

# Coconut Grove Playhouse Historic Report



Jorge L Hernandez Preservation Architect

For Arquitectonica International

02.07.17

# History of the Coconut Grove Playhouse

I. Coconut Grove Theater, 1927 - 1955

Silent Screen movie house

II. Coconut Grove Playhouse, 1955 - 1976

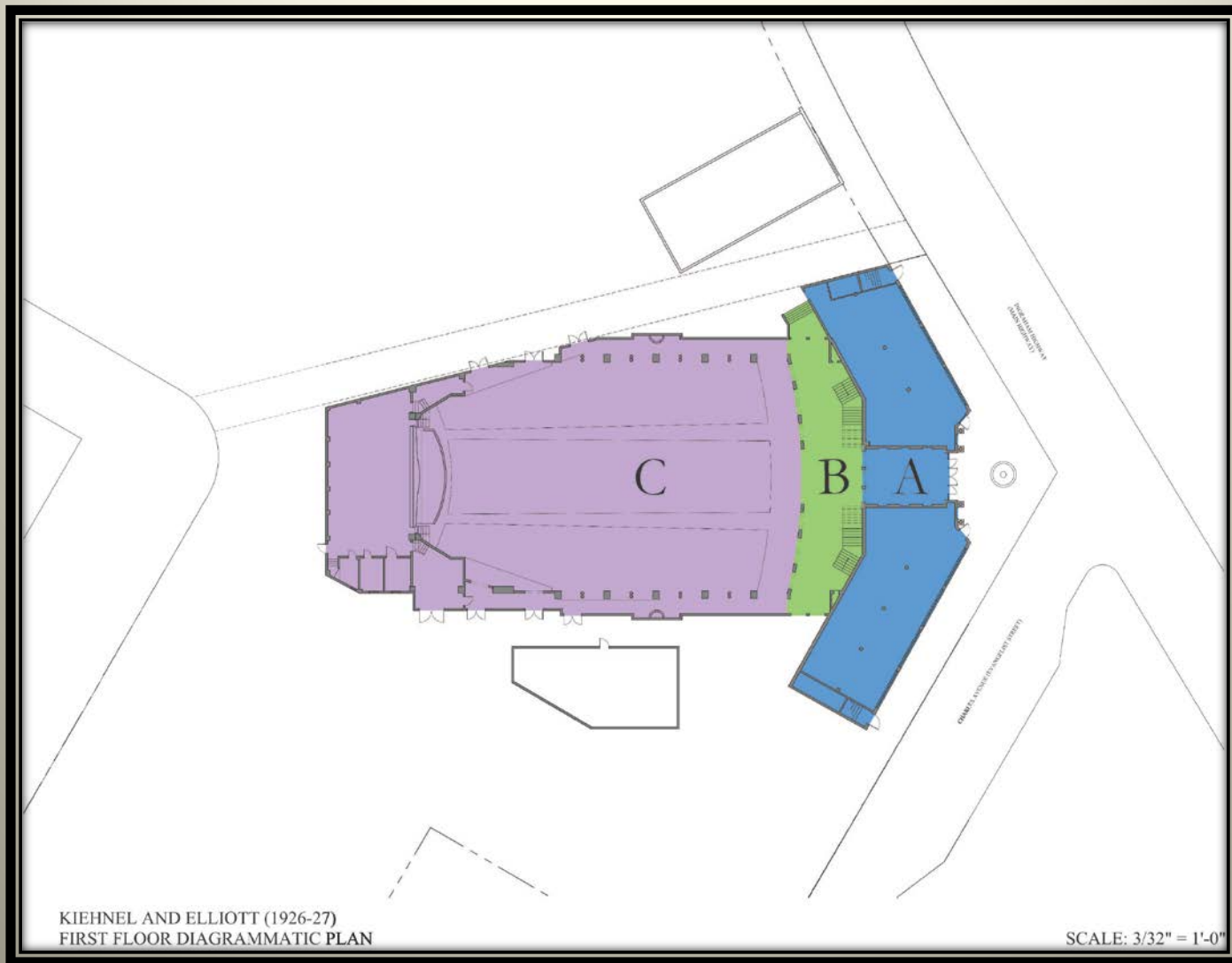
III. Players State Theater, 1977 – 2006

IV. Coconut Grove Playhouse Current Condition, 2006 – 2016

Building Shuttered



Coconut Grove Theater, 1927  
Front Elevation

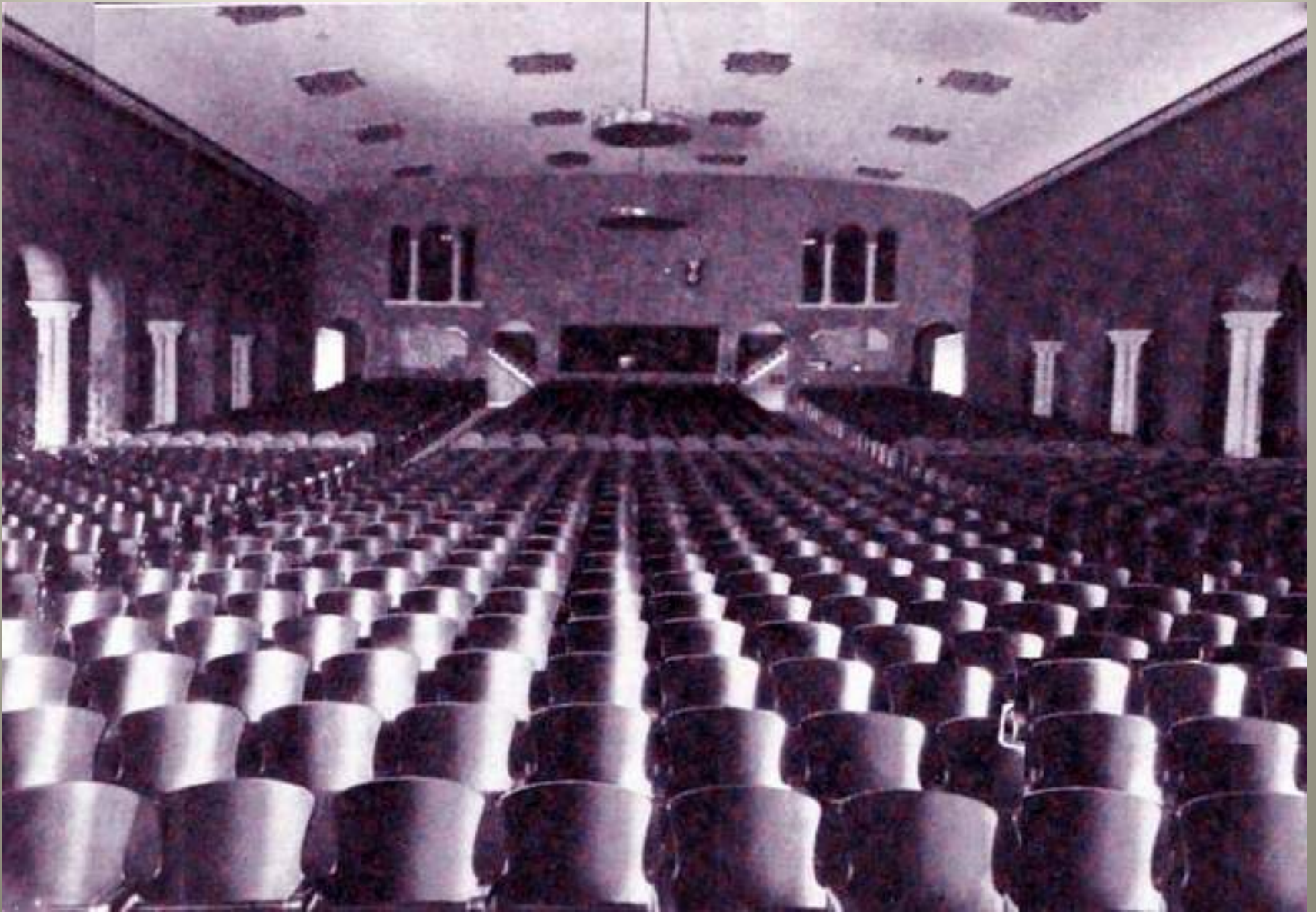


Diagrammatic Kiehnel & Elliott floor plan showing the compositional organization of the Playhouse

A: The front building

B: The crescent shape lobby and vestibule

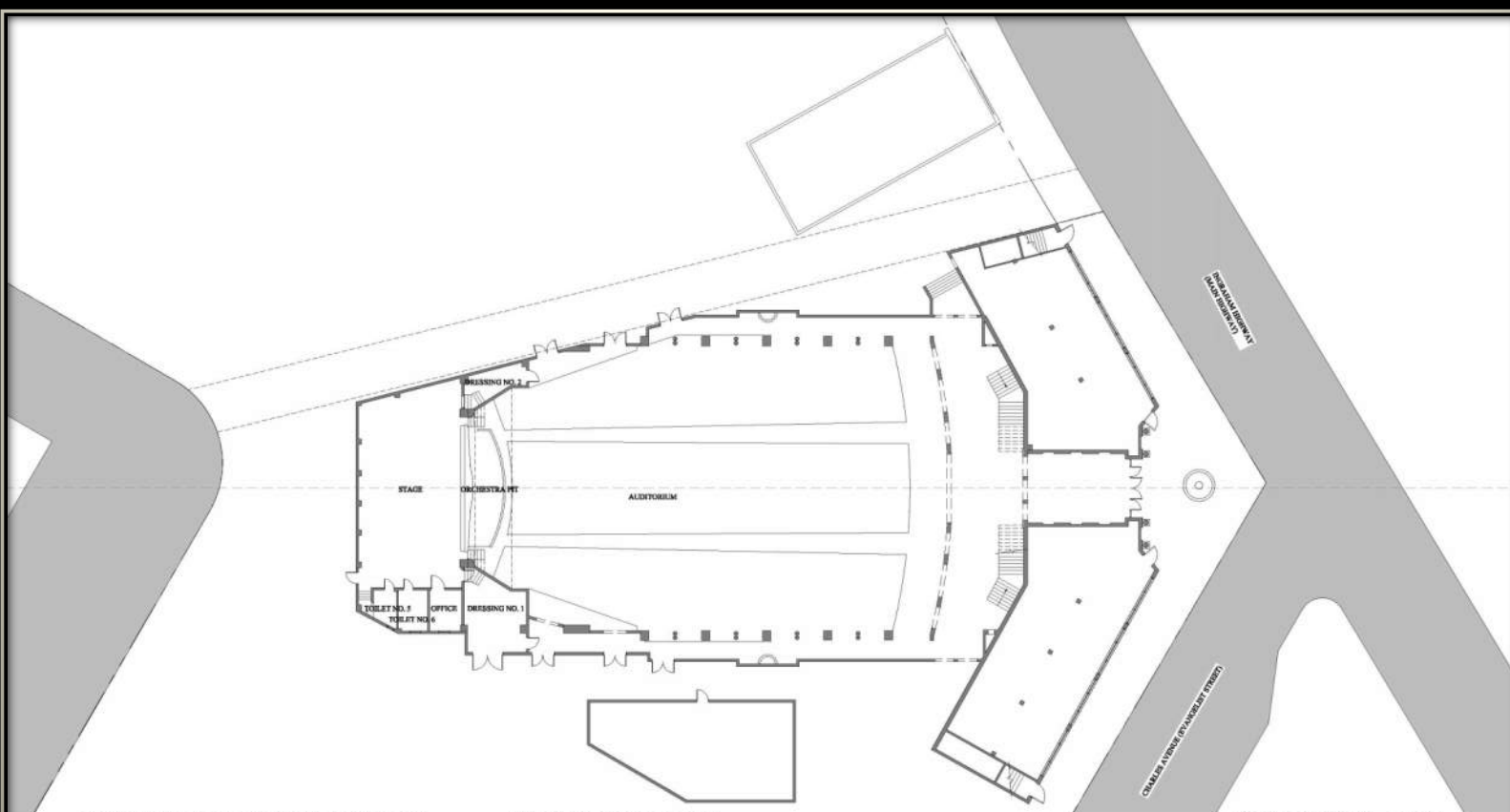
C: The auditorium



Interior view of the Coconut Grove Theater, 1927



Coconut Grove Chamber of Commerce Meetings  
held at the Coconut Grove Theater (1946 Photo)



KIEHNEL AND ELLIOTT (1926-27)

FIRST FLOOR PLAN

SCALE: 3/32" = 1'-0"



KIEHNEL AND ELLIOTT (1926-27)

LONGITUDINAL SECTION

SCALE: 3/32" = 1'-0"

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An iconic scene from the 1933 film King Kong



Sorrrows of Satan, 1926



The Jazz Singer, 1927



Coconut Grove Chamber of Commerce Meetings  
held at the Coconut Grove Theater (1946 Photo)



Olympia Theater in Downtown Miami, Interior view

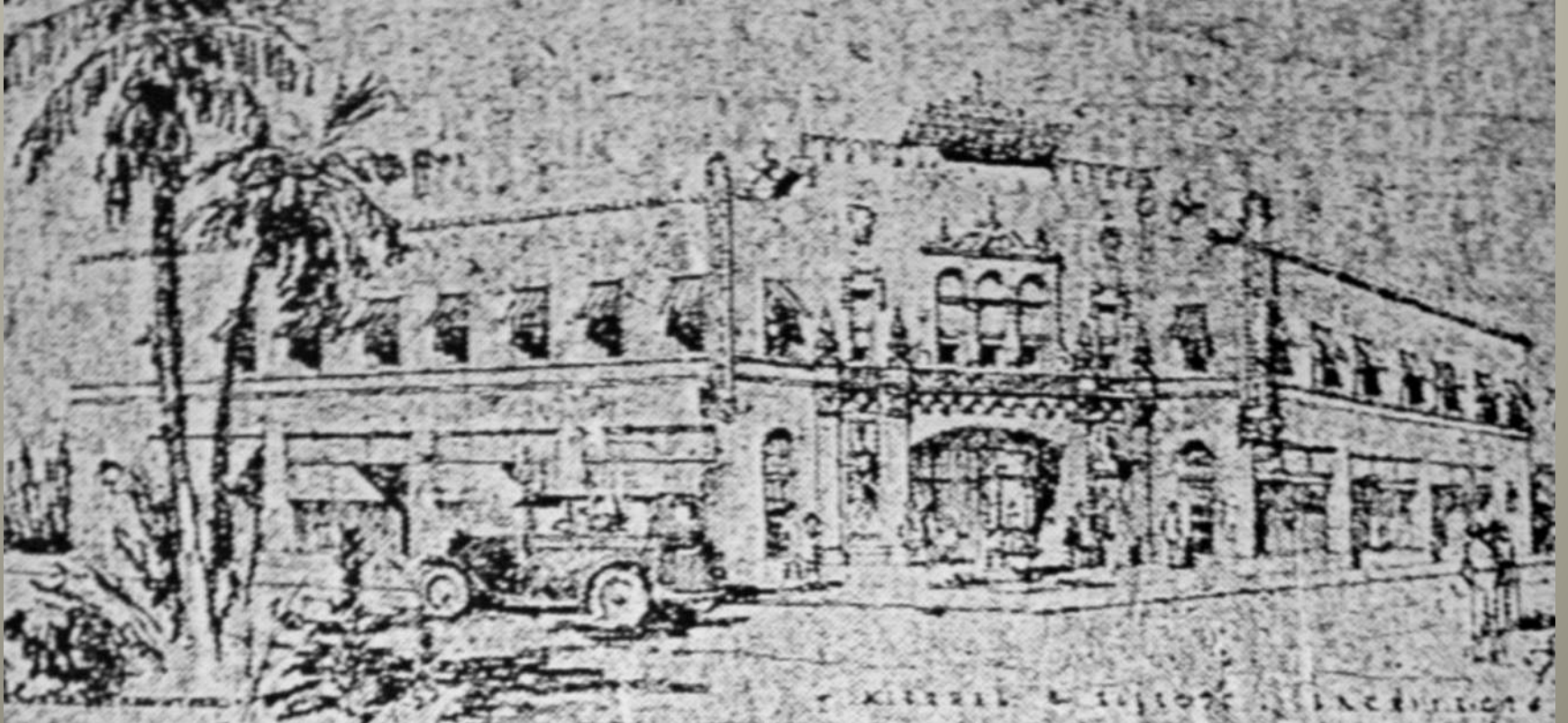




Coconut Grove Theater, 1927  
Front Elevation



Olympia Theater in Downtown  
Miami, by John Ebersohn, 1926  
Interior view



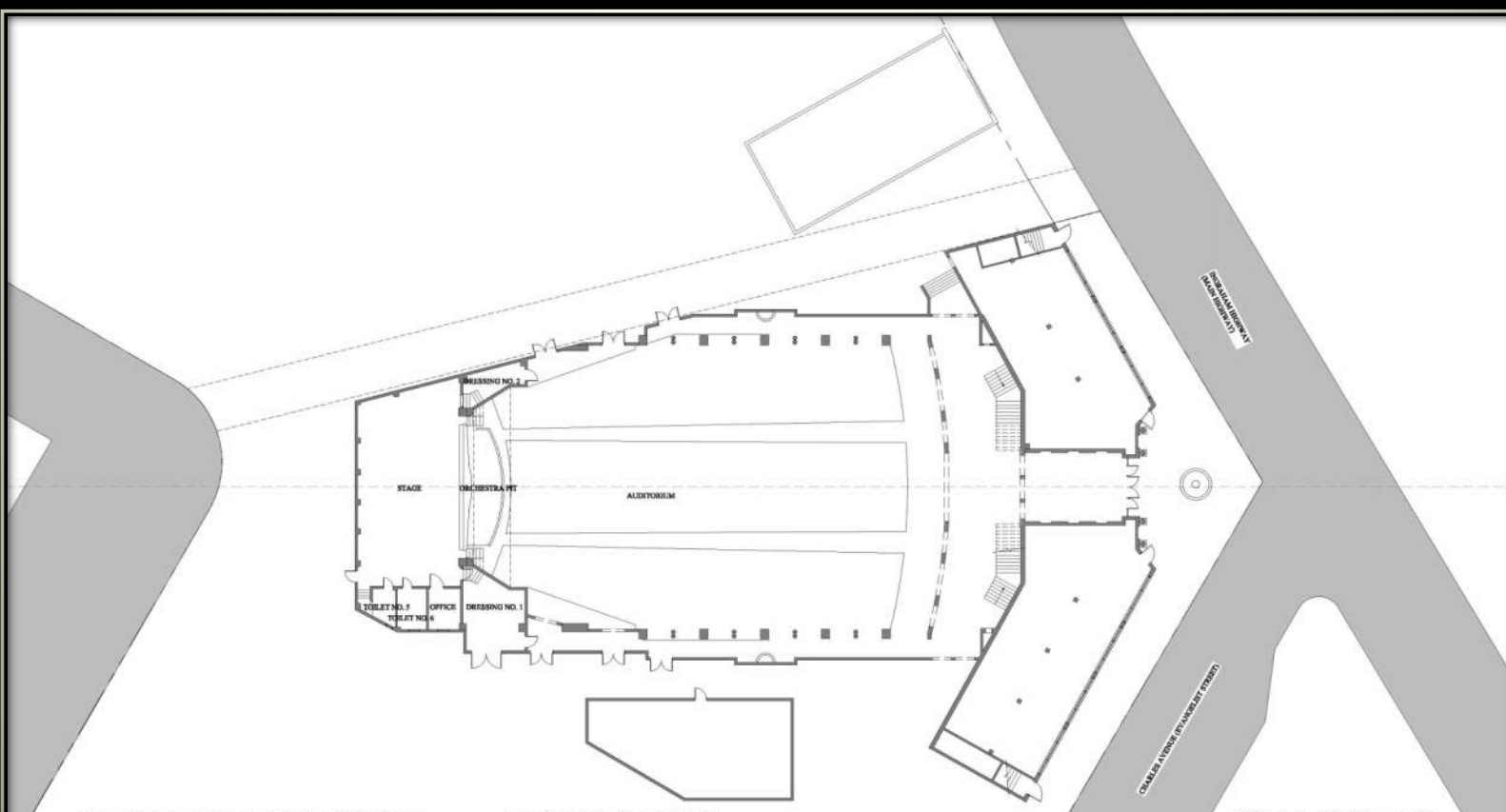
Sketch of the Coconut Grove Playhouse as a two story structure  
Arva Moore Parks Archives



Coconut Grove Theater, 1927  
Front Elevation



Members of the Coconut Grove Chamber of Commerce in front of the Coconut Grove Theater (1946 Photo)



KIEHNEL AND ELLIOTT (1926-27)

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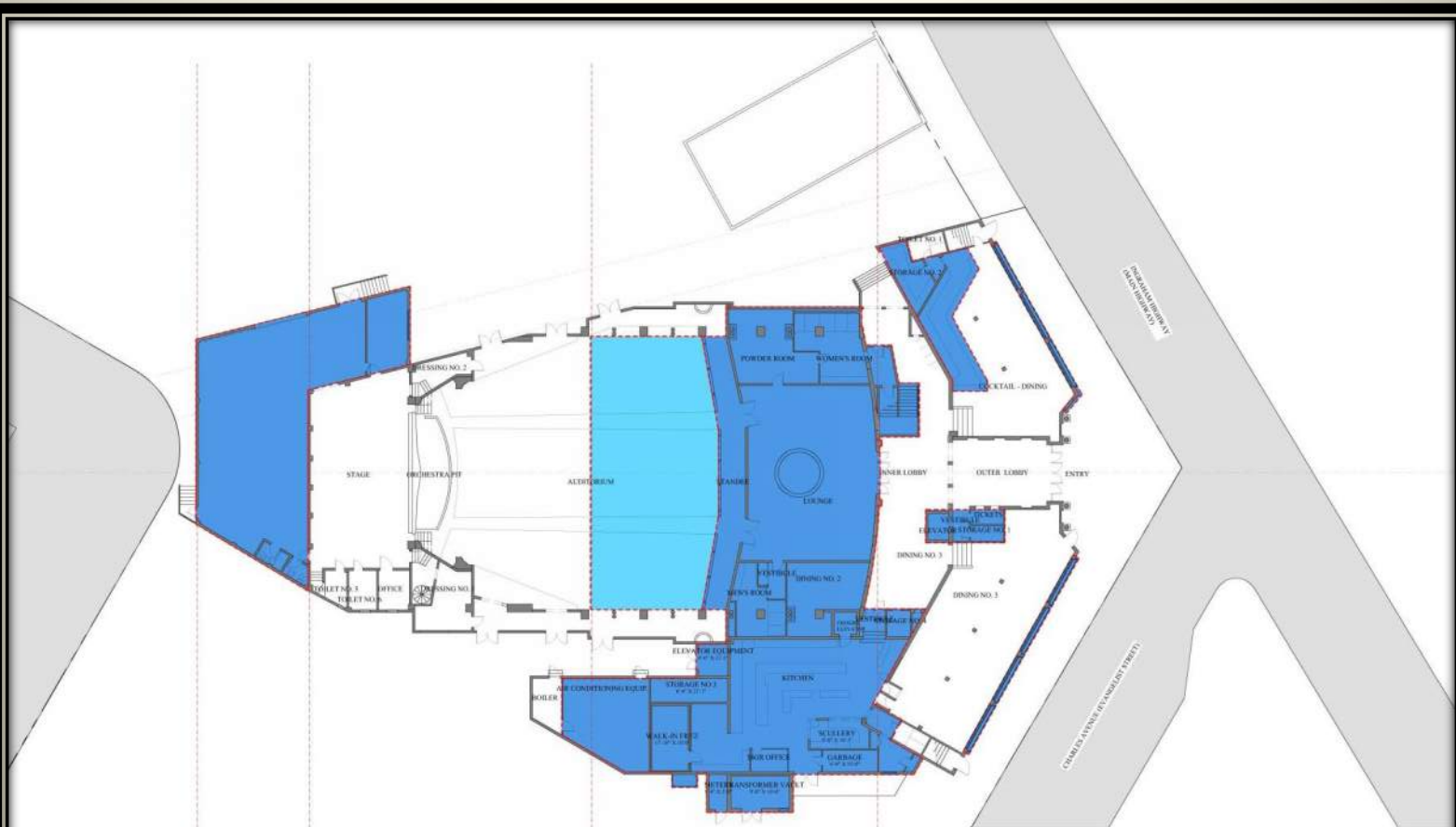
Left:  
Mr. & Mrs. Engle entertaining  
guests in the Playhouse  
Dining Room. Architect  
Alfred Browning Parker is  
seated at the far left.



Right:  
George Engle (1955 Owner)  
& Dorothy Engle at the  
Playhouse Art Gallery



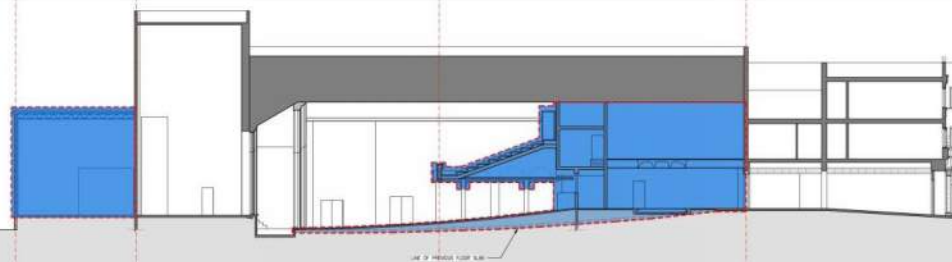
A South Florida Home designed by Alfred Browning Parker



ALFRED BROWNING PARKER (1955-56)

FIRST FLOOR PLAN

SCALE: 3/32" = 1'-0"



ALFRED BROWNING PARKER (1955-56)

LONGITUDINAL SECTION

SCALE: 3/32" = 1'-0"

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Alfred Browning Parker Floor Plan and Section, 1955-56

The royal blue shows Parker's additions, and the light blue indicates the extent of the mezzanine overhead.





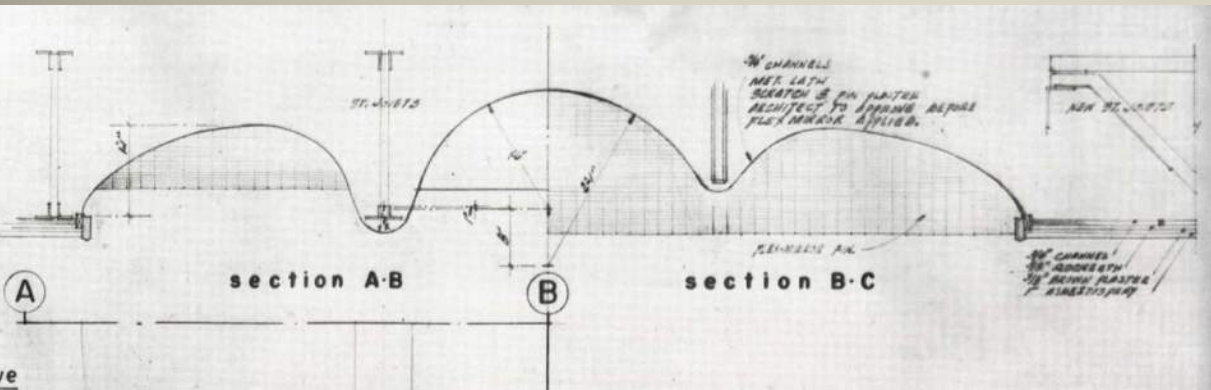
Playhouse dining room interior designed by Alfred Browning Parker



Playhouse Restaurant interior designed by Alfred Browning Parker



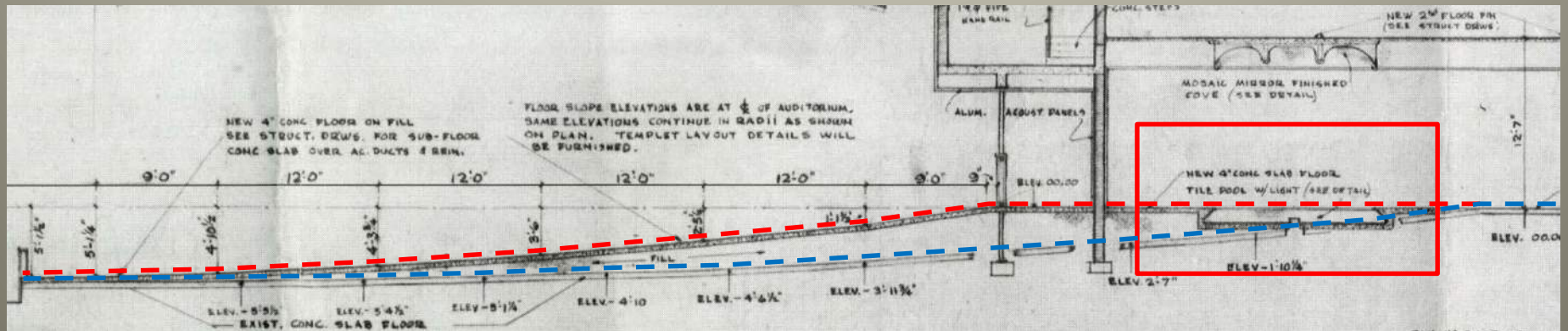
The Playhouse Gallery and Celebrity Room



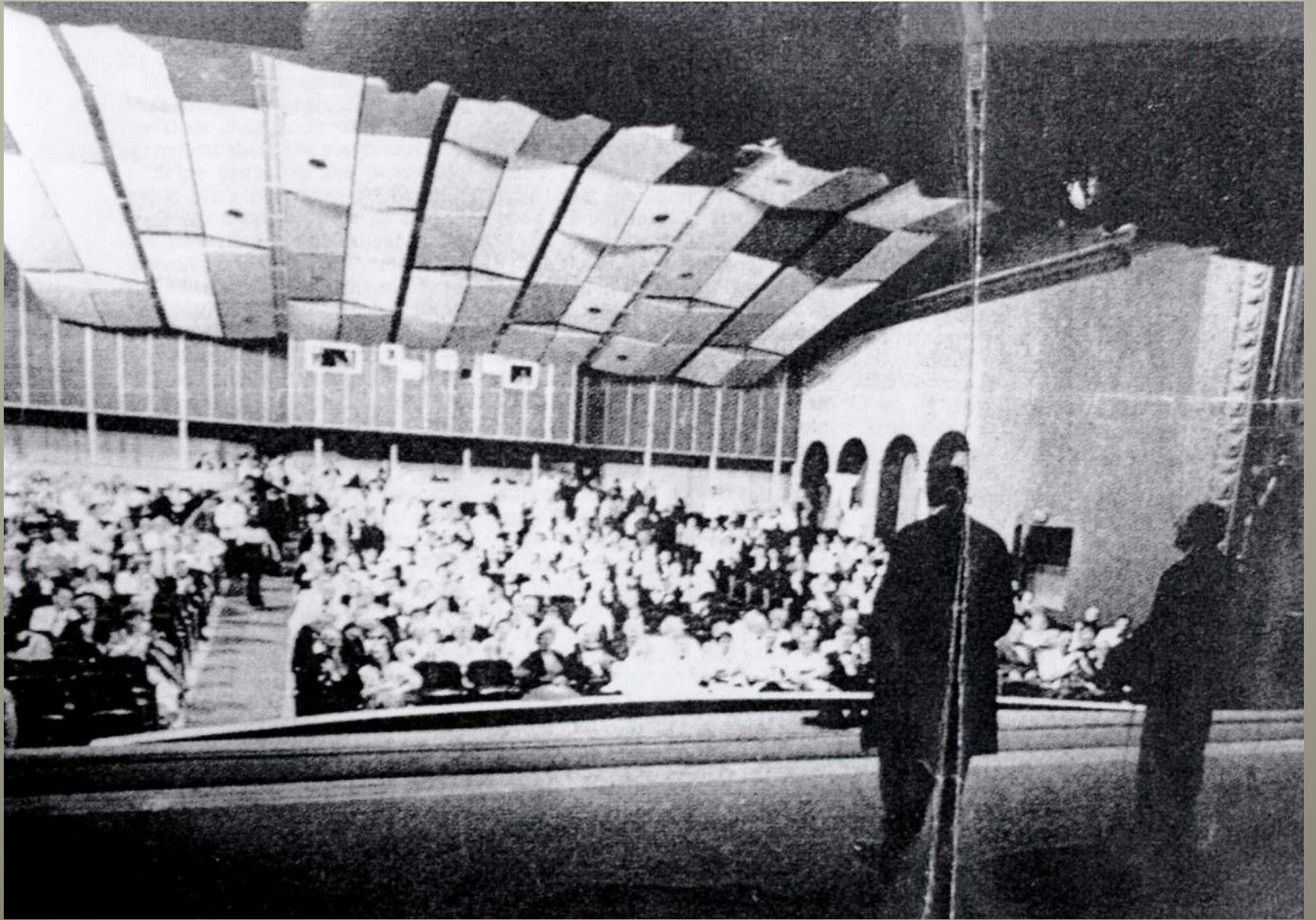
Detail of lobby fountain mirrored dome



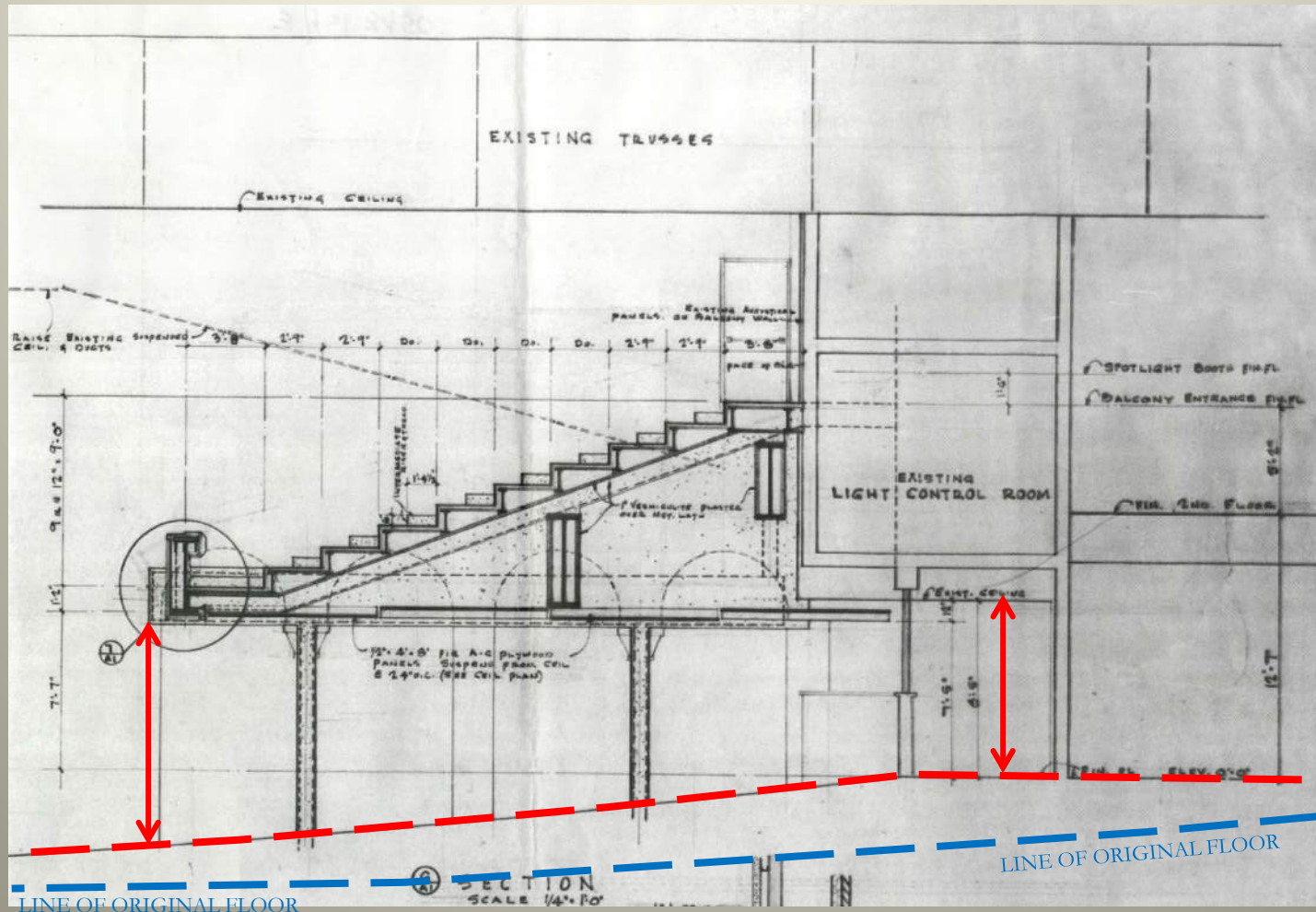
Playhouse Entry Vestibule by Parker



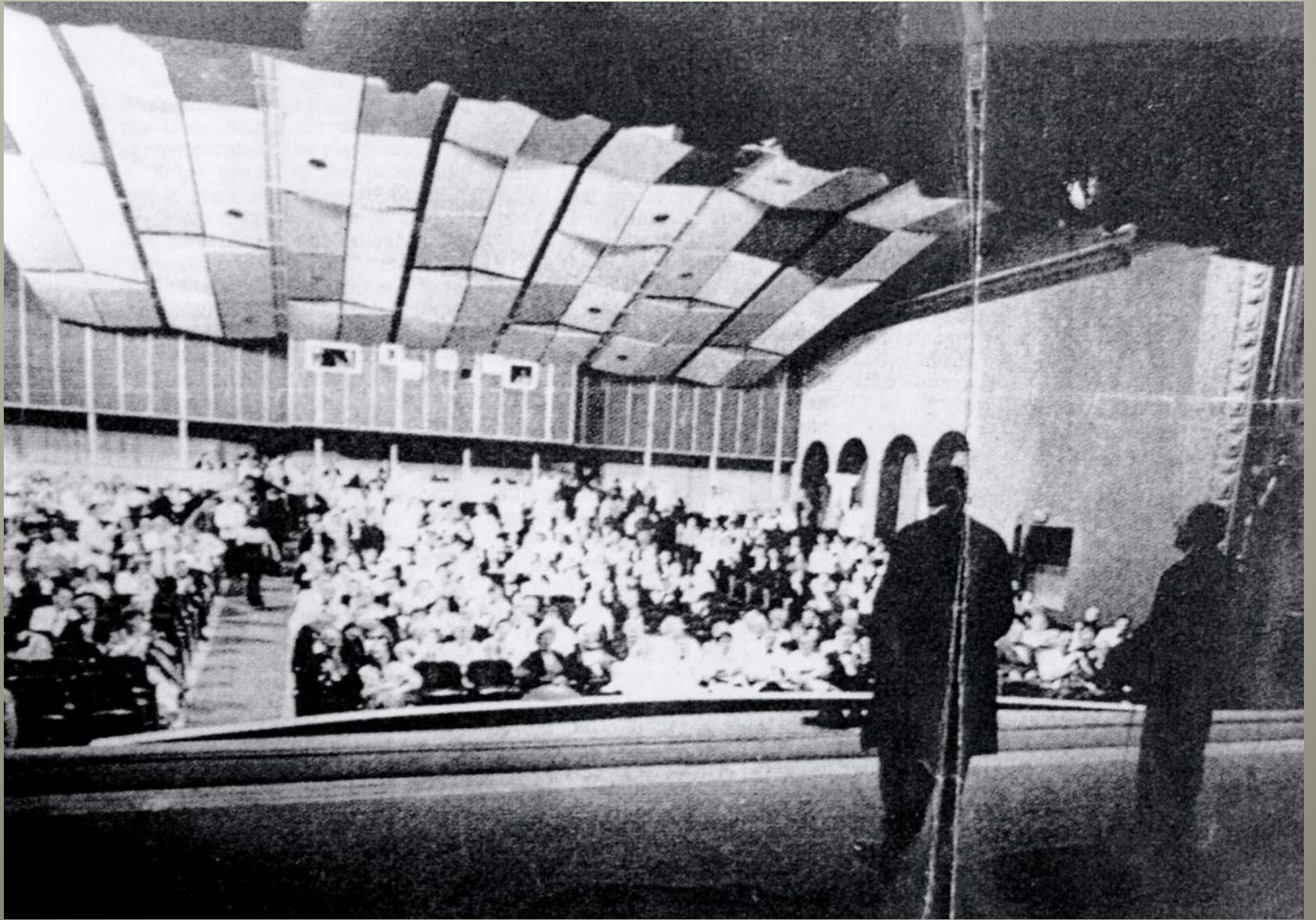
Excerpt from Parker's Longitudinal Section showing the change to the floor slope, which allowed for the fountain.



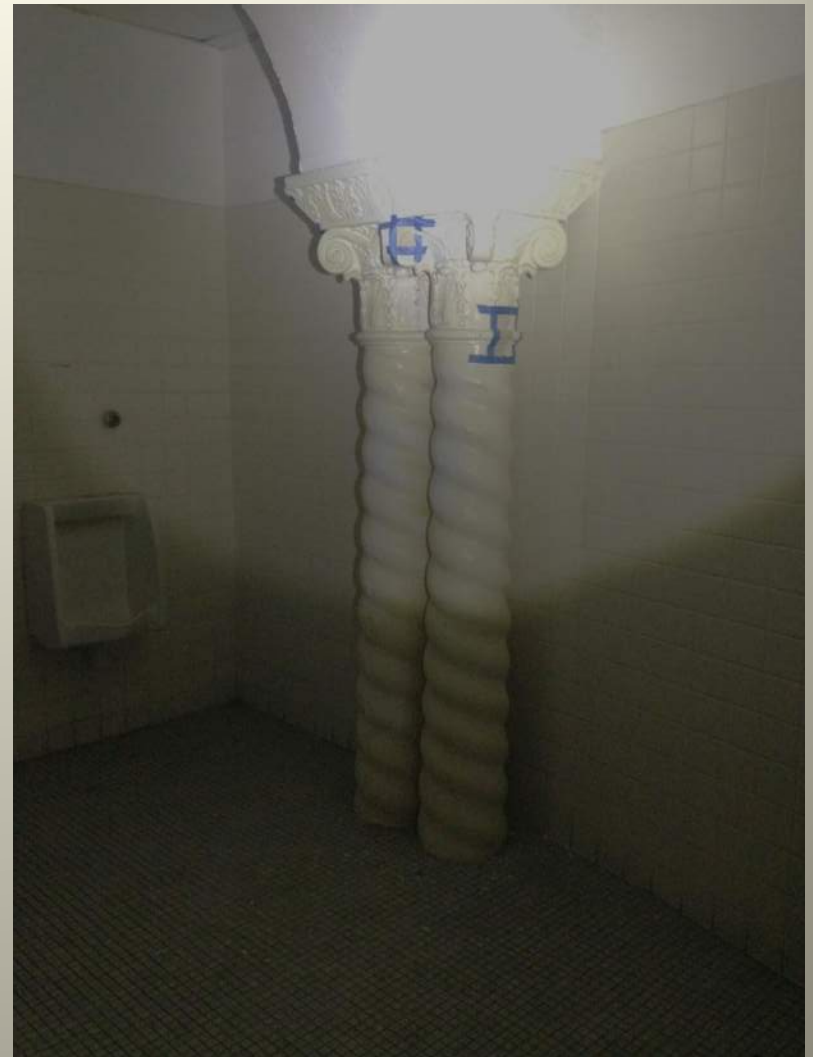
Interior View of the Coconut Grove Playhouse Auditorium



Excerpt from Parker's plans showing the new mezzanine obscuring the existing bays and ceiling heights



Interior View of the Coconut Grove Playhouse Auditorium



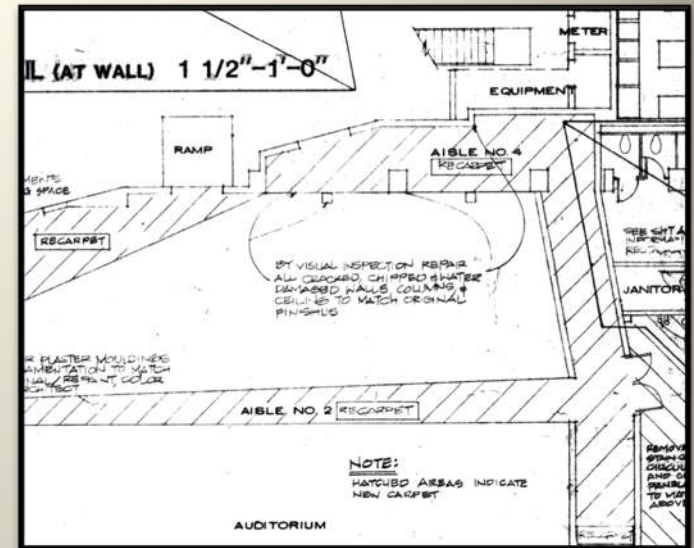
Solomonic Columns now located in the restroom. Due to the change in floor slope, the bases are now below the floor slab.



KIEHNEL AND ELLIOTT (1926-27)  
LONGITUDINAL SECTION DIAGRAM

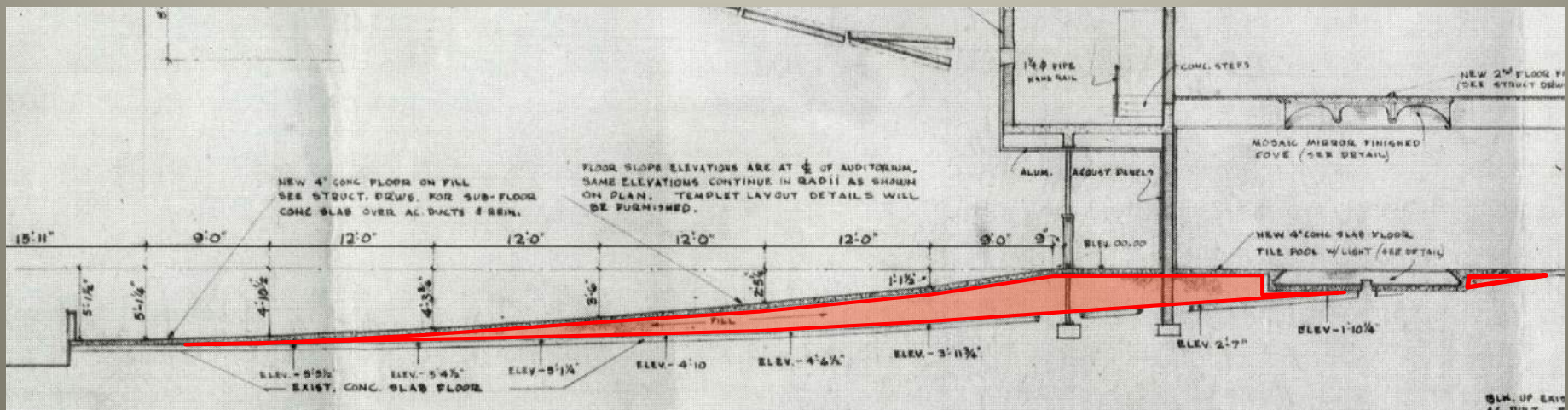
SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"

Diagram showing Alfred Browning Parker's Mezzanine in Kiehnel and Elliot's Section



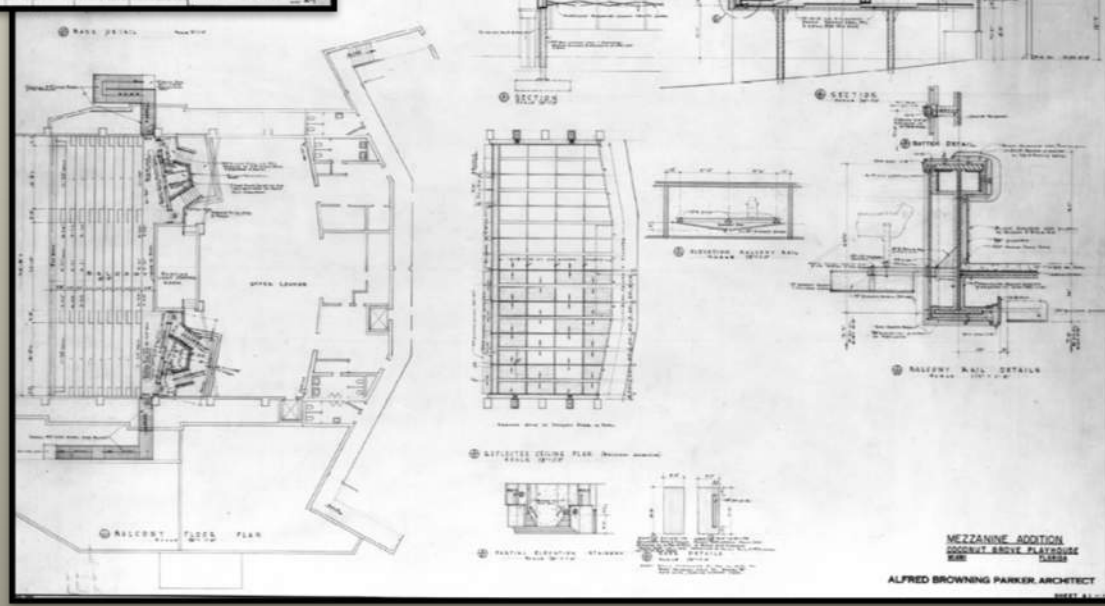
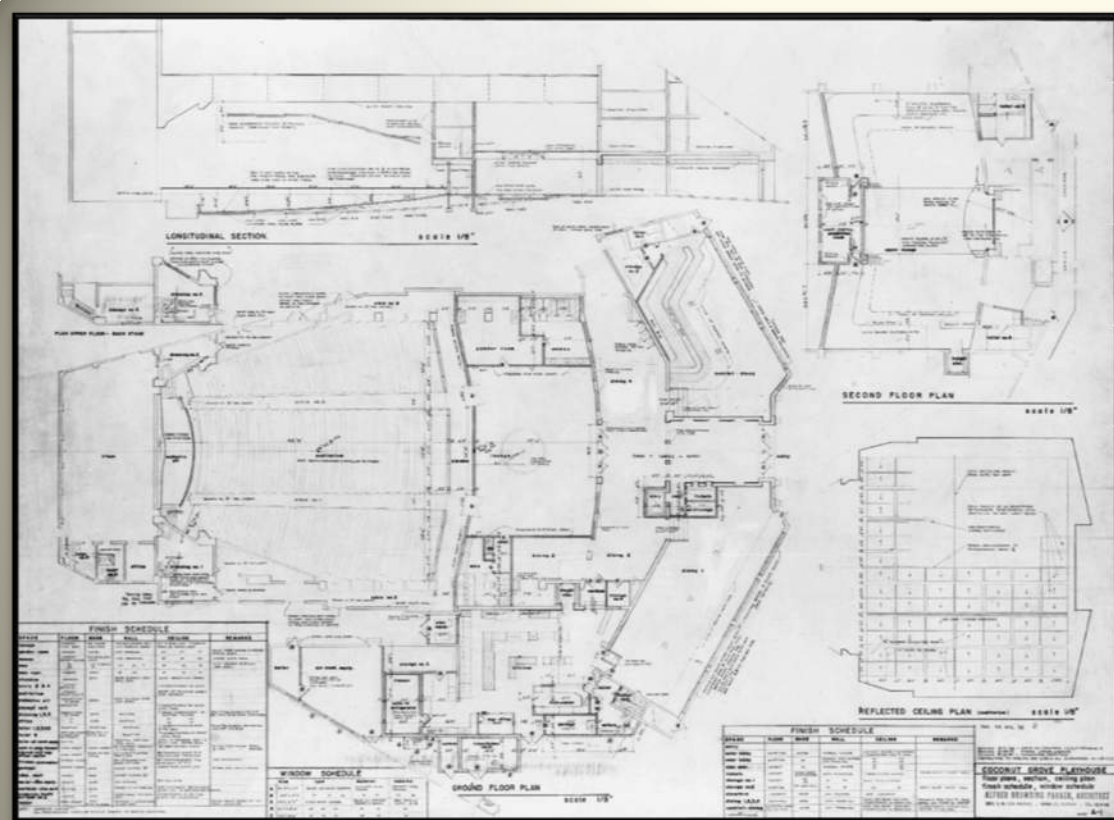
Excerpt from the Ferguson Glasgow Schuster Inc. Alterations & Remodeling plans 1984

Solomonic Columns at the Concession Area that have been buried by Alfred Browning Parkers change to the floor slope



Section in Alfred Browning Parker's Plans showing change in floor slope, 1955

Alfred Browning Parker's Plans showing the Auditorium without the Mezzanine, 1955



Alfred Browning Parker's Plans showing the Auditorium with the Mezzanine, 1955-56





Coconut Grove Theater view of the proscenium arch  
(photo 1946)

Coconut Grove Playhouse front elevation showing the closed up store fronts (Photo 1971)

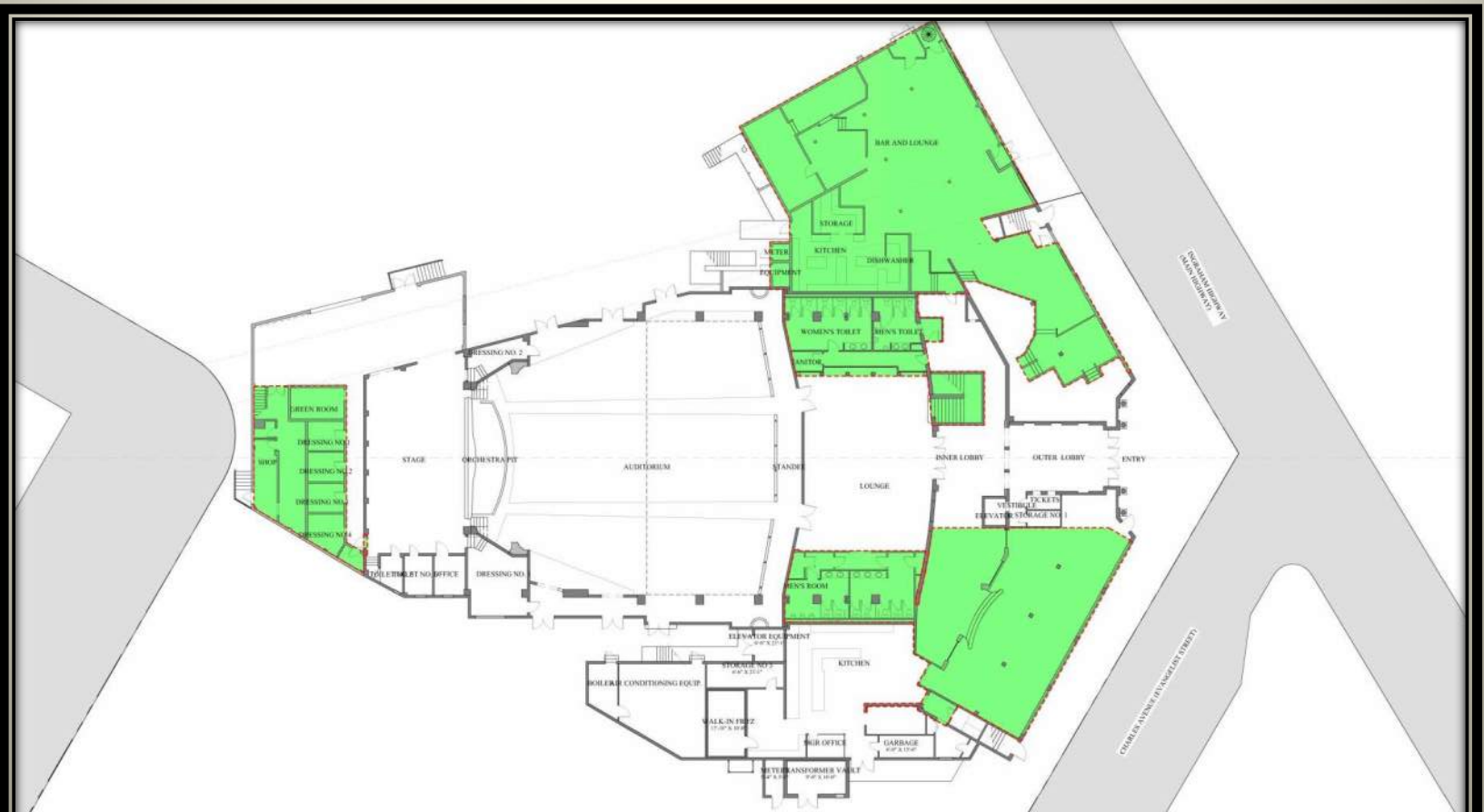


Coconut Grove Playhouse front elevation showing the elevated planters (Photo 1984)





Comparison of the 1926 and 1971 Coconut Grove Playhouse front elevations showing the removal of the crenellation along the roof line.



FERGUSON GLASGLOW SCHUSTER, INC. (1982)

FIRST FLOOR PLAN

SCALE: 3/32" = 1'-0"

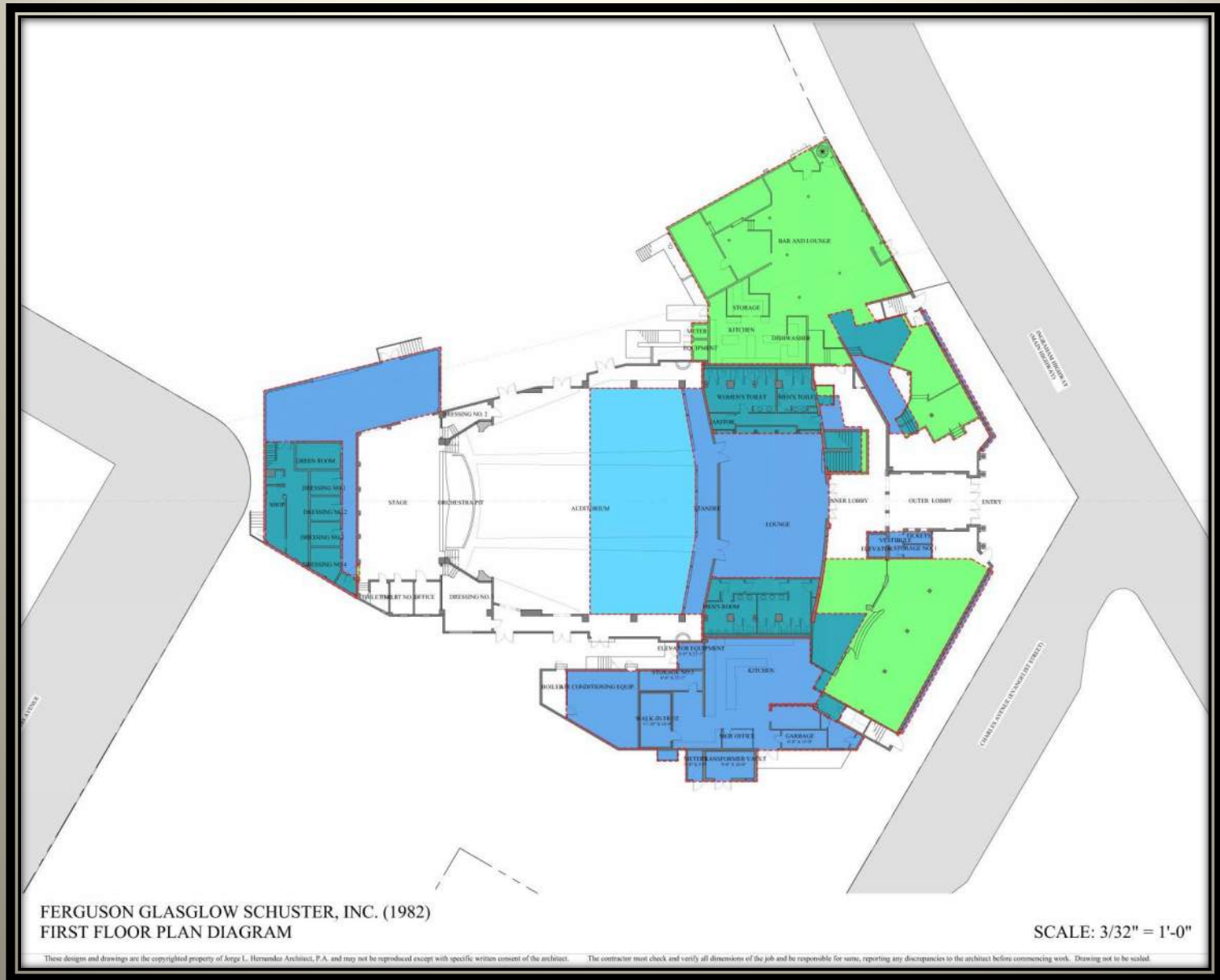


FERGUSON GLASGLOW SCHUSTER, INC. (1982)

LONGITUDINAL SECTION

SCALE: 3/32" = 1'-0"

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Coconut Grove First Floor Plan  
 Blue represents changes made by Alfred Browning Parker, and green represents changes made by  
 Ferguson Glasglow Schuster, Inc.



Carol Channing in *Show Business*  
(left)



Tennessee Williams during the  
run of *A Streetcar Named Desire*  
(right)



Mickey Rooney in *No Sex Please  
We're British*  
(left)



Liza Minnelli in *The Fantasticks*  
(right)

# I. Coconut Grove Theater, 1927 – 1955

- 1926 Mediterranean Revival Silent Screen movie house By Kiehnel and Elliott
- A composition organized about the corner of Charles Ave and Main Highway featuring three distinct parts
- Extraordinary handling of the urban corner
- Included an early form of air conditioning
- Used as: a movie theater, air force training location during WWII, Radio broadcast by Kate Smith, closed at intermittent times
- Example of a master work of Mediterranean Revival architecture
- National Register Criteria C
  - Master work, work of a master
- Miami 21, Chapter 23, Section 4, A-5 & 6
  - (5) Embody those distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style, or period, or method of construction.
  - (6) Are an outstanding work of a prominent designer or builder.

## II. Coconut Grove Playhouse, 1955 – 1976

- Significant reworking of nearly all Kiehnel and Elliott interiors by Alfred Browning Parker
- Changes to exterior that affect the Charles Ave and Main Highway facades
- Changes to exterior that affected the roof lines of the corner
- The cultural history of the site is associated with persons and events significant to the history of the American stage
- National Register Criteria A & B
  - Significance for associations with persons and events
- Miami 21, Chapter 23, Section 4, A-1 & 2
  - (1) Are associated in a significant way with the life of a person important in the past.
  - (2) Are the site of a historic event with significant effect upon the community, city, state, or nation.



### III. Players State Theater, 1977 – 2006

- Further reworking of interiors typified by expedient and non-distinguished work of lesser quality
- Further changes to exterior
- The cultural history of the site is associated with persons and events significant to the history of the American stage
- National Register Criteria A & B
  - Significance for associations with persons and events
- Miami 21, Chapter 23, Section 4, A-1 & 2
  - (1) Are associated in a significant way with the life of a person important in the past.
  - (2) Are the site of a historic event with significant effect upon the community, city, state, or nation.

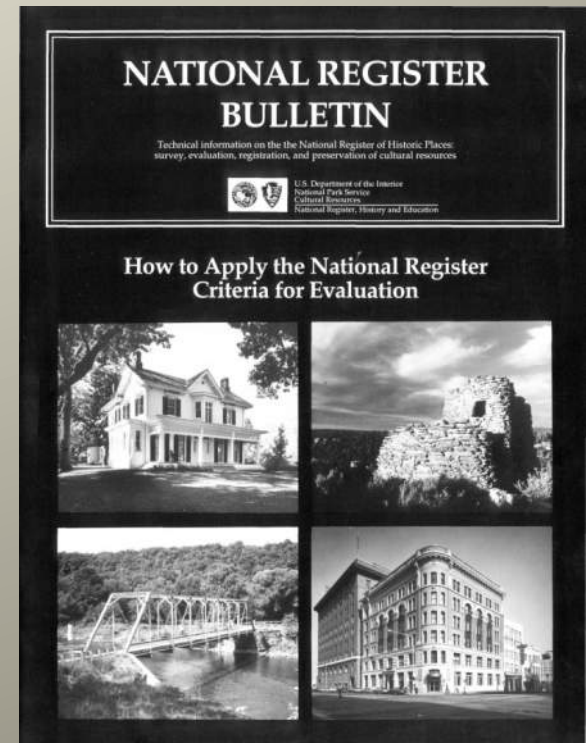
# Methodology

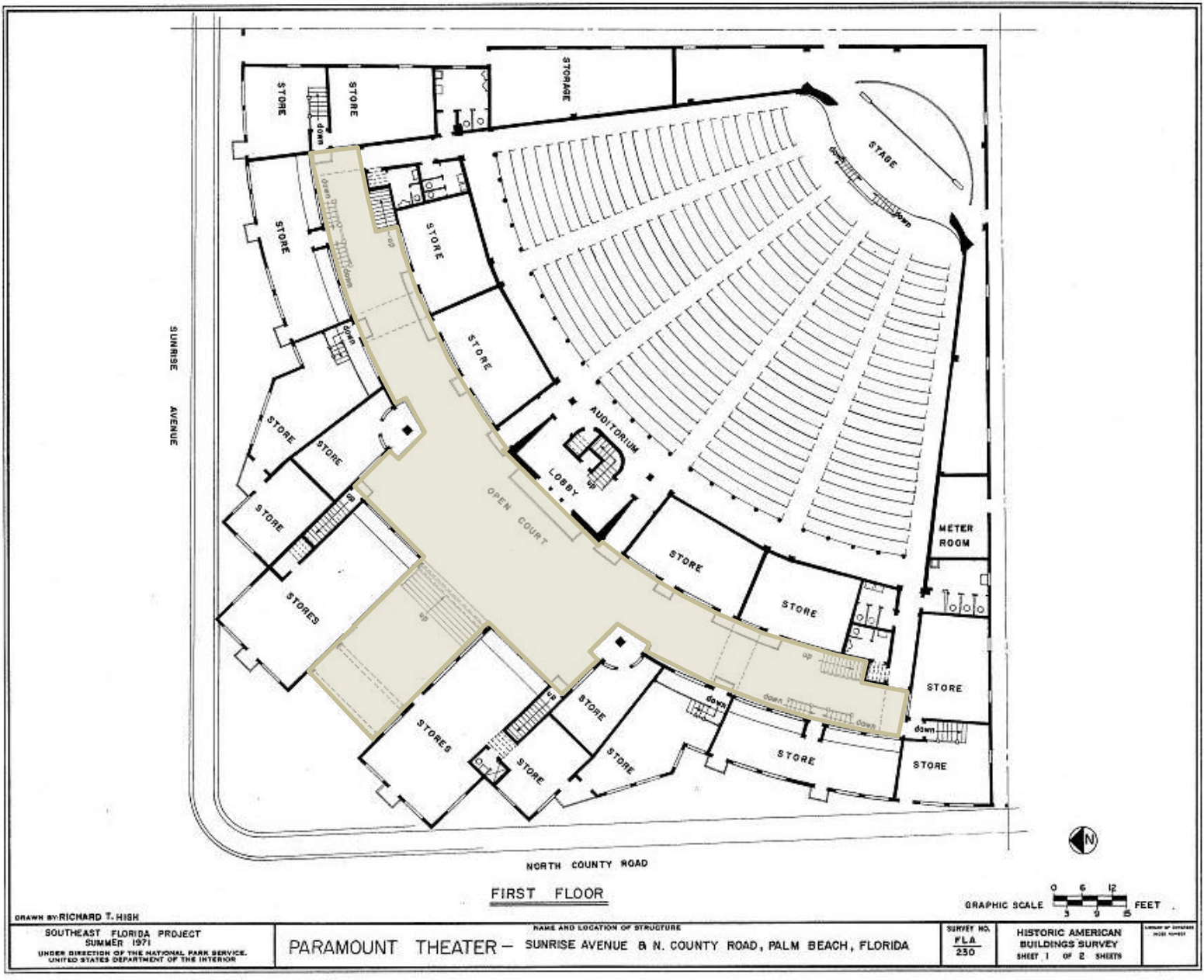


Current state of the Coconut Grove Playhouse Exterior

“For some properties, comparison with similar properties should be considered during the evaluation of integrity. Such comparison may be important in deciding what physical features are essential to properties of that type.”

-National Register Bulletin: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation, Section VIII: How to Evaluate the Integrity of a Property, Comparing Similar Properties





DRAWN BY: RICHARD T. HIGH

SOUTHEAST FLORIDA PROJECT  
 SUMMER 1971  
 UNDER DIRECTION OF THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE,  
 UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

NAME AND LOCATION OF STRUCTURE

PARAMOUNT THEATER - SUNRISE AVENUE & N. COUNTY ROAD, PALM BEACH, FLORIDA

SURVEY NO.  
 FLA  
 230

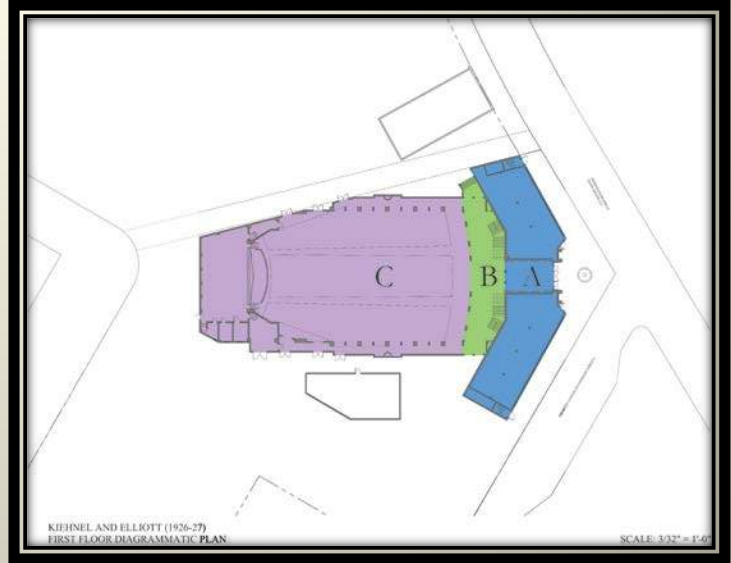
HISTORIC AMERICAN  
 BUILDINGS SURVEY  
 SHEET 1 OF 2 SHEETS

SECTION OF SURVEY  
 (SEE NUMBER)

First Floor Plan of Paramount Theater in Palm Beach



Views of the Paramount Theater in Palm Beach



Exterior view of the Paramount Theater in Palm Beach and the Coconut Grove Playhouse





Aerial view of the Coconut Grove Playhouse

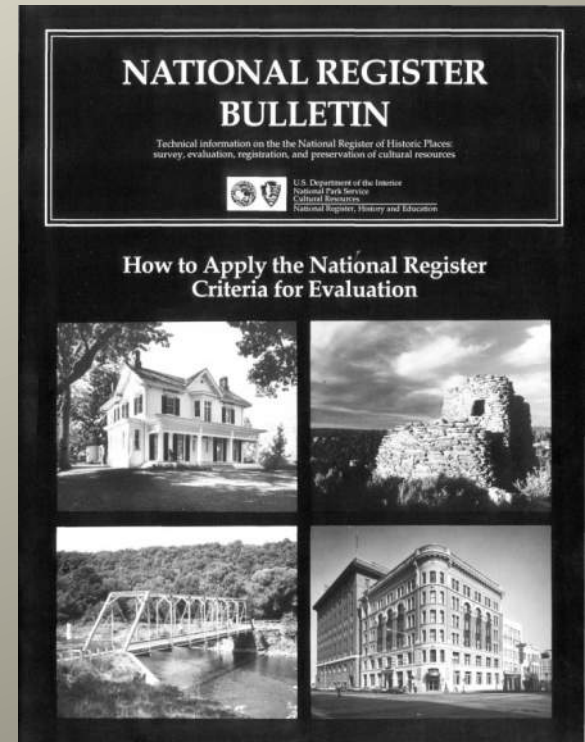
With regards to interiors:

**“Some historic buildings are virtually defined by their interiors ... the loss of an interior will disqualify properties from listing in the National Register - a historic concert hall noted for the beauty of its auditorium and its fine acoustic qualities would be the type of property that if it were to lose its interior, it would lose its value as a historic resource.”**

National Register Bulletin: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation, Section VIII - How to Evaluate the Integrity of a Property, Interiors

**“Some historic buildings are virtually defined by their exteriors, and their contribution to the built environment can be appreciated even if their interiors are not accessible.”**

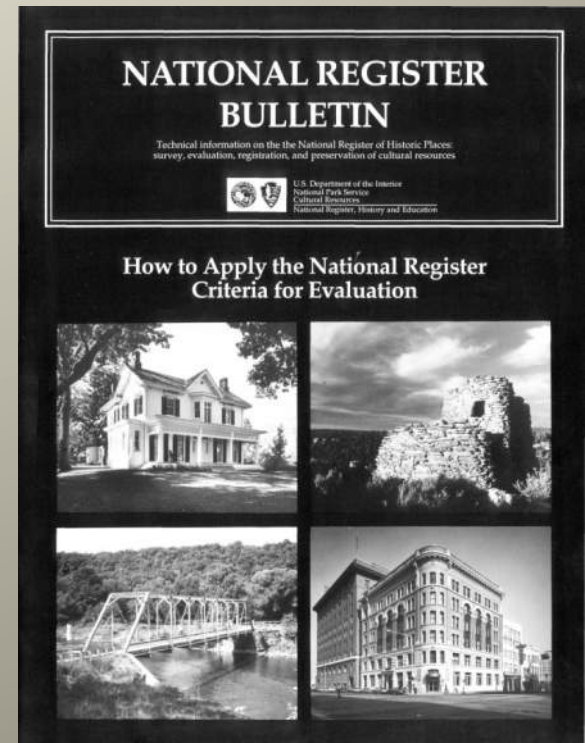
National Register Bulletin: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation, Section VIII - How to Evaluate the Integrity of a Property, Interiors





With regards to exteriors, the Bulletin addresses the topic of integrity under criterion C, for sites associated with the architectural work of a master. “A property that has maintained some historic materials or details can be eligible *if* it retains the majority of the features that illustrate its style in terms of massing, spatial relationships, proportion, pattern of windows and doors, texture of materials and ornamentation. The property is not eligible, however, if it retains some basic features conveying massing but has lost the majority of its features that once characterized its style.”

-National Register Bulletin: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation, Section VIII: How to Evaluate the Integrity of a Property, Assessing the Integrity in Properties





Current state of the Coconut Grove Playhouse Exterior



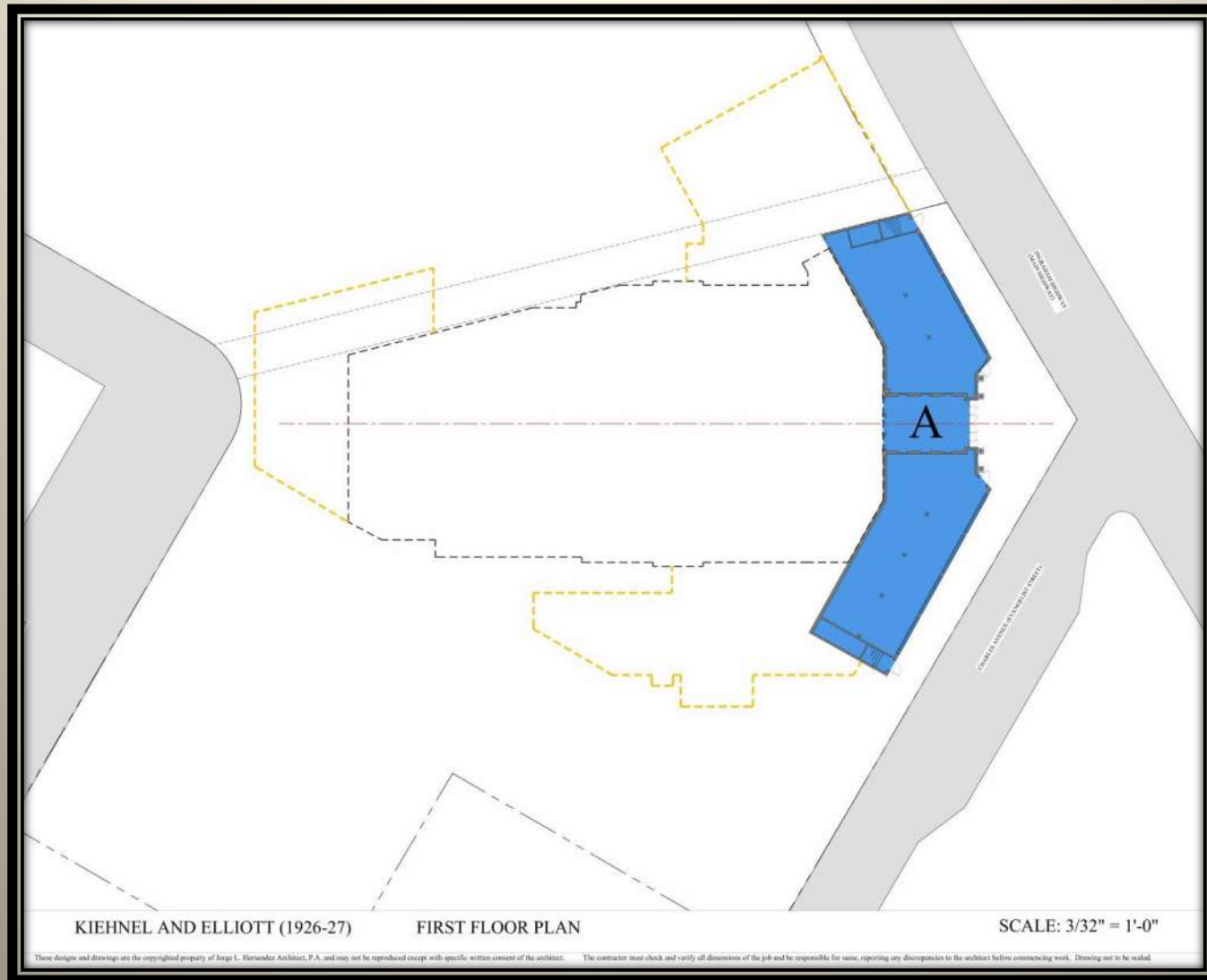
Comparison of the 1926 and 1971 Coconut Grove Playhouse front elevations showing the removal of the crenellation along the roof line.

# Recommendations



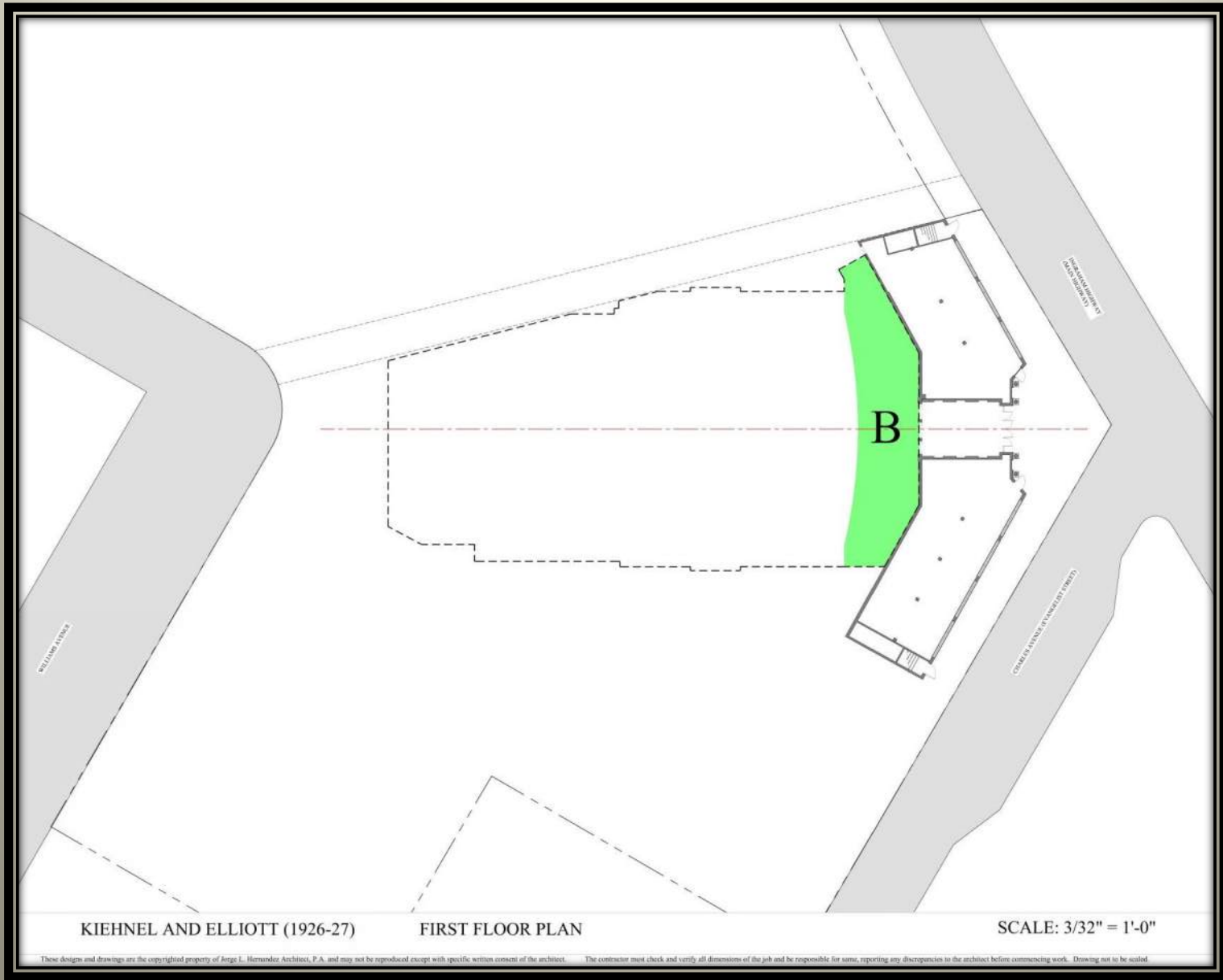
Coconut Grove Theater, 1927  
Front Elevation

## A: The Front Building



1. Restore front building to the 1927 Kiehnel design and remove non-contributing, non-original additions
2. Restore original paint, finishes, and surfaces
3. Replace non-original windows and doors with new windows and doors that are sympathetic to the original design
4. Return ground floor uses that are conducive to an active pedestrian environment.
5. Restore the original roof lines.

B: The crescent shape lobby and vestibule

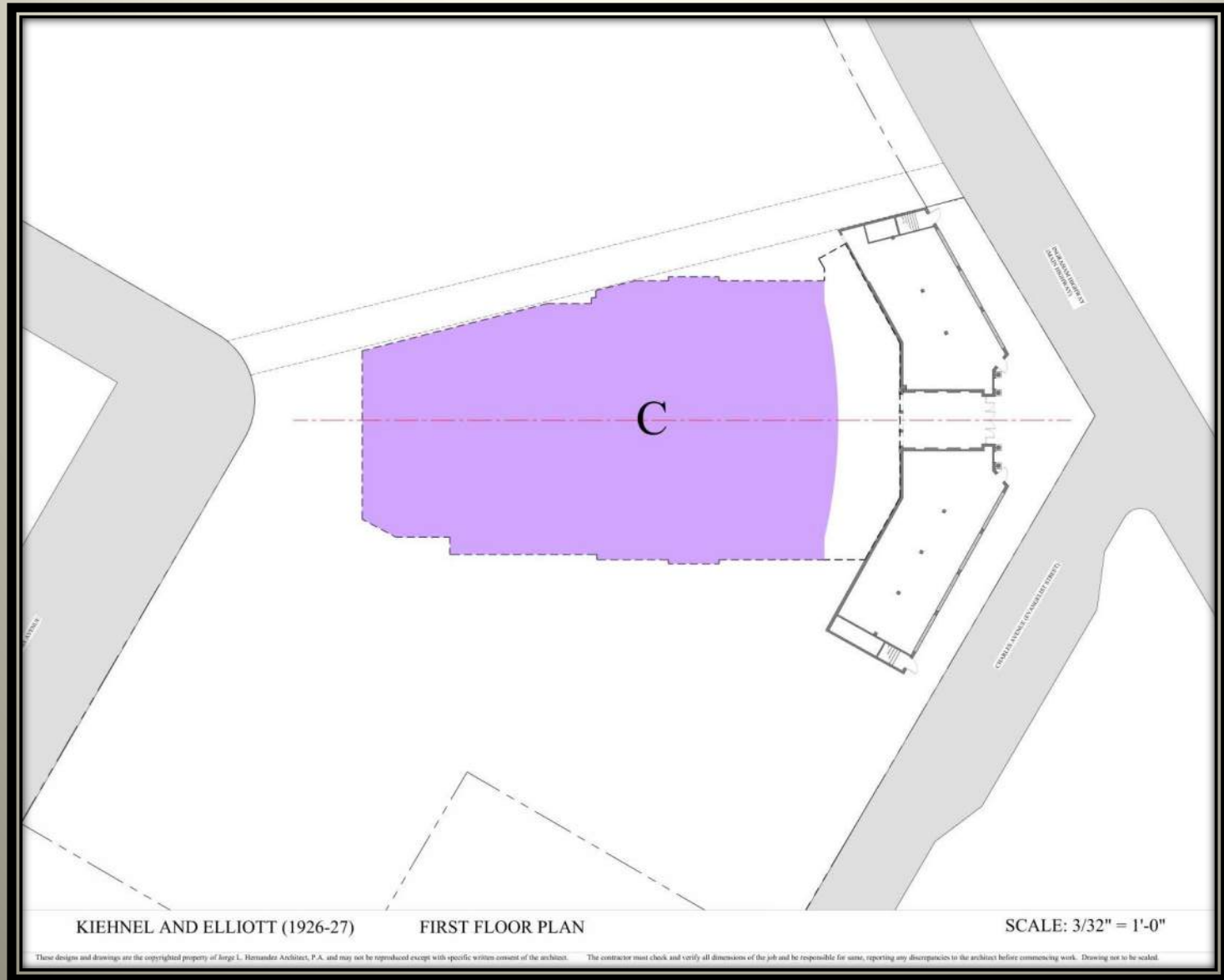


6. Re-establish the foot print of the original lobby as a lush tropical courtyard, where the memory, history and interpretation of this site will be displayed



Aerial view of the Coconut Grove Playhouse

## C: The Auditorium



6. Document and survey for architectural elements to be incorporated in the design of a new state for the art auditorium in its original orientation towards the corner. The proscenium arch and remaining Solomonic columns are among the elements to be incorporated

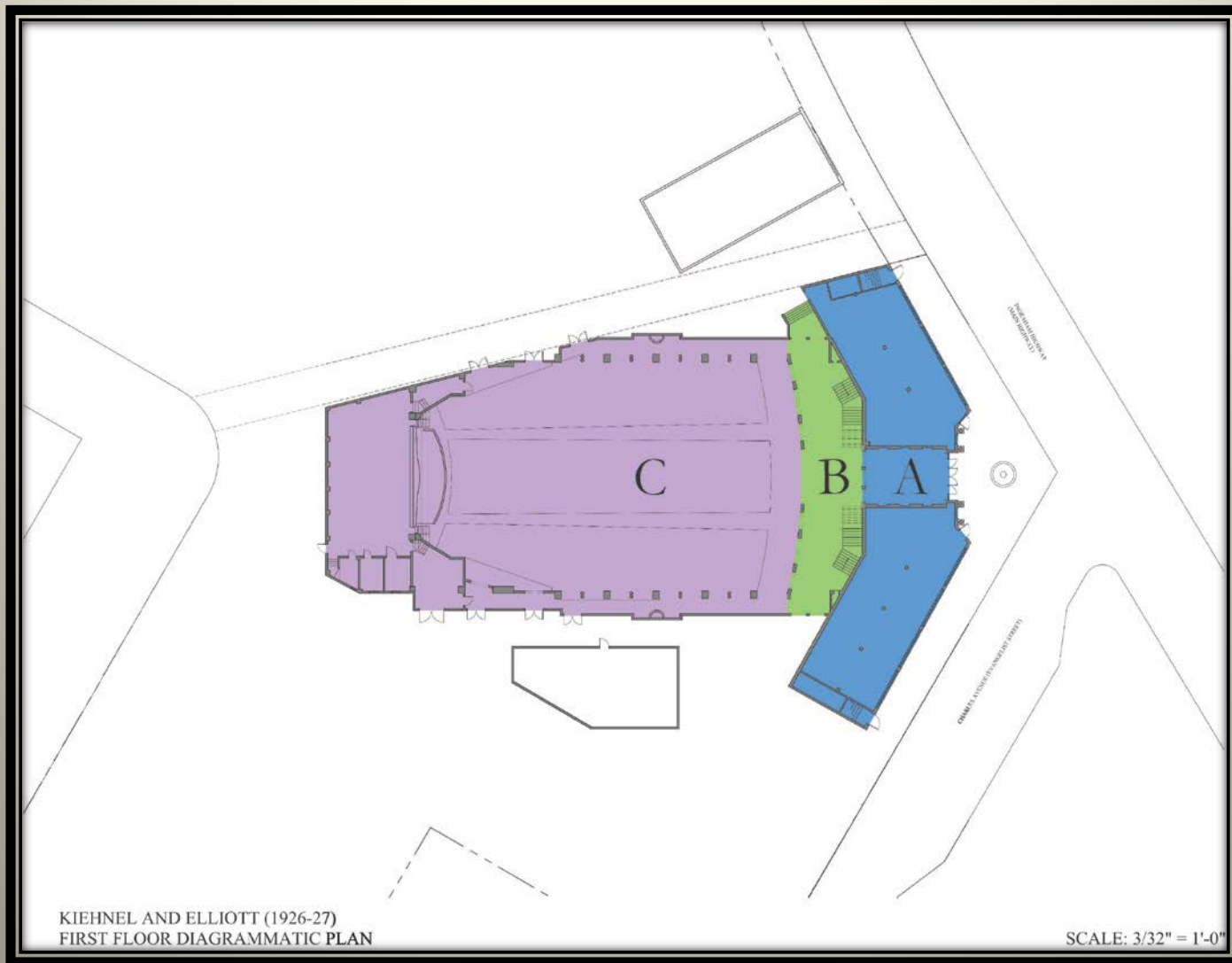




Coconut Grove Chamber of Commerce Meetings held at the Coconut Grove Theater (1946 Photos)



Solomonic Columns now located in the restroom. Due to the change in floor slope, the bases are now below the floor slab.



Diagrammatic Kiehnel & Elliott floor plan showing the compositional organization of the Playhouse

A: The front building

B: The crescent shape lobby and vestibule

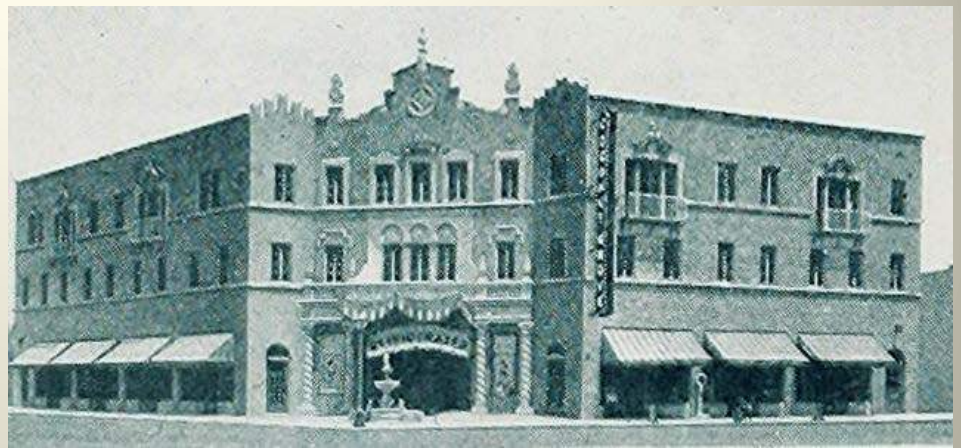
C: The auditorium



Coconut Grove Theater, 1927  
Front Elevation



El Jardin, 1918



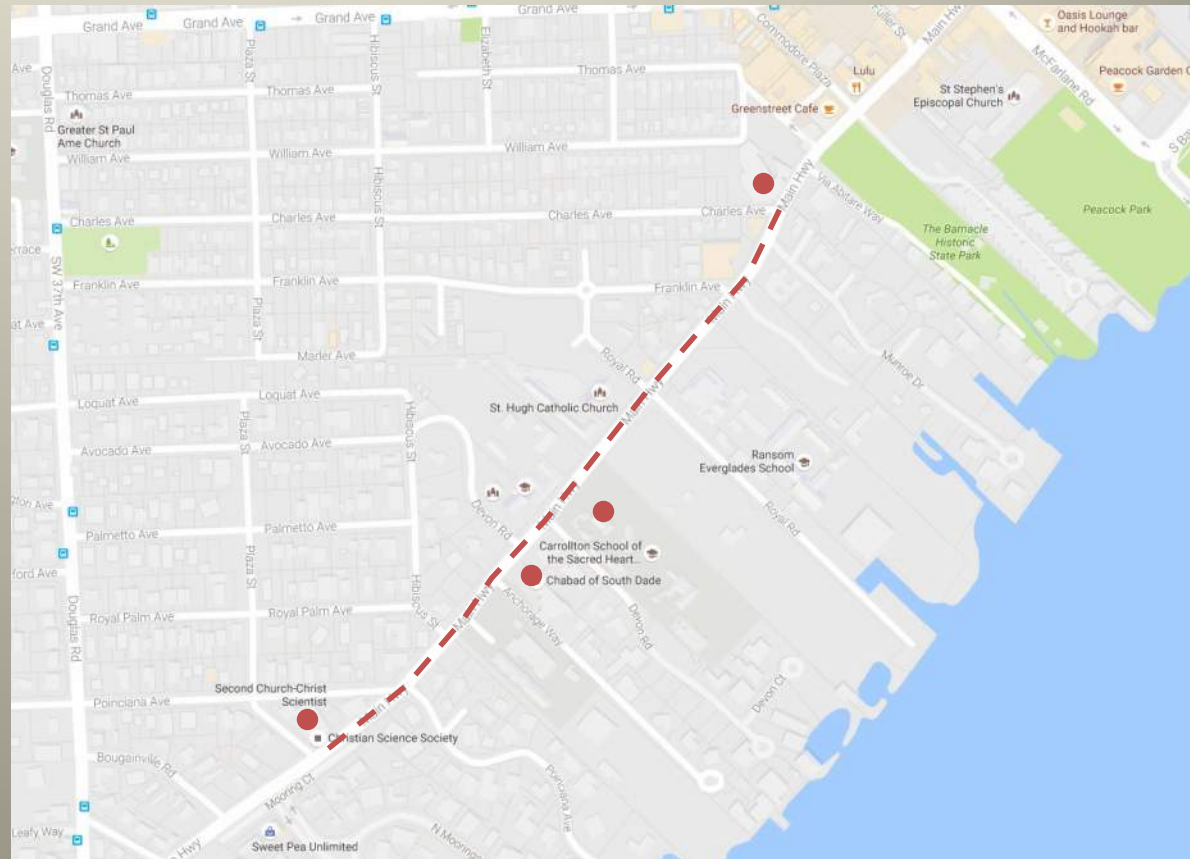
Coconut Grove Theater, 1927



Bryan Memorial Methodist Church, 1928

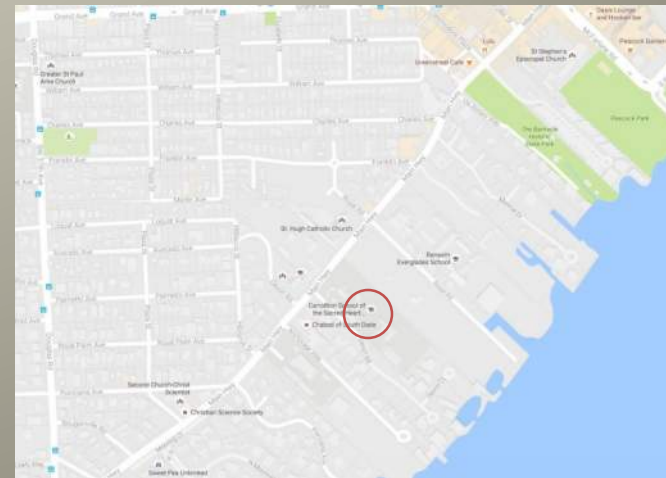


Second Church of Christ Scientist, 1940



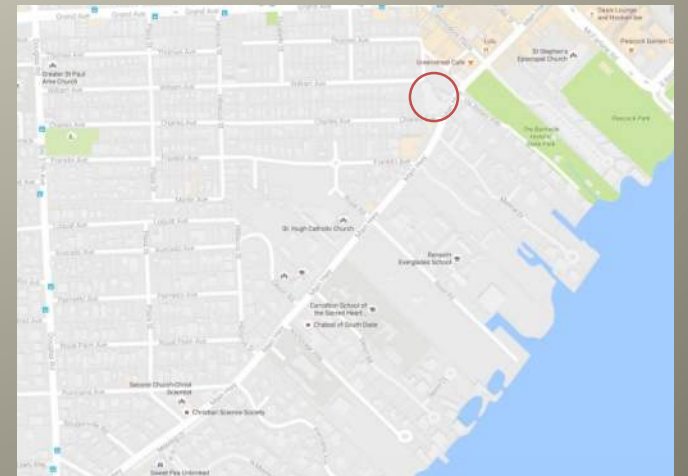


El Jardin, 1918



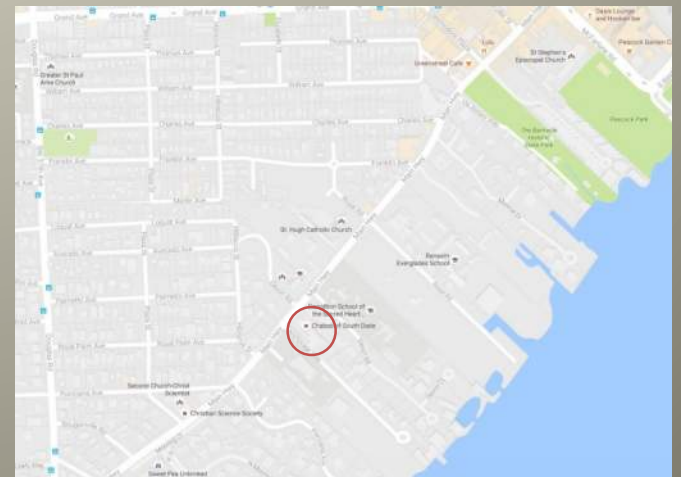


Coconut Grove Theater, 1927





Bryan Memorial Methodist Church, 1928





Second Church of Christ Scientist, 1940

