

Wilshire Theatre
1314 Wilshire Boulevard
Santa Monica, California
City Landmark Assessment and Evaluation Report

Evaluation Report
Photographs
Parcel Map
Sanborn Maps



Prepared for:
City of Santa Monica
Planning Division

Prepared by:
PCR Services Corporation
Santa Monica, California

September 2007

Wilshire Theatre

1314 Wilshire Boulevard

City of Santa Monica

APN: 4282-004-022

City Landmark Assessment and Evaluation

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Description of site or structure, note any major alterations and dates of alterations

The subject property is situated on the south side of Wilshire Boulevard between Euclid Avenue to the west, and 14th Street to the east. The property encompasses the northeast 80 feet of lot V, all of lot Z, and the northeast 30 feet of lot X, Block 111 in the Town of Santa Monica Tract. The lot size of the subject property is approximately 80 feet by 150 feet. The Art Deco Wilshire Theatre building is located in a primarily commercial district, although there are single- and multi-family residential neighborhoods on both the north and south sides of Wilshire Boulevard. The theatre has a rectangular plan with a high decorative parapet on the north (street-facing) elevation and a stage-grid tower on the south (rear) elevation.

This property has been previously identified and assessed under the City of Santa Monica's on-going survey process on two separate occasions. It was initially evaluated in 1993-94 under Phase III of the City's historic resources inventory process. At that time, the subject property was assigned a National Register status code of "5S1," which states that the property is individually eligible for local listing (the National Register 5S1 is now known as a 5S2 on the California Historical Resource Status Code).¹ Following the 1994 Northridge earthquake, the property was resurveyed and evaluated for historical significance in 1995 as part of the City's assessment to determine the earthquake's overall effects to those properties listed in the City's Historic Resources Inventory at the time. The survey found that the earthquake caused no measurable damage to the building. In the December 19, 2006, City of Santa Monica Historic Resources Inventory list, the subject property retains its 5S1 status code.

The subject property was erected in 1930 as a three-unit Art Deco commercial building with a central theatre flanked on each side by a small commercial store. The theatre building is situated towards the north, street-facing end of the parcel. The building is rectangular in plan, built of poured-in-place concrete and has a stucco primary facade. The massing consists of a northern commercial storefront and theatre entrance section along Wilshire Boulevard, which is subdivided into three bays with the theatre set in the middle. The Wilshire Theatre has a high decorative front façade and parapet on the north elevation, while the other elevations are poured-in-place concrete with few openings. The two-story theater auditorium section and stage grid tower are at the southern end of the theatre.

The Wilshire Theatre's decorative front façade is in a stepped arrangement with the central bay wall rising from just above the marquee to above the roof line, forming a high parapet,

¹ Historic Resources Inventory Survey Form, 1314 Wilshire Boulevard.

while the two secondary bays above the commercial spaces on each side of the theatre entrance are both lower and recessed from the center bay's wall. Two wide stepped pilasters divide the recessed secondary bays. The east and west pilasters serve as the two edges of the central theatre bay. Between the pilasters, five smaller decorative pilasters recessed panels divide the front façade. The stucco panels are decorated with curvilinear rows that move east to west between the smaller pilasters. A row of raised decorative "chevrons" runs along the top of the parapet between the large pilasters. The theatre marquee and the entrance foyer are below the central bay's decorative wall and parapet.

The marquee is Streamline Moderne in style with neon-lit lettering spelling "Wilshire" and curved neon lighting is situated over the entrance foyer. The theater entrance consists of a recessed foyer, a poly-chromatic terrazzo floor with a chevron pattern inlay, a ticket booth with aluminum frames and transparent glazing set into the foyer's west elevation, and display cases attached to the side walls and the walls on Wilshire Boulevard. Four sets of aluminum and glass double doors with a single glazed pane in each door, open into the lobby.

Alterations to the central bay include the enclosing of three pairs of metal frame arched windows just above the existing marquee, the removal of the original marquee and the addition of the existing marquee, the removal of the free-standing central ticket kiosk and the addition of the existing ticket booth, and the removal of the tile floor and the addition of the existing terrazzo flooring.

The east and west secondary bays on the front façade are set back from the central bay wall. There is a recessed stucco panel in the center of both the east and west bays that runs vertically to the top of the wall. A stepped scroll relief is set into the recessed panel. At the ground floor level in each bay, there is a small commercial space with aluminum window and door framing and transparent glazing. There is terrazzo finish on the knee-wall below the storefront windows and on the vertical services around the east and west commercial spaces.

The east, west, and south elevations are poured-in-place concrete with only a few doors and windows. The board-formed pattern is noticeable on all three sides. On the west elevation, the neighboring building and the Wilshire Theatre share a party wall. There is a fire exit on the second story of the west elevation.

SURVEY EVALUATION

Statement of Architectural Significance

The subject property located at 1314 Wilshire Theatre is an excellent example of an Art-Deco theatre and is one of two surviving neighborhood theatres in Santa Monica. The Wilshire Theatre is an excellent example of Art Deco style adapted to the neighborhood theatre.

This style was introduced at the 1925 Exposition des Arts Decoratifs in Paris. Although the United States did not participate, the Exposition's influence impacted building designs across the country through the end of World War II. The Art Deco style advocated the extensive use of applied decoration, in contrast to the Modernist Movement, which used abstraction instead of decoration. Art Deco designers believed that the applied decoration should be new in form, reflecting the character of the 20th century, rather than be based on classical precedent. The style was a "modernization" of many artistic styles and themes from the past. Stylized elements Eastern, Egyptian and Mayan influence were common. Also commonplace was ornamentation mirroring machine and automobile patterns and shapes, such as stylized gears and wheels, as well as stylized natural elements such as sunbursts and flowers. Art Deco buildings are characterized as simple geometric forms, with strong vertical emphases. This verticality is accomplished through the use of pyramidal or stepped roofs, towers, or by employing tall pylons. Art Deco buildings tended to incorporate the use of new materials, including steel, aluminum, terracotta and glass. Art Deco was the preferred style for the design of governmental buildings during the Depression.

The exterior of 1314 Wilshire Boulevard has many of the character-defining features of Art Deco architecture. The verticality of the pilasters, recessed panels, and the high parapet of the central bay on the street facing primary façade, dominates the exterior elevations. The decorative patterns including the stepped scrolls and chevrons are also very common details of the Art Deco style. Furthermore, Wilshire Theatre's façade is both balanced and hierarchical.

Between 1920 and 1940, there were several other neighborhood theatres in addition to the Wilshire Theatre in Santa Monica. City directories listed the Crown Theatre (504 Santa Monica Boulevard, 1919), the Majestic Theatre (214 Santa Monica Boulevard, 1919), the Criterion Theatre (1313 3rd Avenue, 1927), the Elmiro Theatre (1443 3rd Street, 1933) and the Santa Monica Wilshire (1314 Wilshire Boulevard, 1933), and the Aero Theatre (1328 Montana, 1940). While some of these were constructed for use by live entertainment or silent pictures, most were eventually converted to motion picture use. Of these, the Aero and Wilshire are the only two existing theatres still in operation as a theatre. The others have been demolished, or significantly altered.

In sum, the subject property is an excellent representative example of the Art Deco style as applied to a neighborhood theatre. Although there were moderate alterations made during the 1960 remodel, the Wilshire Theatre exhibits a high level of architectural integrity.

Statement of Historical Importance

Santa Monica. In 1875, the original townsite of Santa Monica was surveyed, including all the land extending from Colorado Street on the south to Montana on the north, and from 26th Street on the east to the Pacific Ocean on the west. Between 1893 and the 1920s, the community operated as a tourist attraction, visited mostly by wealthy patrons. Those areas just outside of the incorporated city limits were semi-rural in setting and were populated with scattered residences. Following the widespread acceptance of the automobile in the 1920s, Santa Monica experienced a significant building boom, with homes being constructed in the tracts north of Montana and east of Seventh Street for year-round residents.

Previous to the 1920s, Wilshire Boulevard, originally known as Nevada Street, was a sparsely populated residential street. The commercial district in the City of Santa Monica was established in the late 1920s between Wilshire and Colorado, at Second, Third, and Fourth Streets. East of the commercial core on Wilshire Boulevard, a mixed residential and commercial area developed more slowly. The Wilshire Theatre, a neighborhood theatre, was an important development in the conversion of Wilshire Boulevard into a predominately commercial strip. The increase in commercial activities was at least partially caused by the population increase that occurred in the 1920s after the arrival of large companies, such as Merle Norman Cosmetics and Douglas Aircraft. In the years immediately prior to America's entry into World War II, Santa Monica's development escalated as Douglas Aircraft received increasing numbers of government contracts. After the war, when Southern California was flooded with returning veterans and their families seeking homes, the demand for housing continued to be high in Santa Monica, and apartment construction in particular escalated.

1314 Wilshire Boulevard and Vicinity. The area that includes the property at 1314 Wilshire Boulevard is part of the original town of Santa Monica. A 1918 Sanborn map indicates that four of the twelve parcels with frontage along the south or north side of the 1300 block of Wilshire Boulevard was improved by 1918.² Building activity did not begin to pick up until the early 1920s when Santa Monica experienced a prolonged population and building boom. The subject property was constructed in 1930. By 1950, all 12 parcels were improved with commercial properties.³ It appears the subject property is the only remaining extant building from the pre-World War II era. The other commercial buildings in the 1300 block of Wilshire Boulevard were constructed after World War II.

The Wilshire Theatre was designed and built by architect, John M. Cooper. The original owner was Harry H. Belden. It appears that Fox West Coast Theatres purchased the theatre shortly after its completion in the early 1930s. Architect John M. Cooper received his architectural license on July 17, 1913, and opened a practice in Long Beach, California. His practice grew to include architect, Frank H. Webster, whom Cooper partnered with until 1919.⁴ Cooper opened an independent practice shortly after splitting with Webster,

² Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Santa Monica 1918.

³ Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Santa Monica 1918-1950.

⁴ Southwest Builder and Contractor, January 31, 1919.

working from the Marsh-Strong Building in Downtown Los Angeles.⁵ Cooper was a successful local architect with an accomplished career. Although his career did not reach the level of Master Architect, his impressive resume of work includes many thoughtful and important buildings in Los Angeles, which earned him the distinction of being a notable architect and builder during his career. His work was published in the *Architectural Digest* and in the *Southwest Builder*. Some of the best examples of his work include a synagogue in Boyle Heights, a residence at 231 South Plymouth Street, a residence at 316 South Lorraine Street, San Bernardino City Hall, and the Roxy Theatre on Broadway in Downtown Los Angeles.⁶ The Art Deco Roxy Theatre was built in 1931 and is still extant. It has a similar façade composition to the Wilshire Theatre.

Owner Harry H. Belden developed the theatre in 1930. Belden owned the theatre briefly and then sold it to Fox West Coast Theatres at some point in the 1930s. Fox West Coast Theatres were created from a partnership between Mike and Abe Gore, Adolph Ramish, Sol Lesser, and William Fox. Fox West Coast Theatres created a seamless production-to-distribution system for the film industry. The partnership was short lived due to both the antitrust and financial difficulties of Fox; the corporation went into bankruptcy in the early 1930s. The Fox West Coast Theatres came under control of the Skouras Brothers in 1932 and became part of National Theatres, the largest and most successful theater chain in history.

In 1960, the Wilshire Theatre was remodeled. Alterations and additions to the original design included the removal of the freestanding ticket kiosk, removal of the original tile flooring in the foyer, the removal of the original doors, the remodeling of the lobby interior, and the enclosing of the second-story windows.⁷ Between 1976 and 1977 Mann Theatre Corporation bought the theatre and “split the existing auditorium into two separate theatres by adding a wall in the middle” in 1977.⁸ In the early 1990s, Landmark Theatres purchased the theatre.

Person(s) of Historical Importance

Harry H. Belden, according to the original building permit, was the first owner of the theatre. Fox West Coast Theatres owned the property for several years and it was subsequently merged with the National Theatres. In the mid-1970s Mann Theatre Corporation owned the subject property until it was sold to Landmark Theatres in the early 1990s. The current owner is La Brea Washington Co. LLC. It appears that the subject property has never been associated with a person of historical importance.

Statement of other significance

No other evidence was discovered in current research of the property to indicate other significance.

⁵ Ibid, March 21, 1919.

⁶ Ibid, March 13, 1920, December 26, 1930, August 1, 1930, June 21, 1931, and Architectural Digest 1924.

⁷ City of Santa Monica Building Permit, December 2, 1960.

⁸ City of Santa Monica Building Permit, January 4, 1970.

Is the structure representative of a style in the City that is no longer prevalent?

The subject property located at 1314 Wilshire Theatre is an excellent example of an Art-Deco neighborhood movie theatre and is one of two surviving neighborhood theatres in Santa Monica. Between 1920 and 1940, there were several other neighborhood theatres in addition to the Wilshire Theatre in Santa Monica. Of these, the Aero and Wilshire are the only two existing theatres still in operation as a theatre. The others have been demolished, or significantly altered. The Wilshire Theatre is an excellent example of an Art Deco style theatre, and is therefore, an excellent representative of a style no longer prevalent in the city.

Does the structure contribute to a potential historic district?

The subject property, situated within the original Santa Monica Townsite, has not been previously identified in the City's Historic Resources Inventory or in subsequent survey updates and evaluations as being a contributor to a potential historic district within the City. The area in which the subject property is located does not possess a significant concentration, linkage, or continuity of buildings that are united historically or aesthetically by plan, architectural style, or physical development. Additionally, the surrounding area does not reflect a unifying entity that conveys its overall historic context. Specifically, the area's setting, feeling, and associations have been substantially altered over the decades by the appearance of numerous postwar commercial buildings, which, in turn, have negatively affected the design, materials, and workmanship associated with commercial buildings of similar mass and scale associated with the years prior to World War II. Because of compromised integrity issues, there appears to be no identifiable district with which the subject property would be associated as a potential contributor.

CONCLUSION

In summary, based on current research and the above assessment, the property located at 1314 Wilshire Boulevard appears to meet several City of Santa Monica Landmark criteria. The property was evaluated according to statutory criteria as follows:

Landmark Criteria:

9.36.100(a)(1) It exemplifies, symbolizes, or manifests elements of the cultural, social, economic, political or architectural history of the City.

The subject property is a very good example of the Art Deco architectural style as applied to a neighborhood movie theatre constructed during the early 1930s. Additionally, the property exhibits a substantial degree of architectural integrity. Though the commercial setting along the 1300 block of Wilshire Boulevard has been extensively developed with post-war commercial buildings, the property at 1314 Wilshire Boulevard retains a high degree of architectural and historical integrity individually in its design, workmanship, and materials to manifest the architectural history of the City of Santa Monica. Although the property's historical integrity in terms of location and association has been compromised by post-war infill, the theatre itself still relates the feeling of a 1930s theatre. Therefore, the subject property appears to satisfy this criterion.

9.36.100(a)(2) It has aesthetic or artistic interest or value, or other noteworthy interest or value.

The resource does not appear to meet this criterion. The theatre lacks sufficient aesthetic or artistic interest or value necessary for designation.

9.36.100(a)(3) It is identified with historic personages or with important events in local, state or national history.

Current research did not reveal any information on the property's owners and/or occupants to indicate historical significance or notability. Therefore, the subject property does not appear to satisfy this criterion.

9.36.100(a)(4) It embodies distinguishing architectural characteristics valuable to a study of a period, style, method of construction, or the use of indigenous materials or craftsmanship, or is a unique or rare example of an architectural design, detail or historical type valuable to such a study.

The property appears to satisfy this criterion. The subject property is an excellent representative example of an early-1930s Art Deco movie theatre. The theatre incorporates the verticality, organizational hierarchy, decorative details, and other signature trademarks of the idiom in its overall design. Because it is the only remaining example of the Art-Deco style as applied to a movie theatre within the City of Santa Monica, it is important in illustrating the historic architectural context of the city.

9.36.100(a)(5) It is a significant or a representative example of the work or product of a notable builder, designer or architect.

The Wilshire Theatre was designed and built by architect, John M. Cooper. Cooper was a successful local architect with an accomplished career. Although his career did not reach the level of Master Architect, his impressive resume of work includes many thoughtful and important buildings in Los Angeles, which earned him the distinction of being a notable architect and builder during his career. Therefore, the subject property appears to meet this criterion.

9.36.100(a)(6) It has a unique location, a singular physical characteristic, or is an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood, community or the City.

The subject property is located on the south side of Wilshire Boulevard at about the middle of the 1300 block between a laundry on the west and an alley on the east. The massing and proportions of the two-story theatre, with its primary elevation facing north onto Wilshire Boulevard, makes it a distinctive and established visual feature of the Wilshire Boulevard Commercial strip. The marquee together with the Art Deco façade and the outdoor lobby foyer are an important established historic visual characteristic of Wilshire Boulevard in the City of Santa Monica. Therefore, the subject property appears to meet this criterion.

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Southwest Builder and Contractor

Architectural Digest

CITY DIRECTORY RESEARCH

1314 Wilshire Theatre

City Directory Year	Name of Occupants	Address
1930-31	No Entry	1314 Wilshire Theatre
1933-1959	Wilshire Theatre	1314 Wilshire Theatre
1960	Fox Wilshire Theatre	1314 Wilshire Theatre
1965	National Theatres	1314 Wilshire Theatre
1968	Fox West Coast Theatres	1314 Wilshire Theatre
1972-73	National General Theatres	1314 Wilshire Theatre
1975-1978	Wilshire Santa Monica Theatre	1314 Wilshire Theatre

PHOTOGRAPHS



Perspective view showing the primary (north) elevation, view southeast.



Primary (north) elevation, view south.



Rear (south) elevation, view north.



East side elevation, view north.



West side elevation, view east.



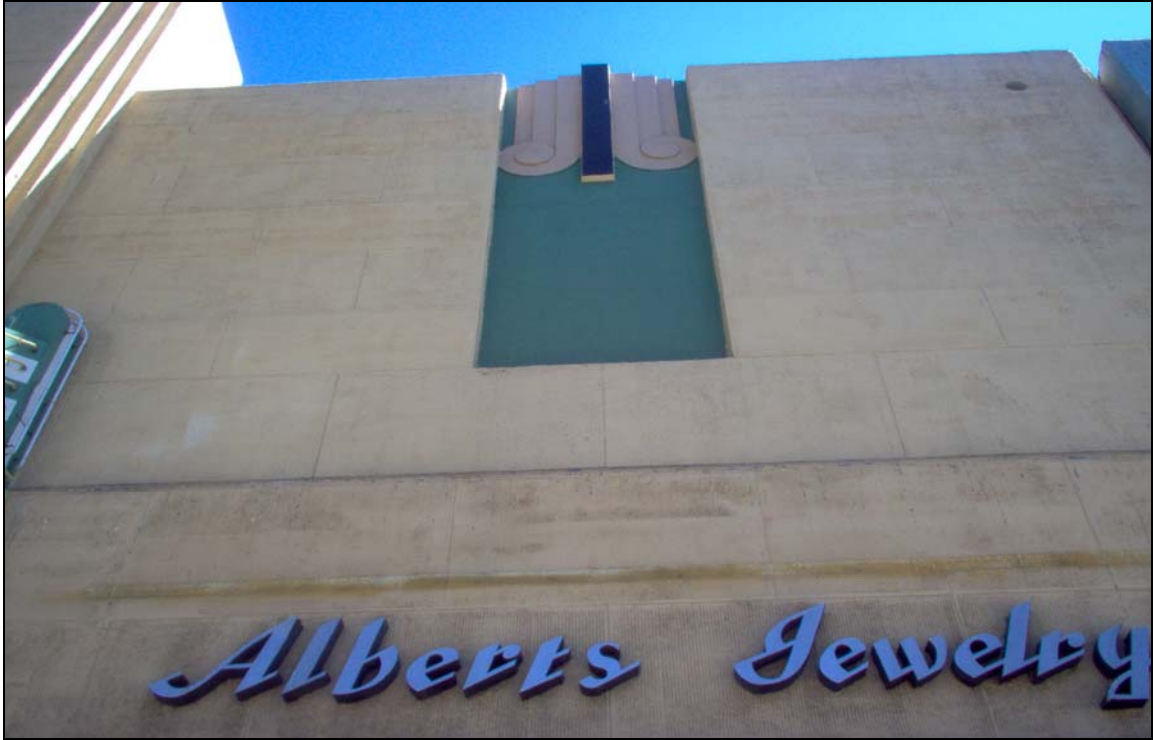
Exterior Lobby, ticket booth.



Marquee, lighting.



Exterior lobby, flooring.



West commercial space, stepped scroll relief.



Pilasters and decorative pattern.

MISCELLENOUS ATTACHMENTS

Parcel Map

Sanborn Fire Insurance Map (1918)

Sanborn Fire Insurance Map (1918-50)

Parcel Map

1995

CONDOMINIUM
TRACT NO. 35731

M. B. 913-16-17

CONDOMINIUM
TRACT NO. 49793

M. B. 1178-85-86

CONDOMINIUM
TRACT NO. 35277

M. B. 921-60-61

CONDOMINIUM
TRACT NO. 33759

M. B. 900-74-75

TOWN OF SANTA MONICA
M.R. 39-45-51

CONDOMINIUM
TRACT NO. 34033

M. B. 898-21-22

CONDOMINIUM
TRACT NO. 47487

M. B. 1147-26-27

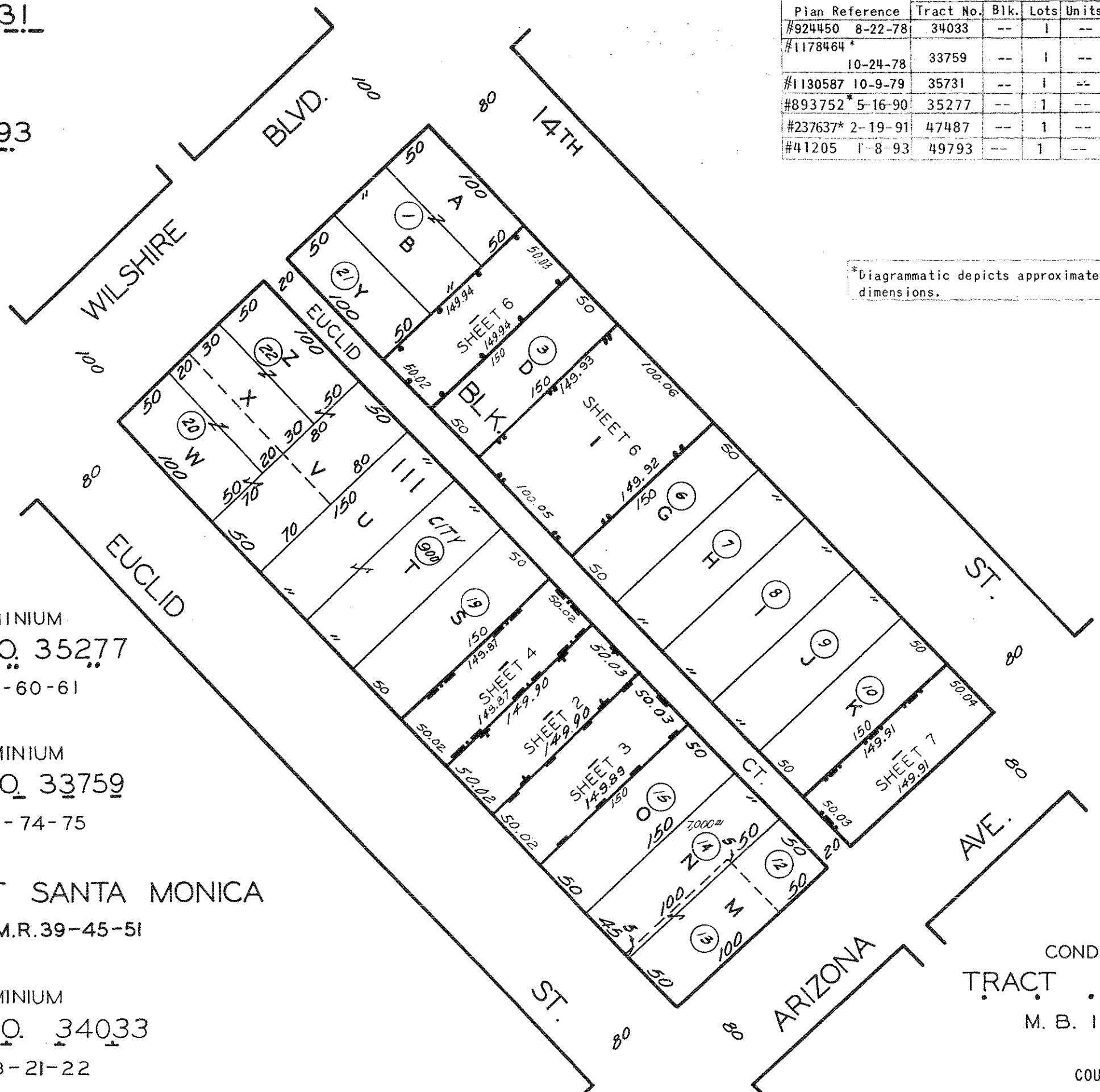
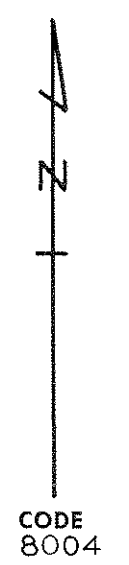
ASSESSOR'S MAP
COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES, CALIF.

The assessment of units in the following Condominium Plans, includes all rights and interests in the common areas as set forth in deeds of record.

Condominium Plan Reference	Common Area				Subdivision of Airspace
	Tract No.	Blk.	Lots	Units	
#924450 8-22-78	34033	--	1	--	Sheet 2
#1178464* 10-24-78	33759	--	1	--	Sheet 3
#1130587 10-9-79	35731	--	1	--	Sheet 4
#893752* 5-16-90	35277	--	1	--	Sheet 5
#237637* 2-19-91	47487	--	1	--	Sheet 6
#41205 1-8-93	49793	--	1	--	Sheet 7

REVISED
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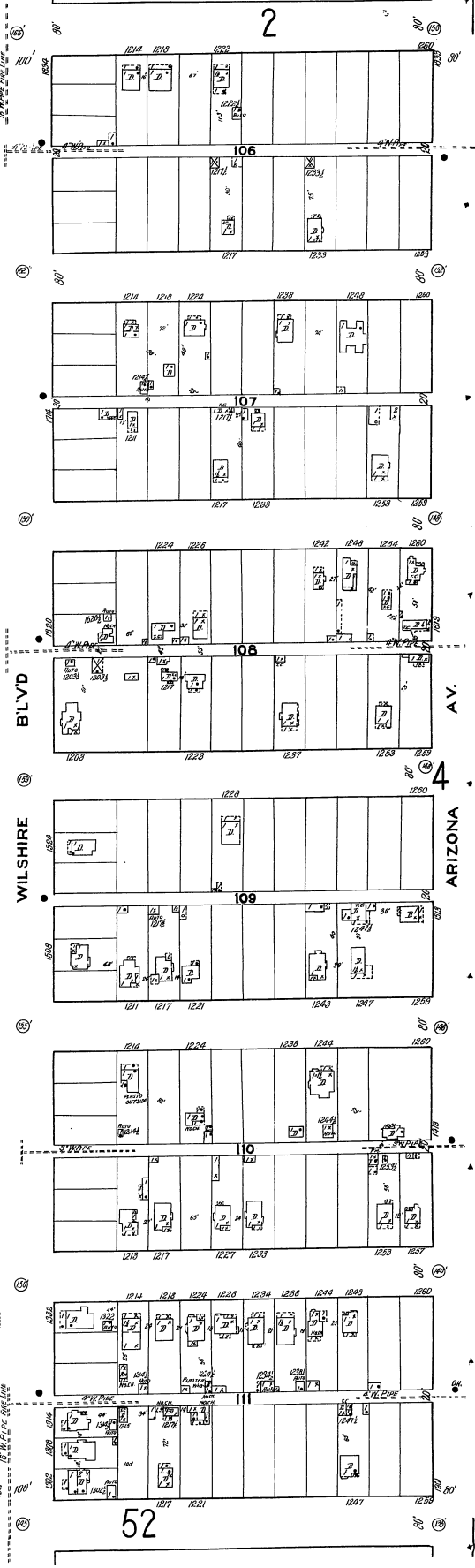
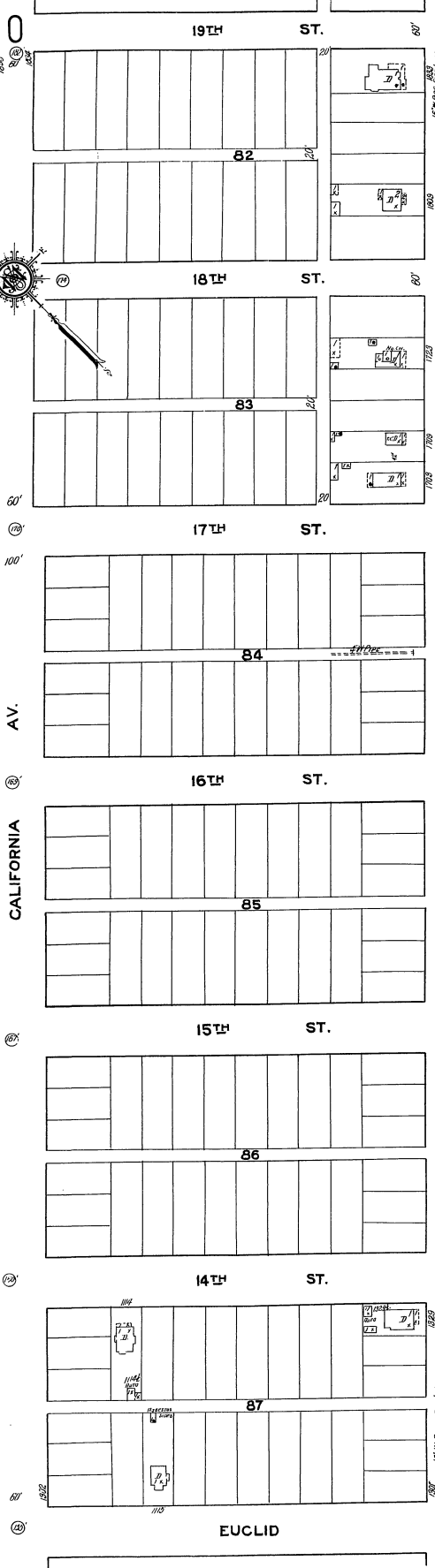
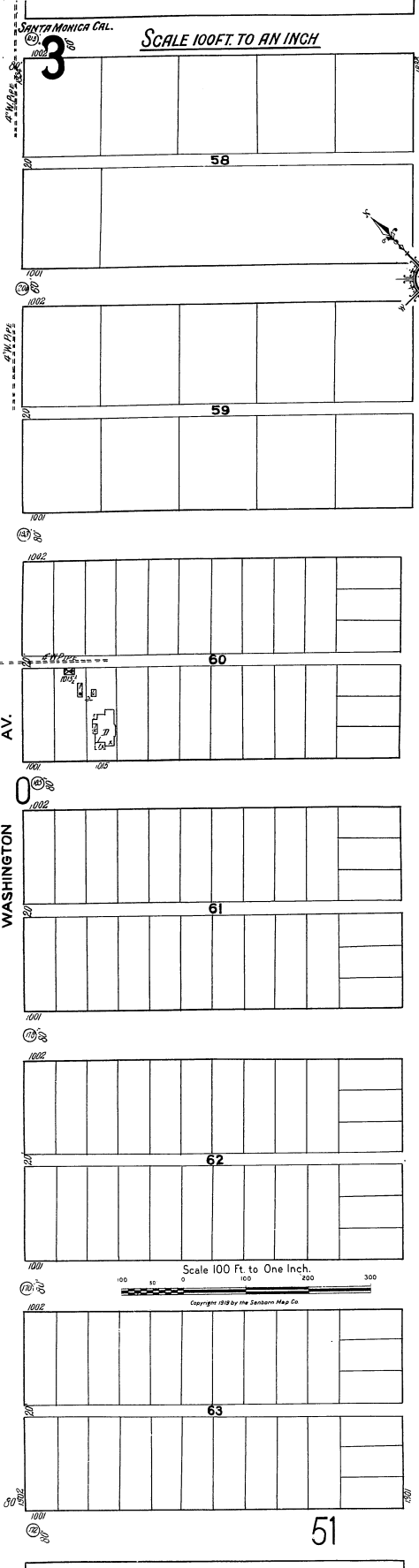
*Diagrammatic depicts approximate dimensions.



CODE 8004

FOR PREV. ASSM'T. SEE:
326-5

Sanborn Fire Insurance Map (1918)



WASHINGTON AV.

CALIFORNIA AV.

WILSHIRE B'VD

ARIZONA AV.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Map (1918-50)

1948

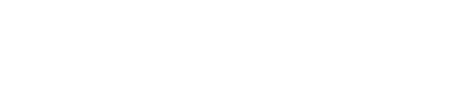
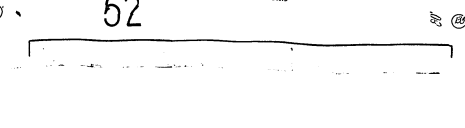
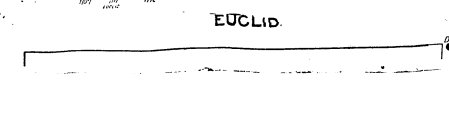
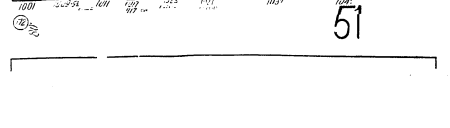
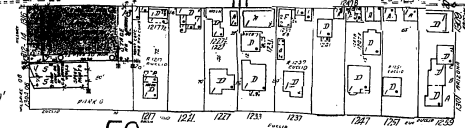
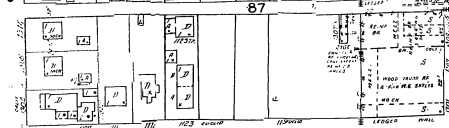
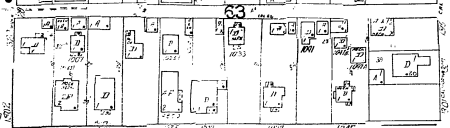
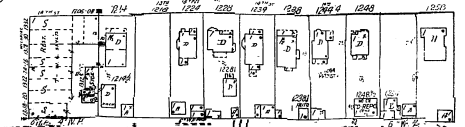
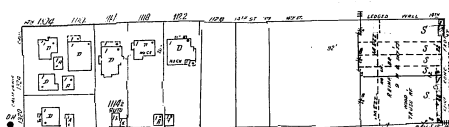
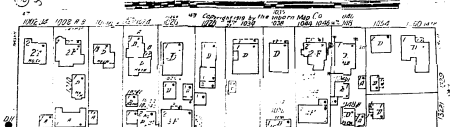
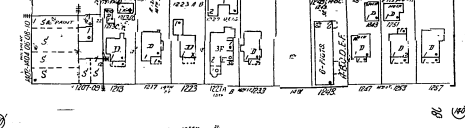
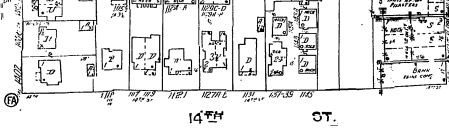
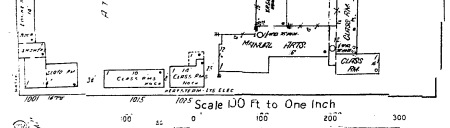
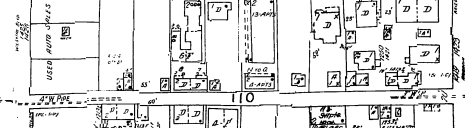
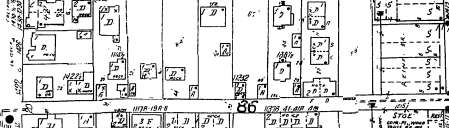
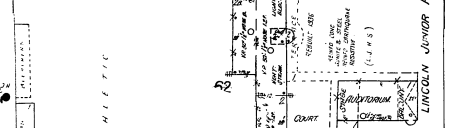
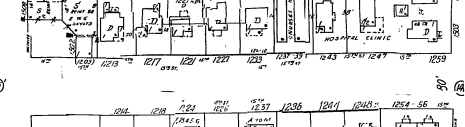
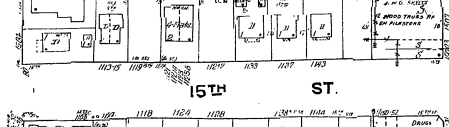
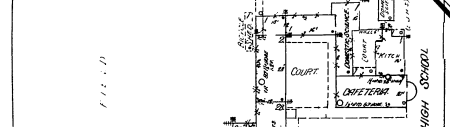
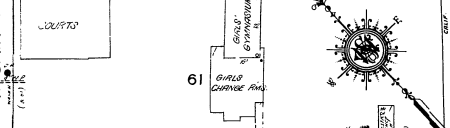
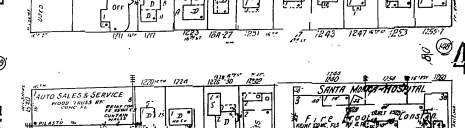
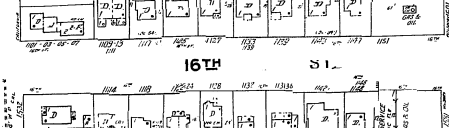
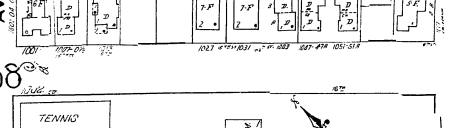
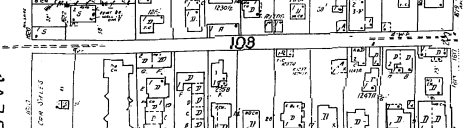
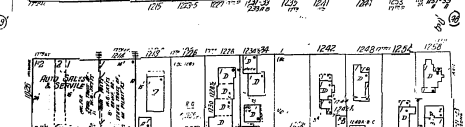
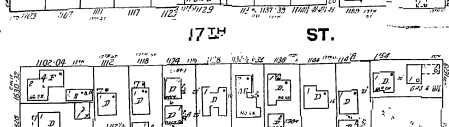
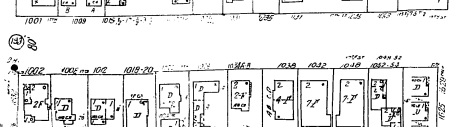
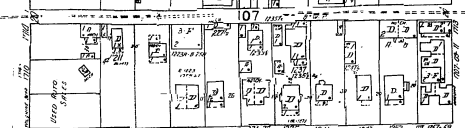
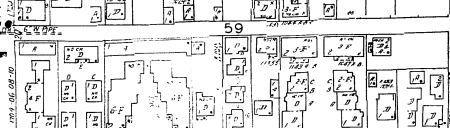
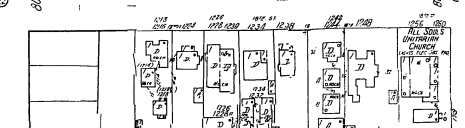
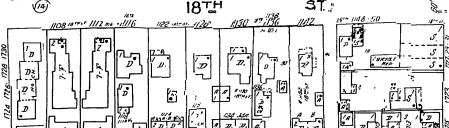
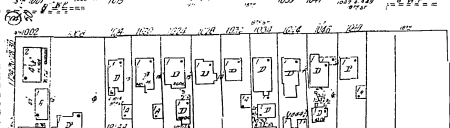
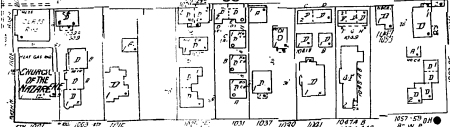
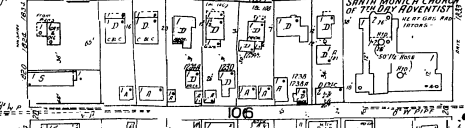
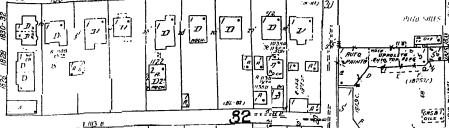
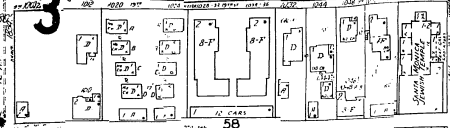
SANTA MONICA CAL.

SCALE 100 FT. TO AN INCH

56

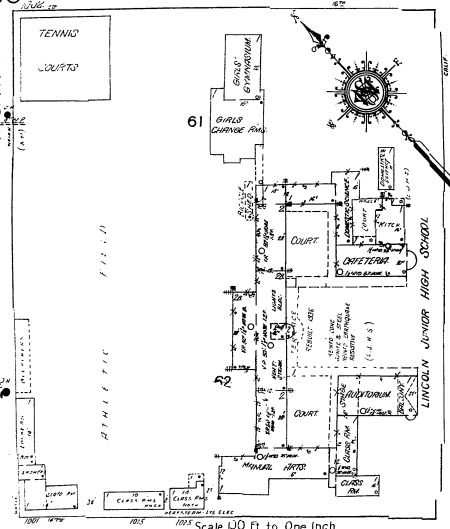
19TH ST.

2



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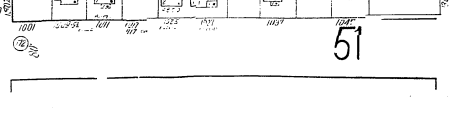
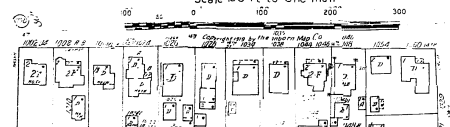
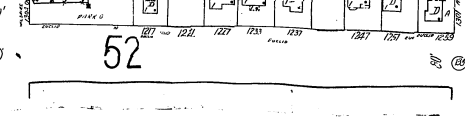
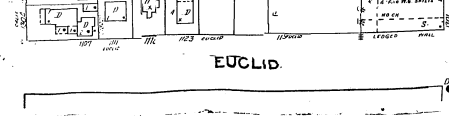
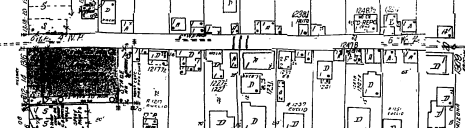
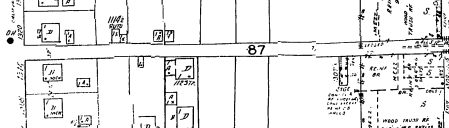
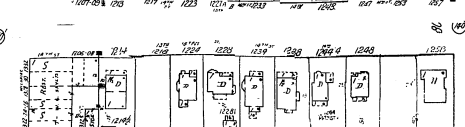
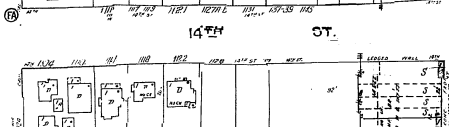
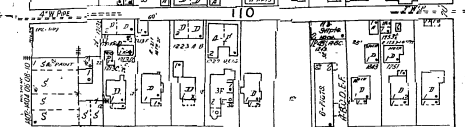
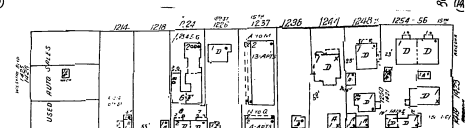
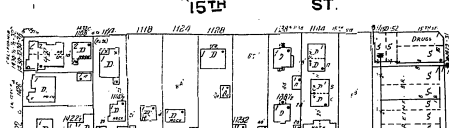
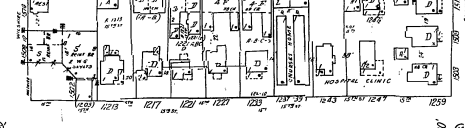
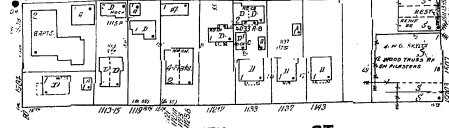
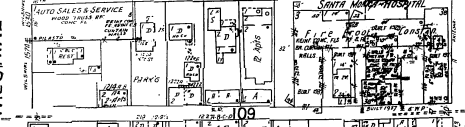
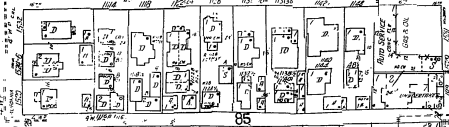
WASHINGTON



ORNL

16TH ST.

WILSHIRE



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EUCLID

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