

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

# 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: Oakland Auditorium DRAFT  
 Other names/site number: Henry J. Kaiser Auditorium  
 Name of related multiple property listing: NA

**2. Location**

Street & number: 10 Tenth Street  
 City or town: Oakland State: CA County: Alameda  
 Not For Publication:  Vicinity: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 \_\_\_ 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 \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

\_\_\_ national      \_\_\_ statewide      \_\_\_ local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

\_\_\_ A      \_\_\_ B      \_\_\_ C      \_\_\_ D

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

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**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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

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

**Category of Property**

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

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**Number of Resources within Property**

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

**6. Function or Use**  
**Historic Functions**

**Civic auditorium and performing arts theatre**

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)  
**Vacant**

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
**Beaux Arts**

**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)  
Principal exterior materials of the property:  
**Exterior - Granite cladding, stucco cladding, terra cotta sculptural reliefs, metal clad doors, wood and metal clad doors and windows, concrete; Interior – concrete and steel, flat and ornamental plaster, stone and wood flooring, ornamental metalwork**

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## **Narrative Description**

### **Summary Paragraph**

The 1913 Henry J. Kaiser Convention Center (formerly the Oakland Auditorium) is a large rectangular, Beaux Arts style building at the southern end of Lake Merritt near downtown Oakland, California. Beaux Arts style elements that are present include the simple orderliness of the exterior, classical massing, monumental scale, symmetrical facades, light-colored masonry walls, and decorative elements such as pilasters, garlands, and floral details. The building has a side-gabled roof with decorative parapets that extend slightly above the roofline. The overall building measures approximately four hundred feet long by two hundred feet across. The building has four floors, including the basement, and totals approximately 228,000 square feet of floor area. The floors are accessed primarily by a system of ramps; stairs and elevators are also present. The building was designed and constructed to house both an arena and a theatre plus other assembly spaces, including ballrooms. The east end of the building houses the arena and the west end the theatre. The stage between the arena and theatre was originally designed to serve both and also allowed for the stage to lower to connect the two spaces. The building is steel frame and reinforced concrete construction, with a three-hinged arch roof truss system at the arena roof. Its principal, north façade is monolithic, with granite cladding and a series of monumental niches that house entry ways with allegorical vaults rendered in terra cotta.

## **Narrative Description**

### **Building Site**

The Oakland Auditorium, having been originally sited within a lakeside park, has an expansive setting that is generally associated with a range of other nearby civic buildings, including the Oakland Museum of California, Laney Community College, the Alameda County Superior Courthouse and Administrative Building, and the Oakland Public Library. The Oakland Auditorium property is also related spatially to Lake Merritt, towards which its primary (north) façade is oriented. However, uniquely, the building has four fronts – the primary, ceremonial façade at the north, secondary façades serving as entryways at the east and west, and a tertiary façade at the rear, towards 10th Street to the south.

Surrounding site areas include:

To the north, a deep sidewalk area with seven sets of steps and planters between the building and the sidewalk, plus a paved parking lot to the north;

To the south, a narrow sidewalk separated by several planting beds, steps, ramps and landings;

To the west, a broad sidewalk and entry area with stairs, landings and ramps, along with a paved and partly landscaped entry drive;

To the east, another broad sidewalk and entry area with steps, landings and ramps plus another paved entry drive.

While each of these site areas are original to the building, surviving original/early site features (outside the building wall) are the sets of granite entry stairs at the center of the west side (1 stairway) and at each of the flanking east and west entries at both east and west sides (4 stairways), the latter including their pairs of lanterns on granite pedestals; plus the original light

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wells (2) and door ramp (1) at the west end of the south side. All other site features are later replacements and, thus, non-historic assemblies.

### **Building Exterior**

The north (primary) façade is clad in granite veneer with terra cotta trim, while the east, west, and south facades are clad in stucco. Each are described in the following paragraphs.

The north façade of the Oakland Auditorium faces north towards Lake Merritt with a monumental, symmetrical and sculptural wall. Its monolithic granite face is punctuated by seven arched openings that contain half-vaulted entry vestibule niches. The odd number of entry arches is an expression of invitation and openness, containing an opening in the exact center of the façade rather than a central solid wall. While the granite façade is a monumental 2-dimensional plane, the overall façade is 3-dimensional. Not only do the recessed niches create volume, but the whole of the north façade is appended to the bulk of the building, its granite faces returning approximately sixteen feet at each end and its flat roof abutting the double-pitched building form. The granite work is of the highest quality, the selection and use of which was reportedly an upgrade of the design based on the admonition of one of its original architects, who warned that anything less would prove to be a shame. The granite façade's composition includes a low granite base and continuous projecting cornice.

Centered under the cornice of the north façade is the phrase "AVDITORIVM OF THE CITY OF OAKLAND DEDICATED BY THE CITIZENS TO THE INTELLECTVAL AND INDVSTRIAL PROCESS OF THE PEOPLE ANNO DOMINI MCMXIV."

Each entrance niche includes three double-height arched window and door openings. Under the arch of the center bay is a fixed, multi-pane, wood-sash window, below which are three decorative solid panels followed by a pair of aluminum-framed doors. The doors are flanked by sidelights and topped with a transom window. The center bay is flanked by two narrower double-height arched openings, each with an identical set of fixed, multi-pane, wood-sash windows with solid panels in between. The windows are original while the aluminum-framed doors are replacements. Within the front of each niche are sets of original granite steps leading up to each entry landing. Original and early images show the site level directly at the foot of the granite steps. Changes at the site have resulted in the addition of concrete stairs fronting each niche outside the building wall, along with the addition of concrete planters between each of the niches.

Each of the seven entrance niches contain a monumental exedrae that is elaborately decorated with sculptural reliefs made from terra cotta; collectively the works are titled the "Riches of the Earth." Each of the seven designs present a unique scene, each with its own subtheme and title. From east to west – "The Joy of the Effort," "Consolation of Arts," "Wealth of the Earth," "The Wealth of the Mind," "Wealth of the Sea," "The Duties of Life," and "Gifts of the Air." Each niche is broken into three parts, or bays, with four composite style pilasters delineating the central entrance and flanking window bays in each niche. The pictorial scenes include figures that depict the theme. For example, the "Consolation of Arts" has figures playing music, creating sculptures, and performing a theatrical piece. Some typical classical details are consistently used

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throughout all of the niches and include decorative garland (fruit, floral, and leaf), floral panels, bands of egg and dart molding, as well as bands of geometric designs around the window and door openings.

Visually the north façade is the primary façade, while functionally the main entrances are located on both the east and west facades; the east entrance serving the arena and the west entrance serving the theatre and other spaces on that end of the building. The niches along the north façade also served as points of entry into the arena and theatre, as well as the primary entrance into the multi-purpose Olympic Room and the Ballroom.

The *west façade* is nearly symmetrical except for the projection of the north façade, which steps back, and includes the main entrance to the theatre. The cornice contains a band of abstract, rectangular recessed ornamental motifs. Steps lead up to three trabeated aluminum-frame and glass double-door entrances that are centered under five round-arched window bays. A glass and metal-frame projecting canopy, supported by brackets and suspended with cables, spans and covers the three entries. The five round-arched window bays contain wood-frame, multi-pane fixed lights and decorative solid panels. The main entrance bay is flanked by two small, wood-frame, multi-pane fixed light windows followed by a single pedestrian aluminum-frame-and-glass entrance with fixed transom windows. The windows appear to be original, while the aluminum-frame doors appear to be modern replacements. The iron lamps and sconces on the east and west facades are matching and, though damaged, appear to be original.

The *east façade* mirrors the west façade; it is also nearly symmetrical except for the projection of the north façade. A small sign on the south end of the façade notes that the main entrance provides access to the arena. The multi-paned, wood-sash windows appear to be original to the building, and the aluminum-framed doors appear to be modern replacements.

At both the east and west facades, the central, upper sets of windows, though intact at the exterior, have been blocked at the interior.

The *south façade* is more utilitarian, containing service doors and loading docks serving the arena and stage, and with minimal ornamentation. The band of rectangular recessed designs at the top of the east and west facades are continued on the south façade. The windows on this façade are multi-paned, wood-sash, fixed windows that appear to be original to the building. The doors and loading dock areas appear to be modern replacements.

The *roof* is an elongated gable clad in metal with a composite finish. A narrow flat-roofed segment spans the northern front, behind and corresponding to the front façade. Shallow parapet walls surround the roof at all building fronts. Miscellaneous vents and equipment housings stand above the roof, including along its ridge. The majority of the roof over the arena, the ballroom (northwest corner of the building), and the art gallery (southwest corner of the building) contained skylights that were designed to be opened; however, the skylight over the arena was removed in 1927 and the skylight over the gallery and ballroom were removed in approximately 1940. While a large roof, it is minimally visible from the surroundings, the arena skylight and the metal cresting along the roof ridge that were originally present having been removed.

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The building had rooftop marquee signs that faced northward to the lake. The most recent versions were installed c1950 and removed in 1982. And an earlier version can be seen in historic photos. While the 1950 signs were identified to be salvaged in the 1982 plans, evidence of the former signs are limited to drawings and photographs, as no physical remnants of these signs have been located.

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## Narrative Description

### Building Interior

The building was designed and built to house both an arena and a theatre. The east end of the building houses a 7,900-seat arena and the west end a 1,924 seat theatre with a stage in the middle originally designed to serve both. At the first floor, these two primary building parts physically yet indirectly interconnect via the circulation concourse that spans the north side of the building. The stage was also originally designed to be opened to either space and the stage floor could additionally be lowered to unify the two spaces by creating a single space with a 13,000-seat capacity, although it is unclear if that feature was ever constructed or, if so, utilized.<sup>1</sup> In 1982, a structural retrofit of the building permanently closed the proscenium at the arena (east side of the stage).

In addition to the theatre and arena, the first floor includes the west lobby, east lobby, north gallery, and offices. The second floor includes the multi-purpose Olympic Room, the theatre balcony, a mezzanine lobby, dressing rooms, and arena seating. The third floor includes the theatre's second balcony, the Ballroom, the gallery (Gold Room), and the highest level of arena seating. The fourth level is the basement. The level of architectural detailing varies greatly in these interior spaces, with the arena having minimal architectural embellishment and the theatre having the most elaborate detailing of all of the spaces.

### *Arena*

The arena is accessed through the east foyer, north concourse, and south utilitarian loading areas at the first floor. The arena space subsumes nearly the entire area of the arena portion of the building, giving way only to the concourse and corridors surrounding it on three sides (north, south and east) at the first and second levels. The overall space of the arena measures 190 feet wide (north-south) by 250 feet long (east-west) and fills the height of the building from the first floor to the exposed, steel-framed, double-pitched roof, which roof originally included large skylights covering most of the arena space prior to its removal. The first floor level consists of the main floor of the arena surrounded by low walls under the lip of the projecting balcony. The upper level is in a horseshoe-plan with two-tiers of raked and fixed seating accessed from the second and third floor concourses that wrap around the arena's north, south and west sides. Above, the building's rectilinear exterior walls define the space with a double-pitched roof sloping to the north and south about its central axis and supported by open steel trusswork. Five arched openings are in the upper east wall, its form reflecting the building's east façade though the exterior windows in these openings are currently covered at the interior. As noted, the original opening to the stage at the arena's west wall has been infilled. Materials within the arena are predominately concrete and with a wood arena floor.

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<sup>1</sup> Oakland Cultural Heritage Survey, "Henry J. Kaiser Convention Center DPR 523 form," April 30, 1983.

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### *Theatre*

In plan, the theatre is a square space at 100 by 100 feet, its ceiling at approximately 50 feet from the first floor level, and its proscenium opening to the stage measuring 50 feet wide by 31 feet high. The theatre's orchestra level includes a raked floor with 866 seats and, at the front of stage, a hydraulic orchestra pit that lowers into the basement (the orchestra pit having been enlarged in the early 1980s), plus two balcony levels. The second floor balcony wraps around the north, south and west sides of the space with 489 seats and a projection booth centered at the rear (west). The third floor balcony spans the upper rear of the theatre with 544 seats and a second projection booth. As at the arena, the upper wall at the third floor balcony is the inside of the corresponding west façade and, again, the several original, west-facing exterior windows are presently blocked at the interior.

The stage surround is an ornate proscenium arch. Decorative cast plaster details at the arch and at the stage wall include Greek Revival elements such as bands of key designs, floral and leaf designs covered in goal leaf, fluted pilasters, garland and decorative grillework. An ornate plaster ceiling covers the theatre. Netting has been added to the ornate ceiling to protect patrons from falling debris. Cast plaster work also ornaments the theatre side walls and balcony fronts and ceilings.

Two foyers stacked at the west end of the building serve the theater, the main foyer at the first floor and the second floor foyer, which provides direct access to the second floor balcony as well as access to stairs to the third floor balcony. The first floor foyer is an elongated space situated between the three sets of west entry doors from the entry vestibule and the seven sets of entry doors to the theatre, along with secondary lobby spaces at the north and south. The second floor foyer, similar in plan and form to the first floor foyer yet with a slightly higher ceiling and with windows with views to the west, primarily serves the theatre balconies.

Theatre lobby areas at the north and south building corners serve as entry ways and provide vertical circulation. In the late 1930s, the south stairway from the 1st to the 2nd floor was added with the addition of the Oakland Art Gallery at the third floor, thereby providing access from an exterior entry way.

### *Stage*

The theatre Stage, at 35 feet in depth and 80 feet in width (including wings), provides a technical performance space with wings and with a stage fly loft equipped with stagecraft. It is separated from the theatre by an existing fire curtain assembly and proscenium curtain.

### *Ballroom*

The Ballroom is located on the third floor and at the north side of the Theatre. The Ballroom is a grand, two-story high, open space with its own small stage at its east end and a balcony across its north side. The Ballroom space is 35 feet wide by 85 feet in length and 22 feet in height, plus the balcony which has a central stair and is otherwise perched above the arches of two of the exterior niches. To the west, an outer vestibule and lobby independently serve the Ballroom and which



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are also directly served by the northwest ramp and an elevator from the first floor North Lobby and its entry.

### *Gallery/Gold Room*

A second large event space lies at the south side of the Theatre. Referred to as the Gold Room, this event space measures 100 feet long by 36 feet wide and with a 22 feet ceiling height and its character is distinctly gallery-like, reflecting an early (mid-1930s) though not original use of the space (the Gallery/Gold Room was the first home of the Oakland Art Museum). A balcony level fills its western end, which was added to the previously open room in the 1980s. Like its Ballroom counterpart, the Gold Room has painted, ornamental plaster ceilings, though much simpler than the Ballroom and without ornamented plaster walls or any spatial divisions. Its ceiling fields are given over to glazed laylights (that were also originally natural light but are now artificially lit).

### *Olympic Room*

Another large multi-purpose space, referred to as the Olympic Room, is located at the northwest corner of the second floor and features a large bar with a 120-person seating capacity. The room overlooks Lake Merritt through the large upper windows in the north façade niches. The layout of this large room has changed over the course of the years, including the addition of a dedicated entry stair from one of the north niches, added in the late 1930s.

### *Ramps/Inclines*

When in use, vertical circulation within the Oakland Auditorium was almost entirely via ramps that were originally labeled “inclines.” There are a total of seven such ramp ways, two of which – at the northeast and northwest building corners – fully ascend/descend from the first to the third floors with the northeast ramp continuing to the basement through a set of stairs. A third ramp at the southeast building corner also connects to the basement with a set of stairs. That ramp then ascends to the second floor, where it terminates.

### *Offices, dressing rooms, etc.*

A range of support spaces are dispersed around the building, including:

At the south side of the arena space is a long, east-west corridor with a perpendicular passageway from an entry way at the south. Additionally, two toilet rooms, a meeting room, and utility areas lie in the interstitial space between the arena corridor and the south exterior wall.

At the south side of the theatre and along a non-original pathway connecting the theatre, the Stage and the southwest entry lobby are a number of back-of-house office and dressing room spaces with utilitarian material and spatial qualities.

Additionally, at the second floor and along the south side of the theatre is a dressing room area, consisting of dressing rooms and toilet rooms. These back-of-house spaces are also highly utilitarian. Several have exterior windows facing south.

Flanking each side of the east entry way and squeezed between the arena foyer and east exterior wall are a set of ticket offices. Narrow concession and storage spaces are also sandwiched between the arena foyer, the north concourse and the Arena.

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Additionally, a set of small dressing and storage rooms serving the arena are sandwiched between the north stage ramp/incline and the concourse. Another set of small dressing rooms can be found on the opposite side, sandwiched between the arena and south ramp/incline to the arena mezzanine.

At the first floor, flanking each side of the theatre entry vestibule and separating the theatre foyer from the west exterior wall are banks of small spaces that, when in use, housed toilet rooms, coat checks, office space, and ticket offices.

A set of toilet rooms are located at the south and north theatre lobbies.

Men's and women's toilet rooms also flank the anteroom to the third floor ballroom.

### *Basement*

A full unfinished basement level lies below the Oakland Auditorium building. The basement is a utilitarian level of concrete construction and large pillars with storage and utility uses.

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## **Narrative Description**

### **Alterations**

Minor alterations have occurred to the Oakland Auditorium over the years, including beam and truss repairs in the arena in 1935; replacement of landscaping with a parking lot circa 1946; alterations to the south balcony wall, including new beams, in 1949; and interior and structural renovations in the early 1980s. Historic photos and aerials show landscaping surrounding the building to the north, west, and east, and Lake Merritt Boulevard further north running along the edge of the lake in 1946. By 1958, aerials show a parking lot on the north side of the building and the roads to the north and west located closer to the building.

Until the 1960s, the Oakland Auditorium was the city's primary facility for conventions and a variety of other large indoor events. With the opening of the Oakland Coliseum and Arena in 1966, the reopening of the 1931 Paramount Theatre in the 1970s, and the opening of the George P. Scotlan Convention Center in 1983, some events and performers were drawn away from the Oakland Auditorium. In 1982, the Oakland Auditorium was closed for renovations. When reopened in 1984, the building was returned to use as an events venue and renamed the Henry J. Kaiser Convention Center. Lacking sustaining uses, the Oakland Auditorium closed in December 2005 and has been vacant since.

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## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

- 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

- 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

### Areas of Significance

Architecture

Entertainment/Recreation

### Period of Significance

1915-1966

### Significant Dates

1915

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**Significant Person**

none

**Cultural Affiliation**

none

**Architect/Builder**

**Donovan, John Joseph, Architect**

**Stirling Calder, Alexander, Sculptor**

**Couchot, Maurice C., Engineer**

**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph**

The Oakland Auditorium is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A at the local level of significance in the area of Entertainment/Recreation as the primary local facility for conventions and other large events in the city of Oakland, from its construction in 1915 until 1966, the building's period of significance. The property is also eligible under Criterion C as a locally significant example of an early-20th century Beaux Arts public building, and as a major work of John J. Donovan, a prominent California architect.

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

**Criterion A Statement of Significance: Entertainment/Recreation**

The Oakland Auditorium is locally significant under Criterion A as one of Oakland's most important and longest running public facilities providing a venue for major entertainment events from its construction until the opening of the Oakland Coliseum in 1966. The list of events below is only a snapshot of the innumerable events held at the Oakland Auditorium, which includes world, nationally, and regionally renowned musicians, artists, and public figures.

In the wake of the 1906 San Francisco earthquake and fire, the City of Oakland entered a period of rapid growth. The Oakland Auditorium was constructed between 1913 and 1915 as one of many public and private projects planned during that growth period. The Oakland Hotel, constructed in 1910-12, was a companion project built to accommodate those attending conventions and other events at the auditorium. The Oakland City Hall, another major civic building, was completed in 1914. The Oakland Auditorium was originally planned as a convention center, and in 1912 a \$500,000 bond was issued for the project. The development team included: John J. Donovan, the supervising architect; Henry F. Hornbostel, the consulting architect; Alexander Stirling Calder, the sculptor; N. Clark & Son, the terra cotta supplier; and Maurice C. Couchot, as consulting engineer. Alexander Stirling Calder, a nationally-renowned sculptor, designed the sculptural reliefs in the niches on the north façade. Couchot designed the trussed roof specifically to reduce the overall weight of the roof. After the approval of the bonds, the project scope was expanded to include the theatre, art gallery, ballroom, and other spaces. Without an increase in funds to cover the costs of these new components, the project went over budget. In 1913, the City Council replaced Donovan as the supervising architect with Walter J.

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Mathews, reportedly due to the cost overruns. Nonetheless, the design of the building is credited to Donovan. The Oakland Auditorium opened on April 30, 1915 with a 3-day celebration called "Dance of a Thousand Colors." The opening of the Auditorium was expedited due to the timing of the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition that opened in San Francisco on February 20, 1915.

Until the 1960s, the Oakland Auditorium was the primary local facility for conventions and a variety of other large events. The following is a partial list of events and people that have performed at the Oakland Auditorium during the period of significance:

- Gallagher and Shean, a vaudeville act
- Feodor Chaliapin, Russian opera singer
- Pablo Casals
- Ernestine Schumann-Heink
- Paul Whitman
- Al Jolson
- Paul Robeson
- James Brown
- Oakland Ballet
- Annual Christmas Pageant (later the Oakland Children's Holiday Pageant)
- Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show (May 10-12, 1915)
- Sergei Rachmaninoff, composer/pianist (February 14, 1925)
- Ringling Brothers and Barnum and Bailey Circus (1941)
- Elvis Presley (1956, 1957)
- Martin Luther King Jr. – speech commemorating the 100th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation (1962)
- Roller Derby (1950s-60s)
- Oakland Symphony Orchestra (1964-1972)

With the opening of the Oakland Coliseum and Arena in 1966, the reopening of the 1931 Paramount Theatre in the 1970s, and the opening of the new George P. Scotlan Convention Center at 10th and Broadway, events and performers were drawn away from the Oakland Auditorium.

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**Criterion C Statement of Significance: Embodies the Distinctive Characteristics of a Type, Period, or Method of Construction, and High Artistic Values**

The Oakland Auditorium is eligible under Criterion C at the local level of significance because it embodies the distinctive characteristics of Beaux Arts civic architecture, as demonstrated by characteristic architectural features of the style, as described in Section 7. Beaux Arts style elements that are present include the simple orderliness of the exterior, classical massing, monumental scale, symmetrical facades, light-colored masonry walls, and decorative elements such as pilasters, garlands, and floral details. The unique four-front exterior, terra cotta reliefs, and arch roof truss system combined the talents of architect John Joseph Donovan, sculptor Alexander Stirling Calder, and engineer Maurice Couchot, into a unified whole that expresses the high artistic values characteristic of the Beaux Arts style.

Construction of the Oakland Auditorium was part of a larger scheme promoted by the business community to build private and public projects to capitalize on the rapid population increase and period of growth in the City following the devastation in San Francisco from the 1906 earthquake and fire. Donovan was the supervising architect for the 1911-14 Oakland City Hall, and is well known for other public buildings throughout the Bay Area, particularly schools. The Oakland Auditorium is notable for its innovative design to serve multiple uses within a single building volume. The terra cotta sculptural reliefs within the front niches, designed by Alexander Stirling Calder, are also significant elements of the overall design of the building, as is the unified composition of the exterior facades, as is the three-hinged arch roof truss system, engineered by Maurice Couchot. Significant interior spaces notable for their design and ornamentation include the theatre, ballroom and gallery spaces.

*John Joseph Donovan (1876 – 1949)* was born in Massachusetts. He attended Phillips Andover Academy in Andover, MA, and received his B.S. in Architecture from Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in Cambridge, MA, circa 1896.<sup>2</sup> He worked in New York, NY and Pittsburgh, PA before moving to Oakland in 1911. Donovan became a well-known architect in California, and the first project he oversaw was construction of Oakland City Hall from 1911 to 1914. He also designed many early 20th century schools in Oakland and elsewhere in northern California.

Other buildings attributed to Donovan include: the Bowie Estate Company Loft Building (San Francisco, 1918- 19); Eureka High School (Eureka, 1926); Key System Oakland Substation (Oakland, 1937); Claremont Middle School (Oakland, 1913); Cleveland Elementary School (Oakland); Clawson School (Oakland, 1913); Oakland Technical High School (Oakland, 1912-13); Dewey High School (Oakland); Durant Elementary School (Oakland); Emerson Elementary School (Oakland); Fremont High School addition (Oakland); Jefferson Elementary School (Oakland); Lakeview Elementary (Oakland); Lockwood School (Oakland); Santa Fe Elementary School (Oakland); Washington Elementary School (Oakland); Pacific Nash Motor Company

<sup>2</sup> Pacific Coast Architecture Database, John Joseph Donovan (Architect), <http://pcad.lib.washington.edu/person/3415/>, accessed October 17, 2016.

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Showroom/Garage (Oakland, 1928-29); Saint Anne's Parish School (Lodi, 1922); Yerba Buena Island Substation (Yerba Buena Island, San Francisco, 1937); Department of Public Works - Division of Highways San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge #1 (1933-36); Department of Public Works - Division of Highways San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge Firehouse (Yerba Buena Island, San Francisco, 1936); Miller Avenue Branch Library (Oakland, 1918); and Sterling Street Substation (San Francisco, 1937), and the campus of St. Mary's College (Moraga, 1928).<sup>3,4</sup>

In 1921, Donovan's book *School Architecture: Principles and Practices* was published. Donovan was also the inventor and developer of a school and institutional window design trademarked as the *Donovan Awning Type Steel Window* and manufactured by Trucson Steel Co. of Ohio.

*Alexander Stirling Calder (1870 – 1945)* was a well-known sculptor. He was born in 1870 in Philadelphia, PA., attended the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts and also studied under Henri Michel Chapu and Alexandre Falguière in Paris at the Académie Julian and at the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux- Arts. Calder was originally based in Pennsylvania after returning from his studies in Paris, but by 1905 was splitting his time between Philadelphia, New York City, and California.<sup>5</sup> He lived in the Bay Area from 1913-1915 while he was Acting Chief of Sculpture for the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco. Calder's other well-known works include the statue "Washington in Peace" on New York City's Washington Square Arch, sculptures for the Swann Memorial Fountain in Philadelphia (1924), and the Leif Eriksson memorial (1929) that was given to Iceland by the United States.

*Maurice C. Couchot (1869-1933)*, a well-known engineer who practiced in various engineering capacities in San Francisco from c1895-1933 including, in his earliest years, as an engineer with Union Iron Works (1896) and Risdon Iron Works (1900). His several partnerships included Couchot & Thurston (c1907-c1910), Couchot and MacDonald (c1922-c1924), and Couchot & Rosenwald (c1925-c1930). Couchot and MacDonald designed several buildings together, including the Spanish Revival Southern Pacific Railroad Company building in Glendale, CA in 1923; the Broadway Arcade Building in downtown Los Angeles in 1924; as well as the Francesca Apartment Building in Nob Hill, San Francisco in 1922; and the National Carbon Company headquarters in Cleveland, OH in 1917.<sup>6</sup> An early promoter of reinforced concrete construction, in 1906 Couchot published "*Reinforced Concrete and Fireproof Construction in the San Francisco Disaster*". Couchot designed a three-hinged arch roof truss system for the Oakland Auditorium in order to reduce the overall weight of the roof and to allow the building's roof to be self-centering.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Pacific Coast Architecture Database, Donovan, John J., Architect (Practice), <http://pcad.lib.washington.edu/firm/2557/>, accessed October 11, 2016.

<sup>4</sup> archINFORM, John [Joseph] Donovan, <https://eng.archinform.net/arch/28751.htm>, accessed October 11, 2016.

<sup>5</sup> A. Stirling Calder, [http://medallicartcollector.com/a-stirling-calder\\_biography.html](http://medallicartcollector.com/a-stirling-calder_biography.html), accessed October 11, 2016.

<sup>6</sup> Pacific Coast Architecture Database, Maurice C. Couchot (Architect), <http://pcad.lib.washington.edu/person/522/>, accessed October 26, 2016.

<sup>7</sup> <https://legacy.seaonc.org/engineer/maurice-couchot/> (accessed July 15, 2019).

Oakland Auditorium  
Name of Property

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

### Bibliography

United States Department of the Interior - National Park Service. *Historic Preservation Certification Application Part 1 – Evaluation of Significance: Oakland Auditorium (Henry J. Kaiser Auditorium)*, 4/21/2017.

United States Department of the Interior - National Park Service. *Historic Preservation Certification Application Part 2 – Description of Rehabilitation: Oakland Auditorium (Henry J. Kaiser Auditorium)*, 10/12/2017

Oakland Cultural Heritage Survey, “Henry J. Kaiser Convention Center DPR 523 form,” April 30, 1983.

City of Oakland Public Library, “Master Facilities Plan, Feasibility Study of the Adaptive Reuse of the Kaiser Arena as a New Main Library, Draft Report,” June 2006.

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### 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 # \_\_\_\_\_

### Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office  
 Other State agency  
 Federal agency  
 Local government  
 University  
 Other  
Name of repository: Oakland Public Library

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



Oakland Auditorium  
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**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreege of Property 4.79 acres**

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**

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

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- |              |            |
|--------------|------------|
| 1. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 2. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 3. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 4. Latitude: | Longitude: |

**Or**

**UTM References**

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or  NAD 1983

- |          |           |           |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

**Verbal Boundary Description**

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

**Legal boundaries of County of Alameda Assessor's Parcel No. 18-450-5.**

Oakland Auditorium

Name of Property

Alameda, CA

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## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Mark Hulbert, Preservation Architect

organization: Preservation Architecture

street & number: 446 17<sup>th</sup> Street, #302

city or town: Oakland state: CA zip code: 94612

e-mail mhulbert@earthlink.net

telephone: 510-418-0285

date: October 25, 2019

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## Photo Log

Name of Property:

**Oakland Auditorium**

City or Vicinity:

Oakland

County:

Alameda

State:

CA

Photographer (date, location):

**Unknown** (1914 images, from Oakland Public Library  
@<https://calisphere.org/search/?q=oakland+auditorium>);

**Frank Deras, Jr.** (2017 images, email: [mail@frankderas.com](mailto:mail@frankderas.com))

Description:

### **Maps/Floor Plans:**

CA\_AlamedaCounty\_OaklandAuditorium\_0001

USGS 7.5' Oakland West Quadrangle, 1997

CA\_AlamedaCounty\_OaklandAuditorium\_0002

10 Tenth St., Oakland, CA - Assessor's Parcel Map

CA\_AlamedaCounty\_OaklandAuditorium\_0003

Existing Site Plan with photo index

### **Historic views:**

Oakland Auditorium

Alameda, CA

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CA\_AlamedaCounty\_OaklandAuditorium\_0004  
East and North Exterior, 1914, looking southwest

CA\_AlamedaCounty\_OaklandAuditorium\_0005  
Central Niche 4 – “Wealth of the Mind”, 1914, looking southwest

CA\_AlamedaCounty\_OaklandAuditorium\_0006  
Arena – looking west, 1914, looking northwest

CA\_AlamedaCounty\_OaklandAuditorium\_0007  
Arena – looking east, 1914, looking southeast

CA\_AlamedaCounty\_OaklandAuditorium\_0008  
Arena Foyer, 1914, looking southwest

CA\_AlamedaCounty\_OaklandAuditorium\_0009  
Theatre, 1914, looking southeast

CA\_AlamedaCounty\_OaklandAuditorium\_0010  
Fl.2 Theatre foyer, 1914, looking south

CA\_AlamedaCounty\_OaklandAuditorium\_0011  
Concourse, 1914, looking southeast

CA\_AlamedaCounty\_OaklandAuditorium\_0012  
Ballroom, 1914, looking east

**Exterior views:**

CA\_AlamedaCounty\_OaklandAuditorium\_0013  
North and West Exterior, 2017, looking south

CA\_AlamedaCounty\_OaklandAuditorium\_0014  
West and South Exterior, 2017, looking northeast

CA\_AlamedaCounty\_OaklandAuditorium\_0015  
East Exterior, 2017, looking northwest

CA\_AlamedaCounty\_OaklandAuditorium\_0016  
Niche 1 (easternmost = 1 to westernmost = 7), 2017, looking southwest

CA\_AlamedaCounty\_OaklandAuditorium\_0017  
Niche 2, 2017, looking southwest

CA\_AlamedaCounty\_OaklandAuditorium\_0018

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Niche 3, 2017, looking southwest

CA\_AlamedaCounty\_OaklandAuditorium\_0019

Central Niche 4 – “Wealth of the Mind”, 2017, looking southwest

CA\_AlamedaCounty\_OaklandAuditorium\_0020

Niche 5, 2017, looking southwest

CA\_AlamedaCounty\_OaklandAuditorium\_0021

Niche 6, 2017, looking southwest

CA\_AlamedaCounty\_OaklandAuditorium\_0022

Niche 7 (westernmost), 2017, looking southwest

**Interior views:**

CA\_AlamedaCounty\_OaklandAuditorium\_0023

Arena – looking west, 2017, looking northwest

CA\_AlamedaCounty\_OaklandAuditorium\_0024

Arena – looking east, 2017, looking southeast

CA\_AlamedaCounty\_OaklandAuditorium\_0025

Arena Foyer, 2017, looking northwest

CA\_AlamedaCounty\_OaklandAuditorium\_0026

Theatre, 2017, looking southeast

CA\_AlamedaCounty\_OaklandAuditorium\_0027

Theatre, 2017, looking northwest

CA\_AlamedaCounty\_OaklandAuditorium\_0028

Theatre foyer, 2017, looking south

CA\_AlamedaCounty\_OaklandAuditorium\_0029

Fl.2 Theatre foyer, 2017, looking south

CA\_AlamedaCounty\_OaklandAuditorium\_0030

Concourse, 2017, looking northwest

CA\_AlamedaCounty\_OaklandAuditorium\_0031

Ballroom, 2017, looking east

CA\_AlamedaCounty\_OaklandAuditorium\_0032

Gallery/Gold Room, 2017, looking southeast

Oakland Auditorium

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**Floor Plans:**

CA\_AlamedaCounty\_OaklandAuditorium\_0033

Existing First Floor Plan with photo index

CA\_AlamedaCounty\_OaklandAuditorium\_0034

Existing Second Floor Plan with photo index

CA\_AlamedaCounty\_OaklandAuditorium\_0035

Existing Third Floor Plan with photo index

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for nominations 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.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

- Tier 1 – 60-100 hours
- Tier 2 – 120 hours
- Tier 3 – 230 hours
- Tier 4 – 280 hours

The above estimates include time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and preparing and transmitting nominations. Send comments regarding these estimates or any other aspect of the requirement(s) to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1201 Oakridge Drive Fort Collins, CO 80525.

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CA Alameda County Oakland Auditorium 0001- 10 Tenth St., Oakland, CA (circled) - USGS 7.5' Oakland West Quadrangle, 1997

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CA Alameda County Oakland Auditorium 0002 - 10 Tenth St., Oakland, CA (highlighted) - Assessor's Parcel Map



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CA Alameda County Oakland Auditorium 0003 – Existing Site Plan



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CA Alameda County Oakland Auditorium 0004 - East and North Exterior, 1914

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CA Alameda County Oakland Auditorium 0005 - Central Niche 4 – “Wealth of the Mind”, 1914

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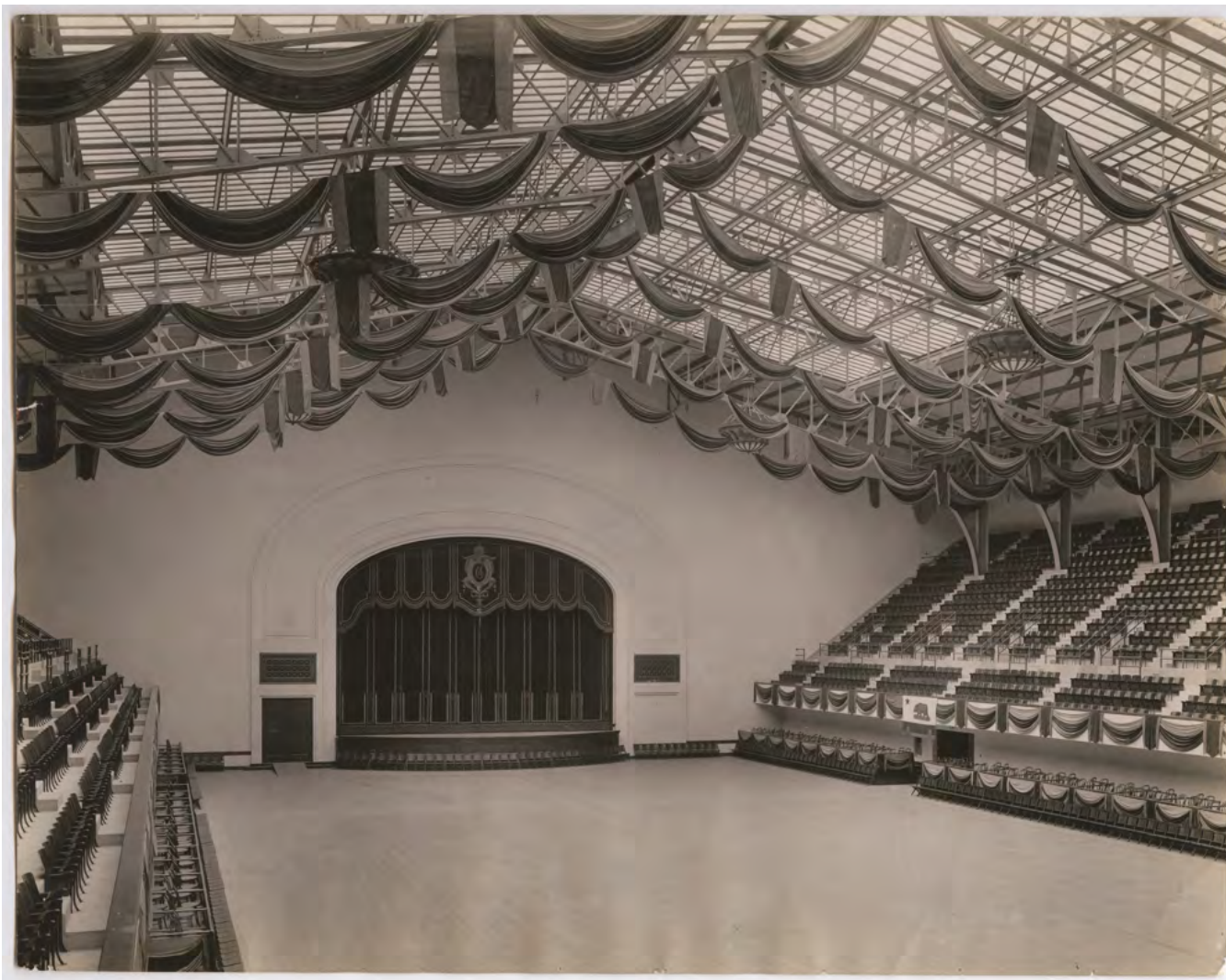
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CA Alameda County Oakland Auditorium 0006 - Arena – looking west, 1914



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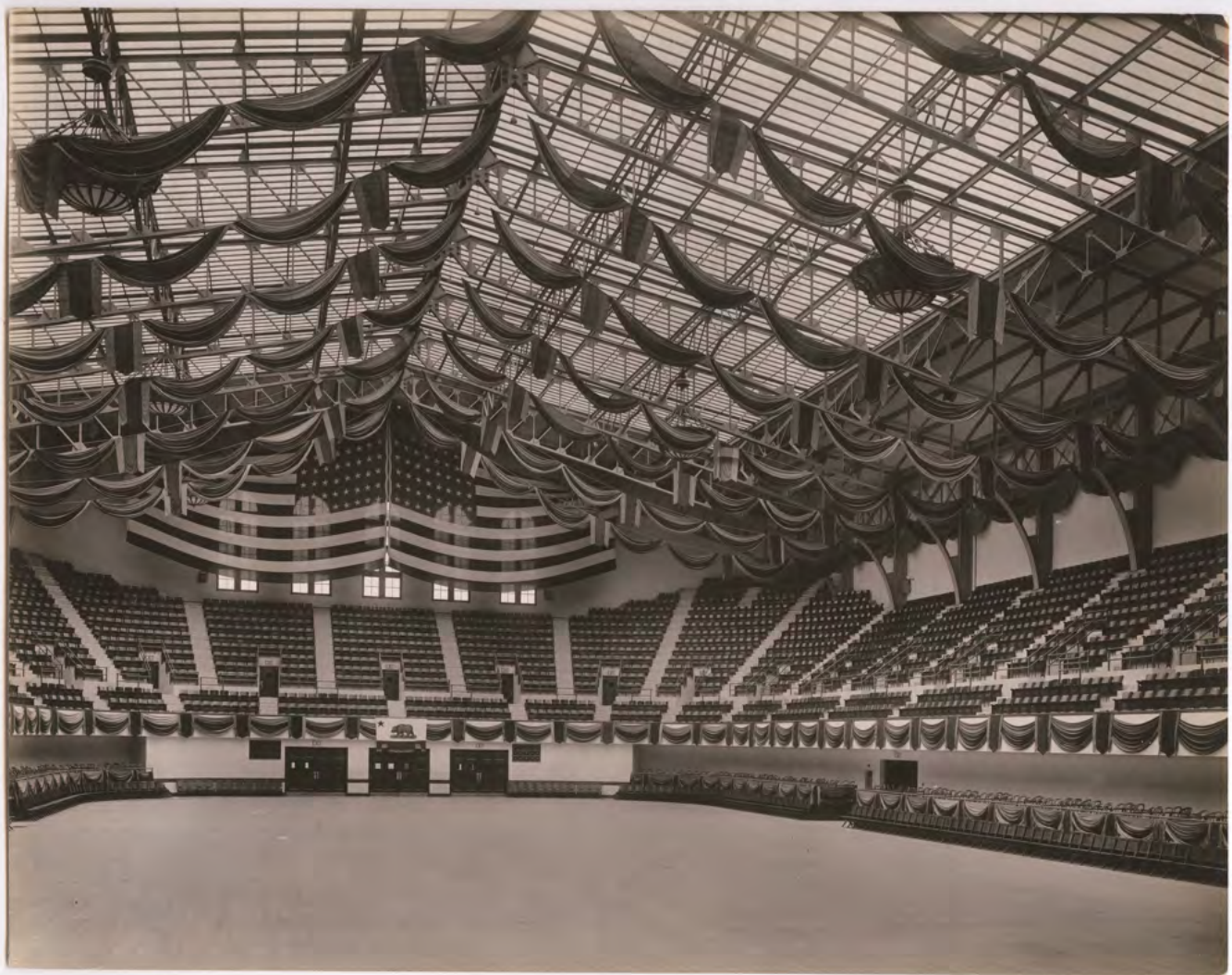
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CA Alameda County Oakland Auditorium 0007 - Arena – looking east, 1914

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CA Alameda County Oakland Auditorium 0008 - Arena Foyer, 1914



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CA Alameda County Oakland Auditorium 0009 - Theatre, 1914

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CA Alameda County Oakland Auditorium 0010 - Fl.2 Theatre foyer, 1914

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CA Alameda County Oakland Auditorium 0011 - Concourse, 1914



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CA Alameda County Oakland Auditorium 0012 - Ballroom, 1914

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CA Alameda County Oakland Auditorium 0013 - North and West Exterior, 2017

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CA Alameda County Oakland Auditorium 0014 - West and South Exterior, 2017



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CA Alameda County Oakland Auditorium 0015 - East Exterior, 2017

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CA Alameda County Oakland Auditorium 0016 - Niche 1 (east = niche 1 to west = niche 7), "The Joy of the Effort," 2017

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CA Alameda County Oakland Auditorium 0017 - Niche 2, "Consolation of Arts", 2017



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CA Alameda County Oakland Auditorium 0018 - Niche 3, "Wealth of the Earth", 2017

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CA Alameda County Oakland Auditorium 0019 - Central Niche 4 – “Wealth of the Mind”, 2017



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CA Alameda County Oakland Auditorium 0020 - Niche 5, "Wealth of the Sea", 2017

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CA Alameda County Oakland Auditorium 0021 - Niche 6, "The Duties of Life", 2017



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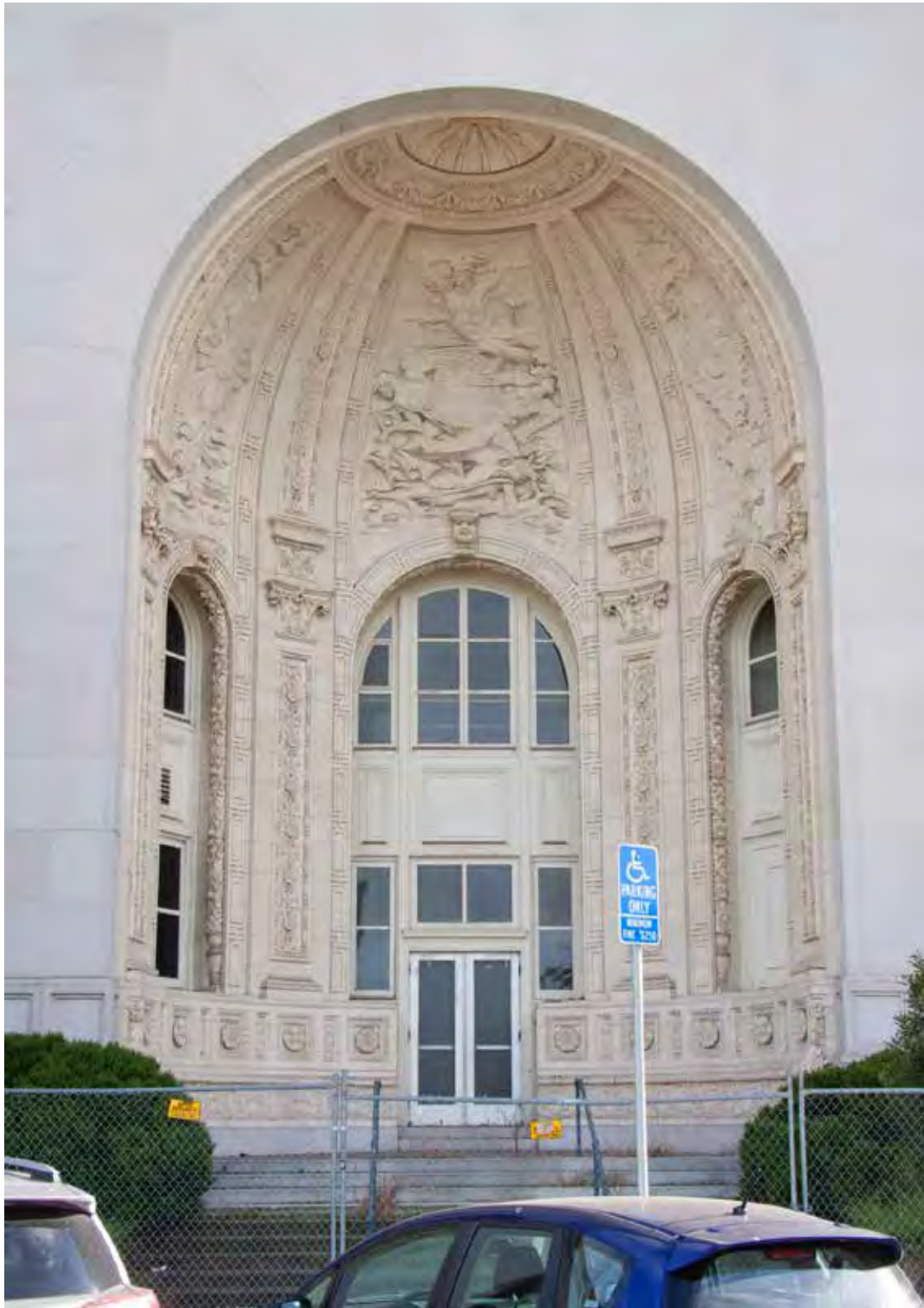
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CA Alameda County Oakland Auditorium 0022 - Niche 7 (westernmost) "Gifts of the Air", 2017

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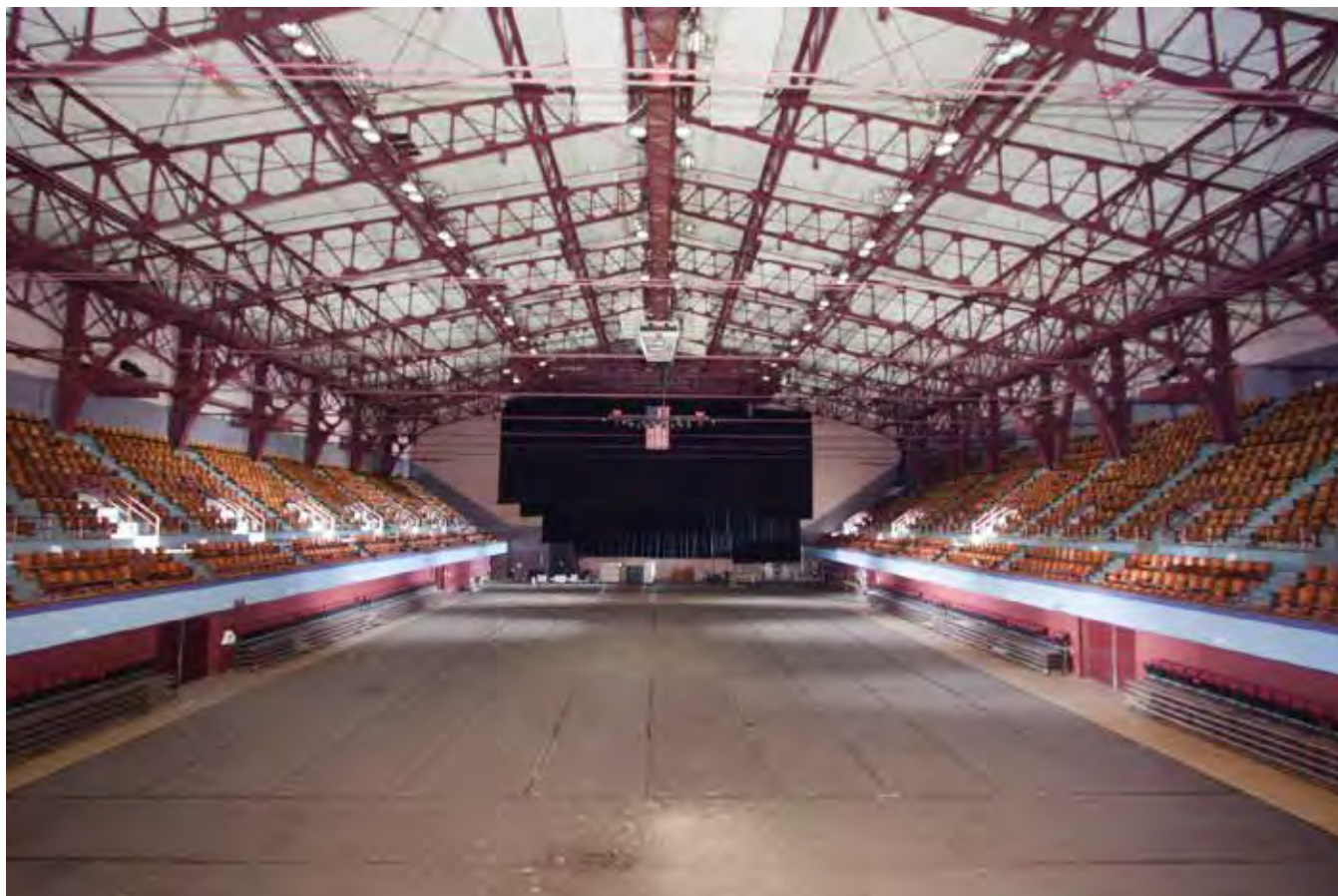
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CA Alameda County Oakland Auditorium 0023 - Arena – looking west, 2017



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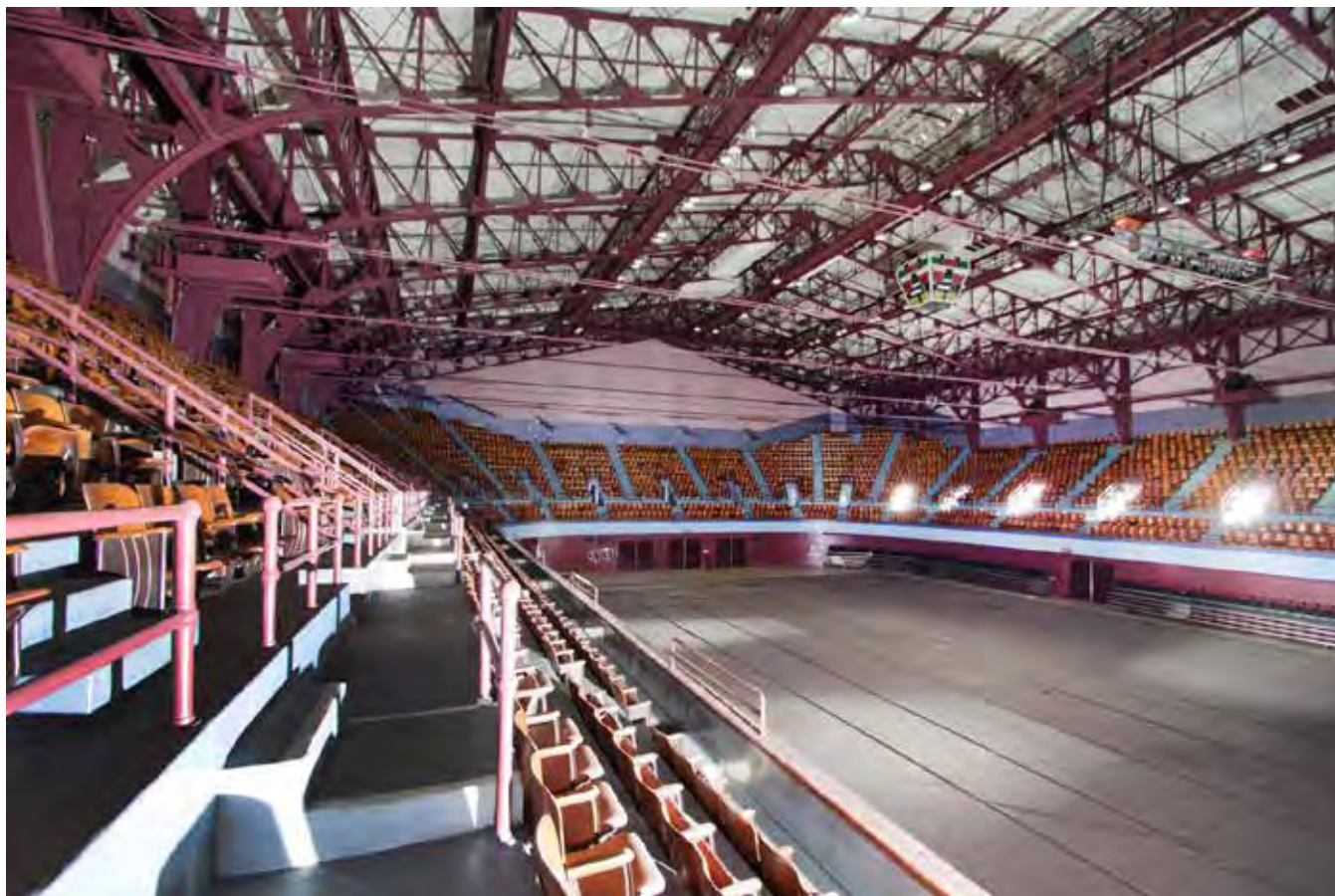
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CA Alameda County Oakland Auditorium 0024 - Arena – looking east, 2017

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CA Alameda County Oakland Auditorium 0025 - Arena Foyer, 2017

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CA Alameda County Oakland Auditorium 0026 - Theatre, 2017



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CA Alameda County Oakland Auditorium 0027 - Theatre, 2017



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CA Alameda County Oakland Auditorium 0028 - Theatre foyer, 2017

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CA Alameda County Oakland Auditorium 0029 - Fl.2 Theatre foyer, 2017

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CA Alameda County Oakland Auditorium 0030 - Concourse, 2017

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CA Alameda County Oakland Auditorium 0031 - Ballroom, 2017



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CA Alameda County Oakland Auditorium 0032 - Gallery/Gold Room, 2017

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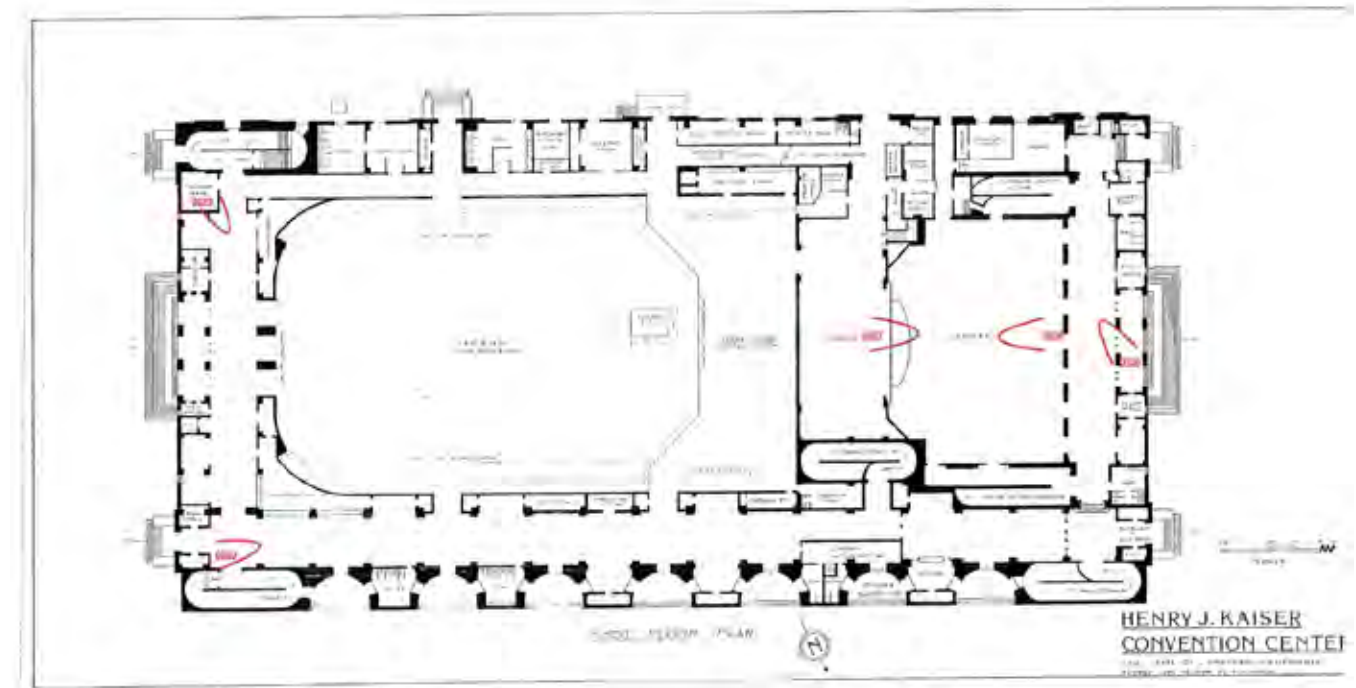
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CA Alameda County Oakland Auditorium 0033 - Existing First Floor Plan with photo index

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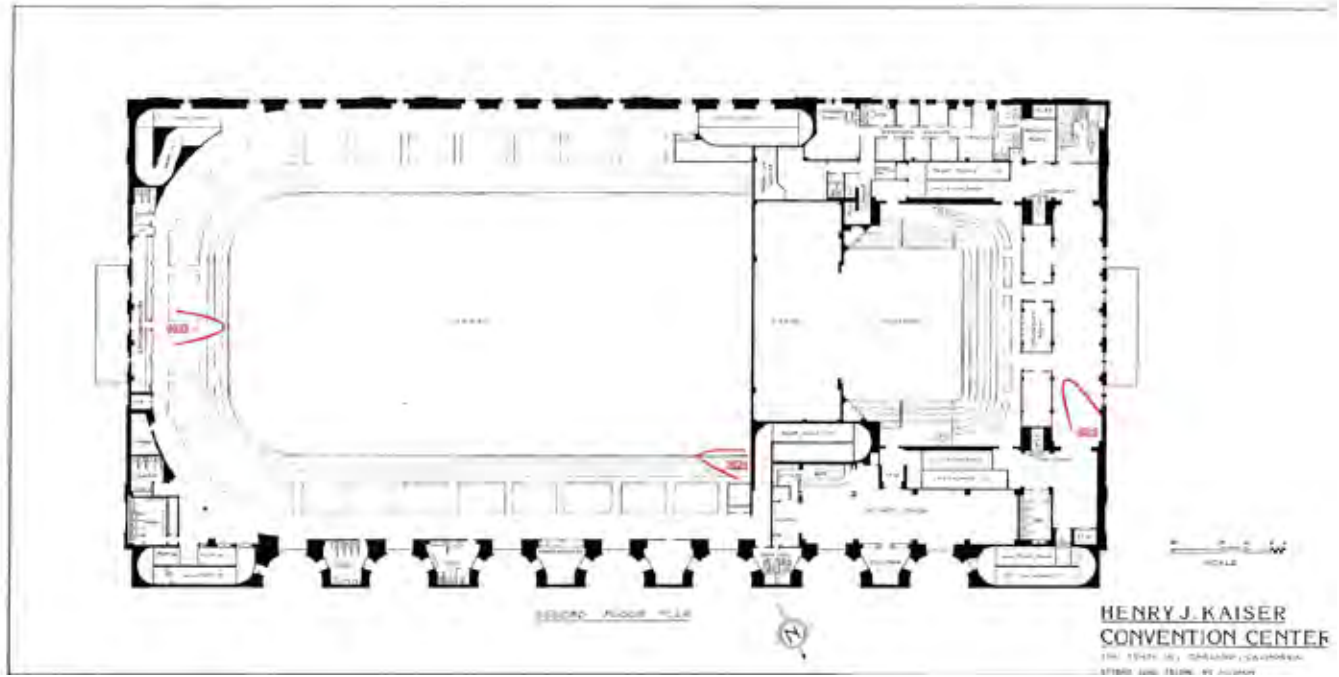
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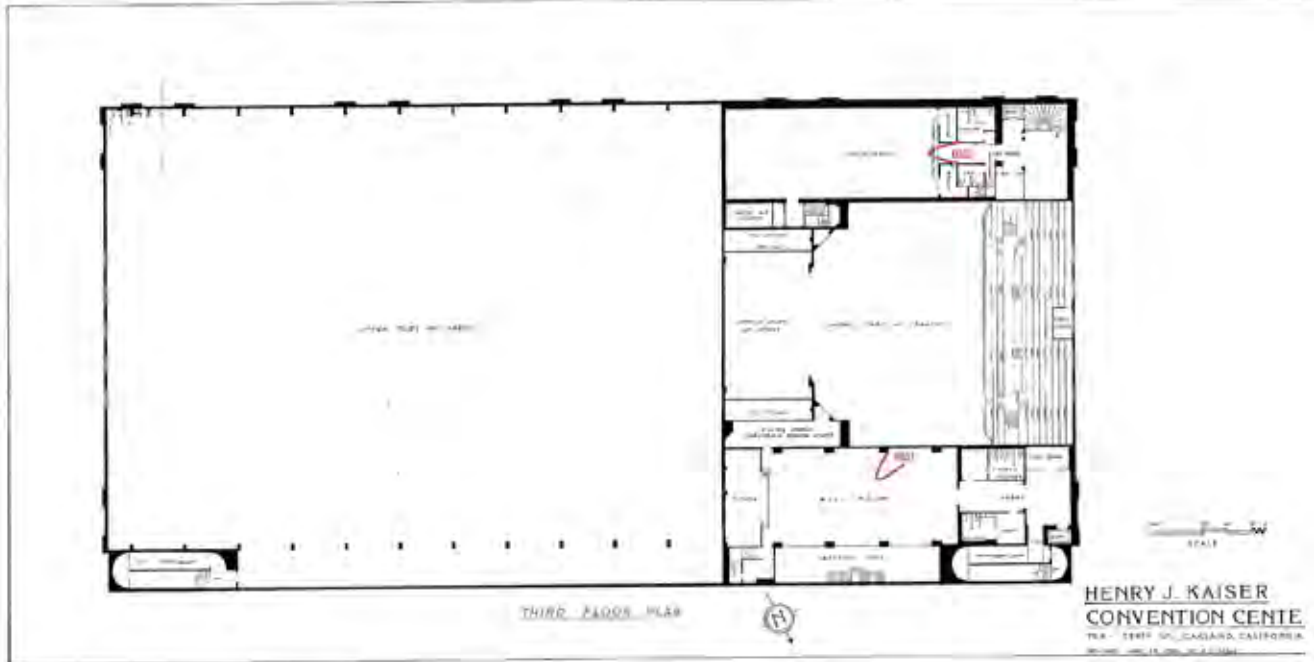
CA Alameda County Oakland Auditorium 0034 - Existing Second Floor Plan with photo index

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CA Alameda County Oakland Auditorium 0035 - Existing Third Floor Plan with photo index