

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Situated in Merced, California, at the intersection of 17th and "N" Street, the Tioga Hotel is the largest building in the City and has been a commercial and social center for the community since its completion in 1928. It is an outstanding example of commercial hotel design of the 1920's, a transitional design. In the facade may be seen the classical tradition of a tri-partite division with horizontal design elements dividing the facade into three vertical parts: a base, the body and a cap. These elements are weaker in definition than the earlier "revival" design of classic architecture.

This six-story and basement structure contains approximately 73,123 square feet; 7452 square feet of basement; 14,900 square feet on the first floor which includes commercial space, lobby, ballroom, and offices; 1,935 square feet on the mezzanine level; a total of 46,184 square feet divided evenly by floors two(2) through five (5) used as residential living quarters; and 2,652 square feet on the sixth (6th) floor where two penthouses are situated. The structure has two identical wings, each consisting of five stories, which are separated by the flat roof of the first story creating a "U" shaped the structure. The roof contains a large sky light which allows daylight to filter to the lobby. The portion of the building between the two wings is set back from "N" Street, above the first story, and consists of six floors in all. The upper story, the sixth story of the building rises above the remainder of the structure. The structure is steel framed with concrete and has a flat roof with a decorative boxed cornice frieze. The cornice and applied decorative details are less vigorous than they would have been in an earlier period when the architect would have been committed to a classic revival design. Two elevators operate in the building.

The main entrance to the building is through a doorway on "N" Street under a flat archway supported by twisted columns and curved brackets. This leads into the lobby. The architectural design of the entry is a 1920's version of the Renaissance Revival. As in the general facade of the building the design is less vigorous than an earlier historical revival style. The entry is flanked by two very handsome wrought iron and glass wall standard lights which have temporarily been removed for restoration and will be returned to their original position upon completion of the restoration process. The entrance originally had a structured canopy which extended out onto "N" Street which had been drastically altered in the late 1940s. The alteration was in the form of the creation of a steel framed aluminum canopy which was completely out of scale with the original design. Upon approval of the Architectural Review Board of the City of Merced, the altered structure was removed in 1979. Above the entrance are three sets of triple arch headed windows flanked by pilasters. Directly above, a tiled roof extending the distance between the separated wings shelters the windows. At this level the only other alteration which has taken place to the exterior of the structure can be found. Multi-paned windows originally appeared above the large commercial glass windows of the ground floor. These were not destroyed, but were covered with wood panels on the exterior and interior of the building. These panels will be removed and the original windows fully restored.

The fenestration of the building is very significant to this overall design. With the exception of the portion of the building which is set back from the street ("N" Street), the middle stories 2 through 4, have an identical window pattern consisting of rectangular double hung windows. Some are grouped in pairs while the majority form single vertical alignments throughout the building. The fifth story, of each wing, alters this pattern by substituting

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arch headed windows wherever the windows are paired. Throughout the offset portion of the building arch headed, rectangular, and very narrow slot-like windows are combined with the exception of the 6th floor where only the narrow slot-like windows are found. Balconies protrude from the face of the building on the 5th floor level; one on either wing and a third larger balcony situated in the center of the offset portion of the building. Two smaller balconies are situated on the same level on the 17th Street side of the structure. Scrollwork can be found at regular intervals on the exterior of the fifth floor. Fire exits are positioned at the front of the building on each floor on each wing.

The description of this structure is of its current appearance prior to any restoration. The Tioga Hotel will undergo certain renovations under an adaptive reuse project, which will retain and restore the exterior of the building to its original condition while converting the interior residential rooms into residential apartment units.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–1930	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify) <i>Hotel</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1928 **Builder/Architect** Ralph McLeran and Company

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Tioga Hotel, built in 1928 is significant not only for its architectural merit which is an excellent example of commercial hotel design of the 1920's, but for its social/cultural history. Situated at the connecting routes of the Southern Pacific Railroad, which traveled north and south from San Francisco, and the Yosemite Valley Railroad, which traveled east and west to Yosemite National Park, it became a gathering place for some of the most prominent figures of this century. Dignitaries from all over the world would utilize this route making an overnight stop in Merced to stay at the Tioga, before continuing their journey to Yosemite.

The Tioga is architecturally significant based on its representation of an era of Hotel design of the 1920's; a type of building and a type of design which died with the Great Depression. It is a classic example of the hotels constructed during this transition period when architects were less rigorous in their design and no longer restricted by the elements of classic revival design. Although this six story structure is the largest building in Merced's history it is not overpowering. The architect's traditional education and sense of proportion gave the building a scale and proportion that keeps it from overpowering its neighbors. It has power and grace and is right for its location which contributes to its historical significance.

The Tioga Hotel was one of the grandest hotels of the agriculturally rich San Joaquin Valley. With its marbled and hand crafted tiled floors, magnificent art deco ceilings, ballroom and facilities the Tioga played a vital role in the community due to its strategic location. When Merced was originally laid out by the railroad its planners used the standard grid iron pattern of streets. These streets were normally established on a true north - south axis but in Merced the streets are slightly off the compass axis but in perfect alignment with the railroad tracks. The town's main axis was a wide street divided with landscape which led from the railroad's depot to the county courthouse (N Street). The second axis of the town plan was the prime commercial street (17th Street) which intersected "N" Street. This intersection was the pivot point for the prime streets of the plan. The Tioga occupies the northwest corner of this intersection only one block from the railroad depot.

Located on a beautiful palm tree-lined street the Tioga proudly displayed the town's first neon sign. It was constructed by Ralph McLeran and Company, financed by the Bank of California, and the deed was held by the Entrada Construction Company. The project was completed on April 21, 1928. In its early history it was managed by Archibald Stevenot, who leased the building in 1929. Stevenot, a man whose name is prominent in the history of the Valley at one time owned and operated the largest gold mine in California. During his 12 year tenure at the Hotel, he had hosted royalty from all over the world as well as prominent U. S. figures and world renowned entertainers. He referred to the Tioga as a "landmark of

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progress and congeniality". Some of the most notable people who had stayed at the Tioga included Eleanor Roosevelt, Calvin Coolidge, Archduke Otto of Austria, King Albert of Belgium, Charles Laughton, Mary Pickford, Gary Cooper and many others.

During the 1940s the ownership and management of the Hotel changed hands numerous times. With the advent of World War II, the Tioga served as a headquarters for the U. S. Airforce, who occupied an entire floor for offices. The Hotel's lobby and ballrooms were also utilized for fund raising activities by such organizations as the Red Cross, the March of Dimes, the Rotary Club and many other sundry organizations. After the war in 1946, General Hap Arnold, a five star general and representative of Washington, D. C., stayed at the Tioga while preparing for the dedication of Castle Airforce Base in memory of General Castle. It was reported to be "the greatest array of military aviation brains ever to gather in this Valley."

In 1949 Gyle Miller, the former manager of the Fairmont Hotel of San Francisco and the Claremont Hotel in Berkeley, became manager of the Tioga. He managed until 1963 during which time the Tioga was reestablished as the finest hotel in the Valley. The famous Parlor Car Tours of California utilized the hotel's facilities for its travelers en route to Yosemite. Films shot in Merced, such as "Bombers b-52" brought actors and actresses to the Tioga such as James Stewart and Natalie Wood. John Wayne frequented the Tioga during his hunting trips. The Hotel also served as the Central Valley's agricultural trading center, attracting the wealthiest cattle ranchers in the state. It also continued to maintain its prominence as the towns social center.

With the ever-increasing availability of automobiles and the construction of modern freeways the use of the railroad began to diminish. Motels flourished and eventually the Tioga was reduced to a transient hotel and began to deteriorate. Presently the Tioga Hotel is being renovated into a residential complex for low and moderate income residents of Merced. Its exterior is being restored to its original condition, while the interior is being converted to its highest and best use, without sacrificing its historical significance, by renovating the existing rooms into self-sufficient residential apartment units. This will include the installation of kitchen units, the refurbishment of bathroom facilities, installation of individual electrical meters, heating and air conditioning and carpeting throughout the unit. No major structural changes are anticipated. This adaptive reuse process is being done through the guidance of Merced's Redevelopment Agency in conjunction with Granada Development Corporation, a firm committed to the restoration of historic properties. It is anticipated that Granada Development Corporation will utilize the tax benefits allowed under the

Tax Act of 1976.
Reform

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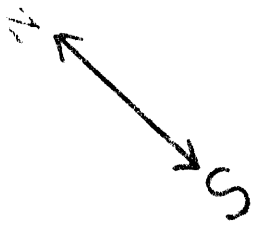
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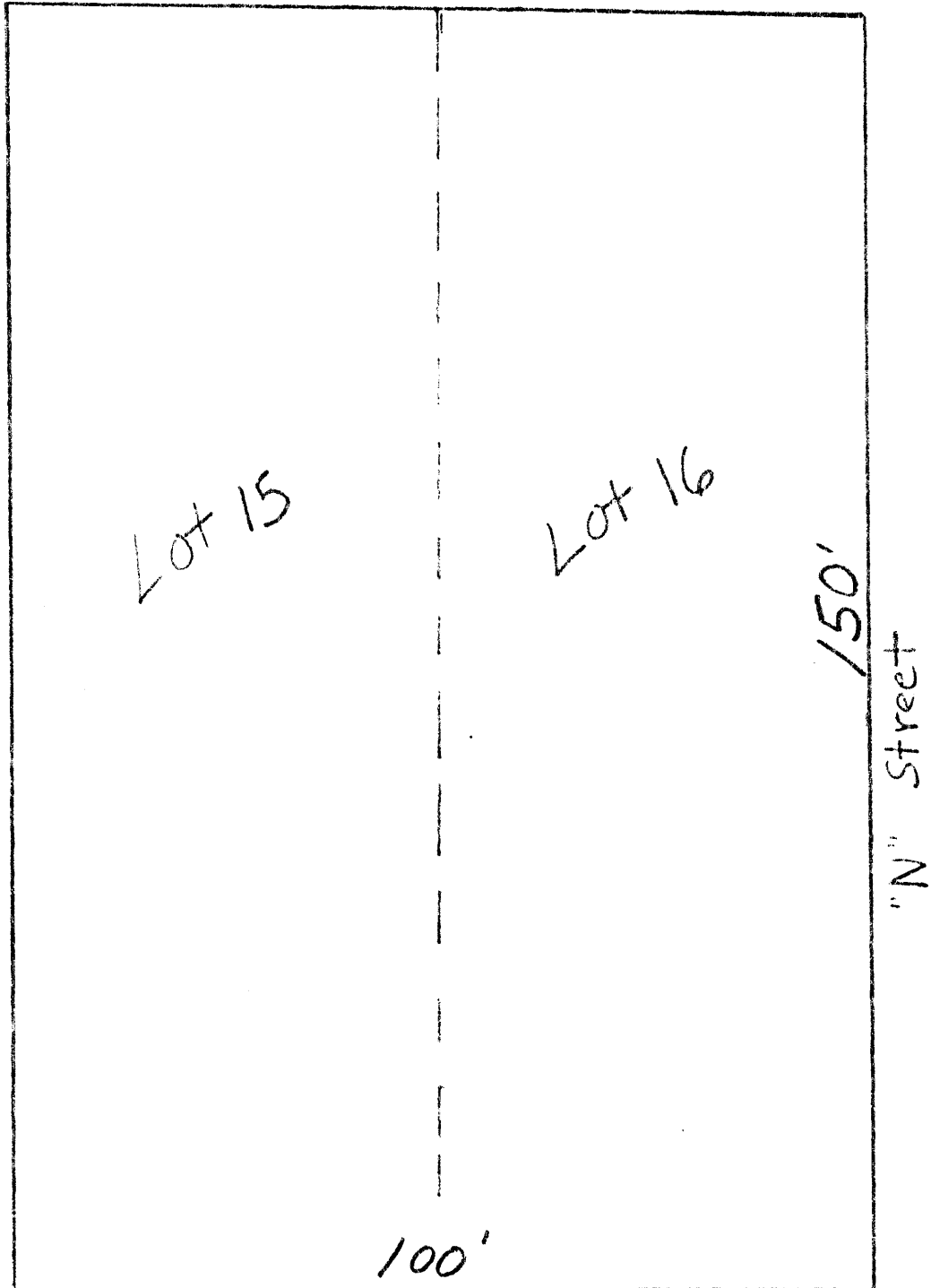
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The nominated property occupies Merced City lots 15 and 16 in Block 165, is 15,000 square feet in size and includes one principle structure. The site is rectangular (150' X 100') and is described as follows:

Beginning at the southeasterly corner of Lot 16 where "N" Street intersects 17th Street and continuing 150 feet along "N" Street to the northeasterly corner, thence at right angles 100 feet to the northwesterly corner of Lot 15, thence at right angles 150 feet to the southwesterly corner, at 17th Street, thence at right angles 100 feet along 17th Street to southeasterly corner of Lot 16.



Block 165



17 Street In The City OF MERCED

Hotel occupies entire Lot