

Attachment 1
Landmark Assessment Report

LANDMARK ASSESSMENT REPORT

Beverly Hills Hotel



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OVERVIEW

Beverly Hills Hotel Landmark Assessment Report

Introduction

This landmark assessment report, completed by Ostashay & Associates Consulting for the City of Beverly Hills, documents and evaluates the local significance and landmark eligibility of the Beverly Hills Hotel (Hotel) property located at 9641 Sunset Boulevard in the City of Beverly Hills, California. This assessment report includes a discussion of the survey methodology used, a brief historic context of the property, and the identification and evaluation of the property for local landmark eligibility and designation.

Physical Description

The Beverly Hills Hotel is located on an irregularly shaped parcel on the north side of Sunset Boulevard. The property occupies Lots 1 thru 11 and Lot 2 on Block 75 of the Beverly Hills tract. The subject property is bounded on the east by North Crescent Drive, on the west by Hartford Way, Glen Way and Glen Way Alley. The northern property line is two parcels south of Lexington Road. The site contains approximately twenty structures, most of which are designed in the Mission Revival style, as well as a multi-story wing off Crescent Drive. The main building is a modified T-shape that occupies the southern portion of the site. To the north are clustered approximately a dozen bungalows, as well as service facilities. Adjacent the main building to the east is the large, rectangular shape International Style designed wing. The hotel's recreation areas are located on the western boundary of the site along Hartford Way.

Findings

The Beverly Hills Hotel appears to meet the City's criteria for designation as a local Landmark as required in Section 10-3-3212 of the Historic Preservation Ordinance. The Hotel satisfies the requirement of subsection A, which requires that at least two of the six "significance" criteria be met. Upon conclusion of the assessment, the Hotel appears to meet four of criteria: criterion A. 1, A. 3, A.4, and A. 6. The Hotel also meets the requirements of subsection 10-3-3212 B, which requires that: "The property retains integrity from its period of significance," and subsection 10-3-3212 C, which requires that: "The property has historic value."

Methodology

The landmark assessment was conducted by Jan Ostashay, Principal with Ostashay & Associates Consulting. In order to identify and evaluate the subject property as a potential local landmark, an intensive-level survey was conducted. The assessment included a review of the National Register of Historic Places (National Register) and its annual updates, the California Register of Historical

Resources (California Register), and the California Historic Resources Inventory list maintained by the State Office of Historic Preservation (OHP) in order to determine if any previous evaluations or survey assessments of the property had been performed. The result of the records search indicated that the subject property had been previously surveyed and documented, and was found through those surveys to be eligible for listing in the National Register under criteria associated with historical events, important personages, and architecture. For this current assessment site inspections and a review of building permits and tax assessor records were also done to document the property's existing condition and assist in evaluating the Hotel for historical significance. The City of Beverly Hills landmark criteria were employed to evaluate the local significance of the property and its eligibility for landmark designation. In addition, the following tasks were performed for the study:

- Searched records of the National Register, California Register, and OHP Historic Resources Inventory.
- Conducted a field inspection of the subject property.
- Conducted site-specific research on the subject property utilizing Sanborn fire insurance maps, city directories, newspaper articles, historical photographs, and building permits.
- Reviewed and analyzed ordinances, statutes, regulations, bulletins, and technical materials relating to federal, state, and local historic preservation, designation assessment procedures, and related programs.
- Evaluated the potential historic resource based upon criteria established by the City of Beverly Hills and utilized the OHP survey methodology for conducting survey assessments.

HISTORIC CONTEXT

History of Site¹

The Beverly Hills Hotel, the first major building in the City of Beverly Hills, opened in 1912. Built for Margaret Anderson, the Hotel was designed by Elmer Grey. The hostelry was constructed as the centerpiece of the new residential community of Beverly Hills and designed to attract tourists and potential residents from the East and Midwest to the beauty and mild climate of southern California.

The Hotel was built on twelve acres of the former Rancho Rodeo de las Aguas, which was patented to the United States from the Mexican government in 1871. The portions of the rancho that were to become the City of Beverly Hills were subdivided and sold over the subsequent 35 years. Burton Green came to Los Angeles in 1906. Green organized the Rodeo Land and Water Company, opened the original Beverly Hills subdivision in early 1907 and developed the land on which the Beverly Hills Hotel would be built. Beverly Hills was named for Green's hometown of Beverly Farms, Massachusetts. The Hotel was included in the plans for the new city. By 1910, less than six new permanent residences had been built north of Santa Monica Boulevard in what would become Beverly Hills. The development and construction of the Hotel contributed to the development of the City, which was incorporated in 1914 with a population of 550.

The Beverly Hills Hotel was built for approximately \$500,000 among the lima beans fields overlooking Sunset Boulevard, which was at the time a dirt road. According to the Los Angeles Times, the new hotel had "every known convenience and appointment," and was a "city to itself." The Hotel had its own lighting and power plants, a curio shop, post office, circulating library, drug store, and barber shop. Landscaping on the hotel site was given great importance. Elmer Grey, the Hotel's architect, is credited with laying out the elaborate plans for the site which included a children's playground, saddle livery, tennis courts, and a private garage for the guests. The plans soon included the terraced triangle of flower gardens, pools, and shady walkways at the foot of the Hotel, which became, and remains, a city park (Will Rogers Park); now located south of Sunset Boulevard.

The investors in the Rodeo Land and Water Company, Henry Huntington, W.G. Kerckhoff, General M. H. Sherman, W.F. Herrin, Burton Green, and others, wanted to create an elegant comfortable community for their families.² They hired Percy H. Clark to oversee the development of the foothill portion of the town and promote development of a hotel site.³ Because of her experience in managing the Hotel Hollywood in nearby Hollywood the company donated the land where the Beverly Hills Hotel is now located to Mrs. Margaret Anderson and also provided her

¹ Excerpted from the "Historic Assessment and Analysis of Project Impacts: Beverly Hills Hotel Report" prepared by Historic Resource Group. As necessary, portions of the narrative have been updated and/or corrected.

² Robert Anderson, *The Beverly Hills Hotel: The First 100 Years* (Beverly Hills: The Beverly Hills Collection, 2012), 66.

³ *Ibid.*, 66.

with a \$250,000 mortgage.⁴ Anderson had the Hotel constructed and then brought over her staff, furnishings and a number of clients from the Hotel Hollywood. Her son Stanley Anderson served as the Beverly Hills Hotel manager.

Known for its hospitality, the Hotel had a fireplace in the lobby with a broad hearth where a fire was always lit as a welcoming gesture to visitors. From the beginning, the Hotel was the social center of Beverly Hills. The hotel's lobby and bar provided a gathering place for early Hollywood settlers, including W.C. Fields, John Barrymore, Gene Fowler, and Will Rogers. Sarah Bernhardt stayed at the Hotel many times, as did Mary Pickford and Richard Bennett with his daughters Constance, Joan, and Barbara. Many well-known people, including Will Rogers and Darryl Zanuck played polo at the nearby Riviera, Uplifters, and Will Rogers fields, and often stopped by the Hotel's bar. As a result, the bar, originally known as El Jardin, became officially known as the "Polo Lounge" in 1941.

The Hotel was a success, especially in winter when guests from the East and Midwest filled the rooms. Many guests ended up staying in southern California, including some retired businessmen and many active businessmen who established their businesses in the area. Under Mrs. Anderson, the Hotel became a center for community activities. The Hotel hosted church services, free silent movies, and society gatherings. Tournaments, shows, and competitions were staged outside, near the front entrance. There were also events for children including movies, and holiday events such as Easter parties and Fourth of July parades with pony rides.

Many patrons built their homes near the Hotel, which flourished along with the movie industry. Douglas Fairbanks and Mary Pickford built Pickfair in the hills overlooking the Hotel in 1920; Harold Lloyd and Tome Mix subsequently built mansions in the same area.

In mid-January of 1915, five bungalows and a tea house were added to the hotel grounds in anticipation of the large number of visitors expected as a result of the Panama Pacific Exposition held in San Francisco that year. Constructed in the gardens behind the Hotel, these new structures were designed and built by Frank Meline. The bungalows had from two to five bedrooms each, two or more tile baths and showers, large living rooms with open fireplaces, sleeping porches, and patios looking out onto an open court. The hexagonal shape tea house was connected to the rear of the Hotel by a pergola. All six buildings had plaster exterior walls and were also built in the Mission Revival style. While these six structures were under construction, five more bungalows were being planned. By 1922, all twelve bungalows on the hotel site today were completed.

In 1928, Mrs. Anderson sold the Hotel to the Interstate Corporation. When the Great Depression hit the Hotel closed for several years, reopening in late 1933, and subsequently changing hands several times in the following years. In 1938, financial difficulties forced the Hotel's bondholders to foreclose, and banker Hernando Williamdevos Courtwright (1904-1986) formed a company to acquire control of the Hotel's stock. Courtwright's company consisted of Dr. Francis Griffin (husband of Irene Dunne), Tom Lewis (husband of Loretta Young), Harry

⁴ Ibid., 80.

Warner, Tony De Marcos, B.B. Robinson, Tom Hamilton, and Verbena Hebard. Courtwright was president and managing director of the group.

By the mid-1930s, the Hotel's reputation as a luxury resort hotel had declined and was no longer considered an equal to the Hotel Del Coronado near San Diego or the Del Monte in Monterey. Courtwright headed an improvement effort that included the promotion of the Hotel's country club atmosphere and desirable location; construction of recreational facilities to encourage summer business; and the renovation of the hotel's guest rooms. Prominent designers and decorators were used for the renovation, including Paul Laszlo, Harriet Shellenberger, Howard Verbeck, John Luccaremi, and W. & J. Sloane. In the early days of reorganization, the advertising campaign focused on the theme of gracious living and a country club atmosphere in the heart of the City. By 1945, the focus was the Hotel's proximity to all points of business and social interest in the Los Angeles area.

In the latter part of the 1930s, the tennis courts were relocated for the addition of an outdoor, heated swimming pool. The tennis courts were reconstructed north of where the new pool was installed. The pool was surrounded by trees and flower gardens with cabanas and locker rooms. The "Sand and Pool Club" was developed as a year-round sunning and swimming spot for neighboring residents. To give the club an authentic beach atmosphere, a strip of genuine silica sand was imported from Arizona.

A new two-story building with eight bungalow suites was added in 1939 for a cost of \$75,000, bringing the total number of hotel guest rooms to 212. The suites ranged from 2-3 rooms, each with a kitchen and bath. The hotel bungalows were promoted as offering the comfort of home without the usual responsibilities for long term residency. Howard Hughes and Greta Garbo were just two of the long term residents of the secluded bungalows.

In the early 1940s, approximately \$20,000 was spent per year to improve and maintain the gardens and grounds with rare shrubs and flowers. The Hotel offered acres of tropical gardens, lawns, tables for tea on the terrace, badminton, a ten-hole putting course, pool, a sand beach near the pool, a bridle path, private cabanas, and tennis courts.

Initial guest room renovations under Courtwright included adding bathrooms to guest rooms, the joining of some guest rooms into suites, adding new wallpaper, modernizing hallways, and redesigning doors. The employee sleeping quarters on the second and third floors of the main building over the kitchen were relocated to a dormitory facility north of the main hotel building near Glen Way. Those original employee rooms were then restyled into guest rooms that provided an additional 20 hotel rooms.

The Hotel's lobby was renovated in 1944, which included relocating and replacing the registration desk and reconfiguring the space to provide a central open area, as well as private alcoves. Other changes to the Hotel at that time included the creation of a floor of shops and studios on the Terrace Level, which was designed by architect Paul R. Williams. The Terrace Level included a health and massage studio, beauty salon, barber shop, art gallery, dance studio, brokerage office,

coffee shop, and photography studio. Additionally, in that same year the Polo Lounge was expanded by one third with an annex and was redecorated.

As a result of the changes made under Courtwright, the Hotel was elevated to a status it had not attained before; it became one of the most prestigious hotels in the world and gained a reputation for impeccable service. The clientele shifted from the winter visitors of the early years to executives of industry and finance, government officials, and socialites and celebrities. Leading families in the nation made the Hotel their headquarters while in California. Stage, screen, and radio stars were guests, as were members of royal families. Over the years, guests included Queen Juliana of the Netherlands, President Sukarno of Indonesia, the Duke and Duchess of Windsor, Henry Ford, Clark Gable, James Forrestal, Major de Seversky, Spencer Tracy, Marilyn Monroe, and Katherine Hepburn.

The Hotel became a meeting place for various community organizations, including headquarters of the Los Angeles Junior League and Beverly Hills USO (in the converted game and sun room), the New York Players Club, the Rotary, Kiwanis, and other social and civic organizations.

Change continued throughout the 1940s. It was the time that the recognizable Beverly Hills Hotel pink and green motif, stylized period script and font, and signature banana leaf wall paper was introduced to the property. In the mid-1940s, 3½ acres of adjoining land were purchased. The Crystal Room and Lanai Restaurant opened in 1947. The exterior of the Hotel was first painted its distinctive pink color in 1948 to complement the color of the sunset and the popular country club style of that time. That same year the vast landscaped front lawn was converted into a large parking lot with formal plantings and the hotel's port cochere was remodeled. One year later a 4 story wing, also designed by Paul R. Williams, was constructed adjacent to the main hotel building along Crescent Drive. The new wing, named the Crescent Wing, contained approximately 109 additional guest rooms, all with private bathrooms and high ceilings. Reflective of the International Style, but referred to in a Los Angeles Times article as "New Orleans Modern," the new wing included seven penthouse apartments on the fourth floor; five additional deluxe suites on the first, second, and third floors; 15 corner studio rooms; and an assortment of general guest rooms. A two-level underground garage was also part of the new wing.

The Beverly Hills Hotel Corporation, headed by New York lawyer and financier Ben Silberstein, bought the Hotel in 1954. Silberstein maintained the Hotel's reputation for excellent service. In 1962, still under Silberstein, the Hotel boasted a ratio of 1½ employees for every guest, the highest ratio of any hotel in the country.

On the occasion of its fiftieth anniversary in 1962, the Beverly Hills was compared by the Herald Examiner newspaper to the world's greatest hotels, including the Sacher Hotel in Vienna, the Waldorf-Astoria in New York, Chicago's Palmer House, San Francisco's Palace, George V in Paris, the Palace in St. Moritz and the Shepherds in Cairo.

In 1963, the Hotel's unique Cinema Room opened. The Lanai Restaurant became the Coterie in 1977, and six years later the Sunset Room opened. Renovation of the bungalows began in 1952

and continued into the 1980s. The Hotel also went through several ownership changes during the 1980s. The Boeskys gained control in 1986 for \$100 million, and later that year, the Hotel was sold for \$136 million to Denver oilman Marvin Davis. In 1987, Davis sold the Hotel to the Brunei Investment Agency.

At the end of 1992, the Beverly Hills Hotel closed for a \$100-million-plus major renovation. During this time new furnishings, features, and carpet were added to replace the former antiquated, deteriorated fixtures. The guest rooms and suites were modernized and enlarged and each of the bungalows was renovated. Some of the interior corridors of the main building were reconfigured, as were the ballroom, kitchen, and other back-of-house spaces. A tea room and central staircase, and additional breakout rooms were also added, in addition to a private dining area within the Polo Lounge. The project lasted roughly 2½ years with the Hotel re-opening for business on June 3, 1995.

Development of Site

The site is comprised of buildings and improvements that together define the property as a world class luxury hotel in a private setting, with glamorous rooms, tropical gardens, starlet filled swimming pool, and celebrity studded Polo Lounge. The property includes the main hotel building that was designed by Elmer Grey and built in 1912, the mid-century Paul R. Williams designed Crescent Wing addition, the winding driveway approach from Sunset Boulevard, tennis courts, parking lots and structures, guest bungalows, swimming pool and cabana, tea room, power plant and laundry facilities, and other back-of-the-house structures.

The main building is surrounded by bungalows, lush landscaping, recreational facilities, and service buildings. The former hexagonal shape Tea House was built in 1915, at the same time as Bungalows number 1 thru 5. Designed and constructed by Frank Meline, a prolific residential designer who built many of the single family residences in Beverly Hills and Hollywood, the tea house structure was connected to the rear of the main hotel building via a covered pergola.

Main Building

The main hotel building was built in 1912 and was designed by architect Elmer Grey. An addition was made to the building in 1919, which was also designed by Grey. Architects Koerner & Gage designed alterations to the main building including conversion of the theater and billiard room to a dance hall and café in 1928. An addition of three rooms was added to provide servants' quarters in 1930. The Hotel's original cocktail room was enlarged in 1939. The design for the enlarged cocktail room was by Edward Cray Taylor, and F.B. Aldous & Sons was the contractor. The Palm Room was remodeled a year later, removing some of the room's partitions and adding a band shell and coat check room. Also at this time the drugstore was divided into several shops and a covered porch was enclosed. Additionally, according to building permits, guest room number 111 was remodeled in 1944 by interior designer Paul Laszlo.