

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

MP-762

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.



### 1. Name of Property

Historic name: Pan American National Bank of East Los Angeles

Other names/site number: Pan American Bank

Name of related multiple property listing:

Latinos in Twentieth Century California

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

### 2. Location

Street & number: 3620-3626 East 1<sup>st</sup> Street

City or town: East Los Angeles State: California County: Los Angeles

Not For Publication:  Vicinity:

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,


I hereby certify that this X nomination     request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets     does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

    national   X   statewide     local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

  X   A   X   B     C     D

	2/7/17
<b>Jenan Saunders/Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer</b>	
<b>Date</b>	
<u>California State Office of Historic Preservation</u>	
<b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b>	

In my opinion, the property <u>   </u> meets <u>   </u> does not meet the National Register criteria.	
<b>Signature of commenting official:</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Title :</b>	<b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b>

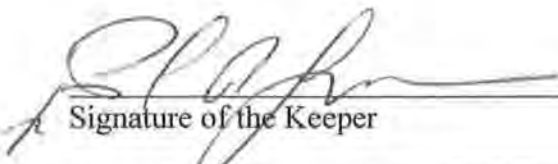
Pan American National Bank of East Los Angeles  
Name of Property

Los Angeles, CA  
County and State

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:)

  
Signature of the Keeper

3/27/2017  
Date of Action

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

**Category of Property**

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

Pan American National Bank of East Los Angeles  
Name of Property

Los Angeles, CA  
County and State

**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>          </u>	buildings
<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	sites
<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	structures
<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

---

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/TRADE: financial institution

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/TRADE: financial institution

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Pan American National Bank of East Los Angeles  
Name of Property

Los Angeles, CA  
County and State

---

## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT: New Formalism

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: brick, concrete, ceramic tile, stucco

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

---

#### Summary Paragraph

Pan American National Bank of East Los Angeles is located on the southwest corner of East 1<sup>st</sup> Street and South Townsend Avenue in East Los Angeles, an unincorporated community of Los Angeles County. The two-story, steel-reinforced masonry building was constructed as a financial institution in 1965 in the New Formalist style. In 1972, the bank expanded into the reinforced concrete and masonry building directly to the west (originally constructed circa 1942), forming an L-shaped plan. The eastern end of the north elevation features five narrow, round concrete arches that project above the roofline, which is otherwise flat. The repetitive arches frame the building's five-panel mosaic mural, as well as its glass and anodized aluminum storefront system. Aside from the arched entryway, the building is clad in stucco, which has been painted blue. The building is located in a commercial corridor and continues to operate as a bank. It is in overall good condition and retains all aspects of integrity.

---

#### Narrative Description

Pan American National Bank occupies the north and west portions of its legal lot, and the remaining quarter contains a surface parking lot. There are some landscaping elements in the parking lot and surrounding the south entrance to the building, including planters containing a

Pan American National Bank of East Los Angeles  
Name of Property

Los Angeles, CA  
County and State

variety of low shrubs and trees. The building faces East 1<sup>st</sup> Street, which is characterized by a mix of one-and two-story commercial buildings.

The building's rectangular massing is interrupted at the eastern end of the primary, north-facing elevation by a uniform row of smooth, round concrete arches. Together, the arches form five bays. The entrance to the bank is located within the central bay, flanked on either side by two additional bays containing aluminum-sashed glass windows. According to construction permits, the storefront system was altered in 1975 and 1989 and occupies the bottom half of the arching elements. A non-original automated teller machine (ATM) is located in the easternmost arch, which also contains a separate arched opening on its eastern side that allows secondary access to the ATM.

The building's most distinctive feature is its five-panel multicolored mosaic tile mural, installed in the upper portion of each of the concrete arches. Each panel illustrates a different scene, drawing on a vocabulary of Pre-Columbian motifs. From east to west, the first panel portrays an indigenous warrior engaged in battle with a Spanish *conquistador*, as both figures are engulfed in flames. The second panel depicts a western-facing man holding a lightning bolt and atomic symbol, positioned in front of an industrial skyline and atop Tlaloc, the Mesoamerican god of rain. A large golden eagle rests on his shoulders, and a white dove flies overhead. The central panel features the bank's original emblem, a stylized "PA" for "Pan American" surrounded by the image of Quetzalcoatl, the Mesoamerican deity whose name means "feathered serpent." The fourth panel portrays an eastern-facing woman holding a young girl. It mirrors the second panel, including the depiction of a golden eagle and white dove above the central figure and the inclusion of Tlaloc at the base. An industrial building and traditional basket are in the background. The fifth panel features a multi-limbed man, who faces away from the other figures and is positioned behind a stalk of maize, a Mesoamerican symbol of fertility and abundance. Surrounding the central figure are an array of astronomical images, including planets, fiery comets, a solar eclipse, and the moon.

The remaining elevations are largely utilitarian in design. With the exception of the entrance, the north, east, and south elevations were originally clad in brick, featuring a combination of running and stacked bond. Paint and stucco were applied to the brick surfaces between 2012 and 2015. Rows of four and five narrow windows punctuate the north and east elevations, respectively. Smooth, unadorned stucco pilasters join the tops of the windows with the parapet. A teller window is located in the second bay of the east elevation, beneath a wall-mounted sign reading "Pan American Bank."

The south elevation features an additional entrance facing the parking lot. A corrugated metal awning is located over the doors. The secondary east façade, set back and separated from the street by the parking lot, is one of the visible elevations from the 1972 expansion into the adjacent property. Three shallow arches adorn the northern most section of the elevation, where the original bank building meets the addition. A third entrance to the building is located on the south end, underneath a single arch.

Pan American National Bank of East Los Angeles  
Name of Property

Los Angeles, CA  
County and State

A pole sign reading “Pan American Bank” is located on the roof. The sign was originally installed in 1966 and re-faced in 1987. Additional wall mounted signage is located on the north, east, and south elevations.

The interior spaces are largely contemporary and utilitarian in design and feature open plans. Construction permits show that interior alterations took place in 1972 (when the bank expanded), 1975, and 1988, and the limited available documentation reveals that the work was largely cosmetic. An arched entry connects the original building to the 1972 addition, which divides the bank’s operations into distinct spaces. The addition functions as an office space for employees and bank executives, with glass partition walls and doors separating meeting rooms from scattered cubicles and desks. The primary public functions take place in the original building, which is largely open as well. The teller counter, constructed of wood and security glass, is located on the eastern side of the room. Photos show that the brickwork in the eastern wall was once exposed, and has since been covered. A glass partition encloses a single office on the south side. The ceiling features acoustic paneling, with large round recessed light fixtures. The southern third of the space has a dropped ceiling, which appears to have been added in 1975. Due to operational restrictions, photographs of the interior are unavailable.

Pan American National Bank of East Los Angeles retains all seven aspects of integrity. The bank retains its integrity of location, as it has not been moved from its original construction location. The integrity of design is intact, as there have not been any substantial modifications to the building that would have impacted its overall form, plan, or style. The integrity of setting is intact, as the surrounding neighborhood reflects the same development patterns as it did during the period of significance. East 1<sup>st</sup> Street remains a low-rise commercial corridor, with residential properties located on the side streets. The integrity of materials and workmanship are largely intact. Though stucco has been applied to the brick elevations and some of the interior finishes have been altered, the mosaic mural and arched entry—the building’s most significant character defining features—have not been materially altered or modified and continue to demonstrate a high level of craftsmanship. The integrity of feeling is intact, as the bank continues to evoke the experience of a mid-twentieth century financial institution. Lastly, the integrity of association is intact, as the building continues to operate as a bank that primarily serves the Latino community in East Los Angeles.

Pan American National Bank of East Los Angeles  
Name of Property

Los Angeles, CA  
County and State

---

## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

Pan American National Bank of East Los Angeles  
Name of Property

Los Angeles, CA  
County and State

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ART

COMMERCE

ETHNIC HERITAGE: Hispanic

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1964-1966

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1964 Charter secured

1966 Mural installed

\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Bañuelos, Romana Acosta

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Stockdale, Raymond

Meza, Jose Reyes (muralist)

\_\_\_\_\_



Pan American National Bank of East Los Angeles  
Name of Property

Los Angeles, CA  
County and State

**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

Pan American National Bank of East Los Angeles is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places at the state level of significance under Criteria A and B in the areas of Art, Commerce, and Ethnic Heritage: Hispanic. It meets the registration requirements for commercial buildings, murals, and offices of prominent persons outlined in the *Latinos in Twentieth Century California* Multiple Property Submission. The oldest Latino-owned bank in California, Pan American National Bank is emblematic of the economic growth of the Mexican American community in East Los Angeles after World War II. The building's five-panel mosaic tile mural, entitled "Our Past, Our Present, and Our Future," is one of the earliest examples of the art form in East Los Angeles and influenced the rise of the Chicano mural movement in the 1960s and 1970s. The bank is also representative of the career of co-founder Romana Acosta Bañuelos, a prominent Mexican American entrepreneur who later became the first Latina Treasurer of the United States. The period of significance begins in 1964 when Romana Acosta Bañuelos was instrumental in acquiring the bank's charter, and ends in 1966 when the murals were installed.

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

*Economic Development in East Los Angeles*

The Pan American Bank operation was established in 1964 as the Pan American National Bank of East Los Angeles, and construction began on a 7,500 square foot building at First Street and Townsend Street in August 1965. The bank initially opened for business in a trailer on the property while construction was underway.<sup>1</sup> Upon the bank's completion, the *Mexican American Sun* remarked, "While not the largest building in the Belvedere area, it is considered by many to be the most beautiful."<sup>2</sup> 12,000 people attended the grand opening celebration in April 1966.

Though the founding board of directors was fairly diverse, a reflection of the continued ethnic diversity of East Los Angeles in the 1960s, Pan American National Bank responded directly to the absence of community-based financial institutions for the rapidly growing Mexican and Mexican American population. Its primary purpose "was to serve the "under-represented and under-served consumers and small businesses of East Los Angeles."<sup>3</sup> The founders believed that access to culturally sensitive financial services was the basis for increasing the community's political power, economic independence, and overall standard of living.

<sup>1</sup> Eloy Brown and Romana Acosta Bañuelos, interview with Virginia Espino, October 22 and 27, 2014, Los Angeles, California. CSRC Oral Histories Series. Los Angeles: UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center, 2014.

<sup>2</sup> "Community Invited to Attend Pan-Am Bank Opening" in *Eastside Sun* 14 April 1966. Courtesy of Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

<sup>3</sup> California Office of Historic Preservation, *Latinos in Twentieth Century California* (Sacramento: California State Parks, 2015), 85. See also Wei Li, et al., "How Ethnic Banks Matter: Banking and Community/Economic Development in Los Angeles" in *Landscapes of the Ethnic Economy*, ed. David H. Kaplan and Wei Li (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2006).

Pan American National Bank of East Los Angeles  
Name of Property

Los Angeles, CA  
County and State

Following the end of World War II, Mexican Americans gradually became the largest ethnic group in East Los Angeles, a demographic shift that quickened in the 1960s.<sup>4</sup> Though large numbers of Mexicans and Mexican Americans had lived in rural and agricultural communities prior during the first half of the century, many began to settle closer to cities as new job opportunities emerged and immigration accelerated after the war. Despite having a larger presence in the Los Angeles area, Mexican Americans continued to suffer from depressed wages, high rates of unemployment, and low rates of homeownership.<sup>5</sup> Pan American National Bank itself encountered numerous challenges in securing its federal charter and establishing its credibility due to the assumption that a financial institution dedicated to the Mexican American community would fail.<sup>6</sup>

When Pan American National Bank opened its doors, it aimed to reverse exclusionary banking practices, including redlining (described below) and traditional methods of assigning credit ratings, which effectively barred most Mexican Americans from receiving home and small business loans.<sup>7</sup> It was the first bank in California to provide full bilingual services in English and Spanish, and it emphasized financial literacy for its customers. As the bank grew, it became a critical commercial anchor within East Los Angeles and bolstered the economic power of its Mexican American patrons. Its location further underscored its role in the community, as 1<sup>st</sup> Street was one of the primary commercial corridors in East Los Angeles at the time.<sup>8</sup>

Pan American National Bank's founders were motivated by national trends in real estate, finance, and land use that excluded communities of color from applying for credit, purchasing homes, and opening businesses.<sup>9</sup> Though efforts to restrict access to more desirable neighborhoods had taken root in the early twentieth century, the rapid expansion of the suburbs in the 1950s and 60s coincided with the acceleration of institutionalized racial discrimination. Throughout the country, banks and other lending institutions adopted a policy known as "redlining" that denied mortgages and other funds to homebuyers and entrepreneurs in neighborhoods that were deemed unfit due to the age of the building stock, density, and the presence of immigrants and other nonwhite residents.<sup>10</sup> Other mechanisms—including federal

<sup>4</sup> Ricardo Romo, *East Los Angeles: A History of a Barrio* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983), 170.

<sup>5</sup> John R. Chavez, *Eastside Landmark: A History of the East Los Angeles Community Union, 1968-1993* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 15-16, 53.

<sup>6</sup> Jane Applegate, "Women Entrepreneurs Report Discrimination Bias" in *Los Angeles Times* 11 July 1990. ProQuest Newsstand, last accessed October 19, 2015. See also Digby Diehl, "Q&A with Romana Bañuelos" in *Los Angeles Times* 7 May 1972. ProQuest Historical Newspapers, last accessed March 20, 2015.

<sup>7</sup> Chavez, 114. See also Ernest A. Schonberger, "Poor Pay More in Mexican-American Area, Study Shows" in *Los Angeles Times* 28 August 1967. ProQuest Historical Newspapers, last accessed March 20, 2015.

<sup>8</sup> *Latinos in Twentieth Century California*, 83.

<sup>9</sup> For a discussion of general trends in banking in Latino communities, see Geraldo L. Cavada, "Entrepreneurs from the Beginning: Latino Business & Commerce since the 16<sup>th</sup> Century" in *American Latinos and the Making of the United States: A Theme Study* (Washington D.C.: National Park Service, 2013), 215-229. See also Eloy Brown and Romana Acosta Bañuelos, interview with Virginia Espino.

<sup>10</sup> John M. Murrin, et al, *Liberty, Equality, Power: A History of the American People, Vol. 11*, (Wadsworth, MA: Cengage Learning, 2012), 772. See also Introduction to "The Tools of Exclusion" in *The Suburb Reader*, 225 and Abigail Rosas, "Banking on the Community: Mexican Immigrants' Experiences in a Historically African American

Pan American National Bank of East Los Angeles  
Name of Property

Los Angeles, CA  
County and State

housing guidelines, municipal ordinances and zoning practices, and the combined efforts of homeowners associations, builders, and real estate brokers—underscored these financial barriers and further contributed to the segregation of suburban neighborhoods.<sup>11</sup> As a result, Pan American National Bank and other financial institutions specifically geared towards communities of color filled a critical niche in the country's economic underpinnings. Similar examples of Los Angeles-area organizations included the Golden Gate Life Insurance Company (1925) and Broadway Federal Bank (1946) that primarily served and employed African Americans, and Cathay Bank (1962), the first Chinese American bank in California.

The success of Pan American National Bank inspired the creation of subsequent community-based financial institutions to serve Latinos. Locally, The East Los Angeles Community Union (TELACU), a prominent community development corporation established in 1968, spearheaded a broad economic development plan for East Los Angeles, which included the formation of the Community Thrift & Loan.<sup>12</sup> Similar banks opened throughout California, including in Santa Ana, and in other states with large Latino populations.

#### *Romana Acosta Bañuelos*

Central to Pan American National Bank's early achievements was the vision and leadership of co-founder Romana Acosta Bañuelos (b. 1925). The only woman to serve on the original twelve-member board of directors, Mrs. Bañuelos' entrepreneurial skills and accomplishments as the founder and chief executive of Ramona's Mexican Food Products, Inc. solidified her credibility within the business community and made her an asset to the bank. The company, which was established in 1949, had grown from a modest tortilla factory into the largest Mexican food wholesale firm in the country by the 1970s.<sup>13</sup>

Though she was not elected chair of the board until 1969, Mrs. Bañuelos played a leading role in securing Pan American National Bank's federal charter in 1964 and establishing policies aimed at making its services accessible to local residents and businesses.<sup>14</sup> Once the bank was in operation, Mrs. Bañuelos was visibly associated with its growth, from soliciting investments from community members to traveling to other cities to guide the formation of new Latino financial institutions. She was unanimously reelected twice to the chairmanship of the board before her business and financial expertise led her into government service.

In September 1971, President Richard Nixon nominated Mrs. Bañuelos to be the 34<sup>th</sup> Treasurer of the United States. Her nomination generated some controversy after U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) agents raided Ramona's Mexican Food Products' processing plant

---

Bank in South Central Los Angeles, 1970-2007" in *Black and Brown in Los Angeles: Beyond Conflict and Coalition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014).

<sup>11</sup> Introduction to "Postwar Suburbs and the Construction of Race," in *The Suburb Reader*, 322.

<sup>12</sup> Chavez, 112-114.

<sup>13</sup> Digby Diehl, "Q&A with Romana Bañuelos."

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. See also Matt S. Meier, Conchita Franco Serri, and Richard A. Garcia, "Romana Acosta Bañuelos" in *The American Mosaic: The Latino American Experience*, 2015. ABC-CLIO, last accessed March 20, 2015.

Pan American National Bank of East Los Angeles  
Name of Property

Los Angeles, CA  
County and State

in Gardena, California in October and arrested thirty-six undocumented Mexican workers. The incident quickly became a national story and led several members of Congress and the INS to call for new laws to prevent employers from hiring undocumented immigrants.<sup>15</sup> Several labor organizations also opposed her nomination, including the AFL-CIO and the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee. Nonetheless, President Nixon maintained his strong support for Mrs. Bañuelos, and the U.S. Senate upheld her nomination.

Upon her confirmation, Mrs. Bañuelos became the first Latina to hold the post, as well as the sixth woman.<sup>16</sup> Her selection coincided with the Nixon administration's efforts to increase the visibility of Mexican Americans within the federal government.<sup>17</sup> Mrs. Bañuelos' association with Pan American National Bank, as well as with Ramona's Mexican Food Products, contributed significantly to her nomination. She served as Treasurer from December 1971 until February 1974, during which she was the highest-ranking Mexican American in government service. She returned to the bank following her resignation, where she remained until the 1990s.

Mrs. Bañuelos continued to travel throughout California as an advocate for greater gender and racial equity in the financial industry after her service as Treasurer. She spearheaded the Pan American Bank Scholarship program to cover the tuition of Mexican American college students who majored in finance or accounting.<sup>18</sup> In a speech before the Federation of Mexican Women of Orange County in 1977, she remarked:

We will not be afraid to organize our own financial institutions when we sincerely feel that our special needs are not being met by existing institutions... Discrimination is the barrier that makes it difficult for some of us to cash a check, to obtain a loan, to achieve equality of treatment in our financial affairs. Because we are women, we find ourselves at the bottom of the social and economic ladders... We discover that we are second class citizens.<sup>19</sup>

Over the course of her career, Mrs. Bañuelos received numerous awards and accolades, including Outstanding Businesswoman of the Year (City of Los Angeles, 1969), Woman Achievement Award (TELACU, 1977), Lifetime Achievement Award (Latino Business Chamber of Greater Los Angeles, 2011), and an honorary doctorate from the City University of Los Angeles.

Although the building is nominated under Criterion B for its association with Mrs. Bañuelos, it is important to note that the bank also helped launch the career of another prominent Mexican American woman. Katherine Dávalos Ortega (b. 1934) worked as a cashier at Pan American National Bank in the 1960s and was promoted to Vice President in 1971, the same year that Mrs,

---

<sup>15</sup> Robert L. Jackson, "Knowledge of Alien Employment Denied by Mrs. Bañuelos" in *Los Angeles Times* 30 November 1971. ProQuest Historical Newspapers, last accessed April 8, 2016.

<sup>16</sup> Richard West, "L.A. Woman Picked as U.S. Treasurer" in *Los Angeles Times* 21 September 1971. ProQuest Historical Newspapers, last accessed March 20, 2015.

<sup>17</sup> Digby Diehl, "Q&A with Romana Bañuelos."

<sup>18</sup> "Pan American Bank Scholarship Foundation, Overview." Undated. Ramona Bañuelos Papers. Chicano Studies Research Center, University of California, Los Angeles.

<sup>19</sup> Romana Acosta Bañuelos, "Speech to the Federation of Mexican Women of Orange County," January 22, 1977. Ramona Bañuelos Papers. Chicano Studies Research Center, University of California, Los Angeles.

Pan American National Bank of East Los Angeles  
Name of Property

Los Angeles, CA  
County and State

Bañuelos assumed the position of U.S. Treasurer. Mrs. Ortega later became president of Santa Ana State Bank (formerly Banco del Pueblo Commercial), a likeminded institution founded in 1971 in Orange County, CA.<sup>20</sup> In 1983, President Ronald Reagan appointed her to be U.S. Treasurer. She served until 1989 and was the second Latina to hold the position.

### *Mural Movement in East Los Angeles*

To mark the opening of Pan American National Bank, the board of directors commissioned Mexican master artist José Reyes Meza to design a mosaic mural for the primary façade of the bank building. Byzantine Studios of Cuernavaca, Mexico executed the design. Entitled “Our Past, Our Present, and Our Future” and completed in 1966, the five-panel ceramic tile mural is one of the oldest existing murals in East Los Angeles and reflected the tradition of incorporating artwork into the exterior and interior walls of small businesses. Banks, in particular, were known for commissioning murals in order to attract new customers, and Meza’s mural for Pan American National Bank was illustrative of this trend within Latino communities.<sup>21</sup>

Like many Latino murals of its era, “Our Past, Our Present, and Our Future” functioned as a mechanism for rethinking or reclaiming Mexican history and cultural representations.<sup>22</sup> It revealed a rising shift in the consciousness of Mexican American artists in the postwar era—particularly during the 1960s—as the visual arts came to explore the nature of Mexican identity in the United States and drew upon pre-Columbian imagery.<sup>23</sup> Its distinguished location and association with a well-respected Mexican artist also meant that it was highly visible within the local community.

As mural making grew in connection to the Chicano movement in the late 1960s, a number of prominent local Chicano artists cited Meza and his work at Pan American National Bank as being a critical source of influence in the early stages of their careers.<sup>24</sup> John Bene, a Hungarian artist whose work in East Los Angeles nonetheless explored themes in Mexican history and culture, similarly designed a stately mosaic mural in 1969 for the nearby East Los Angeles Doctors Hospital (4060 Whittier Boulevard). Referencing European compositional techniques, both murals embraced historicism while demonstrating a connection to the monumental mural tradition of Diego Rivera, David Alfaro Siqueiros, and José Clemente Orozco (“*Los Tres Grandes*”) and foreshadowing the ethnic consciousness of the Chicano mural movement.<sup>25</sup>

---

<sup>20</sup> John Gregory, “Mexican-American Bank Offers Hope, Aura of Pride” in *Los Angeles Times* 20 June 1971. ProQuest Historical Newspapers, last accessed March 20, 2015.

<sup>21</sup> Cary Cordova, “The Heart of the Mission: Latino Art and Identity in San Francisco,” Ph.D. dissertation (University of Texas at Austin, 2005), 280.

<sup>22</sup> *Latinos in Twentieth Century California*, 59.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 58

<sup>24</sup> Alan W. Barnett, *Community Murals: The People’s Art* (Philadelphia: Art Alliance Press, 1984), 71-72.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

Pan American National Bank of East Los Angeles  
Name of Property

Los Angeles, CA  
County and State

Prominent Chicano artists who found inspiration in Meza's mural included Johnny/Don Juan González, David Botello, and Willie Herrón III.<sup>26</sup> Johnny González and David Botello, along with Robert Arenivar, designed and installed an eighteen-panel ceramic tile mural at the First Street Store in 1974, across the street from Pan American National Bank. Having met with Meza in Mexico City in 1970, González and Botello conceived their mural, "The Story of Our Struggle," to be an extension of "Our Past, Our Present, and Our Future," connected through imagery, storytelling, and artistic techniques.

Although the building is not nominated under Criterion C, it is important to note that José Reyes Meza (1924-2011) was a distinguished painter and costume and set designer in Mexico from the 1940s through the 1970s. He was a founding member of the *Salón de la Plástica Mexicana* ("Hall of Mexican Fine Art") in 1949, a prominent cultural institution in Mexico City dedicated to the celebration of Mexican contemporary art. His heraldic mural for Pan American National Bank represents a rare commission in the United States. It exhibits Pre-Columbian and Art Deco influences and expresses mosaic techniques typically associated with the Byzantine Empire.<sup>27</sup>

In addition, the building was designed by California architect Raymond Stockdale, AIA in the New Formalist style. Though little is known about the breadth of his career, one other known Stockdale-designed building has been listed at the local level. In 1988, the City of Los Angeles designated the 1938 Spanish Colonial Revival Brentwood Gas Station (110 S. Barrington Avenue) Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument #387.

Because of his experience with Pan American National Bank, Romana Bañuelos and her husband Alejandro later commissioned Mr. Stockdale in 1980 as the architect for the Santa Ana State Bank, for which they served as advisors. Pan American National Bank formally acquired Santa Ana State Bank as its Orange County branch in 1981.

---

<sup>26</sup> Johnny Gonzalez and Irma Nuñez, interview with Karen Mary Davalos, October 28, November 4, 11, and 18, and December 17 and 20, 2007, Los Angeles, California. CSRC Oral Histories Series, no. 7. Los Angeles: UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center Press, 2013.

<sup>27</sup> Barnett, 29-30.

Pan American National Bank of East Los Angeles  
Name of Property

Los Angeles, CA  
County and State

---

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Applegate, Jane. "Women Entrepreneurs Report Discrimination Bias." *Los Angeles Times*, July 11, 1990. ProQuest Newsstand. Accessed October 19, 2015.

Bañuelos, Romana Acosta. "Speech to the Federation of Mexican Women of Orange County," January 22, 1977. Ramona Bañuelos Papers. Chicano Studies Research Center, University of California, Los Angeles.

Bañuelos, Mona. Interview with Los Angeles Conservancy. August 3, 2015.

Barnett, Alan W. *Community Murals: The People's Art*. Philadelphia: Art Alliance Press, 1984.

Brown, Eloy and Romana Acosta Bañuelos. Interview with Virginia Espino. October 22 and 27, 2014, Los Angeles, California. CSRC Oral Histories Series. Los Angeles: UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center, 2014.

Cavada, Geraldo L. "Entrepreneurs from the Beginning: Latino Business & Commerce since the 16<sup>th</sup> Century," in *American Latinos and the Making of the United States: A Theme Study*. Washington D.C.: National Park Service, 2013.

Chavez, John R. *Eastside Landmark: A History of the East Los Angeles Community Union, 1968-1993*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998.

"Community Invited to Attend Pan-Am Bank Opening." *Eastside Sun*, April 14, 1966. Courtesy of Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

Cordova, Cary. "The Heart of the Mission: Latino Art and Identity in San Francisco." PhD diss., University of Texas at Austin, 2005.

Diehl, Digby. "Q&A: Romana Bañuelos." *Los Angeles Times*, May 7, 1972. ProQuest Historical Newspapers. Accessed March 20, 2015.

Gregory, John. "Mexican-American Bank Offers Hope, Aura of Pride." *Los Angeles Times*, June 20, 1971. ProQuest Historical Newspapers. Accessed March 20, 2015.

Gonzalez, Johnny and Irma Nuñez, Interview with Karen Mary Davalos. October 28, November 4, 11, and 18, and December 17 and 20, 2007, Los Angeles, California. CSRC Oral Histories Series, no. 7. Los Angeles: UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center Press, 2013.

Pan American National Bank of East Los Angeles  
Name of Property

Los Angeles, CA  
County and State

Jackson, Robert L. "Knowledge of Alien Employment Denied by Mrs. Bañuelos." *Los Angeles Times*, November 30, 1971. ProQuest Historical Newspapers. Accessed April 8, 2016.

Li, Wei, Gary Dymski, Maria W.L. Chee, Hyeon-Hyo Ahn, Carolyn Aldana, and Yu Zhou. "How Ethnic Banks Matter: Banking and Community/Economic Development in Los Angeles" in *Landscapes of the Ethnic Economy*. Ed. David H. Kaplan and Wei Li. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2006.

Meier, Matt S., Conchita Franco Serri, and Richard A. Garcia. "Romana Acosta Bañuelos." *The American Mosaic: The Latino American Experience*. ABC-CLIO, 2015. Accessed March 20, 2015.

Nicolaides, Becky M. and Andrew Wiese, ed. *The Suburb Reader*. New York: Routledge, 2006.

Romo, Ricardo. *East Los Angeles: A History of a Barrio*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983.

Rosas, Abigail. "Banking on the Community: Mexican Immigrants' Experiences in a Historically African American Bank in South Central Los Angeles, 1970-2007" in *Black and Brown in Los Angeles: Beyond Conflict and Coalition*. Ed. Josh Kun and Laura Pulido. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014.

Schonberger, Ernest A. "Poor Pay More in Mexican-American Area, Study Shows." *Los Angeles Times*, August 28, 1967. ProQuest Historical Newspapers. Accessed March 20, 2015.

West, Richard. "L.A. Woman Picked as U.S. Treasurer." *Los Angeles Times*, September 21, 1971. ProQuest Historical Newspapers. Accessed March 20, 2015.

---

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_



Pan American National Bank of East Los Angeles  
Name of Property

Los Angeles, CA  
County and State

**Primary location of additional data:**

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Name of repository: Chicano Studies Research Center at the University of California,  
Los Angeles

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** \_\_\_\_\_

---

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** less than one acre

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 34.035803

Longitude: -118.188257

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Assessor Parcel Number 5232-017-004, 5232-017-005, 5232-017-006, and 5232-017-007  
(corresponds to the attached sketch map).

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary includes the land area historically associated with the building.

---

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title: Laura Dominguez/Preservation Coordinator

organization: Los Angeles Conservancy

street & number: 523 West 6<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 826

city or town: Los Angeles state: CA zip code: 90014

e-mail [ldominguez@laconservancy.org](mailto:ldominguez@laconservancy.org)

telephone: (213) 430-4211

date: September 30, 2016

Pan American National Bank of East Los Angeles  
Name of Property

Los Angeles, CA  
County and State

---

### **Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

### **Photographs**

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

### **Photo Log**

Name of Property: Pan American National Bank of East Los Angeles  
City or Vicinity: East Los Angeles  
County: Los Angeles  
State: California  
Photographer: Adrian Scott Fine  
Date Photographed: May 29, 2016

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 1 of 13 North elevation and surrounding streetscape, camera facing southwest
- 2 of 13 North elevation, camera facing south
- 3 of 13 Detail of mural on north elevation, camera facing south and toward the sky
- 4 of 13 Detail of mural on north elevation, camera facing south and toward the sky
- 5 of 13 Detail of mural on north elevation, camera facing south and toward the sky
- 6 of 13 Detail of mural on north elevation, camera facing south and toward the sky
- 7 of 13 East elevation, camera facing southwest

Pan American National Bank of East Los Angeles  
Name of Property

Los Angeles, CA  
County and State

- 8 of 13 Northeast corner, camera facing southwest
- 9 of 13 South elevation, camera facing north
- 10 of 13 South and east elevations, camera facing northwest
- 11 of 13 South and east elevations, camera facing north
- 12 of 13 South and east elevations, camera facing northwest
- 13 of 13 North elevation, camera facing southeast

Due to operational restrictions, photographs of the interior are unavailable.

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

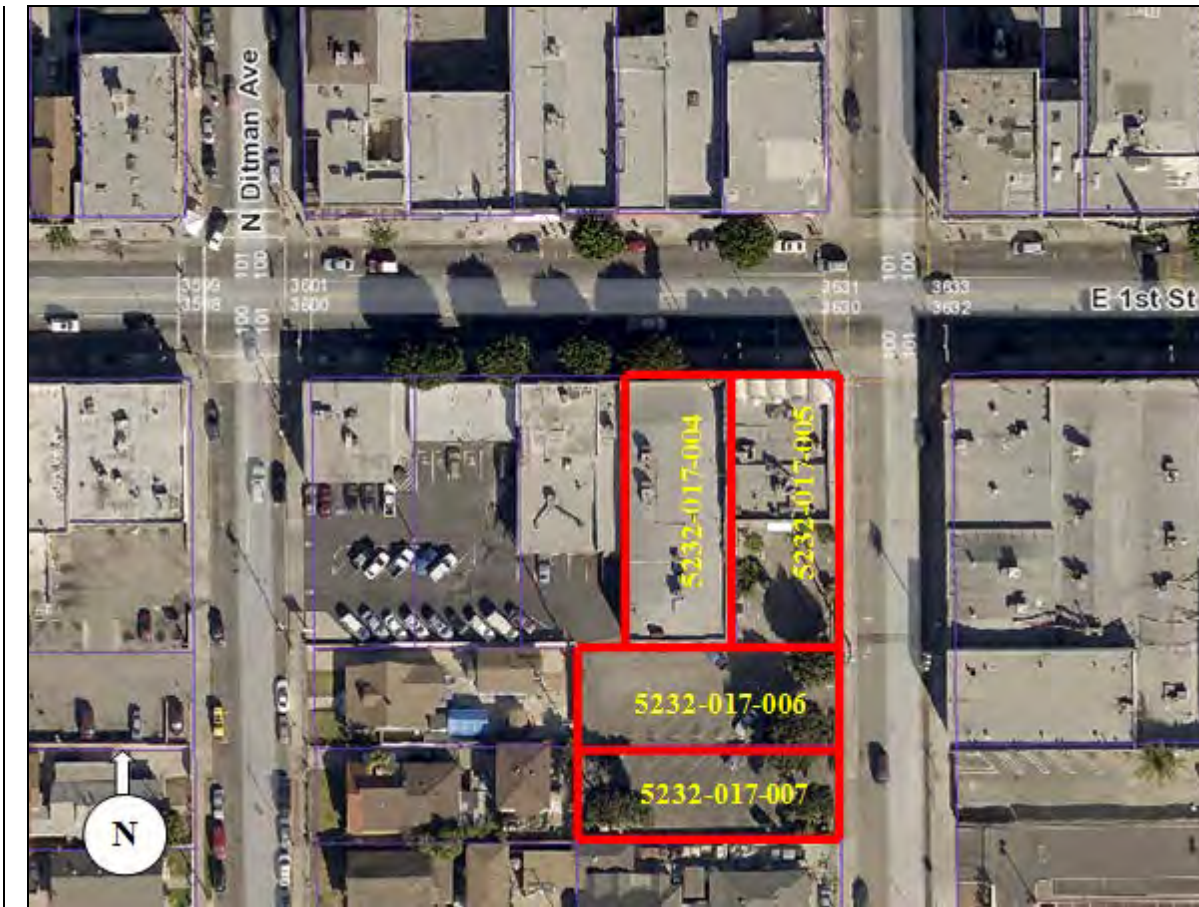
Pan American National Bank of East Los Angeles  
Name of Property

Los Angeles, CA  
County and State

### Location Map

Latitude: 34.035803

Longitude: -118.188257

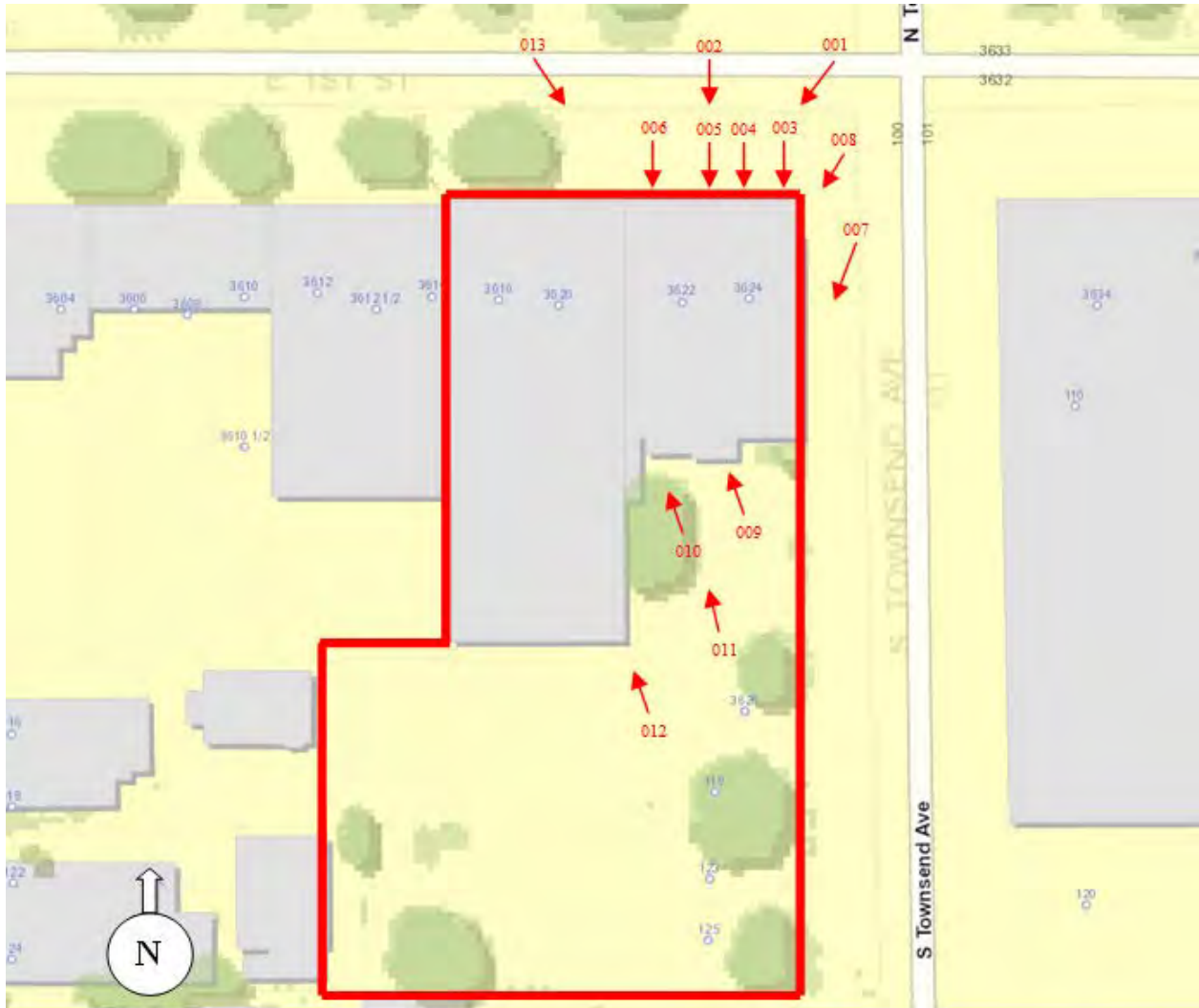


Base image courtesy of County of Los Angeles, Bureau of Land Management, Esri; Property boundary outlined in red.

Pan American National Bank of East Los Angeles  
Name of Property

Los Angeles, CA  
County and State

**Sketch Map/Photo Key**



Base image courtesy of County of Los Angeles, Bureau of Land Management, Esri; Property boundary outlined in red.



Pan American National Bank of East Los Angeles  
Name of Property

Los Angeles, CA  
County and State

**Figure 1.** Signed photograph of Romana Acosta Bañuelos (second from the left) and Katherine Dávalos Ortega (second from the right) with members of the Pan American Bank board. Undated. Courtesy Pan American Bank.



Pan American National Bank of East Los Angeles  
Name of Property

Los Angeles, CA  
County and State

**Figure 2.** "Meza to Paint Pan American Natl. Bank Murals." *Mexican American Sun*, October 14, 1965. Courtesy Los Angeles County Museum of Art.



Caption: OUR PAST, OUR PRESENT, AND OUR FUTURE depicted in Pan American National Bank of E.L.A. mural. As a result of a trip to Mexico by Pan American National Bank President Francisco Bravo, famous Mexican artist Jose Jesus Reyes Meza created the above mural, which he will paint for the front of the new Pan American National Bank building now being erected at E. First and Townsend. L. to R., Francisco Bravo, M.D., president; Raymond A. Stockdale, architect; Jose Reyes Meza, the artist; George L. Russell, vice president; Alonzo Bernal, the muralist Meza; Max Offenber, M.D., director of Pan American Bank.



Pan American National Bank of East Los Angeles  
Name of Property

Los Angeles, CA  
County and State

**Figure 3.** "Community Invited to Attend Pan-Am Bank Opening." *Eastside Sun*, April 14, 1966. Courtesy Los Angeles County Museum of Art.





Pan American National Bank of East Los Angeles  
Name of Property

Los Angeles, CA  
County and State

## Community Invited to Attend Pan-Am Bank Opening

### First Mexican-American Bank Opens Tonight to the Public With a Grand Party Fiesta

When the Pan American National Bank of East Los Angeles opens its new building at 3626 East First St. tonight to the public for a party-fiesta from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m., it will be apparent to all that they are seeing the first Mexican-American bank building to rise in the United States.

First of all, at the entrance are five mosaic murals which tell a story of the development of Mexican culture. These were created in the world-famous Byzantine Studios in Cuernavaca Mexico by Jose Reyes Meza, whose works are in collections in Mexico, U.S.A., Canada, Central and South America.

First view inside the new building is dominated by chandeliers, hand made in Aztec design. The bank's trade mark features the pyramids of the Mayan peoples of Yucatan.

While equipped with all the latest banking equipment, the Mexican theme is carried through with the onyx treatment at each teller's window, by the terrazzo floor, the Mexican hand-carved chairs, the seat coverings and tapestries which were imported from Mexico.

While not the largest building in the Belvedere area, it is considered by many to be the most beautiful. Its cost was approximately \$250,000.

In the Mexican American spirit, the grand opening crowds will be entertained by Ballet Folklorico..."

Leaders of the civic, religious, business, professional and theatrical Mexican American communities will be present.

Hosts will be headed by Dr. Francisco Bravo, president and chairman of the board of directors of the bank, and will include the 16 directors, all leaders in East Los Angeles business and professional circles.

Mistress of ceremonies will be television and radio star Lupita Moran..."

Pan American National Bank of East Los Angeles  
Name of Property

Los Angeles, CA  
County and State

**Figure 4.** “12,000 Attend Pan Am. Nat’l Bank Bldg. Opening.” *Mexican American Sun*, April 21, 1966. Courtesy Los Angeles County Museum of Art.



Pan American National Bank of East Los Angeles  
Name of Property

Los Angeles, CA  
County and State

An Open Letter To The Community...  
To The Entire East Los Angeles Community  
Re: Open House to the Public – April 14, 1966

Dear Friends:

This is an open letter of thanks to all of you.

Never in the history of East Los Angeles has there been such an overwhelming, enthusiastic and beautiful display of good will and support. At our Open House friends present were estimated at more than 12,000 during the three hours allotted to the public to view their bank. Words fail us to express adequately our thanks and appreciation.

The business community participated by staying open until 9:30 that evening and joined with spot lights to celebrate the occasion. All of the news media promulgated our affair and the protective hand of the Sheriff's Department was ever present.

We trust that our friends and co-owners of this bank are equally happy with the facility, the interiors and unusual design, and as to the format of the event – which included the raffling of a color T.V. set, the winner to be announced on May 5<sup>th</sup>, Ballet Folklorico, balloons and live radio broadcasting.

Gratefully, we now settle down to the objectives of this bank, which are to establish a determined and firm leadership in the business and economic welfare of this area. Come to us for financial counseling and for all banking needs.

Serving you will be our greatest pleasure.

Respectfully,

Francisco Bravo, M.D.  
President and Chairman of the Board

Caption: Above is an open letter from Dr. Francisco Bravo, President of the Pan American National Bank of E.L.A. which is self explanatory. At the right, top is a graphic picture of the enthusiastic crowd watching the entertainment in progress. Over 12,000 people attended the Grand Opening. Bottom photo shows famous Mexican artist Jose Reyes Meza (2<sup>nd</sup> from left) being congratulated during the grand opening of the Pan American National Bank building last week, by Dr. Francisco Bravo (left), president; Arnold Martinez (2<sup>nd</sup> from right), field deputy for Supervisor Ernest E. Debs, and George Russell (right) executive Vice President, member of the [na]tional bank. Meza did the bank's outside murals. To be commended are the devoted and unselfish dedication of the bank administration and staff to make the opening of the beautiful financial institution a time to be long remembered.

Pan American National Bank of East Los Angeles  
Name of Property

Los Angeles, CA  
County and State

**Figure 5.** "OEO Deposits More Money in Minority Banks." *Los Angeles Sentinel*, June 1, 1972.  
ProQuest Historical Newspapers.



Pan American National Bank of East Los Angeles  
Name of Property

Los Angeles, CA  
County and State

## OEO Deposits More Money in Minority Banks

The Bank of Finance, Los Angeles, and Pan American National Bank, East Los Angeles, were among the minority-owned banks across the country which received a part of \$17 million in additional deposits, according to an announcement on April 2 by OEO [Office of Economic Opportunity] national director, Philip V. Sanchez.

Of the nation's 37 minority-controlled banks, 29 are operated by blacks, and 8 by Spanish-American. Most of them are located in inner-city areas and play a large role in the economic development of minority-owned business enterprises.

### Impetus

The President's national minority-owned bank deposit program began in October, 1970, and was given further impetus by the White House in mid-1971. The public sector – or government – and the private sector such as industry, business, unions, religious organizations, education and social welfare groups were at that time asked to set goals for increased deposits.

The Treasury Dept. headed the public sector effort and the Department of Commerce enlisted the support of the private sector.

By the end of 1971, these efforts had resulted in an increase in minority bank deposits of \$242.2 million over October 1970, the start of the program. This was a gain of 61 per cent.

Both the public and private sectors exceeded the goals during the final months of the drive. The deposit flow is continuing and the federal government is requesting a quarterly report from its sources in order to monitor the future progress of the plan.

### Other Functions

In addition to expanding the lending functions of the minority banks, the increased deposits strengthen the bank generally and thereby add to their earnings and enable them to improve the services they can offer to their customers.

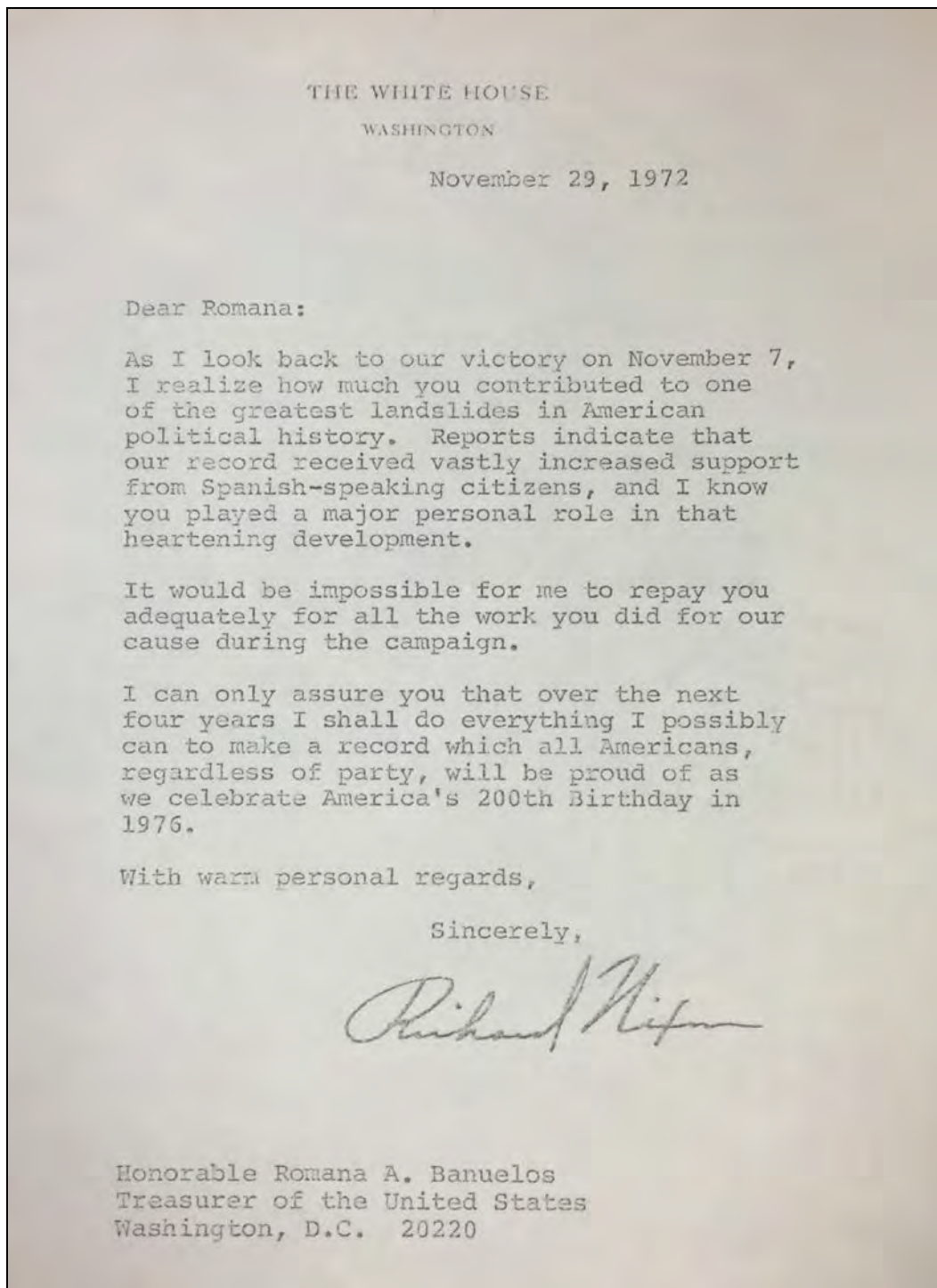
During the fiscal year starting July 1, 1972 the OEO has projected expenditures of \$30.7 million in grants for special impact economic development. A large amount of these funds will move through the minority-controlled financial institutions.

These funds support 39 community development corporations, many of them in urban areas.

Pan American National Bank of East Los Angeles  
Name of Property

Los Angeles, CA  
County and State

**Figure 6.** Letter from President Richard Nixon to the Honorable Romana A. Bañuelos, November 29, 1972. Ramona Bañuelos Papers. Chicano Studies Research Center, University of California, Los Angeles.





Pan American National Bank of East Los Angeles  
Name of Property

Los Angeles, CA  
County and State

**Figure 7.** "Postscript: Ex-U.S. Treasurer Keeps Busy Making Money – Not Signing It." Myrna Oliver, *Los Angeles Times*, August 24, 1979. Ramona Bañuelos Papers. Chicano Studies Research Center, University of California, Los Angeles.

HEALTH AND WELFARE AGENCY  
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY  
915 CAPITOL MALL, ROOM 200  
Sacramento, California 95814  
(916) 445-6951

HEALTH AND WELFARE AGENCY  
COMMUNICATIONS DIVISION  
Governor

Glenn  
Harris G. Glavin  
SECRETARY  
James W. Glavin  
DEPUTY SECRETARY

Los Angeles Times  
**Metro**  
LOCAL NEWS  
EDITORIAL PAGES  
CC + PART II  
FRIDAY, AUGUST 24, 1979

## Postscript: Ex-U.S. Treasurer Keeps Busy Making Money—Not Signing It

Most Americans still carry her autograph in their wallets.

But Romana Acosta Banuelos, now 53, of Los Feliz District, former treasurer of the United States, is busier these days making money than signing it.

"I am guilty of being involved in business only," she said proudly at her Gardena-based Ramona's Mexican Food Products, Inc., where she is president, her second husband, Alejandro Banuelos, is secretary-treasurer; sons Martin Torres, 36, and Carlos Torres, 35, are vice presidents; and daughter Mona Banuelos, 23, is acting vice president.

Mrs. Banuelos, grandmother of two, also is director and former board chairman of Pan American National Bank in East Los Angeles and an adviser to Banco Santa Ana in Santa Ana.

"I don't ever want to retire," she said. "I am in love with the banking business . . . (and) I love the factory. The factory to me is like a child."

The Arizona-born Romana (named by her father for the Italian city he greatly admired) became the highest ranking Mexican-American in President Richard M. Nixon's Administration. But she has always been independent. Convinced she married too young and unhappily, she got divorced. Tired of working in a laundry and sewing factory, she bought into the Casa Blanca No. 2 tortilla factory in 1949—the base of her current company which markets tortillas and burritos from Hawaii to New York.

"Because I was a woman and because I was young and because I had children, it seemed like everybody wanted to help me," she said. "I believe that when you are young and ambitious and a hard-working person, people have a tendency to admire you and to help you get there even sooner."

She got to Washington in late 1971 and stayed until Feb. 14, 1974, when the department was reorganized, paring her employes from 1,161 to 150. She left, she said, because, "I had nothing to do."

As a presidential appointee, Mrs. Banuelos received extensive publicity when immigration officials found illegal aliens working in her factory.

She still believes some unknown political enemy invited news media to accompany the inspectors who went at the time of her Senate confirmation hearings.

Every factory in Gardena is checked routinely, and here about two or three times a year, she said recently, emphasizing that an employer has no legal duty or authority to police illegal aliens. The routine checks continue to net illegals.

"Sure you have to find people," she said. "I think it would be abnormal not to find any people."

As for legal Mexican residents, Mrs. Banuelos believes she has set an example of achievement both as treasurer and in business.

"People say, 'What have you done for the Mexican-American?'" she commented, walking through her factory filled with German and Swiss machines and neatly uniformed Latino workers. "I say, 'I have 400 workers here, and 65 in the Pan American Bank and 22 in Santa Ana. How many do you have?'"

Business aside, Mrs. Banuelos' eyes lighted when asked if she might ever seek elective or another appointive office.

"The only thing that I would like to become is a supervisor in the 3rd District," she said. "That's the one that represents the people of East Los Angeles."

—By Myrna Oliver



Romana Acosta Banuelos

Ms Banuelos:  
You have  
many supporters.  
Harris  
Glavin  
8-24-79

DEPARTMENTS OF THE

Pan American National Bank of East Los Angeles  
Name of Property

Los Angeles, CA  
County and State

Postscript: Ex-U.S. Treasurer Keeps Busy Making Money – Not Signing It

Most Americans still carry her autograph in their wallets.

But Romana Acosta Banuelos, now 53, of Los Feliz District, former treasurer of the United States, is busier these days making money than signing it.

“I am guilty of being involved in business only,” she said proudly at her Gardena-based Ramona’s Mexican Food Products, Inc., where she is president, her second husband, Alejandro Banuelos, is secretary-treasurer; sons Martin Torres, 36, and Carlos Torres, 35, are vice presidents; and daughter Mona Banuelos, 23, is acting vice president.

Mrs. Banuelos, grandmother of two, also is director and former board chairman of Pan American National Bank in East Los Angeles and an adviser to Banco Santa Ana in Santa Ana.

“I don’t ever want to retire,” she said. “I am in love with the banking business...(and) I love the factory. The factory to me is like a child.”

The Arizona-born Romana (named by her father for the Italian city he greatly admired) became the highest ranking Mexican-American in President Richard M. Nixon’s Administration. But she has always been independent. Convinced she married too young and unhappily, she got divorced. Tired of working in a laundry and sewing factory, she bought into the Casa Blanca No. 2 tortilla factory in 1949 – the base of her current company which markets tortillas and burritos from Hawaii to New York.

“Because I was a woman and because I was young and because I had children, it seemed like everybody wanted to help me,” she said. “I believe that when you are young and ambitious and a hardworking person, people have a tendency to admire you and to help you get there even sooner.”

She got to Washington in late 1971 and stayed until Feb. 14, 1974, when the department was reorganized, paring her employees from 1,161 to 150. She left, she said, because, “I had nothing to do.”

As a presidential appointee, Mrs. Banuelos received extensive publicity when immigration officials found illegal aliens working in her factory.

She still believes some unknown political enemy invited news media to accompany the inspectors who went at the time of her Senate confirmation hearings.

Every factory in Gardena is checked routinely, and hers about two or three times a year, she said recently, emphasizing that an employer has no legal duty or authority to police illegal aliens. The routine checks continue to net illegals.



Pan American National Bank of East Los Angeles  
Name of Property

Los Angeles, CA  
County and State

“Sure you have to find people,” she said. “I think it would be abnormal not to find any people.”

As for legal Mexican residents, Mrs. Banuelos believes she has set an example of achievement both as treasurer and in business.

“People say, ‘What have you done for the Mexican American?’” she commented, walking through her factory filled with German and Swiss machines and neatly uniformed Latino workers. “I say, ‘I have 400 workers here, and 65 in the Pan American Bank and 22 in Santa Ana. How many do you have?’”

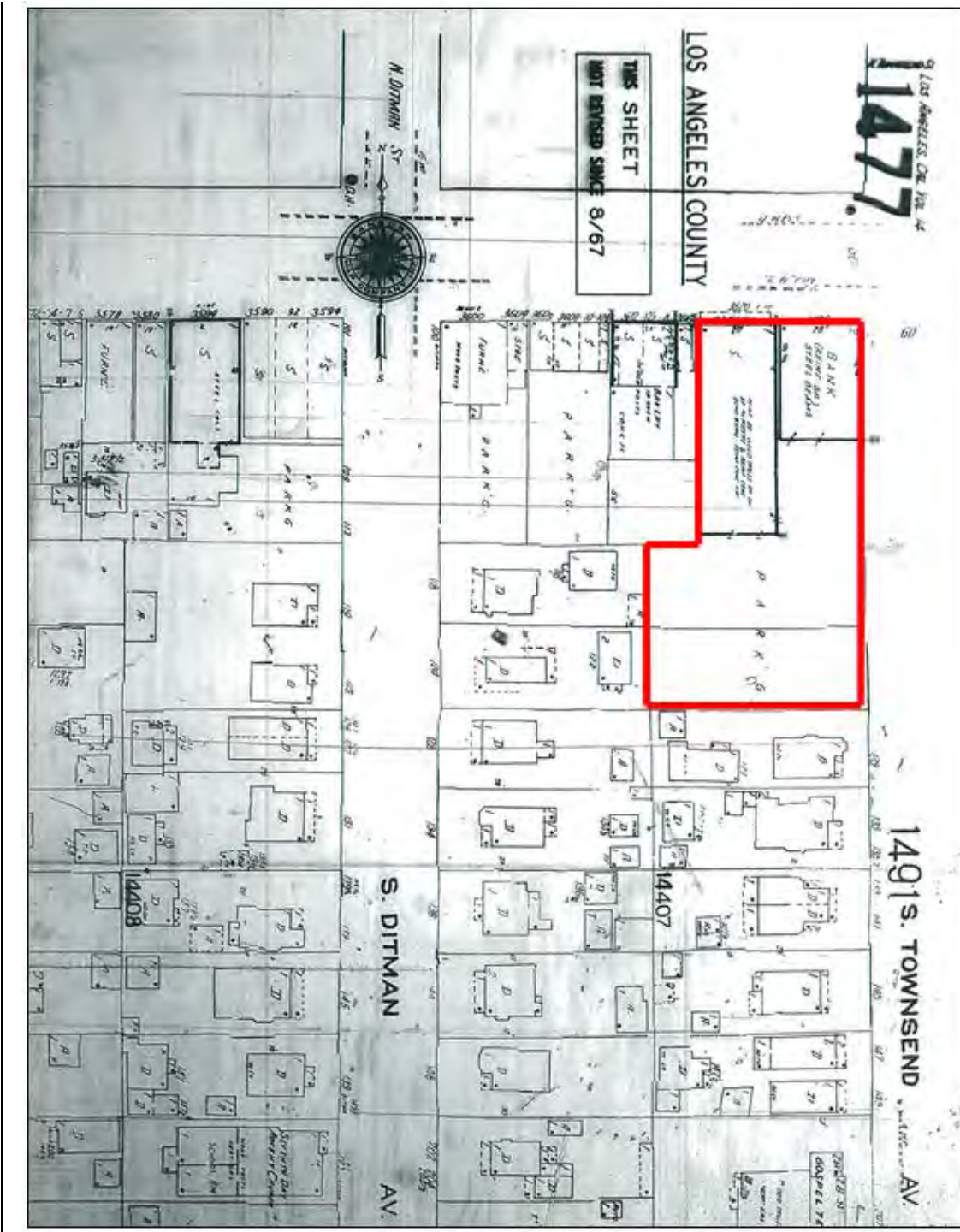
Business aside, Mrs. Banuelos’ eyes lighted when asked if she might ever seek elective or another appointive office.

“The only thing that I would like to become is a supervisor in the 3<sup>rd</sup> District,” she said. “That’s the one that represents the people of East Los Angeles.”

Pan American National Bank of East Los Angeles  
Name of Property

Los Angeles, CA  
County and State

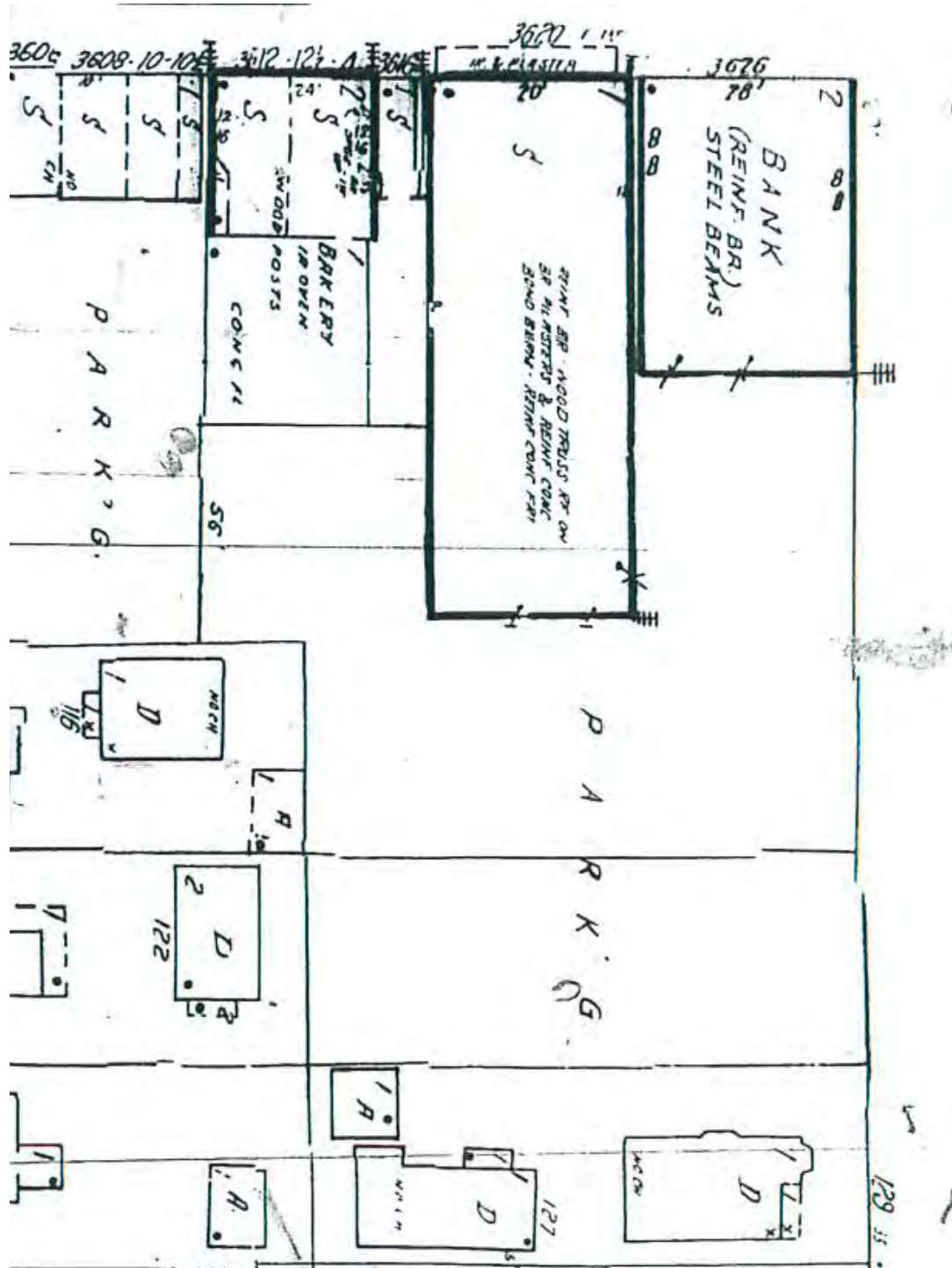
**Figure 8.** Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1967. Los Angeles, Volume 14, page 1477.



Pan American National Bank of East Los Angeles  
Name of Property

Los Angeles, CA  
County and State

Figure 9. Detail, Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1967. Los Angeles, Volume 14, page 1477.





Pan American National Bank of East Los Angeles  
 Name of Property

Los Angeles, CA  
 County and State

Figure 10. Pan American Bank, Application for New Construction. May 24, 1966. County of Los Angeles, Department of County Engineer, Building and Safety Division.

**APPLICATION FOR BUILDING PERMIT**

COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES  
 DEPARTMENT OF COUNTY ENGINEER  
 BUILDING AND SAFETY DIVISION  
 JOHN A. LAMBIE, COUNTY ENGINEER  
 COLEMAN W. JENKINS, SUPT. OF BUILDING

**FOR APPLICANT TO FILL IN**

BUILDING ADDRESS: 3626 E. FIRST ST.  
 LOT NO.: 56 BLOCK 29  
 TRACT: HAZARD EASTSIDE ADDITION  
 SIZE OF LOT: 53.7x134.0 NO. OF BLDGS. ON LOT: ONE  
 USE OF PROPERTY: SHOP  
 OWNER: 1ST ST. STORE TEL. NO. 249-8370  
 ADDRESS: 3624 E. FIRST ST.  
 CITY: LA 63.  
 ARCHITECT OR ENGINEER: RAYMOND STOCKDALE TEL. NO. HO 78908  
 ADDRESS: 3260 HOLLOCK DR. HOLLYWOOD  
 CONTRACTOR: [blank] LIC. NO. [blank]  
 ADDRESS: [blank] LIC. NO. [blank]  
 CITY: [blank]

**DESCRIPTION OF WORK**

NEW  ADD  ALTER  REPAIR  DEMOLISH   
 SQ. FT. SIZE: 16700 NO. OF STORIES: 2 NET AREA: [blank]  
 USE OF STRUCTURE: BANK

SIGNATURE OF APPLICANT: Raymond Stockdale  
 VALUATIONS: 11/3 119,000

P.C. PER 5706-52 11/3 28600

I HEREBY ACKNOWLEDGE THAT I HAVE READ THIS APPLICATION AND STATE THAT THE ABOVE IS CORRECT AND AGREE TO COMPLY WITH ALL COUNTY ORDINANCES AND STATE LAWS REGULATING BUILDING CONSTRUCTION AND CERTIFY THAT NO PERSON IN VIOLATION OF THE LABOR CODE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA RELATING TO WORKERS' COMPENSATION IS EMPLOYED IN CONNECTION WITH THE ABOVE.

SIGNATURE OF PERMITTEE: Raymond Stockdale  
 ADDRESS: [blank]

BUILDING ADDRESS: 3626 E. FIRST ST.  
 LOCALITY: L.A. 63  
 NEAREST CROSS ST.: DITMAN E. ROWAN  
 DISTRICT NO.: 6 GROUP: F2 TYPE: CONST.  PROPOSED BY: [signature]  
 STATISTICAL CLASSIFICATION: CLASS. NO.: 15 DWELL UNITS  
 USE ZONE: MAP NO.: 3213 SPECIAL CONDITIONS: 2EC 2660(3)  
 REVENUE MAP: EX A PG 5  
 ADD. SETBACK FROM FRONT PROP. LINE OF [blank] (STREET) 1ST  
 TYPE OF HIGHWAY: EXISTING WIDTH: 40 SETBACK FROM C.L.: 10 HIGHWAY + YARD = TOTAL: 0 + 0 = 0  
 ADD. SETBACK FROM SIDE PROP. LINE OF [blank] (STREET) TOWNSHIP  
 TYPE OF HIGHWAY: EXISTING WIDTH: 40 SETBACK FROM C.L.: 30 HIGHWAY + YARD = TOTAL: 0 + 0 = 0  
 LOCAL: 40 30 0 + 0 = 0  
 171 CORNER CUTOFF YES  NO

SEE REVERSE SIDE FOR SPECIAL APPROVALS

Road Department approval of Highway Work in improvement is required or occupancy of building. L.A. County Ord. No. 1494

APPROVALS: DATE: INSPECTOR'S SIGNATURE

FOUNDATION, LOCATION FORMS, MATERIALS  
 FRAMES, FIRE STOPS, BRACING BOLTS  
 FURNACE LOCATION DRAINAGE DUCTS  
 LATH. INT.  
 LATH. EXT.  
 HOUSE NUMBER CORRECT AND POSTED  
 FINAL

JOHN F. LEWIS, PRINCIPAL STRUCTURAL ENGINEER  
 PERMIT VALIDATION

PLAN CHECK VALIDATION (4920) M.D. CAM

INSPECTOR COPY



Pan American National Bank of East Los Angeles  
 Name of Property

Los Angeles, CA  
 County and State

Figure 11. Pan American Bank, Application for Addition. May 24, 1966. County of Los Angeles, Department of County Engineer, Building and Safety Division.

**APPLICATION FOR BUILDING PERMIT** 1

COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES  
 DEPARTMENT OF COUNTY ENGINEER  
 BUILDING AND SAFETY DIVISION  
 COLEMAN W. JENKINS, SUPT. OF BUILDING

ASSESSOR MAP/BOOK 24 PAGE 25-26 PARCEL  
 BUILDING ADDRESS 3626 E. 1ST ST.  
 LOCALITY E.L.A.  
 NEAREST CROSS ST. N. Vermont Ave  
 DISTRICT NO. 99-6 GROUND TYPE CONST. F. ACCESS BY Rollman  
 STATISTICAL CLASSIFICATION CLASS NO. 22 DWELL. UNITS SEWER MAP OK A PDS  
 USE ZONE MAP NO. 3213 SPECIAL CONDITIONS C3

**FOR APPLICANT TO FILL IN**  
 (Print or type only)

BUILDING ADDRESS 3626 EAST FIRST ST.  
 LOT NO. 485 BLOCK 29  
 TRACT WITH PLATS ADDITION EAST SIDE  
 SIZE OF LOT 58' x 134' 8" NO. OF BLDGS. NOW ON LOT 2  
 USE OF EXISTING BLDG. BANK & LAUNDROMAT  
 OTHER PAN AMERICAN NAT. BANK TEL. 264-3310  
 ADDRESS 3626 EAST FIRST ST.  
 CITY E. AST LOS ANGELES  
 ARCHITECT OR ENGINEER FERNANDO JUAREZ TEL. 285-2046  
 ADDRESS 672 S. LAFAYETTE PK. PL. L.A.  
 CONTRACTOR Nolan Court TEL. NO. 929-3611  
 ADDRESS 15416 Hamlin #300 LIC. NO. CLASS  
 CITY Van Nuys 91400  
 CONSTRUCTION LENDER NAME AND BRANCH  
 ADDRESS  
 SQ. FT. 3200 NO. OF STORIES 2 NO. OF FAMILIES  
 USE OF STRUCTURE REMODEL FOR OFFICES  
 SIGNATURE OF APPLICANT Rollin Stromm  
 VALUATION \$ 20,000.00  
 P.C. FEE \$ 71.55 P.M.T. FEE \$ 119.25

BLDG. SETBACK FROM FRONT PROP. LINE OF 0' E. 1st St STREET  
 TYPE OF EXISTING HIGHWAY WIDTH SETBACK FROM C.L. HIGHWAY + YARD = TOTAL  
 100' 50' 0' + 0' = 0'  
 BLDG. SETBACK FROM SIDE PROP. LINE OF STREET  
 TYPE OF EXISTING HIGHWAY WIDTH SETBACK FROM C.L. HIGHWAY + YARD = TOTAL  
 CORNER CUTOFF YES  NO

SEE REVERSE SIDE FOR SPECIAL APPROVALS

APPROVALS DATE INSPECTOR'S SIGNATURE  
 FOUNDATION LOCATION FORS MATERIALS 5-1-72 Thompson  
 FRAME FIRE STOP, BRACING BOLTS 6-2-72 Thompson  
 FURNACE LOCATION, GAS VENT, DUCTS  
 LATH, INT. Drywall 6-7-72 Thompson  
 LATH, EXT. 6-2-72 Thompson  
 HOUSE NUMBER COM. REC'D AND POSTED  
 FINAL 6-28-72 Thompson

I HEREBY ACKNOWLEDGE THAT I HAVE READ THIS APPLICATION AND STATE THAT THE ABOVE IS CORRECT AND AGREE TO COMPLY WITH ALL ORDINANCES AND LAWS REGULATING BUILDING CONSTRUCTION. I CERTIFY THAT IN DOING THE WORK AUTHORIZED HEREBY I WILL NOT EMPLOY ANY PERSON IN VIOLATION OF THE LABOR CODE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA IN RELATION TO WORKMEN'S COMPENSATION INSURANCE.  
 SIGNATURE OF PERMITTEE Rollin Stromm  
 ADDRESS

JOHN F. LEWIS, PRINCIPAL STRUCTURAL ENGINEER  
 PERMIT VALIDATION 67 M.G. 6281

PLAN CHECK VALIDATION © NO. CABM -  
 LAC 47513 MAR 6 23 A 7155-A  
 LAC 49693 MAR 20 1 11 925 B  
 White



P/B  
Pan American Bank



P/B  
3626

P/B  
Pan American Bank

FOOT & ANKLE CLINIC  
WOUND CENTER







P/B  
Pan American Bank



P/B  
Pan American Bank

P/B  
26  
Pan American Bank



















P/B  
Pan American Bank











  
Pan American Bank





♿  
PARKING ONLY  
MINIMUM  
\$2.50





P/B  
Pan American Bank

♿  
PARKING ONLY  
MINIMUM FINE \$250

NOT PARKING





NO PARKING  
EXCEPT WHERE  
BY  
SIGN INDICATED  
VIOLATION  
FINE \$250

♿  
PARKING  
ONLY  
VIOLATION  
FINE \$250





Pan American Bank  
P/B

P/B  
Pan American Bank

36





UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action: Nomination

Property Name: Pan American National Bank of East Los Angeles

Multiple Name: Latinos in 20th Century California MPS

State & County: CALIFORNIA, Los Angeles

Date Received: 2/10/2017      Date of Pending List: \_\_\_\_\_      Date of 16th Day: \_\_\_\_\_      Date of 45th Day: \_\_\_\_\_      Date of Weekly List: 3/27/2017

Reference number: MP100000782

Nominator: State

Reason For Review:

X Accept       Return       Reject      3/27/2017 Date

Abstract/Summary Comments: The Pan American National Bank of East Los Angeles is significant at the state and local levels under National Register Criteria A and B, in the areas of Ethnic Heritage-Hispanic, Art, and Commerce. Constructed in 1965, the two-story, steel-reinforced masonry building represents a highly stylized New Formalist (Neo-Formalism) design with decorative Hispanic-inspired mosaic murals on the commercial façade. The murals, by Mexican artist Jose Reyes Meza, are entitled "Our Past, Our Present, and Our Future and represent an early exploration of an art form that would gain significant importance within the Hispanic community as part of the Chicano mural movement of the 1960s and 1970s. The oldest Hispanic-owned bank in California, the bank reflects the significant economic growth of the Mexican American community in East Los Angeles after World War II. Bank co-founder Ms. Romana Acosta Banuelos was an influential local entrepreneur who sought to remedy the absence of community based financial institutions serving the rapidly expanding Mexican and Mexican American populations of East Los Angeles. Located with the heart of the community's emerging commercial district the banking operation would become a pivotal component of the economic growth and stability of the community, helping reverse exclusionary banking practices and supporting financial literacy for local residents. Ms. Banuelos, who would serve as U.S. Treasurer under President Nixon, continually advocated statewide for greater gender and racial equality in the state's financial industry. The property meets the Registration Requirements set out in the Latinos in 20th Century California MPS for commercial buildings, artwork/ mural, and offices of prominent persons property types.

Recommendation/ Criteria: Accept National Register Criterion A and B.

Reviewer Paul Lusignan

Discipline Historian

Telephone (202)354-2229

Date 3/27/2017

DOCUMENTATION:      see attached comments : No      see attached SLR : No

**Pan American National Bank of East Los Angeles  
(Latinos in Twentieth Century California MPS)  
East Los Angeles, Los Angeles County  
Staff Report**

Pan American National Bank of East Los Angeles is located on the southwest corner of East 1<sup>st</sup> Street and South Townsend Avenue in East Los Angeles, an unincorporated community of Los Angeles County. The two-story, steel-reinforced masonry building was constructed as a financial institution in 1965 in the New Formalist style. In 1972, the bank expanded into the reinforced concrete and masonry building directly to the west (originally constructed c. 1942), forming an L-shaped plan. The eastern end of the north elevation features five narrow, round concrete arches that project above the roofline, which is otherwise flat. The repetitive arches frame the building's five-panel mosaic mural, as well as its glass and anodized aluminum storefront system. Aside from the arched entryway, the building is clad in stucco, which has been painted blue. The building is located in a commercial corridor and continues to operate as a bank. It is in overall good condition and retains all aspects of integrity.

Pan American Bank is eligible at the state level of significance under Criteria A and B in the areas of Art, Commerce, and Ethnic Heritage: Hispanic. It meets the registration requirements for commercial buildings, murals, and offices of prominent persons outlined in the *Latinos in Twentieth Century California* Multiple Property Submission. The oldest Latino-owned bank in California, Pan American Bank is emblematic of the economic growth of the Mexican American community in East Los Angeles after World War II. The building's five-panel mosaic tile mural, entitled "Our Past, Our Present, and Our Future," is one of the earliest examples of the art form in East Los Angeles and influenced the rise of the Chicano mural movement in the 1960s and 1970s. The bank is also representative of the career of co-founder Romana Acosta Bañuelos, a prominent Mexican American entrepreneur who later became the first Latina Treasurer of the United States. The period of significance begins in 1964 when Romana Acosta Bañuelos was instrumental in acquiring the bank's charter, and ends in 1966 when the murals were installed.

The property is nominated by the Los Angeles Conservancy, funded in part by an Underrepresented Communities Grant from the National Park Service to the California State Office of Historic Preservation to increase the number of Latino properties listed in the National Register. No letters have been received to date. Staff supports the nomination as written and recommends the State Historical Resources Commission determine the Pan American National Bank of East Los Angeles is eligible under National Register Criteria A and B at the state level of significance with a 1964 to 1966 period of significance and meets the registration requirements of the *Latinos in Twentieth Century California* MPS. Staff recommends the State Historic Preservation Officer approve the nomination for forwarding to the National Park Service for listing on the National Register.

Amy H. Crain  
State Historian II  
January 20, 2017

**OFFICE OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION**

1725 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, Suite 100  
SACRAMENTO, CA 95816-7100  
(916) 445-7000 Fax: (916) 445-7053  
calshpo@parks.ca.gov  
www.ohp.parks.ca.gov



February 7, 2017

J. Paul Loether, Deputy Keeper and Chief  
National Register and National Historic Landmark Programs  
National Register of Historic Places  
1201 Eye St. NW, 8th Fl.  
Washington D.C. 20005

Subject: **Pan American National Bank of East Los Angeles  
(Latinos in Twentieth Century California MPS)  
Los Angeles County, California  
National Register of Historic Places Nomination**

Dear Mr. Loether:

**The enclosed disk contains the true and correct copy of the nomination for the PAN AMERICAN NATIONAL BANK OF EAST LOS ANGELES to the National Register of Historic Places.** On February 3, 2017 in Sacramento, California, the California State Historical Resources Commission unanimously found the property eligible for the National Register at the state level of significance under Criteria A and B with a period of significance 1964 to 1966.

Pan American National Bank is eligible in the areas of Art, Commerce, and Ethnic Heritage: Hispanic. It meets the registration requirements for commercial buildings, murals, and offices of prominent persons outlined in the *Latinos in Twentieth Century California* MPS. The oldest Latino-owned bank in California, Pan American Bank is emblematic of the economic growth of the Mexican American community in East Los Angeles after World War II. The building's five-panel mosaic tile mural, entitled "Our Past, Our Present, and Our Future," is one of the earliest examples of the art form in East Los Angeles and influenced the rise of the Chicano mural movement in the 1960s and 1970s. The bank is also representative of the career of co-founder Romana Acosta Bañuelos, a prominent Mexican American entrepreneur who later became the first Latina Treasurer of the United States.

The property is nominated by the Los Angeles Conservancy, funded in part by an Underrepresented Communities Grant from the National Park Service to the California State Office of Historic Preservation to increase the number of Latino properties listed in the National Register. No letters have been received to date. If you have any questions regarding this nomination, please contact Amy Crain of my staff at (916) 445-7009.

Sincerely,



Jenan Saunders  
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

Enclosure