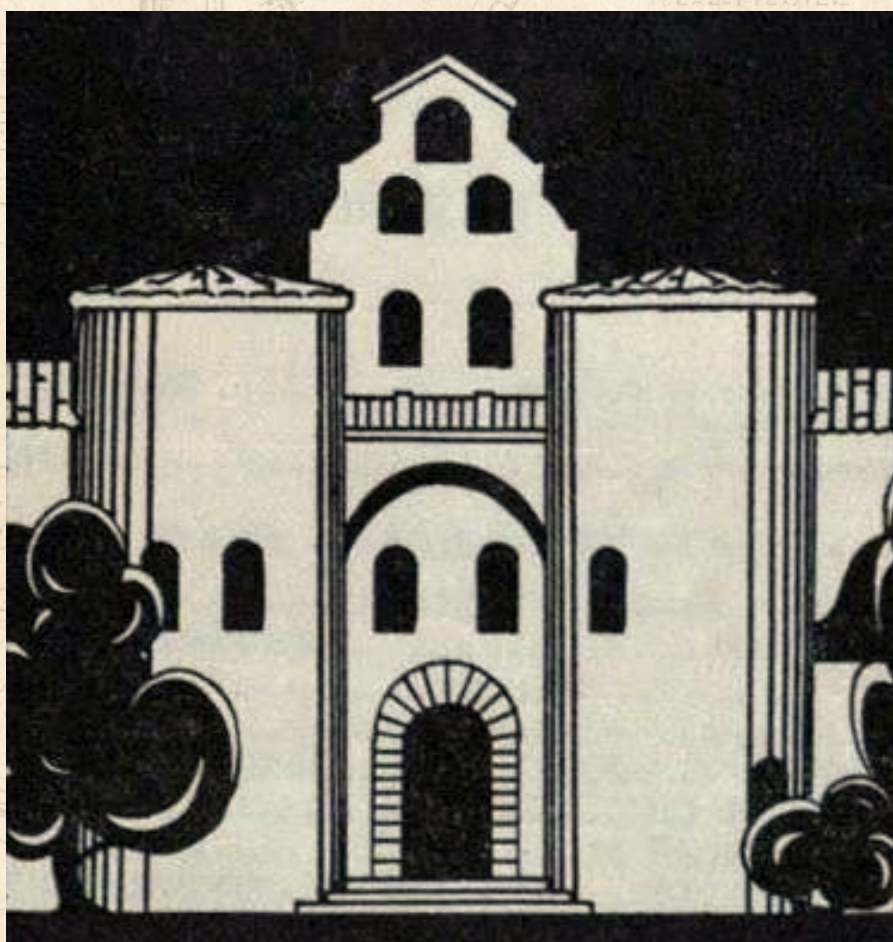


SAVE OUR HERITAGE ORGANISATION PRESENTS

THE HISTORIC ARCHITECTURE OF

San Diego State University

1930-1942



A SELF-GUIDED TOUR
5500 CAMPANILE DRIVE, SAN DIEGO, CA 92182

PRIMARY TYPEFACES

Neutraface light is used for the body text throughout as well as on the cover in the title above and below the school's name. It was influenced by the work of Modernist architect Richard Neutra (1892-1970) and was developed with the assistance of Neutra's architect son and former partner, Dion Neutra (1926-2019).

Erbar condensed appears as the school's name in the cover title. Ludwig & Mayer released it as Erbar Grotesk in 1926. Designer Jakob Erbar's goal was to design a printing type free of all individual characteristics, possessing thoroughly legible letter forms, and a creation of pure typography. A total of 11 styles were added to the family from 1926 to 1930.

Mostra Nuova is used in the cover title, the back cover text, and titles and footers throughout. The font is based on a style of lettering seen on Italian Art Deco posters and advertising of the 1930s.

ON THE COVER

The central graphic of the entrance to Hepner Hall is from the cover of the summer course catalog, volume 19, of the San Diego State Teachers College, dated March 1931. The background reproduces an architectural plan of the State Teachers College Training Building. It details many aspects of the building, from the skylight section in the corridor, the stairs, and the ceiling lights to the roof and gable vents. Courtesy SDSU digital library

INTRODUCTION

As San Diego State University celebrates its 125th year in 2022, SOHO offers this self-guided tour of its original historic core. It was built beginning in 1930 and with some federal Works Progress Administration participation from 1932 to 1943, when federal funds were diverted to the war effort. Many of the original white stucco, red tile-roofed Spanish Colonial Revival style buildings incorporate Mission Revival and Moorish details and remain relatively intact. This rich pastiche is true to historic Spanish Colonial design in Andalusia, Spain, as are carefully sited campus features, such as a central quadrangle and interior courtyards for gathering or for refuge and studying.

The design teams continued to develop the vision of popular and persuasive college President Walter R. Hepner and architect Howard Spencer Hazen of a monastic-like campus encouraging learning. Built near the historic San Diego Mission de Alcalá, Hepner also wanted the new buildings to architecturally reflect Southern California's Spanish Mission roots. Fast-tracked construction took about 250 days, but the money ran out before a single plant or sapling went into the ground. Instead, the gleaming new buildings rose from acres of bare dirt.

Eight of the buildings Hazen designed between 1930 and 1933 remain, along with complementary others completed by 1942. Some historians consider this historic heart of what is now busy, jam-packed San Diego State University to be of lasting architectural value among California's many university campuses. Accordingly, this distinctive district is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The first six completed buildings enabled the new college to open in February 1931 on about five acres (out of 175 donated acres) atop Montezuma Mesa overlooking Mission Valley. Hazen designed these campus "essentials":

- Academic Building, 1930 (Now Hepner Hall)
- Library and Campanile, 1931 (Now Hardy Memorial Tower)
- Little Theatre, 1930
- Teacher Training School Building, 1930 (Now Physical Sciences)
- Science Building, 1930 (Now Life Sciences South)
- Power Plant Building, 1930 (Now the Boiler Plant)

By 1936, additional buildings had fleshed out the campus.

- Scripps Cottage, 1931 (Architect unknown; relocated in 1968)
- The Club, 1932 (Now the Faculty Staff Club)
- Dual Gymnasium, 1933
- Music Building, 1942 (Architect unknown)

THE ACADEMIC BUILDING, 1930

NOW HEPNER HALL



This prominent building of classrooms and offices reigns as Hazen's most expressive example of the Mudéjar style, a reinterpretation and blend of Christian and Islamic architecture and art by Muslims, best seen in the Alhambra in Grenada, Spain. Its monumental, much-photographed portales, with massive twin turrets framing a Catalan-style imitation cut stone archway and a belfry with five bells, long served as the main entrance and symbolic passageway to the rarified world of higher education. Inside the archway is a faience-tiled, arch-vaulted lobby with a glass-and-wrought-iron chandelier, all in the Moorish style.



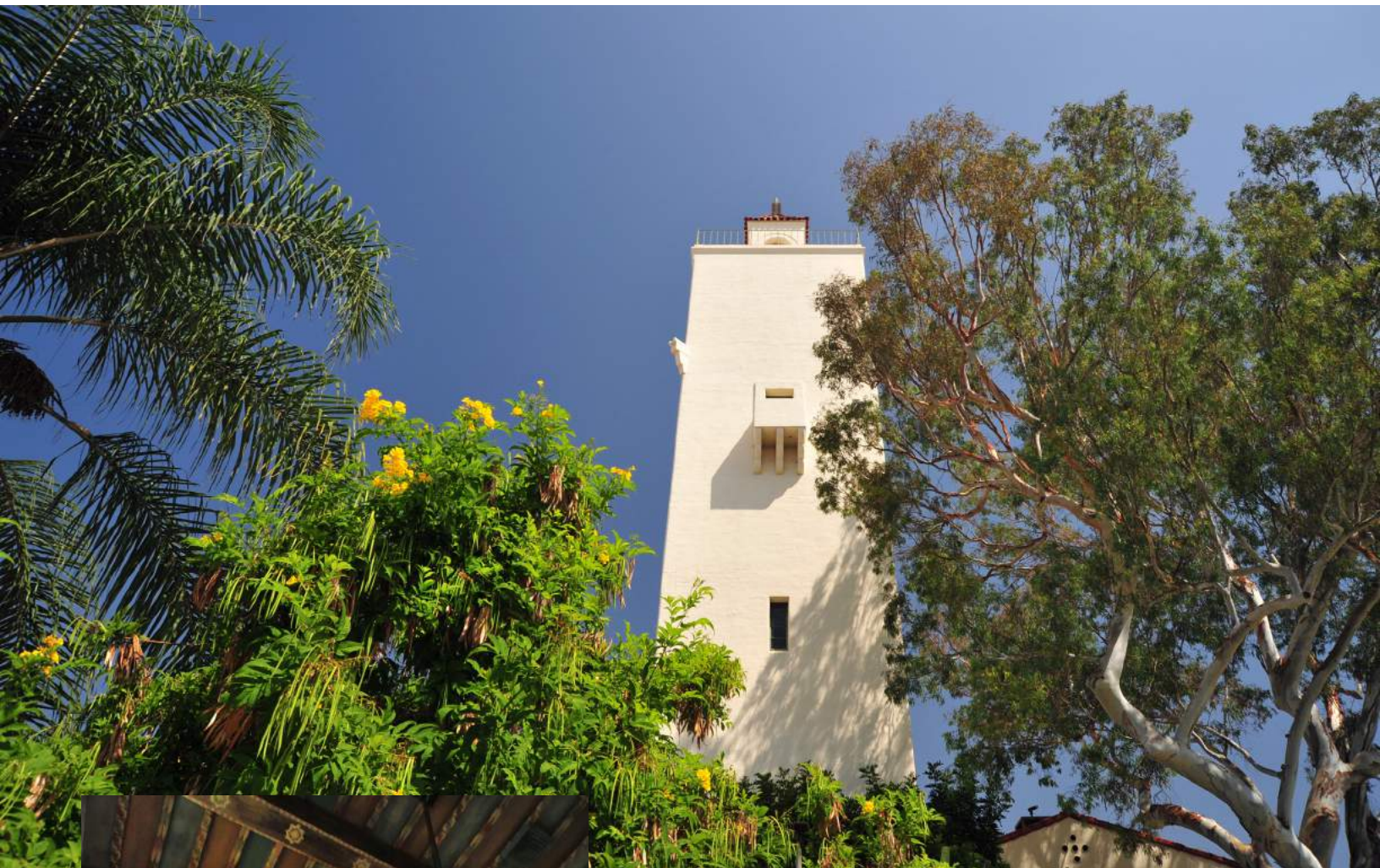




LIBRARY AND CAMPANILE, 1931

NOW HARDY MEMORIAL TOWER





The library has seen extensive interior renovations and was eventually supplanted by the modern Love Library. It originally featured five social realism murals by artists and art students, but only portions of two of them survive. George Sorenson's fresco called "San Diego Industry" (1936) portrays multi-ethnic San Diegans tuna fishing and working in a cannery. That same year, Genevieve Burgeson Bredo painted a mural of hungry families receiving government relief packages. In the early 2000s, Bredo's work was discovered damaged, behind ceiling tiles, then restored. Both are on display in Love Library.

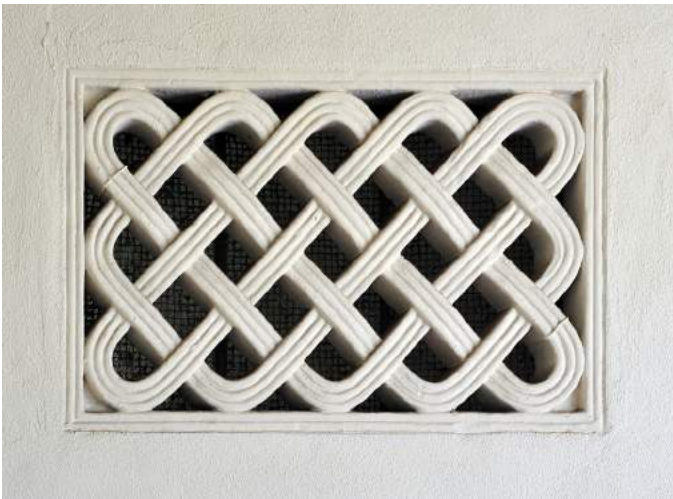
The two-story Spanish Colonial Revival library, with red-tiled roofs and heavy doors made of wood and leaded glass, resembles a Spanish church. Its 11-story campanile, equipped with a carillon, is Hazen's version of a Moorish minaret adapted for use as a Christian bell tower. Five bells hang from wooden beams. The tall, Islamic-inspired campanile also provided water to the fledgling campus via a 5,000-gallon tank on the 11th floor.

LITTLE THEATRE, 1930



This Spanish Colonial Revival structure is attached to the Academic Building by an arcade built of four semi-circular arches supporting a heavy timber-beamed ceiling. The theater has two decorated entrance doors as well as French doors, casement windows, a chimney, and an exterior balcony reached via an outdoor stairway. It was constructed of poured reinforced concrete with a plaster interior and stucco exterior. The 1947 addition closely adheres to Hazen's style. The Little Theatre is still used as a theater, auditorium, and assembly hall. In 1975, it was rehabilitated and brought up to current building standards. Seats have also been added over the years. All of these alterations have been undertaken with care to preserve the building's integrity.





TEACHER TRAINING SCHOOL BUILDING, 1930

NOW PHYSICAL SCIENCES



This building's seven interconnected but distinct sections include a small "campus lab," or grammar school, and a two-story lecture hall. It embodies Hardy's progressive method of educating future teachers as student teachers at a certified grammar school. The adjacent lab of one- or two-stories is arranged around a landscaped patio, used as a playground. The architecture mixes Spanish Colonial Revival and Moorish influences, such as arched entryways, tall iron privacy gates, iron lamps and window grilles, red-tile roofs, stucco-covered poured concrete walls, chimneys finished in stucco, and second-story balconies with decorative wrought iron railings. Some second-story rooms, hallways, and the lecture hall retain their exposed wood beam ceilings, with faded traces of original Hispano-Moorish stenciling. Over the years, the building has been altered and added onto in ways that do not disturb its historic architecture.



SCIENCE BUILDING, 1930

NOW LIFE SCIENCES SOUTH



Like the Teacher Training School, this two-story, roughly L-shaped science building is another example of architect Hazen's fusion of Spanish Colonial Revival and Moorish architecture built of reinforced concrete and stucco. One of its most interesting features is its irregular rooflines, typical of the Spanish Colonial style. Ranging from flat to gable to shed, the roofs give the building a vernacular feeling, as if built over time. However, offsetting this feeling are symmetrically arranged multi-light, metal-frame awning and casement windows. They reflect the institutional formality found in early Spanish Renaissance style government buildings. By 1942, the science facility included three adjacent wings: the original two-story main block plus basement (1930) and two later additions, built in the Spanish Colonial Revival style. The architect is unknown for the Science Lecture Hall (1940) and the Life Science Annex (1942), but these wings blend well with the campus architecture constructed a decade earlier.





POWER PLANT BUILDING, 1930

NOW THE BOILER PLANT



Repaired and expanded as a WPA project in the 1940s, the building is now part of a large physical plant and maintenance complex on the campus's northeast ridge, overlooking Alvarado Canyon. The boiler room has three semi-circular arched doorways with French doors and arched casement windows. Its tall chimney has become a campus landmark visible from Interstate 8. A 1947 addition matches the original Spanish Colonial Revival architecture, including a tile roof; another from 1963 broke tradition with a tin roof.



SCRIPPS COTTAGE, 1931

RELOCATED, 1968



Partly funded by San Diego philanthropist **Ellen Browning Scripps**, the one-story Spanish Colonial Revival style cottage began life as a women's center and headquarters for the Associated Women Students. While the architect is unknown, hallmarks of the style include a red clay barrel-tile roof, decorative red-tile vents under the gables and on either side of the recessed side entry, and a solid wood plank door with wrought iron strap hinges and hardware. In 1968, the wood frame and stucco building was moved from its original location to make way for Love Library. Still on campus, the cottage is surrounded by landscaped gardens, lawns, and mature palm trees. Restored in 2016, Scripps Cottage is a popular meeting and special events venue, thanks to its high-ceilinged assembly room, massive brick fireplace, and proscenium stage.



THE CLUB, 1932

NOW FACULTY STAFF CLUB



The rustic Spanish Colonial Revival building that today is home to the Faculty Staff Club originally housed the campus cafeteria and bookstore, and incorporated Aztec Shops, Ltd. A kitchen, dining room, and lounge with a fireplace made for a cozy campus refuge in the form of a small, L-shaped, country lodge-like building with unimposing double doors. The south facade features bands of small top-opening wood-framed windows running just below the tile eaves. The east front gable is broken only by a fixed, wood-framed window and a decorative concrete grille window, as well as typical tile pipe vents. An eastern porch entrance

features a red clay barrel-tile roof supported by thick, carved, wooden-beam brackets. The enclosed patio provides an outdoor eating and meeting area, typical of rural Spanish houses. After a new bookstore and commons were built in the 1950s and '60s, this building fell into disuse and disrepair. In 1976, the Faculty Senate saved it from demolition by facilitating remodeling for a new use: the Faculty Staff lounge. It was renovated in 2019.





DUAL GYMNASIUM, 1933

NOW EXERCISE AND NUTRITIONAL SCIENCES



ntended for dual purposes—participatory and spectator sports—the gymnasium is a massive rectangular building designed in the Spanish Colonial Revival and Spanish Gothic styles. It is so large that when new it stood out from the rest of the campus perched on the barren mesa. Built on a slope, the split-level structure has three floors and six stairwells. On the east stands the large central gym, for watching sports, or for student dances and other special events. On the west, the huge gym is balanced by an open courtyard surrounded by physical education rooms, including a large activity room. Smaller related buildings clustered around both “ends” of the complex help minimize the gym’s scale. The south elevation was designed as the main entrance, while the main spectator entrance was located in the loggia structure on the southeast corner. This entrance is ornately Spanish Gothic in style and consists of double, pointed arches supported by three molded stone columns. A large platform stairway leads up to the entrance and lobby. Grand wooden doors serve the lobby from the campus’s northern promenade and the eastern interior hallway. A second major entry, on the west end of this facade, has a pointed arch with a wrought iron grille-gate and leads to the courtyard. The overall effect of the Dual Gymnasium is of a firmly entrenched Moorish fortress.





MUSIC BUILDING, 1942

NOW THE COMMUNICATION BUILDING



The Music Building's historic exterior, which resembles a 15th-century Andalusian church, belies the modern amenities added within during the 1960s. Approved in 1940, it represents San Diego State College's second wave of building, but work lapsed when federal WPA construction grants were redirected into the Second World War effort. Only the Music Building and additions to the Library and Science Building were completed.

The Music Building's unknown architect or design team obviously studied the campus's first six buildings and continued their Spanish Colonial Revival vocabulary enhanced by the Mudéjar style, an elaborate blend of Christian and Moorish Spanish architectural elements. This expressive mélange includes a portal in the shape of a serrated horseshoe arch. Those who pass through the arch discover a recessed entry, aglow with brilliantly glazed faience wall tiles. Among other elements carried over from the original buildings are serrated dog's tooth molding, hand-wrought metal lamps, decorative concrete grilles, and red tile roofing.

The building's dominant feature is a three-story, stepped campanile that departs from the campus style in its Romanesque shape and form. A Moorish style ajimez window, composed of twin arched and narrow windows separated by a column, pierces the south wall of the tower's stylized belfry.





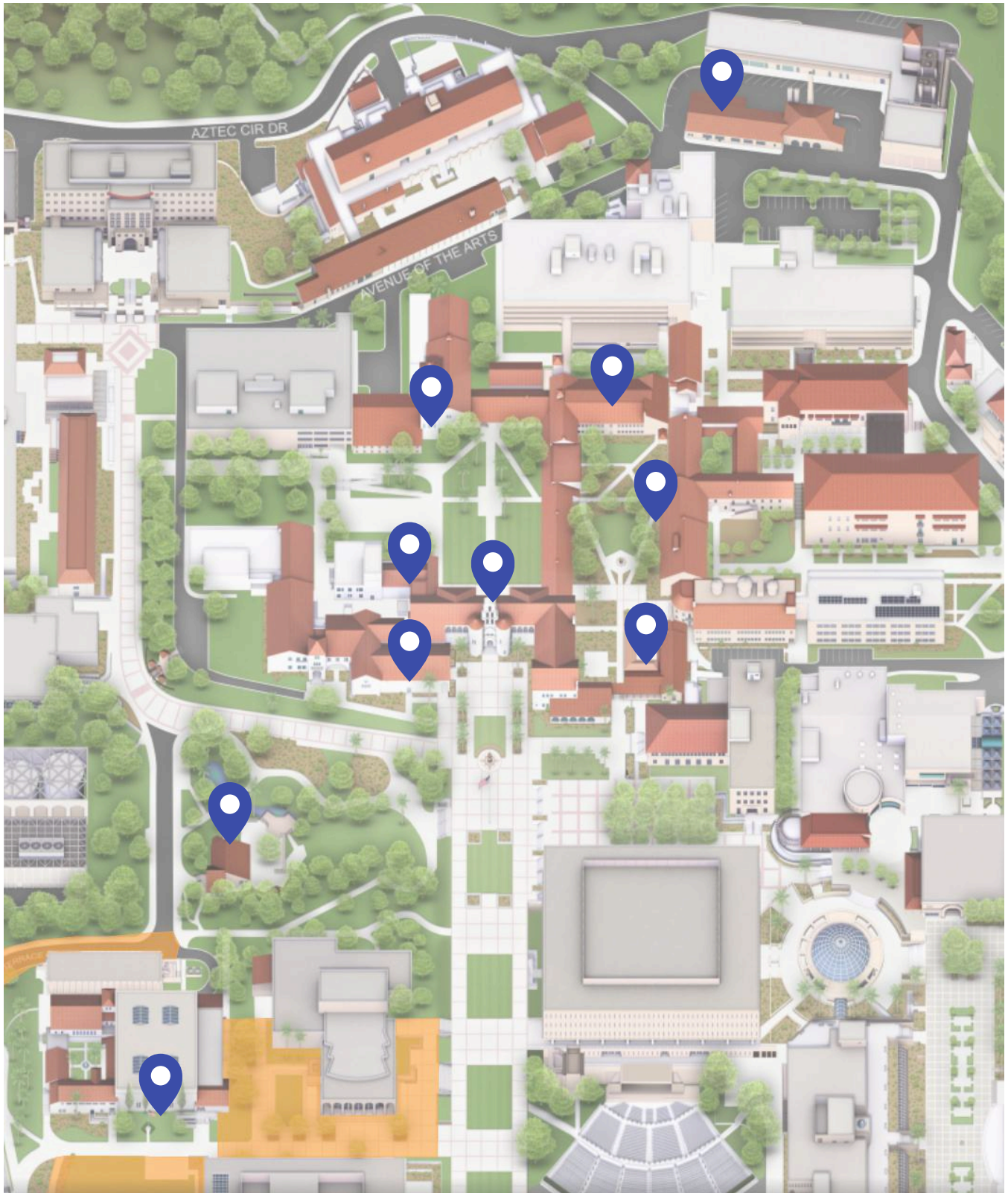
Sometime during the 1960s, two wings were added. An L-shaped, rear annex accommodated telecommunication equipment and radio broadcasting rooms. And a Spanish-Moorish style skywalk, supported by a thick, rusticated arch, connected the Music Building with the KPBS Studio Building.

When it opened in 1942, many described the \$130,000 Music Building as one of the finest structures of its type in Southern California. Soundproof walls, concert chambers, and individual practice rooms were among the modern amenities. The main attraction? The music appreciation room. Dark brown wooden cabinets, designed to hold the college's record collection, lined one wall of a large, carpeted room. There, in the building called "a musician's dream," students and faculty could borrow records and crank 'em up in soundproof cubicles.



MAP

Click on this interactive map provided by San Diego State University. It will help you find your way to each of the ten sites on the tour, as well as to transit and parking. Click the left column for a directory.



RESEARCH, EDITORIAL, PRODUCTION, AND DESIGN

Alana Coons
Ann Jarmusch
Sandé Lollis

PHOTOGRAPHY

Sandé Lollis
Except where otherwise noted



Published by Our Heritage Press
PO Box 80788, San Diego, CA 92138

For a catalog of other tours, visit our website at www.SOHOsandiego.org

Copyright ©2022 Save Our Heritage Organisation

Financial support is provided by the City of San Diego
Commission for Arts and Culture.



Commission for
Arts and Culture