

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**

**DRAFT**

Historic name: Higgins Building

Other names/site number: Los Angeles County Engineering Building

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

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

**2. Location**

Street & number: 108 W. Second Street

City or town: 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Not For Publication:  Vicinity: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 \_\_\_ 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

<b>Signature of certifying official/Title:</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b>	

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ 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>

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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:) \_\_\_\_\_

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Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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#### 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

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**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

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**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/TRADE: business

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

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC: multiple dwelling

COMMERCE/TRADE: restaurant

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

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> AND 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY REVIVALS:

Beaux Arts  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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

Principal exterior materials of the property: concrete foundation, walls, roof, and  
ornamentation; metal cornice

### 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.)

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### Summary Paragraph

The Higgins Building stands prominently at the corner of Second and Main Streets in downtown Los Angeles. The ten-story steel-reinforced concrete building in the Beaux Arts style opened in 1910. It faces Second Street, which marks the northern boundary of the city's historic downtown as well as the southern boundary of its civic center. The building is flush to the sidewalk on its north side (Second Street) and its east side (Main Street); on its west side to an alley (Harlem Place), and on its south side to a surface parking lot. The concrete exterior is clad in finished stucco, with poured concrete decorative elements. The ground floor remains a series of commercial spaces, though reconfigured and without original entry bays and display windows. The marble-clad, tile-floored lobby retains much of its original appearance. On the upper nine floors, offices have been combined to create residential spaces, with many design elements intact, including tiled hallways, marble staircases, and large metal-clad sash windows. Despite alterations over time and losses suffered during a twenty-year abandonment, the Higgins Building retains all aspects of historic integrity.

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## Narrative Description

The Higgins Building was constructed in 1909-1910 with classic architectural details and symmetry in the Beaux Arts style. It is rectangular in shape, 160 feet facing Second Street, 120 feet facing Main Street. At the center of the building is a large light court that brings sunlight and air to the interior. The building's structural strength and mass derive from steel-reinforced poured concrete. Its foundations, walls, and floor were poured as a monolith. The entire building was designed to be fireproof in infrastructure and finishes, and strong enough to withstand earthquakes. The upper nine floors were built to house 297 offices. The ground floor was built double in height to accommodate mezzanines for fifteen commercial spaces and to create its high-ceilinged lobby, entered from Second Street.<sup>1</sup>

There are eight vertical divisions on the building's longest side and six on the shorter side, which correspond to its interior layout of pillars. In addition to concrete being the primary building material, it was also used to cast exterior ornamentation. Concrete surfaces in the interior were clad in marble and tile or given a smooth finish coat. Partitioning walls were built with steel studs and metal screening, then finished with plaster. Where wood was used—in window sashes, doors, chair rails and picture molding—it was sheathed in zinc to be fireproof.<sup>2</sup> The wood clad in metal was then painted to look like wood. The only exposed wood in the construction is found in narrow insets placed in the concrete office floors for use in tacking carpet in place, “and all these pieces together would not make a respectable bonfire.”<sup>3</sup>

In addition to its classicism in design and being built to withstand destructive elements, the building embraced modernity in infrastructure. Remnants of an early private electrical power generating plant remain in the basement. Despite many changes in the surrounding area, long-time neighbors remain, including the restored and repurposed Saint Vibiana's Cathedral (1876) just across Main Street at 114 E. Second Street, Los Angeles City Hall (1928) one block north at 200 N. Spring Street, and the Los Angeles Times Building (1935) half a block northwest at First and Spring Streets.<sup>4</sup>

### Exterior

The concrete exterior of the Higgins Building is clad in stucco, with decorative elements arranged in a base, shaft, capital composition. The building has three ornamented façades. The principal façade, facing Second Street, includes the lobby entrance; the Main Street façade is

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<sup>1</sup> Floor plans and construction details for the Higgins Building are included in an article written by the architect. A.L. Haley, “A 10-story Monolithic Reinforced Concrete Building,” *The Architect and Engineer of California, Pacific Coast States*, April 1910, 34-51.

<sup>2</sup> Produced by the San Francisco Cornice Works using Nos. 22 and 24 galvanized iron, also known as rolled sheet zinc.

<sup>3</sup> “Believes in North End. Builder of Higgins Block Will Extend That Structure to Height of Ten Stories” *Los Angeles Times*, Jan. 16, 1910, V1.

<sup>4</sup> Saint Vibiana's Cathedral, Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument (LA HCM), #17, 1963 (the former locus of the Catholic Diocese narrowly escaped the wrecking ball in 1996); Los Angeles City Hall, LA HCM #150, 1976; Times Mirror Square (LA Times Building), LA HCM #1174, 2018.

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nearly as prominent. A secondary ornamented façade faces Harlem Place alley. The back of the building is flat and without ornamentation.

Working with restoration specialists, building owners have undertaken a multi-year project to repair and restore the building's exterior surfaces, ornamentation, and decorative lighting.<sup>5</sup> The first phase, completed in 2022, focused on the three ornamented façades. As part of the work, the original color scheme of light tan/gray with darker gray accents has been restored on floors two through ten.<sup>6</sup> Future phases in the restoration include repairs and repainting of the central light court, ground floor exteriors, and the back of the building.

Pilasters are symmetrically located on the corners of the building and on each side of the lobby entrance. These extend from the ground level to the top of the second floor entablature, supported by a belt overlaid with dentils. Pilasters also extend to second floor entablatures on each column. The eighth floor entablature extends as a belt of dentils set on short pilasters atop capitals decorated with formal rectangular medallions. At the top of each column is a capital with an ornamented floral medallion. The tenth floor's entablature rests on these capitals. Capping the building is a deep metal cornice with crown molding, ornamented with belt course dentils and modillions. The cornice is topped with a distinctive crown of lights, restored. The roof is flat, the original flagpole rises from its northeast corner.

Large one-over-one windows on the three ornamented façades are a significant feature of the building. The six-foot-by-eight-foot windows occur in pairs—nine sets on the front of the building, seven sets on the two shorter sides. They are set off by concrete ledges and columns. On the back side of the building, windows are a combination of one-over-one and top-hung. Most are above the fourth floor line, marking the height of a since-demolished building that once abutted the Higgins.

The lobby entrance is centered on the Second Street side of the building. Entry doors installed as the building was rehabilitated are of decorative wrought iron. An original set of entry doors set inside the vestibule did not survive. Also lost has been an exterior flat metal canopy suspended on struts above the entrance, and a narrow four-story tall sign attached to the northwest corner, vertically reading "Higgins Bldg."<sup>7</sup>

### Interior

The lobby entrance to the Higgins Building opens into a two-story volume of space and rectangular lobby. The lobby floor is tiled with one-inch square ceramic tiles, primarily white, with star patterns in black, and Greek key borders. The walls are clad in white marble.

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<sup>5</sup> The architect/engineering firm on the restoration project is Simpson Gumpertz & Heger (SGH), the general contractor is Spectra, specializing in historic properties.

<sup>6</sup> Based on a color analysis by Architectural Resources Group (ARG) conducted in 2018.

<sup>7</sup> The sign and entry canopy are visible in a 1941 photograph by Art Streib, *Herald Examiner*, Jan. 29, 1941 (USC Digital Archives/Herald Examiner).

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Other original features include the ornamented gilt coffered ceiling and a large clerestory window of etched glass tiles above the entry door. A reception counter in wrought iron on the right side of the lobby was added during rehabilitation. The gravity-fed mail chute (inactive) on the marble wall behind the counter is original and would have been a convenience for offices on the upper floors.

A two-story marble-clad concrete staircase on the left side of the lobby climbs three steps before turning and rising to the second floor, where it connects to a landing that opens into the interior of the light court. A lesser marble staircase in the lobby leads to the basement. Of three original side doors from the lobby to adjacent stores, one remains.

A bank of three elevators, retrofitted, on the right side of the lobby gives access to the upper nine floors, with one rising to the rooftop. At the lobby level, the elevators have solid doors; on the upper floors, the original wrought iron doors are intact on all but one floor. On each of the upper floors, the elevators open to small rectangular lobbies, where the mosaic floor tiles and Greek key borders seen in the ground floor lobby are repeated. The walls are finished with marble wainscoting and metal-clad chair rails. The lobby at the second floor is abbreviated to accommodate the lobby staircase landing and access to the light court.

While the light court's primary purpose was to allow light and air into the building interiors, it also created an area for gathering and socializing at the second-floor level. Seven skylights installed in the light court floor, since removed, allowed daylight deep into the commercial spaces. The eleven stacks of windows rising nine stories in the light court are in the same design as the one-over-one windows on the exterior, though narrower by a foot.

Original floor tile patterns, wainscoting, and chair rails in the elevator lobbies continue into the central and side corridors. In the corridors, original metal-clad doors are a distinctive feature and remain at most units—though they no longer have their original custom “H/B” (Higgins Building) doorknobs. On the upper half of the doors, the glass windows that would have been typical for offices have been replaced with metal sheeting to create solid residential doors. Transom windows above the doors and along the corridors have been closed to meet fire codes and mirrored to maximize reflected light.

The original thirty-four offices on each of the upper nine floors were reconfigured to create fifteen live/work loft spaces, for a building total of 135 lofts. On floors two through nine, ceilings are ten-foot; on the tenth floor, fifteen-foot. In addition to being connected by the elevators in the center of the building, each floor is connected on the east and west ends by marble-clad staircases with steel tube handrails and decorative railings.

Just as the large windows are a defining characteristic on the exterior, they are defining on the interiors, bringing in light and framing views of the city. Most floors in the converted offices are the original finished concrete, many still bordered by the wood insets originally used for tacking carpets. Most units retain their metal clad chair and picture rails, and tall baseboards; some have areas with marble wainscoting and tile where corridors were incorporated into loft spaces. The

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window sashes and other metal-clad details within the living spaces and in the corridors are no longer painted to look like wood and are distinguished by their silvery-gray patina.

### Rooftop and basement

The flat roof is accessible by the first of the building's three elevators. The elevator opens into a housing with a doorway to the rooftop. The rooftop, also accessible by staircase, was designed for safely enjoying views of the surrounding cityscape and mountains. A half-wall, concealed on the exterior by the building's cornice, surrounds the rooftop perimeter; a railing secures the opening to the light court in the center. Originally envisioned as the site for a garden café, the rooftop is green with plants and has areas where the building's residents can gather and cook outdoors.

The building was constructed with the most modern of utilities for its time: a private power generating plant. The plant in the subbasement generated high pressure steam from boilers heated with oil-burning furnaces. The steam was used to rotate turbine shafts, which then drove electricity generators. It is unknown when the generating equipment was removed. Clear elements of it remain, embedded in concrete footings in the subbasement.

### Alterations

Prior to 1950, most alterations to the building were modest and overseen by the original design engineer, who maintained offices in the building.<sup>8</sup> More significant alterations occurred during the 1950s and 1960s as the building was adapted for use as the Los Angeles County Engineering Building. Efforts to modernize the building included an expansion of the seventh floor elevator lobby in which historic details were removed. Ground floor commercial spaces were converted to other government uses and street-facing store fronts modified. Acoustic ceiling tiles and fluorescent light fixtures were installed throughout. At the entrance, the new name of the building was set in floor tile.

The county moved out of the deteriorating building in 1977, from which time it went unoccupied and derelict until 1998. While vacant, the building suffered more losses, including being stripped of features such as its signature door knobs, brass ornaments, copper wiring, and fixtures.<sup>9</sup> Windows were broken throughout; the basement flooded. A fire set by squatters permanently damaged several windows facing the light court.

The building was purchased by developers in 1998 at the forefront of a movement to repurpose idle historic buildings in downtown Los Angeles. The condition of the Higgins was among the worst. "If there was a contest for Los Angeles' ugliest piece of real estate, the Higgins Building would surely be a top contender," in the words of a *Los Angeles Times* writer at the time.<sup>10</sup> Significant alterations were made during the conversion and some additional historic elements were lost or damaged as offices were repurposed as residences and commercial spaces were reclaimed for the building's reopening in 2003.

<sup>8</sup> Engineer A.C. Martin headquartered his firm in the Higgins from 1910 until 1946.

<sup>9</sup> Ed Leibowitz, "The Building that Time Forgot," *Los Angeles Times Magazine*, Aug. 17, 1997, 20-33.

<sup>10</sup> Jesus Sanchez, "Downtown Eyesore Gets a Fresh New Look" *Los Angeles Times*, June 15, 1999, 59.



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Key changes were as follows. On the ground level, the original fifteen commercial spaces were reconfigured, most to be redeveloped as restaurants. In the lobby, large mirrors were inset into recesses and a bank of mailboxes installed. On the second through tenth floors, approximately half of the partitioning walls that separated offices were removed to create open living spaces with kitchens and baths. Original men's and women's restrooms, a rear corridor, and the freight elevator shaft were subsumed into the new floor plans. Individual heating and air conditioning components were installed in each unit. On the roof, fifteen new access points were created with spiral staircases in tenth floor units opening onto partitioned rooftop patios. A small stair tower encloses each opening. The exterior wall of a commercial space along Harlem Place was partially opened and a significant section of the concrete floor in the unit removed. The changes created a large multi-story open space combining the ground floor, basement, and subbasement. The mechanical artifacts of the power station in the subbasement were retained and incorporated into the design of a nightclub, which was opened as part of the redevelopment of the property.

#### Historic Integrity

*Location:* The Higgins Building remains where built and therefore retains integrity of location.

*Design:* The Higgins Building retains integrity of design as a Beaux Arts commercial building, visible in its massing and symmetry in columns, pilasters, entablatures, and window pairings, and in its classical cornice and ornamentation details.

*Setting:* In addition to its immediate ties to the city's historic center and its civic center, the Higgins has been and continues to be influenced by its closeness to Little Tokyo beginning one block east;<sup>11</sup> and to its long-standing neighbor, Skid Row, beginning one block south and serving as home to thousands of unhoused. Two blocks to the west are the city's historic theater district and marketplaces. Newer landmarks a few blocks west on Bunker Hill include Disney Concert Hall and major art museums. On the blocks immediately across Second Street, multiple two-and-three-story buildings have been torn down to make way for major new construction, most notably the CalTrans District 7 headquarters (2004)<sup>12</sup> and the LAPD headquarters (2009).<sup>13</sup> These uses are new iterations of the civic and cultural crossroads of Second and Main Streets that long ago put the Higgins near City Hall, Saint Vibiana's, and the *Los Angeles Times*. While the buildings around the Higgins have changed, it remains at the intersection of the forces shaping the governance, culture, and fabric of the city. The Higgins Building continues to physically dominate its block as buildings around it have been torn down or reduced in size and major new landmarks have risen. It therefore retains integrity of setting.

*Materials:* The steel-reinforced concrete used to construct every part of the Higgins Building has withstood the pressures of time, as have its finishes, seen in marble-clad walls, metal-clad wood

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<sup>11</sup> Little Tokyo Historic District, National Historic Landmark, August 22, 1986 [Little Tokyo Historic District \(U.S. National Park Service\) \(nps.gov\)](https://www.nps.gov/little-tokyo-historic-district) (accessed Oct. 20, 2022).

<sup>12</sup> "Caltrans District 7 Headquarters, Morphosis Architects," ArchDaily.com <https://www.archdaily.com/206947/flashback-caltrans-district-7-headquarters-morphosis> (accessed Oct. 19, 2022).

<sup>13</sup> Christopher Hawthorne, "Open arms of the law," *Los Angeles Times*, Oct. 24, 2009, 1.

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work, and ceramic floor tiles visible throughout the building. There have been alterations over time, but the Higgins Building retains integrity of materials.

*Workmanship:* The builders of the Higgins Building were exacting in the design and execution of its structural elements and in adding ornamentation and finishes to create a building that would be fireproof and beautiful. The integrity of their workmanship is evident in the building as a whole and in its details. The construction team noted by the architect included M.A. Rowland and Kenneth Pruess (concrete), A. Barmann (steel), the San Francisco Cornice Company (doors and windows), B.V. Collins (tile and marble), John F. Connell (machinery and power plant), and H.J. McGuire (excavation).<sup>14</sup>

*Feeling:* The mass of the building and its prominence at the intersection of Second and Main Streets continues to convey the aesthetic and sense of a 1910 Beaux Arts commercial building.

*Association:* The Higgins Building was integral to the social history and commercial development of downtown Los Angeles at the beginning of the twentieth century and in the forefront of efforts at the beginning of the twenty-first century to repurpose its abandoned/underused historic buildings. It has a continuing strong association to its own history and to that of its surroundings.

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<sup>14</sup> Haley, "A 10-story Monolithic Reinforced Concrete Building," 35, 50, 51.

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## 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

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**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

ENGINEERING

SOCIAL HISTORY

COMMERCE

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

**Period of Significance**

1910-1949

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

**Significant Dates**

1910

1911

\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

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

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

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

**Architect/Builder**

Haley, Arthur L. (architect)

Martin, Sr., Albert C. (engineer)

\_\_\_\_\_

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**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.)

The Higgins Building is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places at the local level of significance under Criterion A in the areas of Social History and Commerce and under Criterion C in the areas of Architecture and Engineering. From its opening in 1910, the building attracted tenants key in the social activism and commercial life of Los Angeles. From 1911 to 1916, attorneys Clarence Darrow and Job Harriman—working from offices in the building—shaped events of intense national as well as local importance in the labor and socialist movements. Darrow, who defended the labor activists who bombed the *Los Angeles Times*, faced trial himself for jury tampering in the case. Harriman, co-counsel in the bombings, lost his bids to become the socialist mayor of Los Angeles, and went on to found the utopian Llano del Rio Colony. In a striking counterpoint to its role in the labor and socialist movements, the Higgins Building also became a center of capitalism and commerce. From 1911 to 1949, it was in the forefront of the dramatic growth of the oil industry in California. The General Petroleum Corporation, a precursor to Mobil Oil, started from one office, eventually outgrowing the building. The building’s design was the boundary-pushing work of architect A.L. Haley and engineer A.C. Martin. The result was the protomodern pairing of Beaux Arts classicism with steel-reinforced poured concrete construction. The Higgins advanced the skyline of Los Angeles by demonstrating the successful use of concrete in a hi-rise, and advanced its infrastructure by embracing modern utilities, including a private electrical generating plant in its sub-basement. The period of significance begins in 1910, when construction was completed, and closes in 1949 when General Petroleum moved out of the building.

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

### **CRITERION A: Social History and Commerce**

When the Higgins opened in 1910, the city’s population was just 319,198—within twenty years it reached 1.24 million.<sup>15</sup> The building quickly became what its wealthy developer had imagined: a place to see and be seen. At a time when the economic drivers and social structure of Los Angeles were being sorted out, the Higgins Building played a role in both settings. Professionals and businesses set up offices in the Higgins, and so did social clubs and civic groups. The Chess and Checker Club of Southern California was founded in the Higgins; the Women’s Progressive League made the building its headquarters and held luncheons on the rooftop.<sup>16</sup> The Association of Liquor Dealers helped spearhead the fight against prohibition from the Higgins; the volunteer City Cleaning Bureau sought to clean up vacant lots.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, <http://www.la Almanac.com/population/po26.php> (accessed Nov. 25, 2022).

<sup>16</sup> “Players Form a Chess Club,” *Los Angeles Times*, Dec. 11, 1910, 57; “Women’s Progressive League Inaugurates Plan for New Organization,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 17, 1912, 12.

<sup>17</sup> “Liquor Men of All Hues to Fight Drys Together,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 16, 1915, 13; “Lot-Clearing Bureau Asks Public Support,” *Los Angeles Evening Express*, Jan. 1, 1914, 11.

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The Higgins served as the Chancery Office for the Catholic Diocese of Monterey and Los Angeles for nearly two decades, beginning in 1917. The offices on the eighth floor where the church maintained the records of the diocese overlooked Saint Vibiana's across the street.<sup>18</sup> The Chancery Office published *The Tidings*, the official weekly of the Catholic Diocese of Monterey and Los Angeles, with the Higgins address on its masthead.<sup>19</sup> On the ground floor of the Higgins Building, an independent retail shop sold religious items; Karl's Shoes and Owl Drug sold items in the secular realm.

In the beginning, the building's nearness to courthouses and the civic center attracted attorneys. Dozens opened offices, none more significantly than Clarence Darrow and Job Harriman. Ultimately, though, the booming oil industry came to dominate—Standard Oil, Union Oil, and, most of all, General Petroleum.

#### *Clarence Darrow and the bombing of the Los Angeles Times*

Clarence Darrow, the nation's leading attorney in the cause of labor, was persuaded to leave Chicago for Los Angeles by Samuel Gompers and the American Federation of Labor. The cause was the defense of the McNamara brothers, James and John, accused in the deadly bombing of the *Los Angeles Times*. After arriving in Los Angeles, Darrow's first stop was the county jail where he met his clients; his second was his new offices in the Higgins.<sup>20</sup> Harriman had arranged for the suite of offices for Darrow just across the hall from his own on the southwest corner of the ninth floor. The offices of the two men served as headquarters for the defense.

The explosion at the *Times* early on the morning of October 1, 1910, was devastating. It destroyed the newspaper building and killed twenty-one people, many of them printers, and injured many more.<sup>21</sup> The blast, which would have been felt and heard at the Higgins Building just a few blocks away, shocked and riveted the nation. The bombing occurred in the midst of a labor strike and the sympathies of many were with the McNamaras. John was a national labor leader and Jim was accused of planting the dynamite. Many union leaders and ordinary workers across the country believed the brothers were falsely accused and sent money for their defense.

The case against the men was overwhelming. While the trial was underway and fourteen months after the bombing, Darrow advised the McNamaras to plead guilty to escape the death penalty.<sup>22</sup> It was a crushing turn in the case for those who supported Darrow and the brothers, including labor leader Gompers. In the midst of the trial, Darrow was accused of jury tampering and remained mired in the case even after the guilty pleas. Darrow was forced to stay in Los Angeles to defend himself against charges he bribed two jurors.

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<sup>18</sup> Francis J. Weber, "The Chancery Archives of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles: An Historical Perspective." *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia*, vol. 82, no. 3, 1971, 171-188 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44210775> (accessed Oct. 24, 2022).

<sup>19</sup> Catholic Diocese of Monterey and Los Angeles, *The Tidings*, masthead, Aug. 9, 1918, 3.

<sup>20</sup> Cowan, *People v. Clarence Darrow*, 125.

<sup>21</sup> "Twenty-one Killed and More Injured in the Dynamited 'Times' Building," *Los Angeles Times*, Oct. 2, 1910, 1.

<sup>22</sup> "The Los Angeles Times Bombing," University of Cincinnati Libraries, Digital Collection <https://digital.libraries.uc.edu/exhibits/arb/mcnamara/bombing.php> (accessed Oct. 22, 2022).

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His private investigator was witnessed giving a \$4,000 bribe to a prospective juror and was arrested on the street one block from the Higgins. The arrest came just as Darrow—who had minutes earlier received a 9:00 am phone call in his office in the Higgins—joined him on the street.<sup>23</sup> The prosecution alleged that Darrow and Harriman colluded and had taken cash for the bribe from a safe in their offices in the Higgins earlier that morning.<sup>24</sup>

Darrow was arrested in January 1912. He faced two lengthy trials, the first ending in acquittal after he testified in his own defense. Harriman also testified, disputing the allegation of collusion. Yes, he had been in the Higgins briefly that morning to collect mail, and he and Darrow had missed seeing each other. Darrow delivered his own closing arguments, in tears. He succeeded in persuading the jury that he was not on trial for the crime charged, but for championing the common man.<sup>25</sup> Darrow's second trial, on bribery charges involving another juror, ended in a hung jury and the case was not retried.

The conviction of the McNamaras and dozens of other union men for crimes related to the bombing, and Darrow's tainted career as defender of labor, devastated the American labor movement. As the events reverberated across the country, the movement was virtually paralyzed for a generation.<sup>26</sup> The national labor movement did not find its footing again until the New Deal, and it took longer than that in Los Angeles.

Darrow was finally able to return to Chicago in 1913. By the time he left Los Angeles, his reputation was tarnished and his mental and physical health fragile. He agreed to never practice law again in California and was never again hired by labor. Twelve years later, his most famous case—The State of Tennessee v. John Thomas Scopes, commonly referred to as the Scopes Monkey Trial—began July 10, 1925.

### *Job Harriman and socialist causes*

Before the bombing, Job Harriman's work in early 1910 included defending union workers caught in anti-union clashes in the city. It naturally fell to him to be the first attorney representing the McNamara brothers. Throughout 1910, the struggle between capitalism and organized labor in Los Angeles seemed to be turning in favor of labor, with socialists in the vanguard.<sup>27</sup> Harriman was a leader in the movement nationally, having previously run for vice-president on the Eugene Debs ticket in 1900, and before that for governor of California.

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<sup>23</sup> John A. Farrell, "Clarence Darrow: Jury Tamperer?" *Smithsonian Magazine*, December 2011 <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/clarence-darrow-jury-tamperer-109085/> (accessed Oct. 24, 2022).

<sup>24</sup> Geoffrey Cowan, *The People v. Clarence Darrow: The Bribery Trial of America's Greatest Lawyer* (New York: Times Books, an imprint of Random House, 1993), 372-375, 494.

<sup>25</sup> Geoffrey Cowan, "The Trials of Clarence Darrow," *Los Angeles Times Magazine*, May 16, 1993, 26.

<sup>26</sup> Lew Irwin, "The blast that rocked labor: The bombing of The Times Building 100 years ago set off a chain of events that devastated America's unions," *Los Angeles Times*, Oct. 3, 2010, 27.

<sup>27</sup> D. J. Waldie, "Red Flags Over Los Angeles," *KCET*, April 25, 2016, Part I: Socialism and the Election of 1911, <https://www.kcet.org/shows/lost-la/red-flags-over-los-angeles-part-i-socialism-and-the-election-of-1911> and Part 2: Bombs, Betrayal, and the Election of 1911 <https://stophomegrownhate.org/red-flags-los-angeles-part-2-bombs-betrayal-election-1911/> (accessed Nov. 9, 2022).

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Harriman decided the time was right to run for mayor of Los Angeles. He was a popular candidate. His campaign, which he ran from the Higgins, became aligned with the defense of the McNamaras and with labor as well as socialism.

He was the leading vote-getter in the mayoral primary in October of 1911 and was expected to win the runoff election in December. When Darrow struck the plea deal on behalf of the brothers, he did not tell Harriman in advance. The guilty pleas just four days before the election upended Harriman's campaign. The timing of the guilty pleas suited Harrison Gray Otis, publisher of the *Los Angeles Times*, and may have been at his insistence. Well before the bombing, Otis was vehemently anti-labor, anti-socialist, and anti-Harriman.<sup>28</sup> "The election of Harriman would result in an orgy of evil," his editorial pages warned.<sup>29</sup>

As Harriman recovered from his courtroom and election losses—including a second unsuccessful run for mayor in 1913—he regrouped with supporters in his offices in the Higgins to plan a socialist community. The result was the Llano del Rio Colony, established in 1914 in the Antelope Valley in northern Los Angeles County.<sup>30</sup> To promote the colony and socialism, Harriman took on the role of editor of *The Western Comrade*, a socialist periodical whose address was his office in the Higgins from 1914 to 1916.<sup>31</sup> Articles explained the colony and full page ads, including one headlined "Colonists—Wanted," promised the opportunity of a lifetime. Inquiries were directed to Harriman's office.

At its height in 1916, Llano del Rio had a thousand members and was considered a flourishing experiment in the principals of cooperation rather than competition. Harriman divided his time between the colony and the Higgins as he fought lawsuits over water and other issues at the site.<sup>32</sup> Despite its ideals, the cooperative struggled, declaring bankruptcy in 1918. It tried a reset and relocation to Louisiana—the New Llano Colony—where it operated for nearly twenty years with mixed success.<sup>33</sup>

Harriman continued to work from Los Angeles, where he died in 1925 of tuberculosis. The Llano del Rio Colony he founded in the Higgins is considered one of the most important non-religious utopian colonies in western American history.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> "Politics May Have Figured in the Case," *The Los Angeles Record*, Dec. 2, 1911, 1.

<sup>29</sup> Waldie, "Red Flags."

<sup>30</sup> Hadley Meares, "Llano del Rio: The ruins of LA's socialist colony," *Curbed Los Angeles*, May 1, 2017 <https://la.curbed.com/2017/5/1/15465616/utopia-socialist-los-angeles-llano-del-rio> (accessed Oct. 5, 2022).

<sup>31</sup> Job Harriman, "Colonists—Wanted," display ad, *The Western Comrade*, July 1914, 31 <https://www.marxists.org/history/usa/pubs/westerncomrade/v2n03-jul-1914-Western-Comrade.pdf> (accessed Nov. 9, 2022).

<sup>32</sup> Celia Rasmussen, "A Socialist Who Almost Was Mayor," *Los Angeles Times*, Oct. 31, 1999, B3.

<sup>33</sup> Aldous Huxley and Paul Kagan, "A Double Look at Utopia: The Llano Del Rio Colony." *California Historical Quarterly* 51, no. 2 (1972): 117-54 <https://doi.org/10.2307/25157371> (accessed Oct. 24, 2022); *Museum of the New Llano Colony* <http://www.newllanocolony.com/DBcolonist/harrimanjob.html> (accessed Oct. 12, 2022).

<sup>34</sup> Site of Llano Del Rio Cooperative Colony, California Historical Landmark, #933, 1980, <https://ohp.parks.ca.gov/ListedResources/Detail/933> (accessed Oct. 12, 2022).



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*Commerce and the search for oil*

Many early tenants in the Higgins Building were civic activists, lawyers, and investors, but its star enterprise became oil—the region’s hottest commodity and symbol of capitalism. Standard Oil and Union Oil both set up offices in the Higgins before building their separate headquarters. The company that came to dominate the Higgins was the General Petroleum Corporation, a highly successful independent oil producer and precursor to Mobil Oil.

By the 1920s, the Los Angeles area was awash in oil derricks and supplied twenty percent of the world’s total production of crude oil.<sup>35</sup> Starting in a single office in 1912, General Petroleum was organized by Captain John Barneson, a naval commander turned oilman, with \$50 million in capital. The company soon took command of the tenth floor and eventually occupied nearly the entire building as it bought out competitors and expanded its reach in the Los Angeles Basin and California.<sup>36</sup>

Two years after the Standard Oil Company of New York moved its offices out of the Higgins, it purchased General Petroleum, which retained its separate identity. The purchase in 1924 gave a major boost to Standard’s reach, adding to its holdings a well-integrated business west of the Rockies, including oil wells, refineries, pipelines, and a fleet of eight oil tankers.<sup>37</sup>

General Petroleum is credited with the 1936 find of the last major oil reserve in the Los Angeles Basin, on the edge of Los Angeles Harbor/San Pedro Bay.<sup>38</sup> Still active, the Wilmington Oil Field proved to be one of the nation’s largest reserves. Five years later, on December 20, 1941—less than two weeks after Pearl Harbor—General Petroleum’s tanker *Emidio* was torpedoed. It was the first World War II casualty on the West Coast.<sup>39</sup>

In 1949, General Petroleum left the Higgins Building. The company moved into its own large and modern new building, topped by the same Pegasus, Mobiloil, and Mobilgas signage it had earlier displayed on the back wall of the Higgins. Its modernist building at 6<sup>th</sup> and Flower Streets was the first major post-war building in downtown Los Angeles.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Richard Nehring, “Oil and Gas Supplies for California: Past and Future,” Report prepared for California State Assembly, December 1975, 2 <https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/reports/2008/R1850.pdf> (accessed Oct. 21, 2022).

<sup>36</sup> Sam Gnerre, “Capt. John Barneson brings an oil refinery to Torrance” *South Bay Daily Breeze*, Oct. 4, 2014 <http://blogs.dailybreeze.com/history/2014/10/04/capt-john-barneson-brings-an-oil-refinery-to-torrance/> (accessed Jan. 14, 2023).

<sup>37</sup> Auke Visser / Other Esso Related Tankers Site, “General Petroleum” <http://www.aukevisser.nl/others/id985.htm> (accessed Oct. 20, 2022).

<sup>38</sup> E.J. Bartosh, “Wilmington Oil Field, Los Angeles County, California,” American Association of Petroleum Geologists, AAPG Bulletin, Aug. 1, 1938 <https://pubs.geoscienceworld.org/aapgbull/article-abstract/22/8/1048/545971/Wilmington-Oil-Field-Los-Angeles-County?redirectedFrom=fulltext> (accessed Oct. 20, 2022).

<sup>39</sup> S.S. Emidio, California Historic Landmark, Dec. 4, 1951, <https://ohp.parks.ca.gov/ListedResources/Detail/497> (accessed Oct. 18, 2022).

<sup>40</sup> General Petroleum Building, California Historic Landmark, June 22, 2004, <https://ohp.parks.ca.gov/ListedResources/Detail/N2244> (accessed Oct. 18, 2022); Victoria Bernal, “The Downtown

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### *A building lost and found*

With the exit of General Petroleum in 1949, the Higgins Estate, which still owned the building, liquidated its real estate and other holdings. The building sold for about \$1 million to the County of Los Angeles, which was looking for a new headquarters for its Bureau of Engineering. The building was given a new name, the Los Angeles County Engineering Building, which is how many in Los Angeles remember it. After more than a quarter century of overseeing construction projects large and small from the building, the county pulled up stakes in 1977, leaving a deteriorating building and neighborhood.

Abandoned to the elements for the next two decades, the Higgins became a prominent and painful eyesore. “The Building That Time Forgot,” was the headline on the 1997 article in the *Los Angeles Times Magazine*. Its windows gone and doors boarded up, only pigeons and human trespassers and vandals visited it.<sup>41</sup>

When its future seemed bleakest, the building was sold in 1998 for just over \$1 million. The property was redeveloped by Andrew Meieran and Barry Shy, with upper floors converted to 135 live/work lofts and the ground level reconfigured into seven commercial spaces. Its original name reclaimed, the Higgins Building reopened in 2003, one of the first of many adaptive reuse projects that helped revitalize downtown Los Angeles. One year after reopening, the building was converted to a condominium, and the Higgins Loft Homeowners Association established.

The commercial spaces attracted restaurants to serve a growing downtown population. The Edison nightclub, built around remnants of the power plant in the sub-basement of the Higgins, brought thousands of first-time visitors to a reemerging downtown.<sup>42</sup> In 2007, the Higgins Building was declared a Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument, and in 2010, celebrated its centennial.<sup>43</sup>

### **CRITERION C: Architecture and Engineering**

The Higgins Building is an important example of early monolithic reinforced concrete construction in a hi-rise building. It set a new height record in Los Angeles for concrete, then considered unproven for tall buildings. It paired classical Beaux Arts style with modern innovations. The Higgins was designed to be fireproof and engineered to withstand earthquakes. Years ahead of when electricity would be offered as a utility in Los Angeles, the Higgins had a self-contained electrical power plant in its sub-basement. The building combined the vision of its

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Los Angeles Buildings That Oil Built,” KCET, Sept. 26, 2022 <https://www.kcet.org/shows/lost-la/the-downtown-los-angeles-buildings-that-oil-built> (accessed Oct. 18, 2022).

<sup>41</sup> Leibowitz, “Time Forgot,” 20-33

<sup>42</sup> Kate Deiona, “The Edison,” *TripSavvy.com*, June 3, 2019 <https://www.tripsavvy.com/the-edison-4135505> (accessed Nov. 28, 2022).

<sup>43</sup> Higgins Building, Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument, #873, May 31, 2007 <https://cityclerk.lacity.org//lacityclerkconnect/index.cfm?fa=ccfi.viewrecord&cfnumber=07-1153> (accessed Sep. 7, 2022).

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namesake developer, Thomas P. Higgins, with that of the architect A.L. Haley, and the young engineer A.C. Martin, whose later work played a key role in defining the skyline of Los Angeles.

*Thomas Higgins brings his copper fortune to Los Angeles*

When Thomas Patrick Higgins arrived in Los Angeles in 1902, he had money to spend, a fortune made in the copper mines of Arizona.<sup>44</sup> He was born July 12, 1844, in Ireland, near Boyle, County Roscommon. He came to the United States at about age twenty, first doing iron mining in New York, then lumbering in Wisconsin before heading to Arizona.

He was among a handful of original hardscrabble prospectors in Bisbee who discovered copper in 1877. By the time he left Arizona for Los Angeles, he had made his mark on that state's economy and landscape. Ready to settle in a new home and invest in still-young Los Angeles, he took cash from the sale of mine holdings and began investing in real estate.

In 1903 he paid \$200,000 cash for the lot on the corner of Second and Main Streets, just across the street from Saint Vibiana's Cathedral—a location that spoke to his Catholicism as well as business instincts.<sup>45</sup> It was where Higgins intended to make a lasting impression in Los Angeles by constructing an office and retail building that would be architecturally unrivaled and tower over its surroundings. Plans solidified after the devastation in San Francisco in 1906. His building would be “absolutely fire and earthquake proof” and make the best use of modern technology.

*A partnership with A.L. Haley and A.C. Martin*

Higgins hired architect A.L. Haley and engineer A.C. Martin to make his building a reality. As construction began, Higgins was 65 years old, Haley 44, and Martin 29. Arthur L. Haley had already established himself with commercial and residential work. Born in Malone, New York, in 1865, he had been designing buildings in Los Angeles since at least 1899. In particular, he designed downtown apartment buildings and residential hotels that helped build the city's housing stock. Many featured his patented invention, “The Sanitary Concealed Metal Wall Bed,” credited with altering the layout of thousands of apartments on the West Coast.<sup>46</sup> His other early projects included a large home for the president of the Los Angeles City Council, the Pomeroy Powers residence, and the Bisbee Hotel.<sup>47</sup> The Bisbee, near the intersection of Third and Main Streets, was commissioned by Higgins in 1904. Another commission for Haley that year was a mausoleum where Higgins and his relatives could be interred.

The year 1904 was also the year Albert Carey Martin, born in LaSalle, Illinois in 1879, arrived in Los Angeles. He was a new architectural engineering graduate from the University of Illinois. He would have studied and perhaps seen the sixteen-story Ingalls Building in Cincinnati, Ohio, the

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<sup>44</sup> “Big Sale of Copper Mines,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 10, 1903, 1.

<sup>45</sup> “Second and Main Street Corner Sold,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 18, 1903, 1

<sup>46</sup> “Sanitary Concealed Metal Bed, Arthur L. Haley, Inventor,” display ad, *Los Angeles Times*, Aug. 2, 1908, 16.

<sup>47</sup> The Powers Residence at 1345 Alvarado Terrace was declared a Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument in 1971. The Alvarado Terrace Historic District was listed in the NRHP in May 1984; “Bisbee Hotel, Downtown, Los Angeles” <https://pcad.lib.washington.edu/building/22624/> (accessed Oct. 23, 2022).

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world's first reinforced concrete skyscraper, completed in 1903.<sup>48</sup> Before working on the Higgins, his early ideas on building with concrete had been successful on several other Los Angeles projects, including the Hamburger Building department store.<sup>49</sup> At the corner of Second and Main Streets, Higgins, Haley, and Martin collaborated to create a classically styled monolithic building of poured, steel-reinforced concrete.

### Beaux Arts architecture

The Beaux Arts style of the Higgins Building was in keeping with the design ethos widely adopted at the turn of the twentieth century for civic and commercial buildings throughout the nation, including in Los Angeles. The city's downtown historic core contains significant concentrations of Beaux Arts buildings. The known examples of Beaux Arts architecture in the city date from about 1897 to 1936, the majority constructed during the 1920s as the city experienced its largest construction boom of the century.<sup>50</sup> The Higgins came to life a decade before the boom of the 1920s.

The building incorporates the traditional Beaux Arts tripartite forms of base, shaft, capital in its fundamental structure as well as in details. The expression of these forms is restrained, and includes the characteristic focus on symmetry, classical details (including columns and pediments), raised first story, use of stone or stone-like materials, hierarchy of interior spaces, and use of decorative surfaces.<sup>51</sup> The detailing extends into the interior, and is most evident in the design of the airy lobby and in the use of Greek-key tiling and marble surfaces.

### Monolithic concrete construction

At a time when steel, brick and wood were the standard, both Haley and Martin championed unified concrete construction for its strength, resilience in earthquakes and fire, and economy in construction. In doing so they pushed its limits as well as its acceptance on the West Coast. So interested was the professional journal *The Architect and Engineer of California, Pacific Coast States*, that Haley wrote a detailed account for its readers about the process. An eighteen-page spread devoted to the Higgins Building in its April 1910 issue included construction photos, diagrams and detailed specifications by Haley on the monolithic reinforced concrete process. The concrete walls and slabs were poured together in a unified framework, using "the gravity system of pouring the green concrete." Haley emphasized the precision needed in setting steel rods into the forms to reinforce walls, footings, girders, beams and joists. "Concrete was delivered by means of a pipe and was poured directly into the forms," he wrote.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Ingalls Building, American Society of Civil Engineers <https://www.asce.org/about-civil-engineering/history-and-heritage/historic-landmarks/ingalls-building> (accessed Sep. 12, 2022).

<sup>49</sup> "New System Speeds Hamburger Annex," Los Angeles Times, Oct. 6, 1907, 24.

<sup>50</sup> "Beaux Arts Classicism, Neoclassical, and Italian Renaissance Revival Architecture," *Los Angeles Historic Resources Survey*, July 2018, 15-21 [https://planning.lacity.org/odocument/a5151e47-83da-41b7-ae95-dda56667848b/Beaux\\_Arts\\_Classicism\\_Neoclassicism\\_and\\_Italian\\_Renaissance\\_Revival\\_1895-1940.pdf](https://planning.lacity.org/odocument/a5151e47-83da-41b7-ae95-dda56667848b/Beaux_Arts_Classicism_Neoclassicism_and_Italian_Renaissance_Revival_1895-1940.pdf) (accessed Oct. 25, 2022).

<sup>51</sup> "Beaux-Arts," *Chicago Architecture Center* <https://www.architecture.org/learn/resources/architecture-dictionary/entry/beaux-arts/> (accessed Oct. 28, 2022).

<sup>52</sup> Haley, "A 10-story Monolithic Reinforced Concrete Building," 35-51.

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A 1910 article in the *Los Angeles Times* about growing interest in monolithic concrete construction featured the Higgins Building.<sup>53</sup> Haley described the many benefits concrete held for Los Angeles. “Reinforced concrete construction is made economical from the fact that material can be obtained from the local market, while the best structural steel can be manufactured ... only by the heavy rolling mills of the East. There is also a great time saving in this kind of building. The fourth and fifth floors of the Higgins building, for example, were built complete within a period of twenty-eight days.”

In short, he argued, concrete was the material that would let Los Angeles quickly and efficiently build itself into a great city. Concrete became the world’s building material of preference in the twentieth century.<sup>54</sup>

### Lighting with electricity

In embrace of another modern technology, the Higgins Building’s basement contained one of the earliest electrical generating stations in Los Angeles. The city did not put up its first power pole until 1916.<sup>55</sup> In the Higgins six years earlier, massive boilers and two four-valve engines, a 100-kilowatt lighting unit, and a 75-kilowatt lighting unit, formed a private power plant that Haley described as “the most complete found in any Los Angeles building.”

In addition to electricity, other amenities included hot and cold running water in each office, steam heat, purified water sent through filters as it entered the building, telegraph and telephone service, three high-speed plunger-hydraulic passenger elevators, and a separate freight elevator.<sup>56</sup> The Higgins used its electrical power to light the interior of the building, and showed off electric lighting to the rest of city with up-lighting on its façades and a dramatic crown of lights ten stories in the air.

### Taking the Higgins higher and changing city codes

After construction was well underway, Thomas Higgins decided to build higher than the originally planned eight stories—he was not to be outdone by an emerging plan for a ten-story building at Second and Broadway.<sup>57</sup> Taking the Higgins two stories higher required getting the city to change its ordinance limiting the height of concrete buildings.

Over the objections of brick, steel and stone men who had been petitioning to have concrete construction outlawed altogether, the city council had a few years earlier adopted a policy that allowed for concrete within strict limits. Buildings could be no higher than 120 feet, thirty less

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<sup>53</sup> “Great Cement Deposits of Southland to Provide Material for Skyscrapers of Future,” *Los Angeles Times*, Jan. 2, 1910. V1.

<sup>54</sup> “Concrete,” *Twentieth Century Architecture* <http://architecture-history.org/schools/CONCRETE.html> (accessed Oct. 27, 2022).

<sup>55</sup> “LA’s First Municipal Power Pole,” Water and Power Associates, [https://waterandpower.org/museum/First\\_Power\\_Pole\\_Installation.html](https://waterandpower.org/museum/First_Power_Pole_Installation.html) (accessed Oct. 26, 2022).

<sup>56</sup> “Half-Million-Dollar Block at Second and Main Streets,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 23, 1909, 1.

<sup>57</sup> “Believes in North End,” V1.



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than the citywide limit on all buildings of 150 feet.<sup>58</sup> With the Higgins half-built, Haley made an impassioned and successful case for raising the limit to 133 feet for concrete.<sup>59</sup> The council's approval generated a fierce debate in the architectural community and was characterized by the *Times* as "radical."<sup>60</sup> To accommodate the greater height, Martin reengineered the Higgins to stiffen walls from the fourth story upward.

### *The legacies of Higgins, Haley, and Martin*

Despite Thomas Higgins' grand vision for the north end of downtown Los Angeles, the focus of development began shifting to the south and west. He did not live to see the turn. He died in 1920 at age 76. Higgins, who never married, readily lent his support to causes Irish and Catholic in Los Angeles and Arizona, to charities benefitting children, and to his extended family and their descendants in Ireland and California.<sup>61</sup> He is interred in Los Angeles, at Calvary Cemetery, alongside his sister and other relatives in the family mausoleum, designed in 1904 by Haley.

Not long after Haley finished work on the Higgins Building, he was commissioned to build a fireproof home for Roy Lanterman, a refugee from the San Francisco earthquake and fires. The house in La Cañada Flintridge in northeastern Los Angeles County is restored to its original condition, open to the public, and recognized as one of the earliest homes of poured concrete in the region.<sup>62</sup> Despite his successes, Haley was frequently broke and in bankruptcy court. Several years after the Higgins and Lanterman projects, his career became marred by allegations of financial improprieties. He moved north and engaged in projects in central Oregon and Vancouver, Washington.<sup>63</sup>

Martin's work on the Higgins Building launched a long and storied career for the young engineer. He headquartered his company in the Higgins for thirty-five years and worked there on plans for such landmarks as Grauman's Million Dollar Theater (1917), Saint Vincent de Paul Roman Catholic Church (1925) and Los Angeles City Hall (1928)—which he would have watched rise from his fourth-floor office window in the Higgins. By the time of his death in 1960, his firm had worked on some 1,500 building projects, many known for their innovative use of concrete.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> "Would Prohibit Concrete Buildings," *Los Angeles Times*, Oct. 23, 1905, 16; "Hollow-Block Men Agitated," *Los Angeles Times*, Oct. 30, 1906, 18.

<sup>59</sup> "Going Higher. Higgins Building Will Have Ten Stories and Work Is Now Under Way," March 2, 1910, 25.

<sup>60</sup> "Building Laws Criticised. New Ordinance Knocks Old Act Topsy-Turvy," *Los Angeles Times*, May 27, 1910, 1.

<sup>61</sup> "Great Philanthropies by Late Thomas Higgins Bared," *Los Angeles Times*, March 19, 1920, 1; "A Great Irishman, The Wonderful Life Story of the Late Mr. Thomas Higgins, Millionaire, Mine Owner," *The Longford (Ireland) Leader*, April 3, 1920, 5.

<sup>62</sup> Lanterman House, 4420 Encinas Drive, La Cañada Flintridge, CA, 1915, NRHP listed Dec. 29, 1994 <https://npgallery.nps.gov/AssetDetail/NRIS/94001504> (accessed Sep. 20, 2022).

<sup>63</sup> "Haley Now Wants Free Port for Vancouver," *Vancouver Weekly Columbian*, Nov. 6, 1919, 6.

<sup>64</sup> "Albert C. Martin Sr., 80, Noted Architect, Dies," *Los Angeles Times*, April 10, 1960, 21.

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“You can’t envision Los Angeles without their work,” says Kevin Starr, California State Librarian and a professor in USC’s School of Urban Planning and Development.<sup>65</sup> “They are among the half dozen architectural firms that over the last 100 years have given us the major buildings of Los Angeles, the city in its public dimension.” The engineering and architecture firm Martin launched, joined in building by his architect and engineer sons, still bears his name—A.C. Martin Partners—more than a century later.

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<sup>65</sup> Linda Arntzenius, “Building Los Angeles” *USC Family Magazine*, Autumn 1997  
[https://web.archive.org/web/20141208092423/http://www.usc.edu/dept/pubrel/trojan\\_family/autumn97/City\\_Hall/city\\_hall.html](https://web.archive.org/web/20141208092423/http://www.usc.edu/dept/pubrel/trojan_family/autumn97/City_Hall/city_hall.html) (accessed Nov. 11, 2022).

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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: Los Angeles City register of Historic-Cultural Monuments

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

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## 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: 34.051004                      Longitude: -118.244989

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

The boundaries of the property, Tract 53327 of the city of Los Angeles, are Harlem Place (119.72 ft.), Second Street (159.43 ft.), Main Street (119.52 ft.) and mid-block from Harlem Place to Main Street (159.65 ft.).

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

Boundaries represent the legal survey of Tract 53327 historically associated with the Higgins Building.

---

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Cheryl Younger and Joan Springhetti  
with contributions by Allan Harris and Stacie Chaiken  
organization: Higgins Building Historic Resources Collaborative  
street & number: 108 W. Second Street, #1002  
city or town: Los Angeles state: CA zip code: 90012  
e-mail: [cheryl.younger@yahoo.com](mailto:cheryl.younger@yahoo.com); [joan.springhetti@gmail.com](mailto:joan.springhetti@gmail.com)  
telephone: Cheryl Younger (212) 203-9645; Joan Springhetti (714) 271-6612  
date: December 2022; Revised January 2023

---

## 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

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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: Higgins Building  
City or Vicinity: Los Angeles  
County: Los Angeles  
State: California  
Photographer: Cheryl Younger  
Date Photographed: October and November 2022

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

Exterior and rooftop, photos 1-12

- 1 of 30 Primary façade facing Second Street. Lobby entrance at center. View from across Second Street, camera facing south.
- 2 of 30 Primary façade at night, illuminated. View from across Second Street, camera facing south.
- 3 of 30 Secondary façade on Main Street. Visible at far left is Los Angeles Police Department headquarters. View from across Main Street, camera facing west.
- 4 of 30 Southeast corner at night, showing illuminated Main Street façade and non-ornamented back side of building. View from across Main Street, camera facing northwest.
- 5 of 30 Back of building facing surface parking lot. Visible at far left is the Los Angeles Times Building, at far right, CalTrans building. View from parking lot, camera facing north.
- 6 of 30 Northwest corner, showing Harlem Place Alley façade. View from the sidewalk on Second Street, camera is facing southeast.
- 7 of 30 Large windows in pairs, floors two through nine. View from Second Street, camera facing up and south.
- 8 of 30 Tenth floor detail of cornice and trim band. View from Second Street, camera facing up and south.

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- 9 of 30 Eighth floor detail of trim band. View from Second Street, camera facing up and south.
- 10 of 30 Light court looking down. View from rooftop, camera facing west and down.
- 11 of 30 Northeast corner of rooftop, flagpole at right. Visible at center is City Hall; to the right, CalTrans building. View from rooftop, camera facing northeast.
- 12 of 30 Rooftop skylight and air shaft, downtown Los Angeles skyline in distance. View from rooftop, camera facing west.

Lobby and staircase, photos 13-21

- 13 of 30 Front doors with lobby and staircase in rear. View from Second Street, facing south.
- 14 of 30 Lobby, looking back toward Second Street and clerestory window. View toward entry doors, camera facing north.
- 15 of 30 Lobby, looking toward interior; reception desk and mail chute at right. View from vestibule, camera facing south.
- 16 of 30 Lobby. View from vestibule, looking east toward basement staircase, camera facing east.
- 17 of 30 Lobby. View from vestibule, looking west toward mirrored wall, camera facing west.
- 18 of 30 Lobby. View from center of lobby, elevators at right, ceiling detail above, camera facing up and south.
- 19 of 30 Lobby, detail of column and ceiling. View looking up, camera facing east.
- 20 of 30 Lobby, staircase to second floor. View looking up, camera facing south.
- 21 of 30 Top of staircase, second floor landing. View looking toward light court, camera facing south.

Typical floors and subbasement, photos 22-30

- 22 of 30 Light court. View from floor of light court, camera facing up and northeast.
- 23 of 30 Light court. View from floor of light court, camera facing up and west.

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- 24 of 30 Wrought iron elevator doors on typical floors. View toward doors, camera facing west.
- 25 of 30 Elevator lobby on typical floor. View toward lobby from hallway, facing south.
- 26 of 30 Staircase on typical floor, found on east and west ends of each floor. View toward stairs, camera facing south.
- 27 of 30 Hallway on typical floor, showing tile floors and marble wainscoting, wood trim clad in zinc. View toward west.
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- 3 of 14 Architect's rendering by A.L. Haley with height increasing from eight to ten stories; published in *Los Angeles Times*, Jan. 10, 1910.
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- 13 of 14 Back of building in 1959, seen from Main Street, adjacent building torn down for surface parking, photographer unknown; USC Digital Archives/LA Examiner.
- 14 of 14 Reclaimed and developed as residential lofts and commercial spaces, view from CalTrans building across Second and Main Streets; 2006 © Brad Buckman.

**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.

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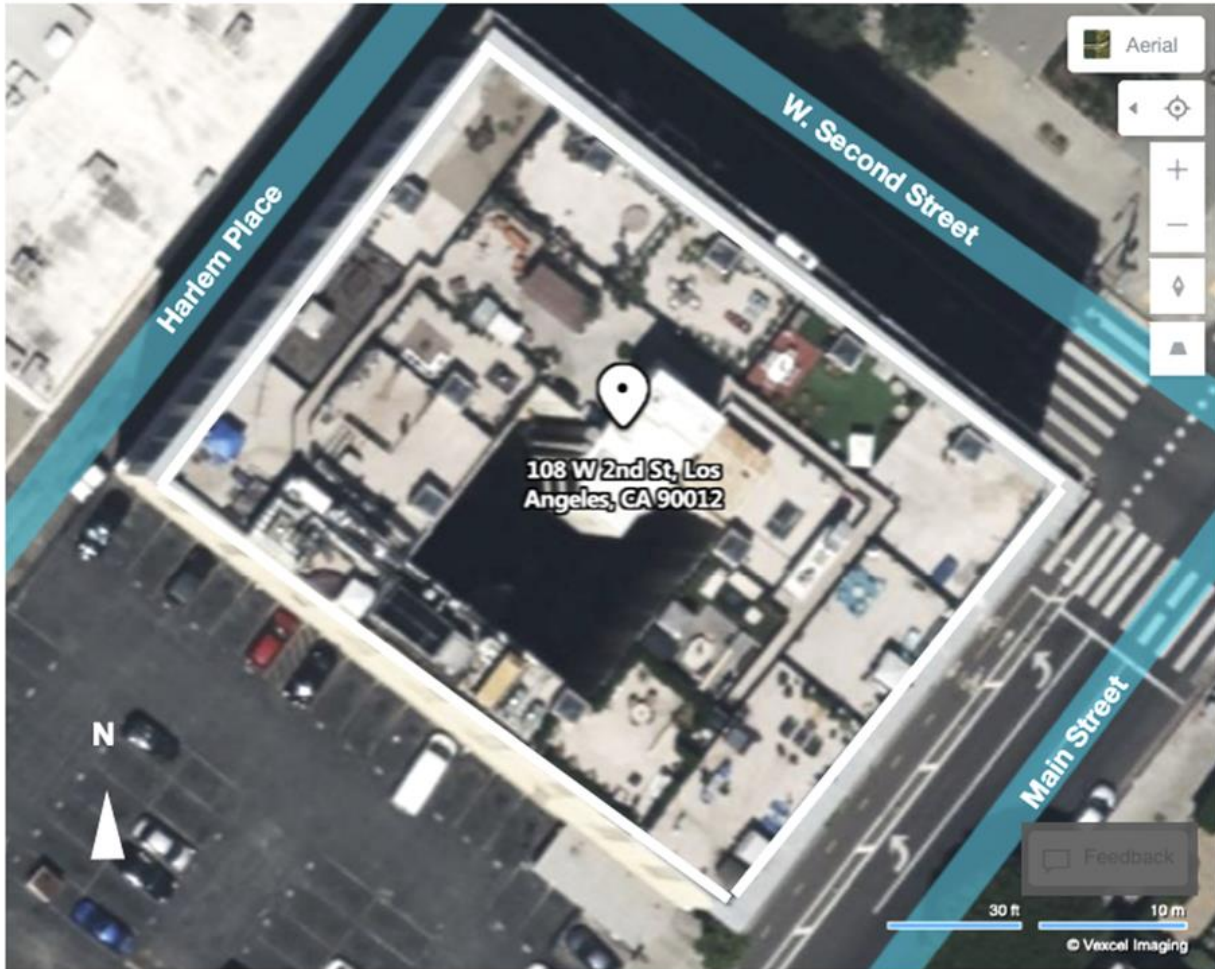
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### Location Map

Latitude: 34.051004

Longitude: -118.244989

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108 W. Second Street, Los Angeles CA 90012



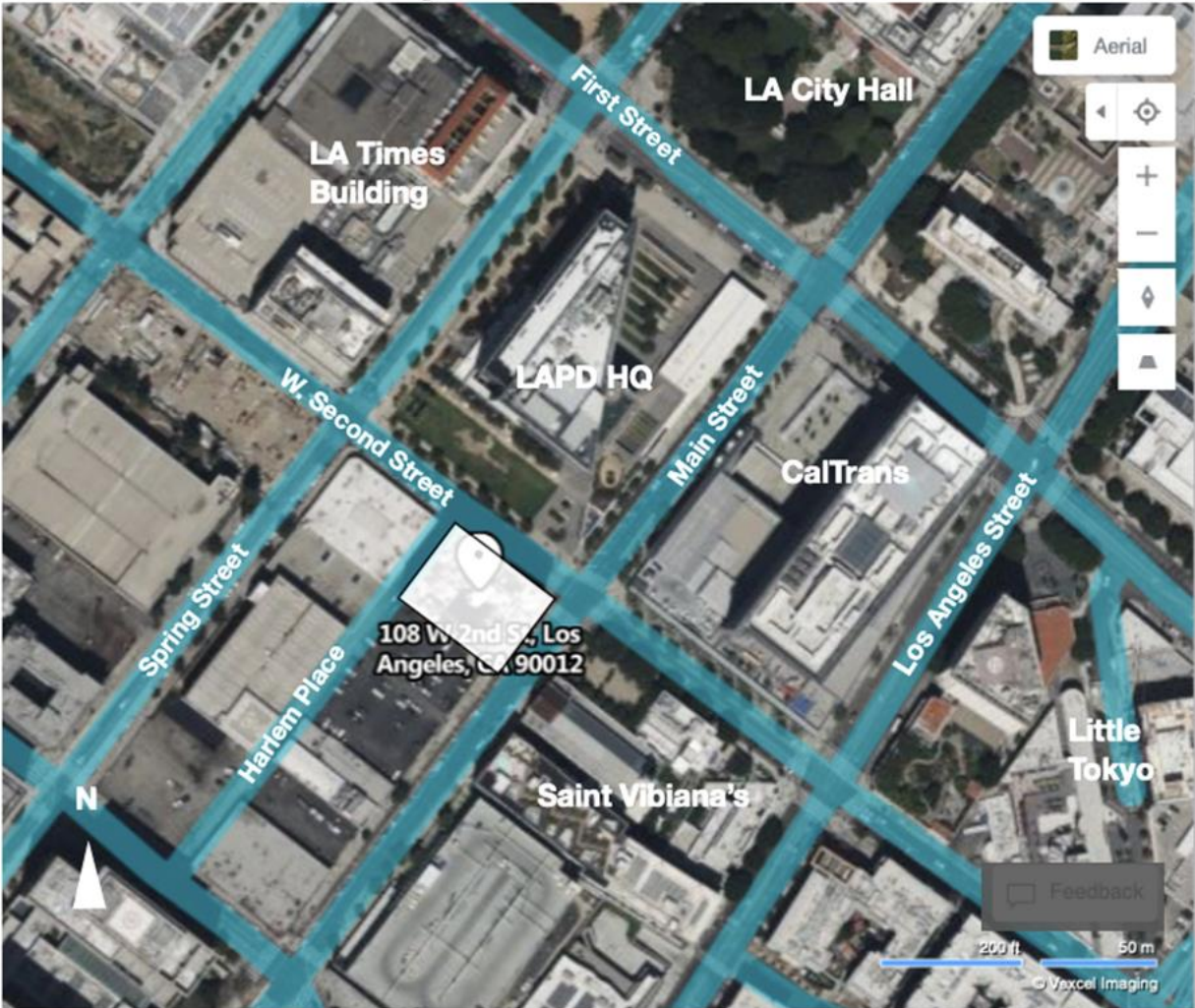
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### Vicinity Map

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108 W. Second Street, Los Angeles CA 90012

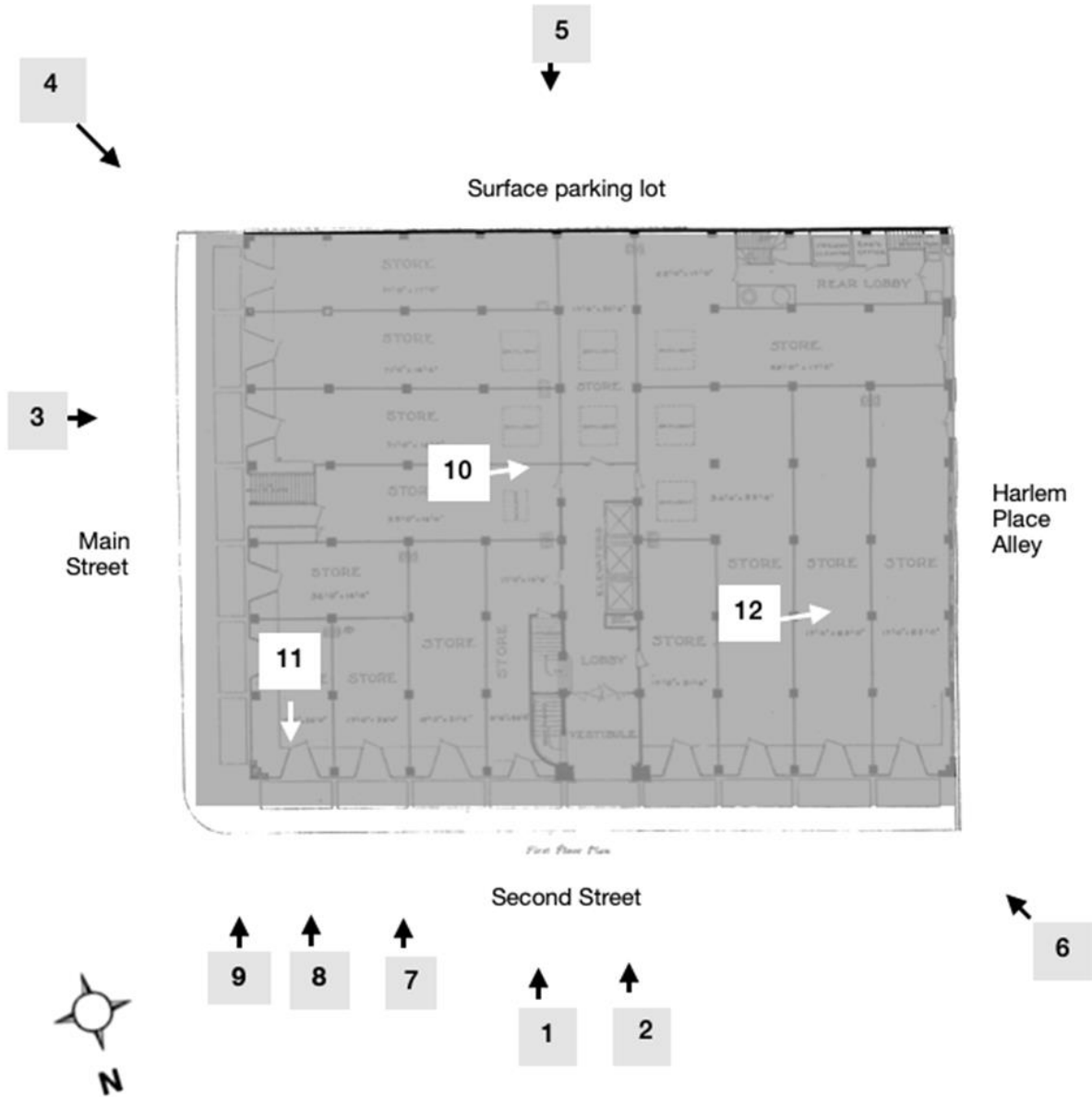


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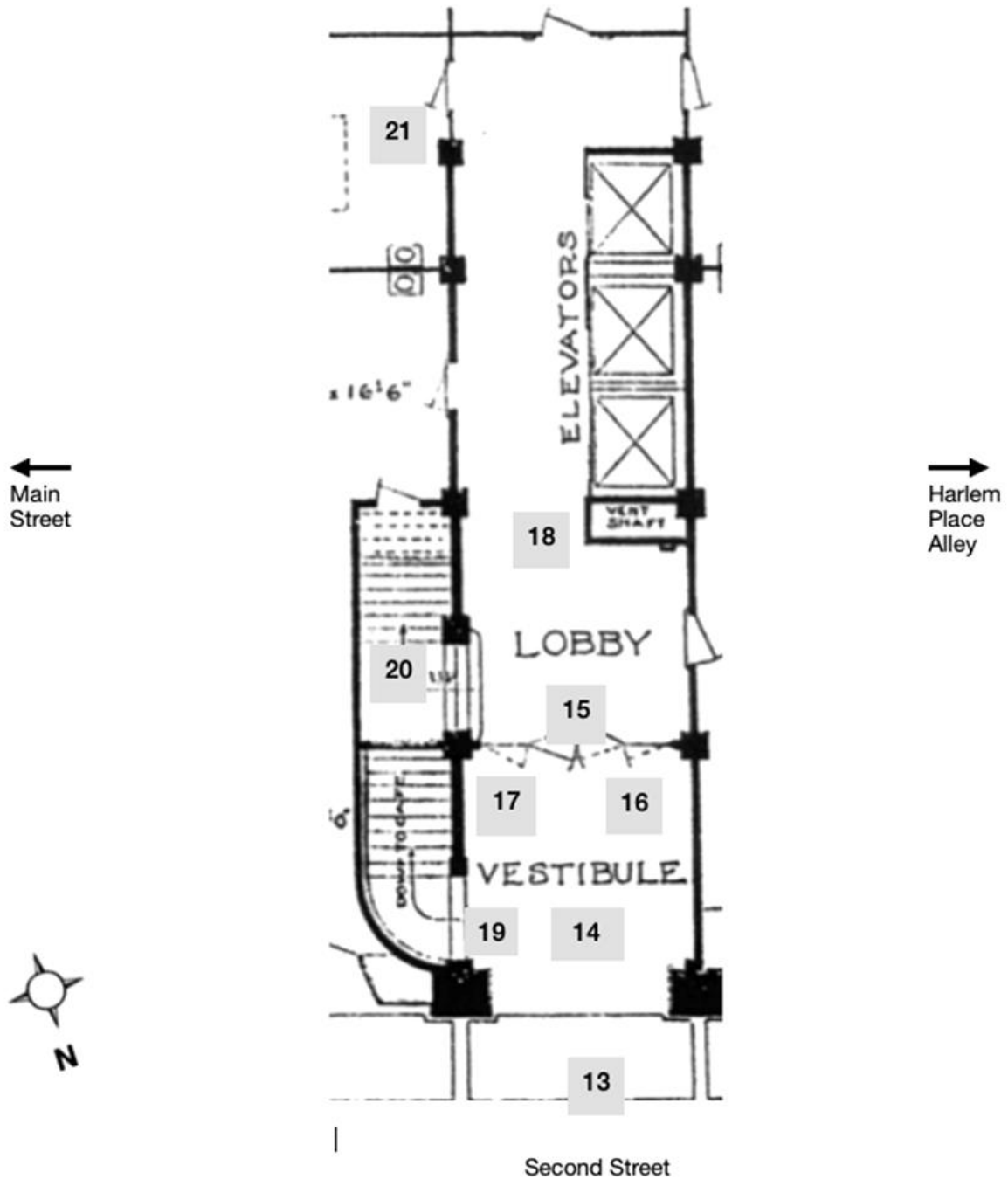
Sketch Map/Photo Key 1 of 3: Exterior and rooftop, photos 1-12



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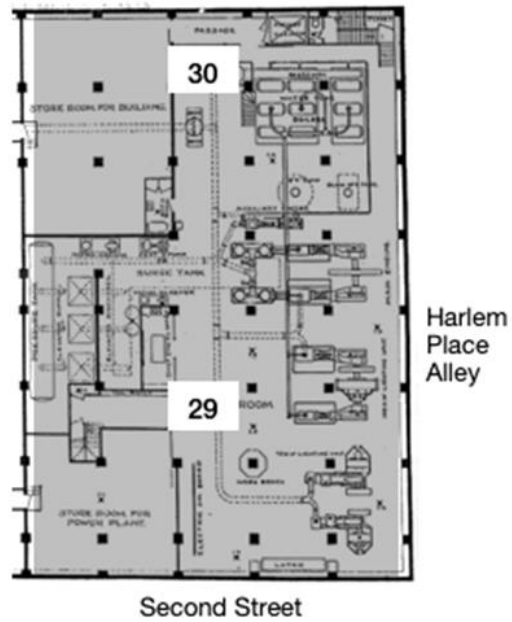
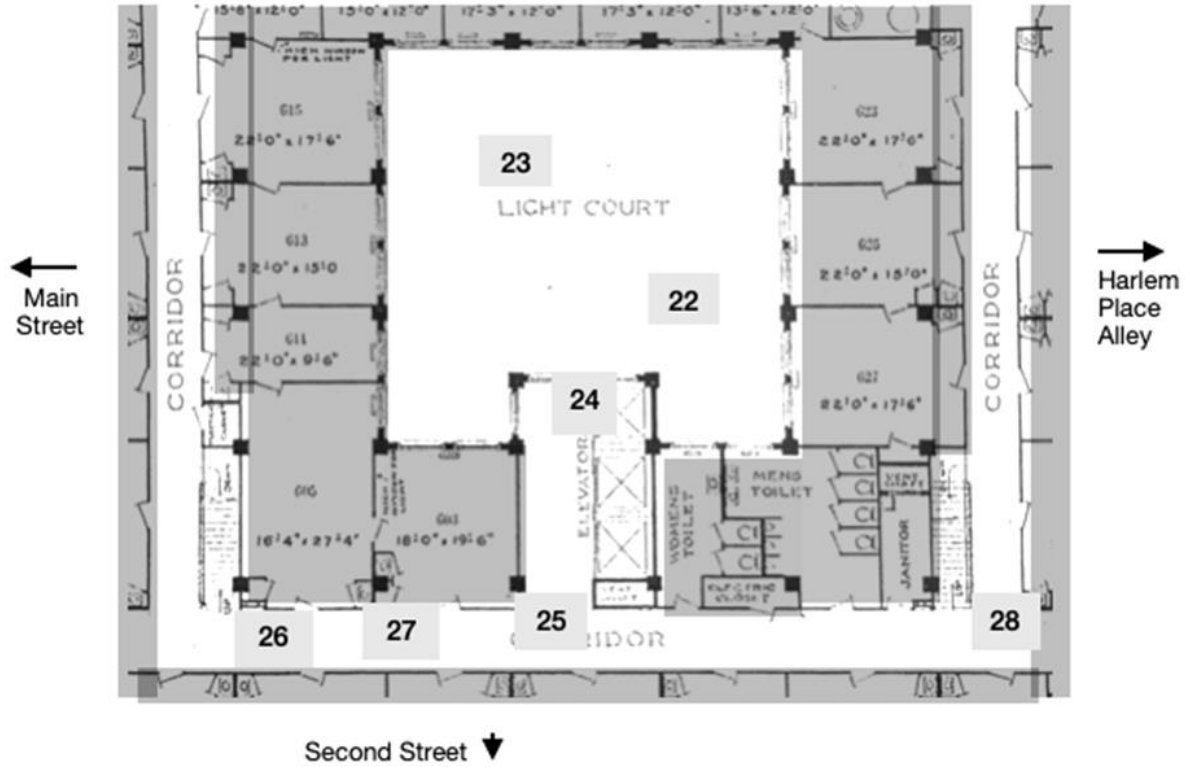
Sketch Map/Photo Key 2 of 3: Lobby and staircase, photos 13-21



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Sketch Map/Photo Key 3 of 3: Typical floors and subbasement, photos 22-30

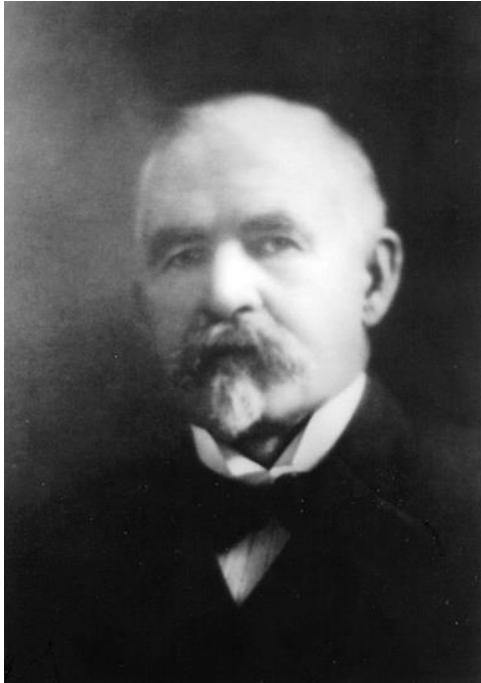




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**Figure 1** Thomas P. Higgins (1844-1920), 1916; courtesy Moira G. Bailis (grandniece).



**Figure 2** Higgins Building at eight stories as originally planned. Promotional postcard published circa 1908 by Newman Postcard Co.; courtesy Thomas P. Higgins (great grandnephew).



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**Figure 3** Architect's rendering by A.L. Haley with height increasing from eight to ten stories; published in *Los Angeles Times*, Jan. 10, 1910.



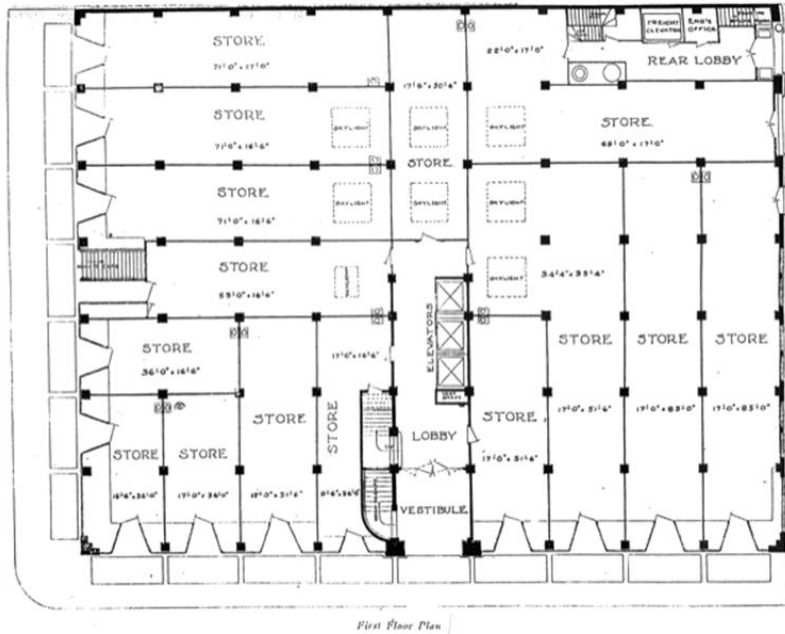
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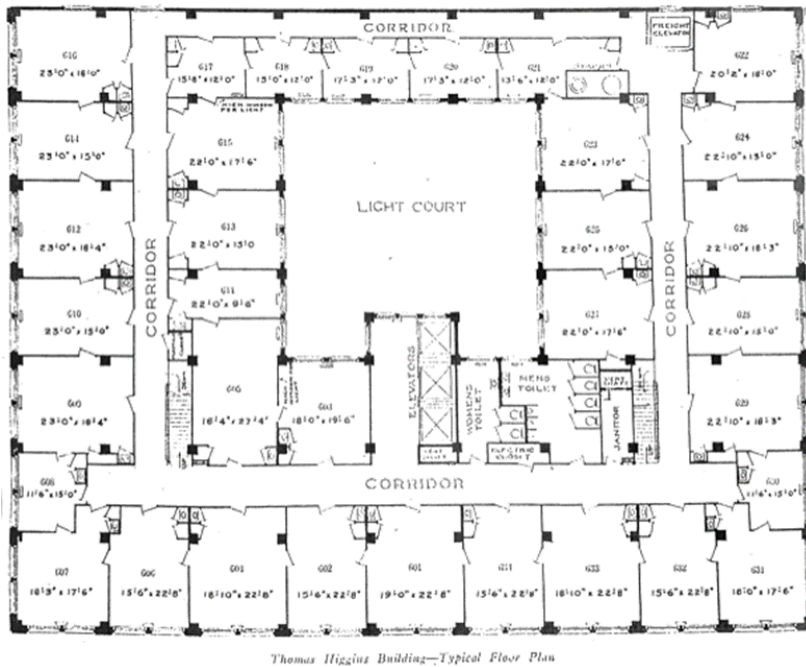
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**Figure 5** First floor plan as drawn by architect A.L. Haley for lobby and commercial spaces; published in *Architect and Engineer of California*, April 1910.



**Figure 6** Typical floor plan as drawn by architect A.L. Haley for offices on floors two through ten; published in *Architect and Engineer of California*, April 1910.



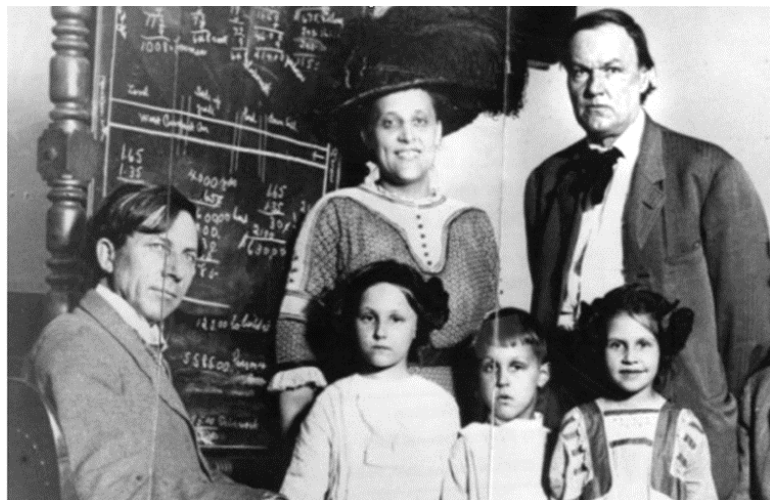




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**Figure 9** Defense attorneys Clarence Darrow, right, and Job Harriman, left, in 1911, shown with wife and children of Ortie McManigal, among the men accused in the bombing of the Los Angeles Times building, photographer unknown; Los Angeles Public Library Photo Collection.



**Figure 10** Advertisement for Llano del Rio Colony published in *The Western Comrade*, edited by Job Harriman, July 1914 issue; courtesy Marxists Internet Archive.

## Colonists—Wanted

*LLANO DEL RIO, in the Antelope Valley, Los Angeles County, California, needs 900 single men and women and married men and their families.*

This is an opportunity of a lifetime to solve the problem of unemployment and provide for the future of yourself and children.

We have land and water, machinery and experts for every department of production.

No experience as an agriculturist needed. Men and women of nearly all useful occupations in demand. Every member a shareholder in the enterprise.

For full particulars address

**Mescal Water and Land Co.**  
JOB HARRIMAN, *President*  
924 Higgins Building, 2nd and Main Streets  
Los Angeles, Cal.

(See article on pages 16 and 17 of this magazine)

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**Figure 11** Higgins Building from corner of Second and Main Streets, Art Streib, photographer, published Jan. 29, 1941, *Herald Examiner*; USC Digital Archives/Herald Examiner.



**Figure 12** Back of building in 1939, from Main Street, looking north between Second and Third Streets. Signage included Mobilgas, Mobiloil, and "Higgins Building Absolutely Fire Proof." Dick Whittington, photographer; USC Digital Library collection.





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**Figure 13** Back of building in 1959, seen from Main Street, adjacent building replaced by surface parking, photographer unknown; USC Digital Archives/LA Examiner.



**Figure 14** Reclaimed and developed as residential lofts and commercial spaces, view from CalTrans building across Second and Main Streets; 2006 © Brad Buckman.



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**Photo 1** Primary façade facing Second Street. Lobby entrance at center. View from across Second Street, camera facing south.



**Photo 2** Primary façade at night, illuminated. View from across Second Street, camera facing south.





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**Photo 3** Secondary façade on Main Street. Visible at far left is Los Angeles Police Department headquarters. View from across Main Street, camera facing west.



**Photo 4** Southeast corner at night, showing illuminated Main Street façade and non-ornamented back side of building. View from across Main Street, camera facing northwest.



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**Photo 5** Back of building facing surface parking lot. Visible at far left is the Los Angeles Times Building, at far right, CalTrans building. View from parking lot, camera facing north.



**Photo 6** Northwest corner, showing Harlem Place Alley façade. View from the sidewalk on Second Street, camera is facing southeast.



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**Photo 7** Large windows in pairs, floors two through nine. View from Second Street, camera facing up and south.



**Photo 8** Tenth floor detail of cornice and trim band. View from Second Street, camera facing up and south.





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**Photo 9** Eighth floor detail of trim band. View from Second Street, camera facing up and south.



**Photo 10** Light court looking down. View from rooftop, camera facing west and down.



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**Photo 11** Northeast corner of rooftop, flagpole at right. Visible at center is City Hall; to the right, CalTrans building. View from rooftop, camera facing northeast.



**Photo 12** Rooftop skylight and air shaft, downtown Los Angeles skyline in distance. View from rooftop, camera facing west.





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**Photo 13** Front doors with lobby and staircase in rear. View from Second Street, facing south.



**Photo 14** Lobby, looking back toward Second Street and clerestory window. View toward entry doors, camera facing north.



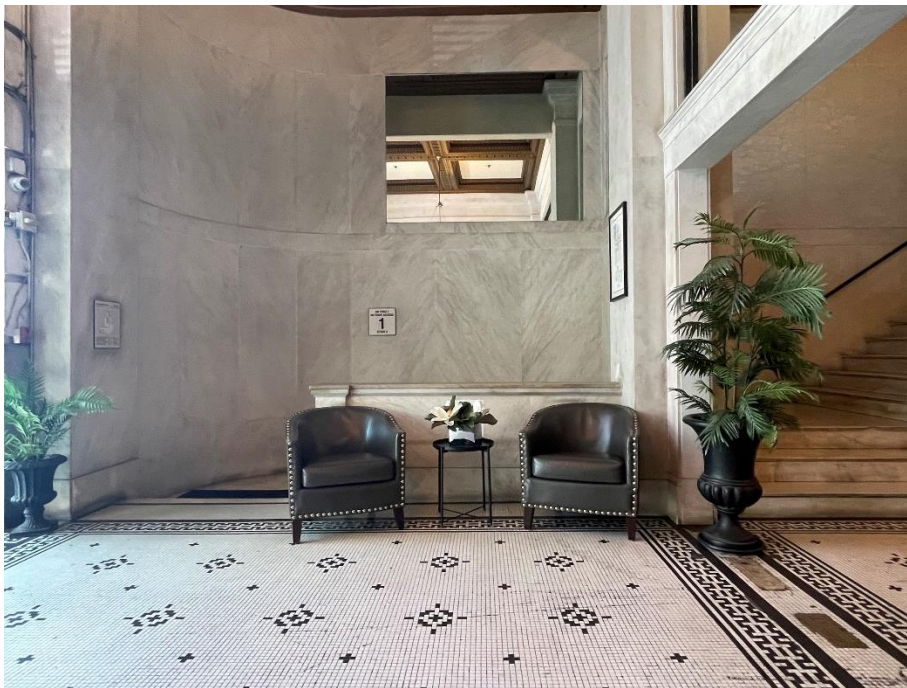
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**Photo 15** Lobby, looking toward interior; reception desk and mail chute at right. View from vestibule, camera facing south.



**Photo 16** Lobby. View from vestibule, looking east toward basement staircase, camera facing east.





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**Photo 17** Lobby. View from vestibule, looking west toward mirrored wall, camera facing west.



**Photo 18** Lobby. View from center of lobby, elevators at right, ceiling detail above, camera facing up and south.



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**Photo 19** Lobby, detail of column and ceiling. View looking up, camera facing east.



**Photo 20** Lobby, staircase to second floor. View looking up, camera facing south.





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**Photo 21** Top of staircase, second floor landing. View looking toward light court, camera facing south.



**Photo 22** Light court. View from floor of light court, camera facing up and northeast.



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**Photo 23** Light court. View from floor of light court, camera facing up and west.



**Photo 24** Wrought iron elevator doors on typical floors. View toward doors, camera facing west.





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**Photo 25** Elevator lobby on typical floor. View toward lobby from hallway, facing south.



**Photo 26** Staircase on typical floor, found on east and west ends of each floor. View toward stairs, camera facing south.



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**Photo 27** Hallway on typical floor, showing tile floors and marble wainscoting, wood trim clad in zinc. View toward west.



**Photo 28** Entry to individual unit, showing zinc-clad door and mirrored former transom windows. View toward door, camera facing south.



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**Photo 29** Electrical power plant remnants in basement, incorporated into design of nightclub.  
View of electrical generator parts, camera facing west.



**Photo 30** Electrical power plant remnants in basement, incorporated into design of nightclub.  
View of boilers used to generate steam, camera facing north.

