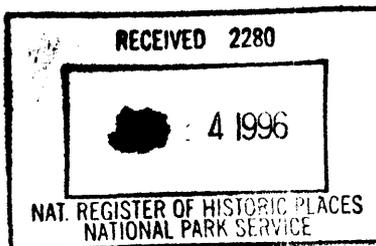


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



APR 30 1996

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name The Town House

other names/site number Sheraton Town House; Sheraton West

2. Location

street & number 2959-2973 Wilshire Boulevard
& 607-643 S. Commonwealth Avenue NA not for publication

city or town Los Angeles NA vicinity

state California code CA county Los Angeles code 037 zip code 90010

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature] 6/19/96
Signature of certifying official/Title Date
State Historic Preservation Officer
State of Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the 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): _____

[Signature] 12/15/97
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action
Edson H. Beall

[Signature] 7/22/96
Paul R. Ferguson

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

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

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

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

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	3	buildings
		sites
1	1	structures
		objects
2	4	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed
in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/Multiple Dwelling

DOMESTIC/Hotel and

COMMERCE/Restaurant

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

VACANT/NOT IN USE

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE NINETEENTH AND TWENTIETH CENTURY

REVIVALS

OTHER: Period Revival

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE

walls CONCRETE/cast stone; BRICK/
reinforced; TERRA COTTA

roof UNKNOWN

other PLASTER

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

See Attached Sheets

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1929

Significant Dates

1929

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Alpaugh, Norman W.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

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 # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: City of Los Angeles

Cultural Heritage Commission files

The Town House
Name of Property

Los Angeles County, California
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 2.5

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 11 381440 3769600
Zone Easting Northing

2

3
Zone Easting Northing

4

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Carson A. Anderson, Feb. 1994; rev. Sept. 1994; Portia Lee, David G. Cameron, Dec. 1995

organization City of Los Angeles Cultural Affairs Dept. date December 18, 1995

street & number 433 S. Spring Street, 10th Floor telephone (213) 485-8690

city or town Los Angeles state CA zip code 90013

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Kyo-Ya Company, Ltd. c/o Fitch Davis Associates

street & number 3250 Wilshire Boulevard telephone (213) 739-0067

city or town Los Angeles state CA zip code 90010

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 1

The Town House
Los Angeles County, CA

Narrative Description

Summary Paragraph

Construction on The Town House, a thirteen-story hotel tower, its two story annex with attached south garage and separate north garage began in July of 1928. The buildings and structures were completed in 1929. The Town House complex is located at the corner of Wilshire Boulevard and Commonwealth Avenue, approximately 4 miles west of downtown Los Angeles. The property has approximately 180 feet of frontage along Commonwealth Avenue and 125 feet of frontage along Wilshire Boulevard. Because of its situation at an angle in the alignment of Wilshire, the buildings' placement opposite Lafayette Park, and its thirteen story height, the structure is the most visually prominent Wilshire landmark seen by travelers going west along the Boulevard from downtown. The hotel comprises a Class "A" steel frame, 13 story, cast concrete and reinforced brick Period Revival Style Hotel and Apartment Building, 150' feet high with reinforced concrete foundation, brick and concrete exterior walls, reinforced concrete on steel frame interior construction, wood on reinforced concrete floors, composition on reinforced concrete roof, and two subterranean parking garages. Adjacent to the main structure is a two-story cast concrete and plaster dining and banquet Annex Building. On the roof of the southernmost garage is a garden. The hotel, annex and south garage beneath the annex were constructed as one unit. The annex and hotel, separated at the street level by a driveway, are connected at the second story level by a walkway; they are contiguous below ground (See Figure 1, the historic 1929 site plan). The north garage, while constructed at the same time, is a separate structure. The period of significance for it and the hotel-annex-garage unit is 1929.

The hotel is a contributing building. The annex and garage constitute one building. Although the garage is not altered, the annex is; therefore, the unit is counted as one noncontributing building. The north garage is a contributing structure. Other non contributing resources are an outdoor swimming pool, (1942) and two lanai buildings (1948 and 1955). Constructed after the period of significance, these resources altered the configuration of the original roof garden from which no original plant material except specimen palm trees can be documented.

An asphalt-paved surface parking lot, c. 1960, adjoins the northernmost Lanai Building, providing an entrance into the subterranean parking structures that underlie these buildings and the garden area. An asphalt paved tennis court, enclosed by six-foot tall cyclone fencing sheathed with green windscreen mesh, adjoins the property on the west. Neither the tennis court nor parking lot is within the property's historic lot lines.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

The Town House
Los Angeles, County, CA

Section number 7 Page 2

In 1929 the setting of the Town House was the fashionable Lafayette Park neighborhood with elegant Beaux Arts apartment buildings and up-scale residences. Wilshire Boulevard adjoining the Town House was the most prestigious commercial boulevard in Southern California with sophisticated retail establishments and low rise office buildings, designed generally in Period Revival styles. The original hotel building has retained its historic exterior appearance; the interior has had extensive remodeling. The annex has had some remodeling but retains its historic character-designing features. The entire property is vacant and secured to all entry at the present time. The complex ceased functioning as a hotel in February, 1993.

Architectural Description

Plan Overview

The tower and its annex comprise the primary hotel facilities which occupy the Wilshire Boulevard and Commonwealth Avenue frontage. The tower is L-shaped in plan, of steel frame construction, clad in rusticated cast stone, terra cotta and masonry. It is highly decorative and carefully composed in a Period Revival style which combines and modifies Classical and Georgian elements. The annex is rectangular in plan and was built with the same construction technique and eclectic use of Period Revival elements. The exterior of the hotel tower is largely intact, with few alterations. The interior has had more substantial alterations, although it retains some character-defining features. The two modern lanai buildings are situated at the rear of the property. A series of flagstone steps, walkways and paths surrounded by mature landscaping connect the buildings and recreational facilities. Vehicular access and egress ramps are located to the north of the two-story lanai building on Commonwealth Avenue and to the west of the annex.

Town House Hotel (Contributing)

Building Exterior

The Town House has an L-shaped configuration, one wing on Commonwealth Avenue and one on Wilshire Boulevard. The building is roughly symmetrical on elevation with virtually the same architectural treatment accorded each facade. The principal facade (Commonwealth Avenue) is fifteen bays across with an ABACABA pattern of window groupings. The three-story base of the building is clad with deeply raked rusticated cast concrete stone; the walls above the third floor level are sheathed with partially reinforced red brick with cast concrete and terra cotta decorative accents. The primary entrance is from Commonwealth Avenue on the east facade

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**Section number 7 Page 3The Town House
Los Angeles County, CA

from a moderately deep inset porch reached by three concrete steps. The entry is defined by a portico incorporating an arched opening with a keystone centered above. The portico consists of a frontispiece featuring a full Roman classical entablature, bearing in its frieze an inscription in intaglio Roman letters reading, "The Town House." The entablature, which is enriched by a dentil course, is supported at each corner by paired fluted columns with papyrus leaf capitals.

Medium relief raised Greek labyrinth fretwork forms a continuous stringcourse around the perimeter of the building that delineates the base of the third floor. The corner windows on both the Commonwealth and Wilshire facades, as well as the sixth and tenth bay at the center of the principal facade, feature bowed balconets of delicate cast ironwork. The windows at the fourth floor level and above are vertically aligned into groups of one and four in the outer bays, and one group of three center bays. These banded windows at the fourth floor level are set within blind arches and have terra cotta surrounds featuring splayed keystone lintels. Four windows, one at each corner of the facade, and one in the sixth and tenth bays, have flat, console bracketed cornices. This alternation invigorates the window treatment, as does the alternation of 8-over-8-light wood sash with narrower 6-over-6-light sash in vertically aligned bands.

The upper facade at the eleventh and twelfth floor level signals the presence of two story suites. This facade is framed at the base of the eleventh floor by a strong, cast concrete and stone beltcourse/cornice featuring mutules on the soffit side, framed at the top of the twelfth floor by a heavy, cast concrete stone entablature. The facade is divided into three and four bay sections amplifying the simple window treatments of the lower mid-section of the facade below. The windows in these three and four bays sections are framed with paired, cast stone fluted pilasters. There is a continuous balcony of shallow depth atop the eleventh floor beltcourse/cornice. It features cast iron balustrades in a criss-cross pattern alternating with narrow vertical bands that have circular patterning. At the twelfth-floor level, the corner windows, and those in the sixth and tenth bays, have pulvinated, balustrade balconets of cast iron construction with patterning matching that of the balconets from the tenth floor downward. The windows of the top floor are simply detailed and have plain surrounds. Their lintels abut a continuous cornice with a plain fascia above. A large one story L-shaped penthouse near the building's northwest corner with a heavy, cast concrete stone cornice surmounts the roof ; it is lighted by octagonal windows.

The Town House's exterior is virtually intact, and has incurred only a few minor reversible changes, as follows:

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 4

The Town House
Los Angeles County, CA

1. An entrance created on the Wilshire facade for the Zebra Room restaurant and club (1946) and Cape Cod Room Lounge (1953). The entrance is marked by a c. 1960 cantilevered metal canopy;
2. New canopy installed at main entrance to the building and replacement metal entrance doors;
3. Installation of several window air-conditioning units.
4. Building and business identification signage, including roof signs and a small internally-illuminated plastic-faced sign at the southeast corner of the building.

Large neon building identification signs read "Sheraton Town House." They are located at both the northeast and southwest corners of the roof in an alignment angled to the front wall plane of the buildings. These two signs are not original to the 1929 building, but date c. 1940. They consist of individual, Roman type, metal-can channel letters roughly eight feet in height with neon components that are supported by a steel truss structure roughly twenty feet in height.

Installed when the building was part of the Hilton chain, the wording was modified in 1954 to reflect the change in ownership.

Interior

Although some of the original decorative features survive on the Town House interior above the first three floors, most have been removed or concealed through continuous remodeling. Character-defining features that have survived on the upper floors include the articulated wood doorway trim surrounds and chair rails, ceiling cornices and decorative wood molding found in the public corridors. Some fireplaces have survived in rooms which were originally apartment living rooms. The first floor has been heavily impacted by numerous alterations, including conversion of dining rooms to restaurant and kitchen space and modification of the lobby area by the introduction of late 1940s and 1950s era design counters and finishes, installation of suspended acoustical ceilings and new wall coverings. At the second floor level, apartment space was converted to meeting rooms by removing many of the original wall partitions.

As originally constructed, the first floor was used for services required by the building tenants. Several dining rooms, banquet halls and club rooms, a beauty and barber shop were located on this floor. North of the main entrance in the Commonwealth wing were office and service facilities. The main dining room was designed as an exact replica of a famous Parisian

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

The Town House
Los Angeles County, CA

Section number 7 Page 5

restaurant. Original detailing which remains includes a coved plaster ceiling with tripartite lattice grillework, stepped plaster trimwork at doorways and a bowed north elevation with five plate glass doors which open on to the exterior patio.

Character-defining features of the first floor include the spatial configuration of public spaces and circulation, including the main dining room, a second dining room, foyer, the entry room and the retail and the coffered plaster ceiling of the retail and office corridor. Character-defining features of the upper floors include the public corridors and spatial configuration of guest rooms. These corridors have articulated wood doorway trim surrounds and wood base, chair rail, ceiling cornice and decorative wood moldings. Trim surrounding the two elevator doors is intact, although the original stained finish has been painted over except on the second floor. Guest rooms also retain plaster detailing, tall ceiling heights on some floors. Decorative plaster and wood molding and original fireplaces surrounded by marble are intact in some rooms.

Annex Building and South Garage (One Noncontributing Building)

A construction permit for the two story Annex building was taken out in April of 1929, several months after construction on the high-rise Town House building had begun. The annex has a rectangular floor plan and is oriented to the south, i.e., facing Wilshire Boulevard. Providing auxiliary dining and kitchen facilities for the main building, it was integral to the operations of the apartment hotel. In 1957, major alterations were made to the Annex which is separated from the Town House on the ground level by a narrow driveway. At that time a second story walkway was constructed linking the building to the hotel tower. The Annex and garage are contiguous below ground.

Five bays across on the south facade, the building is sheathed with cast concrete stone and smooth plaster. The second floor is treated as a *piano nobile* and accorded an elegant architectural treatment featuring floor to near-ceiling height plate glass windows. These lights, enriched with architrave surrounds and topped by cornices, open onto pulvinated cast iron balconets matching those on the Town House Hotel. A Greek fretwork-decorated stringcourse delineates the first and second floor levels, matching the pattern found on the Town House building. Although the annex building generally retains its Period Revival stylistic elements, alterations to the exterior include removal of all wrought iron window ornamentation, the installation of replacement entry doors and showcase windows at the first floor level, and the infilling of the exterior doors onto Wilshire Boulevard.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**Section number 7 Page 6The Town House
Los Angeles County, CA

The primary character defining feature of the annex building that remains is its large-volume spaces. The interior ground floor and second floor have retained original window openings and assemblies. The basement level of the annex is similar in character to the tower and connected by a ramped corridor. A corridor entry leads to a stairway at the west end of the basement which connects to the first floor lobby.

South Garage

Beneath most of the Town House property are two reinforced concrete subterranean garages on separate levels, roughly rectangular in configuration. Accessed from separate entrances, they are original to the property and integral to it, functionally and historically. Vehicular in and out ramps from Commonwealth Avenue are located to the north of the two-story Lanai building; those from Wilshire Boulevard are to the west of the Annex Building. The south garage was begun after the issuance of the building permit of April 1929. Originally functioning as the Hotel's service garage, it is integrated into the structure of the Annex building. The Annex and garage form one continuous unit and are considered one noncontributing building due to the Annex's alterations.

North Parking Garage (One Contributing Structure)

The north garage, designed for resident/guest parking, is not a part of the Hotel or Annex structural system. It seems likely that the North Garage was part of the first construction effort begun in September of 1928, since it appears in Figure 1. Dating to the period of significance, it stands as an individual contributing structure.

Lanai Buildings (Two Non-contributing Buildings)

Constructed in 1948, the two lanais are designed in the Modern style with minimal architectural detail and a distinct spatial configurations. Together the two Lanai buildings form an "L" in plan and frame the Town House swimming pool. The one story structure parallel to the Town House Hotel is rectangular in plan with a double-loaded corridor; the northernmost of the two is two story and "L" shaped in plan with a central corridor. Both buildings have Type III frame and plaster construction. Design features include a flat roof, composition roll roofing, metal sash, redwood siding, and individual guest decks with wood screen divider. These structures are placed over the north subterranean garage.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**Section number 7 Page 7The Town House
Los Angeles County, CASwimming Pool (One Non-contributing Structure)

The swimming pool dates from 1942. Adjoining and framing the two Lanai Buildings and measuring approximately 20 by 50 feet, it was one of the first Olympic size swimming pools to be built in Los Angeles. As conceived, the pool had below-surface windows which allowed visitors to the Hotel Lounge, situated below the pool, to observe the swimmers. These remain, but have been covered over.

Walled Garden Area

The Town House Hotel's shape indicates that its design was intended to frame a garden. In fact, the original dining room looked out upon the garden and opened to it through five large plate glass doors. An article in the May 1936 issue of California Arts and Architecture mentions a terrace adjoining the dining room; this accords with the location of the present terrace. Enclosed with brick straight-line and serpentine walls, the garden utilizes the concrete terrace, steps and flagstone paving to connect visually and practically the annex building, pool area and Lanai complex. Plantings consist of some specimen trees, principally palms, and shrubs. A small, modern gazebo building stands at the intersection of two paths; it appears to have been designed for garden weddings. Most of the planting material and layout have been designed around the plot plan that resulted from the addition of the Lanai buildings and pool. At the present time, the garden is minimally maintained; it is closed and secured from passage.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

The Town House
Los Angeles County, CA

Section number 7.8 Page 7

The Town House Hotel's shape indicates that its design was intended to frame a garden. In fact, the original dining room looked out upon the garden and opened to it through five large plate glass doors. An article in the May 1936 issue of California Arts and Architecture mentions a terrace adjoining the dining room; this accords with the location of the present terrace. Enclosed with brick straight-line and serpentine walls, the garden utilizes the concrete terrace, steps and flagstone paving to connect visually and practically the annex building, pool area and Lanai complex. Plantings consist of some specimen trees, principally palms, and shrubs. A small, modern gazebo building stands at the intersection of two paths; it appears to have been designed for garden weddings. Most of the planting material and layout have been designed around the plot plan that resulted from the addition of the Lanai buildings and pool. At the present time, the garden is minimally maintained; it is closed and secured from passage.

Statement of Significance

Summary Paragraph

The Town House, annex, south underground garage, and the north underground garage are being nominated under National Register Criterion C. Under this criterion, the Town House and these ancillary buildings are significant in embodying the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style, period, and type of construction: specifically the high-rise, masonry, steel frame, apartment hotel designed in Period Revival Style in the decade of the 1920s. Located at the center of a development area of elite residential hotels, the Town House is the most important example of a rare group of high-rise apartment buildings constructed on Wilshire Boulevard and thoroughfares to the north and south, demonstrating the utilization of Period Revival style to create a cultured architectural ambience, thereby inducing residential settlement through the building's appeal to an elite clientele. The Town House complex is also significant as the finest, known example of the work of notable Los Angeles architect and Period Revival stylist Norman W. Alpaugh, and the design most commonly considered emblematic of his career.

Historical Background

In Los Angeles through the late 1920s, the abundance of cheap land and the generally mild Mediterranean climate had favored both single-family residential development and low rise, low density (one to four stories, two to eight dwelling units) apartment and garden court development. Single family residences accounted for the greatest majority of the building permits issued. A relatively small percentage of the building permits during the 1920s were issued for medium-rise apartment houses - 5 to 8 stories. Gradually during the 1920s and 1930s,

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**Section number 8 Page 8The Town House
Los Angeles County, CA

property west of downtown along Wilshire Boulevard and its parallel east-west thoroughfares - 6th, 7th, 8th and 9th - converted from large suburban residences and open lots into higher density commercial and residential uses. On the north-south perpendicular streets in the neighborhood of the Town House - Westmoreland, Commonwealth, Shatto Place and Normandie - numerous three and four story apartments, both free-standing and with party walls, were built for an upper middle class clientele. Churches and synagogues also took their places on the Boulevard and on the adjoining residential streets. Few luxury high rises were built in the approximately two and-one-half mile square area.

Architectural Significance

Context 1- Stylistic Example

The Town House is significant under Criterion C at the local level in the area of architecture as an important example of Period Revival design in the community of Los Angeles during the 1920s, and it represents the most fully expressed example of that style of design applied to high-rise (i.e., nine stories in height or greater) apartment buildings in Los Angeles. The high rise apartment category to which the Town House belongs - 9 to 13 stories - accounted for a small subset of the total construction activity of the decade. The Town House, built to the 150 foot, 13 story City height limit, belongs to an even rarer sub-category of the high rise category. Since City ordinances mandated that no buildings could exceed 13 stories, the height of City Hall, height-limit buildings in the city acquired particular importance and were given special attention in terms of designers and materials.

Luxury apartments were a feature of the development pattern along Wilshire Boulevard and in the larger surrounding area. An important group of mid-rise apartments, comparable in construction costs and marketing were built in the area surrounding the Town House. In the 700 Block of South Normandie Avenue to the south of Wilshire Boulevard, important city designers such as Lee Callahan & Sons, Max Maltzman and A.B. Rosenthal utilized Beaux Arts, Mediterranean Revival, and Classical Revival designs. Like the Town House, the mid-rise apartments were typically of brick or concrete construction and were designed in Period Revival styles: Tudor, Chateausque, a few Egyptian, and the highly favored Spanish Eclectic designs - Churrigueresque, Mission, Monterey and Pueblo Revival. Architects whose buildings were designed to appeal to a wealthy clientele favored revival styles that spoke of elegance and refinement, i.e. Beaux Arts Classical, Tudor, Egyptian or the French eclectic Chateausque, a design that had a strong popular appeal during the years immediately following World War I. Two Period Revival height-limit apartment hotels were built along the Boulevard, the Gaylord (1923 Walker & Eisen) and the Talmadge Apartments (1924, Curlett & Beelman). These were

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetThe Town House
Los Angeles County, CASection number 8 Page 9

elegant apartment hotels also designed to appeal to an up-scale clientele. Further east along Wilshire were the Bryson and Arcady. Scattered individual examples were also constructed along the parallel corridors. These were generally less elegant than the Town House or the other two Boulevard hotels. A cluster of prominent high-rise residential hotels was constructed along Rossmore Avenue at the northern boundary of this residential area, served by Wilshire Boulevard with its houses of worship, elite department stores and retail establishments.

Attracted by evocative styles, Los Angeles architects with commissions for height-limit buildings began to favor decorative elements chosen from Classical Greek, Roman, and Renaissance prototypes as well as early Anglo-American types such as Georgian, Federal and Adamesque. These design elements, selected from historic models or pattern books, readily conveyed the Anglo-American heritage associated with settled commercial and social respectability. In addition, the greater surface area and mass of tall structures offered greater scope for artful design arrangements.

The Town House owes its rusticated base to the Renaissance Revival style modified by the Beaux Arts. Red brick for the middle and upper floors -an extremely effective and very unusual use of the material in that division of a high-rise building to contrast with the lower stories and set off the imposing entrance and *piano nobile* - together with strong delineations of upper floors by use of a string or cornice molding, suggest the Georgian style. Its full Roman classical entablature enriched by a dentil course and supported by fluted columns, indicate a reference to the Neo-Classical style. In addition, the Town House shows delicate Adamesque ornamentation in ironwork balcony detail and symmetrical window rows on a five-bay base. Taken together, these varied elements exemplify the method of Period Revival architectural design: the use of carefully selected, eclectic, historic design details and materials to create a building with easily grasped feeling and associations, readily internalized by potential residents and patrons. Thus the building's grace, polish and refinement became the attributes of those who inhabited it, as well as the stylistic hallmarks of the design.

The Town House building, Annex, and subterranean parking structure have retained integrity of location, design and workmanship as well as the feeling and association so nimbly orchestrated by architect Norman Alpaugh. While the Annex has had some minor changes in material, c. 1955, it has retained the aspect of a 1929 Period Revival building. When Wilshire Boulevard was extended through Westlake (now MacArthur) Park, the Town House, only four years old, immediately became the most prominent high rise - the tallest architectural landmark on the eastern end of the Wilshire Boulevard Corridor. Facing Lafayette Park and located only a block east of Bullock's Wilshire, it became an easily recognizable landmark, emblematic of the Boulevard's luxurious ambience. Wilshire Boulevard only changes direction between Los Angeles downtown and Beverly Hills once, at Commonwealth Avenue, the Town House corner.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 10

The Town House
Los Angeles County, CA

Drivers emerging from Westlake Park westbound on Wilshire were struck by the vision of the Town House directly facing them, framed by the surrounding buildings, a view that continued to hold the attention all the way to Commonwealth Avenue where Wilshire Boulevard assumed a more westerly direction. The siting of the Town House was extraordinary to begin with, and what Alpaugh was able to do with it took on a notable significance.

Context 2 -Architect Norman W. Alpaugh

The Town House is also eligible as the finest example of the architect's documented work, and the commission for which he is most often remembered. Architect Alpaugh (1885-1954) was born in Canada and came to Los Angeles in 1911, later joining forces with architect C.H. Russell. Russell & Alpaugh became well-known as commercial and institutional architects, although they are also credited with designing several large residences in Hancock Park, including that of Hollywood financier, C.E. Toberman. During the brisk building decade of the 1920s, the firm designed a height-limit auto garage in the Spring Street Financial District; the Kroehler Manufacturing Company's Inglewood headquarters; the Chamberlain & Procter Building in Hollywood; and Temple Emanu-El on Manhattan Place between 6th Street and Wilshire Boulevard. Alpaugh also received several school commissions: University High School in West Los Angeles, a building for Harding High School in the Sawtelle district of West Los Angeles, and Seventh Street School in San Pedro. Alpaugh designed a height-limit garage in the heart of the Spring Street financial district, and received two coveted commissions for height-limit apartment buildings in the Wilshire Boulevard Corridor area: the Asbury and Town House Apartment Hotels.

Alpaugh's work was characterized by innovation and progressive planning. His design for a height-limit garage - an architectural first in Los Angeles - on Spring Street was illustrated by a perspective drawing and a sketch of the plans in the Southwest Builder and Contractor, April 30, 1926. "Fifteen Floors in Downtown Garage to Be Served with Three High Speed Elevators" headlined the story which emphasized the combination of tiers of office lofts on the front elevation with the remainder of 13 floors plus two basements for parking cars. The elevators made possible speedy delivery of autos to owners since there was no room on the lot for ramps. The Spring Street facade of the building was a handsome Romanesque Revival design in brick and terra cotta with a rusticated base and tall, elaborately quoined arched entryway. Three central bays were surmounted by Romanesque arches; similar smaller arched lights ornamented the penthouse story. It is not clear whether the building was actually constructed, although it is listed as one of the architect's credits in Who's Who in Los Angeles County. Nevertheless, the design shows Alpaugh's skill in adapting Period Revival elements to his building's purpose,

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

The Town House
Los Angeles County, CA

Section number 8 Page 11

and demonstrates how he earned his reputation as a high-rise architect, executing commissions that required a pioneering approach to architectural problems.

On the eve of the Town House commission, Alpaugh's profile in Who's Who in Los Angeles County, 1928-29, a directory of prominent Los Angeles area professional and business people, indicated that he was well-known in the City and among his peers. Eulogized at the time of his death in a profile length obituary in the Los Angeles Times, Alpaugh was specifically remembered for the design of the Town House and Asbury Apartments. The citing of the Town House as a key work shows that the Wilshire Boulevard structure was a career achievement in the eyes of his peers. Alpaugh's briefer funeral notice mentions only the Town House among all his works. The Town House complex looms large in Alpaugh's career, since it enabled him to secure his reputation with a well-funded building, having exceptional siting, intended to appeal to the prosperous clientele which was settling into the area's apartment hotels.

The story of the planning, construction and grand opening of the Town House was clearly perceived as of major importance by the local news media and published in feature articles in the "Metro," real estate and rotogravure sections of the Los Angeles Times between March 1928 and 1930. Acknowledgment of the design as a major contribution by the architectural establishment is also suggested by illustrations in the Architectural Digest in 1930 and feature coverage and illustrations in California Arts and Architecture in May, 1936. The attention paid to the structure indicates the pivotal role the structure played in his career.

Until 1956 the Los Angeles building height limit mandated by City ordinance was 150 feet. The low profile of Los Angeles with its 13 story height limit was not just a safety issue, or a consequence of the abundance of land. Instead, it was a deliberate commitment to maintain a suitable scale for the city. As a consequence, during the 1920s period of construction, height limit buildings in Los Angeles had a monumentality and importance far greater than their big-city Eastern counterparts of the same height, and high-rise commissions became exceedingly important in an architect's career.

In his book, The Architecture of Los Angeles, architectural historian Paul Gleye illustrated Alpaugh's other major apartment hotel commission, the Asbury Apartments, which were approximately a mile east of the Town House. The Asbury too looked out upon a park, Westlake/MacArthur Park, and was height limit, 13 stories. A somewhat simplified Mediterranean Revival style characterizes the structure located on West 6th Street, a major thoroughfare parallel to and two blocks north of Wilshire Boulevard. The building has tripartite organization and a L-shape. Its architectural focus is a narrow central tower block at the intersection of the wings which is finished with a short hexagonal turret. On the Asbury, the

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**The Town House
Los Angeles County, CASection number 8 Page 12

architect's period revival decorative elements focus on the top of the central turret which features a set of arched windows and a lattice work balcony with elaborate tiered brackets. An adjoining lot facing on Sixth Street was walled to provide a landscaped area. Facing Sixth Street, the two attic stories are embellished by paired baldachino columns, recalling the Spanish Colonial architectural legacy. The Asbury Apartments was certainly an important commission in terms of scale and location, and the choice of the familiar Mediterranean Revival style was both popular and appropriate, undoubtedly signaling to tenants the "California" idiom. Yet the structure's decorative elements are sparse and do not come together as a whole to give it a sense of elegance or refinement. In addition, the building's large expanses of undecorated and identical window rows, and the pronounced beltcourse between the midsection and top stories, overstress the divisional proportions. Still the Asbury is a sophisticated effort. It may have been done with a smaller budget, but it was certainly well-received, got a good deal of publicity and remains a landmark along Sixth Street in the Wilshire Center area.

The Town House's builders were willing to expend more time and money on a Wilshire Boulevard structure, since a Boulevard apartment hotel's architecture was bound to be compared with nearby landmarks such as Bullock's Wilshire and the I. Magnin department stores, as well as dignified, skillfully-wrought Period Revival houses of worship, and the refined low-rise storefronts along the corridor streets, Wilshire Boulevard, 6th and 7th Streets, and the residential cross streets of the area. First, the Town House appears to have been Alpaugh's largest commission. In addition, it was a significant planning achievement because of the care and artistic attention given to the organization of a complex facility which included subterranean parking garages beneath a garden, and numerous tenant amenities - unusual bplex apartment units with state of the art electrical conveniences, wood-burning fireplaces in all units, multiple dining and banquet rooms, and other service functions designed to meet the needs of short and long-term residents. Third, but of greater importance, is the fact that the structure demonstrates uncommon skill in treating the design challenges posed in articulating the facade of a tall structure that is also very wide.

At the building's opening, September 11, 1929, the Los Angeles Times noted the important innovation of "an underground garage with a garden built on top at ground level, a feature not duplicated anywhere else in the U.S." Ten years later, I. Magnin, Wilshire opened with a grand party emphasizing its garden entrance. I. Magnin, together with the May Company, Wilshire, also built at the end of the decade of the 1930s at the western end of the Wilshire Corridor, promoted the ease with which the stores could be approached by automobile. The Town House, built ten years earlier, had both the garage and the garden. It is clear that the architectural and social image of the Town House influenced structures that came later in the Wilshire Corridor area.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**Section number 8 Page 13The Town House
Los Angeles County, CA

Not only was the Town House significant in its day, it continues to remain one of Los Angeles' distinguished buildings. Most significant in the work is architect Alpaugh's choice of period revival elements. His inspired use of the *piano nobile*, Adamesque ornamentation, beltcourses, classical entablatures, keystones and elaborated window treatment created a design of sophistication, polish and taste. In short, he conveyed the cachet of the Boulevard and the surrounding area. The Town House remains a stellar example of architectural design in the service of what was both a commercial and aesthetic purpose. His skillful utilization of the eclectic elements of Period Revival style to convey the desired characteristics for an elegant, widely acclaimed establishment is the measure of his career achievement. Through its combination of Period Revival elements, use of brick patterning to achieve massing, its preeminent place in the work of Norman W. Alpaugh and its role as exemplar of the apartment hotel property type so important to the residential development of Wilshire Boulevard and the surrounding area, the Town House has played a significant role in the architectural history of Los Angeles

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

The Town House
Los Angeles County, CA

Section number 9 Page 14

Bibliography

"Norman W. Alpaugh"

1929 *Who's Who in Los Angeles County, 1928-1929*: 170

"Norman W. Alpaugh:

1954 *Los Angeles Times*. November 16, Pt. I, p. 31. (Funeral notice)

"Apartment Site Bought: Two Million-Dollar Building to be Erected on Corner of Wilshire Boulevard and Commonwealth Avenue."

1928 *Los Angeles Times*. March 13, Pt. II, p. 1.

"Apartment Structure Dedicated: First Steel Column for Town House Placed With Special Ceremony."

1928 *Los Angeles Times*. November 20, Pt. II, p. 9.

"Fifteen Floors in Downtown Garage to Be Served with Three High Speed Elevators."

1926 *Southwest Builder and Contractor*, April 30: 43.

Gleye, Paul

1981 *The Architecture of Los Angeles*. Rosebud Books, Los Angeles

Hancock, Ralph

1949 *Fabulous Boulevard*. Funk & Wagnalls, New York.

Historic Resources Group

1993 "Historic Structures Report and Reuse Study." Report prepared for the City of Los Angeles Cultural Heritage Commission.

Leech, Ellen

1936 "The Town House Is a Town Home." *California Arts and Architecture*. May: 14-15, 32.

Moore, Charles, Peter Becker and Regula Campbell.

1984 *The City Observed: Los Angeles, A Guide to its Architecture and Landscapes*. Vintage Books, New York

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 9 Page 15

The Town House
Los Angeles County, CA

"New Apartment Building at Wilshire and Commonwealth."

1928 *Los Angeles Times*. February 19, Pt. V, p. 1., illus.

Sexton, Randolph W.

1929 *American Apartment Houses, Hotels, and Apartment Hotels of Today*. n.p.
New York.

"Structures Cost Millions."

1928 *Los Angeles Times*. February 19, Pt. V, p. 2

"Throngs Visit Town House: Opening of \$4,000,000 Apartment-Hotel on Wilshire Proves to be
Notable Occasion."

1929 *Los Angeles Times*. September 11, Pt. II, p. 1

Original Sources

City of Los Angeles. Department of Building and Safety

Building Permits:

1928 25057 (Hotel)

1929 11481 (Annex)

1948 25825 (Lanai)

Los Angeles County Assessor's Map Book

1927-1958 44:6

1964-date 5077:7

Sanborn Insurance Maps of Los Angeles

1920 Vol. 7, Sheet 715 (Revised to 10-50) Sanborn Map Co. New York

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

The Town House
Los Angeles County, CA

Section number 10 Page 16

Verbal Boundary Description

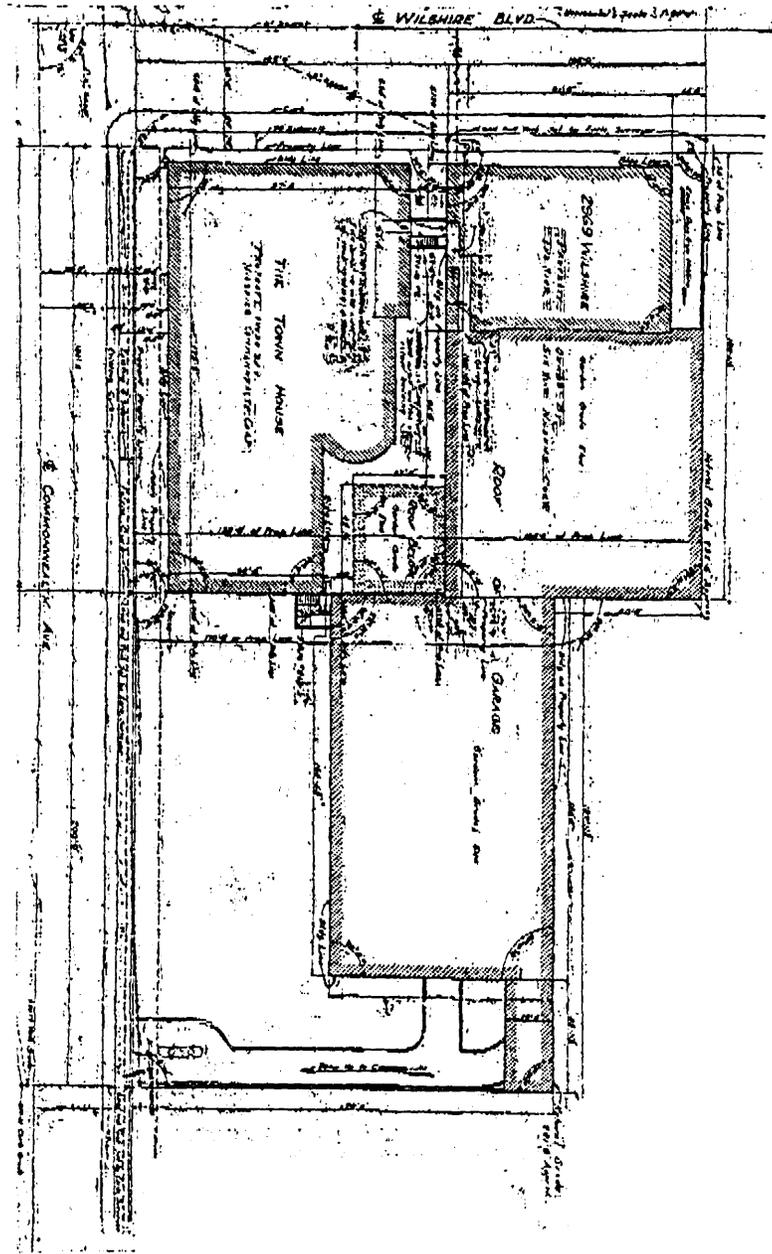
Lots 5 through 11, the north 30 feet of Lot 12, the east 60 feet of the north 30 feet of Lot 13, and the east 60 feet of Lots 14 through 16, all in Block 26 of the South half of the West End University Addition, as recorded in Book 24 of Miscellaneous Records, pages 59 and 60, in the office of the Los Angeles County Recorder.

Boundary Justification

The nominated property comprises the parcels originally associated with the hotel, annex, and north and south garages.

Figure 1
Building Contiguity Above and Below Ground
Original from Town House Plans

The Town House
Los Angeles County, CA



A-1

1929 Plot Plan

• UNITED PACIFIC SECURITIES CORP.
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA
• PLOT PLAN •
• DRAWN BY [illegible]
• 1929

TO CYNTHIA HOWSE	From JAY OREN
Co. SHPO	Co.
Dept.	Phone #
Fax # 916-655-9824	Fax #

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

SIXTH STREET

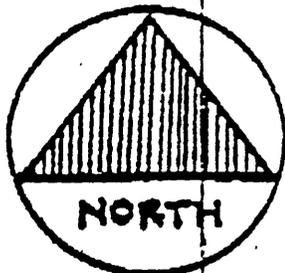
VIRGIL AVENUE

S. COMMONWEALTH AVENUE

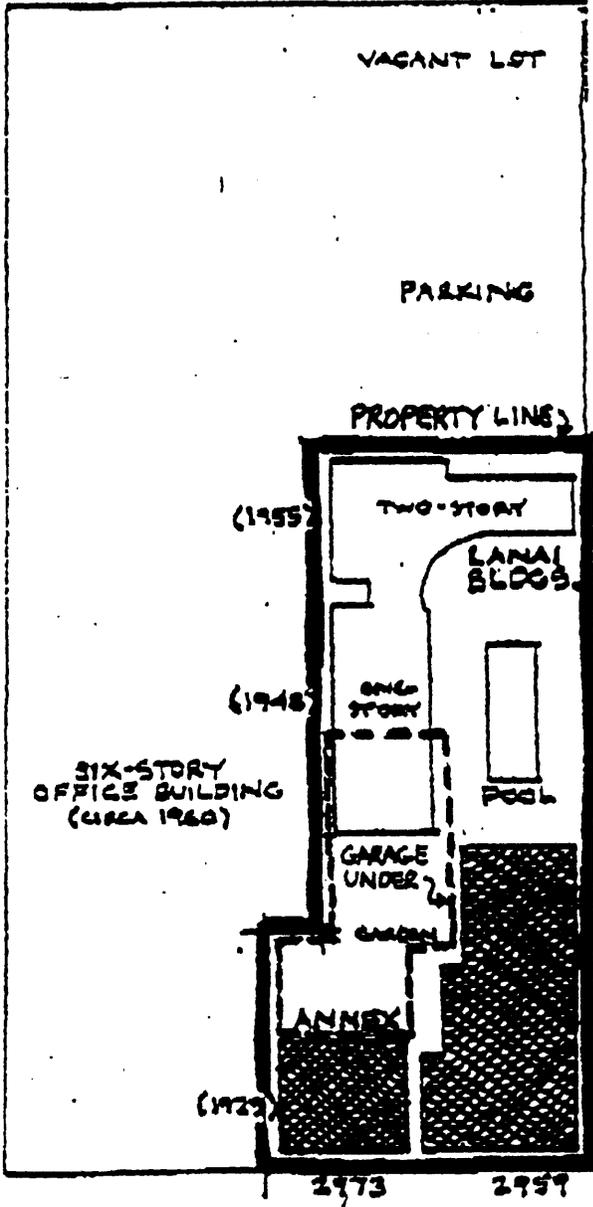
HCM #576

COURTS BUILDING (CIRCA 1970)

LAFAYETTE PARK



GAS STATION



WILSHIRE BOULEVARD

The Town House
Los Angeles County, CA

BULLOCKS WILSHIRE STORE

-SITUS MAP-
NOT TO SCALE

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

The Town House
Los Angeles County, CA

Section number 10 Page 17

Photographs

The Town House
2959-2973 Wilshire Boulevard
607-643 S. Commonwealth Avenue
Los Angeles, Los Angeles County
California

All photographs were taken by Carson Anderson, September, 1994

Photographic negatives are kept at:
Cultural Affairs Department
City of Los Angeles
433 S. Spring Street, 10th Floor
Los Angeles, California 90013

1. Principal (East) Facade (Commonwealth Avenue)
2. South Facade (Wilshire Boulevard)
3. Detail, Entrance and Bottom Floors, Principal Facade
4. Annex Building, South Facade (View: Northeast)
5. View of Town House and Annex Building looking east down Wilshire Boulevard