fee included drawing plans for the parish house. At that point the Vestry considered the contract breached; Goodhue sent his bill which was paid promptly and the Vestry Committee had to find another architect. The fate of the drawings is unclear.

The vestrymen then decided to set up an architectural competition. Entrants were the firm of Pierpont and Walter S. Davis, Allison & Allison, Robert D. Farquhar, Ross Montgomery and Reginald Johnson. The jury consisted of Ernest Coxhead, who had relocated his former Los Angeles practice in San Francisco, Rector Davidson and architect Edward R. Bergstrom. Winsor Soule of Santa Barbara and Walter S. Hobart of San Francisco were alternate jurors.

Minutes of the Vestry Committee do not reveal whether entrants were free to choose their own ecclesiastical style. In the event, Pierpont Davis' firm was chosen, and Goodhue's original choice of Gothic style was evidently abandoned in favor of the Romanesque. Pierpont Davis' travels in Italy to observe early churches appear to have been funded at least partially by St. John's. Robert Farquhar had a continuing and important advisory role in the building of the church. His name frequently comes up in archival correspondence, particularly with respect to decorative elements. In addition, Farquhar was the architect for William Andrews Clark and he had considerably more experience in

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 8 Page 18

**St. John's Episcopal Church
Los Angeles, California**

Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

monumental building than Pierpont Davis. Correspondence in St. John's archives indicates that donors Mrs. H.L. Macneil and William Andrews Clark required that architect Farquhar supervise work on their memorials.

Architects and Designers

Pierpont & Walter S. Davis

Brothers Francis Pierpont and Walter Swindell Davis had been in practice in Los Angeles since 1915, frequently collaborating with architect Henry Francis Withey with whom they shared offices at 3215 W. 6th Street in Los Angeles. Pierpont Davis (1885-1953) began work with Withey in 1912 when they won first place in a competition to build Santa Ana High School. After World War I, in which both brothers served, the trio received recognition for their residential projects in the Los Feliz area of Los Angeles and in the city of Santa Monica. Withey left the practice in 1922.

Pierpont and Walter Davis' commercial, institutional and residential projects include the Castelar Street School (1922), the award winning Anna Desmond residence (1925). In 1928 they were part of the Allied Architects of Los Angeles team that collaborated on the landmark Art Deco Los Angeles County/USC Medical Center (1928). Two of the firm's most widely admired designs, the Villa d'Este Apartments (1928) and the El Greco Apartments (1929) are considered masterpieces of the gracious and decorative Mediterranean Revival courtyard apartment type. An important collaboration in the area of public housing included the Davis partnership, Eugene and Lewis Weston, Ralph Flewelling and Frank Lloyd Wright for the building of Ramona Gardens Public Housing and Aliso Village (1941)

Cartiano Scarpitta

Little material exists describing the background of carver Scarpitta, or the length of time he had lived in the city. He did remain in the city after the church was complete since

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 8 Page 19

**St. John's Episcopal Church
Los Angeles, California**

Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

Rector Davidson states that he subsequently worked on Los Angeles City Hall. A letter in St. John's archives signed by Pierpont Davis authorizing him to proceed with the carving of the facade and central door tympanum stated:

You are being employed solely with the idea that the aesthetic quality of all sculptural and ornamental work will be improved as a result of your skill, experience and interest. You will prepare necessary full size models for the kneeling figures on the corners of the building and for the semi-circular tympanum over the front door.

No models were required for the nave to narthex tympanum sculpture. The contract required Scarpitta to act as supervisor for the carving of all ornamental stone surfaces, "and if necessary put the finishing touches on figure work." From the correspondence it appears that the Italian sculptor's expertise was highly valued and that he had been chosen for the strength of his artistic reputation.

Judson Studio

Los Angeles' most prominent stained glass artisans, Judson Studios, began work in Los Angeles about the time the first St. John's church was built. Their letterhead reads, "Designers and Craftsmen of Stained and Faceted Glass and Mosaic since 1897." The firm's founders, Judson brothers, Walter H., J. Lionel, and Paul, sons of art educator William Lees Judson, set up the firm near the Old Plaza in downtown Los Angeles. In 1920 Walter and Lionel Judson moved the business to its present location in Highland Park. The firm's written history reports that for its first half century work was balanced between the religious and secular, "between recreating the Gothic effect and working for Frank Lloyd Wright in glass and tile on the Ennis and Barnsdall houses."

Judson Studio's contribution to the church during the period of construction was the rose window on the entrance facade. The firm returned to the church after World War II to

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 8 Page 20

**St. John's Episcopal Church
Los Angeles, California**

Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

work extensively in mosaic, remodeling the Liberty Chapel, and adding compositions to the chancel arch and ceiling. In this period 1947-1960, the firm was responsible for much of the ecclesiastical stained glass done in the city. In 1977 Judson Studios again created a work in stained glass for St. John's, a clerestory window in the Liberty Chapel depicting the figure of Dr. Martin Luther King.

Architectural Significance

St. John's Episcopal Church qualifies for listing under Criterion C of the National Register of Historic Places as a structure that embodies the distinctive characteristics of a period style, Romanesque Revival; is the work of master craftsmen in stained glass and mosaics, the Judson Studio, and a master carver, Cartiano Scarpitta; and is a ecclesiastical building that possesses high artistic values.

The architectural organization of the church presents the characteristic Romanesque elements: basilica plan; aisled arcades with classical columns or piers, large areas of smooth, unarticulated wall surface above the arcades broken by simple arched windows; a transept absorbed into the design through the creation of a crossing; radiating chapels, a rose window; and timber-framed roofs.

In order to interpret the artistry and religious reverence of the Italian Romanesque in the new American city of Los Angeles, architect Pierpont Davis relied on elements taken from his model churches. He took the open timber roof of S. Miniato al Monte, Florence as his exact ceiling model. S. Pietro, Tuscania, which in its turn embodied the characteristic decorative scheme of the Romanesque, was integrated into St. John's architectural plan, echoing Fletcher Bannister's description of Italian Romanesque ornament: "[In that period] "In all parts of Italy Christian symbolism entered into decorative carving and mosaics." Thus the monogram of Christ, the rendering of the

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 8 Page 21

**St. John's Episcopal Church
Los Angeles, California**

Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

Apostles and their symbols, the emblems of evangelists and saints, fish, birds and trees - all were incorporated into St. John's intricate decorative scheme.

St. John's also qualifies under Criterion C as the work of a master carver, Cartiano Scarpitta. Trained in his native Italy, Scarpitta was an ideal choice to render the decorative sculptural carving that would make St. John's a Romanesque prototype. Nevertheless, Scarpitta's scheme is entirely original, as is St. John's itself. Being employed to improve the "aesthetic quality" of the work left Scarpitta free to render the symbols of faith and worship through his artistic vision, and to demonstrate the power of his art.

Finally, St. John's qualifies under Criterion C as possessing high artistic values. The church illustrates its builders, members and donors' desire to incorporate a variety of interdependent structural forms, ecclesiastical furniture, ornate service vessels, lights, stained glass and music into a harmonious artistic whole. Changes to the Liberty Chapel and memorial additions in marble and mosaic that followed World War II have erased the character-defining elements of the original chapel and constitute a loss of integrity in terms of workmanship and feeling to the immediate area of the Chapel. However, it is a well-defined space and no other portion of the interior has lost substantial integrity. The structure's exterior and narthex are substantially intact.

The essence of St. John's artistry has always been the contrast between its essential Romanesque austerity and the richness of its ecclesiastical furnishings. This contrast marks the house of worship as a structure of Los Angeles' West Adams neighborhood in the mid-1920s. The architects of the city were skilled in rendering historic elements; the architects' patrons had money and the intent to commission imposing and monumental structures. Both these historic circumstances came together in the construction of St. John's. The result was a composition of high artistic values that reinforced the church's traditional role in the community and manifested its social and religious purpose.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 8 Page 24

**St. John's Episcopal Church
Los Angeles, California**

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American Marble and Mosaic Co., to H. Ivor Thomas, Secretary, St. John's Church, July 14, 1924

Pierpont and Walter S. Davis to St. John's Church, July 14, 1925

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 9 Page 18

St. John's Episcopal Church
Los Angeles, CA

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 9 Page 19

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Los Angeles, CA**

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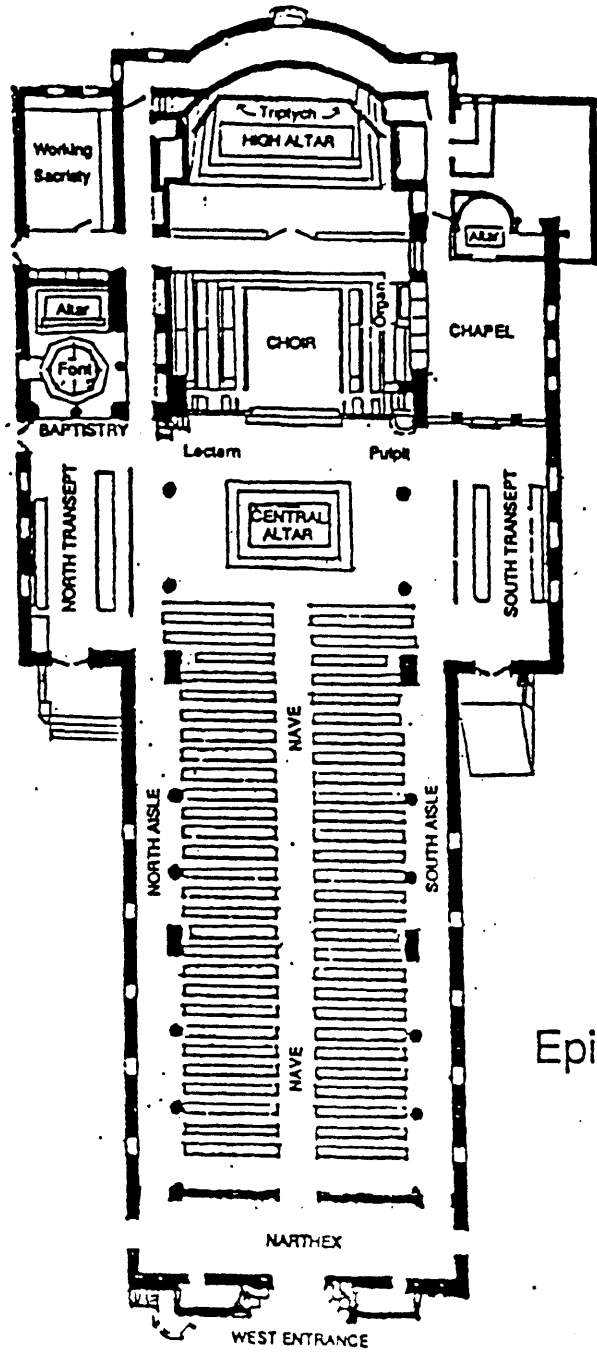
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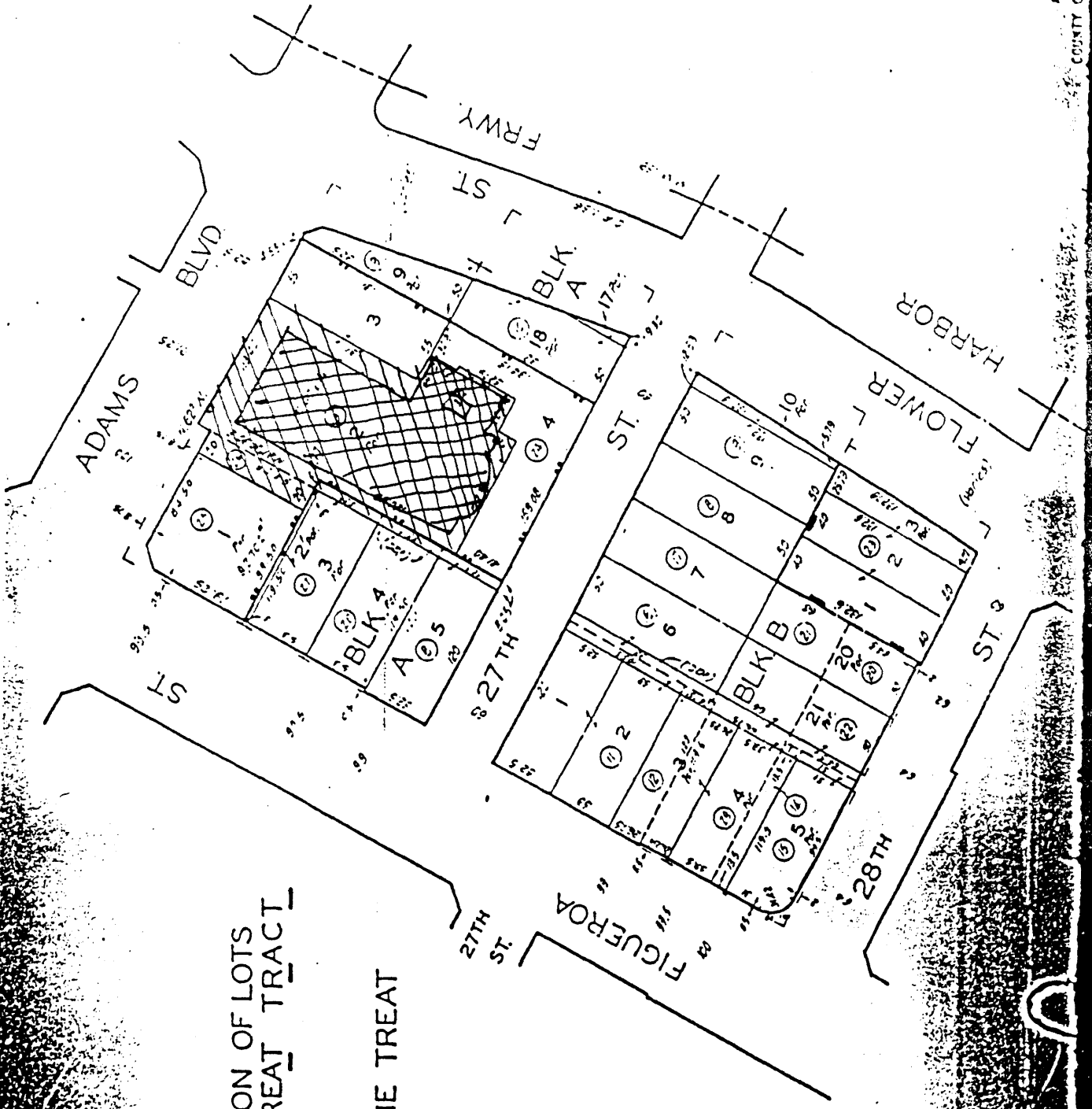
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