

Bellaire Tower
Name of Property

San Francisco, California
County and State

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u> </u>	buildings
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	sites
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	structures
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC: multiple dwelling

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC: multiple dwelling

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT: Art Deco

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Foundation: CONCRETE, Walls: STUCCO,
Roof: MEMBRANE

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

Bellaire Tower occupies a steeply sloped, rectangular parcel at the southwest corner of Green and Leavenworth Streets in San Francisco's Russian Hill neighborhood. The twenty-two-story, steel- and reinforced-concrete Art Deco residential tower was designed by Herman Baumann and completed in 1930. The building exhibits the tripartite massing characteristic of the style, with an ornate Churrigueresque-inspired double-height base, a simplified vertical shaft punctuated by bays and spandrel panels, and an embellished stepped-back capital crowned by a decorative parapet. Exterior walls are clad in painted stucco and typical windows are primarily metal casements and Chicago window types.¹ The northeast ground-floor corner features a richly detailed entry portico with arabesque arched portals, shielded cartouches, and a groin-vaulted ceiling. Bellaire Tower retains all aspects of historic integrity. Despite a series of sensitive in-

¹ A Chicago window is a three-part window design consisting of a large fixed central pane flanked by two narrow, operable sash windows. A hallmark of the Chicago School of architecture, this window type was popular in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries for maximizing natural light in early steel-frame skyscrapers.

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kind window replacements and minor rooftop alterations, the building continues to convey its original architectural character as the “Jewel” of Russian Hill.²

Narrative Description

Bellaire Tower is located on a sixty-foot by eighty-seven-foot rectangular parcel. The building’s rectangular footprint occupies nearly the full lot; concrete sidewalks span the base of its north and east elevations with driveways that provide access to its various garage doors on these sides. It features a flat roof behind an embellished parapet. There are stepped-back corners at the eighteenth and nineteenth floors, while the two uppermost stories, housing a mechanical penthouse, feature a smaller rectangular footprint setback on all sides.

The building does not have a single primary façade; rather, its two street-facing elevations (north and east) are treated with equal architectural prominence and ornamentation, while the west and south elevations, which face the interior of the block, are comparatively restrained in detailing. The Art Deco-style tower is clad in painted stucco and features a highly ornate double-height ground floor with a porticoed entrance in the Churrigueresque style on its northeast ground-floor corner. The tower’s slender form is generally arranged in a three-part massing, including a rusticated foundation and embellished double-height ground floor as the base, a simple shaft with bays divided by pilasters and floors divided by vertically oriented spandrel panels, and an ornate stepped-back capital featuring geometric floral motifs. The following description will use the base, shaft, and capital arrangement to describe the various sections of the building.

The north and south elevations exhibit four bays, while the east and west elevations exhibit twelve bays, all of which are generally symmetrical. Typical windows are metal-frame casement pairs topped with a divided-lite transom, metal-frame Chicago windows topped with a divided-lite transom, and metal-frame single divided-lite casement types.

Base

The parcel at 1101 Green Street occupies a steeply sloping site, with its highest point located at the northeast corner nearest the Green Street-Leavenworth Street intersection. As a result, the street-facing elevations prominently reveal the two basement/garage levels. The visible portion of these partially below-grade levels are treated with rustication, visually grounding the tower and distinguishing it from the smooth planar surfaces of the shaft above. The rusticated base on the north elevation features one wood-panel garage door, while the east elevation features two garage doors along with a solid wood pedestrian door and four windows of varying sizes topped with metal security bars. There are several integrated concrete planter boxes along the street-facing elevations of the building, including tiered concrete planters at the base of the north elevation.

Above this rusticated level, the first and second floors (above the below-grade levels) are adorned with shielded bas-reliefs flanking window openings and vertically oriented spandrel

² McMullen Properties, “Bellaire Tower: A Historic Jewel on Russian Hill,” accessed May 11, 2026, <https://www.mcmullen.properties/blog/bellaire-tower-a-historic-jewel-on-russian-hill>.

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panels, enriched with geometric floral motifs, introducing the stylized ornamentation characteristic of the building's Art Deco design. This decorative treatment leads directly into the richly articulated double-height ground floor of the north elevation, rendering the Churrigueresque style and establishing an ornamental base for the vertical shaft above. Three tall arabesque-arch windows dominate this elevation. Each window is deeply recessed, features divided-lite glazing, and is fitted with scrolling metal balconettes. The building's primary entrance is located at the northeast corner, with dual portals—one facing each street frontage—that mirror the shape of the adjacent arabesque-arch windows. The primary entrance door is deeply recessed and is located in the west wall of the portico. It is a fully glazed carved wood door framed by sidelites and capped with an extra-tall transom, also flanked by sidelites.

The entry portico's portals are supported by engaged columns, which feature inset panels of both lotus and lamb's tongue patterns. These openings are flanked by fluted pilasters accentuated with lotus bases and capitals. Behind the ribbed arabesque-arch portals that are crowned with ornate shielded cartouches, the portico ceiling is formed by an elegant groin vault, further accentuated with fluting along the rounded portions. A metal-and-glass pendant light fixture is suspended from the center of the ceiling. The floor is finished in ceramic tile laid in a black-and-white checkered pattern.

Shaft

The shaft of the building has fewer decorative treatments, with increasingly smooth wall planes. The street-facing elevations (north and east) exhibit more undulation and ornamentation than the south and west elevations, which address neighboring buildings). The outermost bays of the north and east elevations contain tripartite angled bay windows embellished with multiple rectangular spandrel panels between each floor. The Churrigueresque ornamentation of the base and the Art Deco-influenced geometric floral motifs of the building are carried into the decoration of the lowest angled bay windows, with scroll-and-shield cartouches, banded pilasters, and modified chevron spandrels.

From the third floor to the seventeenth floor, the shaft's composition is defined by planar wall surfaces punctuated by evenly spaced bays containing typical windows. While the street-facing elevations most often feature Chicago-style windows, the south and west elevations exhibit simpler casement pairs and single casement types. Ornamentation is limited to rectilinear spandrel panels that provide a subtle vertical rhythm. This comparative restraint reinforces the perception of the shaft as the elongated body of a column, with its height emphasized by the unbroken vertical lines of the shaft on all elevations.

Capital

The upper stories of the tower (generally the eighteenth to twentieth floors) function as the capital of the building's columnar composition, where ornament once again intensifies after the relative restraint of the shaft below. Beginning at the fifteenth floor, the projecting bay windows are enriched with anthemion, chevron, and ballflower embellishments. On the eighteenth floor, the building massing steps back at the corners, creating corner patios enclosed by non-original

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glazed metal-frame security panels. The two northern patios appear to have flat roofs, creating fully enclosed interior spaces, while the two southern patios appear to be open to the air.

Between the eighteenth and twentieth floors, the spandrel panels become canted projections, with the central bay distinguished by decorative urns. On the north and south elevations, the windows at the twentieth floor are Chicago windows surmounted by arched divided-lite transoms, while the east and west elevations feature casement pairs topped with fanlights. The parapet completes the capital's composition with inset horizontal detailing at each corner, reminiscent of quoining, and massive ballflowers sprouting from the elongated bolections at the central bays. Together, these features create a decorative termination for the tower and balance the ornamental richness of the base.

A volume containing two additional floors is set back from all sides and located at the center of the building's flat roof. This is a mechanical penthouse that also provides rooftop access. The highly ornate decoration of the capital is continued at the mechanical penthouse.

Interior

The publicly accessible interior spaces include the ground-floor lobby, which connects to a narrow elevator lobby. Both are rectilinear in layout and generally symmetrical in composition. The lobby is a double-height space with an elaborate coffered ceiling featuring carved/molded panels in symmetrical floral designs, the beams of which are accentuated by ballflowers at their intersections and shielded modillions at the ceiling-wall interface. Like the entry portico, the ceiling features a centrally mounted replacement metal-and-glass pendant light fixture and a black-and-white checkered tile floor, which extends through the elevator lobby. The walls of both spaces are clad in smooth plaster. The east wall of the lobby includes the tall, glazed entry system and two round-arch openings, including a pass-through window in a recessed section with a shallow wood counter supported by carved brackets and a doorway outfitted with a solid wood door.

The north wall features two tall arabesque-arched windows over decorative metal radiator panels. The south wall leads toward the elevator lobby through a series of three rounded arches. The central opening is flanked by paired Solomonic columns with floral carvings and capped by gilded Corinthian capitals. The flanking arches are framed with square pilasters topped with half-capitals. Above, a gilded balconette supported by carved brackets is decorated with shields and ballflowers. A festoon sits above the shaped opening.

Through the central arch, the groin-vault ceiling drops to single-story height to form the elevator lobby. Here two brass-doored elevators flank a central wood-paneled door on the west wall. While the upper floors of the tower are private spaces, their hallways generally mimic the groin-vault ceiling of the elevator lobby with carpeted floors and paneled wood doors to units.

The upper residential floors of Bellaire Tower are organized around two centrally located elevator shafts that create compact elevator lobbies oriented north-south near the middle of each floor. These elevator lobbies are flanked to the east and west by enclosed service stairwells that

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are utilitarian in design with concrete flooring, concrete treads with simple metal railings, and painted plaster walls and ceilings. The elevator doors are unornamented metal, while the stairwell doors and individual unit entries are paneled wood. The elevator lobbies feature original circular floor indicators, a shallow barrel-vaulted ceiling finished in painted plaster with painted plaster walls, and non-original carpet flooring. Each floor contains between one and four privately owned condominium units. Hallway configurations vary depending on the number of units per floor but are generally short, straight runs with flat ceilings and no ornamentation, reflecting the building's restrained yet refined Art Deco interior character.

Alterations

Since the completion of its construction in 1930, Bellaire Tower has undergone minor alterations and replacements. In 1961, a steel pole was installed atop the building to support an antenna, followed in 1974 by the installation of seventy aluminum casement windows within existing frames. In 1978, the building's owner (Silverado Investments, Inc.) converted the apartment building to condominiums. During the late 1980s and early 1990s, work included replacement roofing and glazing within the corner porch enclosure of Unit 1801, at the eighteenth floor, as well as structural revisions within this area, construction of a rooftop communication structure and access stairs, and work on the parapet. The rooftop communication structure is a short one-story volume with a rectangular footprint and a flat roof, located at the base of the mechanical penthouse's north elevation within the tower's primary flat-roof structure. It is clad in painted stucco with symmetrical recessed panels of varying sizes for exterior ornamentation; the access door is located on its east elevation. As the corner patio enclosures consisting of glazed panels do not appear to be shown in the rendering by original architect Herman Baumann, they may have been added later. Structures consisting of either a roof on support posts, or full enclosure, are visible in a 1944 photograph showing the northern patios. Antenna upgrades continued in 1998, with a replacement pole installed without changes to height or location.

Between 2002 and 2010, a sustained program of window replacements was undertaken, replacing original steel-sash units with aluminum-frame installations affecting more than 100 window units, ensuring that original configurations, operations, and lite patterns were preserved. Some window openings within the base section of the building were converted to louvred vents or partially enclosed to accommodate contemporary mechanical ducts and/or conduit. Additional rooftop equipment was installed in 2012 and 2016, including antennas and GPS units, while smaller-scale modifications such as a new metal fence (2013) and repair of the rooftop tank (2022) were also carried out. In 2023, nine street-facing windows on the seventeenth floor were replaced with new units, retaining original woodwork. Overall, the alterations primarily reflect routine maintenance, sensitive window replacements, and minor rooftop additions, none of which significantly compromise the building's historic design or integrity.

Integrity

Bellaire Tower retains all aspects of historic integrity. It remains in its original *location* at Green and Leavenworth Streets and continues to occupy its historic *setting* within a primarily low-rise

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Russian Hill residential block. Its overall *design* remains intact, with the only notable alteration being reversible window replacements. The building's historic *materials* survive, as does the evident quality of its *workmanship*. The property continues to convey the *feeling* of a luxury Art Deco residential tower of the late 1920s, and it maintains its *association* with both the city's high-rise residential development and the prolific career of local Architect-of-Merit Herman Baumann. Collectively, these qualities ensure that the building continues to express its architectural and historical significance with a high level of integrity.

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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 grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1930

Significant Dates

1930

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Baumann, Herman C. (Architect)

Monson Brothers (Builder)

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

Bellaire Tower is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places at the local level of significance under Criterion C in the area of Architecture as an exceptional example of an Art Deco style high-rise residential tower with Churrigueresque detailing and as a significant work of architect Herman C. Baumann, who is recognized as an Architect of Merit by the City of San Francisco's Planning Department. Known as the Jewel of Russian Hill for its commanding hilltop presence and refined architectural composition, the building stands as one of Baumann's tallest and most distinguished residential designs in the San Francisco Bay Area. The building embodies the quintessential character-defining features of its style and period, including its tripartite massing inspired by the American vertical skyscraper, with an ornamented Churrigueresque base, a comparatively restrained shaft, and a richly embellished crown. Interior spaces, particularly the entry portico and lobby, further illustrate Baumann's emphasis on ceremonial entrances and finely detailed common areas, hallmarks of his prolific practice that specialized in large apartment buildings. The period of significance for the building is 1930, the year its construction was completed.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Criterion C: Architecture

Brief History of San Francisco's Russian Hill Neighborhood

Bellaire Tower is located in San Francisco's Russian Hill neighborhood, defined by the San Francisco Planning Department as the area bound by Van Ness Avenue to the west, Broadway to the south, Columbus Avenue to the east, and the coastline of the San Francisco Bay at the north.³ The Russian Hill name is derived from the cemetery containing a dozen or so graves of Russian seal hunters and sailors, which were located at the top of the hill on Vallejo Street in the mid-nineteenth century.⁴ The area is characterized topographically by Russian Hill itself, with its summit generally bound by Broadway, Jones, Taylor, and Green Streets. This compact two-block area was the first portion of the district to be developed, with property transactions occurring in the mid-nineteenth century **Error! Reference source not found.**⁵

³ San Francisco Planning, "Neighborhood Group Organizations." Accessed December 15, 2025, <https://sfplanning.org/resource/neighborhood-group-organizations?page=1654>.

⁴ Fern Hill Walking Tours, "Russian Hill & the Story of San Francisco's First Legal Hanging: Was it Bogus?" Accessed December 15, 2025, <https://fernhilltours.com/2015/05/28/russian-hill-the-story-of-san-franciscos-first-legal-hanging-was-it-bogus/>.

⁵ San Francisco Planning, "Notice of Availability of and Intent to Adopt a Mitigated Negative Declaration: 1000 and 1020 Broadway; 1629 Taylor Street," August 29, 2012. Accessed December 15, 2025, https://sfplanning.s3.amazonaws.com/archives/documents/8865-2006.1202E_1000-1020%20Broadway%20%26%201629%20Taylor%20Street.pdf.

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From the 1850s through the late nineteenth century, Russian Hill evolved from a sparsely settled summit occupied by prominent artists and architects into a well-connected residential enclave, aided by new horse-car lines and street extensions that improved access to downtown. By 1890, the area around Green Street was fully developed with subdivided blocks and interior alleys. During the 1880s and 1890s, the hill became a center of the emerging First Bay Region Tradition—an early local interpretation of the Shingle and Arts and Crafts styles that emphasized simplicity, craftsmanship, and natural materials, marking a departure from ornate Victorian design. Although much of Russian Hill was destroyed in the 1906 earthquake and fire, the summit was largely spared, and by 1911 the neighborhood had been rebuilt with dense rows of wood-frame flats and apartments in a range of styles. In the early twentieth century, Russian Hill reemerged as a desirable residential district for San Francisco’s cultural elite, including artists and architects, such as Willis Polk, whose firm contributed significantly to its post-earthquake redevelopment.

In the 1920s, as post-earthquake single-family homes and apartment buildings began to age, many owners sought to modernize their appearances by removing original wood siding and recladding the façades in durable stucco, often incorporating contemporary Art Deco motifs or streamlined detailing to give older structures a more fashionable and modern character. By the end of this decade, developers constructed several high-rise apartment buildings in the area, including Spanish Colonial Revival and Art Deco apartment buildings on Green Street, such as the subject building. These large projects were opposed by existing residents, foreshadowing similar struggles that would affect the neighborhood in the 1960s.

Between the late 1920s and early 1960s, many areas of Russian Hill did not experience dramatic growth; the majority of the lots in the area had already been built out, and the Great Depression and World War II stunted development. The 1960s witnessed upheaval as longtime residents fought another wave of high-rise development. A half-dozen major buildings were constructed in the neighborhood, including the twenty-five-story Summit at 999 Green Street (1964, developed by Joseph Eichler) and the Royal Towers at 1750 Taylor Street (1965). Further development was halted when a forty-foot height zoning limitation was enacted in the early 1970s. Russian Hill has undergone few physical changes since the 1970s due in part to this zoning limit. The area retains its mixture of single-family homes, two- and three-story flats, and tall apartment buildings, with commercial development largely clustered along Van Ness and Columbus Avenues, and Polk and Union Streets.

Art Deco Architectural Style

Art Deco first appeared in France just before World War I and began flourishing internationally in the 1920s and 1930s. The style went out of fashion during World War II. It took its name, short for Arts Décoratifs, from the Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes (International Exposition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Arts) held in Paris in 1925.⁶ It is an eclectic style that combines rich colors and bold geometric shapes with Machine

⁶ Marcus Whiffen, *American Architecture Since 1780: A Guide to the Styles*, Rev. Ed. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), 235.

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Age imagery and materials such as aluminum, stainless steel, plastics, lacquer, and inlaid wood.⁷ The style emphasizes vertical lines and rectilinear shapes and angles, with imagery such as stepped façades and ornament, zigzags, chevrons, sunbursts, and floral abstractions. It also features planarity, symmetry, and repetition of elements. Art Deco was a common design style for hotels, since at its height of popularity, its aesthetic represented luxury, glamour, exuberance, and faith in technological progress; pushing the notion that modernity could be achieved through decoration.⁸

Architects who sought to capture more of the energy and sensuality of the Jazz Age turned to Art Deco. The distinctive style developed first in Europe, as an amalgamation of several sources. From the pre-war Viennese Secession movement, it took the idea of simplified Classical forms as a basic armature; from Italian Futurism and German Expressionism, it acquired a repertoire of visually dynamic shapes like zigzags, sunbursts, and dramatic angles; and from the frivolous mood of the period, it acquired a taste for opulent and glittery materials and a desire to create buildings as atmospheric as theatrical stage sets. Between the wars, most people referred to it as the modern or jazz modern style. Americans imported this style with enthusiasm. For many, it perfectly captured the mood of the era, expressing modernity and freedom from convention without succumbing to some of the socialist ideals that were occasionally associated with the International style. Businesses and corporations liked Art Deco because it expressed progress and modern efficiency. The style began to filter down the social scale and into builders' language, eventually shaping a number of modest building types from inexpensive apartment buildings to diners.⁹

Art Deco emerged in San Francisco in the mid-1920s and early 1930s as part of a broader embrace of modern architectural styles following the rebuilding after the 1906 earthquake.¹⁰ While much of the early Art Deco work in the city is in commercial and civic buildings—notably in South of Market and within the City's core—there are important instances where Art Deco ornamentation, massing, and detailing were applied to residential apartment towers, reflecting both the aesthetic fashion of the era and increasing demand for multi-family housing.¹¹

In San Francisco, Art Deco apartment towers typically display certain characteristic features: stepped or setback massing to comply with height and light regulations; strong vertical emphasis

⁷ Encyclopedia of Art, "Art Deco." Accessed December 15, 2025, <http://www.visual-arts-cork.com/history-of-art/art-deco.htm>.

⁸ Whiffen, *American Architecture Since 1780: A Guide to the Styles*, Rev. Ed, 236.

⁹ Mark Gelernter, *A History of American Architecture: Buildings in Their Cultural and Technological Context*, (Lebanon, NH: University Press of New England, 1999), 241-243

¹⁰ San Francisco Planning, *Citywide Historic Context Statement 1848-1989*, July 2021. Accessed December 15, 2025,

https://sfplanning.org/sites/default/files/documents/preserv/preservation_SFsurvey_Historic_Context_Statement.pdf

¹¹ Page & Turnbull, *Historic Context Statement South of Market Area*, June 2009. Accessed December 15, 2025;

https://sfplanning.s3.amazonaws.com/archives/documents/372-SOMA_Historic_Context_Statement_06-30-2009.pdf. San Francisco Planning, *Flats and Small Apartment Buildings 1915-1978 Historic Context Statement*, 2023. Accessed December 15, 2025, <https://citypln-m-extnl.sfgov.org/SharedLinks.aspx?accesskey=c79390b0b4063814ff373c248a22ace4b2f0bbd5a1bc27818daf4a43b8661fb3&VaultGUID=A4A7DACD-B0DC-4322-BD29-F6F07103C6E0>.

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via piers, pilasters, or fluted ornament; decorative terracotta or glazed tile spandrels; stylized geometric ornament such as zigzags, chevrons, and sunbursts; flat roofs often with parapets or modestly decorative crowns; and lobbies often featuring higher-quality finishes, marble, tile, and/or decorative metals. These features distinguish Art Deco apartment towers from earlier Period Revival styles—including Classical, Spanish Colonial, and Mission—and from later Modernist or post-World War II apartment buildings.¹²

Examples in San Francisco include Bently Nob Hill (1360 Jones Street), a ten-story Art Deco residential tower designed in 1924 combining luxury detailing and ornament typical of the style, and 1150 Union Street, a ten-story Art Deco apartment building designed by Albert H. Larsen in 1930.¹³ Another example is 100 McAllister Street, originally known as the William Taylor Hotel and Methodist Temple (built in 1920), which, although designed with some Gothic Revival style elements, incorporates Art Deco and Art Moderne details in its massing and façade ornamentation.

In this context, the rise of Art Deco residential towers in San Francisco reflects both a stylistic and cultural shift in urban living. By the late 1910s, large apartment buildings were increasingly viewed as sound investments, embraced not only for their economic promise but also for their alignment with evolving notions of health, safety, and efficiency.¹⁴ As a 1919 issue of *The Architect and Engineer of California* proclaimed, “The individual house is gone,” suggesting that collective living offered advantages of reduced cost and improved conditions.¹⁵ This growing acceptance laid the groundwork for the 1920s, which was San Francisco’s most prolific decade of apartment construction. During this decade, many older mansions and estates in neighborhoods such as Pacific Heights and, to a lesser extent, Russian Hill, were replaced by substantial apartment houses.¹⁶ The emergence of Art Deco towers within this wave illustrates how the apartment building was transformed into a fashionable and modern residential type. Equipped with steel frames, elevators, mechanical systems, and ornament that symbolized progress, these towers embodied the aspirations of a middle- and upper-middle-class urban population seeking stylish, amenity-rich housing close to transit, views, and open air.¹⁷ As such, Art Deco residential towers reshaped the city’s architectural character and stand as cultural markers of a broader transition toward denser, more communal urban lifestyles in the early twentieth century, setting the stage for the even taller vertical skyscrapers that soon came to define American skylines.

¹² San Francisco Planning Department, *Citywide Historic Context Statement 1848-1989*, July 2021.

¹³ *San Francisco Chronicle*, “Magnificent New Apartment Building Adorns Crest of Russian Hill,” July 12, 1930.

¹⁴ San Francisco Planning, *Citywide Historic Context Statement: Large Apartment Buildings (1900-1978)*, 20 November 2024: 13.

¹⁵ J.F. Dunn, “Apartment Houses.” *The Architect and Engineer*. v. 58, n. 3. (September 1919).

¹⁶ San Francisco Planning, *Citywide Historic Context Statement: Large Apartment Buildings (1900-1978)*, November 2024, 14.

¹⁷ San Francisco Planning, *Flats and Small Apartment Buildings 1915-1978 Historic Context Statement*, 2023.

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Art Deco Design of Bellaire Tower

The design of Bellaire Tower exemplifies the Art Deco style through its use of stylized ornamentation, tripartite composition, and integration of architectural hierarchy into a high-rise residential form. At the base, geometric floral motifs adorn the spandrel panels, reflecting the style's tendency to abstract natural forms into decorative patterns. The north elevation is further distinguished by tall arabesque-arched windows, framing the lobby within and establishing a direct relationship between the building's receiving interior and its public face. The entry portico is itself a richly detailed architectural space, with its groin-vault ceiling, elaborate full-lite doors and transom, pendant fixture, and checkered tile floor, creating a sense of anticipation. These lavish entry features emphasize the ceremonial character of the entrance, uniting exterior ornamentation with the impending interior grandeur upon crossing the threshold.

Above the base, the shaft of the building is comparatively restrained, characterized by smooth wall planes punctuated by rectilinear spandrel panels. This transition creates a sense of upward and streamlined progression, consistent with the vertical emphasis of the Art Deco style. Within, these upper stories contain the private residential units that contrast in function to the publicly accessible and ceremonial spaces of the base. This further underscores the architectural hierarchy expressed in the building's tripartite design. The clarity of this organization (ornamented base, streamlined shaft, and embellished capital) demonstrates both the architectural sophistication of Baumann's design and the building's ability to convey the essential qualities of the Art Deco style at a monumental scale.

Herman C. Baumann, Architect

The following biography of Architect-of-Merit Herman Carl Baumann (1890-1960) is excerpted from San Francisco Planning's *Architecture, Planning, and Preservation Professionals: A Collection of Biographies*:

H.C. Baumann was born in Oakland in 1890 to German immigrants. Baumann had no formal training in architecture although he took courses at the San Francisco Architectural Club and apprenticed with San Francisco architects Thomas Edwards and John Sexton. He received his architectural license in 1921 and afterwards worked for the George Wagner Construction Company until he opened his own office in 1925. During the building boom of the 1920s, he became one of the city's most prolific designers of Art Deco apartments and hotels. Two of his best-known works are the Bellaire Tower and the Gaylord Hotel.

He primarily created designs for the development group, Marian Realty. Baumann designed more than 100 large-scale apartment buildings in his career. His partner, engineer Edward Jose, assisted with the design of many of these buildings. Following the Great Depression, Baumann moved on to commercial and industrial commissions and largely broke from his Art Deco background, though he continued to design duplexes and apartment buildings in the Streamline Moderne and Art Moderne styles. In the early

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1940s, he designed Streamline Moderne buildings in the Lone Mountain residential tract for developer and architect Oliver Rousseau. During WWII, he was commissioned for a series of Bay Area naval facilities. This exposure to industrial design undoubtedly affected his designs in the late forties and fifties. In 1949, he designed a series of apartment buildings that step down the steep eastern slopes of Twin Peaks. Set on through lots, located between Graystone Terrace and Raccoon Drive, the apartments feature Midcentury Modern design elements including overhanging eaves and large expanses of glass. His final commission was an International Style-inspired apartment building at 1800 Pacific Avenue, completed in 1959.

Throughout his career, Baumann was well-known for his elaborate entrances and lobbies, which he claimed were important to the occupants' perception of their building.¹⁸

The majority of Baumann's commissions were luxury apartment buildings in upper-income San Francisco neighborhoods. Beyond San Francisco, he is known to have designed just one luxury apartment building in Oakland. This building, the National Register-listed Bellevue-Staten Apartments and Garage (1928-1929), stands as one of Baumann's most significant commissions and a hallmark of his prolific apartment house practice at the height of his career in the late 1920s. Rising fourteen stories on the north shore of Lake Merritt, the tower was the only building of its scale constructed in that area during Oakland's 1920s apartment boom, demonstrating Baumann's prominence in high-rise residential design. The building's eclectic design blends Mediterranean Revival ornamentation with Art Deco form and massing, most notably in the stylized foliate and geometric details of its richly articulated upper stories and in the lavishly finished two-story lobby with coffered ceilings, polychrome ornament, and bronze elevator doors.¹⁹

Within Baumann's career, the Bellevue-Staten represents both his mastery of large-scale luxury apartment design and his capacity to fuse revival and modern stylistic vocabularies to create distinctive residential towers. Alongside San Francisco's Bellaire Tower and Gaylord Hotel, these works can be seen to exemplify the peak of his Art Deco style work and underscores his role in shaping the skyline of the Bay Area through dramatic and stylistically forward apartment architecture.²⁰ The twelve-story Gaylord Hotel was constructed from 1928 to 1929 with Art Deco and Spanish Colonial Revival accents, influenced by the architecture of the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition.²¹ Lauded as the "first New York type residential hotel" in the

¹⁸ San Francisco Planning, *Architecture, Planning, and Preservation Professionals: A Collection of Biographies – A through C*, October 18, 2023. Accessed December 15, 2025, https://sfplanning.s3.amazonaws.com/default/files/Preservation/biographies/Bios_ABC.pdf.

¹⁹ Sally Woodbridge, "National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form: The Bellevue-Staten," July 30, 1991. Accessed December 15, 2025, <https://npgallery.nps.gov/NRHP/GetAsset/7ae3a7fc-3a17-4f0a-a221-ad213f853496>.

²⁰ Bellaire Tower is known as "the Jewel" of Russian Hill and is featured in Mark C. Hytha and Richard A. Houser's, *Highrises: Art Deco—100 Spectacular Skyscrapers from the Roaring '20s to the Great Depression* (New York City: Prestel, 2022), where it is highlighted as an exemplary expression of the Art Deco high-rise tradition on the West Coast.

²¹ San Francisco Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board, "Landmark #159," October 6, 1982. Accessed December 15, 2025, https://sfplanninggis.org/docs/landmarks_and_districts/LM159.pdf.

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city, it was listed as San Francisco Landmark #159 in 1983 and is a contributor to the National Register-listed Lower Nob Hill Apartment Hotel District.²² Thus, the Bellevue-Staten Apartments, the Gaylord Hotel, and Bellaire Tower represent high points of Baumann's career and are clear exemplars of how he synthesized revivalist ornament with modern form to define luxury apartment living in the Bay Area in the late 1920s. These three buildings exemplify the hallmarks of his apartment work through their vertical Art Deco massing and dramatic, highly articulated entrances.²³ Baumann is known to have regularly worked with skilled Italian craftsmen who excelled at creating the elaborate molds necessary for the cast stone and plaster that typically adorned these public-facing areas.²⁴

These signature design strategies carried through to his many apartment buildings across San Francisco, where he produced more than one hundred large-scale residential projects during the interwar years.²⁵ Numerous apartment houses from the Marina District to Lower Nob Hill, including the Bellaire Tower (1930), reveal similar compositional traits of streamlined forms animated by bold Revival-inspired decorative programs concentrated at entrances and lobbies.²⁶ Other notable examples include the Agatha Apartments at 701 Pine Street (1925), Chateau Apartments at 2701 Van Ness Avenue (1929), 1801 Broadway (1931), 2400 Pacific Avenue (1931), 2090 Broadway (1935), and 2400 Buchanan Street (1937).

Conclusion

Bellaire Tower is eligible at the local level of significance under Criterion C in the area of Architecture. Designed by prolific San Francisco apartment house architect Herman C. Baumann at the peak of his career, the property exemplifies the Art Deco style as applied to a residential tower typology of the late 1920s and early 1930s. The building exhibits a tripartite composition that draws from the American vertical skyscraper typology, including a rusticated and ornamented base with Churrigueresque detailing, a comparatively restrained shaft defined by planar wall surfaces punctuated by rectilinear spandrel panels, and a decorated capital with stepped setbacks and a parapet embellished with quoins and bold anthemion, chevron, and ballflower motifs. Character-defining features such as the elaborately ornamented entry portico, arabesque lobby windows, coffered lobby ceiling with decorative reliefs, and rich use of stylized floral and geometric ornament (at both the exterior and interior) underscores the artistic value of the design.

²² NoeHill, "San Francisco Landmark #159." Accessed December 15, 2025, <https://noehill.com/sf/landmarks/sf159.asp>; National Register of Historic Places, Lower Nob Hill Apartment Hotel District, San Francisco, California, #91000957.

²³ Woodbridge, "National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form: The Bellevue-Staten," 1991, 8:1-3.

²⁴ Woodbridge, "National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form: The Bellevue-Staten," July 30, 1991.

²⁵ Anne Bloomfield, "National Register of Historic Places Registration Form: Lower Nob Hill Apartment Hotel Historic District and Addition," 2009. Accessed December 15, 2025, <https://npgallery.nps.gov/GetAsset/5372df24-04ef-4427-8fbc-28d4f4602fe6>.

²⁶ Bloomfield, "National Register of Historic Places Registration Form: Lower Nob Hill Apartment Hotel Historic District and Addition," 2009.

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Known as the Jewel of Russian Hill, Bellaire Tower earned its nickname for its commanding hilltop presence and its distinction as one of Baumann's tallest and most architecturally refined designs in the Bay Area. Its prominent silhouette, visible from multiple vantage points across San Francisco, has long made it a visual landmark within the city's skyline and a touchstone of the Art Deco era. Standing among Baumann's most ambitious residential commissions, the building's pioneering steel-frame and reinforced-concrete construction under new seismic standards allowed it to remain structurally sound through the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake. The period of significance for the building is 1930 under Criterion C, reflecting the year its construction was completed.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ____ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ____ previously listed in the National Register
- ____ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ____ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ____ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- ____ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
- ____ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

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Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of repository: San Francisco Planning Department; San Francisco Public Library

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): N/A

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: Less than one acre

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 37.798254 Longitude: -122.417407

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundary corresponds to the legal boundary with the City and County of San Francisco Assessor-Recorder, Block/Lot numbers 0125/026-089, which measures 60-feet by 87.5-feet. As a condominium building, there are sixty-four (64) individual "lots" contained within this parcel, spanning Block/Lot numbers 0125/026 through 0125/089.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary corresponds to the legal boundary of the parcel on which the building has been located since its construction in 1929-1930.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Maggie Nicholson, Cultural Resources Planner
organization: Page & Turnbull
street & number: 170 Maiden Lane, 5th Floor
city or town: San Francisco state: CA zip code: 94108
e-mail: nicholson@page-turnbull.com
telephone: (416) 362-5154
date: December 2025; Revised March 2026

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Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Bellaire Tower
City or Vicinity: San Francisco
County: San Francisco
State: California
Photographer: Barrett Reiter, Senior Associate, Page & Turnbull
Date Photographed: September and November 2025

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 1 of 18 Oblique view of east (left) and north (right) elevations, looking southwest from the intersection of Green and Leavenworth Streets
- 2 of 18 Oblique view of south (left) and east (right) elevations, looking northwest from Leavenworth Street
- 3 of 18 Base at east elevation, looking west from Leavenworth Street
- 4 of 18 Oblique view of dual-portal entry portico, looking southwest
- 5 of 18 Primary entrance on west wall of entry portico, looking west from Leavenworth Street sidewalk
- 6 of 18 Base at north elevation, looking south from Green Street

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- 7 of 18 Shaft at north elevation, looking up and south from Green Street
- 8 of 18 Shaft at west elevation, looking up and east
- 9 of 18 Oblique view of capital at south (left) and east (right) elevations as well as those elevations of mechanical penthouse, looking west from the intersection of Jones and Vallejo Streets
- 10 of 18 Capital at south elevation, looking up and northwest
- 11 of 18 Oblique view of west (left) and south (right) elevations of mechanical penthouse, looking northeast from roof deck
- 12 of 18 East wall of lobby, looking northeast
- 13 of 18 South wall of lobby, looking southwest
- 14 of 18 North wall of lobby, looking northeast
- 15 of 18 Lobby ceiling, looking up and north
- 16 of 18 West wall of elevator lobby at first floor, looking southwest
- 17 of 18 Elevator lobby at thirteenth floor, looking southwest
- 18 of 18 East service stairwell at thirteenth floor, looking east

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for nominations 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.460 et seq.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

- Tier 1 – 60-100 hours
- Tier 2 – 120 hours
- Tier 3 – 230 hours
- Tier 4 – 280 hours

The above estimates include time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and preparing and transmitting nominations. Send comments regarding these estimates or any other aspect of the requirement(s) to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1201 Oakridge Drive Fort Collins, CO 80525.

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Location Map

Latitude: 37.798254 Longitude: -122.417407

Base Map: USGS "San Francisco North Quadrangle," 1995; edited by Page & Turnbull, 2025



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Vicinity Map

Source: Google Earth, 2025; edited by Page & Turnbull, 2025

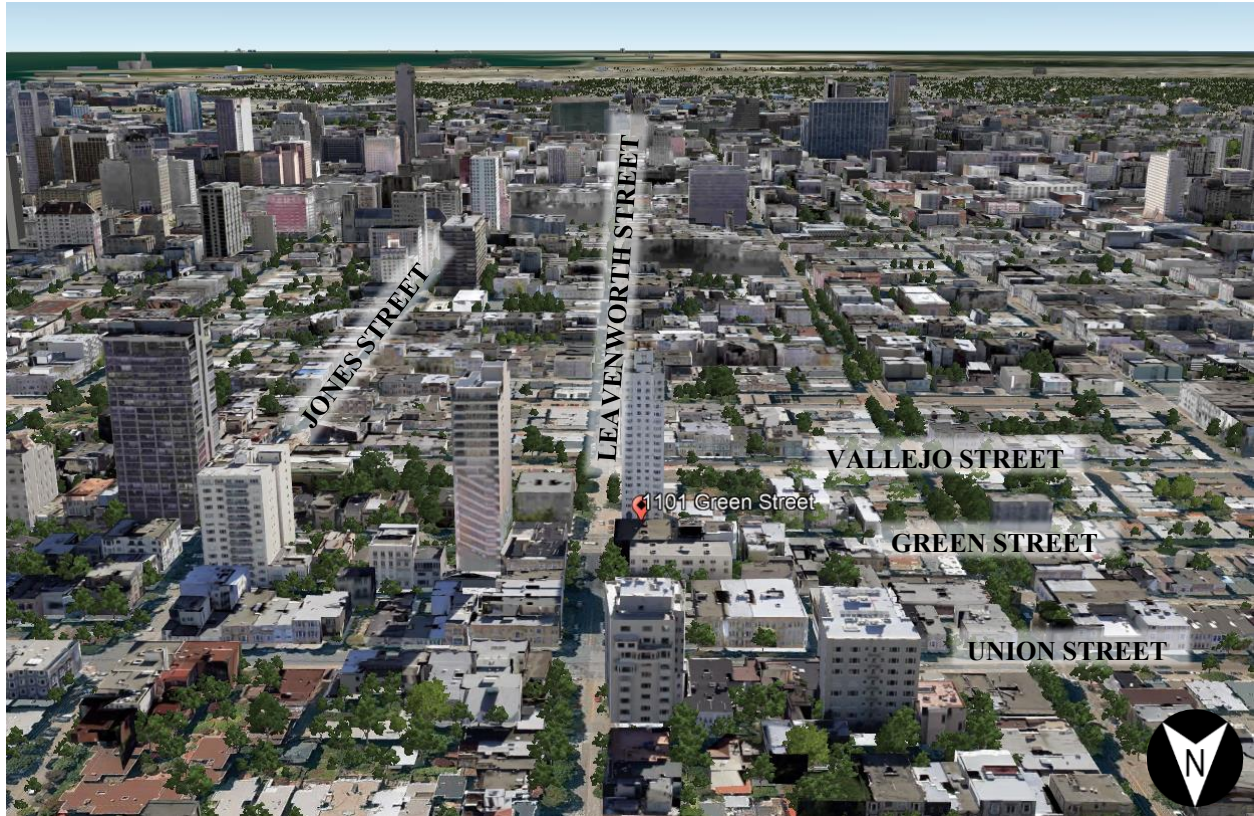


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Bird's Eye View

Source: Google Earth, 2025; edited by Page & Turnbull, 2025

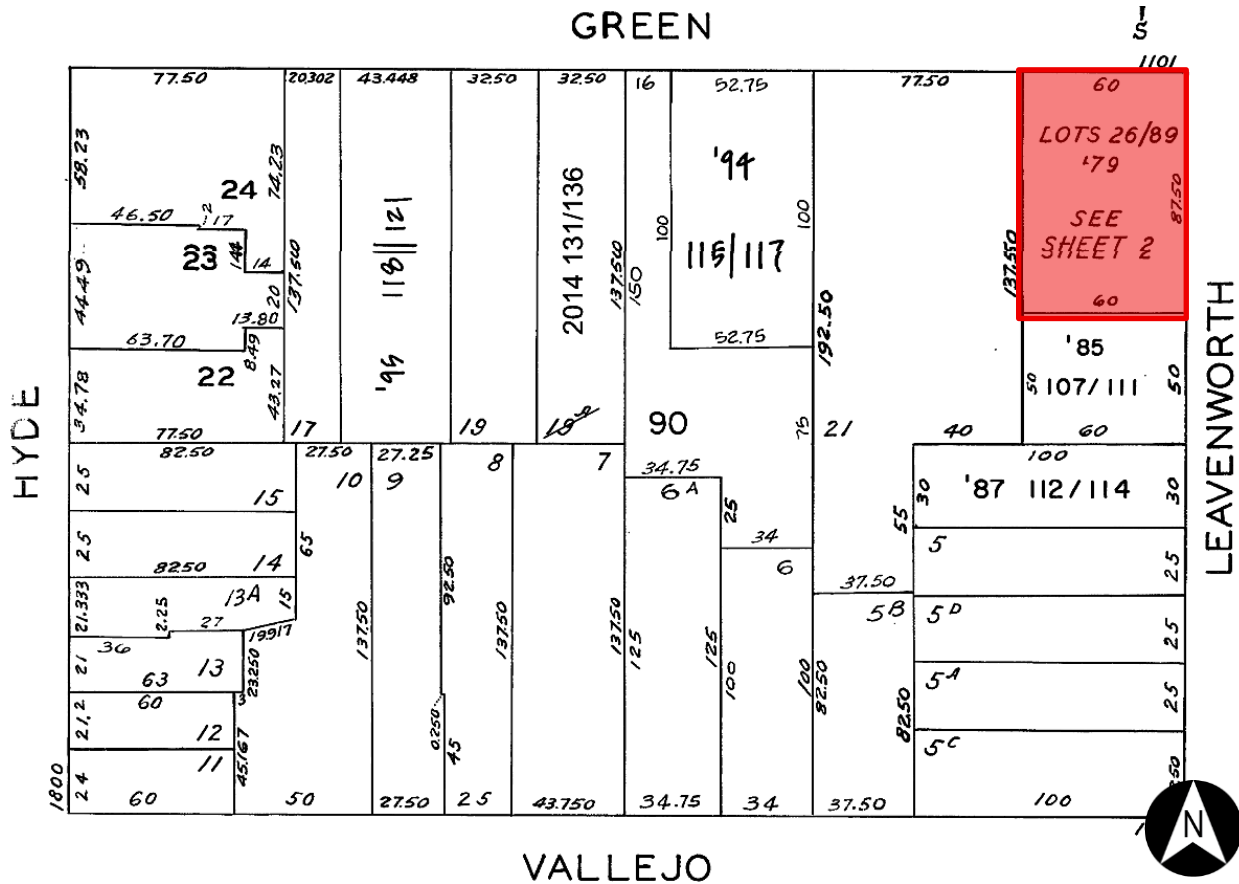


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Boundary Map

Bellaire Tower at 1101 Green Street shaded in red; Source: City and County of San Francisco Assessor-Recorder, San Francisco County Block Map, edited by Page & Turnbull, 2025



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Photo Key 1 of 3—Exterior



Bellaire Tower - 1101 Green Street
Photographic Key Map

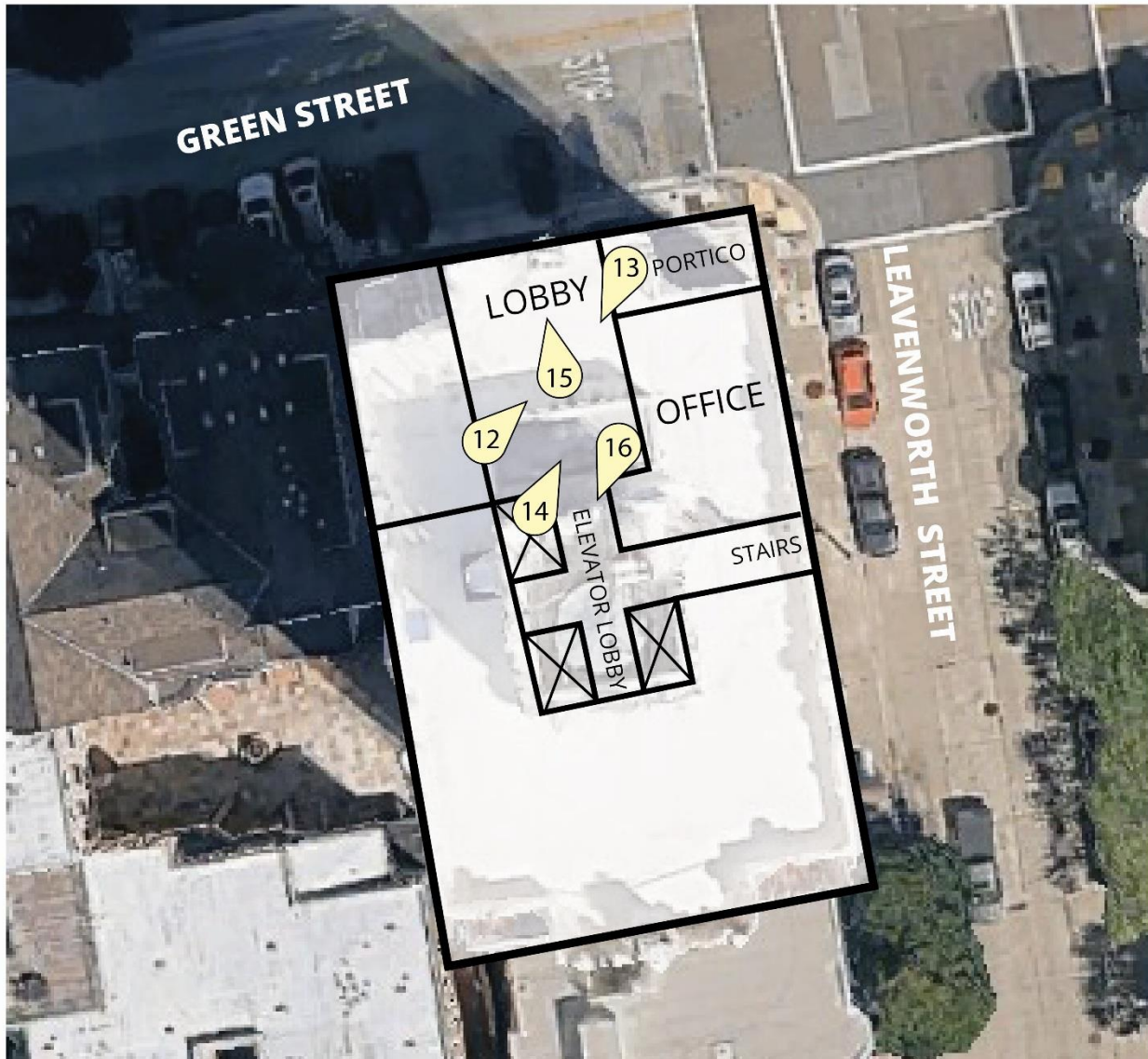
Basemap: Google Earth, 2025.
Edited by Page & Turnbull, 2025.



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Photo Key 2 of 3—Interior, First Floor



Bellaire Tower - 1101 Green Street
Photographic Key Map - First-floor Interior

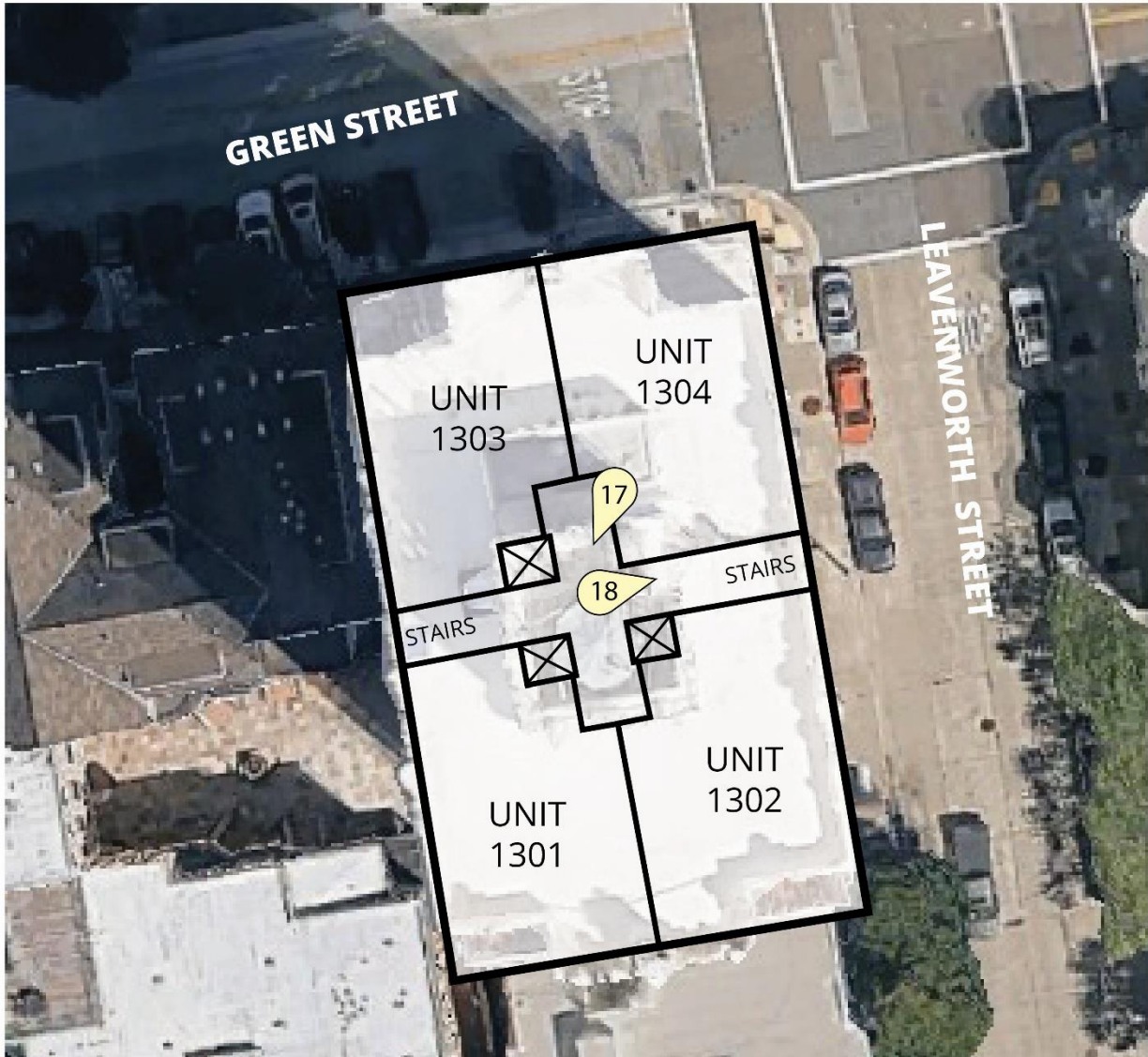
Basemap: Google Earth, 2025.
Edited by Page & Turnbull, 2025.



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Photo Key 3 of 3—Interior, Thirteenth Floor



Bellaire Tower - 1101 Green Street
Photographic Key Map - Thirteenth-floor Interior

Basemap: Google Earth, 2025.
Edited by Page & Turnbull, 2025.



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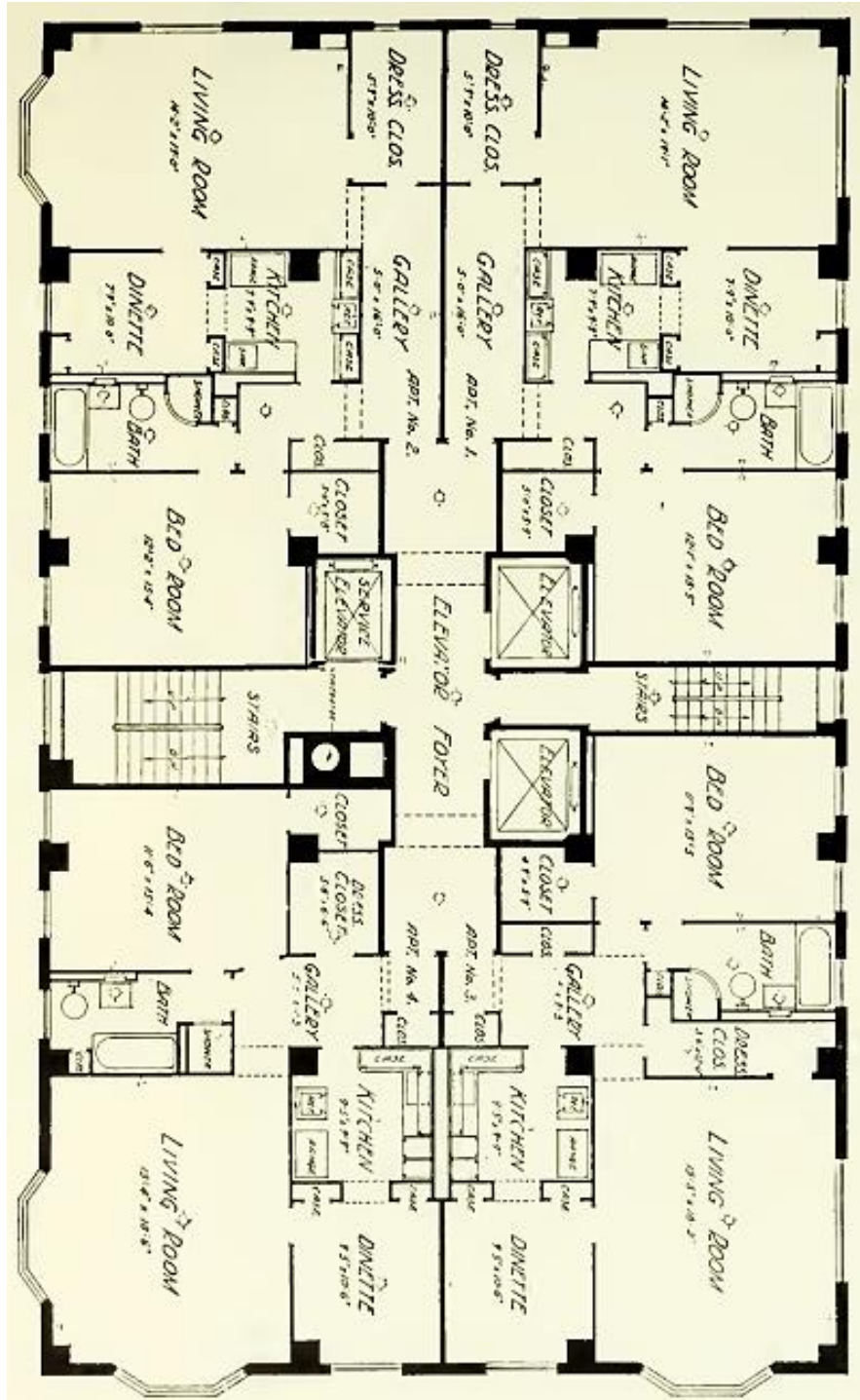
Figure 1 Rendering by architect Herman Baumann; Source: *San Francisco Examiner*, March 9, 1929



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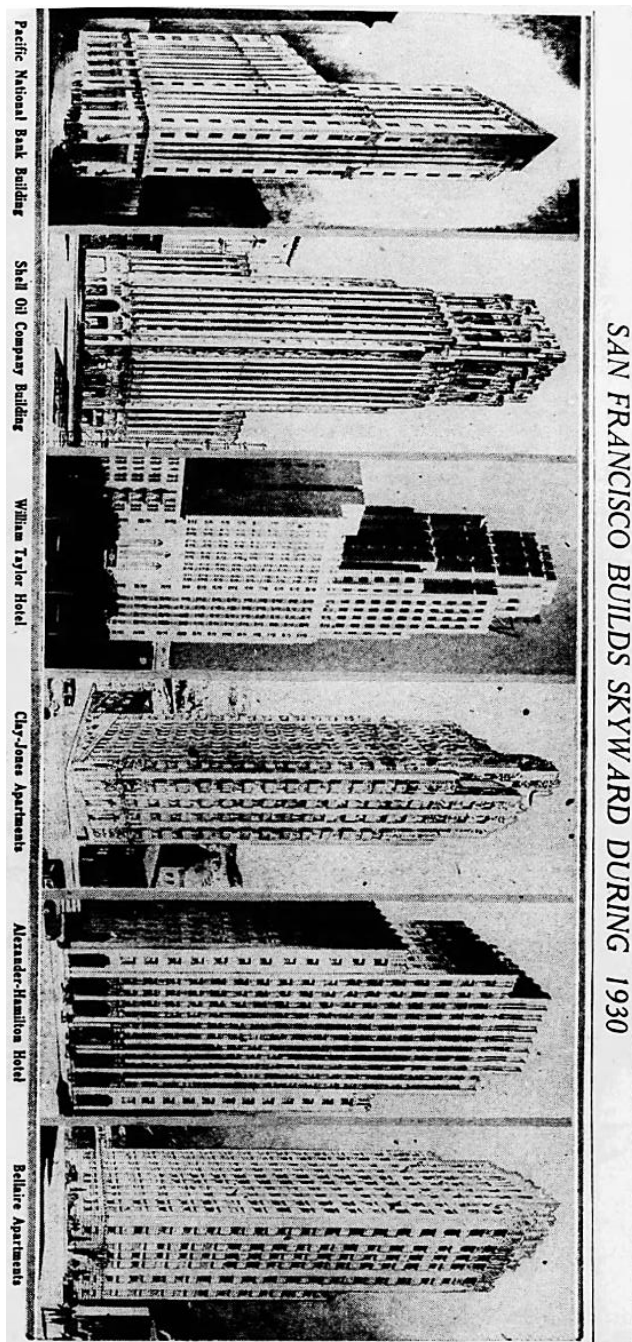
Figure 2 Typical floor plan, showing four apartments, by architect H.C. Baumann; Source: *Architect & Engineer*, December 1930



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Figure 3 Examples of Art Deco skyscrapers constructed in San Francisco in 1930 with “Bellaire Apartments” at 1101 Green Street shown at far right; other buildings, from left to right, include the Pacific National Bank Building, Shell Oil Company Building, William Taylor Hotel, Clay-Jones Apartments, and Alexander-Hamilton Hotel; Source: *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 6, 1930



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Figure 4 Assessor photograph of east (left) and north (right) elevations, September 1944;
Source: San Francisco Public Library, History Center



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Photo 1 Oblique view of east (left) and north (right) elevations, looking southwest from the intersection of Green and Leavenworth Streets



Photo 2 Oblique view of south (left) and east (right) elevations, looking northwest from Leavenworth Street



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Photo 3 Base at east elevation, looking west from Leavenworth Street



Photo 4 Oblique view of dual-portal entry portico, looking southwest



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Photo 5 Primary entrance on west wall of entry portico, looking west from Leavenworth Street sidewalk



Photo 6 Base at the north elevation, looking south from Green Street



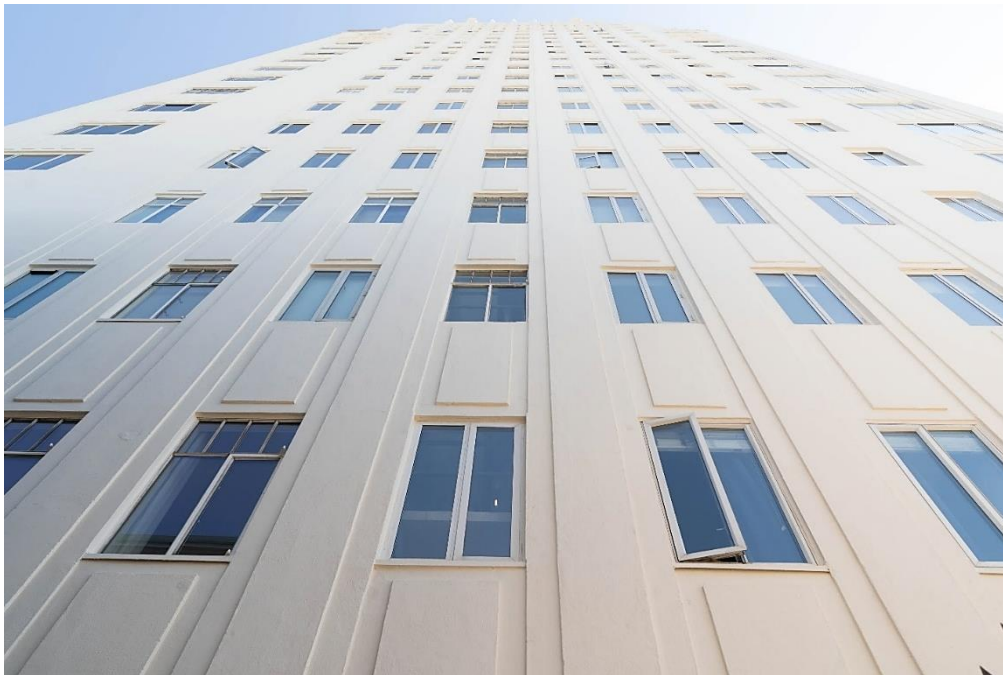
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Photo 7 Shaft at the north elevation, looking up and south from Green Street



Photo 8 Shaft at the west elevation, looking up and east



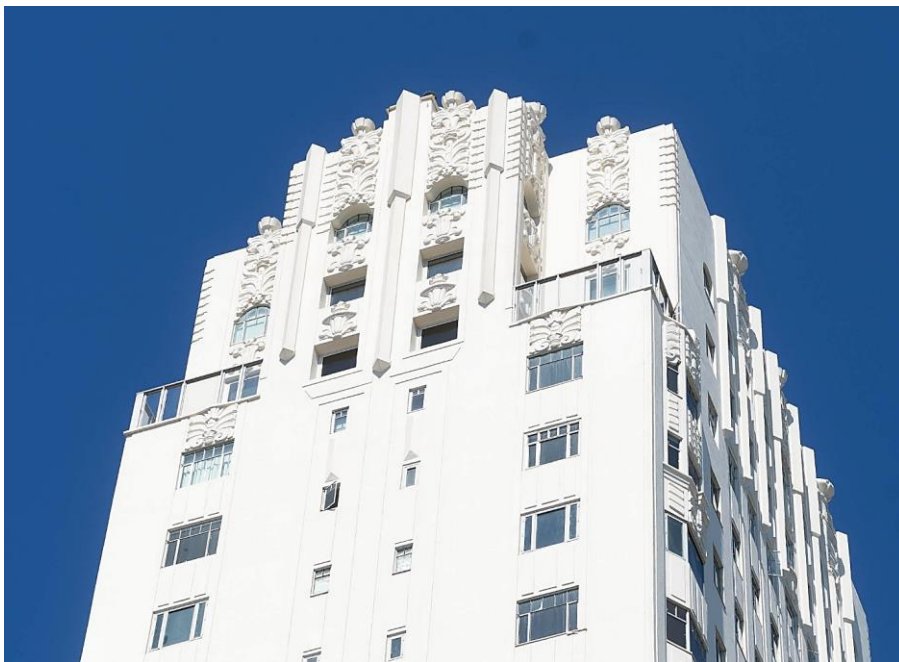
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Photo 9 Oblique view of capital at south (left) and east (right) elevations as well as those elevations of mechanical penthouse, looking west from intersection of Jones and Vallejo Streets



Photo 10 Capital at south elevation, looking up and northwest



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Photo 11 Oblique view of west (left) and south (right) elevations of mechanical penthouse, looking northeast from roof deck

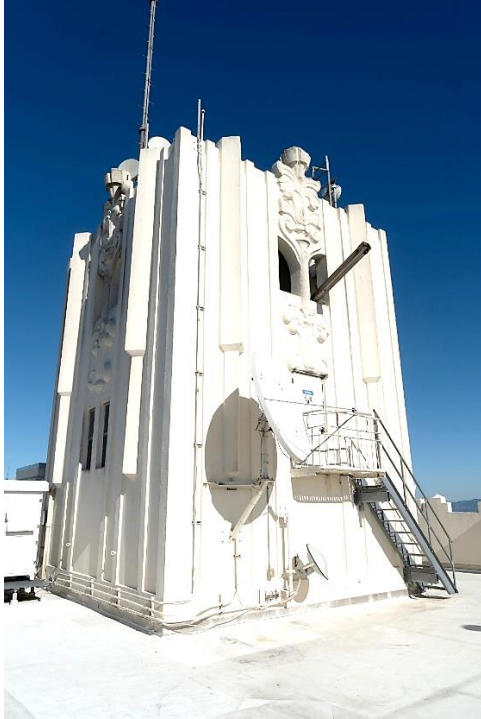
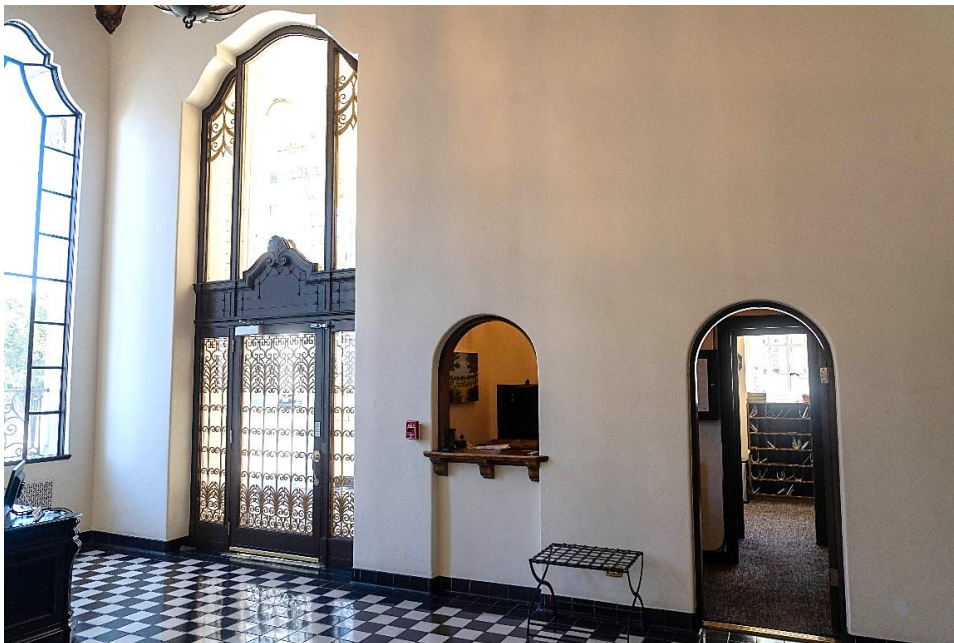


Photo 12 East wall of the lobby, looking northeast



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Photo 13 South wall of lobby, looking southwest



Photo 14 North wall of lobby, looking northeast



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Photo 15 Lobby ceiling, looking up and north



Photo 16 West wall of elevator lobby at first floor, looking southwest



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Photo 17 Elevator lobby at thirteenth floor, looking southwest



Photo 18 East service stairwell at thirteenth floor, looking east

