

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

received MAR 6 1987  
date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Al Malaikah Temple

RECEIVED

SEP 29 1986

and/or common Shrine Auditorium

OHP

2. Location

street & number 655 West Jefferson Boulevard

N/A not for publication

city, town Los Angeles N/A vicinity of

state California code 06 county Los Angeles code 037

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name Al Malaikah Auditorium Co.

street & number 655 W. Jefferson Blvd.

city, town Los Angeles vicinity of state California 90007

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Los Angeles County Hall of Records

street & number 511 W. Temple Ave.

city, town Los Angeles, CA 90007 state California

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Phase I Survey of the Expanded  
title Hoover Redevelopment Project Area has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1985  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Community Redevelopment Agency of Los Angeles

city, town Los Angeles state California

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date <u>N/A</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Occupying nearly a full city block of an area south of downtown Los Angeles which is rich in public and institutional buildings, the Shrine Auditorium is a large facility designed in a flamboyant Moorish Revival style. The principal volume, a cavernous rectangular structure which faces west to Royal Street, contains the nearly 7,000 seat auditorium and the Shrine offices, while a panhandle-like wing which stretches north to 32nd Street encompasses a 101,000 square foot exhibition hall. The exterior is a medley of onion domes, horseshoe arches, and elaborate filigree and plaster relief work. Not to be outdone, the interior is extensively stenciled, and the auditorium features a "tented" ceiling executed in concrete. While the building remains substantially true to its architect's visions, renovation and forced compliance with building codes have caused some alteration, most notably the enclosure of the outer lobby, the construction of a new ticket booth, and the removal of some exterior architectural and interior design elements.

Hailed at its opening for its innovative engineering and remarkable design, the Shrine Auditorium is a free-standing structure of reinforced concrete. Steel trusses support the roof and the auditorium balcony. Exterior decoration is executed in plaster.

The dominant portion of the west elevation, the facade of the auditorium is framed by raised end bays which are crowned by onion domes. Between them, five bays are defined by a two story arcade. Elaborate entablatures wrap the building above the second and third levels. A crenellated parapet is set back on the fourth level between the two domes, partially masking the vaulted roof. Paired Mayan arch apertures framed by columns in antis appear in the first level of the end bays, and are topped by paired keyhole window openings in the second. Balconies faced with reliefs have been removed. Triple arrow loops pierce the third levels. The domes, surmounted by the crescent and seal Shrine emblem, sit on receding hexagonal steps and arcaded drums. The colossal order which defines the main entrance in the central bays features Moorish arches which rise from impost moldings and paired, engaged columns. Capitals, moldings, and archivolt are all intensely carved in stylized geometric and heraldic motifs. Originally open, in 1977 these apertures were glazed with dark glass with a complimentary design of muntins in the arches and with triple doors at the street level. Intricate filigree work also characterizes the two entablatures which frame the third floor. This level is articulated by a continuous arcade of pointed arches with notched surrounds. Every fourth arch is blind, leaving three glazed openings in each of the five bays.

Set back to the south of the auditorium, the Shrine offices occupy the southwest corner of the building. Another Mayan arch opening is set into the setback of the auditorium and is perpendicular to this section. Two stories in height, capped by a continuation of the second floor entablature, the offices feature a centered band of five pointed arches on the lower story and a corresponding glazed arcade on the upper story. All of these openings have either been re-glazed or enclosed and a decorated balcony was removed from the second floor following the 1933 earthquake.  
(see continuation sheet)

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

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received  
date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number

7

Page

1

7. Description (continued):

Repeating the massing of the Shrine offices on the south, another two story high wing beneath an elaborate entablature is set back north of the auditorium facade. Round-headed windows on the second floor and flat-headed ones on the mezzanine are plainly detailed. In 1977 a new ticket booth was added to the ground story. Projecting forward of the auditorium facade, the booth repeats the carved cornice and Moorish arches on columns seen elsewhere on the original building. This facility replaces the ticket windows which were located at the south end of the outer lobby.

The south elevation accommodates a secondary means of ingress and egress and certain service functions. Like the Shrine offices, it is articulated as a two story elevation beneath the carved entablature. Above this level the plain concrete wall of the auditorium proper is visible, flanked by the onion dome on the west and a smaller echo of it on the east. Pointed arches delineate seven bays across the center of the ground floor elevation. Originally glazed in a combination of entries and storefronts with vertical striping in the tympanae, they have been variously altered or enclosed in recent years. Paired horseshoe arches, flanked by colonnettes, top these bays; balconies have been removed from the ends. The central seven bays are framed by two larger bays on either side. In the penultimate bays, clusters of four pointed arches, simply detailed, are topped by four round-headed arches with a continuous molded archivolt. Five openings in the end bays are varied east from west, with horseshoe arches and colonnettes on the upper levels and flat-headed openings with pointed pediments on the lower. A round-headed doorway is at the easternmost end. Nearly all of the openings have been altered, and balconies have disappeared from the end bays.

The principal facade of the exhibition hall forms the north elevation of the complex. It is two stories and edged by a carved cornice. Symmetrical in arrangement, the facade contains three monumental Moorish arches in the center. Clustered columns with petal-like capitals and carved impost moldings support the arches, which contain the original glazing in the tympanae over triple doorways which have been changed. Framing the arcade, penultimate bays are slightly raised and feature paired arched openings, now enclosed, on the upper level. Although corbeled balconies have been removed, the carved spandrels remain. Shallow reliefs in a design of interlocking circles also distinguish the tympanae of two additional entrances, located in the recessed end bays.

Six public spaces occupied the architects' attention on the interior of the Shrine. The outer lobby, once open to the west, is now enclosed. The five bay division of the west wall is repeated on the east, with triple doorways on the lower level and bands of horseshoe arched openings on the upper. These horseshoe arches preserve the scheme also seen originally on portions of the exterior, with colonnettes, carved archivolts, and bracket balconies. The tympanum of the lower openings has been embellished with carvings derived from those on the north elevation, replacing the original stenciling. Both walls and the beamed ceiling were also originally stenciled, and marble has taken the place of tiled door surrounds. The original brass and cast iron chandeliers illuminate the space. The inner lobby, its one story space

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only  
received  
date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 7

Page 2

7. Description (continued):

in dramatic contrast to the two story outer lobby, is lavishly decorated with stenciled boxed beams and ceiling. Original walnut, mahogany and oak checkroom counters have been restored. Arches of various shapes lead to stairs, halls, and elevators at either end. Rejas appear in the vent openings. The lobbies of the first and second mezzanines are similarly detailed, each with a different stenciled design on its ceiling. On the upper story, in the outer lobby, a museum is being created in the space illuminated by the third floor arcade. At either end of the room, murals with Middle Eastern themes are recessed behind two-bay arcades with carved spandrels. The principal alterations to the upper lobbies are to the openings, with grilles replacing casements on the first mezzanine and separating the museum from the inner lobby on the second.

Virtually intact with only minor alterations, the auditorium seats around 3,100 in the orchestra and 3,300 in a balcony which appears to rest on monumental corbels. Both walls and ceiling are extensively stenciled, with a trompe l'oeil tent from which the chandelier is suspended. The walls simulate masonry and a "clerestory" circles the space. Over a half elliptical, fixed orchestra pit, a smaller chandelier is suspended from a sunburst in the ceiling. Huge boxes on corbels, framed by spiral columns, face the pit from either side of a broad horseshoe proscenium arch. Organ pipes are hidden behind a screened three-bay arcade behind the boxes. Voussoirs detail the proscenium arch and murals featuring camels are located in the spandrels. The original fire curtain is still in use. Also original are the mushroom ventilators in the orchestra and some of the balcony seating.

Reached from the auditorium by a long, lighted corridor whose ceiling has been dropped, the exhibition hall is a 150' by 250' basilica-like space. Concrete arches with 90' clear spans, decoratively stenciled, support the ceiling. The arches spring from concrete columns which sit on a mezzanine which runs the length of the space. A clerestory and metal casements in the mezzanine are the sources of the natural illumination. Columns also carry the mezzanine, whose railing and soffit have been re-faced. However, the original grilles are still visible from the upper level. The floor of the hall is of narrow hardwood planks, laid in an elliptical pattern. Arcades terminate the space at either end. The original filigreed light standards which punctuated the balcony have disappeared, however, ceiling pendants similar to those in the outer lobby were rescued from the First Methodist Church before its demolition and rehung in the hall.

A monumental undertaking, the Shrine Auditorium is still evocative of the optimism and enthusiasm of the era in which it was built. The romantic and fantastical elements of its design are largely intact; the Shrine organization has indicated an interest in replacing some of those which are not, specifically the exterior balconies and the stenciling of the outer lobby ceiling. Intended from the beginning to function not only as a fraternal institution but also as a civic one, the Shrine continues to act in those capacities sixty years after it was completed.

Resource count: 1 contributing building.

# 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 checked="" 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 checked="" 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)

**Specific dates** 1926 **Builder/Architect** John C. Austin & A.M. Edelman, architects  
G. Albert Lansburgh, consulting architect

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

Designed by noted Southern California architects John C. Austin and A.M. Edelman in collaboration with eminent theatre architect G. Albert Lansburgh, the 6,700 seat Shrine Auditorium is a flamboyant monument which has served as the city's civic auditorium since its opening in 1926. The world's largest theatre upon completion, and still the largest theatre in the United States, the Moorish Revival edifice is owned and operated by the Al Malaikah Shrine organization, serving a dual role as headquarters for the fraternal organization and as a public auditorium. Celebrated for its acoustics, its unique architectural character, and its innovative construction, the 94,000 square foot structure has played a major role in the cultural life of Los Angeles.

The Shrine organization was founded in New York in the late 1880s, by two members of the Masonic fraternal group who felt a need for additional theatricality and social aspects in that charitable organization. This dual theme of charity and entertainment was carried throughout the country in the subsequent three decades, as branches of the New York organization began to be chartered. A Los Angeles chapter was chartered in 1888, taking the name Al Malaikah, reportedly signifying "The Angels" in Arabic. The group was immediately involved in charitable activities throughout the Los Angeles area, including support for child welfare and hospitals. By 1900, membership had grown to over 1,000, and the Nobles felt the need for a large social hall and auditorium. The city's major facility at the time, Hazard's Pavilion, was demolished in 1905, and many groups began to feel the need for meeting facilities. To satisfy the Shrine organization and others, the group purchased land adjacent to the fashionable West Adams residential neighborhood and the University of Southern California. In 1906, the first auditorium, a cavernous meeting hall, was erected. The building became increasingly popular as a rental facility, and most of the area's major banquets and expositions were held there. The fanciful two story Arabian edifice was destroyed by fire in 1920, creating the opportunity for the Temple to continue to meet the cultural needs of a growing city by constructing a major theatre auditorium in conjunction with an exhibit hall and banquet facility. Plans to rebuild on the same site were announced by the trustees in 1920.

The auditorium committee selected two of their fellow Al Malaikans, John C. Austin and A.M. Edelman to design the structure. This was the first, and only, collaboration of the two, and it appears that they had only their membership in the organization in common. Austin's work in Los Angeles include many important commissions, most notably Los Angeles City Hall, Los Angeles High School, the Griffith Park Observatory, and numerous commercial structures in the downtown area. President of the Los Angeles Chapter of the American Institute of Architects in 1913 and the Chamber of Commerce in 1930, Austin was a member of the Jonathan Club and other prominent Los Angeles organizations. Associated with Austin on the Shrine project was (see continuation sheet)

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property 5.47

Quadrangle name Hollywood

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

### UTM References

A 11 381800 3765300  
Zone Easting Northing

B                    
Zone Easting Northing

C                  

D                  

E                  

F                  

G                  

H                  

### Verbal boundary description and justification

Ex of sts Lot A Tract No 3330 as per Bk 36 of Pg 31 of Maps Lot 20 sub of the Dane Tract as per Bk 6 Pg 324 of M.R. and Lot 17 and SW 29.5 ft of Lot 18 Regina Tract as per Bk 6 Pg 106 of M.R. These are the historic boundaries.

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

state N/A code county N/A code

state code county code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Christy Johnson McAvoy/Leslie Heumann

organization Johnson Heumann Research Associates/  
Community Redevelopment Agency of L.A. date October 1, 1986

street & number 354 S. Spring St., Suite 800 telephone (213)977-1660

city or town Los Angeles, state California 90013

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature Kathryn Guattres

title date 3/2/87

For NPS use only  
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register of Historic Places.  
Alvin S. Brown  
Keeper of the National Register  
date 4/2/87  
Attach: \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_  
Chief of Registration

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**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only  
received  
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Continuation sheet

Item number

8

Page

3

8. Significance (continued):

Abraham M. Edelman, a native of Los Angeles who had designed several theatres and schools in the area. Among his theatre commissions were the Belasco (1904), the Majestic (1908), and the Adolphus (1911). It is probable that the Trustees suggested that the two members collaborate, Austin having no previous theatre experience. Even with two such prestigious architects cooperating on the project, the committee deemed it advisable to hire noted theatre architect G. Albert Lansburgh as consulting architect. Lansburgh, a San Francisco practitioner, is well known for his extravagant interiors and state-of-the-art acoustics, and achieved his greatest recognition as a theatre and auditorium architect, among them a number of Orpheum theatres, the El Capitan and Warner Brothers Theatres in Hollywood, and the Orpheum and Wiltern Theatres in Los Angeles.

The four story edifice that was created by this consortium, with Austin as the lead architect, incorporated theatricality in both interior and exterior. The Moorish motifs employed throughout had some affiliation with the Shrine organization, and these were amplified by the architects to heighten the theatrical and fanciful experience of the patron. The resulting 2.5 million dollar structure was extravagant even by the flamboyant standards of Los Angeles in the 1920s, and subsequent alterations have not substantially diminished its original impact. The engineering feats were well documented in periodicals of the day. As the nation's largest theatre, the Shrine claims some unique architectural and engineering records. The auditorium is one huge room measuring 185 x 150 feet. The proscenium is 102 feet wide, and the stage house is 70 feet deep and 190 feet wide. The asbestos fire curtain is one single steel-framed unit nearly a foot thick. The main chandelier weights over 3 tons and contains interior ladders for rebulbing.

The opening performance in January of 1926 was a mixture of classical music, Al Malaikah pageantry, and cameo appearances by such Hollywood notables as Douglas Fairbanks, Hobart Bosworth, Leatrice Joy, and others. The versatile theatre has housed everything from vaudeville to ballet, opera, religious convocations, and major television productions. In 1948 and 1949, the auditorium hosted the Academy Awards of the Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. Until the construction of the Music Center in 1965, it was the city's only major theatrical space. Its only rival, the smaller Philharmonic Auditorium, was demolished in 1984. The Shrine facility has played a major role in the cultural activities of Los Angeles for over sixty years and continues its viability today. An outstanding architectural and engineering achievement, the totality of its design gives the patron a heightened theatrical experience. Designated Los Angeles Cultural Heritage Landmark #139 in 1976, its presence is a major addition to the University Park/West Adams neighborhood.

United States Department of the Interior  
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National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

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Continuation sheet

Item number

9

Page

4

9. Major Bibliographic References:

\_\_\_\_\_, A Civic Need Fulfilled, Al Malaikah Temple Dedication Souvenir Book, n.d.

\_\_\_\_\_, "Erection of Group of Great Buildings for Shrine Involves Many Construction Problems" Southwest Builder and Contractor, January 15, 1926.

\_\_\_\_\_, "Shrine Edifice Opening is Set" Los Angeles Times, May 3, 1925, Part 5, p. 9.

\_\_\_\_\_, "Shrine Lays Corner-stone for Al Malaikah Temple" Los Angeles Times, November 16, 1924, p. 2.

Austin, John C., F.A.I.A., "The Al Malaikah Temple, Los Angeles" The Architect and Engineer, June, 1926.

Beanfield, R. McC., Assoc. M. Am. Soc. C. E., "Unusual Engineering Features of the Al Malaikah Temple, Los Angeles" The American Architect, May 5, 1928.

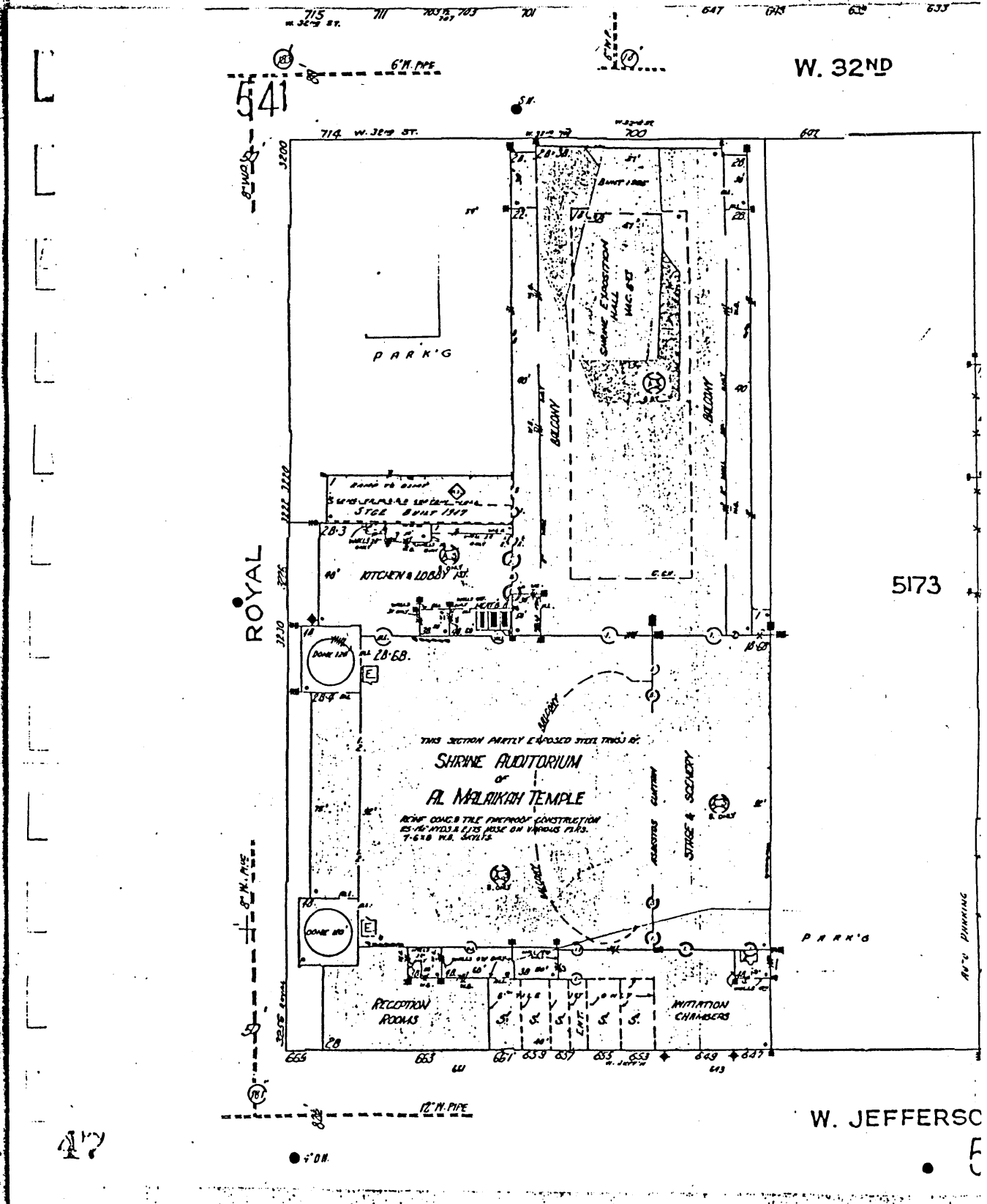
Cultural Heritage Commission, City of Los Angeles, File #139.

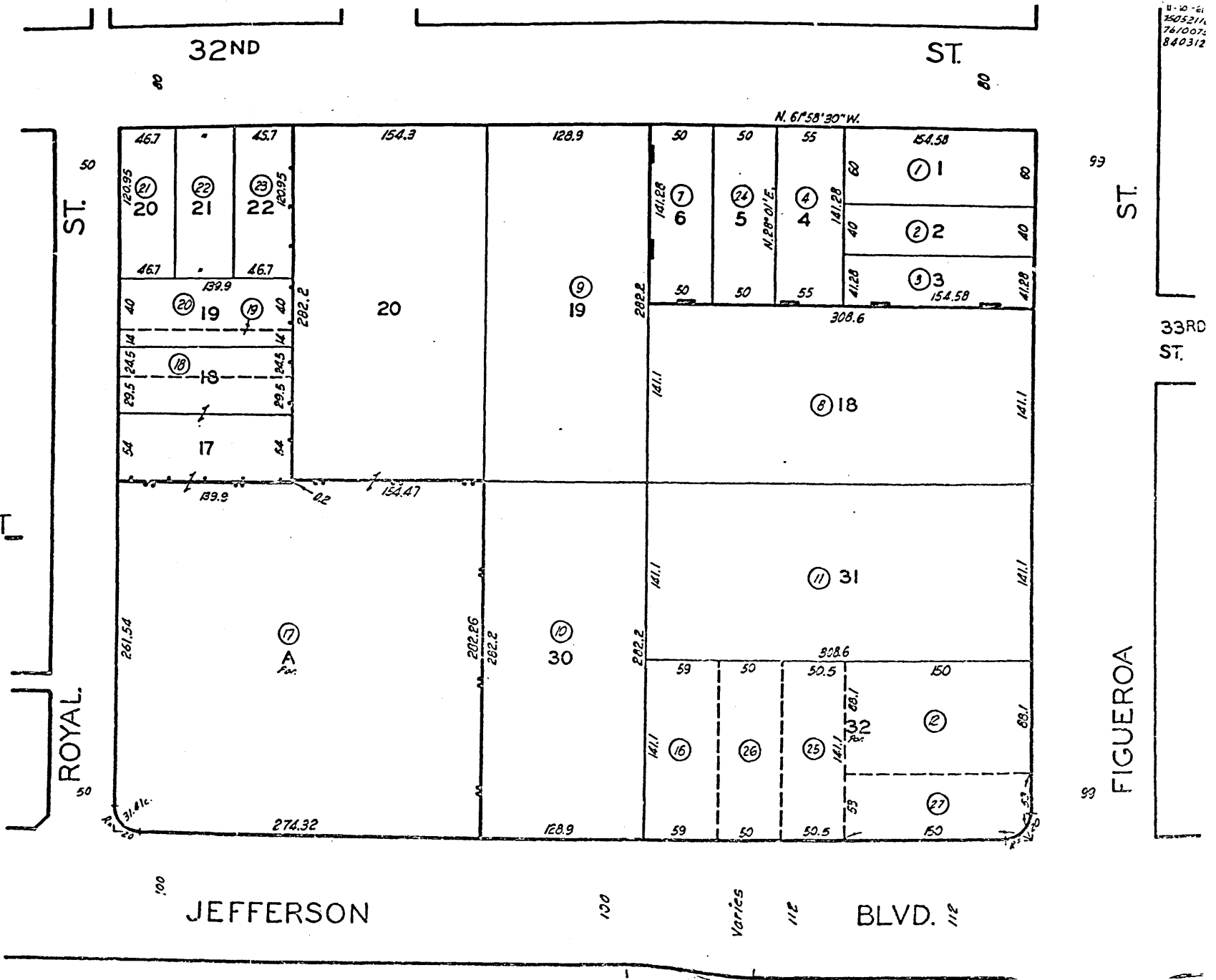
Stern, Norton B. and William M. Kramer, :G. Albert Lansburgh, San Francisco's Jewish Architect from Panama" Western States Jewish Historical Quarterly, Volume 8, No. 3, April 1981.

Wilbur, Cheryl Ruth, A Phoenix Comes to Rest: The History of the Los Angeles Shrine Civic Auditorium, 1920-1965, a dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction for the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Theatre History, (University of California, Los Angeles: 1971).



Al Malaikah Shrine Auditorium  
 647-65 W. Jefferson Blvd.  
 Los Angeles, CA 90007





THE DANA  
BLK. 22  
SRVEY

ACT.

MARBLE TRACT

- 64

3330

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647-65 W. Jefferson Blvd.  
Los Angeles, CA 90007