

State of California  The Resources Agency  
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION  
**PRIMARY RECORD**

Primary #  
HRI #  
Trinominal  
NRHP Status Code 3CS

Reviewer

Date

Other Listings  
Range Code  
**DRAFT**

Page 1 of 20 \*Resource Name or #: (Assigned by recorder) Glendale Civic Auditorium

P1. Other Identifier: N/A

\*P2. Location:  Not for Publication  Unrestricted

\*a. County Los Angeles and (P2c, P2e, and P2b or P2d. Attach a Location Map as necessary.)

\*b. USGS 7.5' Quad Pasadena Date 1966 (revised 1988) T    ; R    ;     of     of Sec    ;     B.M.

c. Address 1401 N. Verdugo Road City Glendale Zip 91208

d. UTM: (Give more than one for large and/or linear resources) Zone    ,     mE/     mN

e. Other Locational Data: (e.g., parcel #, directions to resource, elevation, decimal degrees, etc., as appropriate)

APN 5650-003-900

\*P3a. Description: (Describe resource and its major elements. Include design, materials, condition, alterations, size, setting, and boundaries)

The Glendale Civic Auditorium is located on the west side of North Verdugo Road, between East Mountain Street and Cañada Boulevard, in the City of Glendale, California. It was originally constructed as part of the Verdugo Municipal Recreation Center, which included the auditorium and a pool. The Verdugo Municipal Recreation Center is a prominent local example of the Spanish Colonial Revival style with Moorish influence. Its Moorish Revival characteristics are the block-like volume with thick, masonry walls and side corredores (arcades), lacey, low relief embellishment at rooflines, deeply inset windows and doors, regular bays, arched openings and tile roof. It is one- and two-stories in height, and constructed of expressed, board-formed cast-in-place concrete construction with a clay Mission tile roof.

The Verdugo Municipal Recreation Center occupies a large, sloping, roughly L-shaped parcel bisected by the Verdugo Wash easement of the Los Angeles County Flood Control District. The parcel is bounded by a city-owned surface parking lot to the south, a residential neighborhood to the west, Verdugo Park to the northwest and north and Glendale Community College to the east. (See continuation sheet)

\*P3b. Resource Attributes: (List attributes and codes) HP12. Civic Auditorium

\*P4. Resources Present:  Building  Structure  Object  Site  District  Element of District  Other (Isolates, etc.)

P5a. Photograph or Drawing (Photograph required for buildings, structures, and objects.)



P5b. Description of Photo: (view, date, accession #) Exterior, east façade, view northwest, September 2016

\*P6. Date Constructed/Age and Source:  Historic  Prehistoric  Both  
1938, "Glendale Hails New Auditorium," Los Angeles Times, September 17, 1938

\*P7. Owner and Address:

City of Glendale  
613 E. Broadway  
Glendale, CA 91206

\*P8. Recorded by:  
(Name, affiliation, and address)  
Greg Grammer, President  
The Glendale Historical Society  
P.O. Box 4173  
Glendale, CA 91202

\*P9. Date Recorded: December 2016

\*P10. Survey Type: (Describe)  
Intensive

\*P11. Report Citation:

Glendale Civic Auditorium, California Register Nomination, The Glendale Historical Society (TGHS), April 2017

\*Attachments:  NONE  Location Map  Continuation Sheet  Building, Structure, and Object Record  
 Archaeological Record  District Record  Linear Feature Record  Milling Station Record  Rock Art Record  
 Artifact Record  Photograph Record  Other (List): \_\_\_\_\_

State of California  The Resources Agency Primary #  
 DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION HRI#  
**BUILDING, STRUCTURE, AND OBJECT RECORD**

\*Resource Name or # (Assigned by recorder) Glendale Civic Auditorium \*NRHP Status Code 3CS  
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- B1. Historic Name: Verdugo Municipal Recreation Center  
 B2. Common Name: Glendale Civic Auditorium  
 B3. Original Use: Civic auditorium B4. Present Use: Civic auditorium  
 \*B5. Architectural Style: Spanish Colonial Revival with Moorish influence  
 \*B6. Construction History: (Construction date, alterations, and date of alterations)

Completed in 1938. Unspecified alterations were made in 1949 and 1950, which likely included the three-part arcade on the west side (various lath and plaster and wiring building inspection records, 1949 and 1950). A neon sign was also added in 1950 (Building Permit or BP#37418, 4/12/50). "Loggia entrance," addition on the side and other alterations completed in 1964 (BP#64241, 8/14/63). Lot on south side purchased by city in late 1960s ("Room For Additional Parking" *Glendale News Press*, ND). Pool and outbuildings demolished 1988. Three-story parking garage on north side built 1996 ("Ribbon Cutting For New Garage Today" *Glendale News Press*, January 20, 1996). Monument sign completed 2007 (BP #BS 20070062, 4/17/07). Loggia entrance removed (March 2017). Additions shown in green on Sketch Map below.

\*B7. Moved?  No  Yes  Unknown Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Original Location: \_\_\_\_\_

\*B8. Related Features: N/A

B9a. Architect: J.A. Grundfor b. Builder: WPA

\*B10. Significance: Theme Institutional Development; Works Progress Administration Area Community Planning and Development  
 Period of Significance 1938-1965 Property Type Civic auditorium Applicable Criteria 1  
 (Discuss importance in terms of historical or architectural context as defined by theme, period, and geographic scope. Also address integrity.)

The Verdugo Municipal Recreation Center was designed by J.A. Grundfor and constructed in 1938 with funding from the Works Progress Administration (WPA). It is eligible for listing in the California Register under Criterion 1 at the local level of significance in the area of Community Planning and Development. It is an important and prominent community resource significant for its association with the growth of Glendale in the late 1930s as the country recovered from the Great Depression; and as an excellent local example of civic development funded by the WPA. The venue was instantly popular with residents and has long been an intrinsic part of Glendale life, hosting many important civic and social events. It is a noteworthy symbol of Glendale's growth during the Great Depression, located on land donated by developers of the Rossmoyne Village residential development for construction of community amenities. The period of significance is 1938, the year the Verdugo Municipal Recreation Center was completed, to 1965, when it re-opened after a major City-funded renovation and became known as Glendale Civic Auditorium. The building has undergone alterations over time, including the addition of an arcade facing the street, but retains substantial integrity of its original appearance. The building's major alterations were completed during the period of significance under Criterion 1, reflecting the City's continued investment in the Civic Auditorium as an important part of civic life.

(See Continuation Sheet)

B11. Additional Resource Attributes: (List attributes and codes) N/A

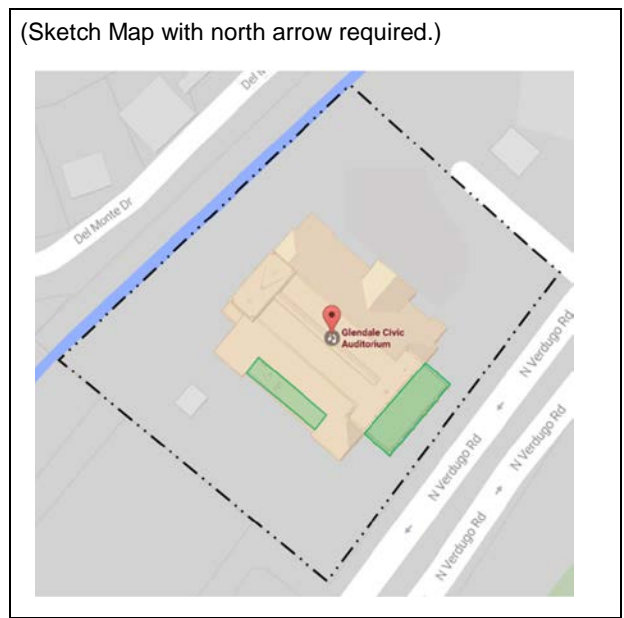
B12. References: See continuation sheet

B13. Remarks:

\*B14. Evaluator: Francesca Smith

\*Date of Evaluation: May 27, 2017

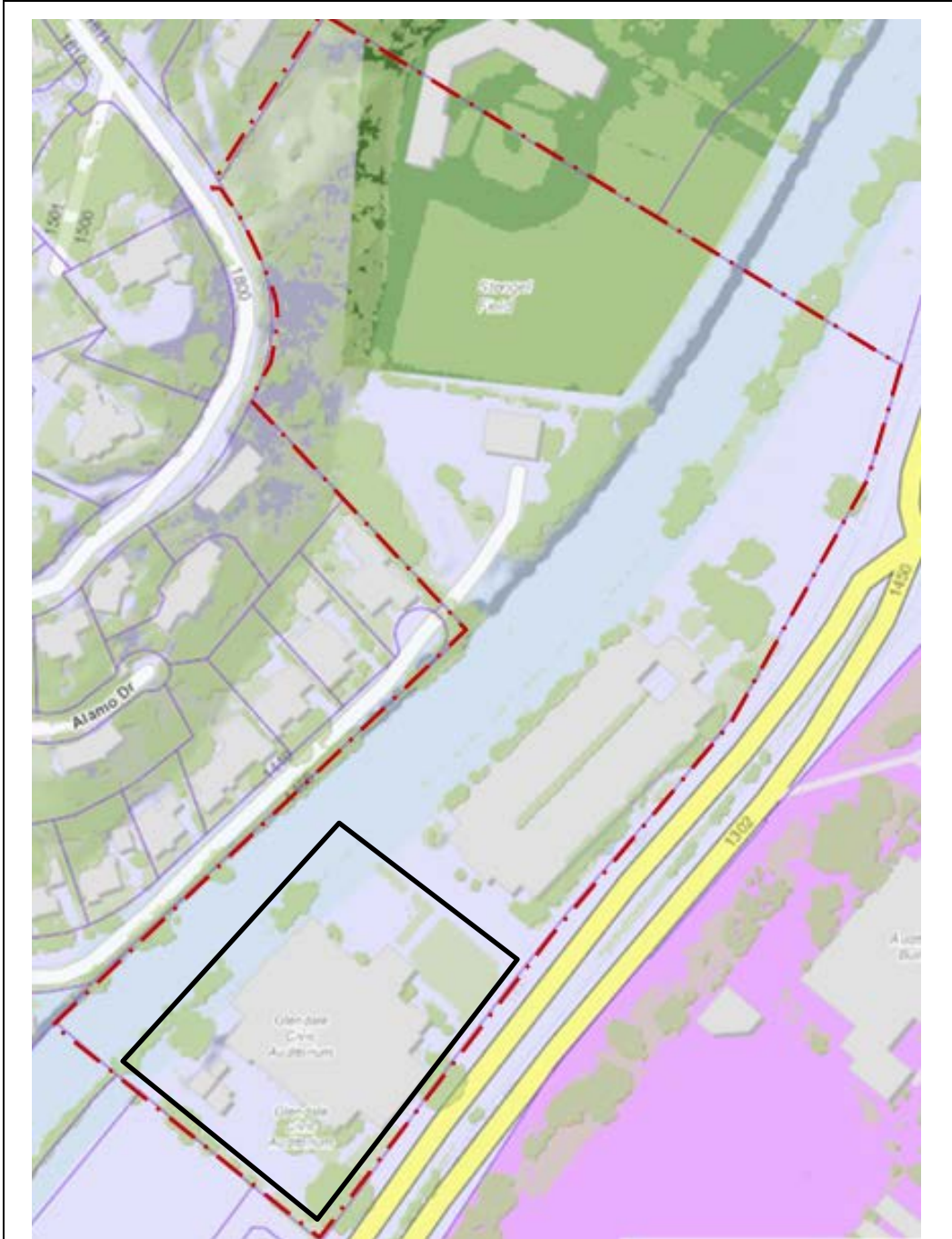
(This space reserved for official comments.)



## CONTINUATION SHEET

Property Name: Glendale Civic Auditorium  
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### P3a. Description: (continued)



**Figure 1:** Graphic aerial view of subject property parcel (red dashed line). The Verdugo Municipal Recreation Center is the building at the lower portion of the image. Its historic property boundaries are shown in black. Source: excerpted from a base map by Los Angeles County Bureau of Land Management, 2016.

The Civic Auditorium is located at the south end of the long, narrow portion of the parcel on the east bank of Verdugo Wash. The wash runs roughly north-south diagonally across the image in Figure 1, bisecting the parcel.

The Glendale Civic Auditorium building is set back from Verdugo Road by a narrow lawn and landscaped beds. It is flanked to the south by a service yard paved in asphaltic concrete, to the west by an access drive, and to the north by a lawn, walkway and small surface parking lot.

To the north of the Civic Auditorium is a three-deck, parking structure (constructed in 1996). The northeast corner of the parcel is occupied by a surface parking lot. The northwest leg of the parcel, on the west side of the wash, forms part of Verdugo Park and is occupied by a portion of Stengel Field, a recreational baseball diamond.

The parcel gently slopes downhill from north to south. The Verdugo Wash is set in a deep, concrete channelized cut.

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Property Name: Glendale Civic Auditorium

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### P3a. Description: (continued)

The Verdugo Municipal Recreation Center is a one- and two-story building over a raised basement. It was designed in Spanish Colonial Revival style with Moorish influences, and is a prominent and highly visible local example of the design hybrid. The building has a roughly rectangular plan and exterior walls are board-formed, cast-in-place concrete. It has a series of flat roofs with parapets over the auditorium and stage house, flanked by hipped shed roofs over the north and south façades clad in clay Mission tile with open eaves. The exterior walls are expressed board-formed concrete, with a decorative Moorish-style geometric pattern cast into the cornices. Fenestration consists of steel sash casement windows.

The primary (north) façade has a balanced asymmetrical composition, with three bays connected by *corredores*. The primary entrance is located in the central pavilion and consists of a pair of glazed metal doors with sidelights and transom lights. The doors are deeply recessed in a monumental round arch with a toothed decorative surround, flanked by tripartite windows and pierced concrete grilles. Shed roofs flank the primary entrance with shed roofs and grouped windows in deep embrasures. The connecting enclosed *corredores* have wood posts with decorative corbels and carved wood beams supporting overhanging eaves with shaped rafter tails. Between the posts are plastered partitions with fixed, metal framed clerestory windows above.

The east façade, on North Verdugo Road, is symmetrical. It has a projecting, five-bay arcaded portico with buttresses; each of the four central buttresses has a decorative wall-mounted metal light fixture. The portico is finished in plaster. The portico ceiling is of wood beams and planks, with decorative metal pendant light fixtures. The west wall of the portico has three pairs of paneled doors in arched embrasures with flat plaster panels above, between stepped concrete buttresses. Concrete stairs with built-in benches at the north and south ends of the portico lead to exterior basement doors. The portico is flanked by tripartite windows in deep embrasures.

The south façade is symmetrical. The central bays are finished in plaster and consist of tall, round-arched, metal-framed glazed openings with pairs of glazed metal doors at basement level, between battered buttresses. This central portion has a flat roof. The flanking end pavilions are of concrete and consist of recessed, arched porches flanked by tripartite windows. The porches are accessed by L-shaped concrete staircases with concrete parapets and metal handrails, leading up to the main floor. The wall of each stair has a recessed circular window with a metal grille.

The west façade, facing the service drive along the wash, is utilitarian in character. The central portion of the west façade consists of the back of the stage house, articulated with stepped buttresses. The north portion of the west façade is two stories in height. It has a pair of recessed, partially glazed, paneled doors with a transom light; divided light, steel sash casement windows; a decorative pierced concrete window grille; and a metal fire escape. The south portion of the west façade is partially obstructed by mechanical equipment. It has a single steel sash casement window, a recessed flush metal door, and a pair of flush metal service doors.

### Character-defining Features

Exterior character-defining features of the Verdugo Municipal Recreation Center include its roughly rectangular, block-like plan; the one- and two-story height over the raised basement; its expressed board-formed, cast-in-place concrete exterior walls; the decorative Moorish-style cast geometric pattern at upper portions of walls; the central flat roofs with parapets (auditorium and stage house); the flanking shed and gable roofs clad in terra cotta Mission tile; the open eaves with shaped rafter tails; punched, steel sash casement and fixed windows; the front-gabled entrance bay with flanking *corredores* and end pavilions; the recessed, round-arched monumental entrance with decorative surround, flanked by tripartite pierced concrete grilles; the symmetrical east façade with stepped concrete buttresses and twin, arched porches with L-shaped staircases at the south façade.

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Property Name: Glendale Civic Auditorium  
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### **P3a. Description:** (continued)

#### Integrity

Although alterations to the property have occurred over time, most of those modifications were completed during the period of significance, and the Verdugo Municipal Recreation Center retains moderate integrity. The Verdugo Municipal Recreation Center has not been relocated, it remains on its original site and this retains its integrity of location. The building retains significant character-defining features of its original Spanish Colonial Revival and Moorish-influenced design, including the rectangular plan; the one- and two-story height with raised basement; its blocky massing; the expressed board-formed cast-in-place exterior walls; decorative, cast geometric pattern at upper portions of walls; central flat roofs with parapets; flanking shed and gable roofs clad in terra cotta tile; the open eaves with shaped rafter tails; steel sash casement and fixed windows; its front-gabled entrance pavilion with flanking *corredores* and end pavilions, the recessed, round-arched monumental entrance and decorative surround and pierced concrete grilles; the symmetrical east façade with stepped concrete buttresses and twin arched porches with L-shaped staircases at the south façade. The collective result of the retention of these features is retention of its integrity of original design. Although the immediate setting was altered when the adjacent Rossmoyne Village Shopping Center (on a separate parcel) and the swimming pool were removed (late 1960s and 1998, respectively), the property setting is identifiable to its original locale. Its background on a major thoroughfare, between the Verdugo Wash, the Rossmoyne neighborhood and Glendale Community College is intact and the plunge complex was replaced with a compatible, contemporary low-rise parking garage. The building retains a majority of its character-defining exterior materials, including the board-formed concrete walls, clay roof tile, exposed wood rafter tails, and steel sashed windows. Although limited alterations have been made, the Verdugo Municipal Recreation Center reflects physical evidence of its original WPA construction including board-formed concrete walls, cast decorative geometric panels, pierced concrete grilles, stepped and curved buttresses and shaped wood rafter tails. Because the building retains integrity of its location, the original design, the setting, as well as its materials and workmanship, it conveys the feeling of a WPA civic building. The property retains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship and feeling, which altogether convey its historic significance and important association with Depression-era development in Glendale in the late 1930s as well as its construction by the Works Progress Administration.

### **B10. Significance:** (continued)

The Verdugo Municipal Recreation Center is a both a physically prominent and a civically significant building from the 1930s. It represents an important local example of WPA-funded civic development during an essential period of growth in the community. The building was a component of a city-wide program of WPA-funded civic improvements that included a new City Hall, a nearby city garage, the main buildings and campus of Glendale Community College; new buildings at Marshall and Doran Street Elementary Schools, and improvements to both Hoover and Glendale High Schools and to the Glendale Public Library.<sup>1</sup> It is located on land that was donated to the City for the purpose of constructing civic amenities. The Auditorium is prominently located on a major thoroughfare, and became an instant community landmark when it was completed in 1938. It has remained a focus of civic life for eight decades, hosting numerous civic, social, and cultural events. City-funded improvements undertaken in the 1960s represent the facility's continued importance to the community, and the City's continued use and support of the civic Auditorium as a significant community asset.

#### *Historic Context*

##### Rancho San Rafael (1784-1871)

The site currently occupied by the Glendale Civic Auditorium was formerly part of the 36,403-acre Rancho San Rafael, granted by the Spanish crown to José Maria Verdugo in 1784. The Rancho was bounded by the Arroyo Seco and the Los Angeles River and extended from their confluence at the Pueblo of Los Angeles in the south to the San Gabriel Mountains in the north. In 1851, following California's admittance into the Union as the 31<sup>st</sup> state, Verdugo's heirs filed a petition to confirm their ownership of the Rancho San Rafael with the Board of Land Commissioners, which had been created to legitimize ownership of the Spanish and Mexican land grants and delineate boundaries. Confirmation was finally received in 1855. Several divisions of Rancho San Rafael took place in the 1850s and 1860s as more Americans settled in Southern California. Due to the often informal nature of the Verdugos' real estate transactions, their creditors were unable to determine clear title to the property. The creditors filed suit, resulting in the court ruling known

<sup>1</sup> "States and Cities: Glendale," *The Living New Deal*, <https://livingnewdeal.org/us/ca/glendale-ca/> (accessed January 18, 2017).

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Property Name: Glendale Civic Auditorium

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### **B10. Significance:** (continued)

as the “Great Partition of 1871,”<sup>2</sup> which determined the legal ownership of both Rancho San Rafael and Rancho La Cañada to the northeast, partitioning the Ranchos into thirty-one parts and conferring title to twenty-eight persons.

In 1870, just before the “Great Partition,” former State senator and future Los Angeles mayor Captain Cameron Erskine Thom purchased 2,700 acres from Catalina Verdugo in what is today the northeast section of Glendale. Soon after, Thom sold 1,100 acres of this land to his nephew, Judge Erskine Mayo Ross. Ross built a house on his land and named it “Rossmoyne,” which was soon applied to the entire Ross ranch. Judge Ross planted groves of citrus, olive, and deciduous fruit trees on the property, and his operations included a packing house fronting Verdugo Avenue.<sup>3</sup>

### The City of Glendale (1876-1930)

The completion of the transcontinental railroad, its connection to Los Angeles by the Southern Pacific in 1876, and the subsequent link to the Santa Fe system in 1881, opened up large areas of previously inaccessible land in Southern California and stimulated a real estate frenzy that would last throughout the 1880s. In 1887 C. E. Thom and his nephew E. M. Ross, together with Harry J. Crow, E.T. Byram, and B.F. Patterson, surveyed and platted a new township which they decided to call “Glendale.” An effort to incorporate as a city began in 1904 led by the Glendale Improvement Association, and the township of Glendale was incorporated as a City in 1906.

The primary catalyst for the growth of the city was the establishment of an interurban railroad line connecting Glendale to Los Angeles in 1904. Leslie Brand, Glendale’s main proponent of the railway, brought the streetcar lines to Glendale using land he owned to the west of Glendale Avenue, what was then the community’s main street. Originating in Los Angeles, the tracks were built up the center of Brand Boulevard and then turned west continuing into the San Fernando Valley to the City of San Fernando. The streetcar line caused Glendale’s business center to shift from Glendale Avenue west to Brand Boulevard, and engendered tremendous population growth and significant commercial and residential development in the adjacent areas. By 1910, the City’s population had risen to 2,700, and “The Fastest Growing City in America” became Glendale’s official slogan. By the 1920s, Southern California in general, and the greater Los Angeles area in particular, had become a destination for many people seeking economic opportunity and a new life in a temperate climate.

Between 1920 and 1930, almost one-and-a-half million people had relocated to the greater Los Angeles area. The economy sustaining this population boom was based on oil, maritime trade and shipping, industrial manufacturing, agriculture, tourism, and the film industry. This huge influx of people and capital resulted in an unparalleled building boom. Demand was created for housing, and vast land areas were subdivided for residential development which continued into the 1930s.<sup>4</sup>

The City of Glendale was directly affected by the regional population boom. Promoted as convenient to Los Angeles while boasting its own commercial, civic, and cultural institutions, Glendale’s population increased from 13,756 in 1920 to 62,736 in 1930. This dramatic population increase and rapid growth spurred the development of many new residential neighborhoods on the outskirts of town. Real estate entrepreneurs capitalized on the desire for home ownership and the citrus orchards, vineyards, and country estates that had once characterized the foothill and valley lands of northwest Glendale were subdivided for residential development.

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<sup>2</sup> Chapman et.al. v. Fernando Sepulveda.

<sup>3</sup> Katherine Yamada, et. al. *Glendale A Pictorial History*, Centennial edition (Virginia Beach, VA: The Donning Company Publishers, 2006).

<sup>4</sup> *Hollywood Today*, 1928.

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Property Name: Glendale Civic Auditorium

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### **B10. Significance:** (continued)

#### Rossmoyne Subdivision (1923-1936)

In 1923, the Haddock-Nibley Company of Los Angeles purchased the Rossmoyne Ranch from Judge Erskine Mayo Ross for subdivision and residential development.<sup>5</sup> Retaining the “Rossmoyne” name for the development, Haddock-Nibley announced one million dollars in capital improvements including sewers, utility lines, grading, street pavement, and lighting.<sup>6</sup>

The majority of Rossmoyne land was subdivided and laid out in 1923 and 1924. A sales office on Verdugo Road, built in an exotic, Egyptian-themed architectural style, attracted considerable publicity. In the tradition of Hollywoodland, large-scale letters spelling out “Rossmoyne” were placed on the hillside. The new subdivision placed “suitable restrictions... on the residential plots with the view of protecting and preserving the requirements of the representative home lovers.”<sup>7</sup> These included architectural covenants mandating Period Revival styles and protection of the foothills to preserve the natural setting. Indeed, the scenic and romantic aspects of Rossmoyne – the beauty of the location, the wooded canyons, and the surrounding mountains and views– were heavily promoted. In 1925, a two-and-one-half acre site on the north side of Mountain Street near Viscano Drive was deeded to the City of Glendale by the Nibley Investment Company as a public park.<sup>8</sup> In 1926 a second phase of Rossmoyne land, located in the hillside area of Rossmoyne’s northeastern corner, was subdivided and laid out as a series of narrow winding streets branching off a wide central spine named Royal Boulevard.<sup>9</sup> A 1926 article in the *Glendale Evening News* announcing the opening of the “Royal Boulevard unit” quoted Alex Nibley in saying that “practically every available inch of ground already developed” had been sold and the “Royal Boulevard unit is opening just in time” to meet demand for new homes in Rossmoyne. The same article goes on to announce the “beautiful Spanish village which is to be part of Rossmoyne. Every home within the Spanish village is to be of pure Spanish type... the entire arrangement will be reminiscent of Old Spain.”<sup>10</sup> The 1929 stock Market crash and subsequent economic Depression largely halted residential construction in Rossmoyne, and no new homes were built between 1931 and 1934. By 1935 the development changed hands to a new real estate company, Rossmoyne Properties, Inc.<sup>11</sup>

#### Rossmoyne Village and the Glendale Civic Auditorium (1936–1998)

In 1936 the opening of “Rossmoyne Village” was announced by Harry Welton, vice-president of Rossmoyne Properties, Inc.<sup>12</sup> Rossmoyne Village was described as a new residential community immediately adjacent to the residential community “formerly known as Rossmoyne.” The “village” moniker referred to development activity within the northeastern corner of Rossmoyne, as it is this area that contained the majority of undeveloped land at the time. This is confirmed by 1936 tract maps which reveal new subdivisions along an extension of Royal Boulevard and adjacent side streets. The small number of infill lots remaining in the original Rossmoyne tracts was included in the marketing as well. Advertisements for the new community promoted plans for a neighborhood swimming pool, playgrounds, a second park, a community center, shopping center, and a college, in addition to new homes.<sup>13</sup> The development of new home sites coupled with integrated recreational, educational and commercial amenities, reinforced the idea of Rossmoyne Village as a self-contained community. Rossmoyne Investments had donated to the city approximately six and a half acres on Verdugo Road, between Mountain Street and the Cañada Boulevard Bridge, as the site of the community center,

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<sup>5</sup> While Judge Ross’s original estate totaled 1,100 acres of land, contemporary newspaper reports describe the purchase of an 800 acre estate by the Haddock-Nibley Company. This might reflect lax reporting, or Ross may have, in fact, sold portions of his estate earlier. Verification for the discrepancy in acreage has not been discovered. One partial explanation may be found in the estate of W.F. Markham at 1405 Mountain Street, which was built in 1926. This estate, named “Homeland,” was originally much larger than any of the Rossmoyne lots surrounding it, and is understood to be a separate entity from Rossmoyne. Hillside land directly adjacent to the Markham home was not subdivided until the early 1970s.

<sup>6</sup> “Open Ross Estate at Glendale,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 1, 1923.

<sup>7</sup> Attributed to a January 16, 1926 edition of the *Glendale Evening News* at the Historic Rossmoyne website, accessed January 6, 2007.

[www.historicrossmoyne.org/history](http://www.historicrossmoyne.org/history)

<sup>8</sup> “Accept Site for Park at Glendale”, *Los Angeles Times*, June 16, 1925.

<sup>9</sup> Tract Map No. 7013

<sup>10</sup> “Rossmoyne Will Offer New Unit,” *Glendale Evening News*, August 7, 1926.

<sup>11</sup> “Extensive Area Designated for Junior College,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 1, 1935, 12.

<sup>12</sup> “Home Tract Announced,” *Los Angeles Times* June 28, 1936

<sup>13</sup> Display advertisement, *Los Angeles Times*, August 9, 1936

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Property Name: Glendale Civic Auditorium  
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### B10. Significance: (continued)

shopping center, and pool.<sup>14</sup> In 1935 the City purchased an additional 25 acres from Rossmoyne Properties on which to develop the college.<sup>15</sup>

The City applied for federal assistance from the WPA to construct the community center, which would include a “municipal plunge” and “recreation hall.” The plunge (now demolished) was designed by architect George Postle, at the direction of the city’s Parks and Recreation Commission, to accommodate swimming and diving meets under Amateur Athletic union rules. The adjacent recreation hall, which soon became known as the civic auditorium, was designed by local architect J. A. Grundfor in the Spanish Colonial Revival style with Moorish details, with an estimated cost between \$35,000 and \$50,000. It would be used for dances and public gatherings, with a seating capacity of 2,500 and a stage that would allow for the presentation of “amateur theatrical productions and pageants.”<sup>16</sup> The design included a long, narrow lobby along the north side of the building, with arched openings into the adjacent auditorium. French doors in arched glazed openings on the south wall opened to a narrow terrace with exterior stairs descending to a patio.

The Auditorium and swimming pool were authorized as a single WPA project at a total cost of \$481,376, and construction began on February 21, 1936. The project was troubled from the start, and quickly ran over budget. First the WPA altered the plans and raised the building higher off the ground than had originally been designed; then changed wages on the job from “security wages” to prevailing, increasing labor costs by approximately one-third. On April 16, the federal government approved an additional \$69,000 for the project, and on July 9 approved a second supplemental application for \$70,273 more. Work was concentrated on the swimming pool after Glendale residents pushed for its early completion, allowing progress on the Auditorium to lag. In the summer of 1937 the City spent its own money to complete the pool, which opened to the public that autumn. In January 1938, the city applied for an additional \$73,804 in WPA funding to grade and landscape the grounds, build retaining walls and sidewalks, finish the Auditorium’s basement floors, install a heating plant, and construct bleachers and restrooms for the swimming pool.<sup>17</sup> The grant was approved in March, with the City contributing an additional \$20,000.<sup>18</sup> The Verdugo Municipal Recreation Center was finally dedicated on September 17, 1938 with speeches from city officials and a free dance.<sup>19</sup>

The venue was instantly popular with the community and quickly became an intrinsic part of Glendale life. The Auditorium hosted more than 300 events each year, including art shows, big-band performances, dances, banquets, high school proms, annual fundraisers for Glendale’s Rose Parade floats, dog shows, and Girl Scout meetings, with an average annual attendance of over 100,000.<sup>20</sup> By the early 1960s, the 25-year-old Civic was showing the effects of age and use. In 1963, the Glendale City Council authorized a \$750,000 renovation in lieu of demolishing the structurally-sound building and constructing a new \$2 million facility. The work included construction of entrance porticoes on the north and east façades, a new east entrance from Verdugo Road, addition of a dining room and kitchen in place of the south terrace and patio, installation of a suspended ceiling and recessed lighting in the main auditorium, and the conversion of the lower level into a secondary event space for youth dances and smaller events.<sup>21</sup> The renovated, renamed Glendale Civic Auditorium was formally re-dedicated on January 16, 1965.<sup>22</sup> Within the next few years the City purchased the adjacent Rossmoyne Village shopping center at the corner of Verdugo Road and East Mountain Street, and demolished it to build a parking lot for the Civic Auditorium.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>14</sup> “Land Dedication Aids Project at Glendale,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 17, 1935, E2.

<sup>15</sup> “Extensive Area Designated for Junior College,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 1, 1935, 12.

<sup>16</sup> “Decision Given at Conference with Officials,” *Glendale News-Press*, August 20, 1935, 1.

<sup>17</sup> “Completion of Auditorium Still in Future,” *Glendale News-Press*, January 13, 1938.

<sup>18</sup> “New Grant for Recreation Center Reported Approved,” *Glendale News-Press*, March 7, 1938.

<sup>19</sup> “Glendale Hails New Auditorium,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 17, 1938, 7.

<sup>20</sup> “‘Brand New’ Glendale Civic to Be Dedicated in Ceremony Saturday,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 15, 1965.

<sup>21</sup> “‘Brand New’ Glendale Civic to Be Dedicated in Ceremony Saturday.”

<sup>22</sup> “Third Business Structure Rising in Rossmoyne Village,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 5, 1937.

<sup>23</sup> The exact date is unknown, but historic aerial photographs show that this occurred between 1965 and 1972.



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Property Name: Glendale Civic Auditorium

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### **B10. Significance:** (continued)

By the early 1980s the Glendale Civic Auditorium was again in need of renovation and, despite regular bookings, was losing money, in part due to the high costs of utilities and maintenance of the locally-beloved but aging building.<sup>24</sup> For several years the City of Glendale debated the benefits of renovating the building against the costs of replacing it with a new convention center and performing arts theater, and replacing the leaking swimming pool with a parking structure. Public opinion ran strongly in favor of preserving the old, but still structurally sound, building. In April 1987, the City Council was presented with petitions signed by 1,050 residents opposing demolition, and twelve local homeowner's groups joined the protest. "We have an outstanding auditorium for the residents [*sic*] needs," said J. D. Rees, who presented the petitions. "All it needs is a program for refurbishing."<sup>25</sup> In January 1988, after being presented with another pro-preservation petition bearing 1,277 signatures, the City Council voted against demolition and directed city staff to budget for the repair and maintenance of the Civic.<sup>26</sup> The building was quickly re-roofed while future renovations were discussed. But the aging swim stadium was deemed too expensive to repair, and was demolished in April 1988.<sup>27</sup> A compatible, differentiated, three-level parking structure was constructed on the site of the swim stadium and opened in 1996.<sup>28</sup> The Glendale Civic Auditorium underwent a limited renovation in 1997-98 with upgrades to restrooms, kitchens, and interior finishes; improved sound, security, fire protection and lighting systems; and new signage.<sup>29</sup>

### Works Progress Administration (WPA), 1935-1943<sup>30</sup>

The Glendale Civic Auditorium was constructed with funding from the WPA. The WPA was a relief program established by President Franklin D. Roosevelt on May 6, 1935 with Executive Order No. 7034, under authority of the Emergency Relief Appropriation Act of 1935. The WPA was the largest and most diverse of the New Deal public works programs. It was created to alleviate the mass unemployment of the Great Depression and, by the time it was terminated in 1943, had employed 8.5 million Americans. Harry Hopkins was the first and best-remembered administrator of the WPA, serving from July 1935 through December 1938.

The majority of WPA funding was used to build schools or infrastructure projects such as bridges, roads, airports, parks, and water lines. In addition, the Federal Project Number One programs produced theater, music, and visual arts projects, while other service programs supported historic preservation, library collections, and social science research. The WPA also employed women in sewing rooms, classrooms, and school cafeterias. In the later run-up to war it improved many military facilities. The volume and diversity of work was so large that one researcher wrote at the time: "An enumeration of all the projects undertaken and completed by the WPA during its lifetime would include almost every type of work imaginable...from the construction of highways to the extermination of rats; from the building of stadiums to the stuffing of birds; from the improvement of airplane landing fields to the making of Braille books; from the building of over a million of the now famous privies to the playing of the world's greatest symphonies."<sup>31</sup>

The WPA employed workers directly. A typical project began at the local level, with city and county governments assessing their needs and unemployment numbers. Proposals were then sent to a WPA state office for vetting before being forwarded to headquarters in Washington, D.C. and finally, to the President for final approval. Projects could be rejected at any time during this three-step process, and were not imposed on local communities by the Federal government. Normally, local governments had to provide about 12-25% of the project costs to trigger WPA funding. In 1939, after a federal government reorganization, the WPA was renamed the "Works Projects Administration" and was placed under the newly-created Federal Works Agency. With the outbreak of World War II and the absorption of the

<sup>24</sup> Steve Whitmore, "Auditorium in the Red," *Glendale News-Press*, September 9, 1982.

<sup>25</sup> Beth Shuster, "Auditorium Needs Remodeling, But How and How Much, City Mulls," *Daily News*, April 17, 1987.

<sup>26</sup> Carol Tucker, "Council Saves Glendale Civic from Demolition," *Foothill Leader*, January 20, 1988, A-1.

<sup>27</sup> Avis Thomas-Lester, "Landmark Swim Arena Demolished," *Daily News*, April 1, 1988.

<sup>28</sup> Christian Berthelsen, "Ribbon-cutting for New Garage Today," *Glendale News-Press*, January 17, 1996.

<sup>29</sup> Building permits and Staci Turner, "Civic Will Get Major Facelift," *Glendale News-Press*, June 16, 1996.

<sup>30</sup> Adapted from "Works Progress Administration (WPA), 1935-1943," *The Living New Deal*, <https://livingnewdeal.org/what-was-the-new-deal/programs/> (accessed October 3, 2016).

<sup>31</sup> Donald S. Howard, *The WPA and Federal Relief Policy* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1943), 126.

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ranks of the unemployed into wartime production and the military, the WPA was gradually shut down. It was officially

### **B10. Significance:** (continued)

terminated on June 30, 1943. During its eight-year history the WPA had spent about \$11 billion on 1,410,000 individual projects. It built 651,087 miles of highways, roads, and streets; and constructed, repaired, or improved 124,031 bridges, 125,110 public buildings, 8,192 parks, and 853 airport landing fields.<sup>32</sup>

In Glendale, in addition to the Glendale Civic Auditorium/Verdugo Municipal Recreation Center, WPA funding was used to construct Glendale City Hall; a City Garage; the former Glendale Public Library; several buildings and other features on the Glendale Community College campus; the construction of four schools and improvements at two others; eight bridges over the Verdugo Wash; and the Chevy Chase West Reservoir.<sup>33</sup> According to the Living New Deal, there were approximately ninety buildings constructed with WPA funding in the “Auditoriums and Arenas” category. The Glendale Civic Auditorium is one of a few known examples in California that were constructed specifically for use as a civic auditorium. Other known examples include the Eureka Municipal Auditorium, constructed in 1935; the Fresno Veterans Memorial Auditorium, constructed in 1936; and the San Jose Civic Auditorium, constructed in 1936.

### Architect J. A. Grundfor, 1888-1979

The Glendale Civic Auditorium was designed by noted local architect John A. “Jack” Grundfor. Grundfor was born in Idaho in 1888. He worked in Salt Lake City, Utah from 1915 until about 1924, and is credited with the design of the gates for the Salt Lake City Cemetery. He received his California architects’ certificate in December 1926,<sup>34</sup> and was living in Los Angeles by 1928. In the late-1920s, Grundfor was employed as the Chief Draftsman for the Fidelity Company, at the same time that Richard Neutra served as Chief Designer. Grundfor and Neutra worked together on an unrealized project for the Lambs Club in Hollywood. The design for the Verdugo Municipal Recreation Center seems remarkably similar to the renderings for the Neutra and Grundfor-designed Lambs Club building. In *Richard Neutra and the Search for Modern Architecture: A Biography and History*, Thomas Hines described the unbuilt club’s design: “The Mass of the building rose in stepped Art Deco segments with lower wings featuring Spanish colonnades.” That description sounds as though he were describing the Verdugo Municipal Recreation Center. In 1933, Grundfor became a Building Inspector for Los Angeles County. He died in 1979.

In addition to the Verdugo Municipal Recreation Center, Grundfor designed a number of residential and institutional buildings in various period revival styles in Los Angeles and Glendale. Surviving works include the Canterbury apartments at 319 W. Wilson Avenue (1928), the El Rey apartments at 404 E. Chevy Chase Drive (1928), the former Colonial Buick dealership at 144 S. Glendale Avenue (1930, now Diamond Honda), all in Glendale; the Council Edgemont apartments at 200 N. Edgemont (1931), and the Banbury Manor apartments at 1716 N. Edgemont (1928), in the Los Feliz area of Los Angeles; the Villa Cintra courtyard apartments at 430 S. Cloverdale (1928), in the Mid-Wilshire area of Los Angeles; and the Alhambra Ward of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints at 1212 S. 8<sup>th</sup> Street in Alhambra (1932). His most recognized work is the extravagant Art Deco style Los Feliz Manor apartment building at 4643 Los Feliz Boulevard in Los Angeles (1929).<sup>35</sup>

The Glendale Civic Auditorium is eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources under Criterion 1 at the local level of significance. It is a prominent community resource that represents Glendale’s growth in the 1930s. It is located in the 1930s residential development of Rossmoyne Village, on land donated by the developers to the City specifically for the construction of civic amenities. It is an excellent example of a WPA-funded civic improvement in the city, designed by J.A. Grundfor, a prominent local architect. Improvements undertaken in the 1960s represent the City’s continued use and support of the Civic Auditorium as an important community asset. The Civic Auditorium became an instant landmark in the community when it was completed in 1938, hosting countless civic, social, and cultural events over the last 80 years, and its status as a focal point of the community continues to this day.

<sup>32</sup> “More about the WPA,” [https://www.indiana.edu/~liblilly/wpa/wpa\\_info.html](https://www.indiana.edu/~liblilly/wpa/wpa_info.html) (accessed October 3, 2016).

<sup>33</sup> “The Living New Deal,” <https://livingnewdeal.org/new-deal-categories/civic-facilities/auditoriums/> (accessed October 3, 2016).

<sup>34</sup> “Granted Certificates,” *The Architect and Engineer* 88 (January 1927): 116.

<sup>35</sup> This partial list of Grundfor’s projects was compiled using photographs from his archives, provided by his grandniece, Lisa Grundfor.

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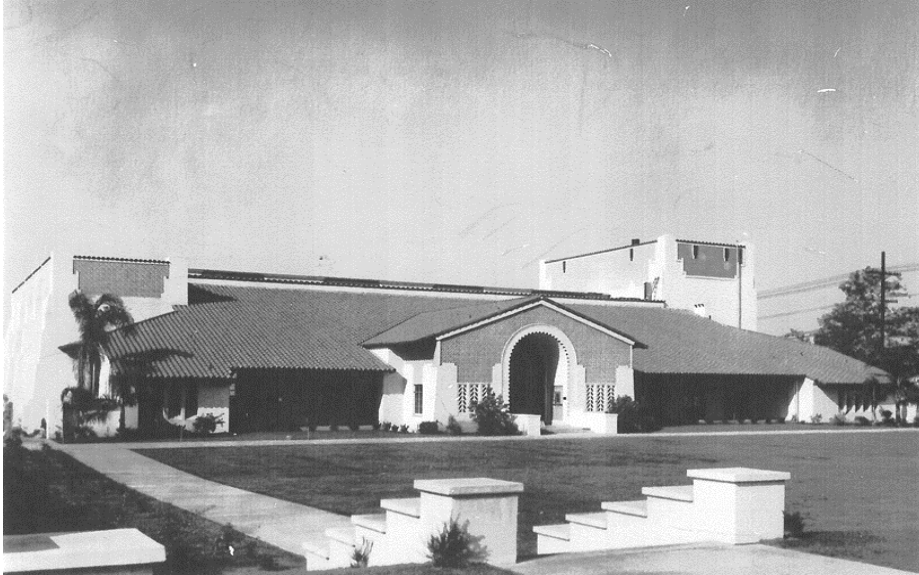
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### Photographs



**Figure 2.** Verdugo Municipal Recreation Center, north or main façade, view southwest, c. 1938.  
Source: Lisa Grundfor.

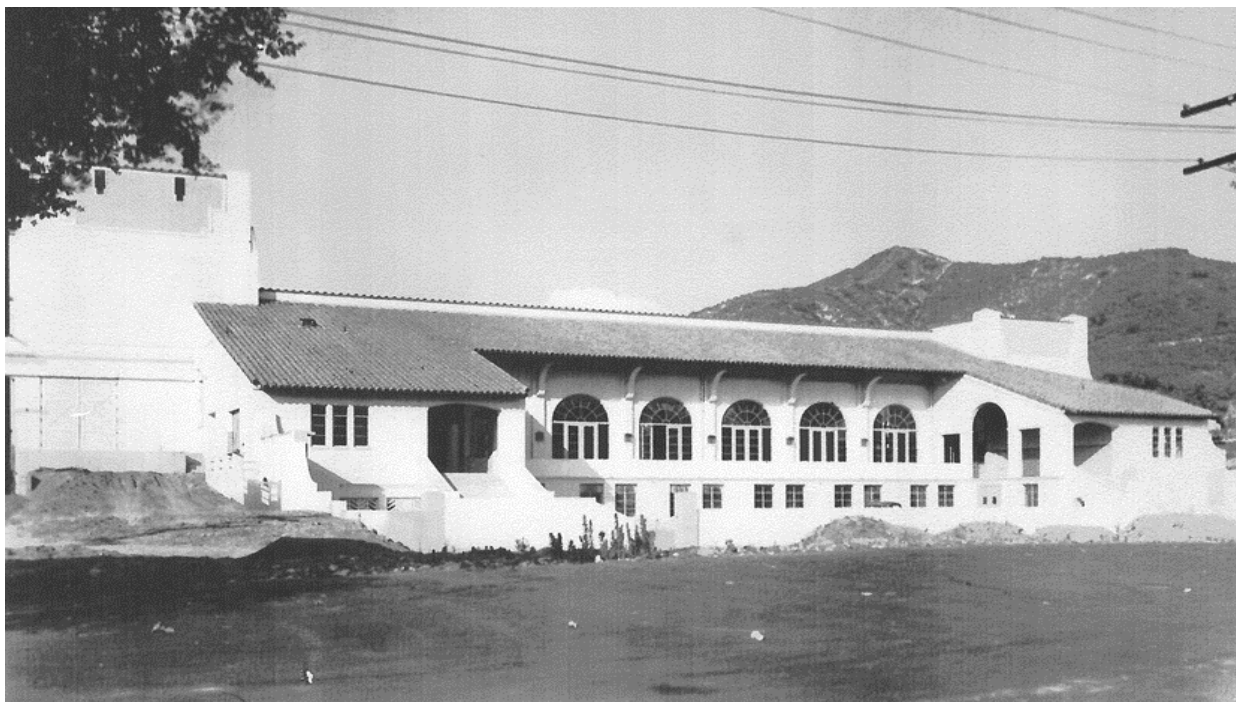


**Figure 2A:** Verdugo Municipal Recreation Center, north façade, view southeast. Entrance loggia added in 1963 had been removed, revealing original entrance bay. May 2017, TGHS.

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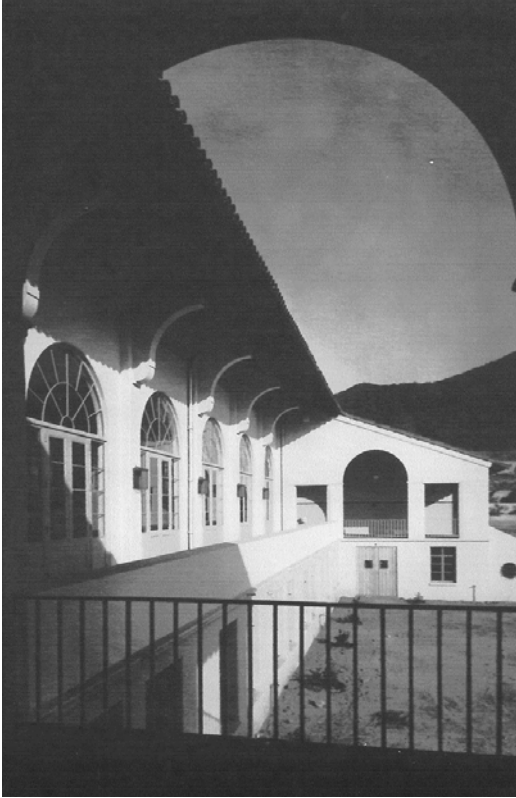
**Figure 3.** Verdugo Municipal Recreation Center, south façade looking northeast, c. 1938. Source: Lisa Grundfor.



**Figure 4.** Verdugo Municipal Recreation Center, south façade looking northwest, c. 1938. Source: Lisa Grundfor.

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**Figure 5.** Verdugo Municipal Recreation Center, south façade looking east, c. 1938. Source: Lisa Grundfor.



**Figure 6.** Verdugo Municipal Recreation Center, view looking east, circa 1940s. Source: City of Glendale, Community Services, Historic Sites, Civic Auditorium, Historical Photos <http://www.glendaleca.gov/government/departments/community-services-parks/parks-facilities-historic-sites/civic-auditorium-/civic-auditorium-historical-photos-#ad-image-1>.

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**Figure 7** Verdugo Municipal Recreation Center, interior detail, view west, c. 1938. Source: Lisa Grundfor.



**Figure 8.** Glendale Civic Auditorium, general site and setting, view northwest from corner of Verdugo Road and Mountain Avenue. September 2016, TGHS.

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**Figure 9.** Glendale Civic Auditorium, exterior, east façade, view looking northwest. September 2016, TGHS. Compare with Figure 6.



**Figure 10.** Glendale Civic Auditorium, exterior, east arcade, view looking northwest. September 2016, TGHS



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**Figure 11:** Glendale Civic Auditorium, detail of entrance bay, main façade, view south of entrance after 1963 entrance loggia was removed. Exterior paint scheme was changed as shown in early 2017. Compare to photograph in Figure 12. May 2017, TGHS.

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**Figure 12.** Glendale Civic Auditorium, exterior, north façade, primary entrance, view looking south. Detail of concrete grilles and Moorish cast geometric patterns. View of same main entrance as Figure 12 before removal of 1963 entrance loggia. Note delicate texture of concrete on upper portion of wall prior to 2017 paint scheme. September 2016, TGHS.

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**Figure 13.** Exterior, north façade, enclosed west *corredor*, view looking southwest. September 2016, TGHS.



**Figure 14.** Exterior, west side, view east. Note pierced grille above recessed doors. September 2016, TGHS.

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**Figure 15.** Exterior, west and south façades, view looking northeast. September 2016, TGHS.



**Figure 16.** Exterior, south façade, east exterior stair, view looking northeast. Note the segmentally arched, recessed doorway. September 2016, TGHS.