

DATA SHEET PH00 86525

Form 10-300
(Rev. 6-72)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: California
COUNTY: Los Angeles
FOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY DATE MAR 4 1975

1. NAME

COMMON: Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County
AND/OR HISTORIC: Same

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER: 900 Exposition Boulevard			
CITY OR TOWN: Los Angeles		CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: 37	
STATE California	CODE 06	COUNTY: Los Angeles	CODE 037

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY <small>(Check One)</small>	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No
PRESENT USE <small>(Check One or More as Appropriate)</small>			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural	<input type="checkbox"/> Government	<input type="checkbox"/> Park	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> Industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Educational	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Religious	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	_____

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME: State of California - Sixth Agricultural District		
STREET AND NUMBER: c/o 900 Exposition Boulevard		
CITY OR TOWN: Los Angeles	STATE: California	CODE: 06

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC: Hall of Records, Los Angeles County		
STREET AND NUMBER: 320 W. Temple Street		
CITY OR TOWN: Los Angeles	STATE: California	CODE: 90012 037

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:			
DATE OF SURVEY: _____			
<input type="checkbox"/> Federal <input type="checkbox"/> State <input type="checkbox"/> County <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Local			
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:			
STREET AND NUMBER: _____			
CITY OR TOWN: _____		STATE: _____	

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

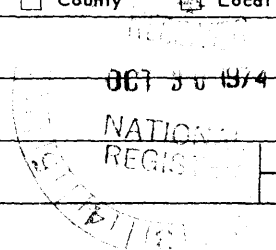
STATE:

COUNTY:

ENTRY NUMBER

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY



7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The original building of the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County was completed and opened to the public in 1913. In the sixty years of its existence, the museum building has not undergone any major alterations, testimony to its structural soundness in a geological area known for destructive earthquakes. The T-shaped structure is eclectic in architectural design, but there are overtones of the then prevailing influence of the Ecole des Beaux Arts. The exterior terra cotta trim and the style of the roof tiles also suggest Spanish plateresque derivation, a popular style in California and Florida between 1910 and 1935. Romanesque influences are evident in the bond pattern of the brick and masonry.

The museum's brick-bearing walls rest on spread footing and framing of riveted steel. The bricks were locally manufactured and of two types: hollow common brick used for structural support and a lesser amount of ruffled brick used in the exterior walls and facade. The physical condition of the brick work remains surprisingly excellent.

A focal point of the original building is its central rotunda, which is crowned by a large mosaic dome. Four smaller domes surround the large one. Within and encircling the octagonal rotunda are sixteen scagliola columns with classic capitals; these imitation marble columns help support a mezzanine above. Natural light diffused through a stained glass skylight in the dome adds illumination to the area. True marble walls to a height of twenty feet contribute to the classic look of the rotunda.

Flanking the rotunda are the three original wings that housed the art, science, and history exhibits. The latter two wings were provided with reinforced concrete balconies for additional display space. All three galleries, which had dimensions of approximately 94 feet by 110 feet, featured large rectangular skylights of ribbed glass. The art gallery stem of the T was constructed with a high plaster cove ceiling, typical of public buildings of the period.

The east entrance to the museum overlooked the spectacular sunken rose gardens of Exposition Park. This entrance, where dignitaries were greeted and entertained on the visits to Los Angeles, was closed to the public when a new building unit was opened in 1930. Two historic cast-iron cannons had been placed on either side of the facade in 1915. A vestibule leading to the rotunda has a tile floor, terra cotta walls, and ornamental staff ceiling.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



B. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 20th Century |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 19th Century | |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal | <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Political | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry | <input type="checkbox"/> Science | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture | _____ |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> Military | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Music | | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation | | | _____ |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Exposition Park, the thirty-acre setting for the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County, was formerly called Agricultural Park and was the site of annual fairs operated by the Sixth Agricultural District Association of California. By the turn of the century the area had become notorious for gambling, dog and rabbit races, drunkenness, and general vice and rowdyism.

Under the leadership of William M. Bowen, a group of civic-minded Angelenos began a campaign to improve the moral conditions of the park and turn it into a cultural-recreational center.

After a decade of litigation, which culminated in California Supreme Court decisions in 1908, the park was deemed to be public property, and the reorganized Board of Directors of the sixth Agricultural Association began to plan ways to use the land.

The first step was to provide funds for a museum, a state exposition building, an armory, and other improvements. Led by Bowen, private subscriptions were solicited; negotiations were also begun with the city and county for funds to maintain the grounds and for the erection of a museum.

The city agreed to lease from the District all the land, excluding the sites of the proposed structures, and to spend \$10,000 annually for ten years in maintenance. The county also agreed to appropriate money for construction of a museum; a fifty-year lease was arranged with the approval of the state for the ground to be occupied by the museum. This tripartite arrangement still exists.

Because the County Board of Supervisors did not wish to administer the new museum directly, the first governing board was comprised of one member of the Board of Supervisors, plus representatives of the Southern California Academy of Science, the Fine Arts League, the Cooper Ornithological Society, and the Historical Society of Southern California; W. M. Bowen was appointed a member-at-large.

The firm of Hudson and Mansell was awarded the contract to design the new museum. On July 11, 1910, the newly constituted Board of Governors assembled for the ground-breaking ceremony. On December 17, 1917, during

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Hunt, Rockwell D. "Memories of the Beginnings, "Museum Associations Quarterly, XVI (Spring, 1960), 2-6.

Robertson, Howard, "The Beginning of the Museum," Los Angeles County Museum Quarterly, X (Fall, 1953), 2-6.

Van Aken, Lillian A. "History of Exposition Park, "Historical Society of Southern California Annual Publications, IX (1914), 244-52.

Los Angeles Times, April 17, 1910, December 17, 1916.

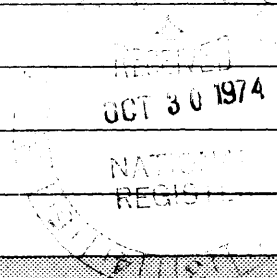
10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			OR	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	0 . .	0 . .		34 0 01 . 02 .	118 0 17 . 20 .	
NE	0 . .	0 . .				
SE	0 . .	0 . .				
SW	0 . .	0 . .				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: **6 acres**

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE



11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: **Burton Reiner, Assistant Curator of History**

ORGANIZATION: **Natural History Museum, Los Angeles County** DATE: **4/24/74**

STREET AND NUMBER: **900 Exposition Boulevard**

CITY OR TOWN: **Los Angeles** STATE: **California 90007** CODE: **06**

12 STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National State Local

Name: [Signature]
 Title: **State Historic Preservation Officer**

Date: **OCT 10 1974**

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

[Signature]
 Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date: **3/4/75**

ATTEST:
[Signature]
 Keeper of The National Register

Date: **2-26-75**

381070
 3764280

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

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

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	
California	
COUNTY	
Los Angeles	
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ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
MAR 4	

001 30 1974

(Number all entries)

8. Significance
(Continued)

the cornerstone laying, Mary Bowen, daughter of W. M. Bowen, rechristened Agricultural Park with its present name, Exposition Park.

Frank Daggett was appointed the first museum director on November 6, 1911, and a month later the first accession was accepted, a "nest and eggs." On June 25, 1913, a contract was negotiated between the Board of Governors and G. Allen Hancock, stipulating that the Museum was to have sole rights to excavate the La Brea Pits, ten miles northwest. From these excavations the world's largest collection of Ice Age fossils was unearthed, and this collection is still a prime attraction of the Museum.

On November 6, 1913, the Museum was formally opened to the public, and a two-day celebration was held in conjunction with the completion of the Owens River Aqueduct. The T-shaped building was constructed of brownish-red brick and contained 30,000 square feet of floor space. The cost for construction and furnishings was about \$250,000.

As the years passed, it became apparent that the Museum's growth made further expansion necessary. In 1925, a new unit was opened at a cost of nearly one-million dollars. This unit provided approximately three times the floor space of the original building. On November 7, 1930, the second major addition to the Museum was opened to the public, at a cost of \$1,500,000. At this time, the entrance to the Museum was created through the south doors of this unit. In April, 1960, the west wing housing the 450-seat Jean Delacour Auditorium was opened.

In 1965, the Art Division moved to new quarters in the Wilshire District of the city, allowing the Science and History Divisions to begin an expansion program. Currently a major project is under way. This \$7,200,000 modernization will include construction of a new north wing, relocation of the taxi-derry wing, and renovation of the existing rotunda (focus of the original building). Groundbreaking for this ambitious expansion is scheduled for the fall of 1974.

Although several additions have been made to the original building, the building itself has had no major alterations. The planned renovation will reconvert the rotunda to the appearance at the time of its completion in 1913. The rotunda, and the entire original building, will continue to be vital parts of the Museum's exhibition program.

The period 1910-1915 saw the completion of the Panama Canal, the opening of the Panama-Pacific Exposition (San Francisco) and the Panama-California Exposition (San Diego), the dedication of the Owens River Aqueduct, and in Exposition Park the construction of the Museum, the Armory, and the State Exposition Building. The Museum is one of the few remaining links with this tremendous cultural and industrial boom of the era before World War I.

Addition to the Statement of Significance (#8)

Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County

Although the original museum building is important because of its significance as a cultural and educational center in Los Angeles County, its distinctive architectural features are noteworthy. Architects Hudson and Munsell were most likely inspired by the prevailing influences of the Ecole des Beaux Arts, but there are many overtones suggesting inspiration by the 1904 St. Louis Worlds Fair. The exterior of the structure exhibits the influence of Richardson Romanesque, and the terra cotta ornament of the elaborate facade has a Spanish plateresque derivation. The interior boasts a highly ornate dome of stained glass and gold-filigree sculpture which reaches a height of eighty feet. The dome is covered on the exterior with mosaic tile, a feature which made the museum a prototype for other buildings in the Los Angeles area. The balcony walls are wainscoted with Italian marble, and the entire rotunda is illuminated by the filtering of natural light through stained glass. With such an array of architectural features, the original building of the Natural History Museum remains a well-preserved example of the fusion of the aesthetically ornate design and the practical purpose of public buildings in the early twentieth century.



Natural History Museum

