

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section _____ Page _____

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SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 03000059

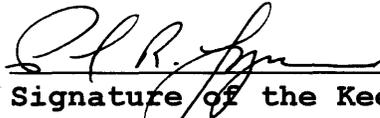
Date Listed: 2/28/2003

Superior Oil Company Building
Property Name

Los Angeles CA
County State

N/A
Multiple Name

This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.



Signature of the Keeper

2.28.03

Date of Action

=====

Amended Items in Nomination:

Previous Documentation:

This certifies that the property has received a preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67).

Geographical Data:

The correct U. T. M. Coordinates are: 11 384060 3768260

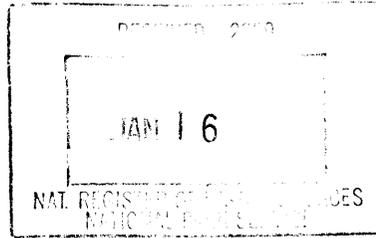
These revisions were confirmed with the CA SHPO office.

DISTRIBUTION:

- National Register property file
- Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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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 any 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 SUPERIOR OIL COMPANY BUILDING

other names/site number Downtown Standard Hotel; Bank of California

2. Location

street & number 550 South Flower Street N/A not for publication

city or town Los Angeles N/A vicinity

state California code CA county Los Angeles code 037 zip code 90017

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.)

K. M. Miller 1/7/03
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

California Office of Historic Preservation
State or 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 commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. 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): _____

K Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

G. R. Lynn

2/28/03

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.)

Number of Resources within Property		
Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

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

(N/A)

Number of contributing resources previously in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/business

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/hotel

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

MODERN MOVEMENT/moderne

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete

roof Asphalt

walls Marble; Stainless Steel

other

Narrative Description

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

(See continuation 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.)

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or a 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.

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 for the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance

1955

Significant Dates

1955: original construction

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Beelman, Claud (architect)

Simpson, William (builder)

Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of repository:

Superior Oil Company Building
Name of Property

Los Angeles, California
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1

1	1	3	8	2	0	6	0	3	7	6	8	2	6	0
Zone		Easting						Northing						

3

Zone		Easting						Northing						

4

Zone		Easting						Northing						

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 Christy Johnson McAvoy, Pricipal; Jennifer Minasian, Architectural Historian

organization Historic Resources Group date August 1, 2002

street & number 1728 Whitley Avenue telephone (323) 469-2349

city or town Los Angeles state CA zip code 90028

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 the SHPO or FPO.)

name Mark Neumann, Downtown L.A. Standard LLC

street & number 142 Greene Street, 3rd Floor telephone (212) 226-5656

city or town New York state NY zip code 10012

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 the 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 Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section 7

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Narrative Description

Superior Oil Company Building
550 South Flower Street
Los Angeles, California

SECTION 7: NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

Summary

The Superior Oil Company Building is a twelve-story, late Moderne style office building located in a densely built part of downtown Los Angeles, with similar or taller high-rises surrounding it. The building is square in plan and located at the northeast corner of South Flower and West 6th Streets, with entrances on both streets. The structure is a steel frame four bays wide and four bays deep, with exterior concrete shear walls. The building has a flat roof surrounded by a parapet. The plan of the building is square, and its volume is vertical and box-like. A second smaller, box-like volume sits in the center of the flat roof and originally functioned as a mechanical tower. The exterior of the property is almost completely intact, particularly from the primary street facades and completely intact above the first floor. Minor changes were made to the east façade at the ground floor, which faces a parking lot. The period of significance is 1955, the year of its construction. The conversion of the property to a hotel did not result in significant changes to the primary facades, existing historic materials, or existing character-defining features.

Exterior

The exterior of the property and its character-defining features are intact. A first-floor opening on the southeast corner of the building was changed from an entrance to a bank of windows, a condition closer to the original design (which was altered at this location in 1964). An entrance was added to the east façade (a non-primary façade). The exterior maintains the look of an office building, with discreet signage for hotel use.

The first story contains pedestrian entrances on the west side and the east side, where vehicles may pull up to the building and people may enter the main lobby through a garden. The original entrance vestibule, facing Flower Street, is located on the west side of the building. The original entrance was on Flower Street (the west side). This entrance still exists, unaltered. A second entrance was added in 1964 on 6th Street (the south side), but was removed in recent rehabilitations. The current main entrance, added in 2002, is on the parking lot side (the east side).

Above the first story, each facade is essentially identical in its dimensions and articulation. The facades are fourteen window bays wide, and are defined by a pier and spandrel system. This consists of vertical, reinforced concrete piers of white marble with gray veining, and slightly recessed concrete spandrels clad in panels of vertically ribbed stainless steel. The spandrel panels at the top of the facade are longer than those on the floors below in order to visually terminate the facade. Stainless steel coping forms a sill around the top of the facade. Every third bay of windows was replaced with operable awning windows. The original windows are a single fixed pane of Solex glass, with a green tint that is matched in the replaced windows.

Throughout the exterior, the slabs of marble cladding the building measure approximately three feet square. The piers are one slab wide, and those at the edges of the facades are three slabs wide, giving weight to the corners of the building. The spandrel panels and the windows are each two slabs high and slightly more than one slab wide.

The mechanical tower is also clad completely in white marble. It is punctuated on the south side by a series of five stainless steel concave disks which were originally present on all sides. A stainless steel flagpole, a custom-designed

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feature, is attached to the west face of the tower with two brackets and extends vertically past the top of the tower. Several new openings at floor level, not visible at street level, were added to the tower when the building was converted for use as a hotel and the obsolete mechanical equipment was removed from the roof. The openings, located on the south, north and east sides, open the interior of the tower to the surrounding roof, which is used as patio space for the pool added to the south side and the bar in the tower. A low access ramp was also added along the west side of the tower, leading to a small door to the pool equipment room.

The entrance added in 1964 on Flower Street was removed in 2001, although elements of it remain. Originally this façade on the first floor was clad in black granite with no windows. A series of aluminum-framed windows and recessed steps were added when the new lobby was created in 1964 on this side of the building. In the most recent rehabilitation, the steps and the recessed area were removed and full length windows like those added in 1964 were continued across the filled in area. A garden patio added in 1967, outside of the period of significance.

Changes made to the building under the 2001 tax act project included modifications to the ground floor on the south and east sides. A new entrance area for the hotel was created on the east side of the building (a non-primary façade). A new patio was installed on the site of the 1967 patio, in a style compatible with the original building. The entrance includes the addition of a cubical, smooth stucco-finished one-story volume set away from the building (containing equipment for entrance and valet services), an open steel trellis over the new entrance steps directly to the south of the addition. A non-significant street entrance on the south façade was removed. Operable windows matching the originals were installed in approximately thirty percent of the existing window openings. On the roof, new openings not visible from the street were added to the rooftop tower.

Interior: Ground Floor

The interior of the first floor contains two lobbies, an original elevator lobby to the west and a double-height banking lobby to the south which was added in 1964 by the Bank of California, who purchased the building in that year and became the primary tenant.

The original elevator lobby remains completely intact and in an excellent state of preservation, with very distinctive features and finishes. An exterior vestibule space at the street leads to the lobby. Towards the sidewalk, a large pier, oval in plan, punctuates the center of the vestibule and conceals a structural column. The floor of the vestibule is divided into diamond shapes by the brass dividing bars in the terrazzo. The ceiling is clad in diamond-shaped panels of stainless steel, with some translucent panels with light sources behind them. Planters with granite curbs originally flanked the approach to the doors, following the line of the diamonds in the paving. The planter to the south was removed and replaced with terrazzo when automatic teller machines were installed (now covered by stainless steel panels). Opening to the original lobby are two pairs of glass entrance doors within a stainless steel frame, set within a glass wall. The door handles make reference to the Superior Oil Company, with the handles in the form of a stylized "S" for Superior. The handles are mounted on black triangles which form a lozenge shape when the doors are closed.

The shape of the lobby and the angles of the diamond shapes (referred to above) which define it are based on a diamond with angles of approximately 30 and 150 degrees. The lobby is trapezoidal in plan with the entrance doors along the shorter (west) side and the elevator doors along the longer (east) side. The main (east) wall of the lobby is punctuated by a

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Superior Oil Company Building
550 South Flower Street
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series of vertical stainless steel elements such as the four elevator doors and the panels above them; the mail box; and the world clock (see below). To the south is a large opening with glass doors which originally led to a reception area, and to the north is semicircular alcove lined with a large, curved panel of ribbed stainless steel which once contained a large globe. To the west of the alcove is an area with glass and marble phone booths and a built-in, glass front display case which currently contains mechanical controls.

The materials of the lobby include a terrazzo floor with a very dark gray base and large pieces of gray and white aggregate; dark gray and white agglomerate marble covers the walls. The terrazzo floor has a similar appearance to the marble walls. The suspended ceiling consists of a series of diamond-shaped Plexiglas pieces held in place by a custom-made framework of thin, flat, nickel silver bars. The ivory translucent Plexiglas panels dropped into this system are essentially shallow, inverted pyramids. Other custom-designed features of the lobby include a three-dimensional sculptural frieze about oil production, a "world clock," a directory board, and a U.S. Mail box. The original elevator panel is also intact.

The sculptural frieze runs just below the ceiling in a continuous band over the entrance doors. Crafted in nickel silver against an originally backlit white Plexiglas background, the frieze shows in great detail oil derricks, oil refineries, and the storage, ground transport, and shipping of oil. The design of the frieze is attributed to the office of the Heinsbergen Company.

The world clock is a unique feature of the building. The clock is contained within a narrow, vertical panel, with ribbed stainless steel panels above it reaching to the ceiling and below it continuing to the floor. The clock consists of a series of horizontal bands (alternating with stainless steel bands), each containing the name of a city and a digital readout of the time of day in that city, showing fifteen cities worldwide such as the capitols of oil-producing regions and countries, including Tehran, Caracas, and Houston.

The handles of the glass doors of the telephone booths are a stylized "S" for Superior as seen in the entrance doors. The handles of the telephone booths are mounted directly on the glass doors. The directory board is attached to the marble wall at the edge of the bank of doors, and hangs outward in front of the glass wall so it appears to float in front of the glass. The mail box, located on the south end of the lobby, collects letters deposited in the chute from the upper floors. It is clad in stainless steel, with a grille of vertical nickel silver rods reaching to the ceiling, as seen throughout the lobby.

The current lobby for the hotel is located in a space that was reconfigured in 1964 for the Bank of California, then the new owners of the building, for a banking lobby. Due to that renovation, this space was not a character-defining feature of the building, as it was completed outside of the period of significance. The double-height space is connected to the elevator lobby by way of a single-height space on the south side of the building where the teller counters were installed in 1964. This area is now the hotel front desk, while the double-height space acts as a lounge and entrance area. In the northeast quadrant of the plan is a restaurant (2001) and kitchen. The mezzanine level of the lobby, located over the restaurant, is reached by an escalator (1964) and has an open balcony (1964) overlooking the main lobby/lounge. The green marble floor in the double-height lobby dates to 1964, but no other finishes remain from that period. The 2001 renovation destroyed no character-defining features in the first floor, and makes some use of selected 1964 features, thereby continuing to reflect the development history of the building.

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Interior: Upper floors

Before the 2001 rehabilitation, the upper floors had been repeatedly remodeled for office use. Fragments of those renovations remained. The original configuration of a corridor around a central core was recreated. Elevator lobbies, both the spaces and their finishes, remain intact.

Four main elevators and an additional service elevator carry passengers and deliveries to the upper floors. The service elevator continues to the roof, which was originally a mechanical area and is now a pool, bar, and lounge. The elevator doors on the first floor are panels of ribbed nickel silver, and those on the upper floors are nickel silver with squares of brass surrounded by a broad, shallow reveal. Five squares are arranged vertically, spanning the break in the doors. The squares appear to echo the square plan of the building.

The exit stairs and their historic finishes are completely intact. One flight is located in the service core (extending to the mechanical penthouse) and a second flight is centered on the west outer wall (extending to the 12th floor). Their finishes include gray marble walls, vinyl tile treads and risers with extruded aluminum nosing, aluminum hand rails, and perforated aluminum soffit panels on the underside of each flight.

The upper floors all have a similar plan with services such as elevators, and storage areas concentrated at the core. Private offices are generally located around the perimeter, as is the second exit stair. Cubicles and reception areas are located outside the private offices, and circulation on each floor takes place in the zone around the rectangular service core. On the east side of the core is a larger space where conference rooms, kitchens, etc. were located.

The original configuration of the floors was similar to the current configuration with a seven foot wide hallway around the service core and elevators. The office floors throughout the building have been occupied by many different companies and, with minor exceptions, none of the original offices or interior finishes were intact when the recent adaptive reuse and rehabilitation of the building began.

Over the years the corridor was widened or opened on most floors through removal of its outer wall. The upper floors had been reconfigured according to the open floor plan favored for office space in the 1970s and later, so that the original configuration was no longer present on any of the upper floors. The original owner of the building, the Superior Oil Company, had their executive offices located on the 12th floor but those spaces were altered by a later tenant.

The current arrangement of a central core, a corridor, and an outer ring of hotel rooms is in fact similar to the 1950s plan of offices where the hotel rooms are now placed. The service core contains the terrazzo-floored janitors' closets were retained, and one of the exit stairwells noted above, is also located in the service core. The core is larger on floors three through five, with a square footprint in the center of the floor plate, and contains housekeeping spaces and an exercise room on each of these floors, on the east side of the core. On floors six through twelve, the east corridor is shifted to the west to allow for longer rooms on the east side of the floor. The service cores on these floors contain housekeeping and storage spaces.

The corridors have carpeted floors, steel stud and drywall walls, and drywall ceilings (excepting the 12th floor ceilings which are acoustical panel). The hotel rooms (there are seventeen to twenty-two of them per floor) have carpeted floors,

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steel stud and drywall walls, built-in platforms for beds, and extensive monochromatic mosaic tiling in bathroom areas. None of these features, finishes, or partitions are original. All are compatible with the restrained original design of the building.

Integrity

The Superior Oil Building has high integrity on the exterior. The most important historic space in the interior, as well as elevator lobbies on all floors, remain intact. The building's association with the Superior Oil Company can clearly be interpreted in the decoration of the lobby, and the historic feeling and setting of the building are very similar to that when it was constructed, with the exception that the Atlantic Richfield building across Flower Street has been demolished. The integrity of materials, design, and workmanship of the building is very high, partly due to the care and expense that went into its design and construction.

The conversion to hotel use has maintained and rehabilitated character-defining features of the interior. The elevator lobby remains completely intact. On the upper floors, elevator lobbies and service areas remain. The corridor configuration, most of which was missing from the building, has been reinstated. Operable windows which match existing inoperable windows have been selectively added. No new openings were created on the two primary street facades or to the north (minor) facade. Changes to the roof area are not visible from the surrounding streets.

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Statement of Significance

Superior Oil Company Building
550 South Flower Street
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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Summary

The Superior Oil Company Building is a twelve-story office building constructed in 1955 as the headquarters of the Superior Oil Company. Designed by architect Claud Beelman, the building is a significant example of Corporate Moderne style architecture in Los Angeles in the 1950s and a significant example of the work of Claud Beelman. The Superior Oil building is eligible for the National Register under Criterion C (and meets Criteria Consideration G) at the local level of significance as it represents the work of a master architect, Claud Beelman. The period of significance is 1955, the year of its construction. It is a significant example Beelman's work because it demonstrates how the architect combined the successful elements of his Art Deco style work in the 1930s with the principles and materials of Modernism, producing distinctive buildings during the 1950s. The building is also significant under Criterion C because it is a significant example in Los Angeles of the Corporate Moderne style of architecture, being one of fewer than two dozen buildings of this style and type which survive throughout Los Angeles, and one of only a handful in the downtown core. As an intact and well-executed example of the style, the building represents the height of office building design during this important era of growth in Los Angeles.

Analysis by the Los Angeles Conservancy and others of this resource and others like it has revealed that intact examples of post-war high rises in Corporate Moderne style are relatively rare. Several have been demolished and many have been altered with complete exterior recladding or restyling with new exterior features and interior finishes. The style was first identified as an important part of Los Angeles architectural history twenty years ago in a published, historical account by architectural historian Paul Gleye. Subsequent research has revealed both a small population of buildings and a small number of architectural firms involved in their development. In addition to Beelman, these firms include Stiles O. Clements, Roland Crawford, Charles Luckman, William Pereira, and Wurdeman and Becket. The Superior Oil Company Building was designated a City of Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument in 2000 and determined eligible for the National Register in 2001 through Part 1 of the historic tax credit process.

In order to support the building's significance, this nomination concludes with a discussion of the context of Post World War II Corporate Moderne and Corporate International Style buildings in the downtown and Wilshire Corridor areas of Los Angeles, those in which the greatest concentrations of such buildings, and the best examples, are located.

Claud Beelman (1884-1963)

The architect of the Superior Oil Building was Claud Beelman, an architect whose work was well known in Los Angeles. Most of Beelman's well-known buildings are large office buildings, the construction of which coincides with two high periods of economic prosperity and building activity in Los Angeles, the late 1920s and the early 1950s. The building represents the later phase of his career.

Claud Beelman was born and raised in Bellefontaine, Ohio. Beelman was awarded the Harvard Scholarship by the Architectural League of America for his architectural training. He came to Los Angeles from Omaha, Nebraska after having worked in New Orleans, Detroit, Cleveland, and Toledo. In Los Angeles, he began a partnership with architect

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Aleck Curlett in 1919 which lasted until 1932.¹ After the dissolution of that partnership, Beelman established his own firm and continued to practice architecture in Los Angeles.

Claud Beelman has been recognized as one of the leading architects whose work has contributed to the historical development of Los Angeles architecture.² Beelman was responsible for many notable buildings in downtown Los Angeles, and was among the best-known architects of his time.³ Early in his career, he mainly designed traditional revival style buildings, while in partnership with Aleck Curlett. After 1929, for his own firm, he designed commercial buildings in Moderne styles including Art Deco, Classical Moderne, and Corporate Moderne, in the 1930s through the 1950s. Throughout his career, Beelman's works are significant for their high level of quality in design and materials. Beelman was an innovator in style and in at least one technical aspect (the mechanical tower; see below). Over a thirty-five year span, his buildings show how Beelman was able not only to learn the lessons of each period and style he worked in, but also to excel within and make a significant contribution to each. Throughout his career, his office buildings are his most distinctive works. For a complete discussion of Beelman's works, including office buildings and other types, please see following section. No other architect in Los Angeles made a comparable, ongoing contribution to the development of this building type in the city during the period from 1930 through the mid-1950s, as evidenced by the significance of his art deco towers and his continuing prominence during the period surveyed as a part of the research for this project. Please refer to the attached chart of comparable buildings and their architects. Beelman's attention to craftsmanship was very high, particularly in a period where the buildings were increasingly constructed with lightweight and synthetic materials. He was also able to guide major corporate clients into new architectural forms which made major statements about the permanence of their industry and their stature in the city.

Works of Claud Beelman in Los Angeles

The early phase of Beelman's career was his association with Aleck Curlett, which began in 1921 when Beelman was thirty-seven years old. During this period, the firm of Curlett and Beelman designed major central Los Angeles landmarks such as the Roosevelt Building downtown at 727 West 7th Street (2S1), the so-called "new" Barker Brothers building at 7th Street and Figueroa (now demolished), and Elks Lodge #99 (now Park Plaza Hotel; 3S; Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument #267) on the west side of MacArthur Park. These three works are representative of the traditional styles skillfully employed in the designs of Curlett & Beelman, in particular the popular Italian Renaissance Revival.

¹ Wolfe, Wellington C., ed., *Men of California* (San Francisco: Western Press Reporter, n.d.) 227.

² McGrew, Patrick, *Landmarks of Los Angeles* (New York : H. N. Abrams, 1994) 269.

³ There are no scholarly articles or books devoted to the career of Claud Beelman; however, this is not unexpected given the fledgling state of published architectural history about Los Angeles. Modern architects (i.e., high Modernists) in Los Angeles have been thoroughly studied and written about in scholarly forums. However, very few (in fact, almost no) articles, dissertations, or published monographs of architects who worked primarily in Los Angeles outside of this idiom exist. Moderne, commercial, and corporate forms of modernism have been distinctly under-represented. The discussion of Beelman's work herein is based on the literature regarding the styles he designed in, the many books in which his work is mentioned, and analysis by professional and enthusiast observers of the buildings themselves.

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In 1928 his partnership with Curlett had not yet ended, but Beelman began to design major buildings for which he alone is credited. These buildings were the first to establish Beelman as a master of Moderne styles. Between 1928 and 1930 he designed four major office buildings in downtown Los Angeles. The Eastern-Columbia and Ninth and Broadway buildings were listed in the National Register as contributors to the Broadway Retail and Entertainment district in 1978, and both would clearly be eligible individually for their architectural significance. The Banker's Building at 629 S. Hill Street (1930) and the Garfield Building at 408 West 8th Street (1928-1930) have been surveyed as potentially individually eligible for the National Register (3S).

Also extant is Beelman's four-story Moderne building for Woodbury College (1937, not surveyed). Two of Beelman's significant buildings from the 1930s are outside of downtown: the Hollywood Wilcox branch post office (1937, an excellent example of Classical Moderne, individually listed in the National Register) and a building at MGM studios in Culver City (1938-1939, described by Gebhard and Winter as "Beaux Arts in the guise of PWA Moderne").

Beelman's tall office buildings from around 1930 share certain significant characteristics, which he employed to exceptional effect. The exteriors of the buildings are organized by a pier and spandrel system which emphasizes their verticality. Most of the exterior, including the piers, are clad in glazed terra cotta. Stamped or cast metal details are usually seen in the spandrel panels. Signage is integrated into the design, usually as one enters the building over the door or in the terrazzo paving. Careful attention to detail is shown in the lobbies, which have patterned marble or terrazzo floors, marble walls with stylized, metal ornamentation, and stylized designs in the elevator doors. The Eastern Columbia building has as its main feature a large, square mechanical tower with a clock on its face. A contemporary account of the innovations of the Eastern-Columbia Building states:

A distinguishing feature, which was originated by Mr. Beelman, is the location of the boiler room, electrical and mechanical equipment and apparatus in the tower. This plan was lauded by the city council and building inspectors who believe that the installation of such equipment in the basement is a precarious custom.⁴

Beelman's invention of the mechanical tower explains its prominent position in his buildings after 1930, this feature would be repeated in a more abstract form in the Superior Oil Building and some of Beelman's other buildings from the 1950s.

Two of Claud Beelman's most important buildings in downtown Los Angeles are located across the street from each other at the corner of Broadway and 9th Street. Both are Art Deco style towers built to the Los Angeles height limit in 1929. The Ninth and Broadway building is named for the company which developed the land at that location, and the Eastern-Columbia Department Store built the adjacent building as their headquarters. The Eastern-Columbia building is one of the most visible and important landmarks in the older section of downtown Los Angeles, mainly because of the distinctive color of its glazed terra cotta cladding, in bright shades of aqua blue and green with gold. The massing of the building is a masterful Art Deco composition, rising in steps to a large central clock tower; this additional height was allowed for uninhabited towers.

⁴Circa 1930; source not available.

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A gap in Beelman's work occurs between his building for Woodbury College in 1937 and the design of several more important office buildings in the mid-1950s. His only known work during this period is a collaborative effort in 1942 on the Rosehill Courts public housing project with W. F. Ruck.

Beelman designed at least five major office buildings between 1955 and his death in 1963: The Superior Oil, Harbor, and Occidental Petroleum buildings, as well as the Wilshire State Bank and the Bank of California Building at Sixth and Spring streets. With greater historical perspective on Corporate Modernism, a style which was developing in Los Angeles from the mid 1940s through late 1950s, the three former buildings will be read as an important illustration of Beelman's contribution to the development of that style. Though the buildings are an important part of the commercial architectural history of Los Angeles, the actual number of intact buildings in that context is fewer than one dozen in all of Los Angeles (see Comparison of Related Properties, below). The Superior Oil Building is among the best examples of Claud Beelman's office buildings, his most significant building type, the context for which begins around 1930 and ends in 1963.

Despite that Beelman was professionally active for nearly fifty years, he produced a relatively small number of buildings. Once he established his own firm, he specialized in the application of various Moderne styles from Art Deco (or Zig Zag Moderne) to Corporate Moderne. Despite the small quantity, however, nearly all of his known buildings, in particular the office buildings, are works of unusually high quality in their design, craftsmanship and materials as evidenced by the fact that many of them are listed on the National Register and the City of Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monuments list. Although the architectural style Beelman employed depended on what was currently fashionable, his work consistently addressed many of the same design issues, since most of the projects were large office buildings. Beelman, in fact, came to specialize in this building type. While Beelman did not invent these styles, he did develop them to new heights quite skillfully thereby making a significant contribution to both the style of architecture and the body of such buildings in Los Angeles. Just as it is difficult to imagine Art Deco Los Angeles without his Eastern Columbia Building, Beelman's Superior Oil Building sets the standard for Corporate Moderne architecture in Los Angeles. See attachments to this nomination for a comparison with other buildings in this context.

The Superior Oil Company Building as an Example of Claud Beelman's Work

The Superior Oil Building is a significant milestone in Claud Beelman's work, and represents the best work of his later career. The massing and exterior organization of the Superior Oil building is similar to that of his earlier Eastern Columbia building. The broad, square clock tower on the roof of the Eastern Columbia Building and the mechanical tower on the roof of the Superior Oil building are analogous features. The costly materials which clad the building at the ground floor are the same as those used on the tower: white marble and stainless steel.

The exterior of the Superior Oil building is organized with a pier and spandrel system like that of a traditional early twentieth century office building. The system was first developed by Louis Sullivan as the first tall office buildings were being designed at the end of the nineteenth century. In his designs completed around 1930, Claud Beelman used the pier and spandrel system to lend a sense of upward momentum to the large mass of the building. In the recessed spandrel panels, Beelman placed elaborate Art Deco patterns in stamped metal. Twenty-five years later when he designed the Superior Oil Building, the spandrel panels remained but with a simple, vertical, ribbed design in stainless steel.

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The abstraction of the decoration in the spandrel panels is carried through the rest of the building as well. The design of the Superior Oil Building is in many ways a sophisticated abstraction of the work for which Beelman was known around 1930. Rather than rising in receding steps to the top of the building as in the Art Deco style examples, the verticality of the mass is communicated through the tight placement of the white piers and dark vertical columns of the windows and spandrels. The ridged terra cotta piers seen in the Art Deco buildings are replaced with flat panels of marble; the elaborate geometric designs in the spandrels are replaced with simple vertical ridges of polished stainless steel. The building has terrazzo paving extending from the vestibule to the sidewalk, but this is done so the design of the building and its immediate surroundings are integrated rather than to announce the presence of the building on the sidewalk with bright colors and designs.

The use of materials in the building also owes a great deal to the lessons of Modernism, particularly those brought to the United States by European Modernist architects. The terra cotta cladding used in his earlier buildings was no longer popular; the material required custom design and craftsmanship, and was suited to intricate designs that were no longer in fashion. Rather, the main material is a plain white marble with the emphasis on its natural surface texture and veining as its only decoration. While the copper used by Beelman in the spandrel panels of the Eastern Columbia Building and the Ninth and Broadway Building gains a patina over time, the stainless steel of the Superior Oil spandrel panels has remained unchanged in character or condition in 45 years. The project had a large budget due to the vast resources of the Keck family and their desire for the building to go beyond the current standards both in its decoration and its engineering. The same exterior materials were used whether from the street level to the building's roof.

The design of the Superior Oil building also represents a collaboration which had been active for over thirty years between architect Claude Beelman and the renowned interior decoration firm of A.T. Heinsbergen Company. The two firms collaborated on the design of the Ninth and Broadway Building, the Elks Club (now the Park Plaza Hotel), the Pacific Coast Club in Long Beach. In 1925 Beelman designed a small studio building for the Heinsbergen Company on Beverly Boulevard several miles west of downtown Los Angeles. This building is designated as Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument #275 and appears eligible for the National Register under Criteria A and C for its architecture and for its significance as the headquarters of the Heinsbergen Decorating Co. The building was extended in the 1940s, and for many years, Beelman had his offices in the addition. It was from this office that he designed the Superior Oil Building.

It is unclear exactly which elements were designed by the Heinsbergen Company and which by Beelman's office. However, it is apparent that the important main elevator lobby was a collaboration between the two firms.⁵ The decoration of the main banking lobby was designed by the Heinsbergen Company, but it was created for the Bank of California after the period of significance, not for the Keck family or Superior Oil Company. Other interior spaces designed for the Superior Oil Company included dining rooms on the fourth floor and executive office on the twelfth floor, but these do not survive.

Claud Beelman's work spans a period from around 1930, when his first major buildings independent of his partnership with Aleck Curlett were constructed, until about 1960, when he died. The earlier buildings were mostly tall office

⁵Tony Heinsbergen, personal interview, January, 2000; also notations on original plans.

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buildings in the Art Deco style built to the Los Angeles height limit in force from 1904 to 1957. These buildings were related to his earlier works with Curlett and Beelman, but they show that Beelman was adept with non-traditional styles, particularly Art Deco, with which the earlier firm did not have occasion to experiment. Beelman's buildings from this period are well known and recognized in local surveys and National Register listings.

The next group of tall office buildings Beelman designed date to the mid-1950s. These buildings are the same size as the others, as all buildings were still built to the height limit of 150 feet in this period. The two strongest buildings from this period are two of the best examples of Corporate Moderne style architecture in Los Angeles, showing the significant contribution Claud Beelman made to this style. These two buildings, the Superior Oil Co. Building and the Harbor Building, are very similar to each other in style, details, size, and level of integrity. They represent Beelman's best work during the period, a significant contribution to the style and type of building during that period.

The population of Beelman buildings currently numbers about twelve. While this is a small number of buildings, most of them are large office buildings that are prominent in the Los Angeles cityscape, most of them downtown. As discussed above, the most significant buildings are divisible into two eras, those buildings constructed before World War II around 1930, and those in the mid to late 1950s. Of this latter group, two stand out as excellent examples of the themes Beelman developed in his earlier work, the Superior Oil Co. Building and the Harbor Building. Most of Beelman's buildings from the earlier period are already recognized with National Register listing or identification of their eligibility in a survey. Among the later buildings, only Superior Oil has been determined eligible for the National Register, and the Harbor Building, given that it is in many ways comparable to Superior Oil, also appears eligible. The building is not simply a late work; it makes a recognizable contribution to the 1945-1957 pool of office buildings documented in the attachment to this nomination, and establishes that Beelman's career and his designs continued to be a meaningful part of the evolving architectural scene of Los Angeles in the post-World War II period.

The extraordinary attention to detail evident in his Art Deco towers is clearly present in the Superior Oil Building (as well as at the Harbor Building). In contrast, buildings such as the Wilshire State Bank and the 1960 Bank of California building do not contain the significant lobbies, high standards for materials, and skillful and straightforward (if standardized) facade organization that are characteristic of his best buildings. The Occidental Center Building in Westwood, like Superior Oil, is clad with white marble squares with gray veining. However, even a cursory comparison reveals that while the marble at the Superior Oil Building is carefully selected for an even, overall texture that integrates each panel of marble with the one next to it and with others throughout the facade, the veining of the marble panels on the Occidental Center appears randomly placed and allows each panel to be read separately because of the disjunctions in the rather pronounced veining. These panels appear too small to cover such a large building, whereas those at Superior Oil, which only 150 feet tall, appear in effective proportion to the height and width of the building (for more details, see Description, page 1). One could arguably conclude that Beelman personally did not take as active a role in the supervision of a building's design and construction in the last years of his life compared to the level of attention clearly lavished on the design of the Superior Oil Building.

Corporate Moderne Style Architecture in Los Angeles Office Buildings

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The Superior Oil Building is also eligible under Criterion C as an example of Corporate Moderne style architecture, a style which was common for tall office buildings in the period from 1945 through about 1960. The style has been described by author Paul Gleye as early as 1984 in his book on Los Angeles architecture, and has continued to be a subject of interest for the local preservation advocacy group, the Los Angeles Conservancy (in particular their "modern committee"), which has taken an active role in identifying these buildings and drawing attention to them. Office buildings constructed during the late 1940s through the 1960s in Downtown Los Angeles, along Wilshire Boulevard, and in much more limited numbers in areas such as Hollywood and, later, Century City, were designed in a style which has come to be known as "Corporate Moderne". The development of the style relied heavily on Art Deco and Streamline Moderne predecessors in Los Angeles, as well as on the development of orthodox Modernism elsewhere. The best examples of the style date to before 1957, when a city ordinance limited building height to 150 feet.

The style was first identified in a published, historical account by architectural historian Paul Gleye in the book he wrote in conjunction with the Los Angeles Conservancy in 1981. Gleye describes the origins of the style in the following passage:

The Second World War halted the construction of commercial as well as residential buildings, and the first postwar designs began to appear about 1948. During the hiatus in construction, the aesthetics of architecture had changed considerably. Late versions of the 30s Moderne style reappeared in buildings such as the Carnation Company (1948; Stiles O. Clements) . . . The Moderne was combined with the International Style in the Mirror Building at Second and Spring streets (1948; Rowland H. Crawford), with horizontal bands of windows set off against the accentuated vertical facade.

The late Moderne style which lasted from the mid-1940s until the late 1950s was descended from the Streamline, but the curve and the teardrop were replaced by sharp angularity, and the smooth stucco walls were often replaced with brick.⁶ The most readily identifiable facade element of this period is the beveled window. Like the crystal of a pocket watch, windows were outlined in a protruding, bezel-like flange, often in a contrasting material.

Further examination of buildings of the same style and context in Los Angeles (see Criteria Consideration G, below) reveals more physical characteristics they have in common. The defining characteristics of the style include the contrast of darker, reflective materials (e.g., glass, dark granite, or dark marble) with light-colored, non-reflective cladding materials on the facades (as opposed to the all-glass skins which later became popular); the appearance that the upper stories visually float over a darker and/or recessed ground floor; strongly defined vertical and horizontal lines; and essentially flat, undecorated surfaces on at least part of the exterior (sometimes seen as a contrast between fenestrated and unfenestrated elevations or masses); large, fixed windows grouped horizontally or vertically, and the use of either costly cladding materials or somehow innovative or novel cladding materials. Horizontal or vertical sunscreens are sometimes employed, as are protruding frames or "bezels" around key window openings or groups of windows.

⁶None of the high rises from this period have brick, though some have limited areas of flagstone at the entrance or base of the building, such as the Gershon-Scott Building (1952). These materials were more common for smaller buildings such as veterinary or doctors' offices, restaurants, or other small, freestanding commercial buildings.

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Gleye is correct in stating that the appearance of buildings in this style was related to earlier Moderne (both Zig-Zag Moderne and Streamline Moderne) buildings, and in fact two architects whose work is well-represented in the category were continuing their pre-war practices: Stiles O. Clements and Claud Beelman.

The style also relied on European precedents. While the architects practicing in a Corporate Moderne mode produced very different bodies of work than their high modern counterparts in Los Angeles, (many of whom, such as Richard Neutra, Rudolph Schindler, J.R. Davidson, and Raphael Soriano, were from Europe) these architects were at least familiar with some of the formal lessons of Modernism. They used new materials when possible, and used traditional materials such as marble in a plain, monolithic manner, allowing the natural veining to provide any surface ornamentation. Many of the buildings (notably Wurdeman and Becket's Prudential Building of 1949) have dynamic compositions made up of several block-like elements with differing styles of fenestration and cladding. Several others (including Superior Oil) are light in color and have a dark base so that they appear to be floating over the darker-colored ground floor.

Examples of the style are concentrated in downtown Los Angeles and the Wilshire Corridor. From the founding of the Pueblo of Los Angeles in 1781 through the 1920s, Los Angeles had a strongly centralized downtown. As larger commercial buildings were constructed during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the downtown area expanded south from the original pueblo, eventually forming an active and important commercial street along Broadway. The Broadway corridor and parallel Spring Street corridor were the chief retail/entertainment and business/banking areas of the city, respectively (today both are National Register-listed Historic Districts). Other developed routes or centers throughout the city were clearly secondary, neighborhood-oriented commercial areas.

In the late 1920s, however, Wilshire Boulevard began to be developed with large apartment buildings, department stores, hotels, restaurants, and office buildings. These buildings replaced the mansions that lined Wilshire and pushed westward into previously undeveloped land, with the district called "Miracle Mile" stretching to Fairfax Avenue by 1940. As this corridor developed after World War II, it became the second major concentration of Corporate International Style and Corporate Moderne buildings, with a larger number than downtown because more development took place along Wilshire during this period than downtown.

In 1957 after the height limit was lifted, it became less likely for surface decoration and materials to be a significant part of the exterior finishing of a high-rise building. This is another characteristic that separates the Corporate Moderne buildings from those later examples. The Superior Oil Company Building would probably not have been finished in the manner it was in an age where buildings were so tall and isolated that their cladding could not be seen from surrounding streets. Gleye identified one of the next trends in tall office buildings as one in which the structure of the building would be expressed on the exterior. Many buildings from 1958-1970 have this characteristic; none in the pre-1957 group surveyed do. For a chart of the Corporate Moderne style buildings identified in the survey conducted to define this context, please see attachment to this nomination. These properties portray the same values and associations as the subject property.

The body of scholarship on this era in American architectural history and preservation has continued to grow, and has been promoted by the National Park Service. The National Park Service has sponsored two conferences, in 1995 and 2000, to promote the understanding and preservation of these resources.

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The Superior Oil Building as an Example of the Corporate Moderne Style

The Superior Oil Company Building clearly fits into the body of Corporate Moderne style tall office buildings in Los Angeles. As noted by Paul Gleye, there are two strains within this group, connected at least in part to the fact that many of the architects were from two generations: those who had been active before World War II (Stiles O. Clements, Roland Crawford, and Claud Beelman), and others who were part of a new generation of architects whose careers would extend into the 1960s and 1970s (Charles Luckman, William Pereira, and Welton Becket).

The building's exterior is characteristic of Corporate Moderne style buildings. One of the characteristics that is common to all the tall office buildings in this style is the way the building "floats" over a first floor that is recessed or clad in a very dark material. This is true of the Superior Oil Building, which is clad in black granite with a glossy finish at the ground level. The ground level originally had very few openings; this characteristic remains on the Flower Street elevation and on the side and rear of the building; it is somewhat changed by the addition of a bank of full-length windows on a portion of the Sixth Street side, but it only minimally interferes with this effect. This ground-level "base" is also slightly recessed to enhance the "floating" effect.

The ground-level base of the building also contains another important characteristic identified by Paul Gleye: it contains a series of beveled openings, in which horizontal plate glass windows are framed by a protruding stainless steel frame. The stainless steel provides a contrast to the black granite as well ("... often in a contrasting material"). These types of windows are present on the east parking lot elevation and the main, Flower Street (west) elevation.

The contrasting materials and the strongly defined vertical or horizontal lines seen in all of the buildings of this type and style are also present in the Superior Oil Building. The exterior is defined, in large measure, by the vertical striation of the entire facade above the ground story, and this feature is probably that by which the building is most often recognized. The exterior is organized into vertical lines of light, non-reflective white marble with a soft finish (defining the structural piers) and darker, vertical lines of glass (single-pane, green-tinted windows) and stainless steel (the decoration of the latter providing further vertical emphasis) with a harder, more reflective finish.

The building contains many traditional materials such as marble, terrazzo, and metal, which were used widely in the 1950s, but the design of the building also relies on some more novel materials. The large, green expanses of pale green glass that make up the windows throughout the building, still in place, are a glass called "Solex," clearly named for the solar protection properties of its tint, and the lobby has a dropped ceiling of Plexiglas, which had first been produced in 1931 and was just coming into wider architectural use.

The colors of the exterior and interior of the building are characteristic of Corporate Moderne style architecture. The black marble, granite, and terrazzo, the white and gray marble, the stainless steel of the exterior and nickel silver of the interior, and the white Plexiglas of the interior form a subdued color palette that is appropriate to an era in which every executive wore a white shirt daily. Beelman's sensitivity to the use of color is clear; it is impossible to imagine a 1930 building by him in these colors, as it is impossible to imagine any of his 1950s buildings clad in the bright colors of the Eastern Columbia Building, which was designed for a retail use, not a business use. Beelman would keep this palette of gray, black, white, and silver for most of his post-1955 buildings, though he would sometimes revert to bright colors in

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addition to these, as in the lobby of the Harbor Building which contains colored marbles within the same monochromatic palette seen in the main lobby of the Superior Oil Building.

The Superior Oil Building and others downtown were not located along in a horizontal, strip environment. However, the Superior Oil Building also makes use of many of these same principles. The building is meant to be seen in three dimensions, and uses the same materials and decoration on each side, above the first floor. The particular characteristics of the site allowed for this three-dimensionality: the building was located on a corner and faced its own parking lot to the east and a lower-scale historic building to the north.

Details of the lobby express the connection between the building and the Superior Oil Company, some directly and some indirectly. The door handles seen on the glass lobby doors on Flower Street and the glass telephone booth doors are an abstract "S" for Superior. The frieze showing the various stages of oil production (see architectural description) clearly refers to the business of the owners, who were of course also the most important tenant. Other, smaller oil companies had offices in the building as well. The elements such as the still-extant "world clock," showing a digital display of the time in fifteen cities worldwide, and the large globe which was planned for the north end of the lobby (not extant),⁷ were meant to give the building an air of modern, international commerce and connect the tenants and visitors with business around the world. Los Angeles itself was clearly no longer a provincial west coast city but rather an international center of business and culture. The economic transformation which had begun in the 1920s, partly through the exports of Southern California's oil companies, was a major factor in this expanded world view.

Conclusion

The Superior Oil Company Building has become an increasingly recognized feature of downtown Los Angeles. It has been informally noted by architects and historians for its architectural interest for several years, and is now included in the Los Angeles Conservancy's respected walking tours program. The building has been recognized by the local government with its designation as a Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument in 2000.

The Superior Oil Building represents one of Claud Beelman's most important architectural contributions to the City of Los Angeles as a significant Corporate Moderne style building. The perspective of the next five years is unlikely to represent a significant change in our perspective that would cause the building to appear any less significant. The building can clearly be favorably compared with others in its context which are already over fifty years old with no discernible difference in the criteria used to evaluate them. The fifty year limit, in this particular case, does not in any way draw a meaningful line through the population of comparable buildings.

⁷The globe is visible in the original set of drawings from Beelman's office, but there is no anecdotal or photographic evidence that it was ever executed and placed in the space.

⁸The Capitol Records Building has been determined eligible for the National Register through Section 106 Review.

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The Superior Oil Building is clearly among the strongest buildings in each of the contexts discussed above, and as such it is eligible for the National Register. As a work of Claud Beelman, it stands with only the Harbor Building as an example of the direction that this important practitioner's work took after World War II. The quality of the building, with its solid construction and fine materials, is comparable with the quality of Beelman's work in other, earlier styles around 1930. The building is also an excellent example of Corporate Moderne style architecture, exhibiting all of the character-defining features of the style. Within the population of buildings in this style, it is among the last built to the 150-foot height limit, one of the strongest designs of that period, and is also a well-preserved example where many are rapidly being torn down or completely altered.

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Wurdeman and Becket, building plans, elevations, sections, and details for the Superior Oil Building, 1955 and 1957 (tenant improvements).

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Geographical Data

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Verbal Boundary Description

The property is bounded by South Flower Street on the west, West 6th Street on the south, the alley of the neighboring property on the north, and Hope Street on the east.

Verbal Boundary Justification

These are the current and historic boundaries of the property.

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Additional Documentation

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Additional Documentation: Photographs

Name: Superior Oil Company Building

Location: 550 South Flower Street
Los Angeles

Los Angeles County, California

Photographer: Jennifer Minasian, Historic Resources Group

Date of Photographs: July, 2002

Location of Negatives: Historic Resources Group
1728 Whitley Avenue
Los Angeles CA 90028

1. East façade of building and context, view northwest from southwest corner of 6th and Hope Streets.
2. West façade, view southwest from across Flower Street.
3. South façade, view northeast from southwest corner of Flower and 6th Streets.
4. North and west facades, view southwest from across Flower Street.
5. West façade, original main entrance, view east from across Flower Street.
6. East façade, new main entrance, view west from adjacent parking lot.
7. East façade, patio, view north.
8. West façade, street-level view of main entrance, view southwest from sidewalk.
9. West façade, detail of the exterior cladding and new operable windows.
10. South façade, street-level view of south façade (1964 entrance removed), view northeast from sidewalk.
11. Roof, view southwest of former mechanical tower, non-original openings.
12. Roof, north façade of mechanical tower, view west from northwest corner of roof.
13. Roof, center of north façade of mechanical tower, original elevator and stair exits and canopy; new glass door at left.
14. Roof, non-original pool deck on the south side of the mechanical tower, view northwest from southeast corner of roof.
15. Interior, subbasement, north corridor, view east from near northwest corner of the floor.

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16. Interior, basement, view southwest from north part of floor.
17. Interior, original entrance and lobby, view northwest from south side of lobby.
18. Interior, original lobby and elevator bank on east wall, view northeast from south side of lobby.
19. Interior, original lobby, view south from north side of lobby.
20. Exterior, original entrance, detail of original entrance doors and hardware.
21. Interior, original lobby, curving metal wall at north end of lobby, view east from northwest corner of lobby.
22. Interior, original lobby, telephone booths with glass doors, view northeast from northwest corner of lobby.
23. Interior, original lobby, elevator door and "world clock", view east from west side of lobby.
24. Interior, original lobby, "world clock" north of elevator bank, view east.
25. Interior, original lobby, frieze of scenes of oil production, south section.
26. Interior, original lobby, frieze of scenes of oil production, center section.
27. Interior, original lobby, frieze of scenes of oil production, north section.
28. Interior, non-historic 1964 lobby (remodeled in 2002), now entrance lobby, view west from northeast corner of lobby.
29. Interior, hotel front desk in a non-historic space (remodeled in 2002), view west from current main entrance lobby.
30. Interior, historic elevator lobby typical of upper floors, view southeast from north end of lobby on 10th floor.
31. Interior, historic elevator lobby typical of upper floors, view northeast from north end of lobby on 8th floor.
32. Interior, detail of marble paneling, elevator door, and crown molding original to east wall of historic elevator lobbies on upper floors.
33. Interior, atypical elevator lobby (historic travertine), view southeast from north end of lobby on 5th floor.
34. Interior, atypical elevator lobby (non-historic wood paneling), view southeast from north end of lobby on 12th floor.
35. Interior, typical corridor, view east of south corridor on 4th floor from junction of east and south corridors.
36. Interior, typical corridor, view east of north corridor on 7th floor from junction of east and north corridors.
37. Interior, typical room on east side of floors 8 – 12, view east from west end of Room 814.
38. Interior, view east of Room 809 in northeast corner of building.
39. Interior, view northwest of Room 603 in northwest corner of building.

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550 South Flower Street
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ATTACHMENT

Establishing Context Among Post-World War II Office Buildings in Los Angeles

In order to determine and evaluate the population of comparable buildings for this nomination, Historic Resources Group completed a survey of tall office buildings constructed between 1945 and 1970. As noted above, the development of the Los Angeles basin in the 1950s was characterized by the rise of nodes and strips of commercial development outside of downtown, such as Hollywood and Wilshire Boulevard. Because of this pattern, HRG surveyed downtown Los Angeles as well as the length of Wilshire Boulevard from downtown to the Miracle Mile, as well as Hollywood's Vine Street corridor.

This was most likely the first actual survey of older Modernist high rise office buildings to be conducted in Los Angeles. The chronological boundaries of the survey were 1945, the end of World War II, through 1970. All buildings from this period with a height of 6 stories or more were noted as to their height, integrity, and condition, and were photographed. Research to determine the architect and the date of construction was later completed as well.

Upon completion of this blanket survey of about four dozen buildings, HRG narrowed down the population of buildings to create the appropriate context in which to evaluate the subject property. As a result of this exercise, HRG has identified a group of nine buildings which represent the population of high-rise office buildings from the period 1945 to 1957 which appear now to be, or may in the future become, eligible for the National Register. These nine appeared to be the most important representations of that context when National Register criteria (in this case, Criterion C) were applied. These were buildings that fit the specific criteria: were good examples of the style, were constructed between 1945 and 1957, and had high exterior integrity. The population of buildings that met these criteria is very limited. Although the population of 1945-1957 high rises was originally much larger, many have been completely altered. This includes three buildings designed by architect Victor Gruen (a national figure in urban planning in the 1950s and 1960s) for the developer Robert Tischman, which have been stripped of their original exterior skin and remodeled. The buildings downtown, on the other hand, are more often subject to demolition in favor of more intensive development; this is because of their modest size and their location in the part of downtown that had just begun to grow after World War II and continues to be a site of new development.

The following determinants, described below, were used to define the context for the comparison with related properties: location, date of construction, physical characteristics, and architects.

Location

The buildings chosen are located in downtown Los Angeles, the Wilshire Corridor, and Hollywood. These locations were chosen because they represent the only concentrations of high rise buildings in central Los Angeles, and also because they were the areas of the city in which the largest amount of building activity took place in the post-war period. Wilshire and Hollywood in particular were becoming centers of new industries (such as the recording industry and insurance) in Los Angeles. Companies in older industries (such as oil and newspapers) that experienced growth during this period built new headquarters in downtown Los Angeles.

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Date of Construction

The buildings below were designed and constructed during the time period of 1945 to 1957. These dates were chosen because they represent the period between the end of World War II, when major commercial (non-military-industrial) building projects recommenced after an essential halt during the war, and the lifting of the building height limit in Los Angeles in 1957. After 1957, the much taller buildings which were immediately built had a different architectural character. They are clearly related in height, surface design, orientation, etc., to buildings constructed in the period after 1960 through the 1980s, with large amounts of glass and different tint colors than were popular earlier (browns as opposed to blues and greens). Although the period spans the time before and after the fifty-year mark at this writing, there is no apparent meaningful reason to divide the group of buildings on that basis.

Physical Characteristics:

The design of all the buildings in the group can be described as Late Moderne or Corporate International Style. These were the only chosen styles for high rise commercial buildings in Los Angeles during the time period selected. Their defining characteristics include the contrast of reflective cladding materials with light-colored, non-reflective cladding materials (as opposed to the all-glass skins which later became popular); the appearance that the upper stories visually float over a darker and/or recessed ground floor; strongly defined vertical and horizontal lines; and essentially flat, undecorated surfaces on at least part of the exterior (sometimes seen as a contrast between fenestrated and unfenestrated elevations or masses). These characteristics accurately describe all of the buildings in the population, with the minor exception that two of the buildings have ground floor retail and one has slightly darker non-reflective cladding material.

Naturally, not every building constructed after 1957 the height limit was lifted exceeded 150 feet. However, the *largest* and most significant office buildings in the city could be no higher than 150 feet prior to 1957, and the largest and most significant office buildings in the city *after* that point were very likely to take advantage of the new allowance.

Architects:

The leading architects in commercial high-rise design during the period were evident from the buildings identified; all were the work of Rowland H. Crawford, Wurdeman and Becket, Luckman and Pereira, and Claud Beelman.

The most traditional Moderne building in the group, the Times Mirror Building, was designed by Rowland H. Crawford. The population contained four buildings by Wurdeman and Becket or their successor firm, Welton Becket and Associates. These two firms were acknowledged leaders in their time, and their work has continued to gain further recognition from a historical perspective as many of their buildings are recognized icons in the city. Claud Beelman was identified as the architect of two of the nine buildings. Luckman and Pereira, architects of several buildings on Wilshire, were also responsible for many of the large number of 1960s buildings in the business district of Beverly Hills. William Pereira was also the master planner for the development of the Irvine Ranch and the University of California at Irvine.

All of the buildings in the group "reflect the same significance or historic associations" and represent the context in question, that of Corporate Moderne style tall office buildings in Los Angeles. Of the nine buildings identified, the Superior Oil Building, the General Petroleum Building, the Capitol Records Building, the Times Mirror Building, and the Harbor Building are significant for the strength of their design within the definition of the style in the National Register

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documentation to which this is attached, and should be considered eligible for the National Register at this time.⁹ Parker Center, the Unocal Building, and the Gershon-Scott Building may become eligible for the National Register in the future, provided their historic integrity remains intact; it appears to be too soon to effectively evaluate these buildings, and their significance will depend on the surviving population of such buildings in the future. The remaining building, the Prudential Insurance Building, is an important landmark in the design of office buildings in Los Angeles but lacks integrity of design and materials due to alterations and may not become eligible for the National Register (however, it may prove to be significant under local or California Register criteria as an important example of the architectural development of office buildings on Wilshire Boulevard).

Other Factors that Support this Grouping of Buildings as a Definable Historic Context:

Research in primary source materials show that at the time these buildings were constructed, they were considered to be an identifiable, new generation of buildings within the cityscape of Los Angeles. They featured images of several buildings the firms had supplied or been involved in, and these images further support the picture of a distinct grouping of buildings, the construction of which was noted by the public and the press. These buildings signified the end of the World War II slowdown and the resurgence of the region and its building industry.

The industries and types of companies for whom these buildings were constructed further helps to define them as a coherent group. After World War II, Los Angeles emerged as a major center of business activity due to the population and economic growth that defense industries had brought there. The industries represented by these buildings include oil and petroleum production, insurance, and, for slightly smaller buildings, savings and loans. Some of these industries or companies were based in Southern California, such as oil, and others were tied to the population growth of the region and relocation of companies to serve that new population, such as insurance. Savings and Loan companies also grew nationwide after World War II, providing access to homeownership; housing construction was, of course, also one of the major industries in Southern California during the late 1940s and 1950s. Many of the buildings in this context, including the Superior Oil Building, are connected by these associations.

⁹The Capitol Records Building has been determined eligible for the National Register through Section 106 Review.

Tall Office Buildings, 1945-1957, which appear eligible or may become eligible for the National Register of Historic Places

NAME	DATE	HEIGHT	ARCHITECTS	EXTERIOR INTEGRITY	PHOTOGRAPH
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Downtown

General Petroleum 1947-1949 13 Wurdeman and Becket High



Times Mirror Bldg. 1948 11 Rowland H. Crawford High



NAME	DATE	HEIGHT	ARCHITECTS	EXTERIOR INTEGRITY	PHOTOGRAPH
Superior Oil	1955	12	Claud Beelman	High	
Parker Center	1955	8	Wurdeman and Becket	High	
Unocal Building	1958	13*	Luckman & Pereira	Good-High	

SUPERIOR OIL COMPANY BUILDING
Tax Credit Certification Application Part 1

NAME	DATE	HEIGHT	ARCHITECTS	EXTERIOR INTEGRITY	PHOTOGRAPH
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Wilshire Boulevard

Prudential Insurance 1948 9+ Wurdeman and Becket Fair



Gershon-Scott Building 1957 11 Stiles O. Clements High



SUPERIOR OIL COMPANY BUILDING

Tax Credit Certification Application Part 1

NAME	DATE	HEIGHT	ARCHITECTS	EXTERIOR INTEGRITY	PHOTOGRAPH
Harbor Building	c. 1957	6 + central tower	Claude Beelman	High	

Hollywood

Capitol Records	1954	13*	Welton Becket and Assoc.	High	
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* built to the Los Angeles height limit of 150 feet which was in place until 1957-1958.

SUPERIOR OIL COMPANY BUILDING

Tax Credit Certification Application Part 1

NAME	DATE	HEIGHT	ARCHITECTS	EXTERIOR INTEGRITY	PHOTOGRAPH
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Heavily altered buildings which would otherwise be in the above population:

NAME	DATE	HEIGHT	ARCHITECTS	HISTORIC	CURRENT APPEARANCE
Signal Oil Co.	1958	17	Pereira & Luckman		
Tishman Building	c. 1958	13*	Victor Gruen & Assoc.		
Tishman Building	1957	13*	Victor Gruen & Assoc.		
Tishman Building	1959	22	Victor Gruen & Assoc.		
Standard Federal Sav.	1954, enlarged in 1957		Welton Becket & Assoc.		

SUPERIOR OIL COMPANY BUILDING

Tax Credit Certification Application Part 1

Table 1: EXTANT 1945-1970 TALL OFFICE BUILDINGS IN DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES
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ADDRESS	NAME OF BUILDING	DATE	HEIGHT (in stories)	ARCHITECT	ALTERATIONS	Potentially significant?
550 S. Flower Street	Superior Oil Company Building	1955	13	Claud Beelman	1964; Claud Beelman	yes
612 S. Flower Street	General Petroleum Building	1947-1949	13	Wurdeman and Becket	High exterior integrity	yes
200 S. Spring Street	Mirror Building	1948	11	Rowland H. Crawford	High exterior integrity	yes
111 N. First Street	City Hall South	1953	8	Lunden, Hayward & O'Connor		?
150 N. Los Angeles Street	Parker Center (Los Angeles Police Dept. Headquarters)	1955	8	Wurdeman and Becket	High exterior integrity	yes
1201 W. Fifth Street	Unocal	1958	13	William Periera and Associates	High exterior/lobby integrity	yes
1010 Wilshire Boulevard	Signal Oil Company	1958	17	Periera & Luckman	Remodeled in 1973 by Craig Ellwood Associates	no
606 S. Hill Street	Western Jewelry Mart	c. 1958	12	W. G. Knoebel		no
420 S. Grand Avenue	Pacific Bell Building	1959	8	Woodford and Barnard	High exterior integrity; microwave tower, added later, also potentially significant	yes
811 Wilshire Boulevard	Tishman Building	1959	22	Victor Gruen and Associates	Exterior remodeled in 1980s	no
600 S. Spring Street	Bank of California Building	1960	17	Claud Beelman	Not a good example of Beelman's work	no

Table 1: EXTANT 1945-1970 TALL OFFICE BUILDINGS IN DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES

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ADDRESS	NAME OF BUILDING	DATE	HEIGHT (in stories)	ARCHITECT	ALTERATIONS	Potentially significant?
320 West Temple Street	Hall of Records	1961	9	Richard Neutra and Robert Alexander	High integrity	yes
Hope Street	Departement of Water & Power	1964	?	A.C. Martin & Associates	High integrity	yes
624 S. Grand Avenue	One Wilshire	1964	(over 20)	Skidmore Owings & Merrill		?
1150 S. Olive Street	Occidental Center (Transamerica)	1965	30	William Pereira, Gin Wong		yes
611 Sixth Street	ATT Center	1967	?	William Pereira		?
611 Wilshire Boulevard	?	1954-1957	13	Welton Becket & Assoc.	Exterior remodeled in 1990s	no
445 S. Figueroa Street	Union Bank Building	1968	40	A.C. Martin & Associates		no

Table 2: EXTANT 1945-1970 TALL OFFICE BUILDINGS IN THE WILSHIRE CORRIDOR

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ADDRESS	NAME OF BUILDING	DATE	HEIGHT (in stories)	ARCHITECT	ALTERATIONS	Potentially significant?
(no #1)						
2010 Wilshire	Wilshire Medical Prop., Inc.	1950	10	Earl Heitschmidt		no
2404 Wilshire	American Cement Company	1961	13	DMJM		yes
2500 Wilshire		1968				no
2600 Wilshire	Western & Southern Life	c. 1954	7	Austin, Field and Frey		yes
2975 Wilshire	Continental Companies Building		7	Langdon & Wilson (?)		no
3200 Wilshire	Wilshire State Bank	1959	18	Claud Beelman	not a good example	no
3245 Wilshire	Pioneer Savings and Loan	1956	5	Bank Building Corporation	not a good example	no
3255 Wilshire	Wilshire Center					?
3325 Wilshire	Tischman Building	1957	13	Victor Gruen & Associates	exterior significantly remodeled	no
3350 Wilshire	Albion Pacific	c. 1959	12			?
3422 Wilshire	IBM	1957	13	Pereira & Luckman		?
3450 Wilshire	Pacific Indemnity	1952	12	Welton Becket Associates	not a good example	no
3540 Wilshire	Tishman Building	1957		Victor Gruen & Associates	exterior significantly remodeled	no
3600 Wilshire	Travelers Insurance Company	1960	22	Welton Becket & Associates		?

Table 2: EXTANT 1945-1970 TALL OFFICE BUILDINGS IN THE WILSHIRE CORRIDOR
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ADDRESS	NAME OF BUILDING	DATE	HEIGHT (in stories)	ARCHITECT	ALTERATIONS	Potentially significant?
3670 Wilshire	Transport Indemnity Insurance	1952	5	Stiles O. Clements		?
3700 Wilshire	Beneficial Plaza	1967		Skidmore, Owings & Merrill		
3933 Wilshire	Southern Federal Savings & Loan	c. 1956	6			no
4050 Wilshire	Inapeg Building	1960	9	Charles Luckman & Associates	currently threatened with demolition	?
4055 Wilshire	Unity Mutual	1956	5	Stiles O. Clements		?
4201 Wilshire	Harbor Building	c. 1956	6	Claud Beelman	exterior and lobby intact	yes
5045 Wilshire	Carnation Building	1948	9	Stiles O. Clements	exterior and interior significantly remodeled	no
5455 Wilshire	Lee Tower	1959	22	Douglas Lee & Everett Lee		no
5757 Wilshire	Prudential	1948	10	Wurdeman & Becket	Exterior integrity compromised; windows replaced, lobby spaces altered	yes/?
6399 Wilshire	Gershon-Scott Corp. Building	1950	11	Stiles O. Clements	good exterior integrity	yes
10889 Wilshire	Occidental Petroleum	1961		Claud Beelman	(located in Westwood district)	?