

LONG BEACH POLYTECHNIC HIGH SCHOOL, AUDITORIUM
1600 Atlantic Avenue
Long Beach
Los Angeles County
California

HABS CA-2902
HABS CA-2902

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
FIELD RECORDS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

**HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
LONG BEACH POLYTECHNIC HIGH SCHOOL AUDITORIUM**

Location: 1600 Atlantic Avenue, Long Beach
County of Los Angeles, California HABS No. CA-2902

USGS Quadrangle: Long Beach, CA
UTM Coordinates: Zone 11, 390372 mE, 3738864 mN

Contractors: Original: Unknown
Reconstruction: N.W. Thiele, Person & Thiele Company

Present Owner/
Occupant: Long Beach Unified School District
1515 Hughes Way, Long Beach
County of Los Angeles, California

Present Use: The property is currently in use as a High School Auditorium.

Significance: The Long Beach Polytechnic High School Auditorium (Auditorium) was initially designed in 1930 by notable architect William Horace Austin (W. Horace Austin) in the Mediterranean Revival style. However, in 1933 a significant earthquake struck the area and impacted the property. During the earthquake, the three-year-old unreinforced concrete Auditorium suffered structural damage that required substantial repairs. In 1935, architect Hugh Davies sought to revitalize and modernize the Auditorium. The design that Davies selected evoked the WPA Moderne style that was popular at the time. This approach incorporated a combination of Streamline Moderne and Art Deco elements. The resulting building retained several interior details of its original Mediterranean Revival style while embracing the stylized geometry of the Moderne design across much of its exterior.

The seismic episode and subsequent 1935 rehabilitation of the Auditorium established a unique architectural example that retains distinctive characteristics of both the Mediterranean Revival and WPA Moderne styles as well as demonstrates an association with the Long Beach Earthquake of 1933.

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Project Information: The Level III Historic American Building Survey (HABS) contained within this document was prepared for the Long Beach Unified School District to record the Auditorium prior to a seismic retrofit and modernization project. The documentation was performed by Joel Levanetz, a Senior Architectural Historian with Chambers Group, Inc. (Chambers), San Diego, California. HABS photographic documentation was provided by Stephen Schafer of Schäf Photo, Ventura, California.

Part I. Historical Information

A. Physical History

1. Date of erection:

The building was originally constructed at the site in 1930 as an expansion of the Long Beach Polytechnic High School campus. However, during the 1933 Long Beach earthquake, much of the initial structure was destroyed. The portions of the primary façade along with the north and south walls that remained intact were incorporated into the reconstruction of the Auditorium. The reconstruction effort was completed in 1935.

2. Architect:

According to the signed architectural drawings, W. Horace Austin created the original Mediterranean Revival design of the Auditorium that was constructed in 1930. In 1935, Hugh Davies redesigned the building, borrowing heavily from the emerging WPA Moderne style.

3. Original and subsequent owners, occupants, uses:

Since its original construction in 1930, the Auditorium has been the property of the Long Beach Unified School District. With the exception of the period immediately following the 1933 Long Beach earthquake when the property remained vacant, the building has served as the Auditorium for the Long Beach Polytechnic High School.

4. Builder, contractor, suppliers:

The historical record failed to indicate a builder, contractor, or supplier for the original 1930 construction. According to the 1935 drawings, N.W. Thiele of the Person & Thiele Company served as contractor for the reconstruction project.

5. Original plans and construction:

With the exception of two corner towers projecting slightly beyond the plane of the primary façade, the original 1930 design of the Auditorium had a largely rectangular footprint. The 1935 reconstruction shared this layout. However, in the later design the stage area at the rear of the Auditorium was extended beyond the north and south elevations, creating a subtle "T" plan.

6. Alterations and additions:

The damage imposed on the structure by the 1933 Long Beach earthquake required a significant level of reconstruction that altered the style and form of the Auditorium. During the repairs, the building was transformed from a Mediterranean Revival auditorium to a building that strongly evoked the WPA Moderne style. When initially constructed, the Auditorium featured smooth plaster walls and dome-capped towers at both corners of the primary elevation. The towers consisted of rectangular columns that extended beyond the plane of the entrance bay. Beneath the domed terminus on both towers was an arched opening behind a decorative balconette. The motif of the arched opening was continued at the base of the towers where a stylized bay of three arched windows was created. At the center of the primary elevation, between the decorative towers, was a simple pediment adorned with five horizontally-aligned rectangular windows. The triangular pediment was supported by an entryway comprised of five arches.

Following the 1933 earthquake, much of the exterior Mediterranean Revival embellishments were removed and replaced with a more understated WPA Moderne style façade. While the corner towers retained the look of three windows near the base of the structures, the domes as well as any arching was removed, reducing these components to austere panels framing the entrance to the building. In addition, the triangular pediment was replaced with a square, unadorned parapet beneath stylized copper-colored lettering that reads, "Long Beach Polytechnic Auditorium." Also in keeping with the simplified geometry of the WPA Moderne style, five rectangular openings were installed in place of the former arcaded entryway. Another strong indication of the transition in architectural styles is found on the secondary elevations. On the north and south sides of the Auditorium, the smooth plaster walls were interrupted by stepped horizontal bands and pilasters capped by stylized decorative fins.

B. Historical Context

Early Regional Development: 1848-1880

The territory previously known as Alta California was transferred to the United States in 1848 with the signing the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo between Mexico and the United States. Two years later, just months before California gained recognition as a state, the County of Los Angeles was established in 1850. At that time, much of the Long Beach area fell within the boundaries of Rancho Los Cerritos, a substantial agricultural property that had largely been acquired in 1843 by a rancher originally from Massachusetts named John Temple.

During its first decades as part of the United States, the newly acquired region endured several natural disasters. Severe floods and droughts throughout southern California between 1862 and 1864 had a dire effect on the cattle industry which had served as a vital economic base for the Long Beach area. In part due to these impacts, Temple made the decision to sell Rancho Los Cerritos to investors Flint, Bixby & Company (F.B. & Co.) for \$20,000. The purchasing party included gold rush miners Benjamin and Thomas Flint along with Lewellyn Bixby. Members of the Bixby family, including Jotham Bixby, brother of Lewellyn and founder of J. Bixby & Company, eventually came to own all of what had been Rancho Los Cerritos as well as nearby Rancho Los Alamitos and portions of Rancho Palos Verdes.¹

By 1876 the Southern Pacific Railroad completed its route from Los Angeles to San Francisco and from there a connection could be made to the rest of the United States via the Central Pacific Railroad. The Southern Pacific Railroad also constructed a line connecting Los Angeles to the seaport at Wilmington as well as to the nearby town of Willmore City. This nearby town would later to be renamed Long Beach.

In 1881 the Southern Pacific Railroad had completed a transcontinental route from Los Angeles to New Orleans. Station stops along the line included Yuma, Tucson, and El Paso. Although the powerful railroad company realized success with its transcontinental line, completion of the Santa Fe Railroad from the Midwest to Los Angeles via Santa Fe, Needles, and San Bernardino in 1886 initiated a rate war that made transcontinental travel inexpensive for many. The

¹ Engstrand, Iris H.W. Rancho Los Cerritos: A Southern California Legacy Preserved. *Southern California Quarterly* Vol. 82, No. 1. University of California Press, 2000.

accessibility of long-distance travel resulted in a wave of migration to southern California. With large numbers of people looking for places to live, the demand for housing led to a period of real estate speculation known as the “Boom of the Eighties.” To capitalize on the fervor, many new towns were platted along rail lines.²

Willmore City to Long Beach: 1881-1929

Willmore City was established in 1881 by real estate developer William Erwin Willmore who entered into a lease with Jotham Bixby. Despite efforts to advertise the region nationally, few were willing to settle in the area. However, in 1884 the Long Beach Land & Water Company bought out Willmore’s lease and renamed the township Long Beach. Bolstered by the “Boom of the Eighties,” the city experienced significant growth and was officially incorporated in 1888. Despite being surrounded by cattle ranching, the city was able to develop as a resort town complete with pleasure piers, a bath house and an amusement area. Eventually other industries took hold including steamship building, film, and seafood canneries. Also, by 1911 the Port of Long Beach had been placed in full operation. The first years of the twentieth century saw Long Beach become the fastest growing city in the United States with a population of 48,000 in 1914.³

During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, growing urban centers seemed eager to demonstrate their progress and refinement. Among the most notable displays in this regard was the World’s Columbian Exposition held in Chicago. Opened to the public on May 1st, 1893, the extravagant fairgrounds included large classical buildings that housed exhibits dedicated to man’s achievements in areas such as science and technology. The clean designs and grand scale of the exposition influenced a trend in burgeoning cities across the nation termed the City Beautiful movement. The movement focused on improving the lives of the citizenry through urban planning and architectural design. The concept of beautifying public spaces on a large scale lent itself to several groups in the Long Beach area. Among them was the Long Beach Architectural Club. This group of local architects was established in the first decades of the 1900s to ensure the design of buildings would meet certain aesthetic standards. Ultimately the club sought to create an urban form that would not only be attractive to its citizens, but would promote Long Beach as an architectural centerpiece of the region.⁴

It was at this time of expanding population and increased interest in refining the city’s appeal that the Long Beach area experienced a second economic boom when oil was discovered on Signal Hill in 1921. Efforts to annex the area were denied and ultimately led to the establishment of Signal Hill as an autonomous city despite being surrounded by Long Beach on all sides. The Signal Hill oil field soon became the largest producer of oil in all of southern California. Economic development was furthered in the late 1920s, as the City of Long Beach built and leased airplane hangars and administration offices at Daugherty Field to the US Navy and US Army Air Corps. In essence, this action converted the modest municipal airport into a small military reserve base and served to establish a military presence that would prove strategic.

² Dumke, Glenn S. *The Boom of the Eighties in Southern California*. Huntington Library Press, 1991.

³ City of Long Beach Department of Development Services. *City of Long Beach: Historic Context Statement*. July 10, 2009.

⁴ Ibid.

Depression, Earthquake and Recovery: 1930-1939

October of 1929 marked the beginning of the most profound and prolonged period of economic depression in the history of the industrialized world. In a climate of financial speculation and panic, the stock market crashed, taking with it the prosperity of the 1920s and replacing it with lasting economic despair. Following several subsequent waves of financial panic, by 1933 nearly half of all U.S. banks had failed and upwards of 13 million people found themselves unemployed. This staggering statistic represented nearly 25 percent of the nation's workforce.⁵

For the citizens of Long Beach, the Great Depression was not the only disaster that would be encountered in the early 1930s. Just before 6:00 o'clock on the evening of March 10th, 1933, seismic activity at the Newport-Inglewood Fault initiated an estimated 6.25 magnitude earthquake centered in Long Beach. The ensuing catastrophe resulted in millions of dollars in property damage and 120 fatalities. In his 1934 assessment of the Long Beach earthquake published in the *Geographical Review*, distinguished geographer W.M. Davis reported the following observation:

In every community where the earthquake was at all intense, severe damage to school buildings was general. Auditoriums collapsed, walls were thrown down, and the very exits to safety were piled high with debris which a few moments before had been heavy parts of towers and ornamental entrances....School buildings must be so re-designed and strengthened that a repetition of the recent disaster can not take place.⁶

The cautious tone and emphasis on the need to improve the safety of school buildings described throughout the Davis report was bolstered by the fact that, in the wake of the devastation, nearly 120 such structures throughout the area had either been completely destroyed or required substantial repair.

Despite the negative consequences wrought by both the Great Depression and the 1933 earthquake, the City of Long Beach would ultimately find itself in a unique position to rebuild as a result of these events. Given the deprived economic climate across the nation at this time, federal grants and loans were provided following the disaster. Federal assistance to the area was soon expanded in 1935, when President Franklin Delano Roosevelt broadened his New Deal legislation. Under measures that included the establishment of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), Roosevelt sought to improve the nation's economic health by employing its citizens under a broad range of public projects.

In Long Beach, artisans and contractors soon found work constructing civic buildings such as court houses and schools. With the profound need to rebuild much of the city following the earthquake, many of the buildings funded by New Deal programs throughout Long Beach in the 1930s were influenced by the Art Deco and Streamline Moderne architectural styles popular at the time. Oftentimes architects would blend elements of both styles into a tradition from the period later termed WPA Moderne. Guided by stricter building codes and higher construction standards in the wake of the disaster, the WPA Moderne structures were not only intended to

⁵ Roosevelt Institute. *The New Deal, 1933: List of New Deal Legislation*. Online, Accessed November 1, 2014.

⁶ Davis, W.M. The Long Beach Earthquake. *The Geographical Review* Vol. 24, No.1, 1934.

withstand any future earthquakes, they were designed to symbolize the resilience of both the city and the nation.

Early Educational Institutions in Long Beach: 1897 - 1935

Long Beach High School

With just five elementary schools making up the city's entire educational system, the Long Beach School Board recognized the impending need for a facility dedicated to secondary education. In 1897, school board members requested a sum of \$10,000 in tax revenue to supplement a bond of the same amount to fund the construction of a high school. Although met with adversity, the project was approved, allowing the Long Beach School District to purchase a parcel at the northwest corner of present day Long Beach Boulevard and Eighth Street for \$1520. Following the purchase, conflict again ensued. This time citizens were enraged that the new facility would be in such a remote location far from the center of town.⁷

In spite of the controversy over the facility, the Long Beach High School was completed and dedicated in May of 1898. The building was a two-story structure strongly influenced by the Mission Revival style. It featured an asymmetrical design with a domed-cupola adorning the corner of the primary façade. The irregular roofline was capped by red terra cotta tile and was interrupted by shaped parapets at regular intervals. With its large arched porticos and generous window bays, the unreinforced masonry school building was eventually considered a refinement to its unimproved surroundings at the edge of the city.

During its first year of operation, the Long Beach High School recorded a total enrollment of forty three students and one graduate. The following year, in 1898, the school graduated five students. Although it would take until 1905 for the number of graduates to exceed 20, rapid growth in Long Beach during the early 1900s would soon strain resources at the high school.⁸

Long Beach Polytechnic High School

With graduating classes at the Long Beach High School soaring from approximately 20 students in 1905 to over 80 in 1910, the school district made plans to construct a secondary education facility better equipped to handle the increased capacity. A *Los Angeles Times* article dated November 3rd, 1910 entitled "Start 'Poly' Group Soon" describes the forthcoming project.

Ground will be broken in the coming week for the new \$200,000 Long Beach Polytechnic high school group, which is planned to be one of the most modern and complete educational institutions of the kind ever built in the West.

The structures themselves, three in number, represent a cost of approximately \$150,000, while the site, a commanding fifteen-acre tract bounded by Pennsylvania and Atlantic avenues, Seventeenth and California streets, was bought last summer for \$53,000.⁹

⁷ Grobaty, Tim. *Long Beach Chronicles: From Pioneers to the 1933 Earthquake*. The History Press, 2012.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ "Start 'Poly' Group Soon: Construction About to Begin in Long Beach." *Los Angeles Times*, November 3, 1910.

The vision for the new high school was created through a collaborative effort between architect A. Burnside Sturges and the Long Beach Board of Education. The resulting campus included individual buildings for three disciplines described as “academic, science and manual training.”¹⁰ Each of the units shared stylistic elements including exterior masonry walls plastered with white cement, red pressed brick trim as well as concrete cornices and moldings. The layout of the campus included the academic building at the center adjoined by the science and manual training buildings. As the focal point, the academic building was designed with a large cement domed entrance and included an auditorium with a seating capacity of 1200. By the end of 1911, construction of the Long Beach Polytechnic High School was completed and the new facility had approximately 850 enrolled students and 31 teachers.

Long Beach Polytechnic High School Auditorium:

As enrollment continued to grow throughout the first decades of the 20th century, the high school expanded its facilities. In 1924, with a student body population nearing 4000, the Long Beach Polytechnic High School celebrated the dedication of David Burcham Athletic Field in honor of the school’s first principal. Soon discussions regarding the construction of a new auditorium began. In 1928 the school acquired the vacant parcels immediately south of the campus and began making plans for the building.¹¹ By 1930, construction on the Auditorium was coming to an end.

The design of the Auditorium was undertaken by W. Horace Austin, an architect recognized for the diversity of his projects found throughout Los Angeles County. Although he was noted for his application of a range of architectural styles, Austin evoked the Mediterranean Revival tradition in his approach to the Long Beach Polytechnic Auditorium. This may have been, in part, to match some of the more classical components embodied by many of the other buildings found on the campus. Architectural elements shared by the 1930 Auditorium design included smooth plaster walls as well as dome-capped towers at both corners of the primary elevation to mirror the concrete dome of the academic building.¹² However, Austin’s design did stray from the overall architectural aesthetic of the campus in the level and style of ornamentation included in the Auditorium. Rather than reserved concrete cornices, Austin chose a pronounced pedimented portico with a stylized arch molding. This theme was carried over to the arcade entryway at the center of the façade. He further distinguished the Auditorium’s Mediterranean Revival style with embellishments found on both of the towers. These included decorative balconettes as well as arched windows and doorways.

Despite the meticulous detail in design and the cost of \$200,000 to build, the original Auditorium lasted only three years before the Long Beach earthquake severely damaged the unreinforced masonry structure. Although the building was dramatically undermined by the seismic event, perhaps due to a concrete balcony that served to reinforce the perimeter walls, the Auditorium was not demolished. In fact, portions of several elevations including the primary façade were integrated into the 1935 redesign of the building.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Mission Geoscience, Inc. *Phase 1 Environmental Site Assessment: Auditorium Project Area at Polytechnic High School*. December 6, 2013.

¹²The University of California. Calisphere Online Historical Archive. Online, Accessed September 8, 2014.

On October 1, 1933, just six months following the devastating earthquake, a large heading printed in *the Los Angeles Times* proclaimed, "Long Beach Plans Huge School Building Program." Beneath the bold title was a conceptual rendering by architect Hugh R. Davies depicting the plans to revitalize the damaged auditorium.¹³ Influenced by the designs growing in popularity in the mid 1930s, the image illustrates a shift from the original Mediterranean Revival style to a blend between the geometry of the Art Deco style and the elaborations of the Streamline Moderne style.

Often termed WPA Moderne, the redesign of the Auditorium converted the front arcade into a series of five rectangular entryways. In addition, the original triangular pediment was replaced with a square, unadorned parapet beneath stylized copper lettering that reads, "Long Beach Polytechnic Auditorium." Also, while some of their form was retained, such as their protrusion passed the plane of the central entryway, the domed towers previously found on either side of the facade were redesigned into simple geometric edifices. Under the 1933 design depicted in the article, the smooth plaster walls of the Auditorium were to be interrupted on the north and south elevations with stepped horizontal bands and pilasters capped by stylized decorative fins. When reconstruction of the Auditorium was completed in 1935, most of the WPA Moderne concepts depicted in the 1933 rendering were put in place and echoed an architectural trend in public building design growing throughout the region and the nation.¹⁴

¹³ "Long Beach Plans Huge School Building Program." *Los Angeles Times*, October 1, 1933.

¹⁴ Davies, Hugh R. *Building Specifications: Auditorium Building, Polytechnic High School Group Reconstruction*. On file at the Long Beach Unified School District, 1934.

Part II. Architectural Information

A. General statement

1. Architectural character:

Despite its origins as a Mediterranean Revival style building constructed in 1930, the current appearance of the Auditorium principally exhibits the architectural character of its 1935 reconstruction in the WPA Moderne style. Following the 1933 earthquake, the emerging aesthetic along with more stringent building codes led to the removal of many of the Auditorium's initial embellishments. The arcade and grand central pediment of the original entrance along with the domed towers that once framed the portico were replaced with the more austere surfaces and geometric motifs of the Art Deco tradition.

At the primary elevation, a wide simple staircase capped by horizontal concrete blocks leads to a recessed entryway behind five unadorned rectangular openings. The surface of the smooth plaster walls at both ends of the elevation extend beyond the plane of the central entrance, creating the effect of massive square columns extending upwards from the corners of the building. Three modest vertical window openings just above the base of either column continue the rectangular theme of the entryway and interrupt the otherwise unadorned surface of the wall.

Slightly recessed behind the blank central parapet above the front stairs is lettering in the distinctive Art Deco style. Immediately beyond is a copper parapet with horizontal massing, regular vertical striations and an intentional patina indicative of the 1935 redesign. As the form of the building continues to the secondary elevations, the unembellished planes of the primary façade give way to finned pilasters connected by stepped horizontal bands that imply the influence of the Streamline Moderne architectural character.

It is not until reaching the interior of the lower lobby area that there are reminders of the Mediterranean Revival style initially intended for the Auditorium. Within the lobby the details of the original design include red tile wall and floor treatments, painted wood panel doors and trim, niches, porcelain drinking fountains and period signage. These elements, along with a collection of metal frame chairs in the Auditorium, constitute much of the remaining original architectural character.

2. Condition of fabric:

With the consideration that the materials currently present span two distinct architectural periods, the fabric of the building retains an appreciable level of integrity. The overall exterior form of the Auditorium depicts many of the elaborations found on WPA Moderne properties of the period. Emblematic details include smooth exterior wall finishes, stepped motifs and pilasters terminated by stylized fins.

Similarly, interior spaces retain materials from the 1930 Mediterranean Revival design and continue to communicate the original aesthetic in portions of the building. However, most of the original fabric, including the red tile veneer, is limited to the lobby area of the Auditorium.

B. Description of Exterior

1. Overall dimensions:

The Long Beach Polytechnic High School Auditorium is roughly rectangular with overall dimensions of approximately 209 feet long by 129 feet wide.

2. Foundations:

The Auditorium is situated on a concrete foundation.

3. Walls:

Exterior walls on all elevations have a smooth finish plaster covering the reinforced concrete. All exterior wall finishes are painted white. Vertically-aligned pilasters with stylized fins occur at regular intervals along the north and south elevations. Further emphasizing the WPA Moderne style of the structure, stepped horizontal bands extend between the raised pilasters and create continuity among the architectural embellishments. The north and south walls adjacent to the interior stage and fly space protrude beyond both the walls and the roofline of these elevations. The exterior walls to the north and south of the stage area feature a vertical stepped motif but do not include the fins or horizontal bands found along the remaining portions of these elevations. The tertiary elevation to the east of the stage alludes to the vertical form found along the remainder of the perimeter. However, the pilasters on the east elevation to the rear of the building are simple rectangular columns without either the finned or stepped ornamentation.

4. Structural system, framing:

The structural system of the Auditorium is comprised of reinforced concrete exterior walls, a rod and steel plate-braced roof and steel trusses.

5. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors:

The primary elevation's recessed main entrance includes a bay of five sets of non-historic period aluminum double doors. To the north of the aluminum doors is a wood two-panel door within a recessed entranceway. The door is painted green and features an opening intended to serve as a ticket booth for events at the Auditorium. The south elevation includes several non-historic period entryways. These include a single panel aluminum door, a roll-away door to the storage area behind the stage and three sets of double doors. One set of the double doors enters the Auditorium lobby through a recessed opening accessed by a simple concrete stairway beneath a modest copper vestibule. The remaining sets of doors are not recessed but are framed by an Art Deco stylized arch surround. The north elevation contains two single-panel doorways and four sets of double door entrances, all of which are non-historic period aluminum.

b. Windows and shutters:

Two bays of three window openings are found on the wall panels that protrude from either side of the main recessed entryway. On the panel to north, two of the three openings are occupied by multi-pane metal windows that appear to be original to the 1935 reconstruction. The third opening

contains ventilation slats that fill the entirety of the space. The large plastered wall framing the recessed entryway to the south features all three openings with multi-pane metal windows. Along the east-facing tertiary elevation, there is a series of 11 rectangular, multi-pane louver windows. All of the windows have metal frames and appear to be original to the 1935 reconstruction. To inhibit light in the Auditorium storage area, many of the visible window panes have been painted black.

6. Roof:

a. Shape, covering:

The roof consists of four distinct levels, all of which include wood sheathing beneath a non-historic period impermeable membrane cover that appears to have been installed within the last two decades. The lowest of the roof levels is found above the stage area storage room at the east elevation of the building. The otherwise flat roof surface at this level is interrupted by a stairway access shelter. Immediately west of the storage area roof is the highest level of the structure. This level constitutes the expanse of the roof over the stage and fly space areas of the Auditorium. Here again the surface is flat with the exception of a small structure for the purpose of rooftop access.

Adjacent to the west of the fly space and stage area is the roof level that spans the seating, mezzanine and lobby areas of the building. This portion of the roof includes a subtle pitch away from an east-west center axis and terminates to the west at the final roof level. Spanning the width of the Auditorium along the west elevation is a narrow, flat roof that covers the recessed entryway. This level is stepped down from the main structure and contains the copper-colored lettering for the Auditorium. A decorative copper parapet centered along the entrance extends between this portion of the roof and the next, creating an iconic architectural detail.

b. Dormers, cupolas, towers:

The primary façade supports a tall rectangular copper parapet embellishment that is situated atop the recessed entryway. The parapet alternates between thin strips of vertically-aligned copper sheet metal and recessed copper panels. Emblematic of the WPA Moderne style, historic period signage depicts the words “Long Beach Polytechnic Auditorium” on a small stepped wall between the front roof line and the parapet.

C. Description of Interior

1. Floor plans:

The floor plan is largely comprised of three individual sections. These include the front lobby, main auditorium seating and the stage area. The front lobby section incorporates a lower as well as an upper lobby area. As one of the remaining elements to survive the earthquake, several character-defining features representative of the 1930 Mediterranean Revival design are found in the lower lobby of the Auditorium. These include the red-clay floor tiles and wall veneer, wood display cases with trim and the niches located beneath concrete staircases at the

north and south ends leading to the upper lobby area. Additional features in the lower lobby area include a stepped ceiling, drinking fountains, wood panel doors leading to the auditorium, bathrooms, a ticket office, and associated period signage.

On the lower level, a metal frame partition wall with four sets of double-doors divide the lobby area from the main auditorium seating area. Each door includes a single panel with a pattern of three vertically-aligned octagonal designs. On the upper lobby level, two sets of double doors allow access from the upper lobby to the balcony seating area.

Overall, the seating area comprises the majority of the Auditorium's interior space and contains character-defining features from the 1935 reconstruction. These include smooth plaster finish curved walls with horizontal scoring that extends the entire perimeter of the seating area from the lobby wall to the opening of the stage area. In addition, two circular embellishments from the 1935 reconstruction are found on either side of the stage opening. Both decorative elements are approximately 11 feet in diameter and feature a stylized face behind horizontal metal grating depicting the theatrical notions of Comedy and Tragedy. Also, rows of original steel frame seats with the letters "PHS" are found at the rear of the lower seating area and throughout the balcony seating area.

The east end of the Auditorium's interior includes two levels. The upper level consists of the stage production area. Along with the rigging and lighting attached to the fly space above the stage, this area contains associated mechanical and electrical equipment. Immediately behind the stage is a narrow concrete secondary space used for the storage of theatrical props and equipment. Beneath the stage area is a basement level that contains several auxiliary rooms associated with costume, make-up, and dressing rooms, as well as the electrical housing and boiler rooms.

2. Stairways:

The primary stairways of the building's interior are found in the front lobby of the Auditorium. Designed to provide a sense of symmetry, two staircases with green linoleum treatments extend to the upper lobby and balcony seating area from either side of the lower lobby. Steel tube handrails frame the staircases. According to the available drawings along with field observations the green linoleum and handrails on the lower lobby stairs are from the 1935 reconstruction. Auxiliary stairways not indicative of any architectural tradition are found adjacent to the stage production area and allow access to the basement level of the Auditorium.

3. Flooring:

As noted in the 1930 drawings, the red-clay tile flooring in the lower lobby area is a remaining architectural element from the original construction. Flooring in the seating area and upper lobby consists of exposed concrete. Non-historic period carpeted walkways line the aisles in the main auditorium. The stage area is comprised of hardwood flooring.

4. Wall and ceiling finish:

The interior walls and ceilings largely feature a painted smooth plaster finish. However, non-historic period acoustic tiles span the ceiling of the main seating area within the Auditorium.

5. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors:

The primary interior doorways are found in the upper and lower lobby areas of the Auditorium. In the upper lobby, the doors include two sets of two-panel wood double doors. On the lower level, leading from the lobby to the main seating area, are four sets of original wood panel doors with inset octagonal patterns.

b. Windows:

As an auditorium, the building was designed to restrict light exposure and focus audience attention toward the stage area. As such, interior fenestration is limited and consists mainly of the three modest window openings found on either side of the primary elevation. These are accessed from the interior through wood panel doors located beneath the period staircases on either side of the lower lobby area.

6. Decorative features and trim:

Decorative features and trim from the original 1930 design are found throughout the lower lobby area. These include painted wood display cases along with a decorative tile finish along the lower wall that features a pattern of stylized floral tile. Also, as indicated in the 1935 drawings, additional decorative features were included in the main auditorium seating area as part of the reconstruction plans. These include two circular embellishments found on either side of the stage opening. Both decorative elements are approximately 11 feet in diameter and feature a stylized face slightly obscured behind a horizontal metal grating. The face on the wall immediately north of the stage depicts the theatrical notion of Comedy while the wall just south of the stage opening depicts Tragedy.

Part III. Sources of Information

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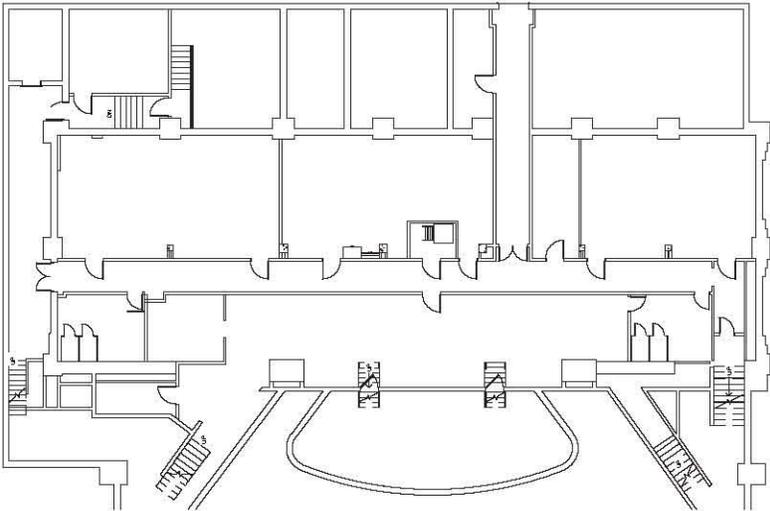
LONG BEACH POLYTECHNIC HIGH SCHOOL AUDITORIUM

Long Beach Polytechnic High School Auditorium
1600 Atlantic Avenue
Long Beach
Los Angeles County
California

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SKETCH PLANS

Historic American Buildings Survey
Department of the Interior
National Park Service
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

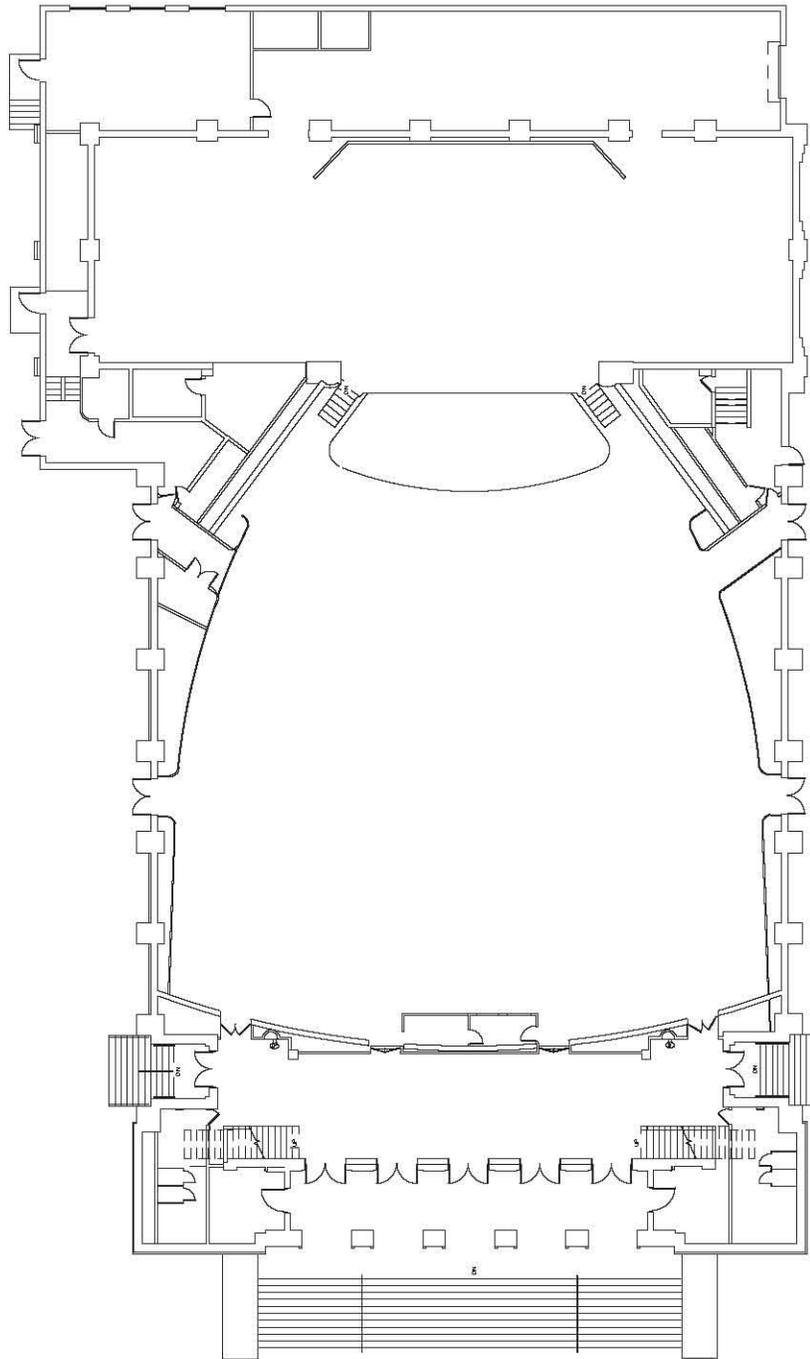


BASEMENT LEVEL EXISTING PLAN

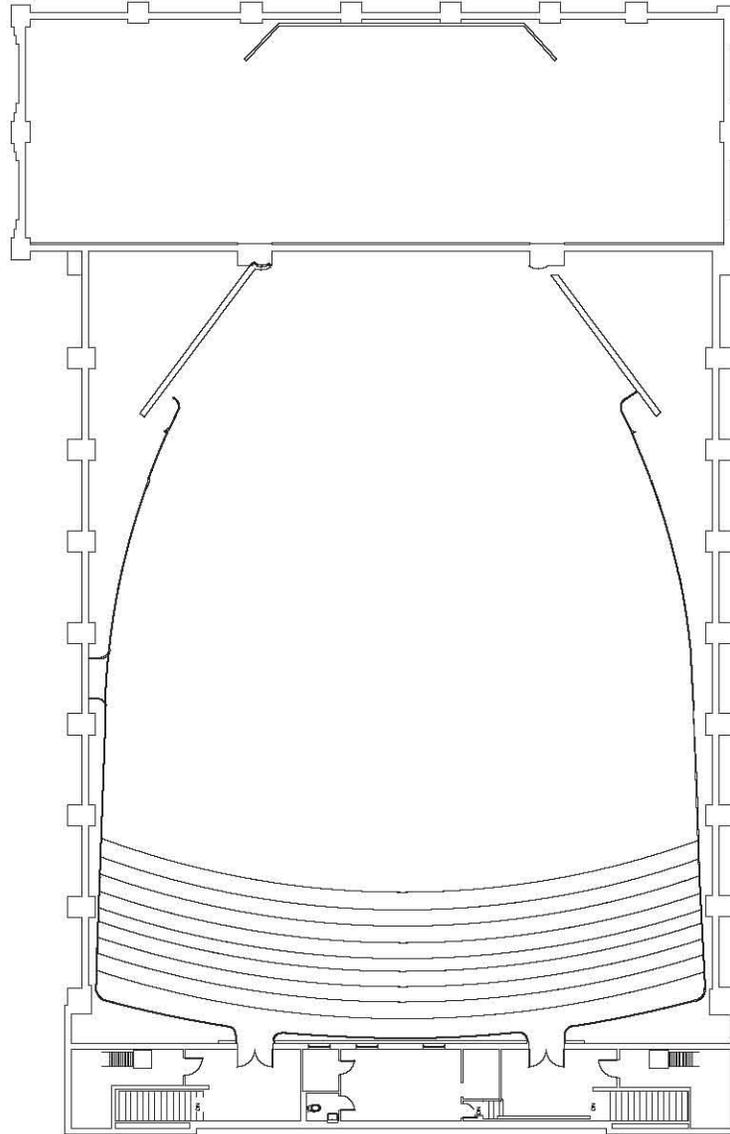
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1ST LEVEL EXISTING PLAN



2ND LEVEL EXISTING PLAN