G. Albert Lansburgh Collection, 1891-1939

Collection Number: 1969-1

Environmental Design Archives
University of California, Berkeley
Berkeley, California

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Descriptive Summary
Collection Title: G. Albert Lansburgh Collection,
Date (inclusive): 1891-1939
Collection Number: 1969-1
Creator: Lansburgh, G. Albert, 1891-1939
Extent: 3 boxes, 1 flat box, 3 flat file drawers, 3 framed drawings
Repository: Environmental Design Archives.
University of California, Berkeley.
Berkeley, California.

Abstract: The collection documents Lansburgh's student work, travels, and architectural projects.

Language: English.

Access
Collection is open for research.

Publication Rights
All requests for permission to publish, reproduce, or quote from materials in the collection should be discussed with the Curator.

Preferred Citation

Acquisition Information
The collection was donated in 1969.

**Access Points**
Architects--California.
Architecture--California.
Theaters.

**Biography**

G. Albert Lansburgh (1891-1939)

Gustave Albert Lansburgh was born January 7, 1876, in Panama City, to Simon Lazarus Lansburgh and Rebecca Pixotto Pyke Lansburgh of Kingston, Jamaica. Lansburgh's father, one of the largest ship chandlers on the Pacific Coast, died in 1879 and his mother relocated to San Francisco with Gustave and his brother Simon. When their mother died in 1888 of tuberculosis, the Lansburgh brothers were raised in a foster home, their guardianship assumed by Rabbi Jacob Voorsanger of the Congregation Emanu-El in San Francisco.

Lansburgh attended the University of California at Berkeley from 1894 to 1896, working during his vacations as a draftsman for Bernard Maybeck. Encouraged by Maybeck to study at L'Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris, he financed his trip to France as the tutor of the son of a wealthy real estate developer. One of fifteen foreign students admitted to the Ecole, Lansburgh won the patronage of the San Francisco cigar manufacturer and philanthropist Moses A. Gunst and his wife Ophelia. In addition to architecture, Lansburgh studied painting, modeling, sculpture, engineering, and art history. He supplemented his formal education with extensive traveling throughout Europe and the Middle East to study great works of architecture. Lansburgh graduated from the Ecole with honors, receiving a gold medal from the Society of French Artists at the Grand Salon of the Champs Elysees in Paris for his design of the projected new Temple Emanu-El in San Francisco (which never came to fruition).

Returning to San Francisco in 1906, just one month after the devastating earthquake, Lansburgh began a professional practice with architect Bernard J. Joseph. In 1908 he established an independent practice, but continued to collaborate with Joseph on many major projects. During this period Lansburgh studied under the direction of his first mentor, Bernard Maybeck.

In 1908 Lansburgh married Irene Muzzy, with whom he had four children: Ruth, Lawrence, Edward, and Carol. Noted as one of San Francisco's most accomplished architects, Lansburgh's designs include the following San Francisco landmarks: the Koshland Building, the Elkan Gunst Building (with Bernard Joseph), the Lumberman's Building, the Concordia Club, and the Rainey Estate Flats. The M.A. Gunst building, which he designed with his associate Bernard Joseph, is no longer standing. He also designed several San Francisco public libraries and schools, and was involved in the development of Telegraph Hill.

Lansburgh was most famous for his opulent theaters, many originally designed for vaudeville and later transformed into movie palaces. He designed more than fifty theaters nationwide, including numerous projects for the Orpheum. Among his San Francisco theaters are the Golden Gate Theatre, the Warfield, the New Orpheum, and the War Memorial Opera House (with Arthur Brown, Jr.). Lansburgh designed six major theaters in Los Angeles and collaborated with architects Abram M. Edelman and John C. Austin in the design of the Shrine Auditorium (referred to as the Al Malaikah Temple, the headquarters of that Shriner order, in Lansburgh's project files). The Shrine Auditorium has been the site of the Academy Awards and other major awards ceremonies for many years and was declared a Los Angeles City Historic-Cultural monument in 1975.

In addition, Lansburgh designed theaters in Kansas City, St. Louis, New Orleans, Salt Lake City, and Fresno, California. Lansburgh also designed the Lobero Theatre in Santa Barbara, a California State Historic Landmark. The Byzantine-styled Martin Beck Theater in New York City was Lansburgh's proudest achievement. His success with the Beck Theater prompted Otto Kahn, president of the New York Metropolitan Opera Company, to seek Lansburgh's expertise in designing a new opera house at the corner of 57th Street and 8th Avenue. It would have held a 5,300-seat theater, but its location proved to be controversial, and the project was dropped after Kahn's death in 1934.

Lansburgh also designed a number of synagogues, including the Sinai Temple for the First Hebrew Congregation in Oakland, which he described as having a portico such as King Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem might have had. Other projects included the B'nai B'rith District Grand Lodge headquarters, the interior of the Clift Hotel (with Anthony Heinsbergen), a city auditorium in Sacramento, several mausoleums, numerous residences, commercial buildings, hotels, and apartment buildings.

Hailed for his "originality and versatility of style" and "careful eye for economy of space, material and construction," Lansburgh was also noted as a master of acoustics. His first major acoustical project was San Francisco's Civic Auditorium, for which he designed a ceiling canopy.
At the height of his career, he ran offices out of San Francisco, New York, and Los Angeles. Lansburgh was appointed to the architectural commission of the 1915 Panama-Pacific exposition, and was responsible for designing many of the exposition's buildings, including the Motor Transportation Building. He contributed to defense efforts in World War II by making drawings of seaplanes and destroyer tenders, until ill health forced his semi-retirement. He was a member of the Argonaut and Concordia Clubs, the San Francisco Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, the Beaux Arts Society, and the Diplome Society of Beaux Arts Architects. Lansburgh died in San Mateo on April 23, 1969, ninety-three years old.

Sources:
"G. Albert Lansburgh," unidentified clipping from the Documents Collection research files [n.d.]

Scope and Contents Note
The Lansburgh collection is organized in two series: Personal Papers, including student work and travel diaries, and Project Records, which include drawings and photographs. Project records, which form the bulk of the collection, include extensive documentation of the design and construction of theaters. The collection, including his library of 118 volumes, was donated by Lansburgh's family in 1969. The books were assumed by the University Library.

Project Index
The following is a list of architectural projects from the Lansburgh Collection. For more complete information about collection contents for each project, as well as shelf location and microfilming status, download the complete Project Index in an Excel spreadsheet format by going to http://www.ced.berkeley.edu/cedarchives/pindex/lansburgh.xls. For instructions on interpreting the Project Index, see The Guide to the Project Index at http://www.ced.berkeley.edu/cedarchives/pindex/guide.htm.

The Project Index list is arranged alphabetically by Project/Client Name and contains information, where available, about the location, date, project type, collaborators, photographers, and formats for each project in the collection.

Project/Client Name (location, date, project type) Collaborator (role), Photographer [Format - Ms=Manuscripts, Dr=Drawings, Ph=Photographs]

• * Al Malaikah Temple ( Los Angeles , CA ; 1922 ; religious ) Photographer: Keystone Photo [Dr, Ph]
• * American Trust Co. ( Berkeley , CA ; 1927 ; commercial ) [Ph]
• * Blumenthal, A. C. ( San Francisco , CA ; 1922 ; residential-multi ) [Dr, Ph]
• * Bonwit Teller Store ( New York City , NY ; n.d. ; commercial ) [Ph]
• * Brown Mausoleum ( San Francisco , CA ; 1909 ; funerary ) [Dr, Ph]
• * Brown, Morris Hotel ( San Francisco , CA ; n.d. ; commercial ) [Ph]
• * Date [residence] ( unknown ; 1917 ; residential ) [Ph]
• * Design: Civic Auditorium ( commercial ) [Dr]
• * Design: theatre ( 1929 ; commercial ) [Dr]
• * Drum, John S. [cabin and bathhouse] ( Lake Tahoe , CA ; 1922 ; residential ) Photographer: Moulin, G. [Dr]
• * Drum, John S. [chalet] ( Lake Tahoe , CA ; 1922 ; residential ) Photographer: Moulin, G. [Dr, Ph]
• * Drum, John S. [residence] ( unknown ; n.d. ; residential ) Photographer: Moulin, G. [Ph]
• * E. F. Hutton & Co. ( San Francisco , CA ; n.d. ; commercial ) [Ph]
• * El Cid & Joan of Arc Bases ( San Francisco , CA ; 1930 ; cultural ) [Dr]
• * F. Peano Sculpture ( Inglewood , CA ; n.d. ; commercial ) [Ph]
• * First Hebrew Congregation-synagogue ( Oakland , CA ; 1914 ; religious ) Photographer: Moulin, G. [Dr, Ph]
• * Gunst Building [Geary & Powell] ( San Francisco , CA ; 1906-1907 ; commercial ) [Ph]
• * Gunst Building [Third & Mission] ( San Francisco , CA ; 1907 ; commercial ) Photographer: Metzgar, F. [Dr, Ph]
• * Gunst Mausoleum ( unknown ; n.d. ; funerary ) Photographer: Moulin, G. [Ph]
• *Henderson's Orpheum Building (Los Angeles, CA; 1910-1911; commercial) Photographer: Moulin, G. [Dr, Ph]
• *Jacob, Andrew A. (San Francisco, CA; n.d.; residential) [Dr, Ph]
• *Jeweler's Exchange (San Francisco, CA; 1922; commercial) Photographer: Parker, D. [Ph]
• *Lansburgh, Mrs. G. Albert (San Francisco, CA; 1923; residential) Photographer: Lother's & Young [Dr, Ph]
• *Loew's Warfield Theater (San Francisco, CA; 1916; commercial) Photographer: Moulin, G. [Ph]
• *Lurie, Robert A. Co. Theater (San Francisco, CA; 1939; commercial) [Dr]
• *Martin Beck's Westside Theatre (New York City, NY; 1923; commercial) [Dr]
• *Mercantile Place Arcade Competition (New York City, NY; n.d.; commercial) [Ms, Dr, Ph]
• *Metropolitan Opera House (New York City, NY; 1929; cultural) [Dr]
• *Meyerfeld Mausoleum (unknown; 1936; funerary) [Dr, Ph]
• *Motor Transportation Building: Panama Pacific International Exposition (San Francisco, CA; 1915; exposition) Photographer: Moulin, G. [Ph]
• *Natomas Consolidated Hotel (Citrus, CA; n.d.; commercial) [Dr, Ph]
• *Ogden Hotel (San Francisco, CA; 1926; commercial) Photographer: Moulin, G. [Ph]
• *Orpheum Circuit Co. building (San Francisco, CA; 1907; commercial) [Dr]
• *Orpheum Theater (Kansas City, MO; 1914-1915; commercial) [Ph]
• *Orpheum Theater (New Orleans, LA; 1919-1920; commercial) Photographer: Schnetzer J./L'Franck C. [Ph]
• *Orpheum Theater, First (San Francisco, CA; 1907-1909; commercial) [Ph]
• *Orpheum Theater, see Henderson's Orpheum Building (Los Angeles, CA; 1910; commercial)
• *Orpheum Theatre (St. Louis, MO; 1915-1916; commercial) Photographer: Hampson F./Moulin G. [Dr, Ph]
• *Panama-Pacific Int. Expo.: Orange Blossom California Candies (unknown; 1913; exposition) [Ph]
• *Portland Auditorium Competition (Portland, OR; 1911; commercial) [Dr]
• *project for columbarium (San Francisco, CA; n.d.; funerary) [Dr]
• *Rainy, William S. (San Francisco, CA; n.d.; residential) [Ph]
• *Sachs Building (San Francisco, CA; 1908; commercial) Photographer: Commercial Art Co. [Ph]
• *San Francisco City Hall Competition (San Francisco, CA; 1912; governmental) [Dr]
• *San Francisco Custom House, detail (San Francisco, CA; n.d.; governmental)
• *San Francisco Public Library Competition (San Francisco, CA; 1917; educational) [Dr]
• *Stanford University [proposed war memorial and theatre] (Palo Alto, CA; 1932; educational) [Dr]
• *Telegraph Hill project (San Francisco, CA; 1925-1926; recreational) Photographer: Moulin, G. [Dr, Ph]
• *Temple Emanuel (San Francisco, CA; 1906; religious) [Dr]
• *Tropp Building (unknown; 1922; commercial) [Ph]
• *unidentified building (unknown; n.d.; commercial) Photographer: Nevada Photo Service [Ph]
• *unidentified residences (unknown; n.d.; residential) Photographer: Nevada Photo Service [Ph]
• *unidentified synagogue (unknown; n.d.; religious) [Dr]
• *unidentified theater (unknown; n.d.; commercial) [Ph]
• *unidentified theater (unknown; n.d.; commercial) Photographer: Collinge J. [Ph]
• *War Memorial Opera House (San Francisco, CA; 1923-1933; commercial) [Dr, Ph]
• *Warner Brothers Theatre (Hollywood, CA; 1925-1926; commercial) Photographer: Keystone photo [Dr, Ph]
• *Webster, George (Sierra County, CA; 1938; residential) [Dr]
I. Personal Papers, 1891-1920

Scope and Content Note
Contains Lansburgh's statement of citizenship, and a carbon copy of an extensive account of his travels throughout Europe, Great Britain, and the Middle East, addressed to his aunt and brother and preserved as a personal diary. Also contains some early artistic drawings by Lansburgh, completed in 1891. Includes many drawings and notebooks completed when he was a student at L'Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris, and a few unidentified photographs. The correspondence includes a series of letters in French from J.L. Pascal, one of his instructors from the Beaux Arts, and other letters in both English and French, including several from George Toy. Also includes a copy of his MIT entrance exams, dated 1894, and several photographs of California missions.

II. Project Records, 1907-1939

Scope and Content Note
Arrangement
Arranged alphabetically within subseries.
Consists of project indexes, photographs, and drawings documenting Lansburgh's designs. Project indexes cover the period 1913 to approximately 1930 or 1931. Photographs document various phases of construction, as well as drawings and models. A few textual documents and small drawings are filed with the photographs. Drawings depict residential, commercial, religious, and funerary projects as well as numerous theaters.

A. Project Indexes

B. Photographs

C. Drawings