

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED
MAY 30 1979
DATE ENTERED JUN 27 1979

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 Fox California Theater

AND/OR COMMON Fox California Theater

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER 242 East Main Street

CITY, TOWN Stockton VICINITY OF 14th CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE California CODE 06 COUNTY San Joaquin CODE 007

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 type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Mrs. Philip Lawton Mr. Douglas Wilhoit, Sr.

STREET & NUMBER 523 S. Olive Ave. Rt. 1 Box 112

CITY, TOWN Stockton, CA 95205 VICINITY OF Carmel, CA 93923 STATE

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Office of the County Recorder San Joaquin County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER 222 E. Weber

CITY, TOWN Stockton STATE CA 95202

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Situated on the south side of Main Street across from the County Courthouse the Fox California Theater is an example of late Spanish Colonial Revival Architecture.

Located on an irregular site of approximately 100 feet wide by 300 feet deep. The exterior is dominated by a tower that was a fashionable feature for the Fox Theater chain. Affixed to the tower, the "Fox" sign was designed to be seen from great distances. Detailing of the front facade and tower reflect the Spanish-Moorish feeling of the interior of the theater.

The general plan of the theater structure consists of; a two story entrance rotunda with a circular mezzanine off which are lounges, offices and restrooms; the theater with mezzanine seating a total of approximately 2500; a stage 70' high, 90' wide and 30' deep; the lower level under the stage includes choir rooms, band rooms, offices and dressing rooms.

The structure includes several retail shops and offices to the south and east that are incidental to the theater itself.

Safety and luxury were major considerations of the building design. Reinforced concrete and steel are the main structural materials of the building that was designed to be vacated in two minutes.

Dominated by massive ornately decorated columns supporting the mezzanine and ceiling the elegant rotunda serves as the mood setting entrance to the theater. Curved stairs to the mezzanine were once enhanced by a bubbling fountain and pool that have now given way to a refreshment stand. The original mirrored chandelier hangs from the rotunda ceiling.

The theater itself is focused upon the stage with its colorful and detailed proscenium.

Huge painted plastered ceiling beams give the appearance of carved wood. The box seat balconies are elegantly painted plaster that again appear to be carved wood.

Considered gigantic when constructed, the stage was designed for both live performances and motion pictures.

Organ pipes one time occupied a double set of lofts on each side of the stage. The pipes were screened with two landscapes painted in oil on canvas that still remain in place.

Throughout the interior, beautifully executed detailing of painted plaster reflecting a Spanish-Moorish-Baroque feeling is dominant.

Special mechanical features include complicated stage lighting, electrical generator, automatic vacuum cleaning system, exhaust and air circulating system, steam heating system and modern motion picture equipment.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

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

SPECIFIC DATES Built during Jan-Aug, 1930 BUILDER/ARCHITECT Balch & Stanberry, Los Angeles, CA
 Contractor: Beller Construction Co. Hollywood, CA

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

There is only one other theater rivaling the true 'movie palace' characteristics of the Fox California throughout all interior California. The Fox theater and the Warnor in Fresno are the only two survivors in this area from the vast chain of Fox West Coast theaters that once operated 32 theaters in Northern and Central California alone. Stockton was always known as a 'good show town' and to help preserve and encourage this image the great theater chain established a facility here that represented more than an ordinary commitment. The Fox West Coast Theaters invested over \$500,000 in constructing this theater after they paid \$285,000 for the large, older T&D Theater that already occupied the site only to demolish it for new construction. The 2500 capacity theater was not built solely for the people of Stockton. This facility, the largest theater ever constructed in the city, was built also to serve and attract people from surrounding counties, including the Mother Lode. Upon completion it had the statewide distinction of being the largest Vaudeville house in California, a significance retained until eclipsed a year later by the Oakland Paramount.

Construction of this theater commenced during the outset of the great Depression and it is significant that over \$200,000 of the construction cost was spent locally for labor, materials and services. Such a commitment to the community developed strong feeling among Stocktonians, a spirit that has always been associated with this building and is once again on the upsurge. To build additional confidence among the public, extraordinary care was exercised throughout the construction regarding safety provisions, fire precautions and ventilation. Extra steel was placed in the structure of the balcony designed to seat about 900 and four times the required weight was applied to the balcony during a stress test. This and other features noted during construction inspired a city building inspector of the time to state that construction was performed in such a way that it was one of the safest buildings ever constructed. (1)

One of the major interior appointments was a \$40,000 three manual Wurlitzer organ with twin pipe lofts. Other interior features included extensive dressing room facilities, as well as band and chorus rooms under the gigantic stage floor measuring 90' wide by 30' deep. The 70' high stage was and is the largest of any in this region. Such facilities, installed with live performances in mind, were never extensively utilized. The reasons for this were the devastating effect the Depression had upon travelling road shows and the emphasis the management placed upon their affiliation with major motion picture studios and a commitment to feature "the latest pictures first". Some releases were shown here before offered in larger cities.

See Continuation Sheet #1

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

A History of the Fox California Theater, A History 10, Thesis by Vicki Lee Benton,
 San Joaquin Delta College, Stockton, CA May 1974, 34 p
Stockton Independent, October 12, 14 and 15, 1930
Stockton Record, October 14 & 15, 1930
Byron Times Development Edition, 1930, p 175
Stockton Record, Feb. 25, 1973 p F6; Oct. 19, 1977 p 1; Nov. 20, 1977 p F6 & 8
Interview, Philip Lawton, Feb. 5, 1979, Stockton, CA

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY .66

QUADRANGLE NAME Stockton West, CA

SCALE QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24,000

UTM REFERENCES

A 1,0 65,0 5,4,0 4,2 0,1 7,4,0
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C

D

E

F

G

H

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

See Continuation Sheet #2.

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
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STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
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11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Edward C. Merlo and Raymond W. Hillman

March 14, 1979

ORGANIZATION

Edward Charles Merlo A.I.A. (Sierra Valley Chapter A.I.A. Preservation Officer)

STREET & NUMBER

165 West Cleveland

TELEPHONE

(209) 465-9022

CITY OR TOWN

Stockton

STATE

California 95204

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL X

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

Raymond W. Hillman

TITLE

DATE

5-16-79

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

Edward Charles Merlo
 KEOPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

6-27-79

ATTEST:

OF REGISTRATION

DATE

6-25-79

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CONTINUATION SHEET 1

ITEM NUMBER 8

PAGE 1

When the theater opened on October 14, 1930, the city witnessed the greatest public celebration in terms of number of participants seen before or since. It was estimated 22,000 people crowded the streets that evening. Downtown streets and stores were especially lit and decorated, a temporary stage was constructed in the adjacent courthouse square and Kleig lights illuminated the sky. Several major streets in the center of the city were closed to accommodate the record crowds, less than 25% of which was actually able to enter the theater for the two opening performances of the 'talkie' "Up the River". The following day W. A. Fitzgerald, editor of the Stockton Independent, a leading newspaper, commented "The opening of the handsome Fox California theater this evening restores Stockton to its former prestige as one of the most important theatrical centers in Central California" (2)

The first of many celebrities appeared at the theater that night including Swedish impersonator and vaudeville and film figure, El Brendel; Irish actress, Maureen O'Sullivan, later to become famous with a role as Jane in the Tarzan movies and Marjorie White, a singing comedienne. Other major personalities to perform at the Fox over the years were Al Jolson, the Marx Brothers, Ted Lewis and Henry Lauder. The big bands of Duke Ellington, Paul Whiteman and Tommy Dorsey as well as the dance revue of Fanchon & Marco also came to attract theater goers.

- (1) Stockton Independent, Oct. 12, 1930
- (2) Stockton Independent, Oct. 15, 1930

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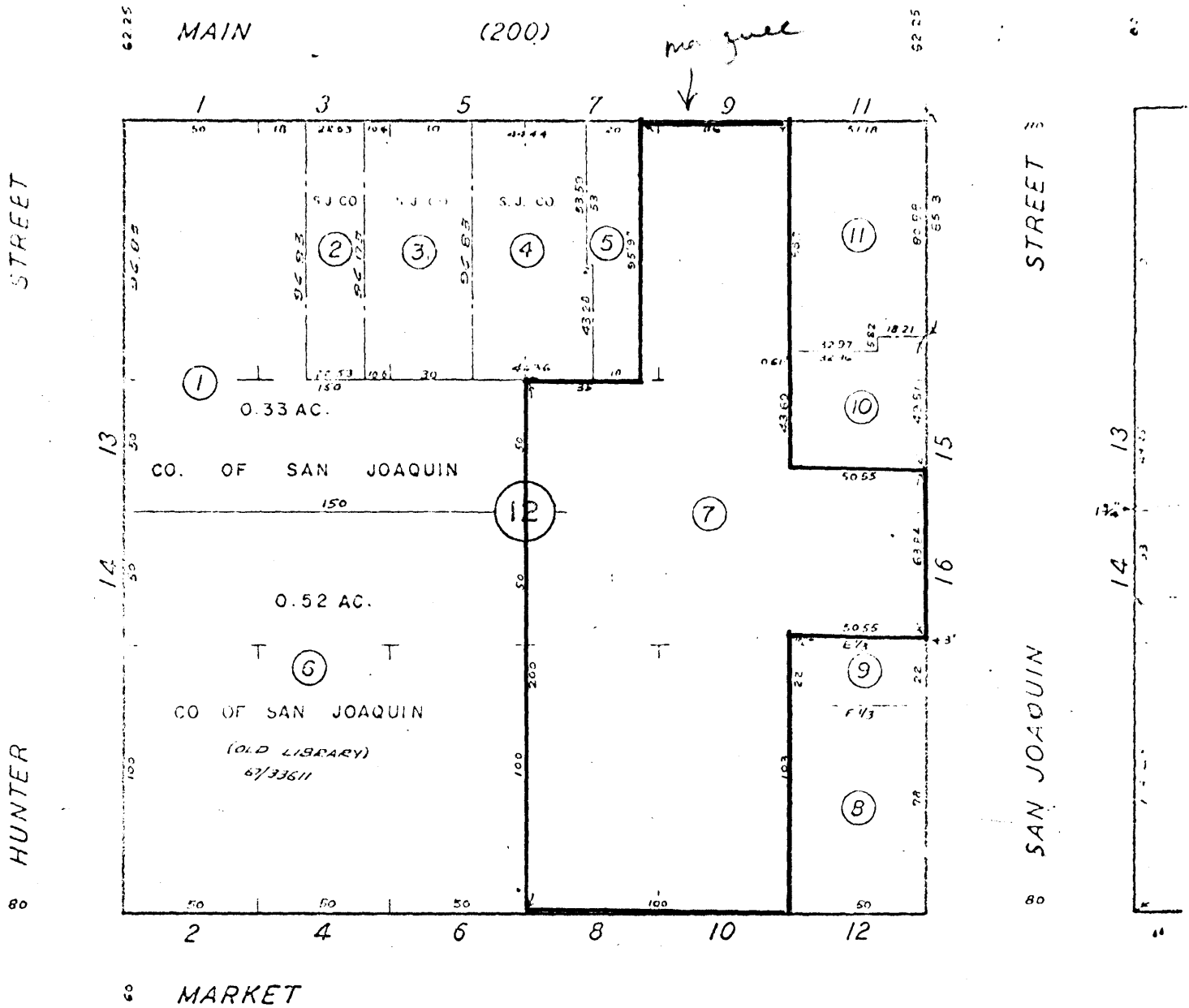
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CONTINUATION SHEET 2

ITEM NUMBER 10 PAGE 1

- 1st: The east 1/2 of Lot 8; all of Lot 10 and the East 75 feet of the west 100 feet of each of Lots 15 and 16 all in Block 12, East of Center Street in the City of Stockton.
- 2nd: The east 50 feet of Lot 16 in Block 12 East of Center Street, in the City of Stockton. Except the north 1-8/12 feet and the south 3 feet thereof.
- 3rd: Portions of Lots 15 and 16 in Block 12 East of Center Street, in the City of Stockton, described as follows: Beginning for the same at a point on the westerly line of San Joaquin Street, in the City of Stockton, distant southerly 134.64 feet from the northeast corner of said Block 12 East of Center Street, and running thence at right angles Westerly 50.55 feet; thence at right angles southerly to a point in the center of the north wall of the brick stable of James C. Gage as described in Deed dated March 17, 1885, made by Mary H. Mathews to H. O. Mathews and recorded in Book "A" of Deeds, Vol. 94, page 443; said point in said wall being distant northerly about 148 feet 4 inches at right angles from the southerly line of said Block 12, East of Center Street, running thence at right angles easterly through the center of said brick wall aforesaid 50.55 feet to the westerly line of said San Joaquin Street; thence at right angles northerly along the said line of San Joaquin Street to the place of beginning.
- 4th: The east 7 feet of Lot 7 and all of Lot 9 in Block 12 East of Center Street. Except the east 7 inches of the north 90 feet of said Lot 9. Also except the north 4 feet 3 inches thereof, as conveyed to the City of Stockton for additional sidewalk space.
- 5th: The west 1/2 of Lot 8; the west half of west 1/3 of Lot 15 and the west 1/2 of the west 1/3 of Lot 16, all in Block 12 East of Center Street, in the City of Stockton.



BLOCK 21

(12)

EAST OF CENTER

EAST OF CEN"

BLOCKS 12 & 13

SCALE 1"=60'

SAN JOAQUIN COUN
ASSESSOR'S MAP:

NOTE: Original dimensions are Stockton City
Standard-By U.S. Standard, lots average
50.50' X 101.1' and 50.50' X 151.50'

MAY 30 1979

REGISTER

1979

COURTHOUSE

6

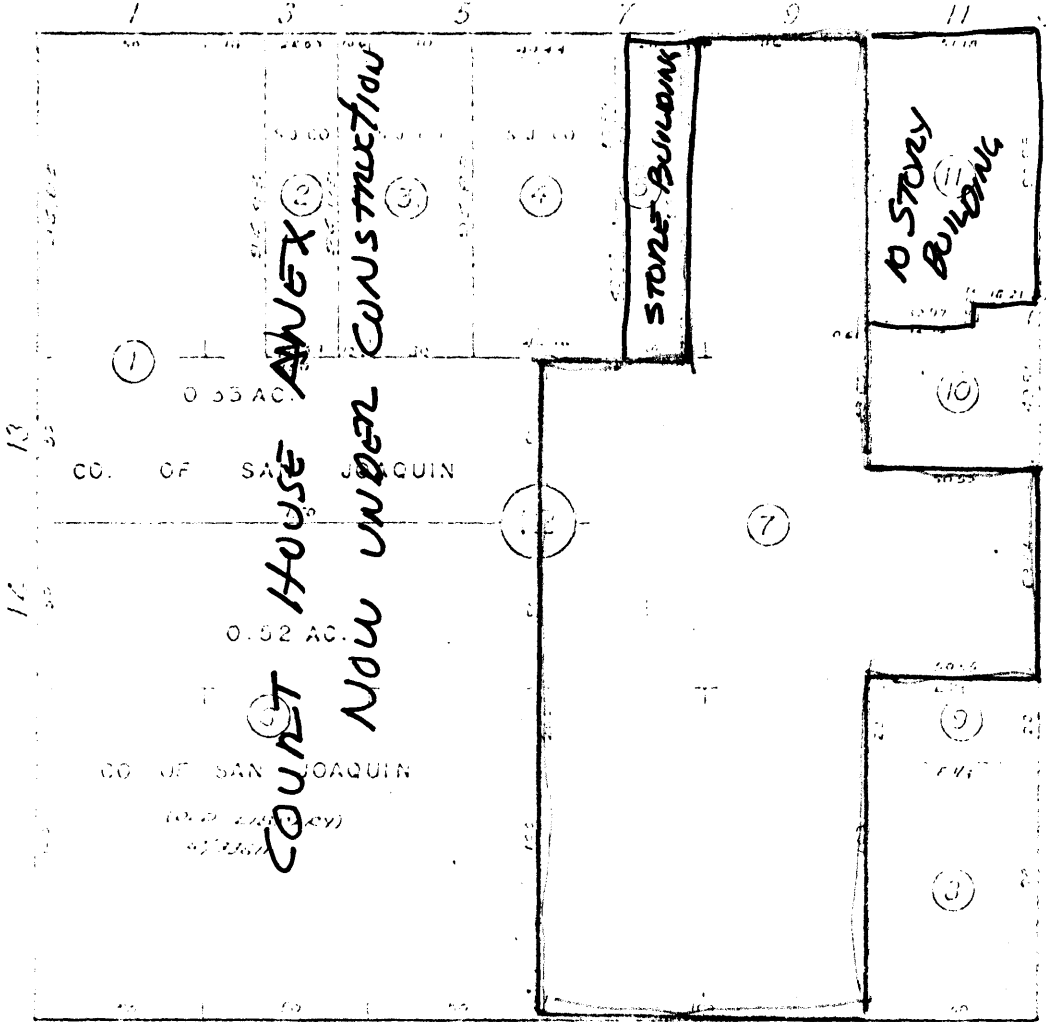
BACK ABOUT 100'

BANK OF STOCKTON NAT. REC.

5

MAIN (200)

STREET



STREET

SAN JOAQUIN

HUNTER

MARKET

BLOCK 21

2

3

PUBLIC PARKING LOT

EAST OF CENTER

EAST OF CEN"

BLOCKS 12 & 13

SCALE 1"=60'

SAN JOAQUIN COUN
ASSESSOR'S MAP

OTE: Original dimensions are Stockton City Standard 1"=60' by U.S. Standard, lots average 50.00' X 101.00' and 50.00' X 151.50'