

# Los Angeles Department of City Planning

## RECOMMENDATION REPORT

### CULTURAL HERITAGE COMMISSION

CASE NO.: CHC-2008-3554-HCM

**HEARING DATE:** September 4, 2008  
**TIME:** 10:00 AM  
**PLACE:** City Hall, Room 1010  
200 N. Spring Street  
Los Angeles, CA  
90012

Location: 525 S. Van Ness Avenue  
Council District: 4  
Community Plan Area: Wilshire  
Area Planning Commission: Central  
Neighborhood Council: Greater Wilshire  
Legal Description: Lot 77 of MB 8-76, Henry J.  
Brown's Wilshire Terrace

**PROJECT:** Historic-Cultural Monument Application for the  
HEERMAN ESTATE

**REQUEST:** Declare the property a Historic-Cultural Monument

**APPLICANT:** Concerned Residents of Larchmont  
140 S. Avenue 57  
Los Angeles, CA 90042

**OWNER:** Ho Y and Woo J. Im  
28 Viewpoint Place  
Laguna Niguel, CA 92677

**RECOMMENDATION**      **That the Cultural Heritage Commission:**

1. **Take the property under consideration** as a Historic-Cultural Monument per Los Angeles Administrative Code Chapter 9, Division 22, Article 1, Section 22.171.10 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

**[SIGNED ORIGINAL IN FILE]**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Ken Bernstein, Manager  
Office of Historic Resources

**[SIGNED ORIGINAL IN FILE]**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Lambert M. Giessinger, Preservation Architect  
Office of Historic Resources

Prepared by:

**[SIGNED ORIGINAL IN FILE]**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Edgar Garcia, Preservation Planner  
Office of Historic Resources

Attachments:      July 28, 2008 Historic-Cultural Monument Application  
ZIMAS Report

## **SUMMARY**

Built in 1908 and altered several times from 1919-1942, this two-story single-family residential building exhibits character-defining features of Colonial Revival architecture. It is T-shaped in plan with a gabled roof sheathed in composition shingles. A single transverse gable covers the central portion of the house. The entry, located under a porte-cochere on the right side of the building, features a classic surround and brick porch with a multi-paneled wooden door and two sets of twin fluted pilasters each with four pane windows. The exterior is clad in wood clapboard siding. The façade has multi-light, casement, double-hung, and fixed windows composed of glass and wood. A large Regency-style window bay is on a recessed façade to the left of the main gable and chimney. Multiple sets of double hung windows flank the large brick chimney. Additional character-defining elements include boxed eaves and a cornice along the roof with broken cornices on gable pediments, circular attic vents are found in each gable end. The estate is surrounded on three sides with brick walls and has a front gate flanked by brick towers. Secondary buildings consist of the original carriage house/chauffeur's quarters, a second garage constructed in brick, a tennis court and brick pavilion, and a swimming pool.

The architects of the 1919 remodel of the proposed Heerman Estate historic monument are Albert R. Walker and Percy A. Eisen. This remodel was one of the first commissions for the pair of native Californians who went on to gain prominence in commercial design with landmarks such as the Fine Arts Building (HCM 125), the United Artists Theatre Building (HCM 523), the Hollywood Plaza Hotel (HCM 665), the Taft Building (HCM 666), the Edwards-Wilkey Building (HCM 786), the "810 South Spring Building" (HCM 871) as well as the Beverly Wilshire Hotel and others. The remodel of the Heerman Estate appears to be one of the only examples of domestic architecture by Walker and Eisen.

The third owners of the estate (1923–1977) were Victor and Sarah Heerman who were screenwriters for many early films, including the adaptation of "Little Women", which earned both an Academy Award. Victor Heerman also directed twenty-one motion pictures. They both retired in 1954 after their work on the screenplay for "Magnificent Obsession".

The house is listed as a contributor to the Windsor Square Historic Preservation Overlay Zone, which was re-established in April 2007.

Alterations to the property include Walker and Percy's 1919 remodel which enlarged the living room and added a bathroom, the chimney, and the brick walls which surround much of the property. Between 1923-1942, the Heermans installed a plumbing system, cellar, tennis court and pavilion, second garage, and Lath house (to grow cymbidium orchids), and altered the interior.

## **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 may be significant enough to warrant further investigation as a potential Historic-Cultural Monument.

# HISTORIC-CULTURAL MONUMENT APPLICATION

TYPE OR PRINT IN ALL CAPITAL BLOCK LETTERS

## IDENTIFICATION

1. NAME OF PROPOSED MONUMENT HEERMAN ESTATE
2. STREET ADDRESS 525 S. VAN NESS AVENUE  
CITY LOS ANGELES ZIP CODE 90020 COUNCIL DISTRICT 4  
ASSESSOR'S PARCEL NO. 5504-016-046
3. COMPLETE LEGAL DESCRIPTION: TRACT HENRY J. BROWN'S WILSHIRE TERRACE, AS PER MAP FILED IN BOOK  
8, PAGE 76, OF MAPS, IN THE OFFICE OF THE COUNTY RECORDER OF LOS ANGELES COUNTY.  
BLOCK N/A LOT(S) 75, 76 AND 77, EX EAST 147.22 FT OF LOT 75 PLUS 1/2 ALLEY TO WEST ARB. NO. N/A  
RANGE OF ADDRESSES ON PROPERTY 519 THRU 529 S. VAN NESS AVENUE
4. PRESENT OWNER HO Y AND WOO J. IM  
STREET ADDRESS 28 VIEWPOINT PLACE  
CITY LAGUNA NIGUEL STATE CA ZIP CODE 92677-5629 PHONE (949) UNLISTED  
OWNER IS: PRIVATE  PUBLIC
5. PRESENT USE SINGLE FAMILY RESIDENTIAL ESTATE ORIGINAL USE SINGLE FAMILY RESIDENTIAL ESTATE

## DESCRIPTION

6. ARCHITECTURAL STYLE COLONIAL REVIVAL
7. STATE PRESENT PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE OR STRUCTURE (SEE OPTIONAL DESCRIPTION WORKSHEET)  
(SEE DESCRIPTION WORKSHEET)
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

# HISTORIC-CULTURAL MONUMENT APPLICATION

NAME OF PROPOSED MONUMENT HEERMAN ESTATE

10. CONSTRUCTION DATE: FACTUAL 1908 ESTIMATED \_\_\_\_\_
11. ARCHITECT, DESIGNER, OR ENGINEER: WALKER AND EISEN (1919 REMODEL)
12. CONTRACTOR OR OTHER BUILDER: MATTHEW O. TREMAIN (OWNER BUILDER)-1908/HOUGHTON AND ANDERSON (1919)
13. DATES OF ENCLOSED PHOTOGRAPHS JUNE 11, 2008
14. CONDITION:  EXCELLENT  GOOD  FAIR  DETERIORATED  NO LONGER IN EXISTENCE
15. ALTERATIONS: SUBSTANTIALLY REMODELED IN 1919 (WALKER AND EISEN) AND 1935. CELLAR ADDED IN 1926, PORTE-COCHERE IN 1935, 2<sup>ND</sup> GARAGE, TENNIS COURT AND PAVILION ADDED IN 1936, LATH HOUSE IN 1942, SWIMMING POOL IN 1984.
16. THREATS TO SITE  NONE KNOWN  PRIVATE DEVELOPMENT  VANDALISM  PUBLIC WORKS PROJECT
17. IS THE STRUCTURE  ON ITS ORIGINAL SITE  MOVED  UNKNOWN

## SIGNIFICANCE

18. BRIEFLY STATE HISTORICAL AND/OR ARCHITECTURAL IMPORTANCE; INCLUDE DATES, EVENTS, AND PERSONS ASSOCIATED WITH SITE (SEE OPTIONAL SIGNIFICANCE WORKSHEET) THIS COLONIAL REVIVAL ESTATE WAS THE HOME OF WRITER/DIRECTOR VICTOR HEERMAN AND HIS WIFE, SCREEN WRITER SARAH MASON HEERMAN. THE HEERMANS WON AN ACADEMY IN 1933 FOR THEIR SCREEN ADAPTATION OF LUISA MAY ALCOTT'S "LITTLE WOMEN". ORIGINALLY BUILT CIRCA 1908, HOUSE AND CARRIAGE BARN WERE PROBABLY CONSTRUCTED BY THE FIRST OWNER, MATTHEW O. TREMAIN, WHO WAS A CARPENTER AND A REAL ESTATE SPECULATOR. HE AND HIS FAMILY LIVED THERE UNTIL 1919, WHEN IT WAS SOLD TO JAMES N. IRVING, WHO HIRED THE FIRM OF ALBERT RAYMOND WALKER AND PERCY AUGUSTUS EISEN TO REMODEL THE HOUSE. IRVING SOLD THE PROPERTY TO THE HEERMANS IN 1923. OVER THE NEXT TWO DECADES, THEY MOLDED THE PROPERTY INTO A FULL HOLLYWOOD ESTATE BY REWORKING THE HOUSE AND CONVERTING THE CHAUFFEUR'S QUARTERS IN THE ORIGINAL CARRIAGE HOUSE TO AN ART STUDIO, MOVING THE UTILITY ROOM TO THE SAME, BUILDING A TENNIS COURT AND AN BRICK AND WOOD PAVILION FOR IT, AS WELL AS A SECOND BRICK GARAGE AND FINALLY, A LATH HOUSE FOR A SPECIAL COLLECTION OF CYMBIDIUM ORCHIDS THAT HEERMAN IMPORTED FROM HIS NATIVE ENGLAND IN 1942. THE PROPERTY REMAINED THE SAME UNTIL VICTOR HEERMAN'S DEATH IN 1977. IT WAS SOLD SHORTLY AFTER THAT WITH THE ONLY SUBSEQUENT CHANGE BEING THE INSTALLATION OF A SWIMMING POOL IN 1984. HISTORIC BRICK WALLS ARE ALSO THERE.
19. SOURCES (LIST BOOKS, DOCUMENTS, SURVEYS, PERSONAL INTERVIEWS WITH DATES) LOS ANGELES CITY BUILDING PERMITS PER ATTACHED, LA COUNTY ASSESSORS RECORDS, RECORDED DEEDS, US CENSUS RECORDS, LOS ANGELES CITY DIRECTORIES, A MARCH 2008 REPORT ON THE PROPERTY BY HISTORIAN, TIM GREGORY (ATTACHED) AND "WALKER & EISEN, 20 YEARS OF LA ARCHITECTURE, 1920-1940" BY DONALD J. SCHIPPERS, HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA QUARTERLY, VOL 45, PAGES 371 - 394.

DATE FORM PREPARED JULY 28, 2008 PREPARER'S NAME CHARLES J. FISHER

ORGANIZATION CONCERNED RESIDENTS OF LARCHMONT STREET ADDRESS 140 S. AVENUE 57

CITY HIGHLAND PARK STATE CA ZIP CODE 90042 PHONE (323) 256-3593

E-MAIL ADDRESS: ARROYOSECO@HOTMAIL.COM

# DESCRIPTION WORK SHEET

TYPE OR PRINT IN ALL CAPITAL BLOCK LETTERS

THE HEERMAN ESTATE IS A 2 STORY,  
NAME OF PROPOSED MONUMENT NUMBER OF STORIES

COLONIAL REVIVAL, T-SHAPED PLAN SINGLE FAMILY ESTATE  
ARCHITECTURAL STYLE (SEE LINE 8 ABOVE) PLAN SHAPE (SEE CHART) STRUCTURE USE (RESIDENCE, ETC)

WITH A CLAPBOARD WOOD SIDING FINISH AND WOOD TRIM.  
MATERIAL (WOOD SIDING, WOOD SHINGLES, BRICK, STUCCO, ETC) MATERIAL (WOOD, METAL, ETC.)

ITS GABLED ROOF IS COVERED WITH COMPOSITION SHINGLES . GLASS AND WOOD ,  
ROOF SHAPE (SEE CHART)) MATERIAL (CLAY TILE, ASPHALT OR WOOD SHINGLES) WINDOW MATERIAL

MULTI LIGHT AND SOME CASEMENT, DOUBLE-HUNG AND FIXED WINDOWS ARE PART OF THE DESIGN.  
WINDOW TYPE (DOUBLE HUNG (SLIDES UP & DOWN), CASEMENT (OPENS OUT), HORIZONTAL SLIDING, ETC)

THE ENTRY FEATURES A CLASSICAL SURROUND & BRICK PORCH WITH TWO SETS OF TWIN FLUTED PILASTERS WITH 4  
DOOR LOCATION (RECESSED, CENTERED, OFF-CENTER, CORNER, ETC.)

PANE WINDOW LIGHTS WITH A MULTI PANELED WOODEN DOOR. ADDITIONAL CHARACTER DEFINING ELEMENTS  
ENTRY DOOR STYLE (SEE CHART)

OF THE STRUCTURE ARE BOXED EAVES, AND A CORNICE ALONG THE ROOF WITH BROKEN CORNICES ON GABLE  
IDENTIFY ORIGINAL FEATURES SUCH AS PORCHES (SEE CHART); BALCONIES; NUMBER AND SHAPE OF DORMERS (SEE CHART);

PEDIMENTS, CIRCULAR ATTIC VENTS ARE FOUND IN EACH GABLE END. THE MAIN ENTRANCE IS LOCATED UNDER A  
NUMBER AND LOCATION OF CHIMNEYS; SHUTTERS; SECONDARY FINISH MATERIALS; PARAPETS; METAL TRIM; DECORATIVE TILE OR CAST STONE; ARCHES;

PORTE-COCHERE TO THE RIGHT OF THE HOUSE. A LARGE BRICK CHIMNEY IS FLANKED BY MULTIPLE SETS OF DOUBLE  
ORNAMENTAL WOODWORK; SYMMETRY OR ASYMMETRY; CORNICES; FRIEZES; TOWERS OR TURRETS; BAY WINDOWS; HALFTIMBERING; HORIZONTALITY;

HUNG WINDOWS. A LARGE HOLLYWOOD REGENCY STYLE WINDOW BAY IS ON A RECESSED FAÇADE TO THE LEFT OF  
VERTICALITY; FORMALITY OR INFORMALITY; GARDEN WALLS, ETC.

MAIN FRONT GABLE AND CHIMNEY. A SINGLE TRANSVERSE MAIN GABLE IS OVER THE CENTRAL MAIN PORTION OF THE  
ADDITIONAL DEFINING ELEMENTS

HOUSE. THE ESTATE IS SURROUNDED ON THREE SIDES WITH BRICK WALLS, WITH A FRONT GATE FLANKED BY BRICK TOWERS.  
ADDITIONAL DEFINING ELEMENTS

ADDITIONAL DEFINING ELEMENTS

ADDITIONAL DEFINING ELEMENTS

SECONDARY BUILDINGS CONSIST OF THE ORIGINAL CARRIAGE HOUSE/CHAUFFEUR'S QUARTERS, A 2<sup>ND</sup>  
IDENTIFY GARAGE; GARDEN SHELTER, ETC.

GARAGE CONSTRUCTED IN BRICK, A TENNIS COURT AND TENNIS PAVILION (ALSO IN BRICK) AND A SWIMMING  
IDENTIFY GARAGE; GARDEN SHELTER, ETC.

POOL. A LATH HOUSE FOR THE GROWING OF CYMBIDIUM ORCHIDS HAS NOT BEEN SEEN FROM THE OUTSIDE.  
IDENTIFY GARAGE; GARDEN SHELTER, ETC.

SIGNIFICANT INTERIOR SPACES INCLUDE NO INTERIOR DESCRIPTION IS AVAILABLE.  
IDENTIFY ORIGINAL FEATURES SUCH AS WOOD PANELING; MOLDINGS AND TRIM, SPECIAL GLASS WINDOWS.

IDENTIFY NOTABLE MATURE TREES AND SHRUBS

IDENTIFY NOTABLE MATURE TREES AND SHRUBS

HISTORIC-CULTURAL MONUMENT APPLICATION

**CITY OF LOS ANGELES**  
**SIGNIFICANCE WORK SHEET**

TYPE OR HAND PRINT IN ALL CAPITAL BLOCK LETTERS

*Complete One or Both of the Upper and Lower Portions of This Page*

**ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE**

THE \_\_\_\_\_ HEERMAN ESTATE \_\_\_\_\_ IS AN IMPORTANT EXAMPLE OF  
NAME OF PROPOSED MONUMENT

\_\_\_\_\_ COLONIAL REVIVAL \_\_\_\_\_  
ARCHITECTURAL STYLE (SEE LINE B)

\_\_\_\_\_ ARCHITECTURE

AND MEETS THE CULTURAL HERITAGE ORDINANCE BECAUSE OF THE HIGH QUALITY OF ITS DESIGN AND THE RETENTION OF ITS ORIGINAL FORM, DETAILING AND INTEGRITY.

**AND/OR**

**HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE**

THE \_\_\_\_\_ HEERMAN ESTATE \_\_\_\_\_ WAS BUILT IN \_\_\_\_\_ 1908, 1919, 1926, 1935-39 & 1942 \_\_\_\_\_  
NAME OF PROPOSED MONUMENT YEAR BUILT

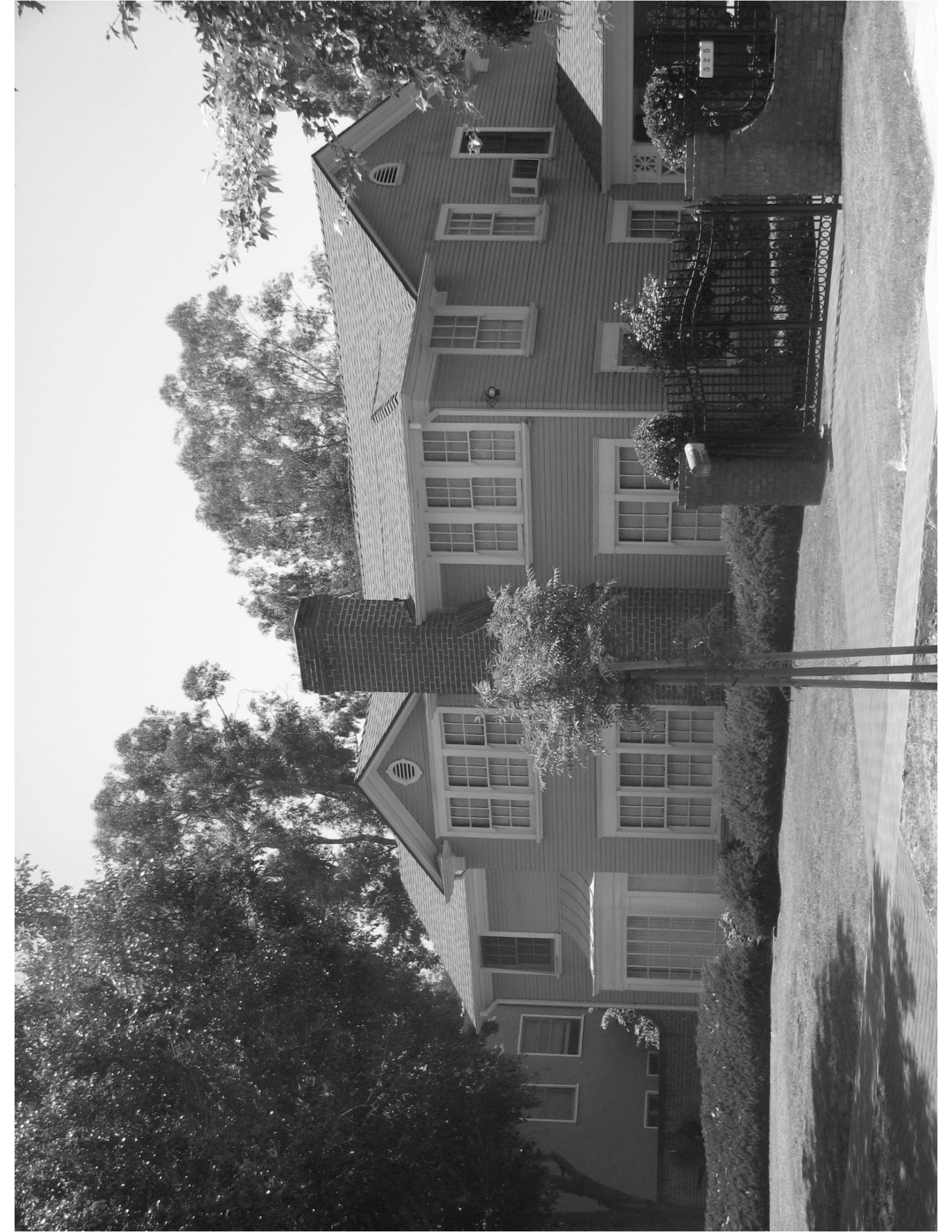
\_\_\_\_\_ VICTOR AND SARAH HEERMAN \_\_\_\_\_ AND \_\_\_\_\_ WALKER AND EISEN \_\_\_\_\_ WAS IMPORTANT TO THE  
NAME OF FIRST OR OTHER SIGNIFICANT OWNER

DEVELOPMENT OF LOS ANGELES BECAUSE THE HEERMANS WERE BOTH SCREENWRITERS FOR A NUMBER OF IMPORTANT  
EARLY FILMS, INCLUDING THE 1933 ADAPTATION OF "LITTLE WOMEN", WHICH NETTED THEM AN ACADEMY AWARD. IN ADDITION,  
VICTOR HEERMAN WAS THE DIRECTOR OF A NUMBER OF FILMS, INCLUDING THE MARX BROTHER'S "ANIMAL CRACKERS", IN 1930.  
KNOWING THE MARX BROTHERS PROPENSITY FOR GOOFING OFF ON THE SET, HEERMAN ORDERED 4 LARGE CAGES TO BE AT THE  
FILMING IN ORDER TO LOCK UP GROCHO, HARPO, CHICO AND ZEPPO BETWEEN TAKES TO PREVENT PROBLEMS. THAT WAS ENOUGH  
TO INSURE THAT THE MOVIE WAS ON SCHEDULE AND THERE WERE NO CRAZY SURPRISES. WHEN HE FIRST ARRIVED IN HOLLYWOOD,  
HEERMAN WORKED FOR MACK SENNETT. HIS DIRECTORIAL DEBUT WAS IN 1916 WITH KEYSTONE FILM COMPANY'S "SHE LOVED A  
SAILOR". HE WENT ON TO DIRECT 21 MOTION PICTURES, SOME OF WHICH HE ALSO DID SCRIPTWRITING FOR. IN THE EARLY 1930S  
HE GAVE UP DIRECTING TO CONCENTRATE ON SCREENWRITING, OFTEN WORKING WITH HIS WIFE. SARAH Y. MASON FIRST CAME TO  
HOLLYWOOD FROM ARIZONA IN 1918 AFTER MEETING HEERMAN WHILE HE WAS ON LOCATION WORKING WITH DOUGLAS  
FAIRBANKS. SHE SOON FOUND THAT HER ACTING ABILITY WAS WEAK, BUT SHE WAS AN EXCELLENT SCRIPT WRITER. SHE MARRIED  
HEERMAN IN 1920. AND THEY WERE TO COLLABORATE IN A NUMBER OF SCREENPLAYS OVER THE NEXT 34 YEARS. BOTH RETIRED IN  
1954 AFTER THEIR WORK ON THE ORIGINAL SCREENPLAY FOR "MAGNIFICENT OBSESSION". THE HEERMAN'S ALSO BECAME WELL  
KNOWN FOR THEIR WORK WITH CYMBIDIUM ORCHIDS.

THE ARCHITECTURAL FIRM OF WALKER AND EISEN WAS FORMED BY ALBERT R. WALKER AND PERCY A. EISEN IN 1919. THE REMODEL  
OF THE MAIN HOUSE FOR ITS SECOND OWNER, NORMAN IRVING, (THE HEERMANS WERE THE THIRD OWNERS.) WAS ONE OF THE  
VERY FIRST COMMISSIONS FOR A FIRM THAT WAS TO MAKE A MAJOR IMPRINT IN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT OF CALIFORNIA OVER THE  
NEXT TWO DECADES. BOTH WALKER AND EISEN WERE NATIVE CALIFORNIANS AND BOTH HAD BEEN IN PREVIOUS PARTNERSHIPS.

**CITY OF LOS ANGELES**  
**SIGNIFICANCE WORK SHEET**  
CONTINUED

WALKER HAD A PARTNERSHIP WITH JOHN T. VAWTER FROM 1910 UNTIL 1917, WHEN THE LATTER JOINED THE US ARMY. THE BEST KNOWN WORK WAS THE WORK NOW DEMOLISHED "CHURCH OF THE OPEN DOOR" (HCM 323), IN 1915. PREVIOUSLY, WALKER HAD WORKED FOR HEBBARD AND GILL IN SAN DIEGO, THEN PARKINSON AND BERGSTRUM AND THEN WITH THE FIRM OF ALFRED F. ROSENHEIM, MYRON HUNT AND ELMER GREY, PERCY EISEN THE SON AND GRANDSON OF ARCHITECTS. HIS GRANDFATHER, AUGUSTUS EISEN, HAD AN OFFICE IN SAN FRANCISCO, WHERE HIS FATHER, THEODORE APPRENTICED BEFORE WORKING FOR CURLETT AND CUTHERTSON, WHICH SENT HIM TO LOS ANGELES TO OVERSEE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE NEW COURTHOUSE. THEODORE EISEN LATER FORMED A VERY SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIP WITH SUMNER P. HUNT THAT LASTED UNTIL 1900. EVENTUALLY PERCY WORKED IN HIS FATHER'S OFFICE AND WORKED WITH HIM IN THE DESIGN OF CASA DE ADOBE (HCM 493). AFTER FORMING THEIR PARTNERSHIP, WALKER AND EISEN DESIGNED MANY OF LOS ANGELES' MOST HISTORIC BUILDINGS, INCLUDING THE "FINE ARTS BUILDING (HCM 125), THE "UNITED ARTISTS THEATRE BUILDING" (HCM 523), THE "HOLLYWOOD PLAZA HOTEL" (HCM 665), THE "TAFT BUILDING" (HCM 666), THE "EDWARDS-WILDEY BUILDING" (HCM 786) AND THE "810 SOUTH SPRING BUILDING" (HCM 871), AS WELL AS THE BEVERLY WILSHIRE HOTEL AND THE SUNKIST BUILDING (DEMOLISHED) TO NAME JUST A FEW OF THEIR PROJECTS. AS THE FIRM WAS TO SPECIALIZE MOSTLY IN COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS, DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE BY WALKER AND EISEN IS ALMOST NON-EXISTENT. IT IS ALSO IMPORTANT TO NOTE THAT THE IRVING COMMISSION WAS ONE OF THE VERY FIRST JOBS THAT THE NEW PARTNERSHIP TOOK ON. THE WORK IN 1919 ENLARGED THE LIVING ROOM AND ADDED A BATHROOM TO THE HOME, WHICH HAD PREVIOUSLY BEEN SERVED BY AN OUTHOUSE. THE LARGE CHIMNEY AT THE FRONT OF THE HOUSE WAS ALSO CONSTRUCTED AT THAT TIME. THE WALKER AND EISEN DESIGN APPEARS TO HAVE ESSENTIALLY GIVEN THE HOUSE THE LOOK IT HAS TODAY, WITH THE EXTENSIVE BRICK WALLS THAT SURROUND MUCH OF THE PROPERTY ALSO BELIEVED TO DATE FROM THAT TIME. THE HEERMANS DID A NUMBER OF CHANGES BEGINNING THE INSTALLATION OF A COMPLETE PLUMBING SYSTEM IN 1923, A CELLAR IN 1926 ADDITIONAL CHANGES TO THE INTERIOR OF THE MAIN HOUSE IN 1935. WITH THE ADDITION OF A TENNIS COURT AND PAVILION AS WELL AS A SECOND GARAGE, BOTH MOST PROBABLY CONSTRUCTED BY STUDIO CARPENTERS (A COMMON PRACTICE AMONG THOSE IN THE INDUSTRY AT THAT TIME.). WITH THE CONSTRUCTION OF A LATH HOUSE, DESIGNED BY ENGINEER GEORGE A. FOSDYKE, IN 1942, THE ESTATE WAS COMPLETED FOR THE HEERMANS. WITH THE EXCEPTION OF A SWIMMING POOL INSTALLED IN 1984, THE ESTATE IS ESSENTIALLY AS THE HEERMANS LEFT IT.



## **Albert R. Walker, Architect (1881-1958)**

*By Charles J. Fisher*

A native California, Albert Raymond Walker was born on April 5, 1881 as the first child of Albert and Elizabeth (Stephens) Walker, in Sonoma, where his Norwegian-born father worked as a carpenter. After the death of his father and a younger sibling, he and his mother relocated to San Diego and lived with her two widowed sisters.

After graduating from high school, the 19-year old Walker found work as a draftsman in a local San Diego architectural office, until 1902, when he went to Rhode Island to attend Brown University. After graduation, he returned to San Diego and worked for the firm of William S. Hebbard and Irving J. Gill.

After a year, he left San Diego and went to work for John Parkinson and Edwin Bergstrum in Los Angeles. He went on to work for Alfred F. Rosenhiem and then the firm of Myron Hunt and Elmer Grey.

In 1909, the year he married 22-year old Jessie R. Morgan, he established his own architectural practice and formed a partnership with John T. Vawter the following year. The firm was to specialize in domestic and ecclesiastical architecture until Vawter left to enter the US Army in 1917. His marriage was to produce one daughter, who was born in 1918.

One of their early commissions was the “Church of the Redeemer”, a Presbyterian church at 36<sup>th</sup> Street and Vermont Avenue. The Craftsman Tudor structure clearly shows the influence of Walker’s association with Irving Gill in its modernistic bell tower.

The firm’s most visible commission was for the 1915 design of the Bible Institute of America building that was to become better known as “The Church of the Open Door” (HCM 323-Demolished) on Hope Street.

In 1919, Walker formed a partnership with Percy A. Eisen, another California born architect and the son of Los Angeles architect, Theodore Eisen.

One of the very first commissions that the new firm took on was the remodeling of a house for banker James N. Irving. This remodel, however, was not indicative of the direction that the new firm would take. The firm also designed several public schools during its early years.

As the 1920s unfolded, a Post War building boom hit Los Angeles that called not only for housing, but for a substantial increase in commercial buildings as well. It was in this latter area that the firm of Walker and Eisen was to specialize, initially with small one-story commercial structures include several auto garage buildings in 1919. The firm utilized the Mission Revival style in a new post office for San Gabriel in 1922.

Within a short time, the firm began designing much more substantial structures, such as the “Taft Building” (HCM 666) at Hollywood and Vine, in 1923, “The Signal Oil” or “Haventrite” Building, also known as the “Fine Arts Building” (HCM 125), at 7<sup>th</sup> and Hope in 1924, the “Edwards and Wildey Building” (HCM 786), The “Texaco/United Artists Theatre Building” (HCM 523), on Broadway in 1927. The Beverly Wilshire Hotel was designed in 1926.

Many of the commercial designs outside of Central Los Angeles tended to incorporate the Spanish Colonial Revival motif, such as “El Mirador Hotel” in Palm Springs.

By 1924, the firm had outgrown its office quarters. As part of the design of the “Great Republic Life Building, the firm configured the 7<sup>th</sup> floor to be their new offices.

Walker and Eisen employed over 50 draftsmen, including some who were to later establish themselves as top architects in their own right, such as Carl Jules Weyl, who along with Haldane Douglas and Rube Ransford, had received his training from the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris. Weyl was to later design the Brown Derby restaurants for Cecil B. De Mille. Weyl worked most closely with Walker during this period.

It was Walker, who was the principal designer in the firm and he was more hands on with the various projects then was Eisen, who was the one who used his extensive social contacts to get the firm’s many clients.

The “Havenhurst Apartments” at Whitley and Franklin Avenues in Hollywood were the first “Own Your Own” (predecessor to the condominium) apartment project in the area. Other apartment project included the “Gaylord” and the “Ardmore” in the Wilshire District.

The partnership managed to stay ahead of the various styles as the progressed from Beaux Arts to Gothic Revival to Art Deco, using terra cotta liberally in the buildings of the 20s. After the stock market crash and subsequent real estate readjustment, the trends of Modernism began to dictate the designs that the firm produced. The “Sunkist Building” at 5<sup>th</sup> and Flower (Demolished) was built in 1936 and shows the great influence of the use of concrete as a design element, rather than the terra cotta covered designs of the previous decades.

The company weathered the Great Depression, but as the early 1940s brought the country to the verge of World War II, the partnership was terminated in 1941. The firm had designed 293 major office, industrial and apartment buildings as well as numerous school, theater and municipal buildings during its 22 years of existence.

Walker soon formed a new partner ship with his former designer Gus W. Kalionzes and Charles A. Klingerman. The firm specialized in the design of hospitals, but one exception was the last major project that Walker took the design lead on, “St. Sophia’s Greek Orthodox Cathedral” (HCM 120). Walker began the design work in 1949 and the firm continued revisions until the great Byzantine structure was completed in 1952.

Albert R. Walker retired in 1954 and passed away at his Westwood home on September 17, 1958. In a period of over 50 years, Walker, with his various associates, had designed over 350 major buildings that helped to create the skyline of Southern California.

# Famed L.A. Architect Albert R. Walker Dies

## Designed Many of Southland's Best Known Business, Theater Buildings

Albert R. Walker, 77, architect and engineer who designed many of Southern California's most famous buildings, died yesterday at his home, 215 S Thurston Ave., Westwood.

Mr. Walker and his associates were credited with starting the westward development along Wilshire Blvd. Over a period of 50 years they designed more than 350 buildings which changed the Los Angeles skyline.

Among them were the Bible Institute on Hope St., the Bank of America at 7th and Spring Sts., the downtown Texaco, Signal Oil, Occidental Life and Oviatt Buildings, the Beverly Wilshire Hotel, Gaylord and Talmadge Apartments, the El Mirador in Palm Springs and many United Artists theaters throughout the State.

Mr. Walker's last major work before retiring in 1954 was the Saint Sophia Greek Orthodox Cathedral.

He was senior partner in the firms of Walker & Vawter from 1910 to 1917, Walker & Eisen from 1918 to 1941 and Walker, Kalionzes & Klingerman from 1941 to 1954.

The Walker & Eisen firm designed 293 office, commercial, industrial and apartment buildings, as well as hotels, theaters, schools, hospitals and municipal buildings throughout the Southland.

Born in Sonoma, Mr. Walker was a member of many professional, civic and fraternal organizations during his 50-year career here.

He leaves his widow Jessie; a daughter, Mrs. Richard F. Dwyer of Brentwood, and two granddaughters, Mrs. Burr Narmore of Corona del Mar and Miss Nancy Dwyer of Brentwood.

Forest Lawn Mortuary is in charge of funeral arrangements.

## **Percy A Eisen, Architect (1885-1946)**

*By Charles J. Fisher*

Percy Augustus Eisen was a third generation architect in born on December 17, 1885 to Theodore A. and Annie (Bennett) Eisen, in San Francisco. His paternal grandfather, Augustus F. Eisen, immigrated from Sweden and initially practiced architecture in Cincinnati, Ohio, where Theodore was born in 1852. After a period in St. Louis, the family relocated to San Francisco in 1854.

Theodore, at the time, worked for the firm of Curlett and Cuthbertson, which sent him to Los Angeles to supervise the construction of the new County Courthouse. Percy's younger brother, Edward, was born in Los Angeles in August of 1890. Theodore soon set up his own practice and remained in Los Angeles.

Percy apprenticed with his father and then they set up a new firm, known as Eisen and Son in 1907. The firm specialized in custom homes, designing houses throughout the Southern California area. Their best-known design was one commissioned in 1917 by the Hispanic Society for "Casa de Adobe" (HCM 495), in Highland Park. This hand made structure was intended as a museum representing the early Mexican Hacienda in the Old California.

In 1913, Percy married 19-year old Ruth Fairbanks Pierce in a wedding that was announced boldly in the society pages of the Los Angeles Times. Their marriage was to produce two boys and two girls. Eisen was very well connected among those in Los Angeles society. Besides his active membership in the American Institute of Architects and the Society of American Engineers, he was also active in his Masonic Lodge, the Elks and was to serve as President of the Native Sons of the Golden West. He was also active in civic affairs. These connections were to prove a valuable asset in the years to come.

In 1919, Percy Eisen formed a partnership with fellow California native, Albert R. Walker. This business venture was to prove quite successful. Initially though, it gave him a chance to prove himself without the influence

of his Father. By the time Theodore Eisen died in 1924, his son had become recognized as one of the most distinguished architects in Los Angeles. One of the very first commissions that Walker and Eisen took on was the remodeling of a house for banker James N. Irving. This remodel, however, was not indicative of the direction that the new firm would take. The firm also designed several public schools during its early years.

As the 1920s unfolded, a Post War building boom hit Los Angeles that called not only for housing, but for a substantial increase in commercial buildings as well. It was in this latter area that the firm of Walker and Eisen was to specialize, initially with small one-story commercial structures include several auto garage buildings in 1919. The firm utilized the Mission Revival style in a new post office for San Gabriel in 1922.

Within a short time, the firm began designing much more substantial structures, such as the “Taft Building” (HCM 666) at Hollywood and Vine, in 1923, “The Signal Oil” or “Haventrite” Building, also known as the “Fine Arts Building” (HCM 125), at 7<sup>th</sup> and Hope in 1924, the “Edwards and Wildey Building” (HCM 786), The “Texaco/United Artists Theatre Building” (HCM 523), on Broadway in 1927. The Beverly Wilshire Hotel was designed in 1926.

Many of the commercial designs outside of Central Los Angeles tended to incorporate the Spanish Colonial Revival motif, such as “El Mirador Hotel” in Palm Springs. Eisen frequently worked these out of town jobs as the supervising architect.

By 1924, the firm had outgrown its office quarters. As part of the design of the “Great Republic Life Building, the firm configured the 7<sup>th</sup> floor to be their new offices.

Walker and Eisen employed over 50 draftsmen, including some who were to later establish themselves as top architects in their own right, such as Carl Jules Weyl, who along with Haldane Douglas and Rube Ransford, had received his training from the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris. Weyl was to later design the Brown Derby restaurants for Cecil B. De Mille. Weyl worked most closely with Walker during this period.

While Walker was the principal designer in the firm and was more hands on with many of the various projects then was Eisen, the latter was the one who

used his extensive social contacts to get the firm's many clients. However, Eisen did work on a number of the projects, especially the out of town commissions.

The "Havenhurst Apartments" at Whitley and Franklin Avenues in Hollywood were the first "Own Your Own" (predecessor to the condominium) apartment project in the area. Other apartment project included the "Gaylord" and the "Ardmore" in the Wilshire District.

The partnership managed to stay ahead of the various styles as the progressed from Beaux Arts to Gothic Revival to Art Deco, using terra cotta liberally in the buildings of the 20s. After the stock market crash and subsequent real estate readjustment, the trends of Modernism began to dictate the designs that the firm produced. The "Sunkist Building" at 5<sup>th</sup> and Flower (Demolished) was built in 1936 and shows the great influence of the use of concrete as a design element, rather than the terra cotta covered designs of the previous decades.

The company weathered the Great Depression, but as the early 1940s brought the country to the verge of World War II, the partnership was terminated in 1941. The firm had designed 293 major office, industrial and apartment buildings as well as numerous school, theater and municipal buildings during its 22 years of existence.

During World War II, Eisen worked with the Army Air Corps Procurement Division. After the War, he formed a partnership with Eugene C. Hart to build homes for veterans in Inglewood and the San Fernando Valley.

This latest venture was to be short lived. On June 18, 1946, the 60-year old Eisen suffered a fatal heart attack at his office. His passing ended a family architectural legacy that went back over 100 years. The buildings that the firm of Walker and Eisen designed helped to recreate the skyline of Los Angeles and remain his greatest legacy.

# Eisen, Architect for Southland Buildings, Dies

Percy A. Eisen, 60, architect and builder, died Monday night after a heart attack at his office. Funeral services will be conducted at 11 a.m. Friday at Edwards Bros. Colonial Mortuary. Interment will be in Forest Lawn Memorial Park.

Mr. Eisen, born in San Francisco, came here in 1890 with his father, the late Theodore Eisen, who was commissioned to design the old Los Angeles County Courthouse. During a partnership with A. R. Walker, Percy Eisen worked on such buildings as the Signal Oil, Shell Oil, Ohio Oil, Texas Company, California Hospital, Beverly Wilshire Hotel, Arcady and Gaylord Apartment-Hotels, Security Title, Edwards Willey, Occidental Life and National City Bank.

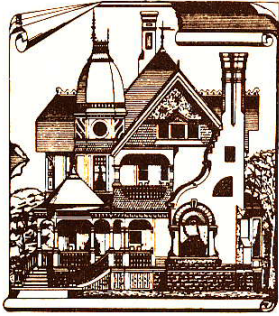
## Served During War

He also handled projects in other cities including the San Luis Obispo County Courthouse, the Consolidated Bank Building in Tucson, El Cortez Hotel in San Diego and the Hilton in Long Beach.

During the war Mr. Eisen was with the Air Corps Procurement Division and since the war he formed a partnership with Eugene C. Hart to build homes for veterans in Inglewood and the San Fernando Valley.

He was active in civic affairs and a past president of the Native Sons of the Golden West here, as well as a member of the Masons, Elks, Institute of American Architects and Society of American Engineers.

Mr. Eisen leaves his widow, Ruth P. Eisen, of 1990 E. Mountain St., Pasadena; four children, Jack, William, Jean and Ruth, and a brother, Dr. Edward G. Eisen.



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**525 SOUTH VAN NESS AVENUE**

**LOS ANGELES**

**Style:** Colonial Revival

**Years of Completion:** 1908—first constructed  
1919—extensively remodeled

**Architects:** 1908—unknown  
1919—Walker & Eisen, Los Angeles. Please see the attached information on this well-respected design firm.

**Builder:** 1908—unknown  
1919—Houghton & Anderson, Los Angeles

**Early Owners:** The Los Angeles County Assessor's map-books indicate that the first improvement on the property was built in 1908 at which time it was owned by Mathew O. Tremain (ca. 1853-1933), a Canadian-born carpenter who had lived for some time in Michigan. The improvement value was \$1,900, which in those days would represent the value of a rather large house. Mr. Tremain had owned lots 74 through 80 of Henry J. Brown's Wilshire Terrace Tract since 1906, giving him a 440 linear-foot frontage along Van Ness. His purchase of this land coincided with the Hancock family's subdivision of their 601.54 surrounding acres, making his house one of the first improvements in the neighborhood. It is probable, given Mr. Tremain's occupation, that he built his own home on Lot 77, which he would share with his wife Margretta (ca. 1861-1922), a native of Germany, and their daughter Ethel.

In 1919, Mr. Tremain sold his property to James N. Irving, a Canadian-born banker and civil engineer, who spent most of his time in Riverside. Mr. Irving immediately commissioned well-known Los Angeles architects Walker & Eisen to design extensive alterations.

**Building Permits:** There is no original building permit on file for the house, but when it was connected to the public sewer in March 1915 it was described in the permit as being "old."

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A permit was issued in September 1919 for large-scale remodeling of the house. Among the changes: the living room, a bedroom, and the kitchen were to be enlarged, and a new bathroom, sleeping porch, and chimney with two fireplaces added. The additions were to measure approximately 7-by-18.5 feet and 13-by-13.5 feet. Walker & Eisen was the architect and Houghton & Anderson was the contractor for this project, valued at \$4,000. The existing two-story house was described as having ten rooms and measuring 34 by 47 feet. There were three buildings on the lot at the time.

In May 1923, plumbing fixtures were to be replaced, as were the tile walls and floors of the bathrooms. Other work to be done included rebuilding the fireplace, setting up a new mantel, and installing three new french doors. William J. Ergenzinger of Los Angeles was to be the contractor for this work, valued at \$1,500.

A permit was issued in March 1926 to excavate for a ten-by-fifteen-foot cellar under the house, and to install stairs, eight-inch-thick concrete walls and floor, and an outside entrance. Ruby Engineering Company of Los Angeles was the designated contractor for this \$500 job.

A number of changes were included in a permit issued in February 1935: adding a service porch, altering the kitchen, adding a pantry, moving the maid's bathroom, adding a bay window to the dining room, adding six feet to the reception hall, moving the main stairway from the living room to the reception hall, adding a powder room, enlarging a bathroom on the second floor, and building a porte cochere. Total square footage to be added was 250. The contractor was identified as "superintendent." (Russell F. Brent signed the permit application.) The cost was estimated at \$4,500. By 1935, the property was said to contain two structures: the main residence and a garage with a study on its second floor.

The three-car garage was to be altered into a two-car garage with a laundry and storage facility, according to a permit issued in April 1935. The garage was described as measuring 21 by 30 feet with a height of 18 feet. The cost was estimated at just \$100. The owner was to act as his own contractor.

In July 1936, construction of a nine-by-twenty-foot tennis court pavilion was permitted at a cost of \$150. To be fourteen feet tall, it would have a concrete foundation, walls of wood and brick, and a roof of composition shingles. No architect or contractor were identified.

The same day, a permit was issued for the construction of a new garage, to measure twenty feet square and to resemble the pavilion in style. The cost was estimated at \$350. Again, no architect or contractor were designated.

In April 1942, a twenty-by-forty-foot, ten-foot-tall lath-house was to be built at a cost of \$400. The engineer was G. A. Fosdyke. No contractor was identified.

A permit was issued in March 1984 for the construction of a swimming pool and spa at a cost of \$25,000. The pool, to be made of gunite, was to measure approximately twelve by eight feet with a depth varying from three to eight feet. Contempo Pools was to be the contractor.

Copies of these permits are attached.

No building permits appear to have been issued since 1984. No building permit could be found for the tennis court.

**Assessor's Records:** Los Angeles County Assessor's building records for this property were not consulted. The Assessor estimates the current square footage of the house at 3,816.

**Other Owners and Residents:** Around 1923, motion-picture director and screenwriter Victor E. Heerman purchased undeveloped Lots 75 and 76, and the residence on Lot 77. He shared the house with his wife Sarah Mason Heerman. They would own the property for over fifty years. Mr. Heerman (1893-1977) was born in Surrey, England but moved to New York City as a boy to become a child actor on the stage. In the mid-1910s, he relocated to California and started directing shorts for Mack Sennett. He directed his first feature in 1920 and went on to turn out light comedies for Paramount. Perhaps his most remembered directorial achievement was the famous Marx Brothers' film *Animal Crackers* (1930). Soon after that, Mr. Heerman gave up directing and concentrated on screen-writing, often in partnership with his wife. In 1933, they won an Academy Award for their screen adaptation of *Little Women*. The Heermans are also remembered for the screenplays of *Stella Dallas* and *Magnificent Obsession* (both the 1935 and 1954 versions). Mr. Heerman also raised prize-winning orchids on his property. A copy of Mr. Heerman's entry in *The Film Encyclopedia* is attached.

After Mr. Heerman's death, his home was sold to Don O. Pettie in December 1977. Edmund F. Kaufman purchased the property in May 1979.

According to County Assessor ownership records, between January 1989 and the present there have been eleven changes in ownership, some corporate and some individual. They are as follows: Hae S. and Jung W. Chun (January 1989); Si Oh and Keum J. Rhew (January 1990); Ba Properties, Inc. (August 1994); Soo K. and Hua S. Yi (December 1994); Kimkeeco, Inc. (March 1997); Won S. Chang (December 1997); Nancy H. Lee (June 1999); J. and James International (May 2000); Nancy H. Lee (December 2000); Bobby Yoo (May 2006); Ho Y. and Woo J. Im (October 2006).

**Notes:** The 1921 Sanborn Fire Insurance map of the neighborhood shows 525 South Van Ness in essentially its current form. A copy of the relevant page is attached.

It is said that Mr. Heerman employed movie-studio artisans to do most of the design and construction work on the alterations he undertook during the time he owned the house.

# Heerman Estate Photographs



*Heerman Estate, 525 S Van Ness Avenue (Photograph by Charles J. Fisher)*



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*Heerman Estate, 525 S Van Ness Avenue (Photograph by Charles J. Fisher)*



*Heerman Estate, 525 S Van Ness Avenue (Photograph by Charles J. Fisher)*



*Heerman Estate, attic vent, 525 S Van Ness Avenue (Photograph by Charles J. Fisher)*



*Heerman Estate, dining room bay window, 525 S Van Ness Avenue (Photograph by Charles J. Fisher)*



*Heerman Estate, driveway gate, 525 S Van Ness Avenue (Photograph by Charles J. Fisher)*



*Heerman Estate, porte-cochere, 525 S Van Ness Avenue (Photograph by Charles J. Fisher)*



*Heerman Estate, main entry, 525 S Van Ness Avenue (Photograph by Charles J. Fisher)*



*Heerman Estate, detail in porte-cochere, 525 S Van Ness Avenue (Photograph by Charles J. Fisher)*



*Heerman Estate, rear elevation, 525 S Van Ness Avenue (Photograph by Charles J. Fisher)*



*Heerman Estate, carriage barn/chauffeurs quarters, 525 S Van Ness Avenue (Photograph by Charles J. Fisher)*



*Heerman Estate, studio entry/carriage barn, 525 S Van Ness Avenue (Photograph by Charles J. Fisher)*



*Heerman Estate, utility room entry, carriage barn, 525 S Van Ness Avenue (Photograph by Charles J. Fisher)*



*Heerman Estate, one of several brick walls on property, 525 S Van Ness Avenue (Photograph by Charles J. Fisher)*



*Heerman Estate, garage built in 1936, 525 S Van Ness Avenue (Photograph by Charles J. Fisher)*



*Heerman Estate, 1936 garage, 525 S Van Ness Avenue (Photograph by Charles J. Fisher)*



*Heerman Estate, tennis court, 525 S Van Ness Avenue (Photograph by Charles J. Fisher)*



*Heerman Estate, tennis pavilion and brick wall, 525 S Van Ness Avenue (Photograph by Charles J. Fisher)*



*Heerman Estate, tennis pavilion, 525 S Van Ness Avenue (Photograph by Charles J. Fisher)*



*Heerman Estate, 525 S Van Ness Avenue (Photograph by Charles J. Fisher)*



*Heerman Estate, 525 S Van Ness Avenue (Photograph by Charles J. Fisher)*