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CITY PLANNING
OFFICE OF HISTORIC RESOURCES
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LOS ANGELES, CA 90012-4801

CULTURAL HERITAGE COMMISSION

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April 12, 2007

Los Angeles City Council
Room 395, City Hall
200 North Spring Street
Los Angeles, California 90012

ATTENTION: Barbara Greaves, Legislative Assistant
Planning and Land Use Management Committee

CASE NUMBER: **CHC-2006-10163-HCM**
HIGGINGS BUILDING
108 WEST 2ND STREET

At the Cultural Heritage Commission meeting of **March 1, 2007**, the Commission moved to include the above property in the list of Historic-Cultural Monuments, subject to adoption by the City Council.

As required under the provisions of Section 22.126 of the Los Angeles Administrative Code, the Commission has solicited opinions and information from the office of the Council District in which the site is located and from any Department or Bureau of the city whose operations may be affected by the designation of such site as a Historic-Cultural Monument. Such designation in and of itself has no fiscal impact. Future applications for permits may cause minimal administrative costs.

The City Council, according to the guidelines set forth in Section 22.125.1 of the Los Angeles Administrative Code, shall act on the proposed inclusion to the list within 90 days of the Council or Commission action, whichever first occurs. By resolution, the Council may extend the period for good cause for an additional 15 days.

The Cultural Heritage Commission would appreciate your inclusion of the subject modification to the list of Historic-Cultural Monuments upon adoption by the City Council.

The above Cultural Heritage Commission action was taken by the following vote:

Moved: Commissioner Barron
Seconded: Commissioner Singer
Ayes: Commissioner Carlisle, Martin and Stalford
Vote: 5-0


Sheldred Alexander, Commission Executive Assistant
Cultural Heritage Commission

SA: aa

Attachment: Staff Report with Findings

c: Councilmember Jan Perry, Ninth Council District
Higgins Lofts Homeowners Association, A/O
Stacie Chaiken, Rep. and Joan Springhetti, Rep.



Los Angeles Department of City Planning

RECOMMENDATION REPORT

CULTURAL HERITAGE COMMISSION

CASE NO.: CHC-2006-10163-HCM

HEARING DATE: March 1, 2007
TIME: 10:00 AM
PLACE: City Hall, Room 1010
200 N. Spring Street
Los Angeles, CA
90012

Location: 108 West 2nd Street
Council District: 9
Community Plan Area: Central City
Area Planning Commission: Central
Neighborhood Council: Downtown Los Angeles
Legal Description: LT 1 of TR 53327-C

PROJECT: Historic-Cultural Monument Application for the
HIGGINS BUILDING

REQUEST: Declare the property a Historic-Cultural Monument

**APPLICANT/
OWNER:** Higgins Lofts Homeowners Association
108 West 2nd Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

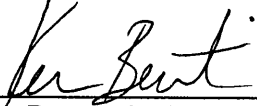
**APPLICANT'S
REPRESENTATIVE:** Stacie Chaiken
108 West 2nd Street, #507
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Joan Springhetti
108 West 2nd Street, #613
Los Angeles, CA 90012


RECOMMENDATION **That the Cultural Heritage Commission:**

1. **Declare** the property a Historic-Cultural Monument per Los Angeles Administrative Code Section 22.125.
2. **Adopt** the report findings.

S. GAIL GOLDBERG, AICP
Director of Planning

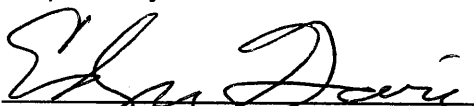


Ken Bernstein, Manager
Office of Historic Resources



Lambert M. Glessinger, Architect
Office of Historic Resources

Prepared by:



Edgar Garcia, Preservation Planner
Office of Historic Resources

Attachments: December 6, 2006 Historic-Cultural Monument Application

FINDINGS

1. The building “embodies the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type specimen, inherently valuable for a study of a period style or method of construction” as an example of Beaux-Arts commercial architecture.
2. The property reflects “the broad cultural, economic, or social history of the nation, State or community” for its association with the development of downtown Los Angeles.
3. The property is identified with a master builder, designer, or architect as a significant early work by architect Arthur L. Haley and the prominent architectural and engineering firm of A.C. Martin.

CRITERIA

The criterion is the Cultural Heritage Ordinance which defines a historical or cultural monument as any site (including significant trees or other plant life located thereon) building or structure of particular historic or cultural significance to the City of Los Angeles, such as historic structures or sites in which the broad cultural, economic, or social history of the nation, State or community is reflected or exemplified, or which are identified with historic personages or with important events in the main currents of national, State or local history or which embody the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type specimen, inherently valuable for a study of a period style or method of construction, or a notable work of a master builder, designer or architect whose individual genius influenced his age.

DISCUSSION

Built in 1910 and located in the downtown area, this 10-story commercial building exhibits character-defining features of Beaux-Arts style architecture. The subject building is rectangular in plan configured around a single light well in its interior. The building has three primary facades clad in reinforced concrete with decorative elements arranged in a classic base-shaft-capital composition. The south-facing façade is unornamented with exposed concrete. The lower two levels are defined by storefronts with rusticated exterior capped by a bracketed cornice. The upper eighth and tenth levels of the subject building have two bands of pilasters with decorative molding topped by a cornice with crown molding. Parings of single one-over-one windows line the facades. Significant interior spaces include ornamental elevator doors and railings, mosaic tile floors, and a marble-clad lobby.

The proposed Higgins Building historic monument was designed by architect Arthur L. Haley. Before his work on the Higgins Building, Haley designed the Powers Residence on Alvarado Terrace (1904, Historic-Cultural Monument #86). Haley collaborated with engineer Albert Carey Martin to pioneer the use of concrete in commercial building construction with the Higgins Building, eventually adding two stories to the planned eight stories. Martin would go on to form the prominent engineering and architectural firm of A.C. Martin, responsible for such landmarks as the Million Dollar Theater (1917), St. Vincent de Paul (1925, HCM #90), and Los Angeles City Hall (1928, HCM #150). The building was commissioned by Thomas Patrick Higgins (1844-1920), an Irish immigrant who made a fortune in the copper mines of Arizona and developed sections of downtown Los Angeles. The Higgins Building housed such groups as the Chess and Checker Club of Southern California, Women’s Progressive League, Association of Liquor Dealers, the City Cleaning Bureau, as well as the law office of Clarence Darrow, who defended the McNamara Brothers, charged in the 1910 bombing of the Los Angeles Times

building.

The subject building appears significant as a well-preserved example of Beaux-Arts style architecture and for its association with the commercial development of downtown and the civic center.

Later additions to the subject property include alteration of storefronts and its reconfiguration from commercial space to residential units.

The Higgins Building property successfully meets three of the specified Historic-Cultural Monument criteria: 1) "embodies the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type specimen, inherently valuable for a study of a period style or method of construction," 2) reflects "the broad cultural, economic, or social history of the nation, State or community," and 3) is associated with a master builder, designer, or architect. As a commercial building designed in the Beaux-Arts style by Arthur L. Haley and A.C. Martin and reflective of the development of downtown Los Angeles, the property qualifies for designation as a Historic-Cultural Monument based on these criteria.

BACKGROUND

At its meeting of January 4, 2007, the Cultural Heritage Commission voted to take the application under consideration. On February 1, 2007, the Cultural Heritage Commission toured the subject property.

Los Angeles Department of City Planning RECOMMENDATION REPORT

CULTURAL HERITAGE COMMISSION

CASE NO.: CHC-2006-10163-HCM

HEARING DATE: January 4, 2007
TIME: 10:00 AM
PLACE: City Hall, Room 1010
200 N. Spring Street
Los Angeles, CA
90012

Location: 108 West 2nd Street
Council District: 9
Community Plan Area: Central City
Area Planning Commission: Central
Neighborhood Council: Downtown Los Angeles
Legal Description: LT 1 of TR 53327-C

PROJECT: Historic-Cultural Monument Application for the
HIGGINS BUILDING

REQUEST: Declare the property a Historic-Cultural Monument

**APPLICANT/
OWNER:** Higgins Lofts Homeowners Association
108 West 2nd Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

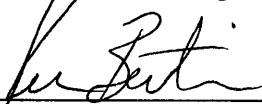
**APPLICANT'S
REPRESENTATIVE:** Stacie Chaiken
108 West 2nd Street, #507
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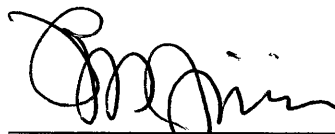
RECOMMENDATION That the Cultural Heritage Commission:

1. **Take the property under consideration** as a Historic-Cultural Monument per Los Angeles Administrative Code Section 22.125 because the application and accompanying photo documentation suggest the submittal may warrant further investigation.
2. **Adopt** the report findings.

S. GAIL GOLDBERG, AICP
Director of Planning



Ken Bernstein, Manager
Office of Historic Resources



Lambert M. Giessinger, Architect
Office of Historic Resources

Prepared by:



Edgar Garcia, Preservation Planner
Office of Historic Resources

Attachments: December 6, 2006 Historic-Cultural Monument Application
ZIMAS Report

SUMMARY

Built in 1910 and located in the downtown area, this 10-story commercial building exhibits character-defining features of Beaux-Arts style architecture. The subject building is rectangular in plan configured around a single light well in its interior. The building has three primary facades clad in reinforced concrete with decorative elements arranged in a classic base-shaft-capital composition. The south-facing façade is unornamented with exposed concrete. The lower two levels are defined by storefronts with rusticated exterior capped by a bracketed cornice. The upper eighth and tenth levels of the subject building have two bands of pilasters with decorative molding topped by a cornice with crown molding. Pairings of single one-over-one windows line the facades. Significant interior spaces include ornamental elevator doors and railings, mosaic tile floors, and a marble-clad lobby.

The proposed Higgins Building historic monument was designed by architect Arthur L. Haley. Before his work on the Higgins Building, Haley designed the Powers Residence on Alvarado Terrace (1904, Historic-Cultural Monument #86). Haley collaborated with engineer Albert Carey Martin to pioneer the use of concrete in commercial building construction with the Higgins Building, eventually adding two stories to the planned eight stories. Martin would go on to form the prominent engineering and architectural firm of A.C. Martin, responsible for such landmarks as the Million Dollar Theater (1917), St. Vincent de Paul (1925, HCM #90), and Los Angeles City Hall (1928, HCM #150). The building was commissioned by Thomas Patrick Higgins (1844-1920), an Irish immigrant who made a fortune in the copper mines of Arizona and developed sections of downtown Los Angeles. The Higgins Building housed such groups as the Chess and Checker Club of Southern California, Women's Progressive League, Association of Liquor Dealers, the City Cleaning Bureau, as well as the law office of Clarence Darrow, who defended the McNamara Brothers, charged in the 1910 bombing of the Los Angeles Times building.

The subject building appears significant as a well-preserved example of Beaux-Arts style architecture and for its association with the commercial development of downtown and the civic center.

Later additions to the subject property include alteration of storefronts and its reconfiguration from commercial space to residential units.

CRITERIA

The criterion is the Cultural Heritage Ordinance which defines a historical or cultural monument as any site (including significant trees or other plant life located thereon) building or structure of particular historic or cultural significance to the City of Los Angeles, such as historic structures or sites in which the broad cultural, economic, or social history of the nation, State or community is reflected or exemplified, or which are identified with historic personages or with important events in the main currents of national, State or local history or which embody the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type specimen, inherently valuable for a study of a period style or method of construction, or a notable work of a master builder, designer or architect whose individual genius influenced his age.

FINDINGS

Based on the facts set forth in the summary and application, the Commission determines that the application is complete and that the property is significant enough to warrant further investigation as a potential Historic-Cultural Monument.

HISTORIC-CULTURAL MONUMENT APPLICATION



photo © 2006 Brad Buckman

Higgins Building

At the corner of 2nd and Main in Los Angeles, California

INS BUILDING

HISTORIC-CULTURAL MONUMENT APPLICATION

Los Angeles Cultural Heritage Commission

200 N. Spring Street, Room 66. Los Angeles, California, 90012. (213) 978-1183

IDENTIFICATION

- 1) Name of proposed monument: The Higgins Building
- 2) Street address: 108 W. 2nd Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012
- 3) Assessor's parcel numbers: From 5149 006 010 through 5149 006 151
- 4) Legal description: Lot 1, Tract 53327
- 5) Range of addresses: Residential: 108 W. 2nd Street, # 201-215, 301-315, 401-415, 501-515, 601-615, 701-715, 801-815, 901-915, 1001-1015.
Commercial: 108 W. 2nd Street, #101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108
- 6) Owners: Private ownership, 135 individual residences and 7 commercial spaces.
Present use: Residential and commercial. Original: Offices and commercial.

DESCRIPTION

- 7) Architectural style: French Renaissance influences
- 8) Architectural description of building: (Attached)
- 9) Construction: 1909-1910 factual
- 10) Architect, designer or engineer: Architecture by A.L. Haley; engineering and architecture by A.C. Martin.
- 11) Contractor or other builder: MA Rowland and Kenneth Pruess (concrete), A. Barmann (steel), San Francisco Cornice Company (doors and windows), B.V. Collins (tile and marble), H.J. McGuire (excavation)
- 12) Dates of enclosed photographs: 1910, 1916, 1941, 1959, 2006
- 13) Condition: Good
- 14) Alterations: Ground-level storefronts have been altered by original and subsequent owners; basement levels and the rooftop have been modified. Upper 9 floors have been converted from offices into residential with 231 units combined into 135
- 15) Threats to site: none known
- 16) Site: original

SIGNIFICANCE

18) Historic and architectural importance: The Higgins Building, located within the downtown historic district, is an important early example of monolithic concrete construction in a high-rise building. It is also important for the role it played in the cultural and civic development of Los Angeles.

19) Sources: (Attached)

20) Preparation of application: Date: Dec. 4, 2006.

Prepared on behalf of the Higgins Lofts Homeowners Assn. by:

Stacie Chaiken
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HIGGINS BUILDING

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

The Higgins Building is a 10-story monolithic concrete high-rise constructed in 1909-1910 with architectural details in the French Renaissance style. It is rectangular in shape – 120 feet facing Main Street, 160 feet facing 2nd Street – and has a flat roof. At its center is a light well that brings sunlight and air to the interior.

Its clean lines, visible structural columns and architectural belts at the second and eighth stories distinguish the exterior. Large 6-foot-by-8-foot windows occur in pairs and indicate the original office configurations. The exterior is fully detailed on three sides; capping the building is a deep cornice and crown of white lights designed to show off the building and its electrical power plant in the sub-basement.

The building's support columns, beams, walls, floors and roof are all constructed of poured concrete reinforced with steel rebar; architectural details on the exterior and interior are also of poured concrete. After pouring forms were removed, all walls were finished with an additional coat of cement. To make the building fireproof, all wood doors and window frames were clad in zinc sheeting – a detail that remains one of the building's most distinctive. Narrow channels left at the interior edges of the concrete floors held the only exposed wood in the entire building: tack strips so carpets could be secured.

The lobby is finished in Italian marble, as is the bottom half of most hallway walls. Two staircases, including the one leading from the lobby, are also marble-finished. Hallway and lobby floors are in small black and white mosaic tile with a Greek key border; elevator doors and stair railings are of ornamental metal.

Although the Higgins Building has undergone a number of modifications since its initial construction and suffered losses to vandals during a period of disuse, its architectural integrity remains intact.

HIGGINS BUILDING

ARCHITECTURAL AND CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Higgins Building, named for the man who built it, Thomas P. Higgins, is an important example of early monolithic concrete construction in a high-rise building. It set a new height record in Los Angeles for concrete, then considered unproven for tall buildings. Every element of the Higgins was designed to be fireproof – and it was 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 basement. In addition to advancing the use and acceptance of concrete construction, the building launched the engineering and architecture legacy of A.C. Martin and led its primary architect, A.L. Haley, to another major concrete project, the Lanterman House in La Canada, which is on the National Register of Historic Places. The tenants who occupied the Higgins Building – from attorney Clarence Darrow to the leadership of the Catholic diocese – helped shape the cultural life and civic spirit of the city.



When Thomas Patrick Higgins arrived in Los Angeles in 1902, he had money to spend – a fortune made in the copper mines of Arizona. He was born July 12, 1844, in Ireland, near Boyle, County Roscommon. He came to the United States at about age 20, first doing iron mining in New York, then lumbering in Wisconsin.

He was one of only a handful of settlers – all hardscrabble prospectors – in Bisbee, Ariz., when he arrived there in 1877. By the time he left Arizona for Los Angeles, he was nearly 60 and 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.

One of his early projects was the Bisbee Hotel on East 3rd Street. Now known as the St. George Hotel, it was recently restored as housing for the homeless. As construction on the Bisbee was wrapping up in 1903, Higgins bought a large parcel just a block away, across the street from St. Vibiana's Cathedral. He paid \$200,000 cash for the lot on the southwest corner of 2nd and Main.

It was where Higgins was determined to make a lasting impression in Los Angeles by constructing an office and retail building that would be architecturally unrivaled. It would tower over its surroundings, be “absolutely fire and earthquake proof” – a timely selling point given the devastation in San Francisco – and make the best use of modern technology.

Higgins hired architect A.L. Haley and engineer A.C. Martin to make his building a reality – and the three men collaborated to create what would quickly be considered one of the best examples of monolithic concrete construction in the United States. At a time

when steel, brick and wood were the standard, Haley and Martin pushed the accepted limits of concrete – the material that would eventually become and remains favored for construction of nearly all types, including the world’s very tallest skyscrapers.

In an embrace of another new technology, the basement of the Higgins Building contained one of the earliest electrical generating stations in Los Angeles. The city would not put up its first power pole until 1916. In the Higgins, six years earlier, massive boilers and two four-valve engines – one connected to a 75-kilowatt electric generator, and one to a 50-kilowatt electric generator – formed a power plant that Haley described as “the most complete found in any Los Angeles building.”

The list of advertised amenities included hot and cold running water in each office, electric lights, steam heat, purified water (sent through filters as it entered the building), telegraph and telephone service and three high-speed passenger elevators.

After construction was well underway, Higgins decided that he needed to build higher than the originally planned 8 stories – he was not to be outdone by an emerging plan for a 10-story building at 2nd and Broadway.

Taking the Higgins two stories higher meant getting the city to change its ordinance limiting the height of concrete buildings. A few years earlier – over the objections of brick, steel and stone men who had been petitioning to have concrete construction outlawed – the city council adopted a policy that allowed for the use of concrete within strict limits. Then, in 1910, with the Higgins half-built, Haley made an impassioned and successful case for raising the height limit to 133 feet – a decision the Los Angeles Times would characterize as “radical” and that generated a fierce debate in the architectural community.

To accommodate the greater height, Martin reengineered the building to stiffen the walls from the fourth story upward. So impressed with the building was The Architect and Engineer of California that it featured the Higgins in an 18-page spread in its April 1910 issue – with construction photos, diagrams and detailed specifications on the concrete process.

In a Jan. 2, 1910, article in the LA Times, Haley describe 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, this was the material that would allow Los Angeles to quickly and efficiently build itself into a great city.

His partner in the design of the Higgins, Albert Carey Martin, had arrived in Los Angeles in 1904 as a new engineering graduate from the University of Illinois. When the Higgins was completed in 1910, Martin was just 30 years old and made a name for himself with his concrete work on the project. Nearly a century later, the engineering and architecture

firm he launched – and would be joined in by his sons – still bears his name. “You can’t envision Los Angeles without their work,” said Ken Starr, state librarian and urban planner, in a 1997 magazine article. “They are among the half-dozen architectural firms that over the past 100 years have given us the major buildings of Los Angeles, the city in its public dimension.” Martin headquartered his company in the Higgins for 35 years – and worked there on plans for such landmarks as Grauman’s Million Dollar Theater (1917), St. Vincent de Paul Roman Catholic Church (1925) and Los Angeles City Hall (1928). By the time of Martin’s death in 1960, his firm had worked on some 1,500 building projects – and cemented its reputation with innovative use of concrete.

The architect on the Higgins Building – Arthur L. Haley – was 45 years old and already established for his commercial and residential work in the city. Born in Malone, N.Y., in 1865, he had been designing buildings in Los Angeles since at least 1899, in particular 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” – which is credited with altering the layout of thousands of apartments on the West Coast.

In 1904 he built a large home for the president of the LA City Council – the Pomery Powers Residence at 1345 Alvarado Terrace. Today, it is a Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument and elegantly houses a drop-in center for the homeless. The year after Haley finished the Higgins Building, he was commissioned to build a fireproof home for Dr. Roy Lanterman, a refugee from the San Francisco earthquake and fires. The house, restored to its original condition, is recognized as one of the earliest homes of poured concrete in the region. Open to the public, it houses a museum on La Canada history.

Despite his remarkable achievements, several years after work on the Higgins Building was completed, Haley’s career became marred by charges of investor fraud – and by bankruptcy. He is believed to have left the city, perhaps for the Seattle area.



When the Higgins Building opened in the last half of 1910, it quickly became the cultural center that its millionaire developer had imagined. It was the place to see and be seen – and by an eclectic mix. Attorneys, businessmen, socialists, clerics and chess champs would all walk its halls.

The Chess and Checker Club of Southern California was founded in the Higgins; the Women’s Progressive League made it its headquarters and held luncheons on the rooftop. The first piece of mail delivered by regularly scheduled aerial post – sent Sept. 9, 1911, from England – arrived 17 days later, addressed to J.A.S. Furlonge, 411 Higgins Building. The Assn. of Liquor Dealers helped spearhead the fight against prohibition from the Higgins; the volunteer City Cleaning Bureau sought to clean up vacant lots.

Among those who set up offices on the 9th floor was criminal defense attorney Clarence Darrow, who came in from Chicago to defend the McNamara brothers, charged in the deadly Oct. 1, 1910 bombing of the Los Angeles Times. The brothers were spared the

death penalty after Darrow advised them to plead guilty. The case was not over for Darrow, however, who was forced to stay in Los Angeles to defend himself against charges he bribed a juror. After two lengthy trials, he was found not guilty. The bombing of The Times and its aftermath were pivotal events in the labor history of Los Angeles – and the case was pivotal in the life of Darrow. By the time he left LA, his reputation was tarnished and his health fragile. His most famous case, the Scopes Monkey Trial, would not come for another 14 years, but his trials in Los Angeles, personally and in court, had a dramatic impact on him.

Job Harriman, a labor attorney and a national leader in the socialist movement, had already set up his offices in the Higgins when Darrow came to town. Harriman would serve as co-counsel in the bombing case and the Higgins became the defense team's headquarters. Harriman, the onetime vice presidential candidate on the Eugene Debs ticket and candidate for governor of California, would run nearly successful campaigns (in 1911 and 1913) to become socialist mayor of Los Angeles. It was also in the Higgins that he developed his plans for a socialist community, Llano del Rio Colony, which was established in 1914 in the Antelope Valley. It struggled and eventually moved to Louisiana, but is considered one of the most important utopian colonies in the American West. Harriman died in Los Angeles in 1925.

Many early tenants in the Higgins Building were lawyers and investors, but its star became the General Petroleum Co. — a highly successful independent firm that would become one of the precursors to Mobil Oil. After starting in a single small office in 1911, it quickly took command of the 10th Floor and eventually occupied nearly the entire building. General Petroleum had refineries and pipelines throughout the area and is credited with the find in 1936 of the last major oil reserve in the LA Basin.

The Higgins served as the Chancery Office for the Catholic Diocese of Los Angeles and Monterey for nearly two decades. With the arrival of Bishop John J. Cantwell in 1917, the chancery moved from a house next to St. Vibiana's to the 8th floor of the Higgins – overlooking the cathedral.

Despite Thomas Higgins' grand vision for the north end of downtown, the focus of development began shifting to the south and west. He did not live to see the turn, however – he died March 15, 1920, at age 76.

Higgins, who never married, was eulogized as a major contributor to the cultural and social life of the city. He readily lent his support to causes Irish and Catholic. Despite his extensive mining wealth and real estate holdings, his home at 12th Street and Magnolia Avenue was large but unimposing. He supported charities in Los Angeles and Arizona, and prided himself in funding college educations for numerous young men he saw as deserving. And, before and after his death, he supported his extended family and their descendents, many in Ireland and a number of whom settled in California.

Higgins is buried in Los Angeles, at Calvary Cemetery, alongside his sister and other relatives in a family mausoleum – designed in 1904 by A.L. Haley.



In 1949, the Higgins Building underwent a major shift: General Petroleum and its signature symbol – the Pegasus – moved out and into a brand-new building at 6th and Flower. The Higgins Estate, which still operated out of the Higgins Building, called it quits that year, too, liquidating its real estate and other holdings.

The Higgins Building was sold for about \$1 million to the County of Los Angeles, which was looking for a new headquarters for its Bureau of Engineering. It was given a new name: the Los Angeles County Engineering Building – which is how many in Los Angeles remember it. After more than 25 years of overseeing construction projects large and small from one of the city's strongest buildings, the county determined that the department needed more modern quarters and pulled up stakes in 1977.

Abandoned to the elements for the next two decades, the Higgins became such a painful eyesore that it was the subject of a 1997 article in the LA Times Magazine, "The Building That Time Forgot." Its windows gone and doors boarded up, only pigeons, human trespassers and vandals visited it.

When its future seemed bleakest, the Higgins Building was sold – in 1998 for just over \$1 million – and it began life again.

It became one of the first of what would be many adaptive reuse projects that have helped to revitalize downtown. Its original name reclaimed, the Higgins Building reopened in 2003 with its 231 offices converted into 135 residences and its 7 ground-level commercial spaces ready for new enterprises.

It had survived, in good times and terrible ones, and as its builders had intended – resistant to fire and earthquakes. Today, it is filled with homeowners and businesses drawn to its architecture and history – and to bringing new energy to downtown at the turn of a second century.

HIGGINS BUILDING

SOURCES

The Architect and Engineer of California, Pacific Coast States. (April 1910), "A 10-story Monolithic Reinforced Concrete Building." (LA Public Library) *Attached*

Los Angeles City Directories. (LA Public Library) 1911-1940

Los Angeles Times. "Big Sale of Copper Mines" (May 10, 1903); "Second and Main Street Corner Sold" (July 18, 1903); "Would Prohibit Concrete Buildings" (Oct. 23, 1905); "Hollow-Block Men Agitated" (Oct. 30, 1906); "May Reach 10 Stories," (Dec. 26, 1909); "Great Cement Deposits of Southland to Provide Material for Skyscrapers of Future" (Jan. 2, 1910); "Half Million Dollar Block at Second and Main" (June 23, 1909); "Believes in North End" (Jan. 16, 1910); "Going Higher. Higgins Building Will Have Ten Stories" (March 2, 1910); "New Ordinance Knocks Old Act Topsy-Turvy" (May 27, 1910); "Are Buildings to Go Higher?" (April 3, 1910); "Players Form a Chess Club" (Dec. 11, 1910); "Women's Progressive League Inaugurates Plan for New Organization" (March 17, 1912); "Mail Here by Aerial Post; (Sept. 29, 1911); "Haley Makes Hot Reply" (Feb. 26, 1911); "Great Philanthropies by Late Thomas Higgins Bared" (March 19, 1920); "Albert C. Martin Sr., 80, Noted Architect, Dies" (April 10, 1960); "A Socialist Who Was Almost Mayor" (Oct. 31, 1999), and other articles.

Los Angeles Times Magazine. "The Trials of Clarence Darrow," by Geoffrey Cowan (May 16, 1993); "The Building that Time Forgot" by Ed Leibowitz (Aug. 17, 1997)

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Who's Who on the Pacific Coast, 1913. (LA Public Library) A.L. Haley

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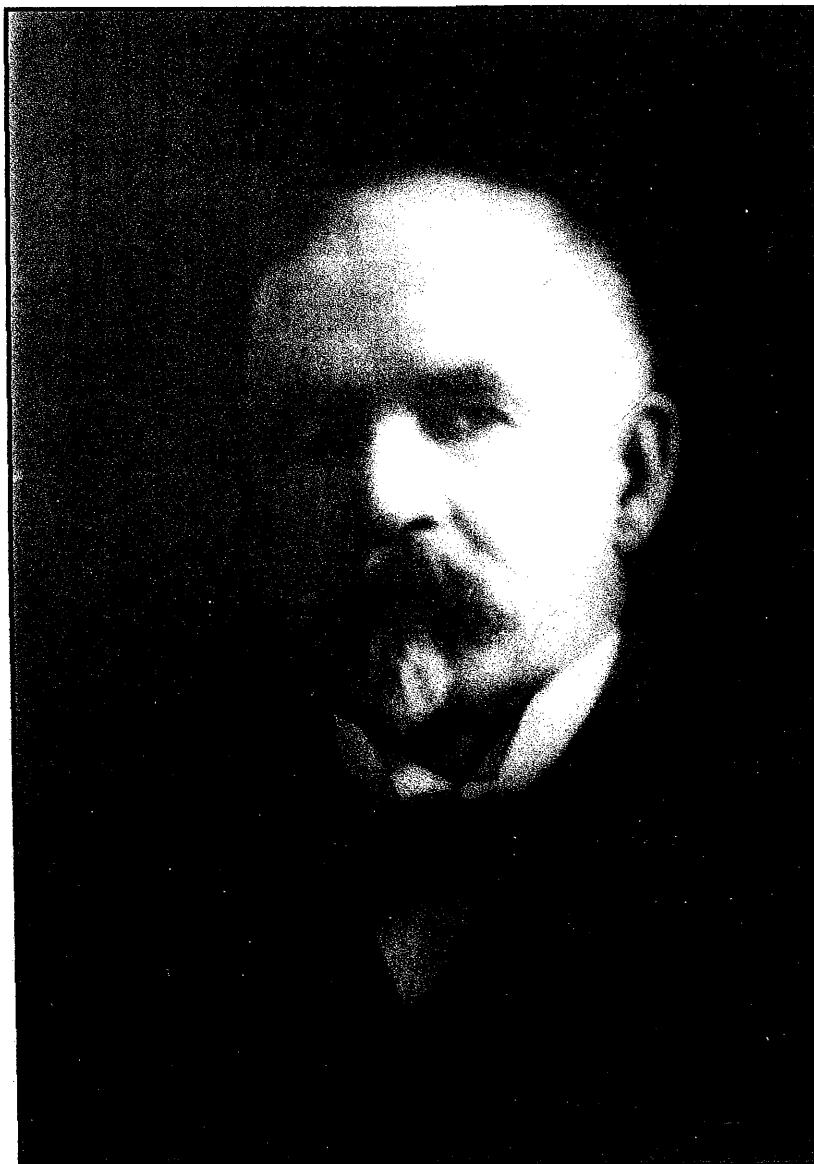
Lanterman House. Archival information on concrete home and architect A.L. Haley

LA Department of Building and Safety. Building permits for Higgins Building

HIGGINS BUILDING

IMAGE KEY PLAN

- #1. **Thomas P. Higgins (1844-1920).** 1916 portrait of namesake. Courtesy Moira G. Bailis.
- #2. **Postcard.** Higgins Building promotional postcard published @ 1908 by Newman Postcard Co. Courtesy Thomas P. Higgins.
- #3. **At 8 Stories.** Architectural sketch and article introducing plans for 8-story Higgins Building. Published June 23, 1909, Los Angeles Times.
- #4. **At 10 Stories.** Architectural sketch and article announcing Higgins Building height will increase to 10 stories. Published Jan. 16, 1910, Los Angeles Times.
- #5. **First-Floor Plan.** Plans by architect A.L. Haley for lobby and commercial spaces in Higgins Building. Published in Architect and Engineer of California, April 1910.
- #6. **Typical Floor Plan.** Plans by architect A.L. Haley for offices on floors 2-10 of Higgins Building. Published in Architect and Engineer of California, April 1910.
- #7. **Sub-basement Plan.** Plans by architect A.L. Haley for power plant in sub-basement of Higgins Building. Published in Architect and Engineer of California, April 1910.
- #8. **Power plant.** 1910 photo of one of the engines in the power plant in sub-basement of Higgins Building. Published in Architect and Engineer of California, April 1910,
- #9. **Construction.** 1910 photo looking west from 2nd Street, the Higgins Building as 8th and 9th stories are being added. USC Digital Archives/Ticor.
- #10. **Clarence Darrow and Job Harriman.** 1910 or 1911 photo of co-counsels in defense of McNamara brothers, accused of bombing the Los Angeles Times. Darrow, standing at center, and Harriman, seated at left, had offices in the Higgins Building. Also shown are attorney Joseph Scott, Mrs. Ortie McManigal (whose husband was among the accused) and three children. USC Digital Archives.
- #11. **General Petroleum era.** 1941 photo of Higgins Building during period it was headquarters of General Petroleum Co. Photo by Art Streib. Published Jan. 29, 1941, Herald Examiner. (USC Digital Archives/Herald Examiner).
- #12. **County Engineering Building.** 1959 photo taken from Main Street shows back of renamed Higgins Building during period it was owned by Los Angeles County and housed the Engineering Department. (USC Digital Archives/LA Examiner)
- #13. **Adaptive Reuse.** Sept. 12, 2006 view from 2nd and Main after offices converted to residential lofts and Higgins Building name restored. Photo by Brad Buckman.



Thomas P. Higgins



POST CARD

THIS SIDE FOR CORRESPONDENCE

THE ADDRESS TO BE WRITTEN
ON THIS SIDE

Place Postage Here	
Domestic	
Island Possessions	
Canada	10
Cuba	
Mexico	
Panama	
Foreign	20

THE ILLUSTRATION ON THE OTHER SIDE GIVES YOU SOME IDEA OF THE HIGGINS BUILDING, WHICH IS BEING ERECTED AT THE CORNER OF SECOND AND MAIN STS., AND WILL BE READY FOR OCCUPANCY ABOUT MAY 1ST 1910. IT WILL BE AS THOROUGHLY FIRE AND EARTHQUAKE PROOF AS MODERN APPLIANCES AND ENGINEERING SKILL CAN MAKE IT. EVERY KNOWN IMPROVEMENT FOR THE COMFORT AND CONVENIENCE OF TENANTS WILL BE INSTALLED. RESERVATIONS NOW BEING MADE AT ROOM 504 LOS ANGELES TRUST BUILDING, COR. SECOND AND SPRING STS. PHONE BROADWAY 2830.

PUBLISHED BY LAWRENCE POST CARD CO. LOS ANGELES CALIF. FRANCHISED

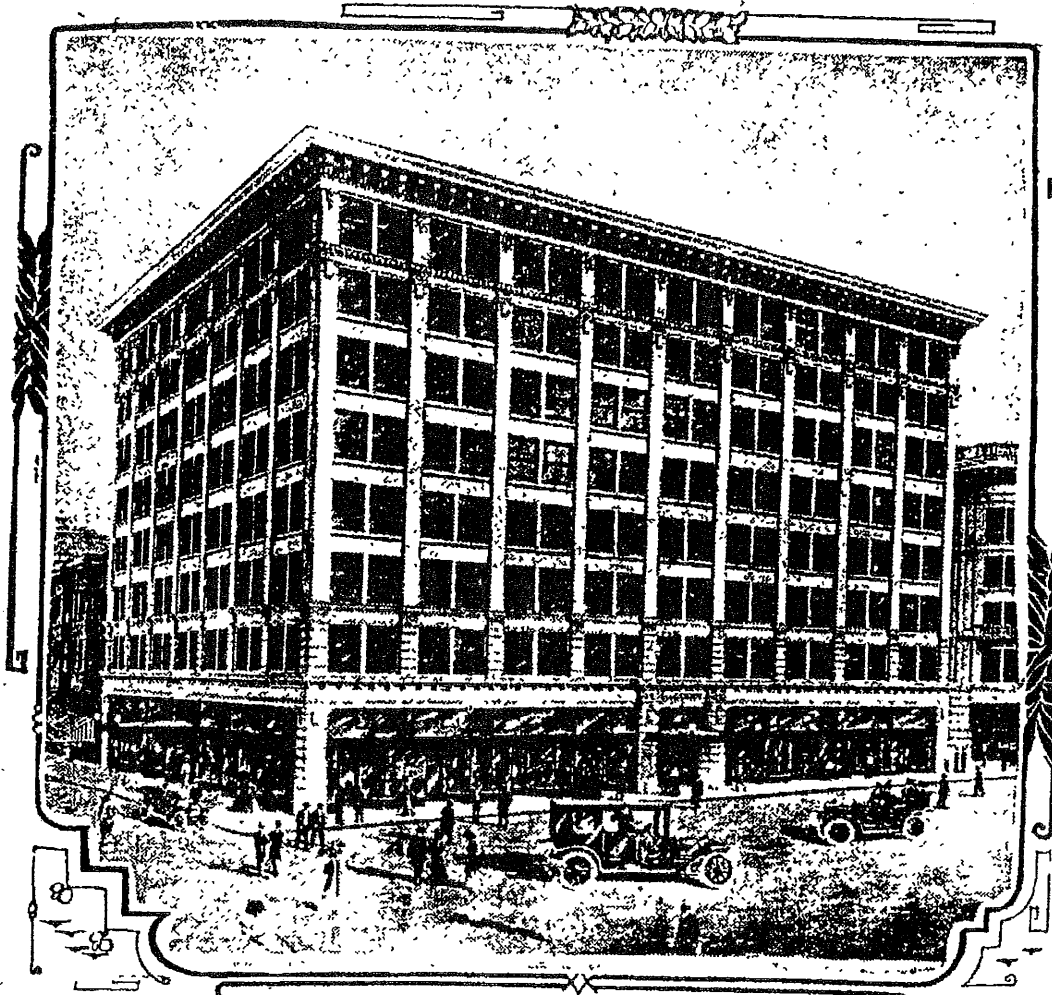
(ASK FOR BROCHURE)

HALF-MILLION-DOLLAR BLOCK AT SECOND AND MAIN STREETS.

Los Angeles Times (1886-Current File); Jun 23, 1909; ProQuest Historical Newspapers Los Angeles Times (1881 - 1985)
pg. 111

MAMMOTH.

HALF-MILLION-DOLLAR BLOCK AT SECOND AND MAIN STREETS.



Higgins Building, on Which Work Has Been Begun.

Photographed from the perspective of A. L. Haley, the architect. A. C. Martin is consulting engineer.

THE Higgins building, foundations and retaining walls for which are in course of construction at the southwest corner of Main and Second streets, will be one of the finest business blocks on the Pacific Coast. Fronting 118 feet on Main street by 159 feet on Second, the structure will be eight stories and contain 151,000 square feet of floor space—nearly four acres. Thomas Higgins, the builder, will expend \$500,000 in its construction. The block was designed and planned by A. L. Haley, architect, incorporated. A. C. Martin is the consulting engineer. The style of architecture is after the French Renaissance.

The block is to be of reinforced concrete construction, and in addition to the eight stories above the street line,

will have basement and sub-basement. The former will be used for a large café, and the latter will be given over to heating and power apparatus. The principal entrance will be on the Second-street frontage, and both fronts will be handsomely faced with moulded concrete blocks, with a finish similar to that of rubbed sandstone. The work of construction will occupy about ten months.

The ground floor will be partitioned off for fourteen large storerooms, and the upper stories will contain 381 offices, averaging 15x22 feet. Each room will have two large six-foot windows, and throughout the architect has planned for the greatest amount of light and air space consistent with the demands of the construction. The structure will be equipped with three high-speed plunger-hydraulic passen-

ger elevators, together with a freight elevator with a lifting capacity of 8000 pounds. One of these lifts will be extended to the roof, and it is intended that later a roof garden café will be made a feature of the building.

The block will be absolutely fireproof. The interior finish throughout will be in ornamental metal, even the window frames being thus treated. The stairways will have concrete treads and iron railings. Each office will be equipped with hot and cold water, steam heat, alternating and direct currents, compressed air and gas. The Second-street frontage will be largely fitted up for doctors and dentists. Each closet will be practically a fireproof safe. Rowland & Frues are putting in the retaining walls, and the excavating is being completed by H. J. McGuire.

BELIEVES IN NORTH END.

Los Angeles Times (1886-Current File); Jan 16, 1910; ProQuest Historical Newspapers Los Angeles Times (1881 - 1985)
pg. VI



Perspective of revised plans for Higgins building at Second and Main. A. L. Haley, architect.

BELIEVES IN NORTH END.

Builder of Higgins Block Will Extend That Structure to Height of Ten Stories.

A. L. Haley, the architect of the Higgins building at Second and Main, has been instructed by the builder, Thomas Higgins, to continue the big structure to a height of ten stories. The necessary strengthening of the walls is now under way. The addition will involve an added outlay of \$50,000 and bring the total investment to over \$500,000. The extra two stories will provide sixty-eight new additional offices. A perspective embodying the proposed addition is reproduced on this page of The Times.

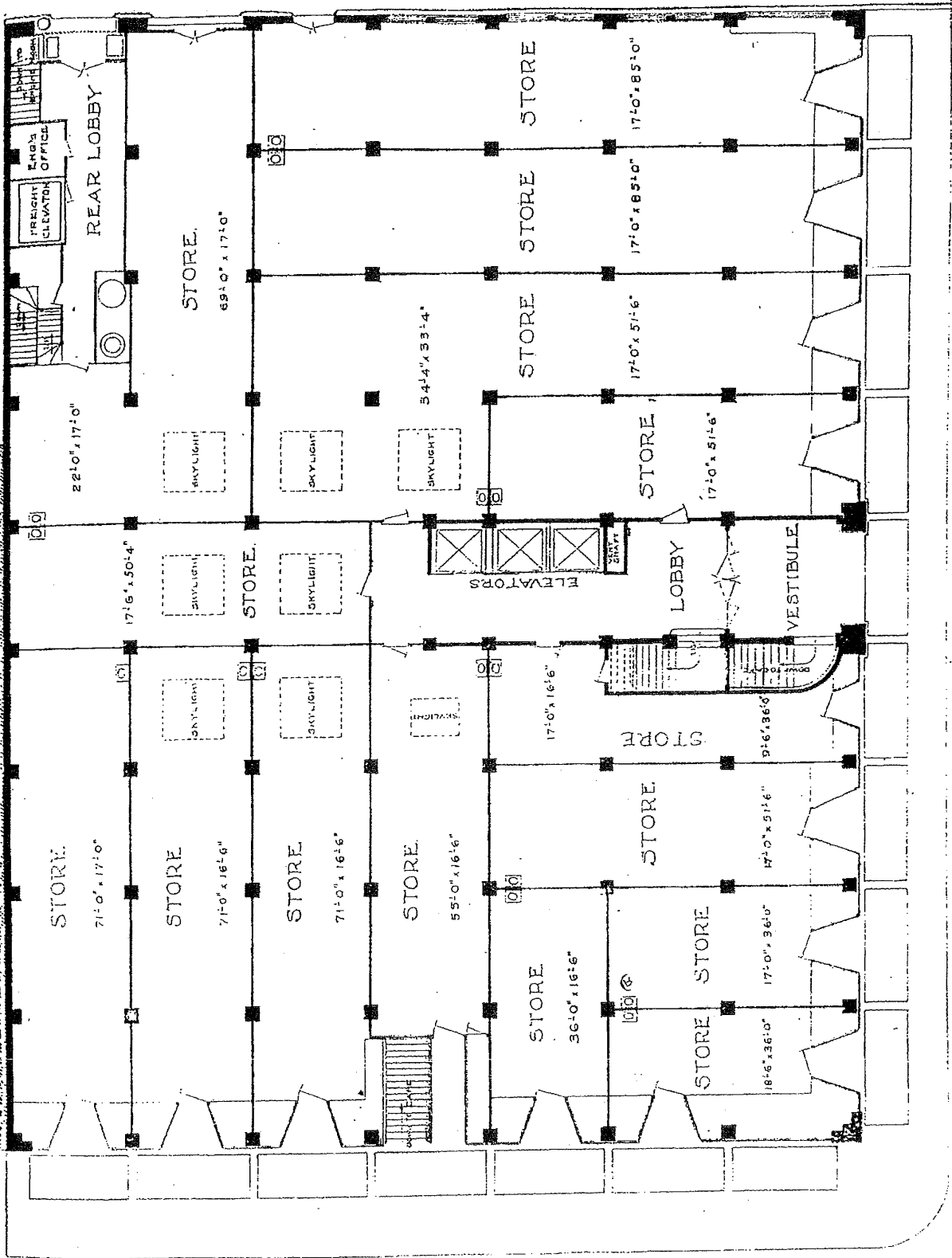
The Higgins building will be one of the best examples of monolithic concrete construction in the United States. It will be absolutely fireproof, even the interior trim being in metal finished to look like hard woods. The only wood in the building will be the little carpet strips around the edges of the different rooms, and all of these

narrow pieces together would not make a respectable bonfire.

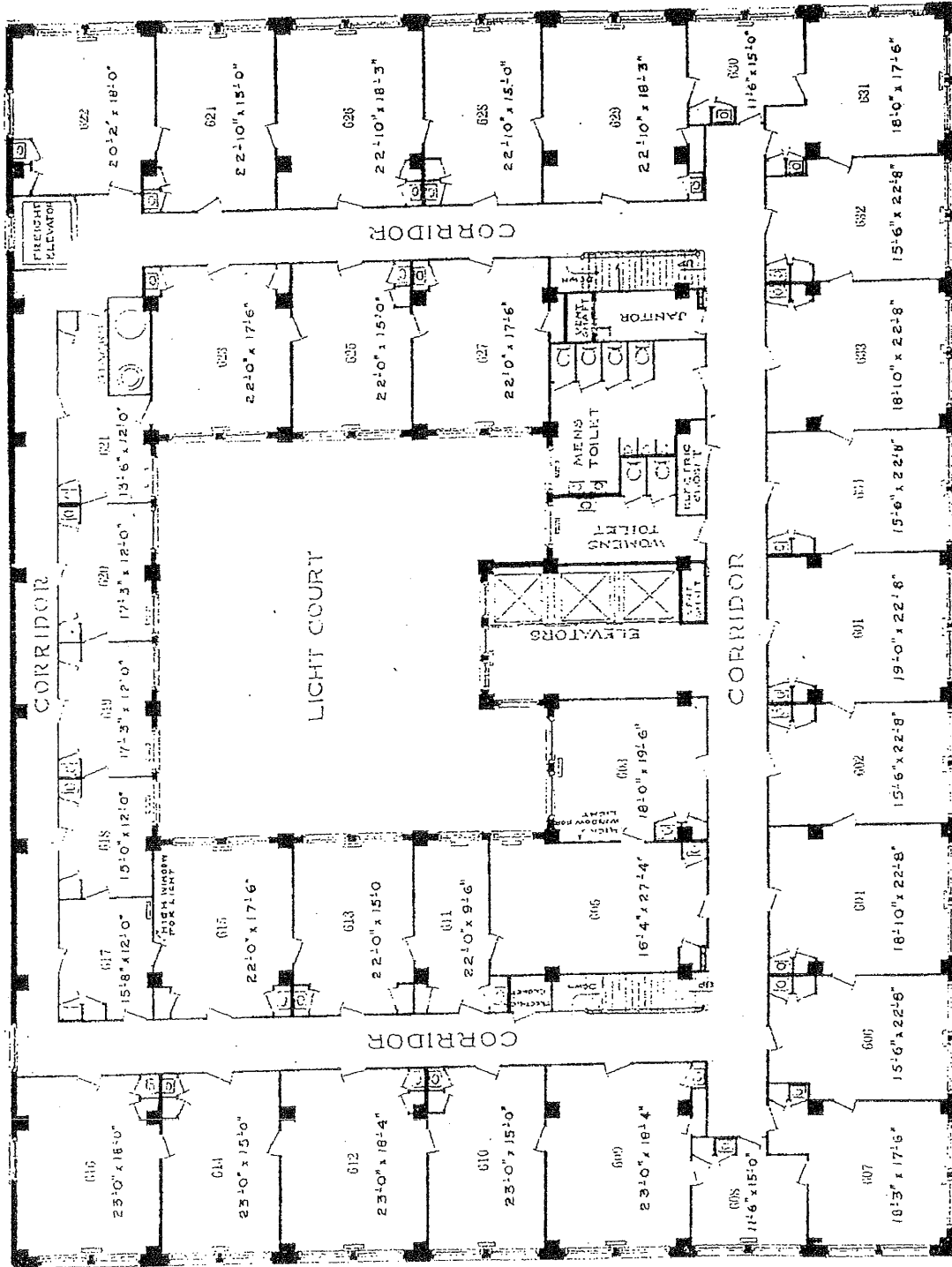
There probably is not another man in the city who believes so confidently in the future of that section of the city north of Fourth street as does Mr. Higgins. To him the idea that the "north end" is deteriorating is a myth too preposterous to be seriously considered. He believed in his Second and Main site long before the present popular civic center idea was ever thought of and showed his faith to the extent of over \$500,000 worth in starting the magnificent block which he is now to extend to ten stories.

The determination of the Council to build the city hall at the Temple Block site and the project of C. Wesley Roberts and his associates to erect a ten-story reinforced concrete block at Second and Broadway settled the thing for Mr. Higgins. What with the buildings named, the nine-story Union League Club building at Second and Hill streets and the proposed eight-story Ferguson block at Hill and Third, all to be finished during the year, not another portion of the business district can be said to be facing any better than the north end.

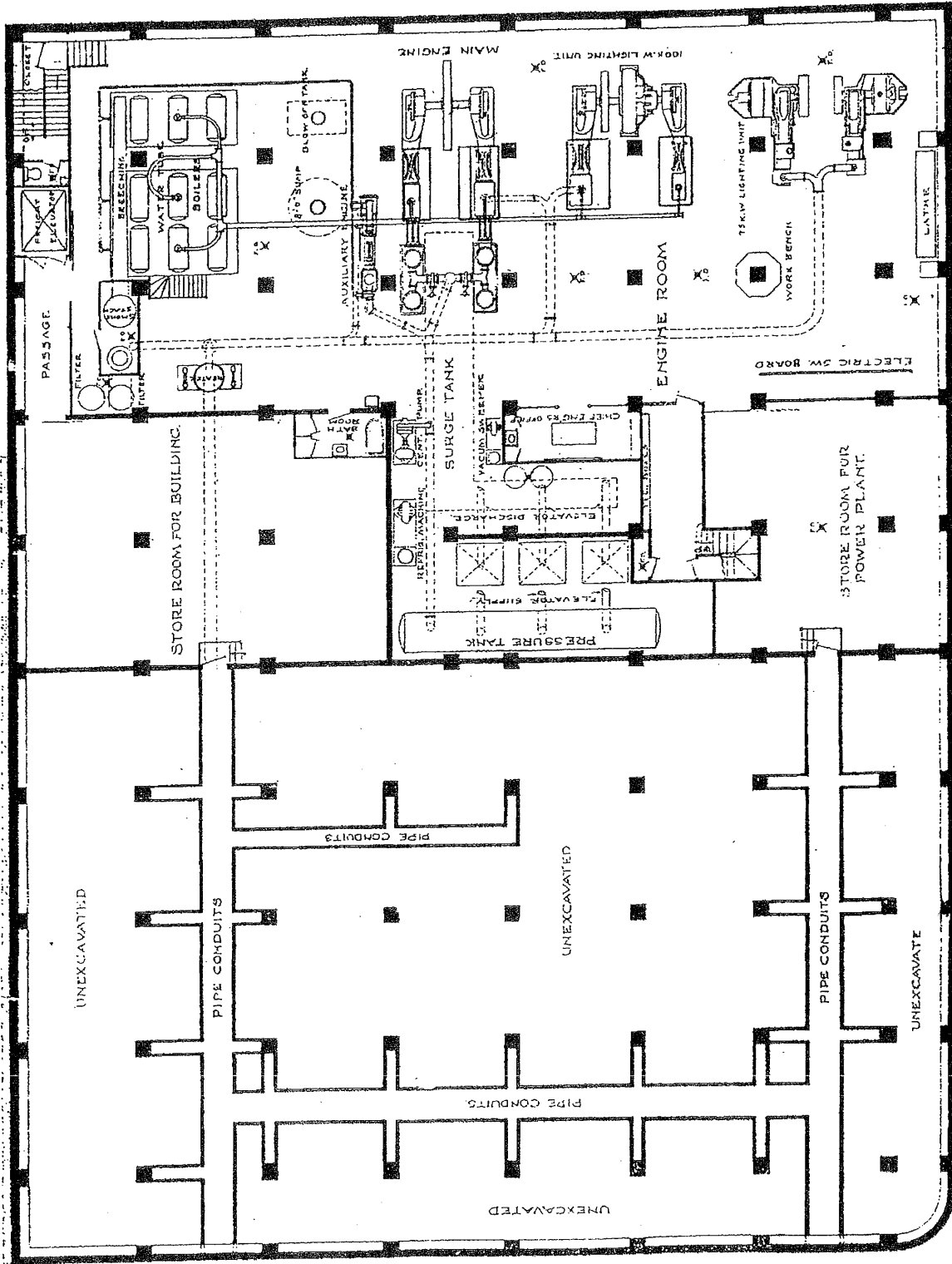
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First Floor Plan

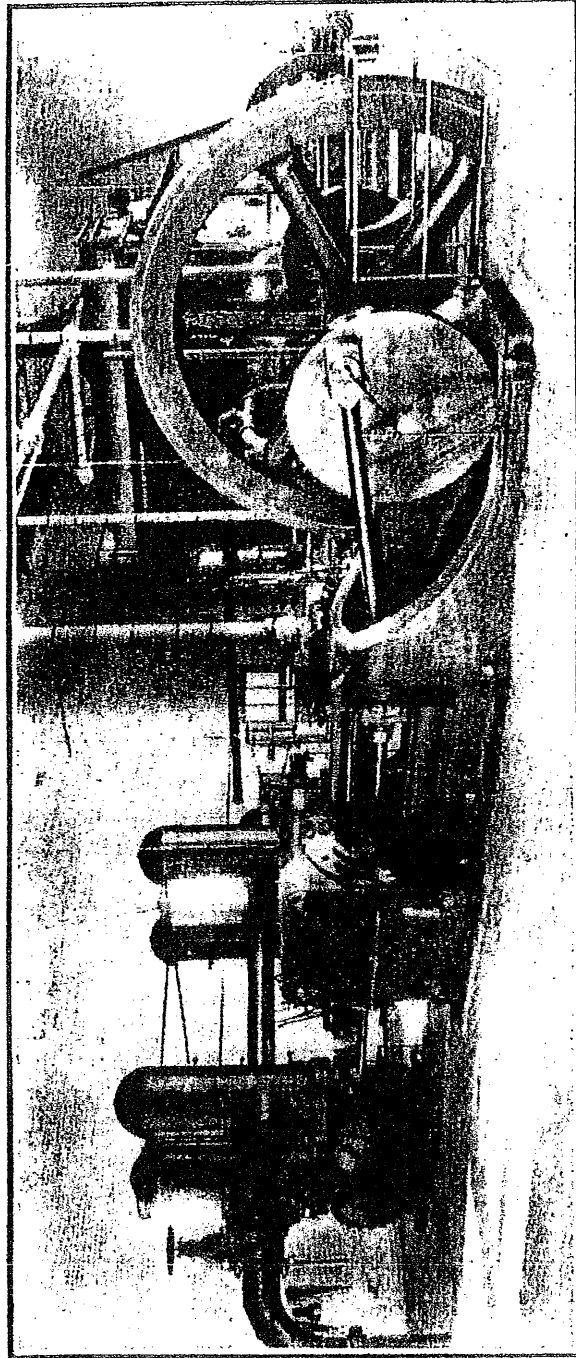


Thomas Higgins Building—Typical Floor Plan

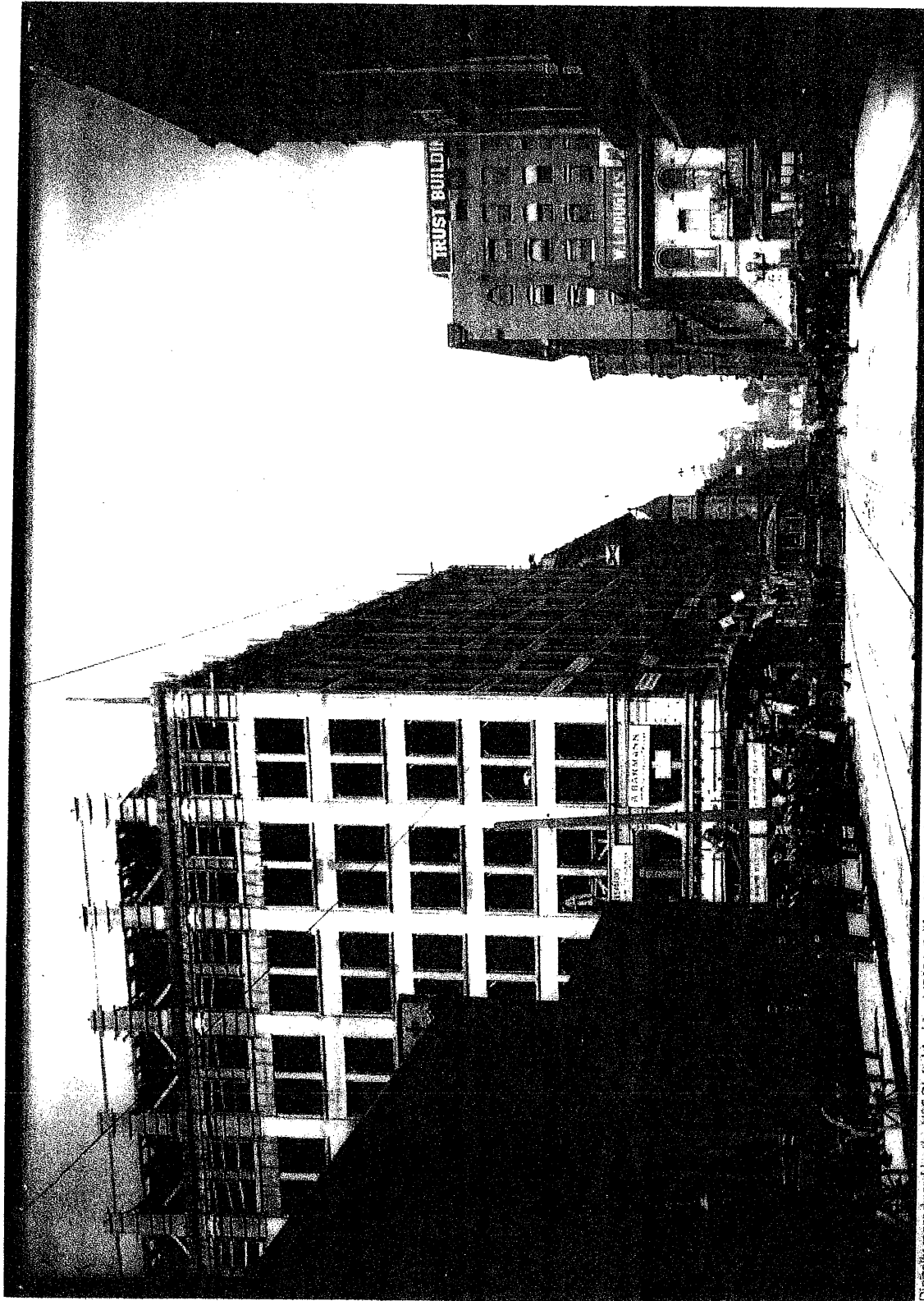


A. L. Hildey, Architect

Thomas Higgins Building-- Sub-Basement Storing Power Plant



One of the Engines, Power Plant Thomas Higgins Building, Los Angeles



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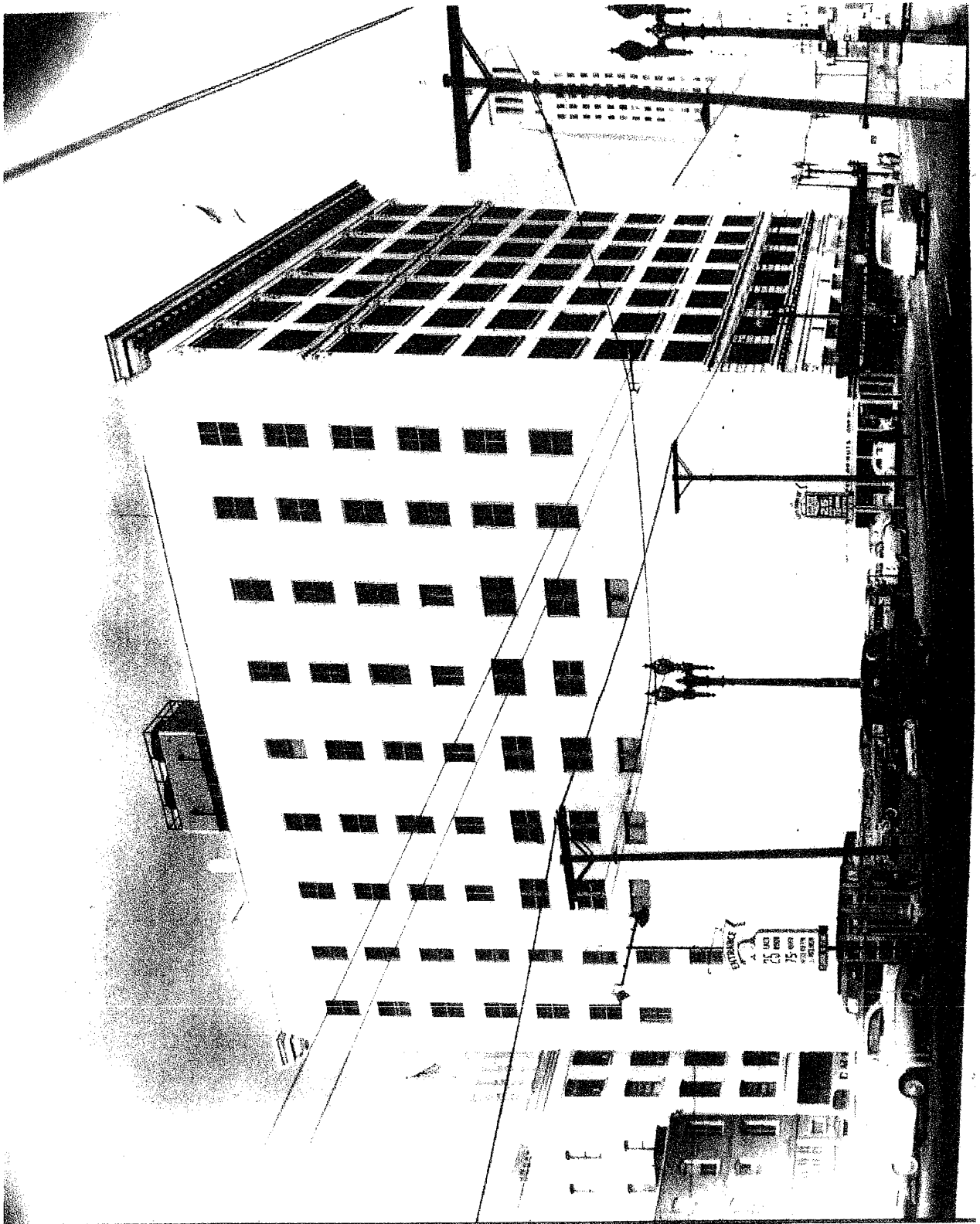
Higgins Building, 1910





Higgins Building, 1941

Photo by Art Streib /Herald Examiner



Higgins Building, 1959



Higgins Building, 2006

photo ©2006 Brad Buckman