

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	APR 28 1980
DATE ENTERED	JUN 9 1980

**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

Fire Station 23

AND/OR COMMON

Old Fire Station 23

LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

225 East Fifth Street

— NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Los Angeles

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

25

STATE

California

— VICINITY OF

CODE

06

COUNTY

Los Angeles

CODE

037

CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

DISTRICT

BUILDING(S)

STRUCTURE

SITE

OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

PUBLIC

PRIVATE

BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

IN PROCESS

BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

OCCUPIED

UNOCCUPIED

WORK IN PROGRESS

ACCESSIBLE

YES: RESTRICTED

YES: UNRESTRICTED

NO

PRESENT USE

AGRICULTURE

COMMERCIAL

EDUCATIONAL

ENTERTAINMENT

GOVERNMENT

INDUSTRIAL

MILITARY

MUSEUM

PARK

PRIVATE RESIDENCE

RELIGIOUS

SCIENTIFIC

TRANSPORTATION

OTHER: art studio

OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

City of Los Angeles - Bureau of Right of Way and Land

STREET & NUMBER

200 North Spring Street

CITY, TOWN

Los Angeles

— VICINITY OF

STATE

California

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Los Angeles County Recorder

STREET & NUMBER

227 North Broadway

CITY, TOWN

Los Angeles, California 90012

STATE

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Historic-Cultural Monuments of the City of Los Angeles (No. 37)

DATE

1966

— FEDERAL — STATE — COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Municipal Arts Department, City of
Cultural Heritage Board, Los Angeles

CITY, TOWN

Los Angeles

STATE

California

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

This is a three-story reinforced concrete building with basement. It is built in a rectangular plan and is designed in a utilitarian manner with an eclectic array of decorative elements. The design of the facade is divided into three major components. The lower level consists of an arched central entrance and an offset doorway. The second level is separated from the first by a decorative terra cotta band and consists of three flat window openings. The third level consists of a slant bay window and a slant roof with decorative red tile. The window bay rests upon two large brackets of an identical design. The design imparts a sense of verticality unusual for a building of this size. The heavy, almost opulent, ornamentation combines, however, with the building's narrow verticality to provide the impression of a restrained elegance.

Architectural details of the facade consist of Italian marble at the lower level and architectural terra cotta trimmed with stone on the upper two levels. Additional details include skylights, mission tile, tile facing and terra cotta decoration, plate glass, copper conductors, copper drainpipes and sheathing, lamps flanking the arched entrance, a coffered ceiling in the central archway, and marble lettering with carved work.

The rear elevation of the building is unusual in that it has also received some attention to architectural detail. This detail consists of a bracketed tile roof/cornice, three arched third story windows, three flat second story windows, and a low flat centrally located entrance.

Alterations to the exterior consist of the minor modification of one doorway and the addition of a flagpole. These alterations do not alter the architectural integrity of the structure.

The interior of the structure consists of four levels. The basement was designed as a storage and equipment area. Several pieces of the original equipment remain, including a steam heating unit. The first floor originally housed ten horse stalls and provided an area for the fire trucks, lockers, an annunciator, and a hose tower. The area was finished in vitrified brick, white tile, and oak trim. The second story contains an assembly room, dormitory, lockers, toilets, a bath, and trunk room. It had a cement floor, oak trim, a tile wainscot, plaster and burlap walls, and was finished with white oak trim. The third story was originally an area for the chief and his assistants. It contained a reception room, chief's room and chambers, a large bath area, and a dining room. The third floor was finished with oak flooring, Peruvian mahogany trim, leatherette wall covering, ornamental stucco ceiling panels, a large fireplace with French mirror, and a bathroom finished in marble.

The building was equipped with two automatic elevators, a system of sliding poles, and a dumbwaiter. Alterations to the interior of the

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Description

structure are minimal. The majority of the decorative features are intact and much of the original equipment and fixtures remain.

The building is located in an area of primarily early twentieth century structures. A modern police station is located across the street from the fire station and there is some modern infill. The area is characterized, however, by c. 1910-1920 hotels, rooming houses, and commercial buildings in fair to deteriorated condition.

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY) Local history
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1910

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Architect - Hudson and Munsell
Builder - F.O. Engstrum Company

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Such significant factors as unique architectural design, elaborateness of materials used, and historical impact on the Los Angeles community as attested to by no less than 30 newspaper articles, have combined to support the claim that Old Fire Station No. 23 was the most elaborate, unique fire station in the city built at the turn of the century.

Dedicated at 225 East Fifth Street on October 10, 1910, at a cost of \$57,000, Fire Station No. 23 was designed by architects Hudson and Munsell, who also designed the California Museum of Science and Industry (see biographical note at end of "Significance" section). Not only is the Station one of the oldest fire stations in the City (the last to be used for horse-drawn apparatus), but it is also the City's first station built of reinforced concrete and the first station three stories high. The third floor was used as the Department's Headquarters for about 10 years, and was also used as living quarters for the Chief Engineer and his family until 1928. The elaborate detail of mahogany paneling and trim, imported Italian tile, and numerous other unique, luxurious features, all in a remarkable state of preservation, have prompted Ms. Rebecca Zurier, after a seven-month tour of 250 or more old fire stations throughout the United States for the Library of Congress, to conclude that no other fire station in the country could match the interior of Old Fire Station No. 23.

Beginning in March, 1909, local press coverage appeared, describing plans and specification preparation taking place for Fire Station No. 23. Even then it was touted as, ". . . one of the finest engine houses in the country." This was the beginning of numerous articles that appeared in 1909 and 1910 during the construction of Fire Station No. 23. On May 13, 1909, articles appeared reporting that the architectural plans submitted by architects Hudson and Munsell were approved by the Board of Public Works. As more information became available, articles in late May provided more detailed description of the plans for the Station, including the oak flooring and mahogany trim. A picture representation finally was displayed on June 13, 1909, with the caption, "To be handsomest fire house in West." This article, in addition to identifying the fire protection need which this Station would answer for the growing wholesale and industrial districts, also underscored the effect that this Station would have as a model for future fire stations.

A shift in news coverage occurred on June 24, 1909, when the F.O. Engstrum Company was awarded the contract for building the Fire Station.

See Continuation Sheet

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

1. Western Insurance News, "Four New Houses Are in Course of Construction," March 16, 1909.
2. Los Angeles Herald, "New Fire Engine House Will Be Finest in City," May 13, 1909.

.See Continuation Sheet

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

UTM NOT VERIFIED

ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 0.12 acres

QUADRANGLE NAME Los Angeles

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24000

UTM REFERENCES

A 1,1 | 3,85 | 0,1,8 | 3,7 | 6,7 | 7,3,6

B | | | | |

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C | | | | |

D | | | | |

E | | | | |

F | | | | |

G | | | | |

H | | | | |

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION The property is a rectangular lot, 167' by 26.5', on the north side of East Fifth Street between Maple and Los Angeles Street. It is Lot 1 in Block "A" of the Rivara and Vignolo Tract on District Map 129-213.

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

Michael Savko, Senior Administrative Assistant

ORGANIZATION

Los Angeles City Fire Department

DATE

September 14, 1979.

STREET & NUMBER

200 North Main Street

TELEPHONE

(213) 485-6034

CITY OR TOWN

Los Angeles

STATE

California

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

Kenn Mollon

TITLE

DATE April 21, 1980

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DATE 6/9/80

ATTEST:

[Signature]
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE 6-2-80

[Signature]
CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

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Significance

Since construction of public buildings made of reinforced concrete was a new endeavor, one of the Fire Commissioners requested that a special inspector be available to ensure that the proper proportions of cement called for in the specifications be used. On June 29, 1909, it was reported that funds for the new Station were never appropriated for the Fire Station destined to be ". . . the finest fire house in the West and an example of reinforced concrete architecture." This dilemma was corrected in a July 3, 1909, article announcing the awarding of the contract to the F.O. Engstrum Company after the Fire Commission had received its appropriation in the new budget for the Station.

No more is heard of the Fire Station in the news media until mid-December when charges appeared in the newspapers by City Auditor Mushet that the F.O. Engstrum Company should not receive partial payment for cement work done since the contractor had not complied with the specifications for concrete mixture. The specifications required one part cement, two parts sand, and three parts rock. F.O. Engstrum and the City Building Inspector assigned to the project argued that the monolithic character of the building was at stake since some of the gravel used contained a larger percentage of rocks, which increased the probability of voids not being filled by the gravel. A special City Council committee, appointed to look into the matter, actually spent an all-day session on this matter hearing reports from several architects, inspectors, and the contractor. The Building Inspector declared that the work done was as good a job in reinforced concrete as he had ever seen. Finally, on March 1, 1910, Engstrum's demand was ordered paid by the City Council, thus ending the dispute.

Public interest was again stirred up by the news media as the Station neared completion. One Councilman deplored such an extravagant expenditure of \$60,000 for a fire station when three could have been built for the same cost. A month later, two lengthy tongue-in-cheek articles appeared detailing the extravagance of the building and the exorbitant cost to the taxpayers. The fault, of course, belonged to the previous political administration, according to the newspapers. On September 30, 1910, just prior to its dedication, the Fire Commission went on record deploring the extravagance and denying responsibility for it; this, in spite of the fact that the same Commission and the Mayor had approved the original plans.

Once the Fire Station was put into operation, the controversy subsided. The Station was used for Department Headquarters for the first 10 years,

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Significance

with Chief Eley in residence. His successor, Chief Scott, became Chief Engineer in 1919 and moved in with his wife, in residence, until 1928. The third floor was subsequently used for the Department's Medical Liaison Section and Training Section.

In 1960, after 50 years and 60,000 alarms, Fire Station No. 23 was officially abandoned as a City fire station. Six years later, the City's Cultural Heritage Board declared Fire Station No. 23 a local cultural historical monument. No further use was made of the building, other than occasional filmings by motion picture companies, until June 26, 1979, when the City Council, at the request of the Chief Engineer of the Fire Department and the Board of Fire Commissioners, proclaimed Old Fire Station No. 23 as the Official Los Angeles City Fire Department Museum.

Old Fire Station No. 23 is currently in a remarkable state of preservation, especially considering the fact that it has not been used as a fire station in 19 years. Much of what can be seen at the Station dates back to 1910, including the mahogany doors, paneling, and trim. Missing are such items as copper pipes for plumbing and brass doorknobs removed by the destitute inhabitants of the "Skid Row" locale. The neighborhood has been earmarked by the City for revitalization programs in future years, and the opening of a Fire Department Museum would be an integral part of revitalization.

Relatively few alterations have been made to the building. A kitchen was put in later on the second floor for the firefighters while the third floor has seen conversions from Department Headquarters, to the Chief's family residence, to the Medical Liaison Section and Training Section. It will not be difficult to reconvert these rooms back to their original 1910 condition.

No other fire station in Los Angeles conveys the feeling of the historical period of horse-drawn apparatus as does Old Fire Station No. 23. In 1979, Ms. Rebecca Zurier completed a seven-month tour of the United States, funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities. Her assignment was to provide photographs and commentary on old fire stations throughout the country for inclusion in the archives of the Library of Congress. After visiting approximately 250 such fire stations, Ms. Zurier concluded, in an interview, that no other fire station in the country could match Old Fire Station No. 23 for interior decoration and existing original furnishings. This significant statement underscores the uniqueness of

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Significance

Old Fire Station No. 23 and its eligibility potential for the National Register.

Biographical Note

HUDSON, Frank D., 1868 to 1941. In practice under the name of Hudson and Munsell over three decades, prominently in Los Angeles. Studied in the office of William Curlett in San Francisco and moved to Los Angeles in 1895 **to set up his own office.** Between 1899 and 1901, he was Building Inspector for the City under Mayor Eaton. Afterwards, he formed a partnership with William A. Munsell which flourished until the early 1930's. The firm designed several prominent City and County buildings, including the old Los Angeles Hall of Records on Broadway, the first County Museum building at Exposition Park, the early units of the Los Angeles County Hospital, the old Masonic Temple on Pico, and the first store of the Southern California Music Company.

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Major Bibliographical
References

3. Los Angeles Times, "New Engine House Plans," May 13, 1909.
4. Los Angeles Evening News, "Fire Engine House Plans Are Approved," May 18, 1909.
5. Los Angeles Express, "To Plan Fire House on East Fifth Street," May 18, 1909.
6. Los Angeles Examiner, "Plans Ready for Station House," May 23, 1909.
7. Los Angeles Herald, "Plans for New Fire Engine House Finished," May 23, 1909.
8. Los Angeles Times, "Fire Station to be Model," June 13, 1909.
9. Western Insurance News, "Handsome New Headquarters," June 19, 1909.
10. Los Angeles Evening News, "Special Man to Inspect New Fire House Building," June 24, 1909.
11. Los Angeles Herald, "Need Money for New Fire House," June 29, 1909.
12. Los Angeles Times, "May Reject Bids," June 29, 1909.
13. Los Angeles Express, "Contracts Awarded for New Engine House," July 3, 1909.
14. Los Angeles Times, "Engstrum Gets Contract," July 3, 1909.
15. Los Angeles Examiner, "City Spends \$200,000 and More for Engine Houses Now Building," December 12, 1909.
16. Los Angeles Record, "Mushet's Charge Supported by Two Witnesses," December 13, 1909.
17. Los Angeles Times, "Mackus Says Mushet Charge Is Trivial," December 14, 1909.
18. Los Angeles Examiner, "Mushet Charges Probed," December 14, 1909.

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19. Los Angeles Express, "Engine House Concrete Question Is Referred," December 14, 1909.
20. Los Angeles Times, "What Is Concrete? City Council Mystified," December 14, 1909.
21. Los Angeles Times, "Concrete Parts Must Adhere to Contract," January 1, 1910.
22. Los Angeles Examiner, "5th Street Engine House Nearing Completion," January 9, 1910.
23. Los Angeles Times, "To Return \$4000 Demand," January 11, 1910.
24. Los Angeles Examiner, "Engstrum Collects \$2000. Council Finally Orders Payment for Disputed Fire Engine House," March 2, 1910.
25. Los Angeles Examiner, "\$50,000 Engine House Is Nearing Completion," June 24, 1910.
26. Los Angeles Record, "What a Waste!," August 5, 1910.
27. Los Angeles Record, cartoon caption reads: "That Little Skinny Thing Cost That Much!," August 6, 1910.
28. Los Angeles Times, "Sybaritical Effort, This," September 20, 1910.
29. Los Angeles Times, "Fire Engine House Is Ready for Use," September 25, 1910.
30. Los Angeles Herald, "Finest Engine House In World to Open Saturday at Fifth and Maple," September 29, 1910.
31. Los Angeles Times, "Luxurious Engine House. Fire Commission Denies Load of Responsibility," September 30, 1910.
32. San Pedro News, "Goo Goo Extravagance in Engine House," September 30, 1910.
33. Los Angeles Times, "L.A. Fire Station Ends 50 Years of Service," November 24, 1960.

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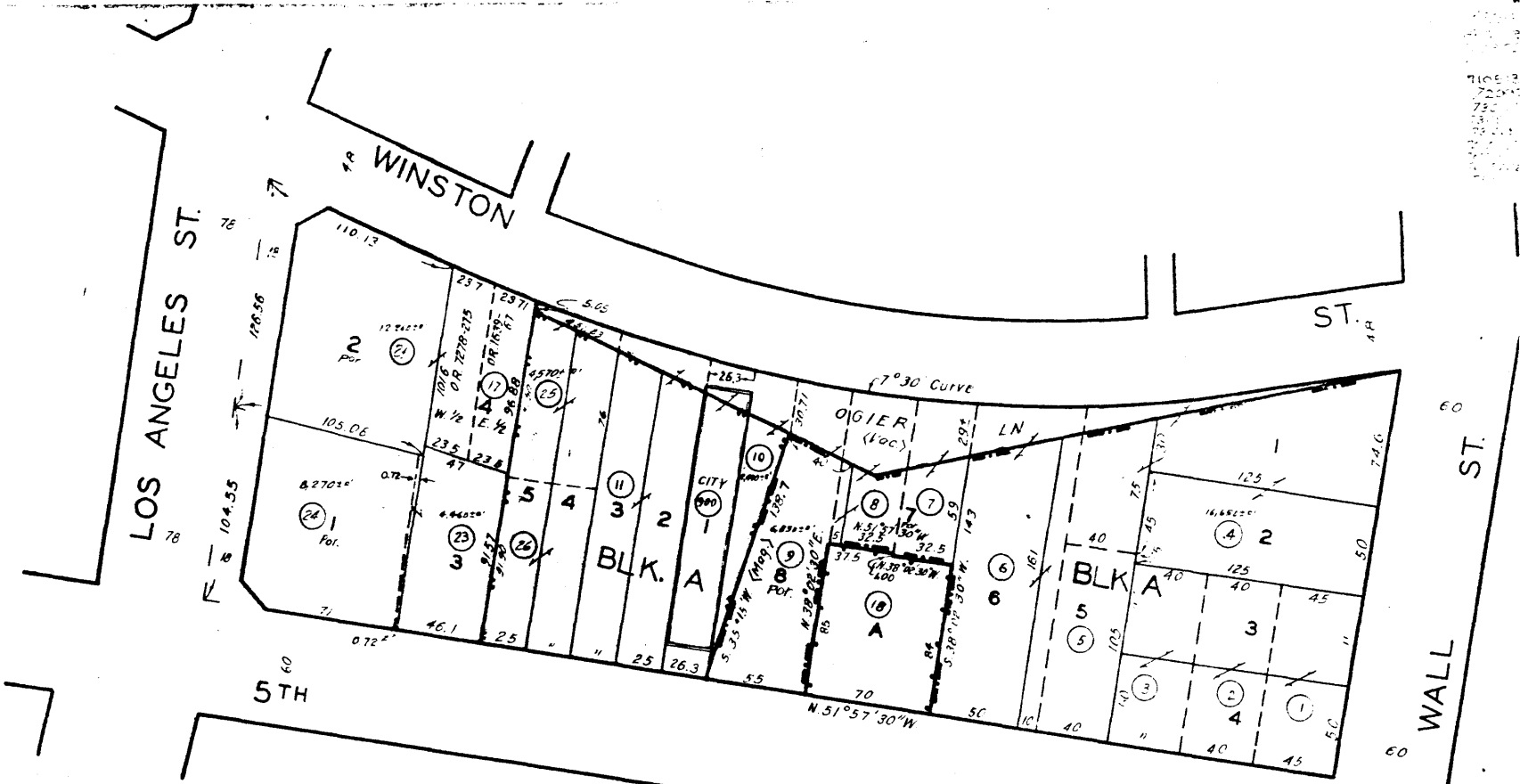
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Major Bibliographical
References

34. Telephonic interview with Ms. Rebecca Zurier, Providence, Rhode Island, on August 14, 1979.
35. Cultural Heritage Board, Municipal Arts Department, City of Los Angeles, "Fact Sheets on Historic-Cultural Monuments."
36. Withey, Henry, "Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased)," published by Hennessey & Ingalls & Company, Los Angeles, California, 1970, pages 306 and 307.

7106
7204
7302
7400
7508
7606
7704
7802
7900
8008



JONES AND PONET BLOCK

M.R. 39-69

Fire Station 23
Los Angeles, Los Angeles County, Calif

MORENO VINEYARD TRACT

M.R. 3-166-167

RIVARA AND VIGNOLO TRACT

M.R. 5-110

W.R. ARNOLD PROPERTY

M.B. 5-190

CODE
8