

# The ARCHITECT AND ENGINEER

VOL. 94

AUGUST, 1928

No. 2

## UNITED ARTISTS THEATER LOS ANGELES

*By E. A. Evans*

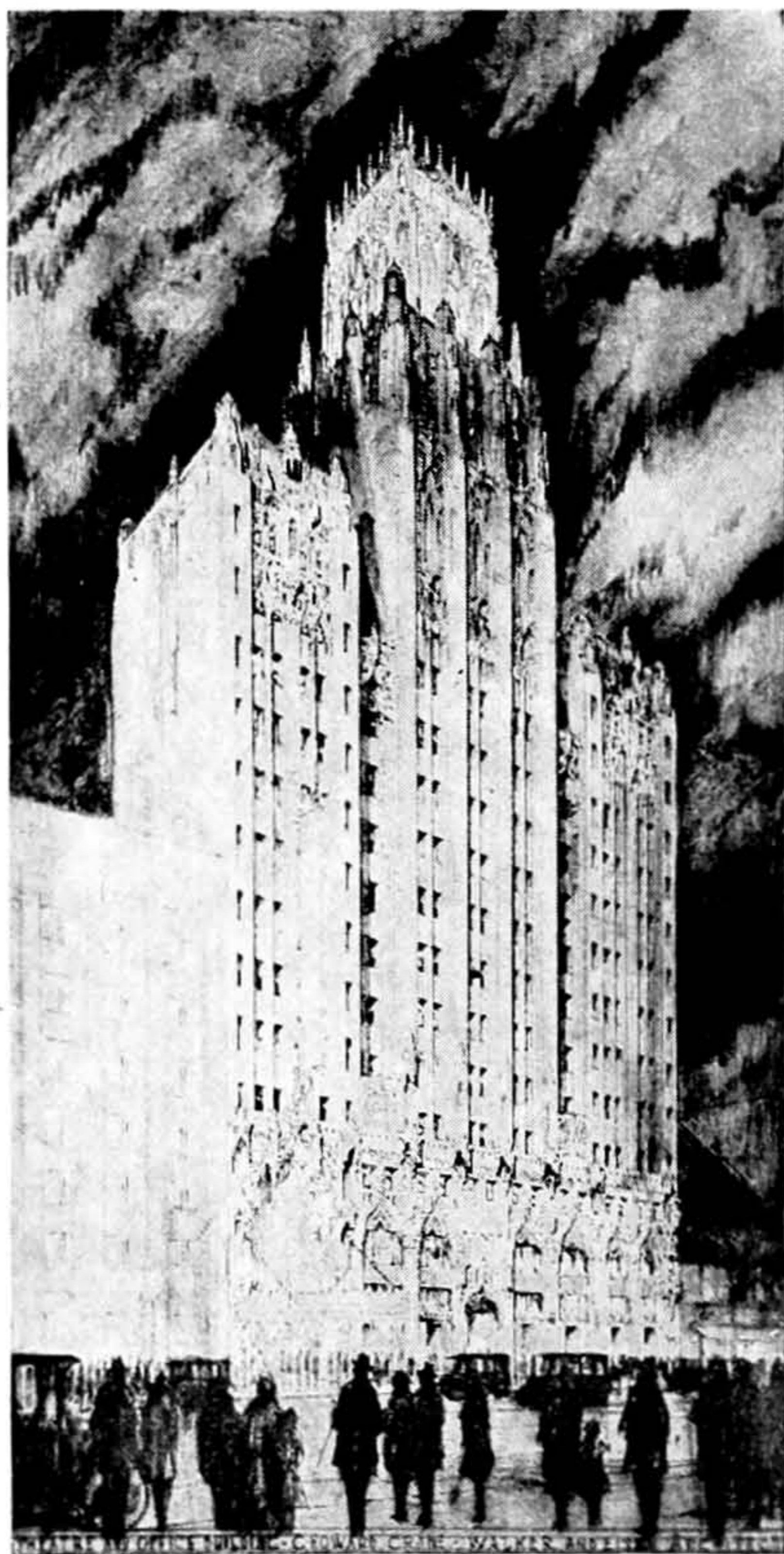
**U**RPRIISINGLY few people have any conception of the tremendous strides that have been made during the past decade in the matter of catering to the public's taste in entertainment. The matter has, by force of necessity, long since been commercialized and advanced to a state of well-organized and efficient industry—a science—if you please.

Each year witnesses the entry of some new form of amusement or manner of presentation of same, conceived and executed for the sole purpose of furnishing a variety of pleasure for the American public. These people, all extremely well versed in the many sources of varied amusements, can no longer have their appetites appeased by mere entertainment alone. In addition to being furnished with amusement, they re-

quire and even demand that their entertainment be presented amid surroundings having decorative features and embellishments of the highest order, and that appeal to their discriminating eye, their sense of value and their aesthetic taste as well.

Recognizing the increasing demand for quality on the part of the American public, and appreciating the fact that a fitting atmosphere must be provided in order to satisfy their needs, the United Artists Corporation conceived the forming of a national chain of theaters with magnificent edifices in principal cities of the United States.

The immensity to which this science of entertainment, if we may call it such, has grown, may be somewhat visualized when we consider that the initial capital outlay for establishing this contemplated chain



UNITED ARTISTS THEATER



of theaters involved the sum of some thirty millions of dollars in property, buildings and equipment.

Forming one of the first links in this chain came the United Artists Theater of Los Angeles, and Messrs. Walker & Eisen of Los Angeles, in association with the office of C. Howard Crane, of Detroit, were engaged as the architects. This theater, executed in the Spanish Gothic style throughout, towers above the skyline of Los Angeles with the exception of one building only—the new City Hall, and viewed from distant environs of the city, it may be easily distinguished from its companion buildings.

The theater is situated on an inside lot having a frontage of 150 feet on South Broadway with a depth of 150 feet to an alley. The rear 110 feet of this site is occupied by the theater portion proper with a spacious lobby extending from the auditorium to the Broadway street frontage.

As is usual in developments of this character, the Broadway street frontage to a depth of forty feet, with the exception of the theater entrance, is occupied by an office building having the first story portion divided into stores and a building entrance lobby; the upper twelve stories forming the executive offices of the Texaco Corporation. The exterior, with its interesting and intricate embellishment of Spanish-Gothic detail, is faced entirely with architectural terra cotta treated in two color tones and textured to produce an effect assimilating the characteristics of the weather-worn surfaces of old Spain.

A problem presented itself in the treatment of the exterior in the disposition of certain roof structures required for the mechanical equipment for the office portion of the building, and the decorative treatment was still further complicated by the

fact that a roof sign of tremendous proportions was demanded, surmounting the entire mass. While at first this problem seemed to be a thorn in the side of a pleasing solution, in the final analysis these obstacles became a help indeed in arriving at a highly satisfactory treatment.

The general composition of the Broadway facade consists of 11 bays formed by generously proportioned masonry piers extending from the grade to the highest point of the facade and terminating in finials of interesting design. Modeled heads representing the various luminaries of the motion picture world serve as motifs in the formation of these finials and spring, as it were, from forms symbolizing the Muses in niches of intricate detail at the base of each pier. The masonry piers, forming the three bays at the center of this facade, were carried to a height necessary to accommodate the mechanical equipment, and are repeated on the sides and rear above the roof, thus producing a tower effect above which



FOYER, UNITED ARTISTS THEATER  
LOS ANGELES

the roof sign is extended.

This roof sign assumed the shape of a hollow square, extending to a height of 50 feet above the roof with the structural frame concealed by a highly ornate pressed metal facing of Spanish-Gothic detail. Thus, this entire roof sign, at first considered an obstacle, becomes a necessary part of the architectural treatment, its tapering finials and lacy crestings serving as a perfect means of transition between the solid structure below and ethereal space above. This sign in general color tone matches the adjoining terra cotta while the grille work between the piers and the finials and crestings are treated in decorative gilts and colors.

The theater entrance itself dominates the entire lower three stories of the building,



being in the form of a well proportioned arch containing delicate tracery and colonettes within and being surmounted by a well proportioned label mold and finial of interesting detail, all composed upon a lace patterned field executed in two colors. Spandrel sections at the various floors throughout the typical stories are faced with a

ing, ornamental plaster canopies, finished in old gold and silver, have been provided from which colorful drapes are suspended. This arch treatment is repeated on the other axis of the lobby by means of large canopied and draped mirrors.

The walls and ceilings of the lobby are in textured plaster with all ornamental



CEILING DROPS, UNITED ARTISTS THEATER, LOS ANGELES

Walker and Eisen and C. Howard Crane, Architects

arker tone of terra cotta, thus accentuating the vertical dimensions and the building height.

The theater lobby has a highly decorative groined and vaulted ceiling and a floor of random size quarry tile with decorative inserts. On the axis of the theater entrance a balcony landing of interesting ornamental iron detail has been provided behind which occurs the principal opening into the mezzanine and balcony foyers. Above this open-

wainscots and other embellishments executed in imitation travertine.

The main auditorium is treated in Spanish-Gothic detail. The proscenium arch, having a width of 48 feet and a height of 32 feet, is provided with heavy ornamental plaster canopy behind which rich drapes fall in graceful folds with concealed lights to emphasize the color scheme. Organ screens at either side of the proscenium arch are in the form of highly ornate grilles



of heavily-ornamented plaster finished in dull gold and silver and treated in the same manner as the foyer openings and proscenium arch.

Along the walls of the auditorium and adjoining the main ceiling, large drops of ornamented pierced plaster work have been provided to accommodate lighting equip-

been applied to the ceiling dome by setting directly in the plaster and suspended therefrom are thousands of crystal pendants. Around the perimeter and at the base of the dome concealed lighting equipment has been installed to display this mirrored ceiling to its best advantage.

On either side wall of the auditorium



LOBBY, UNITED ARTISTS THEATER, LOS ANGELES

Walker and Eisen and C. Howard Crane, Architects

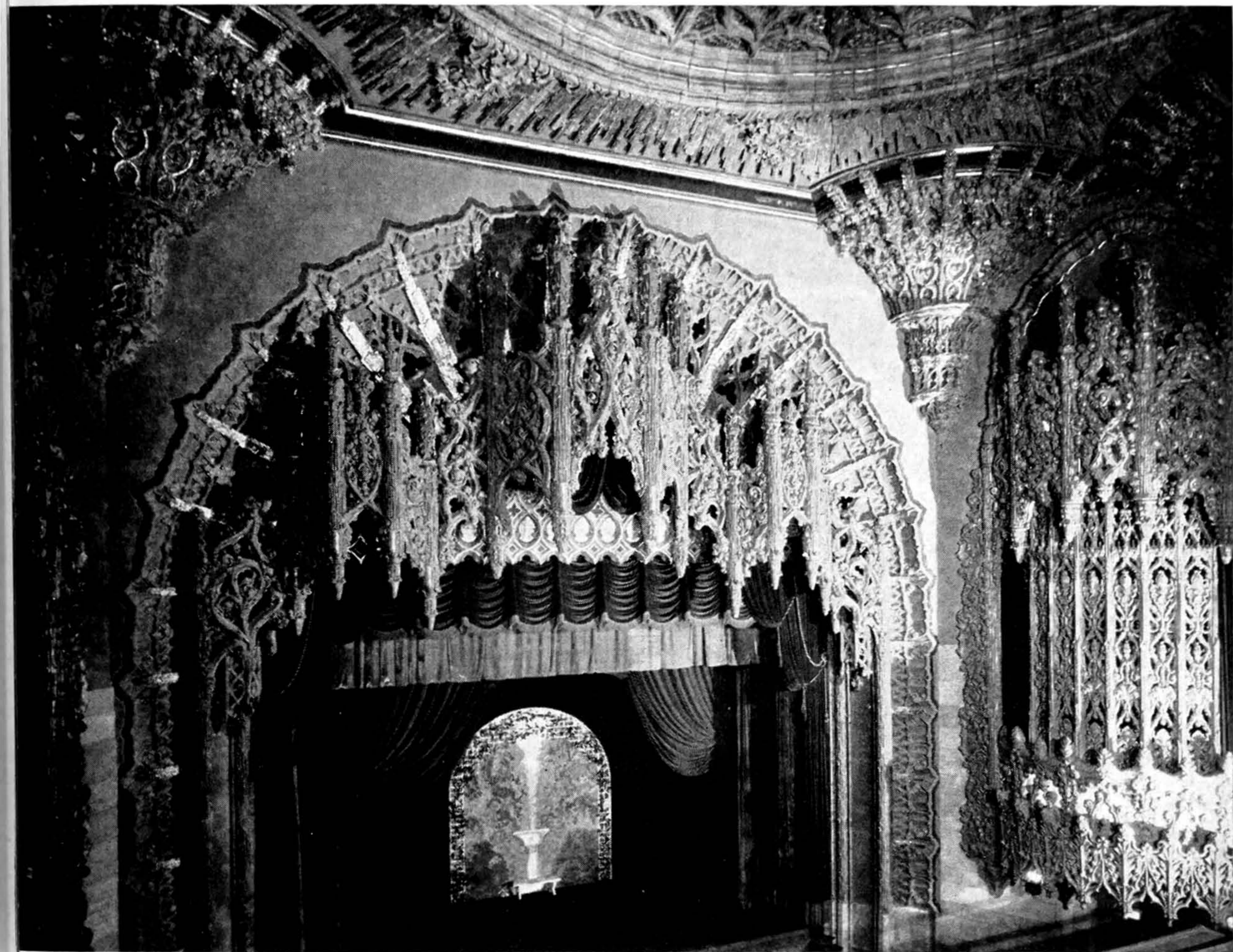
ment and to serve as additional architectural embellishment; all finished in dull gold and silver.

The most striking part of this main auditorium is the ceiling itself, made in the form of a gigantic sun-burst and surrounded by intricate Spanish tracery. A novel effect has been obtained in connection with this dome by the employment of circular mirrors in varying sizes. These have

there are large murals symbolic of the spirit of the motion picture guiding the destiny of the many famous players connected with the United Artists Pictures. These murals were posed for by the various screen luminaries whose speaking likenesses are shown.

Two balconies have been provided; one in the form of a mezzanine loge section and the other the main balcony having a seating capacity of 900 people.





PROSCENIUM ARCH, UNITED ARTISTS THEATER, LOS ANGELES

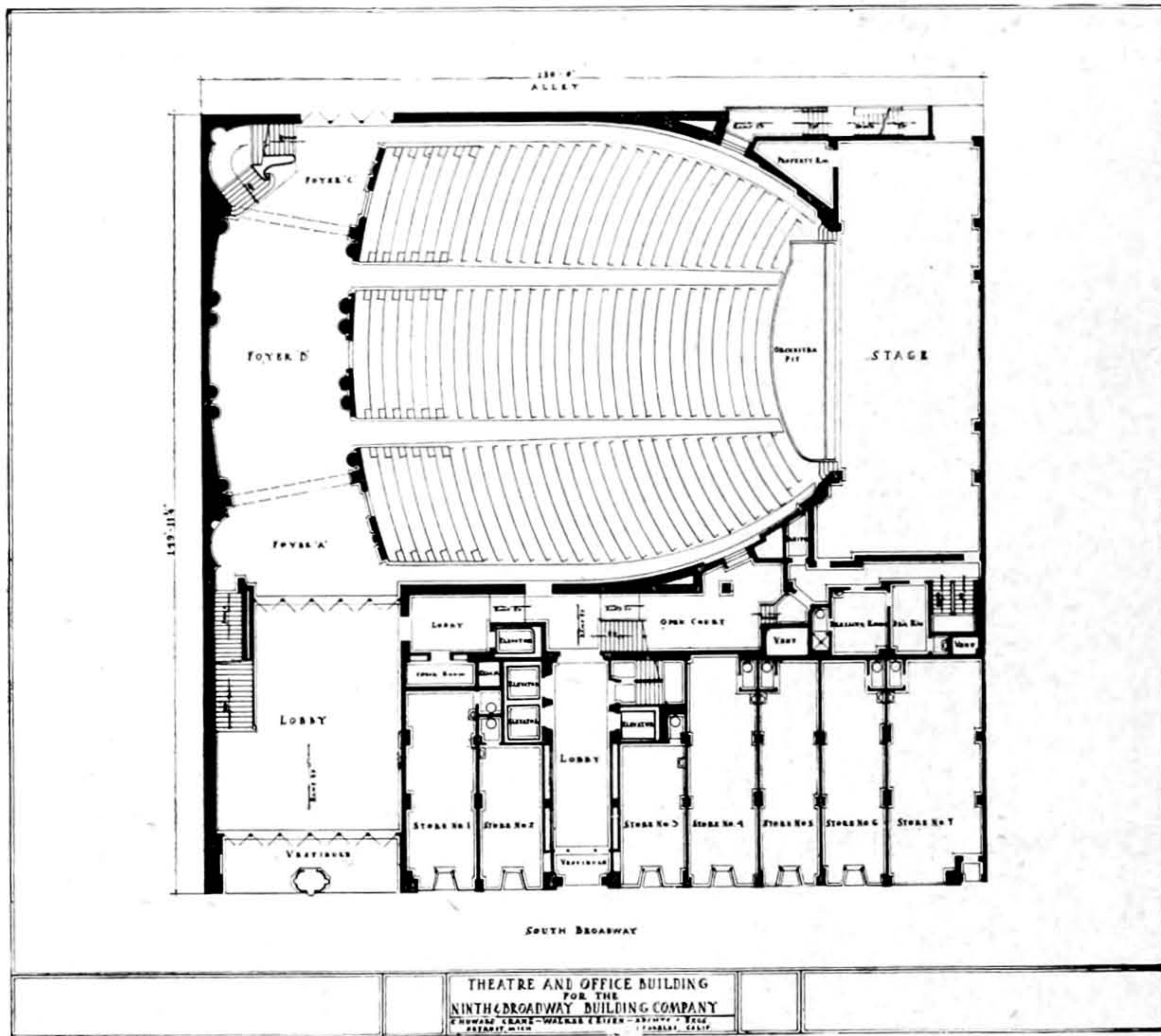
Walker and Eisen and C. Howard Crane, Architects





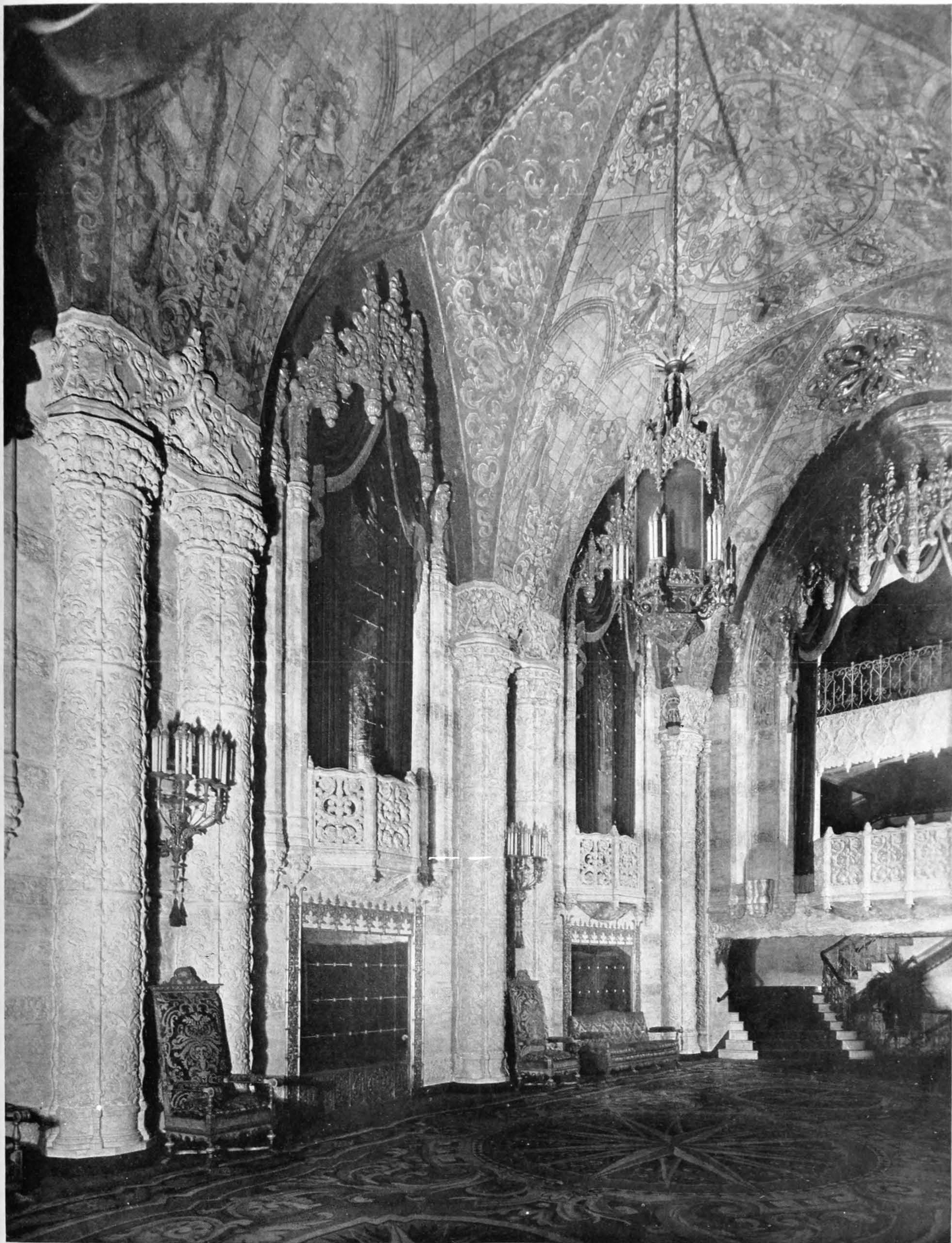
UNITED ARTISTS THEATER AND OFFICE BUILDING, LOS ANGELES  
WALKER AND EISEN AND C. HOWARD CRANE, ARCHITECTS





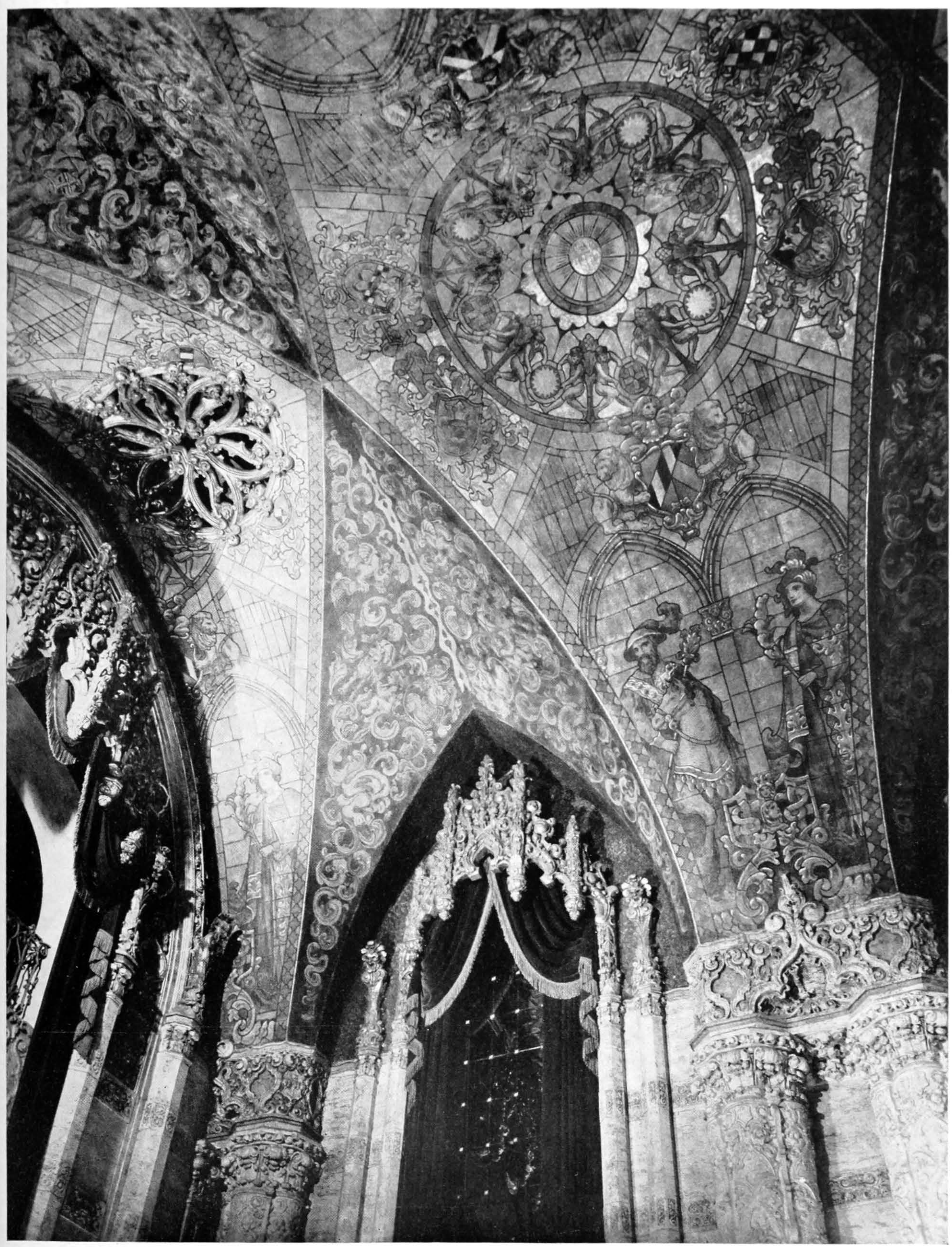
GROUND PLAN, UNITED ARTISTS THEATER BUILDING, LOS ANGELES  
WALKER AND EISEN AND C. HOWARD CRANE, ARCHITECTS





MAIN FOYER, UNITED ARTISTS THEATER, LOS ANGELES  
WALKER AND EISEN AND C. HOWARD CRANE, ARCHITECTS





*Mott Studio, Photo*

MAIN FOYER CEILING, UNITED ARTISTS THEATER, LOS ANGELES  
WALKER AND EISEN AND C. HOWARD CRANE, ARCHITECTS