

837

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

MAR 31 1992
JUN 04 1992
NATIONAL REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Hollywood Melrose Hotel

other names/site number Melrose Arms

2. Location

street & number 5150-70 Melrose Boulevard

N/A not for publication

city, town Los Angeles

N/A vicinity

state CA

code CA

county Los Angeles

code 037

zip code 90004

3. Classification

Ownership of Property

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>1</u>	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
<u>1</u>	_____

buildings
sites
structures
objects
Total

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet

Shado R. Craig

May 20, 1992

Signature of certifying official
California Office of Historic Preservation

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register.
 - See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other. (explain:)

Entered in the
National Register

Victoria Sykes

7/8/92

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic/hotel

Commerce/Trade/specialty store

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic/multiple dwelling

Commerce/Trade/specialty store

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Late 19th & 20th Century Revivals

Materials(enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete

walls brick

roof asphalt

other terra cotta

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

Located in the southeastern section of Hollywood in close proximity to Paramount Pictures and other major production facilities, the Melrose Arms, on the southeast corner of Wilton Place and Melrose Avenue, is a three-story brick mixed use commercial building containing both retail and residential spaces. This two part commercial block type composition is characterized by the horizontal division into a single-story lower retail floor and two upper residential floors. This construction block type was used to accommodate a wide range of functions and is readily found in all forms of commercial core development. Designed in the Norman Revival style, the structure's main facade extends along Melrose Avenue, and is divided by three tall gables into an A-B-A-B-A arrangement. The building is clad in polychromatic brickwork on the north, west, and east elevations; primarily in an American Bond pattern. The bays containing gable ends are clad in a modified Flemish Bond or diagonal brickwork pattern, with brick ends forming the diamonds. Each gable is bounded by stylized piers outlined with vertical terra cotta quoining bands. The brick piers themselves are ornamented with narrow terra cotta niches.

Fenestration in each horizontal bay (B) is fairly regular, consisting of six-over-six light, double-hung sash windows capped with art stone lintels interspersed with smaller three-over-three light, double-hung sash windows which have the same art stone lintel caps. Third floor window and second floor smaller window sills consist of vertically laid brick. Windows in gable bays (A) are single light casement type with an inside lattice-type screen. These windows are also surrounded by quoining. A narrow vertical vent surrounded by quoins pierces each gable face. Surviving original windows have been repaired and compatible replacement windows have been installed in openings where original fabric was removed.

The structure is divided horizontally by a wide beltcourse separating the street-level storefronts from the apartment level windows of the upper floors. The beltcourse runs continuously on the west, north, and east facades and consists of a double cornice molding, a frieze with raised linear molding, and a narrow half round architrave. It is interrupted by corbelled niches located at the corner gable bays. Storefront bays are divided by pilasters with bases, lightly inset faces, and medallion moldings in lieu of capitals in the form of decorative shields. Storefront transoms with inset decorative wood grillwork have been restored at locations uncovered during work. Corner gable bay transom grillwork features an open, spindle-like milled assembly while the western horizontal bay transom grillwork is in the form of small Norman Revival lancet shaped windows. Centered entries on the gable bays of the main facade contain double wood and glass doors which match the original doors. New storefront entry doors are slightly recessed to match the original door placement. Dimensions of glass framing have been kept to a minimum to closely resemble the original plate glass windows. Interior store partitions have been removed to restore the earlier appearance of the ground floor spaces. The first level of artstone, including the beltcourse, has been painted and new individual letter signage added.

A steeply pitched gable roof, intersected by the three gables tops the structure. Plain art stone cornices flush with the brick cladding cap each end of the roof which slopes towards the street. An inverted art stone corbiestep, also flush with the brick and a remnant of the original more elaborate gable cornice, completes the edges of the gable roof lines. A small, square turret capped by a steep pyramidal roof emerges from the roof next to the central gable, adding additional detail to the upper story of the central bay. Portions of the gable roofs where the original composition shingles were removed have been reroofed with new composition shingles which match the original roof.

See continuation sheet

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Continuation Sheet Melrose Arms

Section 7, Page 2

Description of physical appearance continued (p.1 of 1):

The entrance to the upper stories is located in the central bay of the primary facade, which is scored to resemble segmented stone blocks. New wood and glass entry doors match original doors. The recessed entrance is surrounded by compound archivolt molding. It is flanked by restored recessed openings framed in the same Norman-style pointed arch compound archivolt molding which contain new multi-light fixed windows, which also match the original. A metal and neon "Melrose Arms" shield sign remains above the entry, dating from the period when the upper floor occupancy use changed from hotel to apartments.

The secondary facades, on the south and east elevations, are of a much more utilitarian appearance. Fenestration and brickwork follow the patterns of the primary facade. A flat roof tops the rear portion of the structure. Combination heat pump and air-conditioning units which do not protrude beyond the face of the building have been placed in selected windows on the south, east and west elevations. Decorative fire escapes exist on the north, east, and west facades. Seismic retrofit per City of Los Angeles Division 88 requirements includes concealed diaphragm anchors on the east, north, and west elevations; diagonal interior bracing in north elevation storefronts; exposed anchor plates on the south (rear) elevation; the blocking of several south elevation first floor windows, and gunting on portions of the west elevation first floor walls.

The interior spaces of the building still retain much of their original configuration. The lobby is located in the center of the ground floor, and is accessed through a small entry vestibule with a pair of pointed arches. A stair enclosure and a small elevator are inset into a similar arch adjacent to the vestibule. The lobby and its coffered ceiling have been restored with plaster patched and repaired as required. Two small windows overlook the lobby from the enclosed mezzanine. In the upper stories, narrow corridors extend the length of the building, with apartments arranged along both sides of the corridors. The hallway ceilings have been lowered eight inches to accommodate a code required sprinkler system. Walls have been patched and repaired as required to match the original plaster. New painted hallway doors with moldings to simulate recessed panelled doors have replaced former doors. Hotel rooms have been restored to their original configurations with plaster walls and interior doors repaired. New work includes crown molding, carpet, bath linoleum and tile, sink and tub fixtures, and new electric heaters on the north elevation.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Period of Significance

Significant Dates

Architecture

1927

1927

Cultural Affiliation

Significant Person

Architect/Builder

Lee, S. Charles

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas of significance noted above.

An excellent example of Lee's mixed use residential development, Melrose Arms is a significant structure close to the Hollywood studios. Lee's contribution to the area's fanciful architectural tradition dominates this portion of the Melrose streetscape, retaining, as it does, a high degree of integrity, unusual materials, and a well-defined style. Melrose Arms also serves as a reminder of the diversity of Lee's work, whose reputation to date is strongly associated with a specific type of structure, extravagant movie palaces primarily in the Art Deco style. Lee's attention to detail and the stylized design of much of the ornament on the exterior is a harbinger of his later work. As an example of the early work of one of Los Angeles' most prominent Art Deco architects, Melrose Arms has an important place in the compendium of Southern California architecture.

Known originally as the Hollywood Melrose Hotel, Melrose Arms was designed by prominent Los Angeles architect S. Charles Lee in 1927. The building, an excellent example of Lee's early work which retains a high degree of integrity, was designed after Lee's arrival in California in 1921 and before his rise to prominence as a theater designer between 1929 and 1945.

Born in Chicago in 1899, Lee trained at Technical College, Armour Institute of Technology, and the Art Institute. He worked in the office of Rapp and Rapp in Chicago until his move to Los Angeles. Lee designed a series of residential buildings, apartments, and hotels during the 1920s, most in the popular period revival styles of the time. For several years, he was associated with Walter McCarty, developer of the Beverly Wilshire Hotel and the adjoining Beverly Hills residential subdivision, where he designed homes for the lots that McCarty sold. Melrose Arms was the second collaborative effort on an apartment building between Lee and the owner, J. Vance Troyer, a Los Angeles developer.

In 1928, Lee was commissioned by Louis B. Mayer and Irving Thalberg to design the Motion Picture Producers Association (MPA) Building, an Art Deco-influenced structure that marks the beginning of Lee's work in the style that was to make him famous. Lee has been hailed as the most prolific and prominent architect of movie palaces of the Art Deco period, noted for sleek Art Deco auditoriums and luxurious commercial buildings. Lee also designed movie theaters in various period revival styles. Among his theater designs are the Tower (1925) and the Los Angeles (1929) in Los Angeles; Fox Wilshire (1929) in Beverly Hills; Fox (1930) in Bakersfield; Bruin (1937) in Westwood Village; La Reina (1938) in Sherman Oaks; Tower (1939) in Fresno; Academy (1939) in Inglewood; Mayfair (1941) in Ventura; and the Vogue (1941) in Oxnard. The Los Angeles and the Tower are among the buildings designed by Lee which are listed in the National Register. Representative of Lee's designs in Hollywood are the MPA Building, the Lyons Store Building (1932; now the Department of Water and Power), the facade of the Max Factor Building (1935), and Temple Israel.

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Continuation Sheet Melrose Arms

Section 8, Page 2

Statement of significance continued (p.1 of 1):

Lee was awarded honors from L'Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris; the Synergy award, the highest recognition bestowed by the Society of American Registered Architects; and the Vasco Nunez Balboa award, the highest honor conferred by the Panamanian government to a non-Panamanian. Lee was also honored by the American Film Institute, the Los Angeles City Council, the County Board of Supervisors, and the City of Beverly Hills.

Close to several movie studios, including the California Studios two blocks away at Melrose and Bronson, Melrose Arms provided both housing and neighborhood services. Before 1950 the immediate area was a mixed use neighborhood comprised of single family homes, bungalow courts, apartment buildings, and other residential hotels, working movie studios, entertainment facilities such as an ice skating rink (at Clinton and Van Ness), schools, and small businesses.

Lee's original plans for Melrose Arms, now part of the S. Charles Lee Collection housed at UCLA, indicate that the building was designed to serve as a small shopping area for the neighborhood at street level and as a hotel on the upper two stories for visitors to Los Angeles and for technicians working in the nearby studios. The original plans illustrate ground-floor spaces reserved for a bank, several storefronts, a market, a drugstore, and the hotel lobby. A historic photograph documents the use of different storefronts by the Melrose Cafeteria, and the Gramercy Place/Melrose Avenue corner storefront rented by a dentist, Dr. A.S. Lehman.

Melrose Arms is an excellent example of Lee's mixed use commercial designs. Lee also designed apartment buildings in period revival styles of larger scale in the late 1920s, including the ten-story DuBarry Apartments (1929) at 458 South Catalina Street. The Norman Revival style of Melrose Arms provided a significant counterpoint to the predominant Spanish Colonial Revival image of the period in the community, and was often used by developers to heighten the profile of a given site. Few business blocks built in this style exist in the immediate area, although a number of Chateausque apartment buildings have been identified as contributors to a thematic luxury apartment grouping which played a strong role in the community's history, and Norman Revival single-family residences are present in the neighborhoods. The strong presence of the Melrose Arms on a commercial strip does not have a counterpart within the area of the Hollywood Historic Resources Survey.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository:

UCLA Research Library, Special Coll.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of property Less than 1.

UTM References

A

1	1	3	7	8	9	10	3	7	7	1	9	9	0
Zone			Easting				Northing						

C

Zone			Easting				Northing						

B

Zone			Easting				Northing						

D

Zone			Easting				Northing						

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Parcel 1: Lot 14 of Tract No. 2275, in the City of Los Angeles, County of Los Angeles, State of California, as per map recorded in book 22 page 93 of Maps, in the office of the County Recorder of said County. EXCEPT the East 25 feet thereof conveyed to the City of Los Angeles for street purposes by deed recorded in Book 851 Page 161, official Records.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

This is the lot that has been historically associated with the property.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Christy Johnson McAvoy, Principal

organization Historic Resources Group date November 22, 1991

street & number 1728 North Whitley Avenue telephone (213) 469-2349

city or town Hollywood state CA zip code 90028

Continuation Sheet Melrose Arms

Section 9, Page 2

Major Bibliographical References (p.1 of 1):

De Wolfe, Evelyn, "UCLA to Be Custodian for S. Charles Lee's Renderings",
Los Angeles Times, Part VIII, February 19, 1984, p. 1.

Los Angeles Building Permit #10206, April 12, 1927.

Los Angeles Certificate of Occupancy #10206, December 20, 1927.

Smith, Susan, "Lee's Picture Palaces: A Part of the Show" Los Angeles Times, Calendar, August 26, 1979, p.26.

Valentine, Maggie, "S. Charles Lee Collection" catalog, UCLA Research Library, Special Collections.

Maps

Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1919.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1943.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1950, Volume 9, p.975-980.

S. Charles Lee Collection, UCLA

Apartment Building (Corner of Council and Edgemont), original plans.

Barancik Building, original plans, 1926.

Du Barry Apartments, original plans, 1929.

George McGhee Apartment Building, original plans, 1925.

International Investment Apartment Building, original plans, 1929.

Kenmore-Wilshire Hotel, original plans, 1927.

Melrose Arms, original plans, 1926.

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Continuation Sheet Melrose Arms

Section 10, Page 2

Verbal Boundary Description continued (p.1 of 1):

PARCEL 2: The Northerly 150 feet of Lot 10 of I.A. Weid's Subdivision of the Southeast Quarter of Section 14, Township 1 South, Range 14 West, San Bernardino Meridian, in the City of Los Angeles, County of Los Angeles, State of California as per map recorded in Book 13 Page 39 of Miscellaneous Records, in the office of the County Recorder of said County.

PHOTO LOG

Hollywood Melrose Hotel/Melrose Arms
5150-70 Melrose Avenue
Hollywood, CA
Photographer: Not known
Date of Photo: c. 1930
Location of Negative: HRG
View/Description: North and east elevations; view southwest.
#1 of 17

Hollywood Melrose Hotel/Melrose Arms
5150-70 Melrose Avenue
Hollywood, CA
Photographer: Bill Doggett
Date of Photo: 1990
Location of Negative: HRG
View/Description: North and west elevations; view southeast.
#2 of 17

Hollywood Melrose Hotel/Melrose Arms
5150-70 Melrose Avenue
Hollywood, CA
Photographer: Bill Doggett
Date of Photo: 1990
Location of Negative: HRG
View/Description: West and south elevations; view northeast.
#3 of 17

Hollywood Melrose Hotel/Melrose Arms
5150-70 Melrose Avenue
Hollywood, CA
Photographer: Bill Doggett
Date of Photo: 1990
Location of Negative: HRG
View/Description: South elevation; view north.
#4 of 17

Hollywood Melrose Hotel/Melrose Arms
5150-70 Melrose Avenue
Hollywood, CA
Photographer: Bill Doggett
Date of Photo: 1990
Location of Negative: HRG
View/Description: Portions of north and west elevations; view southeast.
#5 of 17

Hollywood Melrose Hotel/Melrose Arms
5150-70 Melrose Avenue
Hollywood, CA
Photographer: Bill Doggett
Date of Photo: 1990
Location of Negative: HRG
View/Description: Upper floors, north and west elevations; view southeast.
#6 of 17

Hollywood Melrose Hotel/Melrose Arms
5150-70 Melrose Avenue
Hollywood, CA
Photographer: Bill Doggett
Date of Photo: 1990
Location of Negative: HRG
View/Description: North elevation, main entrance; view southwest.
#7 of 17

Hollywood Melrose Hotel/Melrose Arms
5150-70 Melrose Avenue
Hollywood, CA
Photographer: Bill Doggett
Date of Photo: 1990
Location of Negative: HRG
View/Description: North elevation, ground floor storefronts; view southwest.
#8 of 17

Hollywood Melrose Hotel/Melrose Arms
5150-70 Melrose Avenue
Hollywood, CA
Photographer: Bill Doggett
Date of Photo: 1990
Location of Negative: HRG
View/Description: North elevation, main entrance detail; view south.
#9 of 17

Hollywood Melrose Hotel/Melrose Arms
5150-70 Melrose Avenue
Hollywood, CA
Photographer: Bill Doggett
Date of Photo: 1990
Location of Negative: HRG
View/Description: North elevation, storefront; view south.
#10 of 17

Hollywood Melrose Hotel/Melrose Arms
5150-70 Melrose Avenue
Hollywood, CA
Photographer: Bill Doggett
Date of Photo: 1990
Location of Negative: HRG
View/Description: North elevation, storefronts; view southwest.
#11 of 17

Hollywood Melrose Hotel/Melrose Arms
5150-70 Melrose Avenue
Hollywood, CA
Photographer: Bill Doggett
Date of Photo: 1990
Location of Negative: HRG
View/Description: North elevation, storefronts; view southeast.
#12 of 17

Hollywood Melrose Hotel/Melrose Arms
5150-70 Melrose Avenue
Hollywood, CA
Photographer: Bill Doggett
Date of Photo: 1990
Location of Negative: HRG
View/Description: Lobby interior; view southwest.
#13 of 17

Hollywood Melrose Hotel/Melrose Arms
5150-70 Melrose Avenue
Hollywood, CA
Photographer: Bill Doggett
Date of Photo: 1990
Location of Negative: HRG
View/Description: Lobby interior; view south.
#14 of 17

Hollywood Melrose Hotel/Melrose Arms
5150-70 Melrose Avenue
Hollywood, CA
Photographer: Bill Doggett
Date of Photo: 1990
Location of Negative: HRG
View/Description: Interior, second floor corridor.
#15 of 17

Hollywood Melrose Hotel/Melrose Arms
5150-70 Melrose Avenue
Hollywood, CA
Photographer: Bill Doggett
Date of Photo: 1990
Location of Negative: HRG
View/Description: Interior, corridor and stairway.
#16 of 17

Hollywood Melrose Hotel/Melrose Arms
5150-70 Melrose Avenue
Hollywood, CA
Photographer: Bill Doggett
Date of Photo: 1990
Location of Negative: HRG
View/Description: Interior; representative apartment bedroom.
#17 of 17