



The City of Seattle

Landmarks Preservation Board

700 Third Avenue · 4th floor · Seattle, Washington 98104 · (206)684-0228

REPORT ON DESIGNATION

LPB 124/94

Name and Address of Property: Leamington Hotel and Apartments, 317 Marion Street

Legal Description: C.D. Boren's Addition, Block 4, Lots 2 and 3, except the easterly 9 feet.

At the public hearing held on June 15, 1994, the City of Seattle's Landmarks Preservation Board voted to approve designation of the Leamington Hotel and Apartments as a Seattle Landmark based upon satisfaction of the following standard for designation of SMC 25.12.350:

Standard D: *It embodies the distinctive visible characteristics of an architectural style, or period, or of a method of construction;*

Description

The Leamington Hotel and Apartments were built in 1915-16 as separate but conjoined properties with distinguishing features. The three-story apartment wing and four-story hotel wing are each L-shaped in plan and are joined to form a single U-shaped building enclosing a courtyard. Exterior walls are faced with red brick. The street facade of the hotel wing is enriched by a profusion of glazed terra cotta tiles, both flat and ornamental. The exterior of the apartment wing is more restrained, with decorative terra cotta concentrated at the two entrances on its north and east facades. Only the hotel wing contains a lobby that, although substantially altered, retains marble wainscoting, terrazzo floor and tiled fireplace. The interior arrangement is a standard double-loaded corridor, the west wing originally containing single hotel rooms with communal bathrooms and the east wing housing fully serviced apartments. Later alterations included the addition of private bathrooms for many of the hotel rooms and the updating of kitchens and bathrooms in the apartment wing. The ground-level space at the northwest corner of the building originally and for many decades functioned as a restaurant or cafe. While the interior has undergone some significant changes, the exterior of the building is remarkably well preserved. Its location in the central business district is also notable, with three historic properties in close proximity.

The combined hotel and apartment building is situated on the southwest corner of the intersection of Fourth Avenue and Marion street in downtown Seattle. Across Fourth Avenue is the 1904 Rainier Club (National Register and City of Seattle Landmark) and across Marion Street is the 1930 YMCA Building (City of Seattle Landmark). The 1906 Central Building occupies the western half of the block, separated from the Leamington by an alley. Adjacent blocks contain modern high-rises of 40 to 76 stories.

The Leamington has a U-shaped plan. The north or Marion Street facade forms the base of the U, its 111-foot length divided equally between the hotel and apartment sections. The east (apartment) wing extends 120 feet on Fourth Avenue, and the corresponding west (hotel) wing faces on the alley which bisects the block. The 35-foot wide courtyard formed by the U is oriented to the interior of the block.

The two wings share a uniform cornice height; however, because of the sharp downward slope of Marion Street from east to west, the basement of the three-story apartment wing rises partially above grade at its western end, and the basement of the four-story hotel wing also appears above grade at the furthest western corner. Both wings are supported on a poured concrete foundation. The structural system is reinforced concrete frame with infill walls of clay tile.

The separate functions of the two wings are clearly differentiated by their exterior appearance. The apartment wing, which occupies the corner and therefore presents two street facades, attains a certain elegance by the use of French window forms, wrought-iron railings at mock balconies, and cream-colored classically detailed terra cotta trim. The two entrances, one centered on the Marion Street facade and the other located near the southern end of the Fourth Avenue facade, are enhanced by wide frames of terra cotta blocks and surmounted by second-story windows given special treatment by the use of terra cotta quoins and balustrade. Two decorative terra cotta panels, depicting back-to-back cornucopiae in low relief, are set into the brickwork on either side of the entrances at the third floor level. Sills, lintels, keystones and coping of cream-colored glazed terra cotta contrast with the dark red brick of the wall surface. The basement level, which rises partially above grade as both streets slope downward from the corner, is also clad with terra cotta tile blocks.

The hotel wing to the west shares the same floor alignment and roof line. Its half of the Marion Street facade, however, is greatly enriched by the use of terra cotta quoins at the edges of each of its six piers, terra cotta spandrels incorporating applied cusped arches and quatrefoils, and an open balustrade at the cornice level surmounted by obelisk-shaped finials. The recessed entry, centered in the five-bay elevation, is enframed by additional ornamental glazed terra cotta tiles and a hanging keystone above the segmental-arched opening. The wall surfaces of the west or alley elevation of this wing, as well as those of the courtyard, are stucco covered.

Fenestration is regular throughout, although the two wings are differentiated by their window spacing and character. The apartment wing is distinguished by large tripartite windows consisting of a central double-hung unit of six-over-one lights flanked by narrow five-pane sidelights. Smaller double-hung windows occur in the bays flanking the two main entrances. All window units retain their original wood frames and sash. The street facade of the hotel wing is characterized by paired double-hung windows between the piers. The original wood frames and sash of four-over-one lights are still intact. At the alley and courtyard elevations, single window openings are regularly spaced. Wood-frame double-hung sash of one-over-one lights is common, although steel sash is used at the ground floor alley and in the end units of the courtyard. In addition, small mock balconies of wrought iron appear on the apartment wing of the courtyard elevation. The south end walls of each wing are blank.

The interior of both wings has been altered, although many significant features remain. The original Marion Street entry to the hotel has been replaced with aluminum-framed plate glass double doors. Early furnishings of the lobby have been removed. Remaining features include terrazzo flooring, marble wainscoting, marble treads and risers of the main stairway, and a fireplace front of brown glazed square tiles. Removal of a panel of the modern suspended ceiling revealed the absence of any original moldings or other details. The end wall of a short hallway west of the lobby contains a large art glass window, with the letter L appearing in a central floral design.

A second stairway descends from the lobby to the daylight basement space at the northwest corner of the building. This originally and for many decades functioned as a restaurant or cafe. In more recent times it has been used for offices and other purposes, and no significant features survive. The remainder of the basement contains restrooms, a boiler room and storage areas.

Upper floors of the hotel wing have a standard double-loaded corridor configuration. Originally, common bathrooms were located on each floor. In the 1960s some sleeping rooms were converted to two bathrooms accommodating the adjacent rooms. Much of the original millwork--simple door and window surrounds--is intact, although doors have been altered or replaced and all hardware has been replaced.

There is no lobby in the apartment wing. Small entryways at each entrance provide access to narrow stairways with marble treads and wood risers. The original wood railings of simple design are intact. Millwork in the apartment wing is somewhat more refined, and the two and three room apartments more spacious. The kitchens and bathrooms have been modernized and very little original fabric remains in these areas.

While alterations have affected the interiors of both wings, the exterior of the Leamington remains remarkably well preserved. Curiously, early advertisements for the hotel and apartments include engravings showing a uniform exterior, with the terra cotta enrichments of the hotel wing carried throughout the north and east facades of the apartment wing. However, an early historic photograph proves that the current appearance conforms to the original construction.

Statement of Significance

The Leamington Hotel and Apartments is a handsomely detailed and exceptionally well preserved example of an early twentieth century building type that has largely disappeared from Seattle's downtown core. It is locally unique in the manner in which the two functions are differentiated by the distinctive design of each wing of the building. The property is associated with a number of locally significant personages, but is particularly noteworthy for its architect, W.R.B. Willcox, who shaped both the teaching of architecture and its professional practice in the 1920s and 1930s, and its developer, Dr. Edward L. Smith, who nurtured the early development of the Congregational Church in the Northwest before embarking on international service for this denomination.

Historical Background and Significance

At the time the Leamington was constructed in 1915-16, Seattle was already well supplied with hotels, both large and small. During a period of rapid growth after the Great Fire of 1889, many hostleries were erected to accommodate both the carriage trade and the transient seamen, laborers and fortune seekers on their way to the Alaskan gold fields. The Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition of 1909 was a stimulus to further expansion of hotel room capacity. By 1910 Seattle boasted 475 hotels, reportedly providing more accommodations than any city of the same size in the country.

Many of these early establishments fell victim to fire or changing economic conditions. Some were demolished or moved as changing land use patterns affected the downtown and its periphery. Bad management or lack of clientele forced others into bankruptcy or compelled them to sell at a loss. The apartment hotel concept had arrived in Seattle at the turn of the century, and large well-appointed examples of this type were erected downtown and on First Hill. This East Coast phenomenon never really caught on, however, and the grand residential hotels struggled financially.

By the mid-'teens the idea of a small-scale establishment, combining both a transient hotel and apartments with hotel service, seemed a reasonable venture. If the transient population fluctuated, rental of the apartment units would compensate, and vice versa. An article in *The Hotel Monthly* of February 1915 quoted a local hotelier as confident that the number of travelers to Seattle would soon increase. The war in Europe was diverting tourists to other destinations, the California expositions would attract vacationers to the West Coast, and the lure of Alaska as a traveler's adventure would ensure a supply of passengers heading north.

The rationale for building a small-scale combined hotel and apartment seemed evident, but not the identity of the developer. Dr. Edward Lincoln Smith was for half a century one of the most influential Congregational clergymen of the Pacific Northwest. Upon his graduation from Yale Divinity School in 1890, he joined a group of five other graduates who were assigned to the Northwest states. Representing the Home Missionary Board of the Congregational denomination, the missionaries organized and ministered to parishes in Washington, Idaho and Oregon, and collectively came to be known as the "Yale Band."

After fulfilling initial assignments, Dr. Smith arrived in Seattle 1899. Under his guidance, a small Sunday school in the North Broadway district was developed and organized as the Pilgrim Congregational Church. Quickly outgrowing its early meeting places, the parish constructed a new church building in 1906, which is still standing. Dr. Smith's skills were valued and, in addition to his church work, he was active in civic affairs, serving eight terms on the Seattle School Board.- In 1912 he left for New York where he served as secretary of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. In this capacity he traveled abroad, visiting India, Japan and China, where he established a close association with Peking University. Returning to Seattle in 1921, he resumed the pastorate of Pilgrim Church, then pursued other pastoral work until his death in 1940.

It was during his tenure with the Board of Foreign Missions that Dr. Smith, working through the real estate agents West and Wheeler, purchased the site at Fourth and Marion and developed the Leamington Hotel and Apartments. As architects he chose Julian F. Everett, who had designed the 1906 Pilgrim Church, and W.R.B. Willcox, who had practiced locally since 1907. Willcox and his former partner, William Sayward, had designed a new heating plant for the Pilgrim Church, and in later years Willcox would design a residence for Dr. Smith in the fashionable Mt. Baker neighborhood. The structural engineer on the project was Henry Bittman, whose architectural and engineering firm produced several significant commercial buildings, particularly during the 1920s.

Of the two architects, Willcox is the more notable. His architectural work encompasses a variety of projects, including residences, commercial and institutional buildings, and such public works as the Arboretum Sewer Viaduct (National Register) and the Queen Anne Boulevard Retaining Walls (Seattle City Landmark). His most significant achievement, however, is the transformation of architectural education that he brought about at the University of Oregon while Head of the Department of Architecture from 1922 to 1947. Walter Ross Baumes Willcox (1869-1947) was a Vermont native who had only brief formal training in architecture. A smattering of courses at East Coast schools and apprenticeships at firms in Chicago and Boston preceded the inauguration of his practice in Burlington, Vermont, in 1894. He later formed a partnership with William J. Sayward, an M.I.T. graduate, and the two moved to Seattle in 1907. Their arrival coincided with an economic slump that produced few clients. Willcox busied himself by serving on the Municipal Planning Board, continuing his interest in social, economic and political reform, and developing the philosophical underpinnings of his architectural theories. Sayward left Seattle in 1912 and Willcox remained to practice alone until his departure for Eugene, Oregon, in 1922.

At Oregon Willcox abandoned the traditional system of training architects based on the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris. Eliminating the competitive device central to the Beaux-Arts method, he created an organic process-oriented approach influenced by the theories of Louis Sullivan. He refused to allow books in the drafting room and would not tolerate discussions of "style". The program that he developed at Oregon became a prototype and helped to reform architectural training. During the 1930s Columbia, Harvard and other universities reorganized their schools of architecture, many adopting Willcox's non-competitive system.

Little is known of the architect Julian F. Everett, although many of his works have achieved recognition. He is listed in Polk's Seattle City Directory from 1905 to 1922. During this

period he designed the above-mentioned Pilgrim Congregational Church, the Temple de Hirsch (National Register; recently demolished), Fire Station No. 23 (National Register), the Julius Redelsheimer House (National Register), and numerous other residences, hotels, and commercial buildings. He is mentioned in the September 21, 1912 issue of the *Town Crier* as the designer of "as many beautiful buildings as any architect in the Northwest," but one who does not advertise himself or his work.

Construction of the Leamington was completed in the Spring of 1916. The earliest alterations (May 1916) were requested by Charles Blanc, who opened Blanc's Cafe in the northwest corner of the above-grade basement of the hotel. In early print advertisements, mention of the cafe ("Where Epicureans Meet") was prominent. Charles Blanc, a French-born, classically-trained, widely-traveled chef, was well known to Seattle's discriminating diners. He had been Chef de Cuisine at the Rainier Club, the Rainier Grand Hotel and the New Washington Hotel among others. His own cafe at the Leamington became so popular that he soon outgrew the space, moving to extravagantly furnished quarters at the New Arctic (now Morrison) Hotel in 1920. He continued to operate Blanc's Petit Cafe at the Leamington, but when his new venture failed he moved across Marion Street, where Maison Blanc was a fixture of the local dining scene for many decades. No evidence of Blanc's occupancy at the Leamington survives.

The Leamington, which apparently was named for its original manager, J.K. Leaming, was renamed the Pennington under new management in 1918. By 1921 it was the Penbrook Hotel and Apartments and remained so until 1965 when the name changed to the Milner Highland and, later, simply the Milner. It has been known as the Pacific Hotel since 1981.

During the Second World War the United States government established a policy of leasing hotels in port cities to accommodate the vast numbers of merchant marine seamen serving the war effort. Hotels were, requisitioned in San Francisco, New Orleans, Baltimore, and other coastal cities, while a seamen's club was opened at the Hotel Wilshire in New York City. On May 4, 1943 the Seattle Port Area Committee of the United Seamen's Service announced that the Penbrook Hotel would be taken over and its permanent guests would be assisted in finding other accommodations.

After the war, the Penbrook continued to operate as both a transient hotel and an apartment house. In 1967, in order to compete with more modern establishments, the hotel wing was refitted to provide private bathrooms for many of the rooms. Kitchens and bathrooms in the apartment wing were upgraded. In the late 1980s the aging hotel was closed and the property has been vacant for the past three years.

The features of the Landmark to be preserved, include:

The entire exterior of the building, including the roof.

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