

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED **OCT 31 1975**
DATE ENTERED **NOV 11 1975**

**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
Pasadena Playhouse
AND/OR COMMON
Pasadena Playhouse

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
39 South El Molino Avenue
CITY, TOWN
Pasadena
STATE
California 91101
VICINITY OF

CODE
06
COUNTY
Los Angeles
CODE
037
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
22nd
NOT FOR PUBLICATION

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	<input type="checkbox"/> ACCESSIBLE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
			<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
			<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
			<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER: theatre
			arts

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME
City of Pasadena (in escrow)
STREET & NUMBER
100 North Garfield Avenue
CITY, TOWN
Pasadena
STATE
California 91101
VICINITY OF

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.
Bank of America, Pasadena City Center
STREET & NUMBER
111 South Marengo
CITY, TOWN
Pasadena
STATE
California 91101

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE
State Historical Landmark - Reg. #887
DATE
July 11, 1975
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS
State Historic Resources Commission, Dept. of Parks and Recreation
CITY, TOWN
Sacramento
STATE
California 95811
FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

7 DESCRIPTION

17342 11/10

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

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Built in 1925 and designed by architect Elmer Grey, the Pasadena Playhouse is of Spanish Colonial Revival architecture. The main auditorium faces east, seats 700, has near perfect acoustics, a stage 72 feet wide and 36 feet deep and boasts an ambience of warmth and intimacy. It sits between flanking wings which surround a rough slate flagstone patio.

The north wing has two stories. The first floor contains offices and a 50-seat theatre opening onto the patio. The second floor, reached by both an interior stairway and an outdoor stairway off the patio, contains offices and two additional 50-seat theatres, both of which open onto a balcony overlooking the patio.

The south wing is one story and contains a large rehearsal room and a small kitchen.

Over the lobby is a paneled library.

The patio has a Spanish style fountain.

The building has a concrete frame with hollow tile walls and a cement stucco finish. It has a Spanish tile roof. It is located on the street and landscaping consists of several large trees on the patio and a row of palms on the street. Directly behind is a six story school building built in 1936.

The alterations to the 1925 building have been minimal. The two second story theatres were originally one large room. A removable thrust stage has been added to the Main stage.

The overall dimensions are approximately 100 feet wide by 200 feet deep.

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 checked="" 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

1925

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

Elmer Grey

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The "Pasadena Playhouse" with its adjacent "College of Theatre Arts" has brought international recognition to the City of Pasadena, has generated outstanding cultural attractions for Pasadena, and has produced a great segment of the trained acting professionals in cinema and television.

An excellent example of the Spanish Colonial Revival architecture in a public building, was probably the outstanding project of the architect, Elmer Grey. He also designed the Beverly Hills Hotel and, in conjunction with Myron Hunt, the Huntington Library and Gallery.

At the time of its opening, the Playhouse was termed an "architect's masterpiece" which "radiates warmth" by the May 18, 1925 issue of the Pasadena Evening Post. The Christian Science Monitor (May 28, 1925) said "For beauty, completeness and technical equipment it sets a new standard of theatre building in America."

In consideration of the Pasadena Playhouse as a landmark site there is validity in stating an historical and institutional preface to the present building. As a result of community interest and support the Community Players of Pasadena was formed in 1917 and on November 20, 1917, the first production was presented at the Pasadena Shakespeare Clubhouse. Later that year the Savoy Theatre in Pasadena became the official base for the group and the location became known as the Community Playhouse of Pasadena. In spite of limited facilities the Playhouse gained community support, accented by theatrical values, artistic integrity and participation at every level of operation by the community. It was this spirit and strength of community acceptance that prompted the campaign to create an adequate and attractive site for the Playhouse. The success of that campaign during 1923-4 was a tribute to the worthiness projected by the Playhouse.

With the world premiere of Victor Mape's "The Amethyst", the present Pasadena Community Playhouse was officially opened in 1925. It was termed by one and all a success and during the years that followed compiled an incredible record.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Gail Leo Shoup, Jr., The Pasadena Community Playhouse; Its Origins and History from 1917 to 1942, U.C.L.A., 1968
 Pasadena Evening Post, May 19, 1925
 Pasadena Cultural Heritage Landmarks published by the City of Pasadena, 1973
 Pasadena Area History, Manuel Pineda and Caswell Perry, published by J.W. Anderson, 1972, pages 47, 53, 65.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1.3 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A	1, 1	3, 9, 5, 2, 3, 0	3, 7, 7, 8, 6, 2, 0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Peggy S. Ebright, president

ORGANIZATION

Playhouse Association, Inc.

DATE

July 30, 1975

STREET & NUMBER

2990 Lombardy Road

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

Pasadena

STATE

California 91107

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

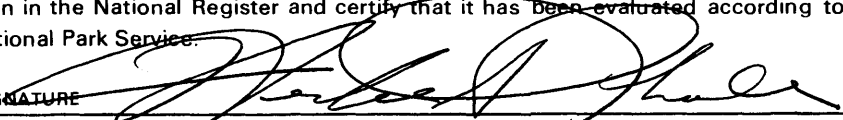
NATIONAL

STATE X

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



TITLE

State Historic Preservation Officer

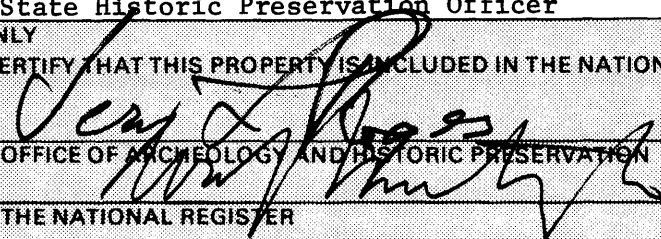
DATE

OCT 1 1975

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

Acting



DATE

11/10/75

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

NOV 6 1975

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER

PAGE 1

1. Extension of #6:

Title of Survey: Pasadena Cultural Heritage Landmark

Date: August 20, 1972

Local (City)

Depository for Survey Records: Cultural Heritage Committee, City of Pasadena,
100 N. Garfield, Pasadena, California 91101.

2. Extension of #8:

Over 1600 plays were staged on its four stages. World attention was achieved with the world premiere of "Lazarus Laughed" by Eugene O'Neill in 1928.¹ Playhouse policy pattern make possible a host of important world and American premieres providing a calibre of testing ground of play value that was highly prized by playwrights.

In 1937, under Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 17, the Playhouse was named "The State Theatre of California." This honorary action inspired a complete Midsummer Drama Festival devoted to the "Story of the Great Southwest", tracing western growth from Montezuma through the days of gold discovery.

The "State Theatre" title also inspired the annual week-long state One-Act Play Tournament and the State Theatre Players.²

As early as 1920 the Playhouse sensed the need for formal training in the communication arts and the Summer Art Colony was established. This growing need for training evolved into the College of Theatre Arts, which began in 1928 and established the pattern of a two year training period with an optional third year and a granting³ of degrees of Bachelor and Masters of Fine Arts with full accreditation.

The Playhouse was called the "biggest single supplier of Hollywood stars".⁴

¹The Pasadena Community Playhouse; Its Origins and History from 1917-1942 by Gail Leo Shoup, Jr., U.C.L.A. 1968, p. 202-204.

²Ibid., p. 308.

³Ibid., p. 270-274.

⁴Richard Tregaskis, "Prep School of the Stars" in Nation's Business, 41, March 1953, 43.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER

PAGE 2

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Form - Continuation Sheet -pg 2

Among those who gained their early training at the Playhouse and who achieved star status are:⁵

Robert Young	Eleanor Parker	Edgar Buchanan
John Carradine	Carolyn Jones	Kim Stanley
Lloyd Nolan	Dana Andrews	Victor Jory
Earl Holliman	Barbara Rush	Douglas Montgomery
Victor Mature	Gene Hackman	Laird Cregar
Don DeFore	Kim Hunter	Randolph Scott
Marilyn Maxwell	Robert Preston	Dustin Hoffman
Charles Bronson	Sally Struthers	Martha Hyer
William Holden	Raymond Burr	Louise Albritton
Lee J. Cobb	Gig Young	Wayne Morris
Ruth Buzzi	Onslow Stevens	Hugh Marlowe

And there is no attempt to list the many in the fields of direction, design or the technical areas of stage, screen and television.

The Playhouse was the first American theatre to have staged all of Shakespeare's 37 plays.⁶

The intensity of the Playhouse schedule over the years called for a new production every two weeks on the Main Stage. This year-round schedule was only changed during the production of a Midsummer Drama Festival, accenting a playwright or theme. This festival pattern began in 1934 with the ten Chronicle Plays of Shakespeare, done in chronological sequence for the first time in theatre history.

⁵Student transcripts housed at Ambassador College, Pasadena; also through interviews with Oliver B. Prickett, younger brother of Charles Prickett, Playhouse general manager from 1920 until his death. Oliver Prickett has charge of the extensive primary source material (scrapbooks, pictures, records, etc.) housed in the Pasadena Public Library in a special basement section.

⁶The Pasadena Community Playhouse by Gail Shoup, p 250-251

⁷Ibid., pg. 252

actors headed by ...
prestigious companies in the United States.

Serve as a showplace for the American Academy of Dramatic Arts/West which is located in Pasadena.

Serve as a showcase for the best plays to be offered from College drama departments throughout the state.

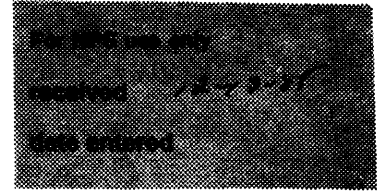
Re-establish the statewide annual one-act play contest.

Provide a home for the Pasadena Playhouse Alumni and Associates who will produce an annual fund-raising production on the Mainstage.

Offer an equipped television studio for varied television productions and to explore the field of filming plays for national distribution.

**United States Department of the Interior
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Continuation sheet

Item number

Page

Multiple Resource Area
Thematic Group

dnr-11

Name Pasadena Playhouse
State Los Angeles Co., CA

Nomination/Type of Review

Date/Signature

1. Additional Information
(Rec. 12-13-85)

Keeper

[Handwritten Signature] 11/2/85

Attest

2.

Keeper

Attest

3.

Keeper

Attest

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Keeper

Attest

5.

Keeper

Attest

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Keeper

Attest

7.

Keeper

Attest

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Attest

9.

Keeper

Attest

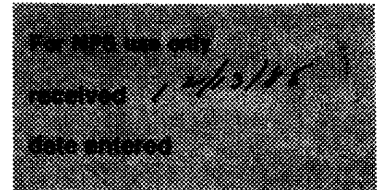
10.

Keeper

Attest

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

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

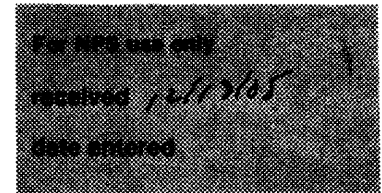


Continuation sheet Description Item number 7B Page 1

The six-and-one-half-story Fannie E. Morrison Annex to the Pasadena Playhouse was constructed of reinforced concrete in 1936. This annex was a much-needed expansion of the Playhouse, which was built in 1925, and provided the large spaces required in which to perform all of the technical, creative and visual elements of the large variety of productions presented by the Playhouse from 1936 to 1966. The upper floors housed the School of Theatre Arts, an integral part of the Playhouse for approximately 30 years. The annex wraps around the theatre on the west (rear) and northwest sides and is connected to the north wing of the theatre. The annex was designed by Cyril Bennett, prominent Pasadena architect, who designed several of the city's major buildings, including the Pasadena Civic Auditorium, the Raymond Theater, First Trust Building, Lloyd's Bank, Masonic Temple, portions of Pasadena City College, and many other buildings of note. This building was designed to be functional and utilitarian and provided the appropriate-sized spaces for various activities critical to staging a play or musical. The "ell" contains the stairs, lobby, elevator, restrooms for each floor. The first and second floors contain approximately 5000 sq. feet of scenery workshop area and a mezzanine where all technical services were performed for the main stage, including scenery design and construction. The basement area held dressing and locker rooms as well as mechanical equipment. The third floor was the location of the administrative offices where Gilmor Brown and other members of the Playhouse management worked and held executive sessions. The extensive wardrobe department used the remainder of the floor for sewing, dying, storing, and fitting costumes. The fourth and fifth floors contained rehearsal halls and classrooms. The television and radio studios were also located in this portion of the building. The sixth floor contained the cafeteria and a 3800 sq. foot patio-deck. A 6-foot parapet wall protected this area. The small section of building, reached by a short stairway from the sixth floor contains the elevator mechanism and two small rooms. All windows in the building are metal-framed with several rectangular panes forming large rectangular windows. A building permit was taken out for this annex in January of 1936; thus the structure will soon be 50 years old. Although this annex is functional and utilitarian, rather than decorative, it did provide the space needed for the Playhouse to produce larger and more complicated plays, provided room for the School of Theatre Arts which supported the Playhouse, and systems for more elaborate visual and scenic affects. The Playhouse and the Fannie E. Morrison Annex are interchangeable, with actresses and actors, directors, set designers, writers, costume designers, and technical personnel working in both buildings. The annex has retained most of its original integrity on both the interior and exterior. It will be rehabilitated according to the Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

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

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



Continuation sheet Significance

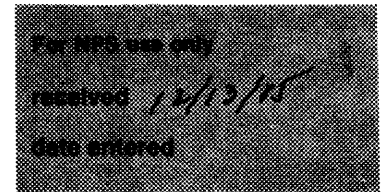
Item number 8B

Page 1

The Fannie E. Morrison Annex of the Pasadena Playhouse, built in 1936, is a property of extraordinary importance to Pasadena and the theatre arts. Its strong associations with legitimate theatre, movies, radio, television and the fields of scenic design, costume design, writing, and acting continued to be a significant force in the theatre arts world from its construction in 1936 until the 1960's. The Pasadena Playhouse, which began as a community theatre in 1917, with Gilmor Brown as founder and Director, evolved, through the years, into a professional theatre (by 1942), a School of Theatre Arts (1928), an accredited college (1936), the State Theatre of California (1937), radio performances (1926-1960's) and a television station (1946-1960's). The Annex was of great importance to the Playhouse because it allowed the Playhouse to expand greatly the activities it could handle for the years 1936-1960. It retains its original integrity, having only a few interior changes through the years. These changes consisted of radio and television control rooms and the addition of some accoustical materials, all added in the building's significant television and radio years. The Playhouse/Annex received local, state, national, and international recognition for its significant impact upon the theatrical world. On March 25, 1937, the California State Legislature designated the Pasadena Playhouse as the "State Theatre of California, 'citing as having"exemplified the highest standards of dramatic art and having brought national and international renoun to the State of California as a center of dramatic art." The Playhouse and the annex were intertwined to such an extent that after 1936 it would be hard to separate the activities of the two. Gilmor Brown and the paid staff had offices in the annex on the third floor. All of the conferences involving writers, scripts, costumes, scenery, directing and acting were held in the third floor administrative rooms. The building of the annex coincided with the elevating of the School of Theatre Arts to an accredited college, able to grant BFA and MFA degrees, in late 1936. The School/college continued to have a significant impact as a training ground for persons in all fields of dramatic art through the 1930's, 40's, and 50's. The annex's functional and utilitarian architecture provided 6½ stories of spaces in which professionals, students, and volunteers could learn about the theatre and exhibit their talents in their chosen field. Many went on to become well-known in their professional field. The Playhouse/Annex was associated with the lives of persons significant to entertainment history, during their productive lives. Among those persons whose achievements are illustrated are: actors and actresses, Victory Jory, Lurene Tuttle, Maurice Wells, Douglass Montgomery, Onslow Stevens, and Dorothy Adams, all of whom started at the Playhouse; Established actors who played there gratis were Helen Jerome Eddy, Belle Mitchell, and Arthur Lubin; Harrison Ford and Frances Starr were imported from Broadway; Charley McCarthy and Edgar Bergen performed there for a lengthy time; Catherine Turney, well-known screen-writer; Eugart Yervian and Herschel Daughtey, directors; Horton Foote and Mary Greene, director-producers; Scott McLean, successful scenic designer, and hundreds more. The plays of William Saraoyan, Eugene O'Neill, and Noel Coward were among those authors having national premieres of their works at the Playhouse. The Playhouse/annex is a symbol of Pasadena, a unique and cultured city. Unlike the typical farming community located in Southern California from the 1870's, Pasadena has always had a cultural social and educational environment able to interact and support such an institution as the Playhouse/annex, a relationship that lasted for more than 50 years. The Playhouse/annex has been extolled in letters, articles, and by the State Legislature. National Business, in March, 1953, called the school "the biggest single supplier of Hollywood stars" in an article entitled "Prep School for the Stars". The Fannie E. Morrison Annex displays integrity of association and illustrates a significant theme in our culture: entertainment. Its unique character, significant contribution to the development of radio and television, as well as the role it played in the theatre arts industry, make it a building worthy of being characterized as a building of extraordinary importance to the community, state, and nation.

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Continuation sheet Significance

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Prominent architect, J. Cyril Bennett, was responsible for several fine buildings in the Pasadena area. In addition to the Pasadena Playhouse addition, he also designed the Pasadena Civic Auditorium (with Edwin Bergstrom), Pasadena Masonic Temple, First Trust building, All-Saints rectory, Raymond Theater, The Board of Administration Education Building, Lloyds Bank, Edison School, Hamilton School, Horace Mann School, Pasadena Skating Rink, Pasadena City College (1936-37), California State Guard Armory, La Pinterosca, Library, and many prominent homes. He is mentioned on pp. 337 of Architecture in Los Angeles and Southern California By Robert Winter and David Gebhard (1977), for his design of the Moderne Penn Auto and Tire Warehouse which features a frieze of automobile tires. He is also mentioned on the same page as the designer of another Moderne building considered significant, The United California Bank at Raymond and Colorado Sts. The Renaissance Revival First Trust Building is pictured on pp. 342 in the same book. On pp. 348, his work on the buildings at Pasadena City College is mentioned. Completed in 1936-37, these buildings were built with W. P. A. money, and were designed by three prominent Pasadena architects. Mr. Bennett is mentioned in Who's Who in the West (1956) Carew History of Pasadena (1930), the Pasadena Community Book (1943) and California Southland, (1929). He was fortunate to have had his early training with Charles and Henry Greene and Sylvanus Marston, very distinguished architects. From 1923 to 1930, he was a partner in the firm of Bennett and Haskill; after that he continued in private practice for several years, having a long and prestigious career. Even though the Pasadena Playhouse addition was a purely functional building, it performed well for its intended use.

The historical significance of the addition is so intertwined with that of the Playhouse that it is sometimes hard to separate the two. The actors and actresses, directors and assistant directors, costume designers and wardrobe people, musicians, dancers, set designers and builders, writers and others moved freely back and forth from the teacher/pupil type of situation to performing artist or assistance with the final product. Not only did several actors and actresses gain success after learning and working at the Playhouse, Experimental Workshops, or College of Theater Arts, but also set designers, costume designers, and others needed to produce a professional-quality performance. The faculty was well-qualified and few compromises were made for the sake of a limited budget.

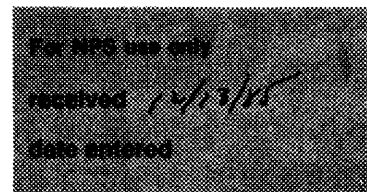
For over half a century the many achievements of the Pasadena Playhouse were a vital force on the American theatre scene. A careful study of the Playhouse reveals that certain elements worked together to make the theatre a success. Pasadena, with its unusual social and intellectual climate, was quite sophisticated for a small city. The winter visitors brought a rich cultural interest and the money that caused Pasadena to be called the "City of Millionaires. The social and cultural atmosphere is what caused Gilmore Brown, Pasadena Playhouse's legendary director and founder, to settle in the city in 1916. The unique temperament of Pasadena at the time of his arrival was an important factor in the founding of the Playhouse. This atmosphere provided an outlet for his very considerable creative talents. By providing substantial support, the residents of the city were able to form a solid base for a successful community theatre and school that lasted for fifty years.

The early settlers of Pasadena brought with them the education, social and cultural elements, and refinements of a civilized life, according to R. W. Farnsworth, author of A Southern California Paradise (1883). Arriving from Indianapolis in the 1870's, the members of the Indiana Colony, as they were first called, were interested in fruit experiments being conducted here. They purchased 4000 acres and laid out a very impressive

continued

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Continuation sheet Significance

Item number 8B

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settlement. By 1890 it had "grown into a city of 5000 inhabitants, with banks, daily newspapers, and palatial business blocks," records James Guinn in the Historical and Biographical Record of Southern California (1902). Pasadena had an active Board of Trade with over 400 members, including leading business and professional persons, and public spirited residents. They did an outstanding job of promoting the community to wealthy investors. A handful of very fine resort hotels were built and eventually filled with an elite clientele. Pasadena possessed an unusually high civic pride, as evidenced by the size and quality of its public library, churches and commercial district. An emphasis on art and education resulted in the founding of many fine schools, including the California Institute of Technology which was founded by Amos Throop in 1891. Many artistic and social clubs were founded early in the city's history; these cultural groups fostered the community spirit which nurtured the Pasadena Playhouse during the era from 1916 to the early 1960's. George Bernard Shaw, in 1917, wrote to Upton Sinclair that he had heard of "all sorts of interesting people being at Pasadena," and he would like to visit the place. Upton Sinclair lived in Pasadena for several years, and Mr. Shaw's comment was from the Sinclair's book, Upton Sinclair, My Life in Letters (1960). Several organizations, including The Chautauqua and Scientific Circle, The Browning Society, the Dickens Fellowship, The Shakespeare Club, The Fine Arts Club, and several music societies made Pasadena culturally alive. Pasadena was not the typical pioneer settlement, and reflected that in its cultural interests as well as its architecture. In 1883 Barney Williams opened the first Pasadena Theatre, with seating for 500 persons (J. W. Wood, Pasadena California: Historical and Personal (1917)). In 1889 Professor T. S. C. Lowe built the Grand Opera House at the cost of \$125,000. The Pasadena Standard of Feb 16, 1889 called it "the finest and most complete mechanico-symposium of stage devices on the Pacific Coast, outside of San Francisco."

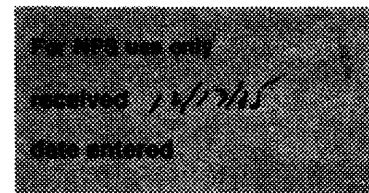
Community theatre was becoming popular for those who wanted to act for the sheer love of it. Predecessors of the Pasadena Community Players, organized in 1917, were The Pasadena Drama Club, The Valley Hunt Club, the Masker's Club, the Cue Club, the Young Women's Auxilliary of the Presbyterian Church, the Amateur Players Club, the Civic Repertory Club, the Tuesday Morning Drama Class and the Drama League of America. It is interesting that among these groups the Pasadena Community Players (later Pasadena Playhouse) would be the one to become internationally famous. Certainly the genius and talent of long-time director and founder of the Pasadena Playhouse, Gilmor Brown, must have been the element that made the difference.

The Pasadena Playhouse experienced an almost phenomenal early growth, rising from the position of a typical little theatre group to a position of international eminence. The Players were formerly organized in the fall of 1917 by Gilmor Brown. He had come to Pasadena in 1916 as the actor/manager of the Savoy Stock Company. When the company closed, several citizens stopped by to complain, and the Community Players was born. Those interviewed about those early days of the organization recall that it was a "period of great excitement and promise with a true community spirit". The social and cultural climate which Brown found when he entered Pasadena caused him to settle here for the rest of his life. It was the perfect combination: a man of considerable talent and a city of well-educated culturally-minded residents. The first production of the new group was a bill of four one-act plays which opened on the night of November 20, 1917. In the title roll of that first play, entitled "The Song of the Lady Lotus Eyes", was a young dance student from the Denishaun School of Dance, Martha Graham. It was she who uttered the first lines spoken by the Pasadena Community Players. "A Civic Enterprise" was the first motto of the Players. In an article in the Los Angeles Evening

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Express (November 18, 1918), Gilmor Brown stated that the theatre belonged "to the whole community and is designed to express the big art of friendship" stressing that it was not a commercial operation "but a playhouse for all recreational and artistic interests of the community." In "A Dream on a Dime," (from Ten Talents in the American Theatre, 1957) Mr. Brown said " It has always been my good fortune, or possibly my talent, to have the instinct or inspiration to discover exceptional people interested in cultural activities."

The Playhouse maintained a policy of close cooperation with many of the service clubs in the Pasadena area. They took plays to the servicemen at the Soldiers Home in Sawtelle, to sanitoriums, and Convelescent homes. Free tickets were given to the blind, the retarded, the handi-capped and some indigent citizens. Plays were given to raise money for the Community Chest and other worthwhile endeavors. In 1917 the Playhouse held an American Red Cross Pagaent.

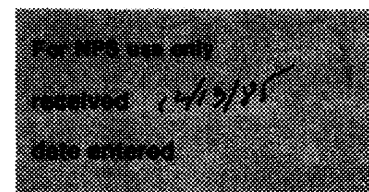
The Pasadena Playhouse reached a new milestone when, on May 18, 1925, it opened its new theatre at 39 S. Molino Ave. The new Playhouse was called "an architect's masterpiece which radiates warmth and hospitality" (Pasadena Evening Post May 18, 1925). The Christian Science Monitor of May 28, 1925, wrote: "Such a theatre it is! For beauty, completeness and technical equipment it sets a new standard of theatre building in America--a structure that will be visited and admired by all who appreciate the dramatic arts and realize the cultural possibilities of spoken drama as a community builder." The theatre marked its opening night with great excitement and the opening was hailed as "the most brilliant function the Crown City (Pasadena) has ever known" ("Epoch-Marking Pasadena Playhouse," Saturday Night May 1925). Partially responsible for the interest and excitement was the devotion of the entire community to the Playhouse. The activity which had most consistently proved the organization's deep involvement with the city's civic and cultural life was the five-year-long drive to build the organization's own theatre. The dream had come true with the assistance of hundreds of gifts, both large and small. Some were able to give only 50¢ while many made dollar contributions.

In 1936 a major change in the structure of the Playhouse was made with the addition of a six and one-half story building which was added to the west (rear) facade. The space was needed for the growing School of the Theatre and for the large production department. Fannie E. Morrison was responsible for the construction of the wing. Her generosity was felt immeasurably for several years. She originally had said she would give \$110,000, but was convinced to increase her gift in order that an extra floor and elevator might be built. In all, 40,000 square feet was added, making the entire building the largest of its kind in the world.

The added space opened off of stage right and formed an ell-shape around the north and west sides of the building. The first and second floors were used for the new scene shop, while the third floor housed all properties and furniture. The administrative offices for Mr. Brown and the other directors also occupied the third floor. Part of this floor was devoted to costume designing, storage, and sewing. The fourth and fifth floors were used as rehearsal halls and classrooms. The top floor held the cafeteria. With all of the activities under one roof, the Playhouse reached the heighth of its productivity. Norris Houghton remarked in the publication, Advance From Broadway (1941), that this little theatre was no longer a "little" theatre, but had become "big business."

Through the years the Playhouse product reached a very high level of artistic skill. Gilmor Brown had a special interest in new scripts. The Playhouse produced over 500 new plays, 477 of these were world premieres. Contests were often held to encourage new material and the winning play would be produced at the Playhouse. The American premieres

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of three Russian plays, The Main Thing by Nicholas Yevreynev, The Armoured Train by Vsevolod Ivanov, and Squaring the Circle by Valentine Katayev, drew national attention. The Playhouse had scooped the London and New York theatres by presenting these plays first. A number of celebrated European plays opened for the first time in America. In December of 1938 James Barrie's last play, The Boy David, was presented. Its star was a new young actor named Dana Andrews, who, as a result of the play came to the attention of Samuel Goldwyn and was signed to a contract. The American premieres of the works of both John Masefield and Noel Coward were some of the most significant introductions of new plays accomplished by the Playhouse. The strong community support the organization received during the fifty years the Playhouse was open was the main reason such ambitious projects could be undertaken. Hundreds of volunteers provided the manpower needed to produce such labor-intensive projects. The world premiere of Eugene O'Neill's Lazarus Laughed drew international attention to the theatre. The New York Herald Tribune (May 6, 1928) reported that O'Neill's drama "is so stupendous that it presents almost insuperable difficulties of presentation." During the 1930's a cooperative agreement with the Schuberts of New York produced several plays at the Playhouse. Musicals were also premiered at the theatre, although it was for dramatic presentations and the Shakespearean offerings that the Playhouse was most noted. A musical produced in the 30's called Hullaballu, a musical about Hollywood, created a lot of attention as movie stars flocked to the theatre to see the production. In April of 1949 the Playhouse took on the Herculean task of presenting four full-length plays which comprised Percy MacKaye's Hamlet of Denmark on four successive nights. On February 11, 1941, the Playhouse premiered William Saroyan's Across the Board Tomorrow Morning. The Playhouse and the school made a significant contribution to the development of new writers and new plays.

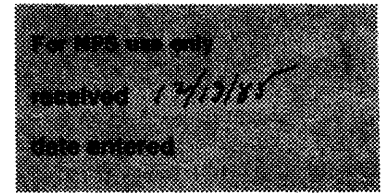
Newly-discovered acting talents, such as Victor Jory, Maurice Wells, Lurene Tuttle, Douglass Montgomery, Onslow Stevens, and Dorothy Adams were given a big boost at the Playhouse and School. Some outstanding scenic designers, Janis Muncis, James Hyde, Corliss McGee, Malcolm Thorburn, and Rita Glover, who was the first woman to be admitted to the Designers Guild of California, received their training at the School of Theatre Arts. The set design courses at the school had an excellent reputation.

Mary Brown, author of Theatre in the Round, in 1952 said, "the willingness of the Playhouse to experiment with all forms of productions has laid the groundwork for theatres everywhere." An earlier version of the Experimental Workshop was begun in 1918 and continued for 4 years. It was revived in 1927 with a new managing director, Catherine Turney. She later became a member of the first graduating Class of the Pasadena School of Theatre (1930) and went on to become a successful Hollywood screen writer. Sunday night readings were held at the Playhouse for many many years, and anyone who wanted to was allowed to read. The Playhouse gathered over 10,000 names for its files during those years of readings. When the Fannie E. Morrison addition was built in 1936, the Workshop was reconstructed as The Laboratory Theatre. Over 250 plays were produced by the Laboratory Theatre. In February of 1938, Albert McCleery, a staff writer for Stage cited the Laboratory Theatre as foremost among the experimental theatres of this country." The annual Palm Award was presented to this theatre in both 1937 and 1938. The excellent reputation earned by the Experimental Workshop and the Laboratory Theatre was established by the high calibre of productions mounted by those groups. These workshops were intertwined with the School of the Theatre which was held in the Fannie Morrison annex (addition).

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An early version of the School of Theatre Arts was begun in January of 1920 and continued through 1924. Students could receive college credits through the University of California. In a brochure announcing the 1922 session, a new program was introduced emphasizing classes for Community Drama Directors. This action brought older people to the school. In 1927, after the new theatre was opened, the Board of Directors approved a plan for a new drama school. In 1928 the Playhouse offered its first courses after Harriet Hurst donated \$5000 for the project. Soon the school was not only paying its own way, but was contributing much to the support of the Theatre activities. The treasurer of the Playhouse Association, in the annual report for 1934, told the membership: "I cannot stress too strongly what a financial help the School of the Theatre has been in taking up some of the slack in the past year's shrinkage of box office receipts.... (It) is an ever present help in preserving our financial balance." The training offered in the school was built on the basic concept, "Learn by Doing" and was a sound philosophy for education in the performing arts.

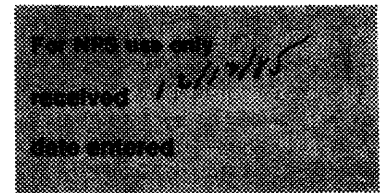
According to Gail Shoup Jr., who was Director of the School of Theatre Arts from 1955 until 1965, strong ties developed between the Playhouse and the motion picture industry. This was aided by the close geographical proximity to Hollywood. The Playhouse helped the movie industry by improving the raw material for picture production, making available new talent for every department of stage and screen. The film colony observed the Playhouse closely, especially in its regard to original material. Some of those who graduated from the School of Theatre Arts in the 1930's and went on to fame and fortune were Catherine Turney, a screen writer; Eugart Yervian, a director; Scott McLean, scenic designer; Herschel Daughtey, film director-producer; Horton Foote and Mary Green, director-producers, and Norman Philbrick, who joined the staff of Stanford University and was known for his work in education television. A letter from Fred Koch on April 16, 1943 cites the "fine things about your School there" illustrates that the school, and later the College of Theatre Arts has earned great respect in the field of drama and educational theatre. Many actors and actresses appeared in Playhouse productions. In Hollywood Life, Arthur Luken, Helen Jerome Eddy and Belle Mitchell all talked about the value of playing "legit" again. In 1931, Harrison Ford and Frances Starr were brought out from New York by the Playhouse to perform in Barrie's What Every Woman Knows for four weeks. The Motion Picture Director (March 1926) observed that the Pasadena Community Playhouse "draws upon professional talent to a degree, and in turn has furnished "discoveries" to the professional stage ". Richard Tregaskis in "Prep School of the Stars" in National Business (March 1953) commented that the Playhouse is "the biggest single supplier of Hollywood stars." Gail Shoup has said that the Playhouse had a product to offer the movie industry in an era when stock companies had declined and university drama departments were not yet as active as they are today. The liason between the Playhouse and School and the movie industry was a long and important one.

The Playhouse and School gave its first radio performance on July 21, 1923, over Station KHJ. A two-hour program of variety acts was featured. On the following day, the Los Angeles Times carried a review by Ben Markson entitled, "Players Give Art by Radio". Numerous letters of commendation, including one from Hawaii, asked that the program be repeated and continue with similar ones. When the School presented The Merchant of Venice over KHJ, it was thought to be the first time anywhere that Shakespeare has been presented via radio. From time to time similar programs were presented. Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy broadcast from the Playhouse regularly for a long period of time. The students working for experience in radio gave weekly broadcasts over stations KXLA and KWKW. On April 25, 1957, the head of NBC, Robert Sarnoff,

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in a letter to Gilmore Brown, said, Broadcasting, as well as theatre and motion pictures, is richer for the talent discovered and developed by your project. Your graduates are seen everywhere in our industry and they, themselves, are your most loyal boosters." The radio work done in the 40's led to the school's significant contribution to the television industry during those exciting days of its infancy in the 1940's, 50's, and early 60's.

A conference with the Times-Mirror Company (owner of the Los Angeles Times) in May of 1946 resulted in an agreement to participate together in a then-infant industry known as television. The Playhouse converted a portion of the fifth floor into a television studio and control room and the Times-Mirror Company purchased the equipment. Students helped set up the equipment. By 1948 the Playhouse, in association with the Los Angeles Times, was telecasting on station KTTV. By the early 50's Albert McCleery (an executive producer with NBC) reported, in an interview with Gail Shoup Jr. on May 28, 1967, the Playhouse had "an active aggressive T. V. department that "made real contributions to the industry during the prime years when most productions were done on a "live" basis."

Gail Shoup Jr., Director of the School of Theatre Arts from 1955-1965 notes that, "although the Playhouse had originally been founded as a Community Theatre, its influences gradually spread beyond the limits of Pasadena until eventually it was officially designated as The State Theatre of California, primarily in recognition of the significance of its work." (1937). Officials of the State were quite aware of the increasing stature of the Playhouse during these prime years. Recognizing that the organization had "brought national and international renown to the State of California as a center of dramatic art," the legislature resolved on March 25, 1937, to confer upon the Pasadena Community Playhouse the honorary title of The State Theatre of California." (Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 17).

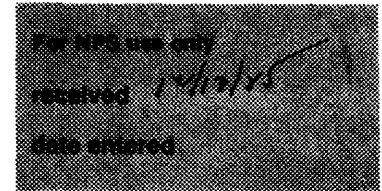
The Pasadena Playhouse and School initiated several touring programs through the years, which contributed to the designation by the State in the above-mentioned paragraph. The first touring program occurred in 1928 when the company took productions to Pomona, Santa Paula, Santa Maria, Carmel, Palo Alto, and San Francisco. They motored in "eight machines and two trucks," covering 1200 miles and appearing before 7600 persons. The next company to tour called themselves the Goldwyn Players, after Sam Goldwyn. During the 1930's they appeared in motion picture houses and presented sketches and plays between the movies. From 1928 until 1935, the School used the Padua Hills Theatre in Claremont to put on plays four nights a week. Later, a group of post graduates from the School of the Theatre Arts began in November of 1940 to tour as the El Pablo Players. In the late 40's, the school's third-year student company, known as the State Theatre Players toured 61 cities.

In December of 1937 the Playhouse established a record as the only theatre in America to have given the entire Shakespearean canon.

The Playhouse and School had changed from an amateur community players theatre to a professional group. In 1937 corporate changes resulted in the formation of the Pasadena Playhouse Association, completely dropping the word "Community" from its name. On May 22, 1942, after a five-year struggle with the demands from Actors' Equity Association, the Playhouse signed a contract which ended its quasi-amateur status, and from that time until its closure for non-payment of taxes by the IRS (1966), it functioned as a union theatre.

On November 15, 1937, Elmer Rice commented in a letter to Gilmore Brown, "I think your theatre is one of the few in the country that is really worth talking about."

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Because of its high visibility, its national and international fame, the Pasadena Playhouse and School of Theatre Arts has been the subject of a substantial amount of press, and the subject of many articles, letters, and studies. An entire room in the Pasadena Public Library is filled with the Playhouse archives, including letters from many famous persons. The Playhouse and School appear to have been the most discussed, dissected, observed and written about organization on the West Coast.

Studies written about the Playhouse from the 1920's until the present time indicate that there has always been a fascination with the Playhouse. In the early 1980's a revival of that interest is evidenced by several new publications and dissertations.

Included below are some of the works about the Playhouse.

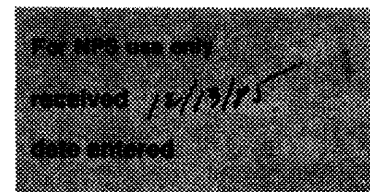
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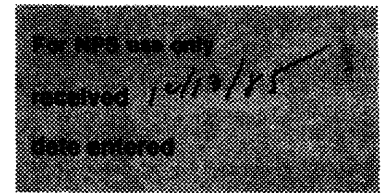
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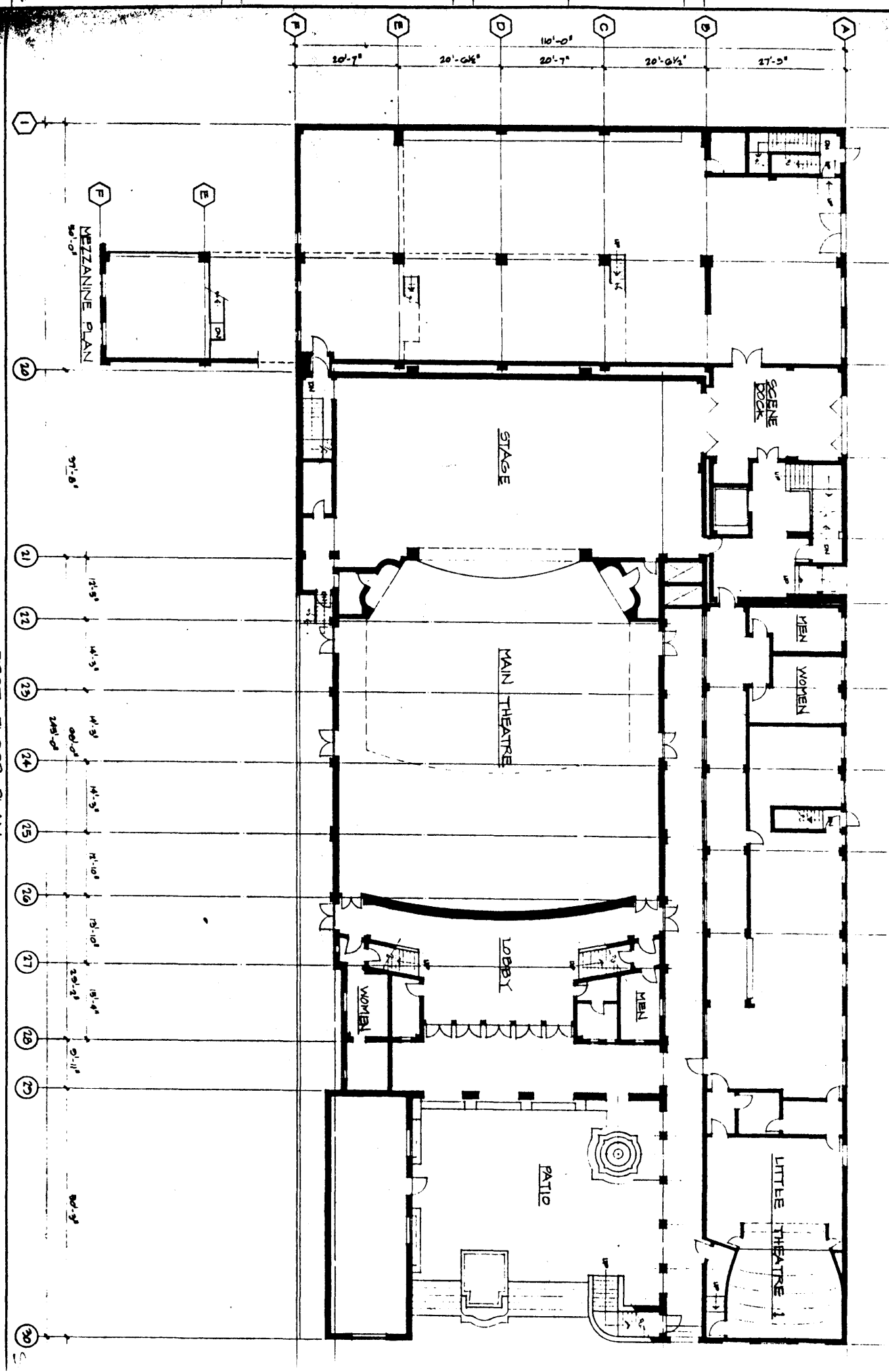
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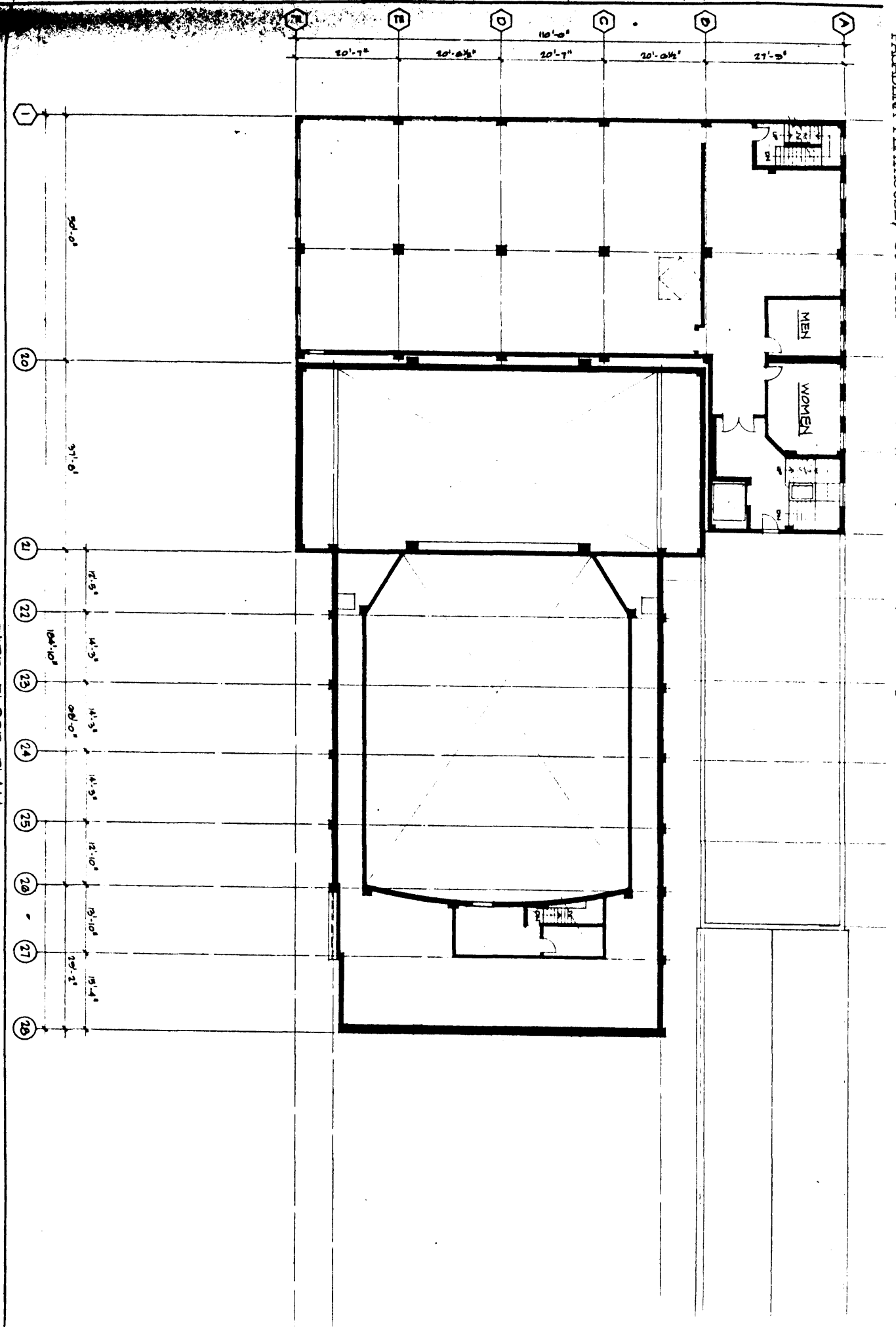
Prepared for:
Houk Development Co.
411 West Fifth St.
Los Angeles, CA 90013
213/624-8088

PASADENA PLAYHOUSE, 39 South El Molino Avenue, Pasadena, Los Angeles County, California



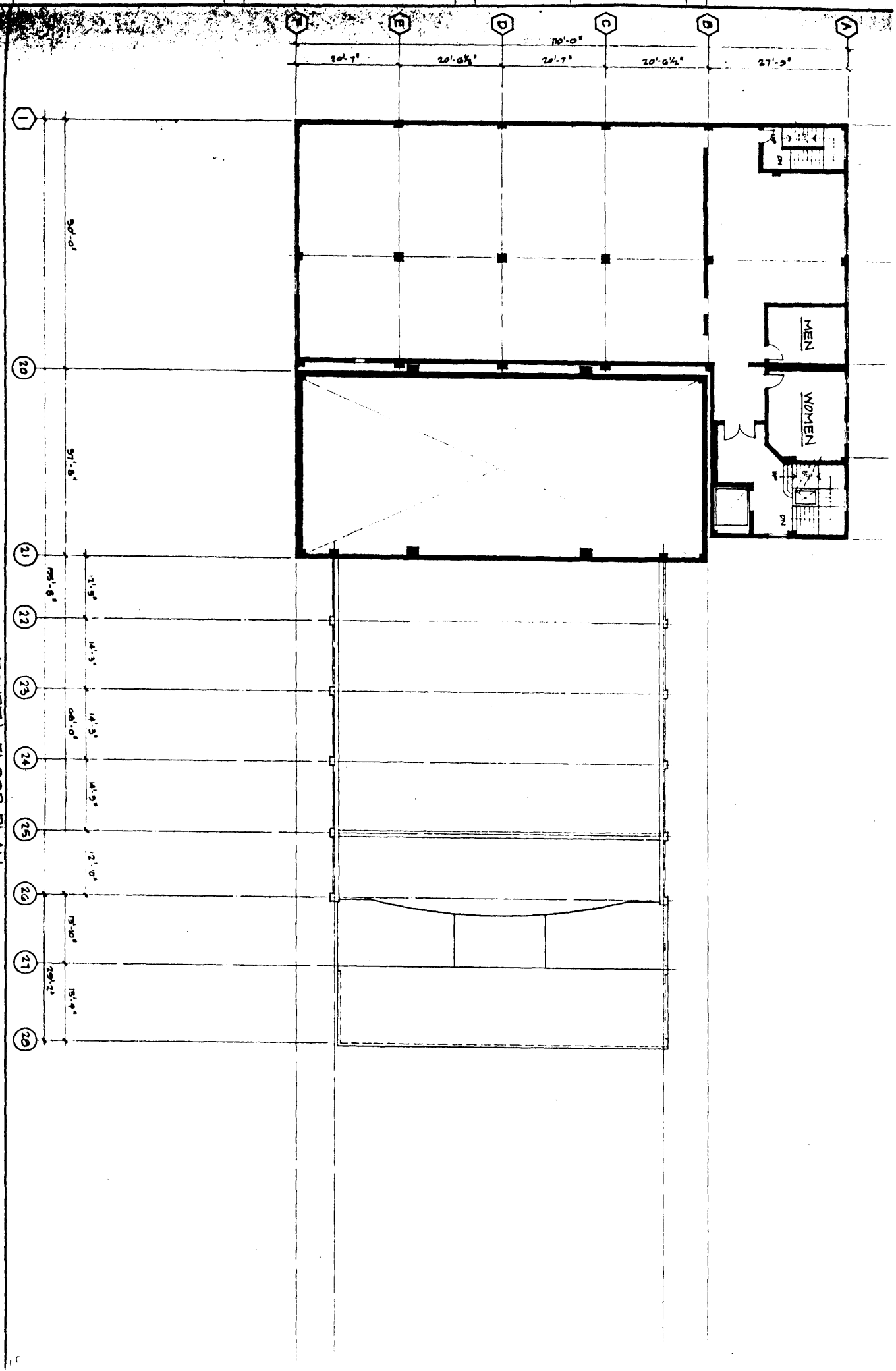
FIRST FLOOR PLAN

PASADENA PLAYHOUSE, 39 South El Molino Avenue, Pasadena, Los Angeles County, California



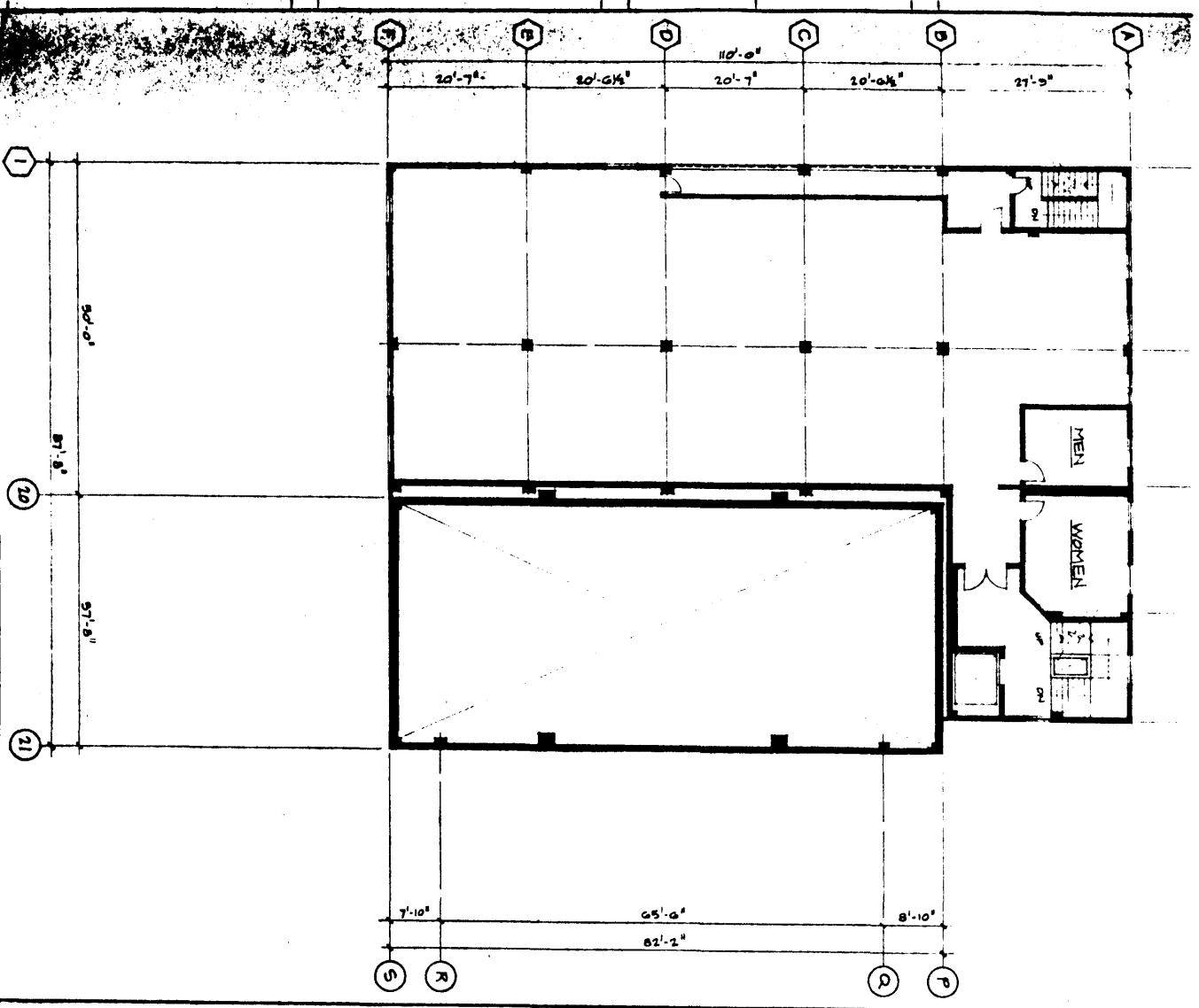
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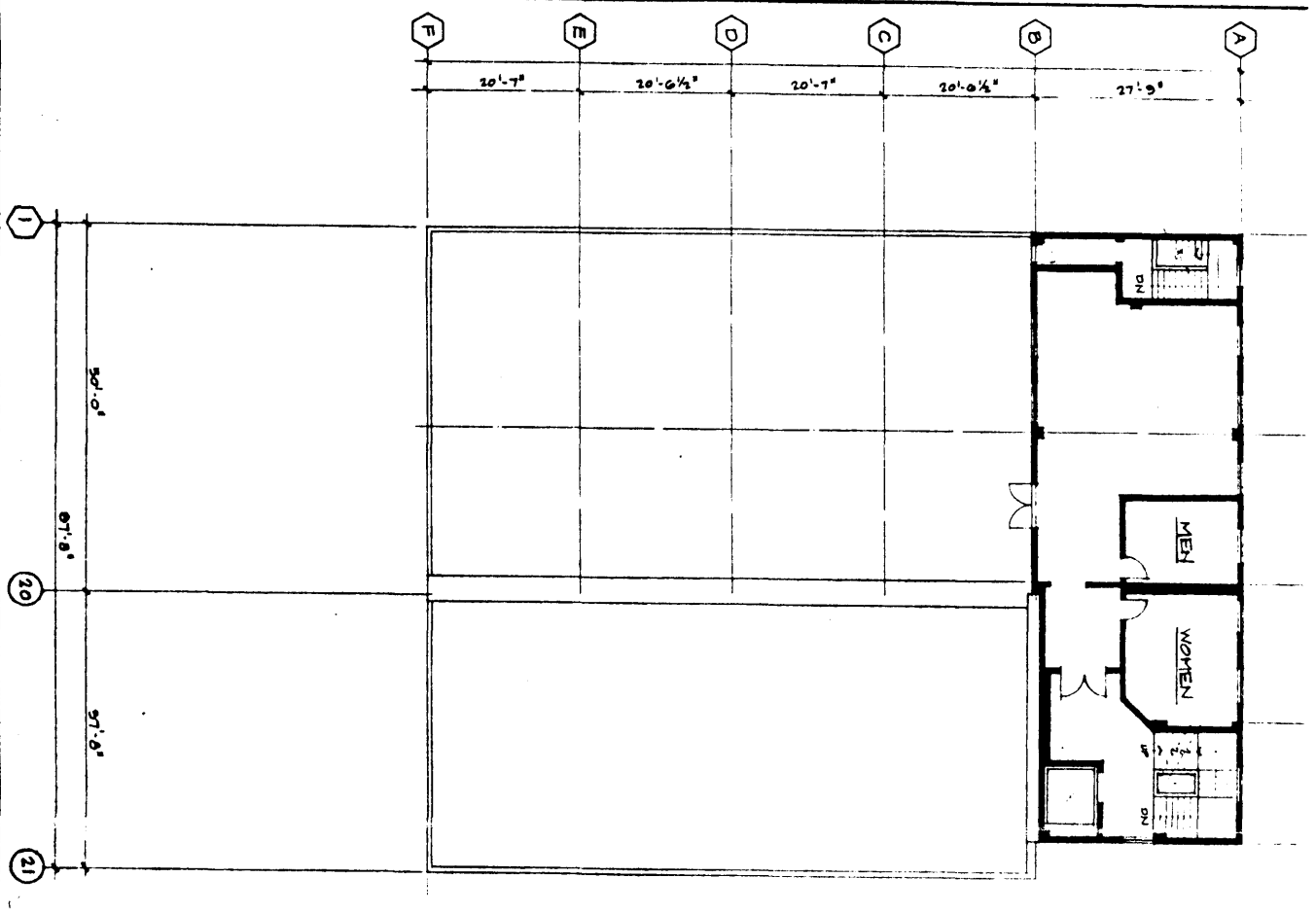


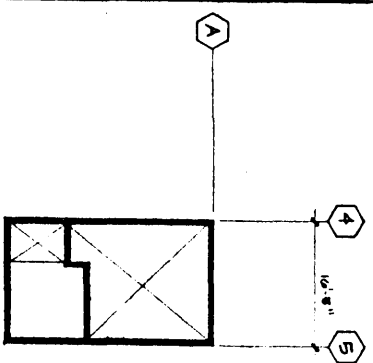
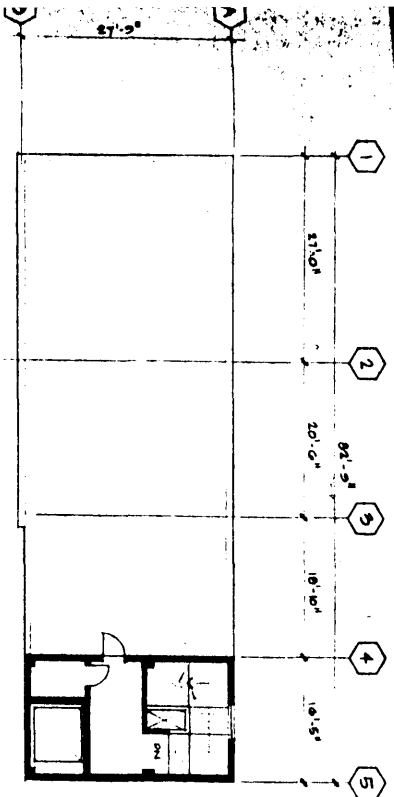
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SIXTH FLOOR PLAN





SEVENTH FLOOR PLAN

PENTHOUSE PLAN

