

(REDACTED)

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

(REDACTED)

(REDACTED)



**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Singer Building

and/or common Singer Building

2. Location

street & number 16 South Oakland Avenue ; 520 East Colorado Blvd.
n/a not for publication

city, town Pasadena n/a vicinity of congressional district 22

state California 91101 code 06 county Los Angeles code 037

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
district	public	XX occupied	agriculture	museum
XX building(s)	XX private	unoccupied	XX commercial	park
structure	both	work in progress	educational	private residence
site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	entertainment	religious
object	in process	XX yes: restricted	government	scientific
	being considered	yes: unrestricted	industrial	transportation
	XX n/a	no	military	other:

4. Owner of Property

name Gustav C. and Lota C. Hilbert

street & number 918 E. Balboa Blvd.

city, town Balboa N/A vicinity of state California 92661

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Office of the Assessor, County of Los Angeles

street & number 300 East Walnut Street

city, town Pasadena state California 91101

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Pasadena Architectural and Historical
title Inventory

has this property been determined eligible? yes x no

date 1980 federal state county xx local

depository for survey records Urban Conservation Program, City of Pasadena
100 North Garfield

city, town Pasadena state California 91109

7. Description

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

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Located at the southeast corner of Colorado Boulevard and Oakland Avenue, the Singer Building is a two story commercial structure in the Churrigueresque-influenced Spanish Colonial Revival style. It is built of concrete with brick exterior walls and is capped by a hipped and gabled red tile roof. Ornamental ironwork, cast stone, terra cotta tile flooring, glazed tile, and interior oak trim are integrated into the decorative scheme. Although it appears to be rectangular in plan, the Singer Building is L-shaped, with a small service court opening onto Converse Alley in the rear (south). The short leg of the "L" faces Colorado and contains one double sized bay, while eight bays are located along Oakland. A three-sided corner bay, crowned by a flattened tower, anchors the composition. Brick piers on moded stone plinths separate the bays. Cast stone finials top each pier, punctuating the scalloped line of the corbeled parapet which dips over each bay. Alterations have not been substantial.

The corner bay is distinguished by its decorative scheme and contains the entry to the principal street level store, originally the Singer Sewing Machine Showroom. A broad, stone frieze in a tile-like pattern bands the bay above the second story, interrupted over the corner by a sign on a re-surfaced panel. Accenting the frieze, the upper portions of the piers are embellished with moldings and carved panels so that they form pedestals for the finials above them. In the center, or corner, portion of the bay, the second story contains a full length window with an iron balconet. Below it, the showroom is entered through a one story, glazed, three-sided projection which is framed by attenuated cast iron columns. A narrow iron frieze finished with intricately patterned cresting surmounts the entry, in which an aluminum-framed door replaces the original. To either side of the center section in the corner bay, large display windows appear in the lower story, accented on the Oakland elevation by cast iron columns. Friezes above the windows have been re-surfaced and are used for signage. Above an ornamental iron molding the second story is identical to those of the remaining bays on each facade. Centered in the wall plane, a deeply recessed opening is filled with a double, multi-paneled, casement window, divided by an engaged colonnette of spiralled wood. Wood shutters are in the window, and delicate iron scrolls, intended to support awnings, are attached to the wall at either side of the window.

The Oakland (west) elevation consists of three bays to the north of a slightly smaller bay, which contains the entrance to the second story offices, and four bays to the south. Churrigueresque-inspired detailing, partically repeating the design of the ornate corner bay, appears in the entry bay. Surrounded by a series of ornate stone moldings, embellished reveals, and a lintel panel deeply carved in a curvilinear pattern of urns and shields, the wood-framed doorway is glazed, flanked by sidelights, and topped by a transom. Large lanterns on scrolled metal brackets illuminate the entrance. A molded hood, edged with decorative course which repeats the design of the lintel, separates the ground level from the second story. Faced in a diamond pattern of raised bricks, the upper level is pierced by a single, narrow window. An arched grill of lacy ironwork screens the opening and overlaps the stone frieze. The frieze, which echoes the design of the corner bay, is spanned on its upper edge by a carved stone molding which restates the lintel motif. The lower story of the bays north of the Oakland entrance face onto the principal showrooms and contain

8. Significance

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

Specific dates 1926

Builder/Architect Everett Phipps Babcock

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Singer Building is architecturally significant as "a good, as yet unspoiled example of Spanish Colonial Revival commercial work."¹ Its style, quality, scale, and location capture the essence of the historic character of Pasadena's symbolic and actual main street, Colorado Boulevard, during its heyday in the 1920s. Built in 1926, the Singer Building was designed by Everett Phipps Babcock, a New York native who had practiced architecture in the northwest before coming to Pasadena in 1923. Less than a dozen buildings in the Pasadena region are known to be by Babcock, who died while undergoing a minor operation in 1928. This is his only known non-residential commission. He specialized in the Spanish Colonial Revival style, having had the opportunity to learn from a master of the idiom, Wallace Neff, in whose office Babcock worked for about a year.² The Singer Building is Babcock's only known non-residential commission.

The Spanish Colonial Revival received its impetus for the Bertram Goodhue and Carlton Winslow designs for the Panama California Exposition held in San Diego in 1915. Their work had a Churrigueresque, or Mexican Baroque, flavor, characterized by intense ornamentation concentrated within defined fields, often around portals and windows. The Singer Building represents the adaptation of the opulence of this style to a small scale commercial work, though losing none of the quality in the translation. Expensive materials and fine workmanship resulted in a cost of \$105,000 at the time of its construction.

Pasadena was particularly distinguished by the excellence of its Spanish and related Mediterranean style architecture of the 1920s, and it is in this context that the importance of the Singer Building to Pasadena's architectural heritage can be appreciated. A Mediterranean theme unifies the buildings of the Civic Center (listed in the National Register) three blocks to the west. When West Colorado Boulevard was widened in 1929, many store owners took advantage of this opportunity to build new, often Spanish styled facades on their Victorian era buildings. Well-heeled

1. Gebhard and Winter

2. Interview with Claire Bogaard, Pasadena Heritage, 1982.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Harold N. Hubbard, "Singer Building Renovation Now in the Final Stages", Pasadena Star-News, October 4, 1981

"Handsome Building of Spanish Design Being Built for Nationally known Company on Colorado Street, Pasadena Star-News, May 29, 1926.
See continuation sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property .31

Quadrangle name Pasadena, California

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A	1 1	3 9 50 1 0	3 7 7 8 69 0
	Zone	Easting	Northing
C			
E			
G			

B	1 1	1 1 1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1 1 1
	Zone	Easting	Northing
D			
F			
H			

Verbal boundary description and justification

A rectangular lot beginning at the SE corner of East Colorado Boulevard and South Oakland Avenue go south 190' then east 70' turn north 190' then 70' west to point of origin. Building occupies its original lot. Map # 5734-36-12

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	N/A	code	county	N/A	code
state	code	county	code	state	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Leslie Heumann /Lorraine Melton

organization Pasadena Heritage

date July 1984

street & number 54 West Colorado Boulevard

telephone (818) 793-0617

city or town Pasadena

state California 91105

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature Macion Mitchell-Wilson

title Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer date 3/6/85

For HCRS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register
Entered in the
National Register

date

5-16-85

Jeanne L. DeLores
Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

Chief of Production

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places
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display windows punctuated by iron columns. Those to the south are individual glazed storefronts with recessed entries. Rosettes decorate the wood-framed doorways. A dado of blue, brown, white, and gold patterned tilework appears in each bay. Grills over the transoms are formed by ornate squares of ironwork and edged by a decorative course with a motif of griffins and urns. The second-story scheme of these bays repeats that of the side sections of the corner bay, minus the stone frieze.

Similar detailing was employed on the Colorado (north) elevation. Although the two storefronts in the street level of the double bay were remodeled in the 50s, the transoms removed and signs substituted, the second story remains intact. The corner bay (addressed 520 East Colorado) was originally intended to serve as the entrance to the Singer Sewing Machine Showroom. After Singer moved, this entrance continued to serve commercial businesses. Today, the entrance at 16 South Oakland is the main entrance to the second-story offices, just as was planned in 1926. The original building permit showed 16 South Oakland as the building address.

Facing the service alley on the south, the rear elevation is utilitarian in character. Four casement windows flanked by iron scroll brackets are in the second story, while a single, unembellished window is on the first. A series of grilled rear entrances open onto the service court, which occupies the southeast corner of the property.

A generous use of the decorative conventions of the Spanish Colonial Revival style distinguishes the interior spaces, notably the office building lobby. The Churriguereque theme of the exterior is re-stated by a carved wood interior door surround. Exposed wood beams provide a contrast to the light stucco walls and ceiling. Terra cotta paves the floor and staircase, accented by glazed tile risers. An iron railing complements the stairway design. Etched glass panes in the oak doorways, a stained glass window at the head of the stairs and working fans, while not original, are compatible with the historic character of the design.

Recently restored, the principal remaining alteration being the Colorado Street level frontage, the Singer Building occupies an important corner in the Central Business District. Drivers and pedestrians on Colorado Boulevard have witnessed the removal of intrusive metal awnings and the installation of more appropriate ones, the replacement of an aluminum doorway in the west entry with a wood one, and the refurbishment of the interior. The Singer Building contrasts dramatically with the seven story, modern-faced office building which abuts it on the east. Rather, it stands as a link between the remaining period revival buildings, built of brick and stone during the 20s, which still dot Colorado Boulevard and other streets in this vicinity.

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residents commissioned the finest architects to design Mediterranean homes and villas. At the same time, many specialty stores, some with offices on a second story, were built to cater to the same clientele. Modest in scale, pedestrian in orientation, these buildings exploited their picturesque appearance to create an atmosphere of intimacy and elegance in downtown Pasadena.

Accelerated re-development in the past ten years has resulted in the demolition of many of these structures and streetscapes. The Singer Building epitomizes the beauty and graciousness of this bygone era and is one of the handful of buildings of its kind which still stands to carry on the tradition. A sympathetic restoration has reinforced its continued viability, and a bookseller replaced the Singer Sewing Machine Company who occupied the principal showroom for over fifty years. The Singer Building, as an outstanding example of a small commercial building in the Spanish Colonial Revival style, is an integral piece of the historic fabric of downtown Pasadena. The building is currently unoccupied, and is in danger of downtown development. The Bank of America owns a large building next door to the Singer Building, making the Singer Building an attractive lot rather than the historically significant building which deserves recognition by being placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

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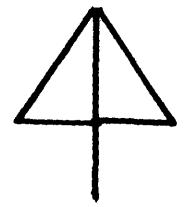
Continuation sheet

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David Gebhard and Robert Winter, A Guide to Architecture in Los Angeles and Southern California, Salt Lake City and Santa Barbara, Peregrine Smith, 1977.

The Singer Building
16 South Oakland Avenue
Pasadena, California



1" = 40'

Colorado Boulevard (East)

Oakland Avenue (South)

