

CLAUD BEELMAN'S CORPORATE MODERNE STYLE 1951-1963

by

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Dedication

To the memory of the late Mary Elizabeth Slater Credle: Her love of knowledge has sustained me in ways she could not.

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Abstract

When he arrived in 1921/22 Claud Beelman brought with him his mid-western cultural background and a set of professional skills which enabled him to integrate smoothly into the Los Angeles of the period. Upon his arrival he formed a partnership with Alexander Curlett which lasted until about 1930. The incredible boom of the 20s was fueled by the expansion of the oil industry and by the expansion of automobile related manufacturing. The swelling population also sparked immense growth in the construction industry. This exponential growth enabled the partners to garner major commissions for over twenty significant buildings throughout Southern California.

The depression brought about an end to the Curlett and Beelman partnership. Beelman continued to practice architecture during this difficult time. In partnership with other architects he designed the Hollywood Post Office and on his own Woodbury Business College and the headquarters building for MGM Studios. During this period he was commissioned to design a number of additions and to undertake renovations to existing buildings.

World War II brought Beelman commissions for large military hospitals at Corona and Long Beach. After the war as boom times resumed, Beelman was sought to design smaller scale retail, banking and warehouse structures and one major hospital addition for the Children's Hospital in Los Angeles. In fulfilling the commissions from 1930 through the early 50s Beelman developed components of an approach to design which became recurrently utilized tools.

Increasing prosperity generated commissions for large office buildings as had been the case in the 20s. The commissions for the major office buildings designed from 1951 to 1963 enabled Beelman to integrate his gradually acquired set of design tools into a consistent approach for the major buildings of the period. Five building on Wilshire Boulevard and two downtown particularly embody this approach. These were the culmination of Beelman's career, his own iteration of corporate Modern.

Introduction

Claud Beelman Enduring Presence in Southern California Architecture

Well designed buildings which still make an important contribution to the Southern California landscape are Claud Beelman's enduring legacy. From 1921 until his death in 1963, working with a variety of partners, Beelman produced a number of notable buildings. Having begun to work during his teens, he early on developed a pattern of diligently pursuing both the acquisition of professional skills and the commissions which allowed him to utilize them. Beelman's designs evolved from elegantly detailed historicism, to soaring Deco followed by the gradual development of a style which could most clearly be labeled his own.

As well, his mid western origins gave him a cultural and ethnic kinship with many of the new arrivals who were shaping Los Angeles and were themselves of mid-western origins. From the moment of his arrival in 1921/1922, Beelman was fully attuned to the boosterism which transformed Los Angeles in the 1920s. This era of prosperity and exponential growth was the foundation period of his Southern California practice. During this initial period of his practice in Los Angeles, from 1922 to 1930, Beelman worked with his partner Alexander Curlett on a sequence of designs drawn from Beaux Arts historicism. The 1920s boom era bought Beelman commissions for the design of numerous banks, Union Oil, the home furnishings manufacturer and retailer Barker Brothers, and the clothier Forman and Clark. The Deco styling of the 1929-30 Eastern Columbia building marked his major break from historicism. During these boom years,

lasting connections were made with the business community which allowed Beelman to continue receiving commissions for major projects during the depression. Even in the difficult economy of this period he garnered such design opportunities as those for the design of the MGM Headquarters and Woodbury College business school. The evolving taste of the business community gave Beelman the opportunity to explore Deco and Streamline Moderne designs during the 30s and 40s. This period was the starting point of a trajectory which, by the 1950s resulted in a style which was his own.

Beelman's work continued to evolve during the Second World War when he worked on government projects, most notably military hospitals in Long Beach and Corona whose style reflected the continued development of a pared down Moderne first demonstrated in his 1930 design for Cedars Hospital. After the war, as Southern California's most lengthy boom period developed, Beelman at first started working on small projects for the same retailers and banks who were his clients during the 20s. These included Barker Brothers and Security First Bank. The important commission for the Don Lee television studios, the first designed specifically for television production, marked another break with previous designs in its utilization of block massing and abstraction. Further refinement of themes which began with earlier hospital designs of the 30s and 40s can be seen in the commission of a major addition to Children's Hospital which capped Beelman's first post war works.

As economic conditions continued to improve during the post World War II period commissions increasingly became ones for large office buildings refocusing Beelman's practice on the type of building which had marked his success during the 1920s. During this last period of major productivity elements of a vocabulary which had been

accumulating since his break with historicism were brought together. From 1951 to 1963, the evolution of Beelman's architectural designs culminated in the expression of his own iteration of the Corporate Moderne style. This style gave the business leaders of Southern California buildings which were contemporary, yet not radical, efficient and often used rich materials to project their corporations' importance and their personal success.

Corporate Moderne, as finally expressed by Beelman in his office buildings of from six to twenty-two stories, had some essential elements: Rising from dark bases which were variously, a podium/base, a band of dark stone cladding, or a recessed area of glazing framed in dark metal the upper floors were expressed in vertical piers clad in white stone, often marble. The fenestration also rose vertically with spandrels between windows usually of bright stainless steel or dark metal. Some examples, such as the Standard Oil and Tidewater Oil buildings utilized rich materials and also contained especially commissioned works of art. They were the most important elements expressed in Beelman's last designs. These themes remained consistent even though the designs were created with a succession of principal employees and partners ranging from his long time employee Herman Spackler to partners Robert Langdon and Ernest Wilson and finally, Kent Attridge, formerly of the Welton Beckett firm, who oversaw the completion of the last works in what was essentially a caretaker situation.

The buildings of this last period became identifiably Beelman's. All the evolution from 1930 through the early post World War II period is brought forward and combined in these final commissions. It is these works from 1951 to 1963 which become the full expression of Beelman's Corporate Modern Style which I wish to discuss. Of these last

works, only the Standard Oil Building of 1954/55 along with the California Bank Building of 1963 were downtown but share the design vocabulary of the Wilshire buildings which are more numerous. Beelman's Corporate Modern style is most clearly illustrated in the concentration of projects along the Wilshire corridor. The stretch from Virgil to Crenshaw Boulevard is a compendium of Beelman's work office building designs created from 1951 to 1963 as Wilshire underwent a postwar surge of commercial development. Beginning with the 1951 triple Tishman Building at Mariposa and the 1954 Continental Assurance building, followed by the 1958 Tidewater Oil Headquarters, the 1962 Getty/Union Building and lastly, the Pacific Indemnity Insurance Building of the same year; these were Beelman's contribution to this second major phase of commercial development. Farther to the west on Wilshire Boulevard, in Westwood, Beelman Associates also designed a major structure, the Kirkeby Center of 1960/62 (now Occidental Petroleum Headquarters) whose design is thematically linked to the other Wilshire designs.

Chapter 1

Mid-Western Origins and Architectural Training

Like so many of the new arrivals to Southern California in the 1920's, Claud Beelman was from the mid-west and came equipped with training and cultural predispositions which enabled him to integrate himself smoothly into the social and business life of the area. Beelman was born in Bellfontaine, Ohio in 1884. In 1888 his family moved to Lima, Ohio where his father was a partner in a carriage making business.¹ He was married to Laurene Taft in 1907. In a Lima News article Beelman recounts having met his first wife through his friend Cam Crow and having just enough money to hire a horse to make the hour trip to see her, but always finding a way to continue his courtship, an early example of the persistence which was an important trait throughout his life.

Beelman's interest in architecture began early. In the same Lima News article, he recounts having had a hand in the design of the family's second home in Lima. Claud Beelman completed only elementary school and began working in the local office of Toledo architect George F. Mills in 1900 at age sixteen.² Beelman's also recounted in the same article that his start was not auspicious, I was "very proficient in up-ending ink bottles on drawings from the very beginning, and I learned a lot from the retracing I had to do". During the period from 1902 to 1911, Beelman was employed as an architect in offices in New Orleans, Detroit, Cleveland, and Indianapolis, working his way up as a

¹ *The Lima News*, May 31, 1955, Local News Page.

² *The Lima Ohio News*, May 31, 1955, Local News Page.

draftsman training on the job. While in Detroit, Cleveland and Indianapolis Beelman had been president of the local architectural clubs in those cities.

As Beelman developed his skills, he was recognized, and received the Harvard award of the Architectural League of America in 1905. This would have allowed him to attend Harvard. Beelman did not avail himself of the opportunity, perhaps made hesitant by his lack of formal education, even though receiving the award speaks of a considerable development of architectural skills.³ An article in “The Indianapolis Star” in 1912, notes that he won a contest to design a concrete house. He was qualified to enter the contest due to his membership in the Indianapolis Architectural Club.⁴ This is another indication of how far Beelman had progressed from his beginning as a sixteen year old draftsman to that of an award winning designer and membership in a professional organization. At this point he was working in the Indianapolis office of Clarence Martindale. In Toledo from about 1912 until 1919⁵, he was associated with large public improvements.⁶ During this latter period, Beelman gained important experience as a partner in the firm of Schreiber and Beelman, which was dissolved in 1916⁷ even though Beelman remained in Toledo at least through 1918. This transition from draftsman/student to principal was a path still open to Beelman before academically trained architects came to dominate the profession.

³ *The Lima News*, May 31, 1955, Local news page.

⁴ *The Indianapolis Star*, April 22, 1912, first Business and Real Estate page.

⁵ Beelman’s draft registration card, dated Sept. 12, 1918, has him in Toledo at this period and stated that he is an architect.

⁶ In *Men of California 1928/30*, 227. The biography mentions both public improvements and being in business for himself.

⁷ *Western Architect*, vol.24, Dec. 1916, 7.

In 1921/1922, Beelman moved to Los Angeles after a brief stay in Omaha, Nebraska and quickly established a partnership with Alexander Curlett. Once established in Los Angeles he made important social connections and was a member of a number of Los Angeles clubs including the Los Angeles Athletic Club, Beach Club, The Commercial Club, and The Gables, Los Angeles and later the Los Angeles Country Club. Like his partner Curlett, he is listed as living in Beverly Hills, in Beelman's case at the northwest corner of Palm Drive and Elevado,⁸ and later at 707 N. Rodeo Drive.⁹ This home was sold in 1949 after the death of Beelman's first wife.¹⁰ Claud Beelman's social affiliations and residential address demonstrate his integration into the community and its prosperity.

Balancing his own architectural education by apprenticeship, Beelman's first partner in Southern California, Alexander Curlett (1880-1942), born in San Francisco, received a degree in architecture from Columbia University in 1901, and trained in his father, William Curlett's, architectural office. This formal training path was soon to replace the office apprenticeship as the usual foundation for an architectural career. The father, like his son had a formal education in architecture. William Curlett (FAIA) was a leading architect in northern California in the late nineteenth century. He was born in Ireland, and had been trained in Manchester England, arriving in San Francisco in 1871. Young Alexander arrived in Los Angeles in 1913 with his father, at first working with Theodore

⁸ *Men of California*, 1928/30, 227. This is a brief biographical sketch.

⁹ *Los Angeles Times*, Oct. 2, 1949, E 1, this article notes that Beelman sold what was evidently his second residence in Beverly Hills.

¹⁰ The home sold for \$42,500 (\$384,446 in 2010 dollars), and doubtless worth much more than that.

Eisen, his father's brother-in-law. While still working with his father, young Curlett is purported to have designed three buildings including the Gates Hotel.

Alexander Curlett cultivated business connections and was on the board of Union Bank, and on the board of the Fifth and Hill Building Corporation, the Pershing Square Building Company as well as the Grand Avenue Fireproof Corporation in downtown Los Angeles. Socially, he was a member of the Los Angeles Country Club, Beach Club, Tennis Club and the Los Angeles Athletic Club. His residence was in Beverly Hills at 811 Alpine Drive¹¹. Preceding Beelman, Curlett had already made important business and social connections in Southern California which were clearly useful to his practice and to the subsequent partnership with Beelman.

Based on biographies in "Men of California"¹², it is clear that Curlett was more formally trained esthetician with established business and social connections in Los Angeles. Beelman certainly benefited from the established position Curlett's earlier arrival provided. Beelman arrived with an up from the bottom education, both socially and architecturally, but quickly took advantage of his new circumstances. He was also a good draftsman who also was reputedly a stickler for details¹³. Both Curlett and Beelman used their combination of social and business connections to obtain work in what today would be described as networking among the business community who might offer them commissions. Curlett and Beelman's combination of talents and skills

¹¹ *Architectural Digest*, 1928, v.7, 130-131.

¹² *Men of California*, 1928/30, 227. Entry on this page provides this information.

¹³ This comment is derived from conversations with Mrs. Shirley Wilson, widow of partner Earnest Wilson on Sept. 6, 2006, and on Aug 29, 2006 with Mr. Greg Brandon of the engineering firm which worked with Beelman.

must have worked well given the number of commissions that they received during the 20s when their partnership produced some twenty-two major buildings. This could be one explanation for the continuous stream of classified advertisements during the period seeking skilled draftsmen. This close collaboration between partners in both social and professional realms was an increasingly typical model of the internal workings of an architectural practice at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Architectural Practice Becomes a Corporate Endeavor

During the period from the 1880's to the 1920's American architectural practice began to be organized following a corporate model and was increasingly staffed by academically trained professionals. Departmentalization and delegation began to replace the builder architect who both designed and built as well as that of the gentleman architect working with a staff of draftsmen who were often simultaneously apprentices. The nationally known architectural firm which became a prototype provides insight into ways in which architectural practice in the United States was evolving, based on both educational background and delegation of responsibilities among the principals involved.

Daniel Burnham, of Burnham and Root in Chicago, is the prototypical exemplar of this evolution. Not only is the firm's organization a prototype, but the similarities between the personalities of Beelman and his first partner, Curlett as compared with that of Burnham and his partner John Wellborn Root are notable. Beelman, like Burnham, was a partner who had been educated by working in the offices of established architects. It is interesting to note that Burnham, like Beelman, had once had the opportunity to attend

Harvard, but failed the entrance exam due, in his case, to “stage fright”.¹⁴ Like Beelman, Burnham’s route into the profession was by apprenticeship, albeit somewhat later in his life than Beelman, getting started at age 25 by working at several firms in Chicago and finally more permanently, in 1872, for Carter, Drake and Wright.¹⁵ Root, like Curlett, was the product of a university curriculum. Root first studied music in Liverpool, England and later passed the examination to enter Oxford University where he was due to matriculate in 1866. Called home by his family, Root studied engineering at New York University.¹⁶ It was Burnham who moved most comfortably in business circles and made the initial as well as the continuing contacts necessary in working with a client. Apparently Beelman’s similar skills as the persistent salesman allowed him to play a like role in his partnership with Curlett and with later partners. Burnham got the big contracts and oversaw the laying out of the basic plan and the development of the design and is also described as having a refined level of taste.¹⁷ This is echoed in the relationship of Curlett and Beelman. Beelman’s drafting skills and eye for fashion developed his taste allowing him to play a similar role. Just as had Burnham and Root, Beelman and Curlett belonged to all the proper social clubs which provided a network for making business connections. Burnham also sought to organize the office through delegation. Louis Sullivan is quoted as overhearing Burnham say to Root, “you must delegate, delegate,

¹⁴ Hines, Thomas S., *Burnham of Chicago*, 11.

¹⁵ Hines, *Burnham of Chicago*, 13.

¹⁶ Hines, *Burnham of Chicago*, 17.

¹⁷ Hines, *Burnham of Chicago*, 24. On this page Harriet Monroe, biographer of Root, comments on Burnham’s ongoing oversight of commissions.

delegate”.¹⁸ With this observation Sullivan was recognizing corporate architectural practice at its inception.

From 1873 to 1893 Burnham and Root designed everything from large homes to churches to office buildings. After both Root’s death and Burnham’s overseeing of the planning and construction of the Columbian Exposition, Burnham carried on as a commercial architect whose office worked on large scale projects and turned out a considerable volume of work. Starting in 1908, he reorganized the office into departments which oversaw individual stages of design and construction. Even with this departmentalized organization Burnham remained in close contact with the development of each project.¹⁹ Both the wife of one of Beelman’s last partners as well as a principal in the engineering firm with which Beelman consulted made the same observation about Beelman’s role in his practice.²⁰

From 1921 to 1930 Curlett and Beelman were almost solely commercial architects. Beelman remained principally a commercial architect throughout the remainder of his career after the dissolution of their partnership. For a newly formed partnership, Curlett and Beelman produced a considerable volume of commercial work, designing more than twenty notable bank, office, and retail structures during the 20s boom. This could only have been achieved through a well organized, departmentalized office.²¹ A comparable combination of personal relationship and corporate structure allowed

¹⁸ Hines, *Burnham of Chicago*, 25. This quote originally from Sullivan’s *Autobiography of an Idea*, 291.

¹⁹ Hines, *Burnham of Chicago*, This is the subject of the first section of Chapter II.

²⁰ Based on oral interviews with Mrs. Shirley Wilson widow of Beelman’s former partner on Sept. 6, 2006 and with Mr. Greg Brandow of Beelman’s structural consultants on Aug. 29, 2006.

²¹ See Appendix A for a list of some major projects from the period.

Curlett and Beelman and later Beelman, with subsequent partners, to achieve success in Southern California.

Architectural practice had moved through several phases of development in the United States from the colonial builder-craftsman to the architect-builder who worked from and often created pattern books of architectural designs to the well educated, socially connected dilettante of the nineteenth century and ultimately to a university trained professional who operated within a twentieth century corporate entity of academically trained professionals organized through departmentalization of functions. By the 1920s the symbiosis of the aesthetic and the corporate were the hallmarks of a successful architectural firm. A similar formula allowed Curlett and Beelman to take full advantage of the opportunities offered by the phenomenal growth in Southern California in the 1920s. These possibilities were later revived by Beelman during the economic expansion of the 1950s and 1960s. Yet it is the boom of the 1920's which became the period against which subsequent periods of prosperity for both Los Angeles and Beelman were measured. This period also provided the atmosphere which fully engaged Beelman's skills in pursuing business and in architectural design. The boom of the 1920s created all the elements which became emblematic of Los Angeles.

Chapter 2

Los Angeles in the Twenties and Thirties

Economic Boom to Depression

Claud Beelman arrived in Los Angeles at a propitious moment, poised to take full advantage of the booming 20s. Like so much of the nation during the 1920s; Los Angeles experienced an astounding boom. Building on the now well established infrastructure of rail connections, water supply and a major port, the city was inundated with emigrants, a great number of whom were from the Mid-West. The building boom which ensued and the increased use of the automobile became self generating components of this boom. Los Angeles was a unique city born of a combination of its own leaders' will to make it a major metropolis and filled by emigration from within the United States. These emigrants were comprised largely of white, protestant mid-westerners. Los Angeles in the 1920s was a vibrant place awash in new oil wealth and new arrivals. Between 1920 and 1930, the population of Los Angeles rose from 577,000 to 1,238,000, some 136%. The amount of construction stimulated by these factors, along with its rising to seventh place among industrial cities in the United States, made it unique in the nation.²²

In ten years, Los Angeles built a new downtown to the south and west of its previous center. By 1930, the center of downtown had shifted from Second and Spring Streets,

²² Starr, Kevin, *Material Dreams*, 87. This whole chapter, 4, discusses the importance of the oil industry.

its center in 1880, to Hill and Seventh Streets.²³ This is made clear by the number and variety of structures built along Seventh Street's path from Main Street to Flower Street. Retail establishments marched west along Seventh Street, notably the new headquarters of Robinson's Department Store.²⁴ A number of new twelve story buildings lined this and adjacent areas with new buildings whose designs demonstrated the pursuit of an image which complimented their owners' ambitions. Downtown Los Angeles of the 1920's was an essay in Beaux Arts architectural products which utilized historical references to express the client's success and their importance in the business community. Foremost among the firms contributing to this array of new structures was the firm of Curlett and Beelman which produced a number of distinctive buildings along Seventh Street, such as the Union Oil Building (1923) and Barker Brother's flagship store (1924), the Roosevelt Building (1926/27), as well as the Foreman and Clark Building (1928/29), all adding to the luster of the city and surviving to this day.

Oil Booms

Los Angeles of the 1920's was the embodiment of exponential expansion in a number of economic sectors, one of the most important of which was the oil industry. An oil boom which started in downtown in the 1880's was given a tremendous new impetus by discoveries during the 1920s and 1930s in Huntington Beach, Signal Hill and Santa Fe Springs along with finds in the Baldwin Hills, Torrance, Long Beach, and at Venice

²³ Longstreth, Richard, *City Center to Regional Mall*, 29-34. Here Longstreth traces the shifting of major department stores locations to the south and west of their previous locus.

²⁴ Longstreth, *City Center to Regional Mall*, 31. This page notes the general shift of upscale retailing to 7th Street during the 20s.

Beach.²⁵ Southern California became a net exporter of petroleum, shipping it from the expanded ports of Long Beach and San Pedro to the east coast through the Panama Canal which had reopened to commercial traffic in 1923 following World War I. In 1924, oil surpassed agriculture as the leading industry in the state with the Los Angeles basin producing some 230 million barrels of oil and 300 billion cubic feet of natural gas. Los Angeles remained self sufficient in oil until the 1950's. Among the prospering oilmen, was George F. Getty, who had moved to Los Angeles in the early 1900s from Minnesota by way of Oklahoma, already wealthy from his investments in Oklahoma oil fields. His son, J. Paul, already a wealthy oilman in his own right, inherited his father's company in 1929 and continued to expand this oil empire until his death in 1976. Just as George Getty had come originally from the mid-west, Minnesota, thousands of less affluent, but still substantial emigrants came to California from the mid-west during this period. Claud Beelman was of the same background, having been born in Ohio, and having worked, for the most part, there and in Indiana. He would later receive major commissions from George Getty's son J. Paul.

In-migration Dominated by Mid -Westerners

The period from 1900 to 1919 had been a prosperous one for Midwestern farmers who now sold their farms and retired to the salubrious sunshine of Southern California. Unlike the industrial centers of the east, Los Angeles was filled by internal migration. In 1920 Los Angeles had one of the lowest rates of foreign-born citizens of any major American city, its nineteen percent being the lowest save for that of St. Louis and

²⁵ Starr, *Material Dreams*, 85-87.

Baltimore²⁶. This made the city one of largely white Anglo Saxon extraction. Meetings of the Iowa Society would draw up to 125,000 attendees in a park with an area marked off so that each of Iowa's counties had its gathering place²⁷. Mexicans, Chinese, Japanese and African-Americans together formed about fourteen percent of the population at the end of this period in 1930.²⁸

This "Anglo-Saxon" dominance was touted by many city boosters as one of the reasons for the city's rise to greatness. Just as Los Angeles had reinvented itself by means of infrastructure projects; it reinvented itself as an Anglo-Saxon citadel. "Of all the images associated with Los Angeles in the 1920's, legions of white-collar employees working in crowded downtown offices rarely come to mind, but this reality underlay the city's much heralded prosperity".²⁹ Clark Davis suggests that these were the whitest of collars as "The cult of Anglosaxonness which flourished among Los Angeles elites directly affected the ability of the region's young men to find work"³⁰. The striking new offices, which now made up some thirty percent of the structures in downtown Los Angeles, were filled with this privileged group. The designs of the buildings were rooted in architectural historicism, yet another instance of those in power recreating the city in an image which suited their perceptions. In this case, allowing them to equal the quality of

²⁶ Fogolson, Robert, *The Fragmented Metropolis*, 80. From Table 6, drawn from census data.

²⁷ Bliven, Bruce in Starr, *Material Dreams*, 132. This Bliven quote originally is from page 17 *Los Angeles: The City That Is Bacchanalian*.

²⁸ Fogolson, *The Fragmented Metropolis*, 83. From text on this page, Table 9 on preceding page illustrates this point.

²⁹ Davis, Clark in Sitton, *Metropolis in the Making*, 180, Here Davis couples Los Angeles' promise with the concept of a white collar job.

³⁰ Davis in Sitton, *Metropolis in the Making*, 183, Here Davis discusses the confluence of "true Americans" and Anglo Saxon origins as models for the business community with Los Angeles as its bastion.

design in many large American cities to the east, thus demonstrating Los Angeles' civic importance. Money and power was controlled and administered by inhabitants of these buildings. Beelman was the ethnic and cultural kin of those shaping the city's course allowing him easily to relate to and be accepted by Los Angeles's business leaders.

Staying in Business during the Depression

The Great Depression marked the end of the boom in downtown building and with it came the end of Curlett and Beelman's partnership. Curlett became an administrator for the reconstruction of schools after the 1933 earthquake and later for the PWA, after which he was in charge of the U.S. Housing Administration and Federal Housing Projects in the Los Angeles area. Curlett is listed as one of the architects for the new county building in 1933. This is the last record of Curlett as an architect until his death in 1942.³¹

The Great Depression of the thirties was also a transitional period for Beelman both in the organization of his practice and the style of his designs. Like many, he was trying to survive in extremely difficult times. The last major building by Curlett and Beelman was the 1928/29³² Forman and Clark Building located at 404 W. 7th Street. It was the last of the more historically derived designs of Curlett and Beelman, in this case, an interpretation of Spanish Renaissance motifs. What is significant about Forman and Clark was the use of a base/podium above which rise a tower with flanking wings. In the

³¹ Whitney, Henry, *Biographical Dictionary of American Architects* (deceased) 153. The last paragraph of the entry discusses this period.

³² *Los Angeles Times*, Jan. 15, 1928, E 1.

case of Forman and Clark the second floor was the principal sales area for the clothing firm.



FIGURE 1. Forman and Clark Bldg. 1928/29 Beelman Rendering Courtesy Pebble Wilkins.

The idea of a base or podium was not unique to Beelman, but the idea of a base from which an office tower rose was to be carried forward in Beelman's work and used in several Commissions of the 50s and 60s. Elevators and mechanical systems are clustered at the back or west side of the structure in order to create an axis from which the wings projected. With this design Beelman had developed one of his models for a

large building. Be it office or institutional, this format of flanking wings dominated by a service tower which contains mechanical systems at its top was yet another element which was carried forward in Beelman's work of the 1930s and post WWII.



FIGURE 2. Eastern Columbia Building (1930) in 2009 Credle.

During the period 1930-1932, Curlett and Beelman were gradually dissolving their partnership. Beelman's last major project of the twenties and the first attributed to him

alone is the Eastern Columbia Building which was completed in 1930. The preceding June of 1929 Los Angeles Times article notes that Beelman had left on a tour of east coast retail establishments in New York, Boston, Detroit, Philadelphia, Cleveland and Chicago to gain ideas for the structure.³³ The commission, by Adolph Sieroty, reflected Sieroty's desire for a modern design which made the sales floor attractive and also provided a wholesome environment for the employees. The latter concern perhaps sprang from his memories of his own struggle as a young man. Mr. Sieroty was the type of client who allowed Beelman to produce his most successful designs. Sieroty, originally from Poland, came to Los Angeles at age fifteen and started to work establishing his first business, a furniture store on Spring Street, in 1892.³⁴ He like Beelman had begun his own career as an apprentice at age sixteen. Having sponsored Beelman's "ideas" shopping trip in 1929, the result was a design which provided a unique experience for both shoppers and employees.

The announcement of the Eastern Columbia project in The Los Angeles Times states that the construction would cost \$2,000,000 (25,216,570 in 2010 dollars). The building, at 849 N. Broadway, was completed in a remarkable nine months, opening formally on September 12, 1930.³⁵ Beelman once again put the mechanical systems on the roof as at Forman and Clark in this case enclosing them with a neon lit clock tower which provided both identification and advertisement for Eastern Columbia.³⁶ The exterior is

³³ *The Los Angeles Times*, June 2, 1929, E 1.

³⁴ *Los Angeles Times*, Feb.15, 1932, 14.

³⁵ *The Los Angeles Times*, September 12, 1930.

³⁶ *Los Angeles Times*, Mar. 29, 1931, Architecture Upside Down, 15.

finished in colorful highly decorated glazed terra cotta tiles which add more emphasis to the vertical ribbing of the design. The building's color and rooftop clock made it instantly recognizable. This is Beelman's most stunning essay in the Deco style which took its name from the 1925 Paris Exposition des Arts Decoratifs et Industriels Modernes.³⁷

As had been true of the Forman and Clark building, the exterior design and that of the interior were co-ordinated. The color and Deco decoration of Eastern Columbia's exterior was utilized inside. The building is now adaptively reused as condominiums as are some of Beelman's later buildings.

After the completion of Eastern Columbia Beelman created a number of buildings which moved stylistically from Deco to Moderne.³⁸ Leaving behind Deco, Beelman Created designs which were decoratively simpler than Eastern Columbia yet maintained a sense of drama by accenting the vertical, an aspect of Deco design which he retained in his designs until the end of his career. Remaining with Beelman was Herman Spackler who had worked with Curlett and Beelman since 1922. Spackler, like Beelman, had worked his way up from draftsman to designer and remained Beelman's associate until his death in 1952.³⁹ The new Cedars of Lebanon Hospital 4833 Fountain Avenue, now the Scientology Headquarters, was the first of their post Deco designs. Here Beelman

³⁷ Mc Millian, Elizabeth, *Deco and Streamline in Los Angeles in L. A.* Mc Millian discusses this exposition at some length. The show not only luxury items such as Lalique glass whose designs were synonymous with Deco but also a Russian constructivist pavilion.

³⁸ Moderne has flattened surfaces with a horizontal banding of windows.

³⁹ *Los Angeles Times*, Sept. 30, 1952, A 2. This obituary notes that Spackler had worked with Beelman since 1922 when he would have been 27 years old.

brought together, in a new fashion, the elements which were now becoming consistently used tools in his design vocabulary.

At Cedars Hospital major decoration was eliminated by Beelman but the vertical emphasis of Deco remained. The surfaces became flattened and planar. This reductive process began the evolution which eventually Beelman carried forward into his particular iteration of Corporate Moderne style. These flattened surfaces without decoration were separated by a vertical stacking of windows set on the same plane as the sash which is recessed in vertical openings and a feature first emphasized seen in



FIGURE 3. Cedars Hospital (1930) in 1935 South Façade from Fountain Ave Los Angeles Public Library Images.

the Foreman Clark building and more dramatically in Eastern Columbia. The smooth wall surfaces were also reminiscent of the Elks⁴⁰ lodge of the twenties which had large areas of broad flat concrete wall, albeit punctuated with sculpture (see fig. 4). Beelman has put an arch at the central entrance, similar to the Elk's entrance. At Cedars a dramatic double stair leads up to the two story arched entrance. The fenestration rose vertically like Eastern Columbia. Cedars hospital building had the vertical emphasis of Deco without any decoration.



FIGURE 4. Elks Lodge 1925 607 Park View St. Beelman Rendering Courtesy Pebble Wilkins.

⁴⁰ *Society of Architectural Historians Southern California Chapter Newsletter*, July/August 1985, 1.

At the center of the structure is a mechanical tower capped with a peaked roof as at Eastern Columbia. The wings project at an angle allowing a maximum light and air into the interiors, in a manner similar to the concept of the Foreman and Clark Building of 1928/29 (fig.1 page 18).

Cedars embodies the summation of the first steps Beelman took away from both the historicism of the twenties and from Deco. It was, overall, a process of simplification. Decoration became more restrained, and the materials were presented straightforwardly. Concrete, the material chosen, perhaps reflected the economic situation of the era as well as being a long standing interest of Beelman's going back as far as the 1906 design for a concrete house.



FIGURE 5 Hollywood Post Office (1935) Los Angeles Public Library Images.

Following the break with Curlett, Beelman sometimes teamed with other architects sharing commissions, much of it coming from the WPA which encouraged such

collaborations in order to employ as many architects as possible. Once prosperous architects were now happy to have part of a more modest commission. Libraries, schools and federal buildings were the major commissions available during this bleak period. In 1935, Beelman, along with Allison and Allison, was listed as the architect of the new Hollywood Post Office at the Northwest corner of Wilcox and Selma Avenues.⁴¹ The building is a restrained, smooth surface example of Moderne which had a kind of severe, reductive classicism not unlike other federally sponsored buildings of the period. The plan is straightforward with a postal lobby in front and the work areas behind. This formal symmetry had previously been present in Beelman's work and remained a part of his architectural vocabulary until the end of his career. Public entrance was made through a rectilinear portico into the postal patron service area. As with many WPA buildings there is art and decoration. Narrow bands of decoration accent the top of the exterior parapet walls echo that found in Deco. As well, the building is largely of poured in place concrete, an economical choice as was the case with Cedars Hospital.

In 1935 Beelman undertook a number of remodels and additions. He is listed as designing an addition at the Ambassador Hotel and the Utah Street School, the latter work perhaps sent by his former partner who was an administrator for school projects.⁴² Among these works was the remodeling of the Consolidated Building (now the Jewelry Mart) at Sixth and Hill Streets on the southeast corner of Pershing Square. Originally designed in 1908 by Harrison Albright, the Beaux Arts exterior was completely replaced with flat surfaced panels and vertically emphasized fenestration similar to Cedars

⁴¹ *Los Angeles Times*, Nov. 24, 1935, E 1.

⁴² *Los Angeles Times*, Jan 19, 1936, E 1.

hospital.⁴³ This Design was a precursor of the later, very similar remodeling of Symphony Hall on the north side of Pershing Square.



FIGURE 6. Woodbury College (1937) Beelman Rendering Courtesy Pebble Wilkins.

Two important commissions of the late 30s which Beelman obtained further illustrated his continuing design evolution. An important project of the period, both stylistically and as indicative of the image sought by business, was Woodbury College, built in 1937.⁴⁴ It had the sleek horizontality of Moderne in its fenestration and an imposing pylon rising over the entrance with a clock at the top and the name Woodbury College spelled out on the leading edge, not unlike retail designs of the period. As Elizabeth McMillian notes, “style modern as it was first called proved particularly popular with businesses that wanted their buildings to have a fresh contemporary image”.⁴⁵ The building also

⁴³ *Los Angeles Times*, Oct. 13, 1935, D 2.

⁴⁴ *Los Angeles Times*, Jan. 31, 1937, C 11.

⁴⁵ McMillian, *Deco and Streamline in Los Angeles*, 19.

had two other hallmarks of Beelman's work, symmetry and the use of concrete as a finish material. This private business school evidently saw the new style as a good marketing tool. Unfortunately, this structure has since been demolished.



FIGURE 7. MGM Headquarters 1937 Photo 1950 Los Angeles Public Library.

Another significant commission also came to Beelman in 1937, when he was asked to design the MGM Studio executive office building on Grant Street in Culver City.⁴⁶ The design was basically rectilinear and very planar Moderne and as with the Hollywood Post Office, and has similar symmetrical massing. The fenestration of the four story building is vertically emphasized. These windows had some Deco derived ornament the cornice level of each section reminiscent of a similar treatment on the Hollywood Post Office. The Main entrance, as presented in an early rendering, had a semicircular kind

⁴⁶ *Los Angeles Times*, Mar. 14, 1937, E 6.

of Regency⁴⁷ style portico which perhaps was a quotation from the Choragic Monument of Lyssicrates.⁴⁸ This historic reference was replaced in the final design with a stainless steel edged, projecting canopy. Beelman would use this motif in several post WW II buildings. As the building was to cost \$650,000 to \$700,000. dollars⁴⁹, the commission must have been welcome during this period of protracted economic downturn⁵⁰, in fact a Los Angeles Times social page on September 27, 1937 notes that Mr. and Mrs. Beelman had sailed for New York via the Panama Canal on the SS. Santa Rosa.



FIGURE 8. Philharmonic Hall after remodeling by Beelman (1938/39) City of Los Angeles Historic Designation Listing Photo.

⁴⁷ Revival of the English architectural style popular during the late 18th and early 19th centuries before the ascension of Queen Victoria to the throne. It features both classic quotations and planar surfaces. A revival and interpretation of the style was popular in Hollywood during the late 1930s and 1940s, particularly in residential designs of the period.

⁴⁸ This round ancient Greek monument featuring Corinthian columns was erected in commemoration of winning a prize in a Dionysian festival in 335/34 B.C. Measured drawings of it made it an icon of Greek revival style.

⁴⁹ \$9,763,055 to \$10,514,059 in 2010 dollars

⁵⁰ *Los Angeles Times*, Mar. 14, 1937, E 6.

Remodeling also continued to be a mainstay for Beelman. He is noted as the architect for the major remodel of the Auditorium Building⁵¹, at the northeast corner of Fifth and Olive, where the Los Angeles Philharmonic performed. It is cited by Paul Gleye as an example of a building expressing Los Angeles' penchant for modernizing, "becoming the city of the future".⁵²

This also describes the impetus behind the evolution of Beelman' architecture as his stylistic expressions evolved during the 30s and 40s. For the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Beelman resurfaced a 1906 building by Charles F. Whittelsey, who had worked in the office of Adler and Sullivan in Chicago, and recreated it as a planar Moderne structure. It is a portent of the future work by Beelman. Rising from a dark band at street level, there are vertical bands of smooth surfaces. Equally important is the vertically expressed fenestration. These last two elements continue themes first noted in the design of Cedars Hospital (see fig.3 page 22). This is another lost work, a gaping hole diagonally across from the Biltmore Hotel and to the north of Pershing Square.

In 1940, Beelman designed the research laboratory for Cedars of Lebanon Hospital where he had earlier designed the main building of the hospital.⁵³ In 1942, he is mentioned as a collaborating architect for the Rosehill Courts public housing project.

⁵¹ *Los Angeles Times*, Mar. 27, 1938, E 1.

⁵² Gleye, Paul, *The Architecture of Los Angeles*, 110-111. Here Gleye illustrates with text and photographs the extent of the renovations.

⁵³ *Los Angeles Times*, Apr. 21, 1940, E 2.

This was a modest frame and stucco design of only one hundred units. This project is a utilitarian design without any stylistic pretensions yet planned to provide tenants with as much outdoor space as possible. This commission was, perhaps, sent Beelman's way by his former partner Curlett, who was local federal housing co-coordinator.



FIGURE 9. Long Beach Hospital Ca 1945 U.S. Archives.

During the Second World War, Beelman designed military hospitals in Corona and in Long Beach (1940-42). The latter is on a site on the former Bixby Ranch land.⁵⁴ These were the more severe, planar, and starkly utilitarian descendants of the design for Cedars Hospital. As can be seen in figure 9, Beelman also retains a preference for symmetry in the building's layout. Beelman entered and left the Depression/World War II period with hospital design.

⁵⁴ *Los Angeles Times*, Dec. 16, 1942, 13.

In terms of development of style the reductive smoothness as represented by the 1929/30 Cedars Hospital and of the 1940/42 Long beach Naval Hospital has become an ongoing motif. Also carried forward are the vertical fenestration and formal symmetry of these designs. As a link with work of the 1930s and 1940s it is notable that his work of the 1950s had as an early commission an addition on Children's Hospital whose design contained these elements. This return to a hospital design, while coincidental, was the product of a new economic boom in Southern California one which would enable Beelman to design a number of large buildings and further the development of his own design vocabulary.

Chapter 3

Return to Boom times, the 1950s and 1960's

The Post WWII boom had some of the same economic components as that of the 1920's, construction, both domestic and commercial, industrial growth and infrastructure expansion to meet the needs of an increasingly motorized population. It was fueled, as was growth in the 1920's, by a massive in migration from other parts of the United States. War industries had drawn thousands of workers from the rest of the country. In a survey in 1943 more than 75% of the defense workers at North American aviation said that they would like to remain in California after the war.⁵⁵ This migration was more ethnically diverse than that of the twenties, yet the bulk of the city's new residents were Caucasian. In a truism which has become a cliché, it is said that the tens of thousands of servicemen who saw Southern California on their way to war came back to stay afterwards. From 1940 to 1950 the population of Los Angeles County grew from 2,785,643 to 4,151,687, adding 1,366,044 inhabitants, a 49% increase, and a number greater than the population of Los Angeles in 1930; and by 1960 to 6,038,771, or 116.78% increase from the 1940 figure.⁵⁶

Once the war was over, building housing for the new arrivals became its own self feeding boom just as had been true in the 1920s. By 1950 there were some 137,900

⁵⁵ Starr, *Material Dreams*, 156.

⁵⁶ From U.S. Censuses 1940, 1950, 1960 Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, the percentile computations are mine.

workers in the construction industry.⁵⁷ Enormous subdivisions, such as Lakewood, were planned as small cities with commercial as well as residential areas. New factories were built to provide products for local consumption and for export. Employment in automobile assembly and related industries grew to 16,300 workers in 1950. Highways were built for the increasing number of cars, the Arroyo Seco Parkway, which was begun before the war, was expanded; marking the first leg of what would become a network of freeways. Oil continued to be an important industry growing from 16,000 workers in 1950 to 17,300 in 1960 even as oil production in the Southern California area gradually declined.⁵⁸

Defense plants created during the Second World War continued to expand with the Korean and Cold Wars. Aircraft and related industries employed some 85,600 workers in 1950; a decline from the peak war year of 1944 when 230,000 had been employed.⁵⁹ This proved a brief hiatus. Particularly stimulated by the Cold War, the aircraft industry transformed into the aero-space industry, employing 333,067 workers by 1961. Aerospace remained a mainstay of the Southern California economy until the early 1990's. During the war years Los Angeles became the second largest garment manufacturing center, growing some 475%.⁶⁰ Southern California from 1950 to 1960 experienced growth both economic and in the city's physical expanse which more than equaled the frantic expansion of the 1920s. This new period of growth further

⁵⁷ Arnold, Robert, *The California Economy, 1947-1980*, Table V-1 which enumerated the workers in various industries.

⁵⁸ Bank of America, *Focus on Los Angeles-Long Beach Metropolitan Area*, 9.

⁵⁹ Starr, *Embattled Dreams*, 123.

⁶⁰ Starr, *Embattled Dreams*, p.153.

emphasized the development of Los Angeles as a horizontal, automobile oriented city. This added a new chapter to a trend which defined the city. The San Fernando Valley, West Los Angeles and the South Bay filled with buildings just as downtown had in the 1920's. This new boom enabled Claud Beelman again to find commissions for major commercial buildings. The most important of these commissions followed the axis of Wilshire Boulevard which enjoyed a second period of development along the section from downtown to Westwood during the 50s and 60s. In fact, the stretch from Virgil to Crenshaw Boulevard is a compendium of Beelman's work in the 50s and 60s, just as Seventh Street had been in the 1920s.

Old Clients, New Buildings, and a Return to Boom Times

Having maintained his ties to the business community and his practice through the Depression and World War II years, Beelman was positioned to flourish with the new boom. The designs of the commissions during this period each mark a further development and utilization of a design vocabulary bringing forward floor plans from earlier work, planar elements reminiscent of the designs of the 30s and 40s, as well as the still symmetrical block massing which evolved in the 50s. All of these became elements of Beelman's final style, his iteration of Corporate Moderne.

The first Post War period projects were small to mid-range in size, commercial and retail, and were often for the same clients he served in the 1920s. Examples from this period include two retail stores, a bank, a small scale headquarters building, and a major hospital edition. These included commissions from old clients such as Barker Brothers and Foreman and Clark. When Beelman returned to commercial work in 1948

and 1949 he designed two Barker Brothers branch stores. Curlett and Beelman had designed their flagship store on Seventh Street in 1925. On these later projects he worked with Herman Spackler, who had been with him since his days at Curlett and Beelman and was listed as “associate” on many of the firm’s drawings from 1940 to 1953.⁶¹

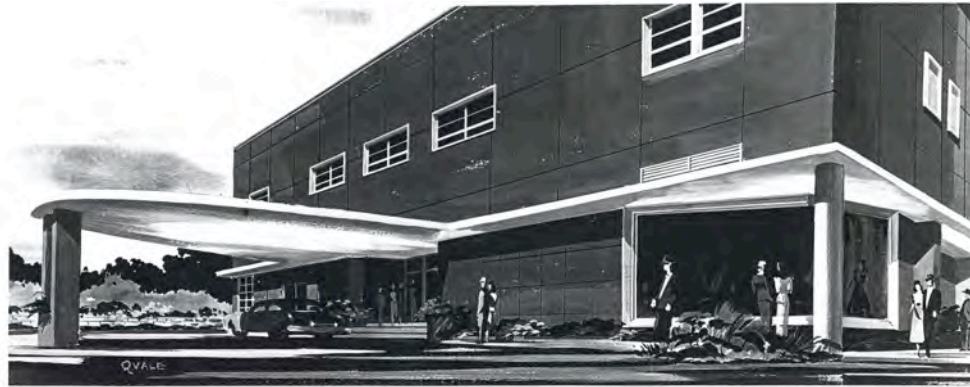
Stylistically, Beelman returned to one whose surface was sleek and planar. As befits structures of two stories, which most were, there is a horizontality to the composition, with vertical elements reminiscent of Woodbury College used as an advertizing focus for the entrance. The massing is in block like forms. This was a reductive style which included elements of the commercial Moderne which developed in Los Angeles in the late 1930s. This new sleekness and simplicity demonstrated Beelman’s awareness of current taste in the business community which had evolved from Deco to Moderne during the period from the 1930s to the 1940’s and were now seeking a current expression of modernity. As ever, Beelman always remained carefully attuned to his commercial client’s need to present their establishments in the latest and most fashionable style. As noted by Gleye, and as the designs of the two Barker Brothers demonstrate, this was not only characteristic of commercial development, but of design in Los Angeles in general. It is this awareness of, and attention to style and current taste which further propelled Beelman’s stylistic evolution.

⁶¹ Copies of renderings from the period often carry the notation of Herman Spackler as designer.

One Barker Brothers store was part of the then fashionable and prosperous Crenshaw district.⁶² Based on the rendering, it showed a building with a sleek horizontality and an advertising pylon projecting above the second story at the street entrance corner of the building, a specific echo of his design for Woodbury College and of many commercial structures built in Los Angeles in the 1930s. A similar theme of horizontal emphasis with an imposing advertising pylon was also followed in the design for the Pasadena store.⁶³ This branch also had a port cochere at the side to accommodate those arriving, as most did, by automobile. Beelman continued to respond to the ever increasing primacy of this mode of transportation in Los Angeles.

⁶² *Los Angeles Times*, Mar. 22, 1949, 5. This is the announcement for the groundbreaking. Among other points it notes that this will be one of their largest suburban stores.

⁶³ *Los Angeles Times*, January 13, 1949, A 2. An announcement of groundbreaking, and an article in the *Times*, July 31, 1949 announcing the opening notes that this is the twelfth of Barker Bros. suburban stores.



BARKER BROS., PASADENA

FIGURE 10. Beelman Rendering showing Porte Cochere 1949 Courtesy Pebble Wilkins.



FIGURE 11. Don Lee/Mutual Broadcasting Building (1947/48) East Facade in 2009. Credle.

In 1947-48, showing that he had not lost touch with the entertainment industry, Beelman was commissioned to design the first structure specifically intended for television broadcasting, the Don Lee-Mutual Broadcasting Building at 1313 Vine St., now the Pickford Center for Motion Picture Study.⁶⁴ The design is largely horizontal with

⁶⁴ www.oscars.org/facilities/pickford.html 6/21/06

symmetrical block massing. The vertical emphasis of the entrance is reminiscent of the Portland Cement Headquarters façade of about the same time, although pared and attenuated. (See Fig. 12 page 37) Don Lee-Mutual uses the geometry of the design in a more playful manner making it the building's decoration. These thematic elements show their debt to Beelman's recent commercial work. Within the composition of box-like elements there is the glass of the entrance hall, which is placed behind pierced pylons, opening up an otherwise closed structure. This larger scale endeavor was a portent of more important commissions to come.

For the design of the now demolished 1949 Southwestern Portland Cement Company,⁶⁵ Beelman revisited themes which combined the smooth surfaces of his Hollywood Post Office of 1935 (fig.5 page 24) as well as the restrained decoration of the MGM headquarters of 1937 (fig.7 page 27). There was a penthouse on the roof for staff, a feature which would recur in later, larger office buildings. The front façade had a recessed portico with the six fluted pilaster like columns between which was vertically stacked fenestration. The building's grand façade gave it a more imposing presence than might otherwise be the case in a three story building. Overall, it was a formal design of, what else, poured in place concrete a material favored by Beelman and which advertized the client's product.

⁶⁵ *Los Angeles Times*, Mar. 27, 1949, E.1.



FIGURE 12. Portland Cement Building Wilshire Boulevard Beelman Rendering Courtesy Pebble Wilkins.



FIGURE 13. McKesson and Robbins Warehouse Rendering 1950 Los Angeles Public Library.

After the revisitation of themes from the 1930s in the Portland Cement Headquarters, Beelman returned to the exploration of block massing in a more horizontal form in the McKesson and Robbins pharmaceutical warehouse of 1950-51 on Vineland Avenue in

North Hollywood.⁶⁶ The nature of the building dictated horizontality, yet at the corner entrance to the offices rectilinear block forms are used to emphasize the pedestrian entrance. Further emphasizing the horizontality a canopy wraps around the corner and across the front of the building. This kind of massing first seen in the design of the Don Lee-Mutual studios and the Pasadena Barker Brothers branch is now a well developed theme which is utilized in another design in 1950.

The 1950 Security First Bank branch at Bedford and Wilshire in Beverly Hills (fig 14) was one of the last small projects. It is a boxy structure wrapping around the corner with the horizontally emphasized fenestration akin to the Barker Brothers branches (fig.10 page 36). There was a parking lot in back⁶⁷. This provision was now a necessity for a successful commercial development in Los Angeles. Reflecting the booming 1950s it was noted that this was the 133rd Security First branch to be opened in Southern California. This design is both planar and reductive, a direction Beelman was increasingly headed.

⁶⁶ *Los Angeles Times*, Feb. 11 1951, E2.

⁶⁷ *Los Angeles Times*, Dec. 17, 1950, 9. A rendering lists Herman Spackler as Associate Architect



FIGURE 14. Security First Bank (1950) Beelman Rendering Courtesy Pebble Wilkins

In 1951 the Children's Hospital commissioned a major addition, a million-dollar project which provided clinics and twenty-two new beds for patients.⁶⁸ The design was accomplished using block like elements similar to the smaller projects, but now on an enhanced scale. The central service tower and massing of the structure would be echoed later in the Tidewater Oil Headquarters (fig.37 page 84), while the vertical fenestration harkens back to both Cedars Hospital of 1935 (fig.3 page 22) and the Long Beach Naval Hospital of 1940/42 (fig.9 page 30). There were four wings projecting from the central block which formed an X. This addition has since been demolished for an even larger hospital building.

⁶⁸ *Los Angeles Times*, Aug. 20, 1951, A 2.



FIGURE 15. Children's Hospital (1951) Dick Whittington Photo Courtesy Pebble Wilkins.

In another downtown commission, Beelman, continuing in association with Herman Spackler, designed the Savoy Garage in 1952.⁶⁹ Its large cubic blocks also would later be echoed in the Tidewater Oil headquarters building, albeit more gracefully. In short, the massing of these early post war projects was an element retained in Beelman's later office buildings. With their restrained rectilinear blocks and smooth surfaces, these relatively modest projects presaged Beelman's expression of his own unique Corporate Moderne style as later presented in his larger office buildings. Equally importantly, the garage commission reflected the ongoing struggle to solve downtown's parking shortage⁷⁰ and was further recognition of the importance of the automobile, Los Angeles' favored mode of transportation, as a major consideration in local architecture.

⁶⁹ *Los Angeles Times*, Jan. 30, 1952, A 2.

⁷⁰ Longstreth, *City Center to Regional Mall*, The early stages of this problem are discussed in pages 41-54.

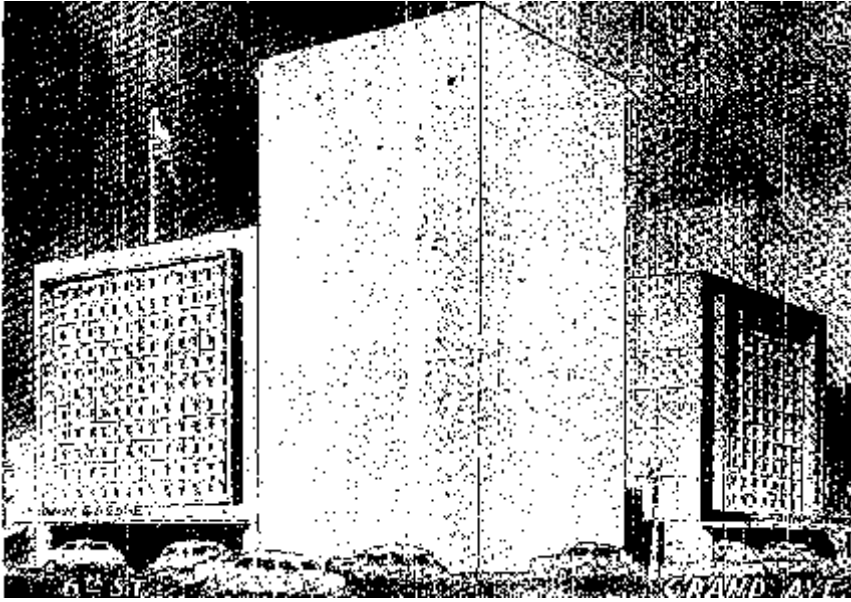


FIGURE16. Savoy Garage (1952) Los Angeles Times.

These newer approaches to form and surface were joined with other elements developed earlier in his career shaping his approach to the larger post war designs. In terms of plan, the office and institutional buildings of Beelman's postwar period had their origins in his corporate work of the 1920s and early 1930s echoing both the Forman and Clark Building and Cedars Hospital and were joined with the block like massing of commissions during the 1950s as found in the Don Lee Broadcasting, Children's Hospital, and the Savoy Garage projects. Beginning early in his career, Beelman had been interested in the uses of concrete as both a finish and as a structural material. Greg Brandow, of the structural engineering firm of Brandow and Johnston, commented that, in larger buildings from the 1920s forward, Beelman designed buildings which utilized steel framing, had concrete cores, and a sheathing of poured in place concrete outside the steel frame.⁷¹ Brandow further explained that this was a method used extensively in the 1920s, but had been superseded by other methods in the 1950s. In

⁷¹ From an oral interview with Mr. Greg Brandow at Mr. Brandow's offices on Dec. 13, 2011.

the interview he commented that interest in the use of this method was now reviving as it was seismically quite sound. Mechanical systems were contained in efficient vertical shafts culminating in rooftop housing most notably in the Forman and Clark building and at Eastern Columbia. As noted earlier, Claud Beelman continued to utilize in his exterior treatments of his larger projects the verticality of the Art Deco, as expressed in his highly decorated Eastern Columbia (fig. 2 page 19), and the horizontality of Moderne, as in Woodbury College (fig.6 page 26) when dealing with smaller structures. In the 1950s his buildings became increasingly pared down and rectilinear with block like, symmetrical massing. These more restrained and reductive buildings of this period were a further step in the evolution of his personal Corporate Moderne idiom. This vocabulary which combined elements both long standing and newer is reflected in and reaches its culmination in the commissions from 1951 to 1963 along Wilshire Boulevard.

Wilshire Boulevard, Emblematic Axis of Los Angeles and of Beelman's Work in the 1950s and 1960s

Wilshire Boulevard's development was a major expression of the automobile's shaping of the commercial life of the city and in the enhancement of Los Angeles' particular pattern of horizontal development. First to come, in the teens, were businesses specifically for servicing autos. Later, in the 20s, the automobile shaped the grocery business and finally retail stores as they were designed for the convenience of the customers, most of whom were arriving by auto. In retailing, the stores were being built with an eye to accommodating the auto. At first there were drives in, allowing the customer to park at the front of the store or in a court or to eat a meal in their car. Los

Angeles also became a leader in the reconfiguration of the grocery business. Later, new shopping areas while facing the street had parking behind them. Some stores, such as Bullocks Wilshire in 1929, developed elegant rear entrances which were more important than the street entrance. Although there were large plate glass display windows on the street façade these were often enlarged to appeal to motorists as well as pedestrians. There was still a major street entrance even though most of their customers were arriving at the newly emphasized back door.⁷²

The auto became the emblem of individual mobility and autonomy. Those coming to Los Angeles for a new way of life became the first to live in the auto age. They might have come for reasons as different as health or retirement and increasingly for business, but their lives were now shaped by the automobile. The automobile gave an even more individual bent to a city of new beginnings and opportunities. Few areas in the city are as emblematic of the changes taking place in this period than Wilshire Boulevard from Westlake to Fairfax Avenue. From 1920 to 1940, this area became a commercial hub whose development depended on the auto. In designing commercial buildings in the area, the architects were in touch with the most current fashion, designing structures which ranged from Spanish Revival to Deco and finally Streamline Moderne. Just as automobiles developed new body styles, with a new model every year, the structures designed to accommodate their presence also reflected the latest style.⁷³

⁷² This is essentially Richard Longstreth's thesis in *The Drive-In, The Supermarket and the Transformation of Commercial Space in Los Angeles, 1914-1941* and in his further exploration of the automobile's influence on Los Angeles development as expanded in his *City Center to Regional Mall*.

⁷³ Roderick, Kevin, *Wilshire Boulevard*, 121 to 143 traces this development along with comments on architectural styles.

As with so many Los Angeles stories, one must begin with land speculation. This is not atypical in the development of American cities, it is however a quintessentially Los Angeles story. Wilshire Boulevard from Westlake to Fairfax is the result of two distinct personalities each offering the drama and quirkiness necessary for a good Los Angeles tale. These two personalities reflected the boosterism and self promotion which were Los Angeles' hallmarks and were the kind of businessmen whose ventures provided Beelman with opportunities for commissions. With a gap of about twenty-five years between the initiation of their particular schemes 1895 and the early 1920s respectively, H. Gaylord Wilshire and A.W. Ross shaped Wilshire Boulevard's mid section. These two phases of development had distinct characteristics, the first residential, the second commercial.

H. Gaylord Wilshire was the scion of Cincinnati money and society with the beginnings of a Harvard education, an avowed socialist and inveterate self-promoter and huckster, in short all the credentials to become a true Angelino. In particular, his mid western origin was similar to so many Anglo Angelinos, including Beelman, who, like Wilshire, was also from Ohio. Wilshire came out of his semi-retirement as one of California's first grapefruit growers to develop land on the western edge of the old Pueblo of Los Angeles land grant. In December of 1895, he filed a plan for an area west of Westlake Park to be developed as an exclusive residential area⁷⁴. Wilshire named the principal east-west street after himself and pointedly made sure that no rail right of way would be granted along the street. This was to be the preserve of aristocratic carriages and later of horseless carriages.

⁷⁴ Roderick, *Wilshire Boulevard*, 16.

This exclusivity was emphasized by the important Angelinos who built homes in a variety of styles in the new development among: them Gen. Harrison Gray Otis, editor of the Los Angeles Times, Edwin T. Earl, owner of the rival Los Angeles Express, Chicago grain merchant Hiram Higgins and Earl C. Anthony, owner of the Packard dealership.⁷⁵ This trend toward diverse architectural styles would be one of the hallmarks of development along Wilshire Boulevard with each newly popular style making its appearance. The boulevard pushed west to Western and later to Irving Boulevard, named for banker Irving Hellman who lived at Catalina and Wilshire across from his brother. The real estate project was off to a propitious start and continued to prosper. This westward surge was made more possible by the increasing use of the automobile.

From 1920 onward, the development of Wilshire Boulevard was increasingly the result of automobile accessibility. This accessibility helped Wilshire to become a recreational area for the Los Angeles establishment as well as for the film community. The chief venue for this was the Ambassador Hotel which opened on January 1, 1921.⁷⁶ With facilities ranging from golf to swimming to horseback riding as well as elegant boutiques and the Coconut Grove Nightclub, this was the apex of Los Angeles entertainment. It was a must for visitors to the city at least to drop by even if they could not stay there. The list of guests who did stay there is impressive: six presidents and innumerable celebrities from Lindbergh to Einstein were lodged or were entertained there. This “country” resort increasingly reconfigured its grounds to make access by automobile as

⁷⁵ Hines, Thomas S. in *The Grand American Avenue 1850-1920*, Chapter 12 on Wilshire Boulevard, 316-320. This traces the early residential development and the variety of styles.

⁷⁶ Roderick, *Wilshire Boulevard*, p. 55.

convenient as possible. The parade of limousines arriving for special events became a local spectacle.⁷⁷ In 1935 Beelman was to receive a commission to make renovations and additions to The Ambassador.⁷⁸



FIGURE 17. Talmadge Apartments 1923-24 Photo 1924 Los Angeles Public Library.

This elegant lifestyle also extended to residential building. In 1923/24 Curlett and Beelman designed “The Talmadge” an elegant apartment building for the screen star Norma Talmadge. This 12-story building, at the corner of Wilshire Boulevard and Brendo Street, was a product of Curlett and Beelman’s reliance on historical styles as reference, in this case Georgian, and typical of their historicism of the 1920s. It remains a symbol of early elegance along Wilshire.

⁷⁷ Roderick, *Wilshire Boulevard*, 58-61. Here Roderick discusses the importance of The Ambassador in Los Angeles social life.

⁷⁸ *Los Angeles Times*, Oct 27, 1935, D 1.

The developer who realized the increasing importance of the automobiles and the potential of the central Wilshire corridor was A. W. Ross, a man quite different from Wilshire but, perhaps, more persistent and ultimately more visionary in his understanding of Los Angeles. He was, like Wilshire and Beelman, a mid westerner, hailing from Iowa. According to Ralph Hancock, Ross calculated the growing importance of the automobile in Los Angeles and its role in transporting shoppers to stores. Ross realized that within a four mile radius of Wilshire Boulevard between La Brea and Fairfax there were a large number of wealthy and middle class shoppers.⁷⁹ By 1936 some half million people with a purchasing power of \$600,000,000 lived within Ross' four mile radius.⁸⁰

In the early 1920s, he bought a tract of eighteen acres on the south side of Wilshire at \$3000 per acre, a purchase which made his friends think him mad. It was derisively dubbed "Ross's bean patch". This was not the final word, however. After a battle to have the land zoned commercial, which was rebuffed in a referendum, Ross resorted to individual appeals for rezoning or "spot" zoning.⁸¹ This ultimately gave Ross more control over each project, with the property along Wilshire gradually being zoned commercial one plot at a time. By 1929, this stretch of Wilshire, now described in the press as the "Miracle Mile", had become a major shopping destination. In discussing Wilshire Boulevard's importance in the context of Los Angeles' neighborhoods development Longstreth notes, "The Miracle Mile codified and intensified those

⁷⁹ Hancock, Ralph, *Fabulous Boulevard*, 151-152.

⁸⁰ Longstreth, *City Center to Suburban Mall*, 128.

⁸¹ Hines, p. 323.

characteristics that made Wilshire so important to Los Angeles: a linear structure, punctuated by freestanding towers that rose amid low-density development, the whole anchored to a broad street where traffic flowed unimpeded--- a place that was easy to reach, that always seemed busy but never crowded, a place permeated with natural light and air, a place that fused the best qualities of Main Street and metropolis, evoking memories of both but unlike either one”.⁸²

During the period 1925 to 1939, the boulevard itself had changed. Starting in the early 1920s distinctive “Wilshire” streetlamps had been installed. Wilshire and Western became the busiest intersection in the nation according to a survey in 1928 with some 74,755 cars passing through. A traffic signal had been installed and the novelty of painted lines to demark lanes of traffic had been introduced. By 1931, the traffic lights from Westlake to Fairfax had been synchronized to ensure an orderly flow of traffic.⁸³

⁸² Longstreth, *City Center to Suburban Mall*, 133.

⁸³ Hancock, *Fabulous Boulevard*, 238.



FIGURE18. Wilshire Boulevard Looking East on the South Side ca 1948 Showing Retail Development in the Miracle Mile Los Angeles Public Library.

By the end of World War II, Wilshire Boulevard had become a major shopping district and an important route to the Westside. Comprised of a band of commercial development flanked on either side by residential, Thomas Hines considers Wilshire to have become the linear city envisioned by the Spanish urbanist Arturo Soria y Mata⁸⁴. It was definitely not the residence-lined Champs Elysee envisioned by some at the turn of the twentieth century and of those who voted against zoning the area commercial. Even though residences did not dominate Wilshire, residential development continued in

⁸⁴ Hines, in *The Grand American Avenue 1850-1920*, 311.

adjacent areas. In 1934 Beelman created a model home for the Carthay Circle development which later became Musso's Restaurant. This was started by one of the owners of Hollywood's Musso and Franks.⁸⁵ Development of Carthay Circle to the southeast of the intersection of San Vicente and Wilshire Boulevards had residential and commercial components.

Ross' vision became a reality while Wilshire's residential emphasis faded. Wilshire Boulevard had been shaped by developers' ambitions, and the increasing use of the automobile. Its flanking structures represented every major architectural style from the 1890s to 1939. This parade of styles was echoed in Beelman's own career with his own progression from historically derived designs to Moderne. It was a record of where Anglo Los Angeles had been and a portent of the direction in which the city's development was moving, both in terms of architecture and in urban growth. As Harriett von Breton noted, "Ever since the California ranchos became cities, Wilshire Boulevard has veined its way from success to failure to success surviving politicians' manipulations, land speculators' exploitation, and even the Depression, it has stretched its way to the Pacific from the heartzone of the city and has been a symbol of tenacious and spirited growth and development".⁸⁶

From the 1950's until about 1970 Wilshire Boulevard experienced another period of commercial growth. Seeking to escape the congestion of downtown, but still maintain a central location, new office buildings were built in significant numbers from 1950 into the 1970s marking a shift from retail commercial to office construction. This post war period

⁸⁵ Roderick, *Wilshire Boulevard*, 137.

⁸⁶ Gebhard, David and Harriette von Breton, *Los Angeles in the 1930s*, 2.

represented a new stage in Wilshire Boulevard's development. Insurance Companies were among the most numerous with the 1946-48 Prudential Company western headquarters being an early example. Its asymmetrical massing and horizontal fenestration reference the International Style. Its designers were Walter Wurdeman and Welton Beckett who contributed to the Los Angeles cityscape starting in the 1930s.



FIGURE 19. Prudential Headquarters 5757 Wilshire Boulevard 1946-48 Wurdeman and Beckett Photo Youarehere.com.

From 1956 until 1963, Beelman added notable structures on Wilshire, particularly concentrated in the segment from Virgil to Crenshaw. Firms such as Getty Oil and the insurance companies Continental and Pacific Indemnity commissioned structures during this period. These buildings represented a final flowering of Beelman's architectural development and are products of this second commercial phase in the development of the boulevard. These were the kind of business opportunities which Beelman had

cultivated from the beginning of his career and which still provided lucrative commissions. The first of the post war office building commissions along Wilshire were the result of a familiar story along the boulevard, speculative development, in this case the 1951 Mariposa triple tower building complex for the Tishman organization of New York.

Tishman Triple Tower Building

By 1950, a prosperity, equal to that of the twenties, had finally returned and Beelman was ready to work with the business community. In a newly evolved style, he resumed efficiently turning out office designs with flexible floor plans which were now sheathed in sleek materials. For the Tishman building at 3440-3450-3460 Wilshire Boulevard, Beelman's first major post war commercial building, the style remained smooth and reductive. As he had been since the demise of Curlett and Beelman, Herman Spackler⁸⁷ was still Beelman's chief assistant.

Built at a cost of \$12 million (\$99,605,860. in 2010 dollars), Norman Tishman is quoted as saying, "We have selected this business site in Wilshire Center district because it is close to, but not in the city center congestion".⁸⁸ This was recognition of downtown's deficiencies and of the assets of the Wilshire corridor. These attributes were the ones which led to a post war surge of office development along the boulevard thus providing Beelman with commissions.

⁸⁷ *Los Angeles Times*, Sept. 30, 1952, In Spackler's obituary he is specifically described as an associate architect with Beelman Associates and given credit for his contribution to the designs of the Tishman Building and Children's Hospital.

⁸⁸ *Los Angeles Times*, Mar. 2, 1950, A 2.



Figure 20. Triple Mariposa Building under Construction Showing Partial Concrete Sheathing and Areas Left for Curtain Wall. Brandow Archives.

The Tishman Buildings, at Mariposa and Wilshire, was designed as a group of three glass and marble rectilinear shafts, each containing 150,000 sq. ft. of usable floor space unified by a common base which contained retail spaces and to the rear parking for 1400 cars. The design marked the intersection of the verticality of earlier designs with a feature not found in Beelman's other work. The curtain wall does not entirely wrap around the building it is punctuated at the corners and on the east and west facades of each building with vertical bands of limestone. The ribbing of the curtain wall areas also adds a vertical element.



FIGURE 21. Tishman Triple Buildings at Mariposa (1951/52) Wilshire Facades 2009 Credle.

This is an early and isolated use by Beelman of a glazing similar to the curtain wall construction of several contemporary International Style office buildings in the east. Beelman's emphasis on the vertical can still be seen in four strong vertical areas of stone which interrupt the curtain wall on the east and west facades.

The Lever Brothers headquarters, for example, was under construction in New York at the same time.⁸⁹ This early partial use in Los Angeles of a fenestration which appears to be curtain wall construction perhaps reflected the influence of Beelman's New York City based client.

⁸⁹ Kahn, Hasan-Uddin, *International Style*, 122.



FIGURE 22. Leaver House New York by Gordon Bunshaft of Skidmore Owings and Merrill 1948-52 Photo SAH BlogSpot January19, 2010.

The more block like massing used here further developed a theme in common with Beelman's smaller scale projects of the late 40s and 50s as well as larger commissions such as the Savoy Garage (fig.16 p.42). The site plan is efficient, combining offices, retail, and that most necessary element in Los Angeles, parking to the rear. As Tishman noted, an ever growing need which could be provided more easily along Wilshire. The linear development of the boulevard provided the access which downtown lacked.

Even a change in partners did not alter Beelman's overall design direction as commissions after the Tishman triple building at Mariposa returned to a more strongly vertical emphasis reminiscent of his earlier work from the preceding twenty years. In 1953, after Spackler's sudden death,⁹⁰ Robert E. Langdon Jr. and Ernest Wilson, two USC graduates, who had previously formed their own fledgling firm, joined Beelman, creating a renewed Beelman and Associates. This partnership lasted until Beelman's debilitating automobile accident of 1961. Beelman chose Langdon and Wilson based on the advice of his accountant according to Greg Brandow.⁹¹ Langdon and Wilson and their wives were invited by Beelman and his wife Ann to their Beverly Glen home, which at her request, reflected Colonial Williamsburg not modernity.⁹² Over an evening of canasta the idea of their joining Beelman was broached.⁹³ Langdon and Wilson were trained at USC during the late forties by professors who were very much aware of the International style, William Pereira who began teaching there in 1949 being among them. In the 1950s Pereira joined Charles Luckman his fellow University of Illinois classmate, producing the CBS Television City in 1952 and in 1956-58 the IBM headquarters at 3424 Wilshire Boulevard at Mariposa to the east across Mariposa from

⁹⁰ *Los Angeles Times*, Sept. 30, 1952, A 2. This obituary notes that Spackler had worked for Beelman since 1922, when he would have been 27 years old.

⁹¹ Oral Interview with Greg Brandow Aug.28, 2006.

⁹² *Los Angeles Times*, Jun.8, 1952, J 32.

⁹³ Oral interview with Mrs. Shirley Wilson Sept. 6, 2006.

Beelman's Tishman Triple Tower building.⁹⁴ Its honeycomb of concrete is markedly different from the neighboring Beelman building.



FIGURE 23. IBM Building 3424 Wilshire Boulevard at Mariposa Luckman and Pereira 1956-58 Photo Youarehere.com.

⁹⁴ Pacific Coast Architectural Database ID 67, <https://digital.lib.washington.edu/architect/architects/67/> , 1/3/2012.

Yet while Langdon and Wilson were associated with Beelman the only evidence of their exposure to the ideas of the international style are a tendency toward reductive simplicity in the work of the firm and which perhaps only amplified a course on which Beelman was already set. Beelman's work from 1945 to 1963 demonstrated a continuity of elements brought forward from his work since the end of the Curlett and Beelman partnership.

During this last period these characteristics were further refined and exude a restrained richness guided by Beelman's own well-developed taste. All of this was developed without the pretext of the more rigid aesthetic credo espoused by International Style architects. What was evident was a dedication to high quality. This reflected Beelman's roots as an architect trained in the drafting room. The evidence can be seen firsthand in the drawings from the Brandow Archives. Those who worked with him found him a taskmaster in his pursuit of high quality.⁹⁵ Langdon and Wilson remained Beelman's partners until 1961 after which they refounded their own firm which produced corporate architecture in a curtain wall style derived more directly from International Style aesthetics.⁹⁶ This exterior expression was markedly different from the Corporate Moderne exteriors they produced while associated with Beelman. Beelman went his own way, not embracing the new style as he had previously done with earlier stylistic developments.

⁹⁵ Oral interview with Mrs. Earnest Wilson Sept. 6, 2006.

⁹⁶ Reprint from *Southwest Builder and Contractor*, August 25, 1965 courtesy Pebble Wilkins. This reprint used by Langdon and Wilson as promotional material speaks of their realizing the opportunity presented by working with Beelman. This article also has illustration showing the style of their designs, which is more in the curtain wall idiom.

Not the International Style

While having mentioned the International style in connection with the Tishman buildings and Langdon and Wilson's architectural education a brief discussion of its definition serves to demonstrate Beelman's lack of response to this new architectural movement. The International Style was first defined by Philip Johnson and Russell Hitchcock for their seminal 1932 show at the Museum of Modern Art, New York. Three cardinal rules had to be met in order for an architectural work to be included in architecture of this genre. There must be an expression of volume as opposed to mass, a balance to the composition as differentiated from one based on preconceived symmetry and finally the absence of applied ornament.⁹⁷ Beelman's work in the 50s and 60s was typified only by the last. In discussing the means by which the International style became the aesthetic expression of post World War II American business, William Jordy begins with an examination of the PSFS Building in Philadelphia which was built before the war and was included in Johnson and Hitchcock's MOMA show. Jordy believes that the emphasis on technology and efficiency, without reference to the social impetus behind the style at its European inception, was the primary means by which George Howe convinced his conservative banker client, Mr. James M. Wilcox, that the design of the PSFS building should depart from tradition and embrace the new aesthetic. Howe emphasized that the building should be functional and ultra practical.⁹⁸ This argument resonated with Wilcox of PSFS thus giving insight into the kind of presentation by which the International style increasingly was made the chosen aesthetic of post war

⁹⁷ Hitchcock, Henry Russell with Philip Johnson, *The International Style*, IV, V and VI.

⁹⁸ Jordy, William, *American Buildings and their Architects*, The Impact of European Modernism in the Mid Twentieth Century, vol. 5, 90-91.

corporate America. Howe further emphasized that by adhering to these guidelines, the building would be emblematic of a movement which represented the future of architecture and by inference the progressive and forward looking image which American business liked to present. As noted earlier the desire to present a progressive image was prevalent in Los Angeles as well.

This emphasis on the technical and practical was furthered in the post war period by Mies van der Rohe. His architecture was the visual embodiment of the application of technology albeit in a custom product. Sheathed in metal and glass, Mies' structures became a standard for corporate architecture.⁹⁹ The firm of Skidmore, Owens, and Merrill became the exponents par excellence of the metal and glass sheathed corporate office building. Jordy notes that their Lever House (fig. 22 page 56) fostered a public acceptance of the style.¹⁰⁰ Interestingly, Charles Luckman was on the board of Lever Brothers at the time. The experience persuaded him to re-enter the practice of architecture for which he had originally been trained at the University of Illinois. Luckman came to Los Angeles and joined William Pereira, who, as previously mentioned, had been teaching at USC to form the firm of Luckman and Pereira.

Beelman certainly could be said to be both practical and to utilize technology in his designs, yet his designs represented a vision that was personal, rooted in design elements which pre-dated the International Style and had evolved throughout the

⁹⁹ Jordy, *American Buildings and Their Architects*, Chapter 2 is his careful examination of this idea.

¹⁰⁰ Jordy, *American Buildings and Their Architects*, Vol. 5, 255.

course of his practice in response to the local market. His structures, which were often steel framed, then sheathed in poured in place concrete to which the exterior cladding was applied, represented an established approach to architecture.¹⁰¹

As Beelman received his post World War II office building commissions his style became recognizable as including several basic elements. Beelman brought forward a vocabulary he had been developing since the 1930s. This period began with the somewhat atypical Tishman triple buildings but was more definitively expressed in office commissions thereafter. Among the final group of elements which defined Beelman's Corporate Moderne were: exteriors vertically expressed with ribs of stone or marble separated by vertically emphasized fenestration often including stainless steel panels. These buildings generally rose from a dark base which itself was often of a rich granite that added to the structure's sumptuousness. These elements reflected the evolution of Los Angeles architecture described by Gleye in his discussion of "modernization" in his comments on Los Angeles architecture from the 1930's to the 1950's.¹⁰² Modernization, as seen by Gleye, was the desire of businesses in Los Angeles to consistently present themselves in the style of the moment.

In accommodating his clients' wishes for a building in the latest style, Beelman traveled a path similar to that of other Southern California architects, most notably Stiles Clements, in this evolutionary pattern. Beelman (1884-1963) and Clements (1883-1966) were near contemporaries. Clements, born in Maryland, preceded Beelman to Southern

¹⁰¹ See fig. 27 page 70. This shows the Superior Oil building under construction using this method.

¹⁰² Gleye, *The Architecture of Los Angeles*, 110-111. Here, with illustration, Gleye discusses the Beelman renovation of the 1906 Philharmonic Auditorium. See fig. 8 page 28.

California becoming a partner in the firm of Morgan, Walls, & Clements and ca. 1937 forming his own firm Stiles Clements Associates. While with his first partners he designed buildings in Spanish revival style in the 1920s, shifting to Deco designs in the 1930s, and becoming a premier exponent of the style.



FIGURE 24. The Miracle Mile ca 1948 on the south side looking east showing Clements' designs for Coulter's, Mullen and Bluett and farther east the Dominguez building. On the left is the sign for his Ralph's store. Los Angeles Public Library.

As was true of Beelman's work, Wilshire was also a compendium of Clements work. The Stretch from La Brea to Fairfax, the Miracle Mile, once had four notable buildings by Clements, the 1928 Spanish revival Ralphs at Hauser, the 1931 Deco styled Dominguez building at 5410 Wilshire, the 1938 Streamline Moderne Coulter's department store and, finally, the 1949 Moderne building for Mullen and Bluett at 5570 Wilshire. Unfortunately only the Dominguez building survives. Unlike Beelman, Clements ultimately did not arrive a style which was particularly his own, but his contribution to the cityscape of Los Angeles, especially his Deco buildings, remains significant due to surviving structures throughout the rest of the city.

Chapter 4

Corporate Moderne Perfected

Continental Assurance

During this period, from 1955 to 1963, Beelman Associates completed three buildings for oil companies, two for insurance firms and one for a real estate magnate, which later became the headquarters of an oil company, as well as one bank building. These commissions continued Beelman's involvement in projects along the Wilshire corridor which would include five major buildings between Virgil and Crenshaw. At the same time Wilshire Boulevard was becoming a major center for insurance firms. With Langdon and Wilson as new partners, one of the first major efforts of the firm was the 1956/1957 office building for the Continental Companies, which included the Continental Assurance and Continental Casualty companies. This commission began a busy period for Beelman Associates. During the middle 50s a number of classified ads by Beelman Associates appeared in the Los Angeles Times looking for senior draftsmen, testifying to the volume of work which the firm had in hand and reminiscent of a similar period in the 1920s when Curlett was his partner. The announcement of this project mentioned Earnest Wilson as the principal in charge.¹⁰³ The Continental Assurance design demonstrated that Beelman Associates had now fully developed its own expression of the Corporate Moderne style.

¹⁰³ *Los Angeles Times*, May 20, 1956, G 1. Langdon and Wilson designed the successor CAN building on 6th Street, now the Superior Courts Building.



FIGURE 25. Continental Companies Building under Construction 1956 Brandow Archives.

Ground was broken for the building, the west coast headquarters of the company, on July 31, 1956 with John T. Grant, Robert M. Sargent, executives of Continental, along with Beelman in attendance.¹⁰⁴ A Los Angeles Times article described the wide column spacing of the structural steel within the structure creating office spaces practically column free, a trait incorporated in Beelman office designs from the 1930s on. Further emphasized in the article is the modular design of both the ceiling and of the floor deck as well as movable partitions allowing for ease in reconfiguring the interior. According to Greg Brandow of the structural engineering firm Brandow and Johnston, the modular

¹⁰⁴ *Los Angeles Times*, July 31, 1956, 19.

construction which included electrical conduits pre-installed in the steel pan flooring was state of the art at the time. Plans for this building survive because Brandow and Johnston bought many of Beelman's drawings and plans from his wife Ann after Beelman's death when they found out that she was merely going to dispose of them. These drawings which were preserved along with Mr. Brandow's insights into the structural methods used by Beelman have been invaluable insights into Beelman's work.¹⁰⁵

The Continental Companies Building, at Wilshire and Virgil, is a simple white stone clad rectangle with strong vertical fenestration and, at the ground level, a recessed band of dark windows in dark framing. The exterior is described as having identical architectural treatment on all sides. The sharp verticality of the fenestration is in marked contrast to the International style, while the piloti at the ground level are perhaps an echo of that style. The deep recession helps to create a contrastingly dark area to the white verticality of the walls above it giving a lighter floating effect to the seven stories above. This separation of the bulk of the building from the ground is in a manner consistent with the elements of Beelman's Corporate Moderne. Part of the trim of the base is a canopy trimmed in stainless steel, a favorite Beelman material.

¹⁰⁵ Oral interview with Greg Brandow on Nov. 8, 2011 and access to their archive of Beelman's drawings.



FIGURE 26. Assurance Building Virgil Street Level 2009 Credle.

A penthouse lunchroom for the use of all occupants was placed on the roof set beneath a floating cornice. Also emphasized in the Los Angeles Times article are the attached parking garage and freeway access via Virgil Avenue north to the Hollywood Freeway. This project is a specific response to the opportunities offered by the Wilshire location as opposed to the congestion of downtown. Both the penthouse and parking are elements which would mark several of Beelman's later office designs, especially those along Wilshire. The structure was built at a cost of \$3,500,000. (\$27,757,000 in 2010 dollars).



FIGURE27. Continental Assurance Building (1954/56) Virgil Ave. Facade 2009 *Credle*.

With this modest start Beelman brought together many components which would mark his later buildings. The only missing component was the use of rich materials and specialized detailing such as specifically commissioned art works as well as customized hardware which were elements of the Superior Oil Building which was being designed at the same time. Commissions from oil companies would give Beelman the opportunity to utilize more expensive materials and to include special art commissions. These later structures gave Beelman Associates the opportunity to further refine his version of Corporate Moderne in a more elegant manner.

The Oil Industry, Source of Major Commissions

An early mainstay of the Southern California economy, the oil industry had continued to expand and prosper during the depression. New discoveries during the 30s and 40s continued the oil boom in Southern California. At the end of this period the companies focused on a wartime production surge which expanded capacity and increased profitability. During the 50s and 60s, Superior Oil, Getty Oil and Occidental Petroleum had good fortune in making new oil discoveries both locally and abroad which further boosted their production and thus profitability. Several of the oil companies were guided by executives of unique personality and drive. These executives typified the business connections which Beelman cultivated and reflected his own aggressive pursuit of business. Both Beelman and his clients typified the booster mentality of Southern California.

Superior Oil/Standard

The newly constituted Beelman Associates received the first of these new oil related commissions in 1955/56 when Superior Oil asked them to design a downtown office building. The commission came from an oilman, William M. Keck, who, like Beelman, had worked his way up. Commissioning this headquarters he announced his success at a prime location in downtown Los Angeles. The quality and richness of its materials, marble and stainless steel, speak of a desire to make a personal and corporate statement. Keck, a Texan, founded Superior Oil in 1921 at Coalinga, California and led it until his death in 1963. He was a tireless worker in the oil fields, but had little formal education. The company was innovative in the areas of drilling techniques, the using of

seismological data and was the major innovator in the use of offshore platforms. By the 1950s Superior was a major player among American oil companies.¹⁰⁶ In 1955 this increased prosperity prompted Mr. Keck to commission a headquarters building at 550 S. Flower Street in downtown Los Angeles next to the prestigious California Club. Coincidentally, the years of Keck's rise; 1921-1963 coincide exactly with Beelman's tenure in Los Angeles. After Superior Oil's removal of its headquarters to Houston in 1963, the building was used by California Bank which not long thereafter, commissioned a downtown bank tower from Beelman. The National Register listed Superior Oil building is now adaptively reused as the Standard Hotel.¹⁰⁷ This continuity of corporate use is indicative of the quality of the structure and its adaptability.

As with the Continental Assurance building, due to the steel framing, the interior of Superior Oil was open and flexible, allowing it to be configured into large office areas which were grouped around an elevator core. This open interior later facilitated the adaptation of the spaces as a hotel. The steel framing is sheathed in a wrapping of poured in place concrete a method of construction consistently favored by Beelman. The roof is capped by a square mechanical systems tower at its center.

On the exterior the richness of marble separated by fenestration which includes stainless steel panels enhance the building. These sumptuous materials became the decorative elements of the Superior Oil Building as opposed to the highly sculptural decorative surfaces used by Beelman in the Deco 1930 Eastern Columbia building.

¹⁰⁶ www.wmkeck.org/about/wmkeck.html, 8/8/2007. Keck Foundation web site.

¹⁰⁷ National Register Nomination Section 8, Statement of significance 1-13.

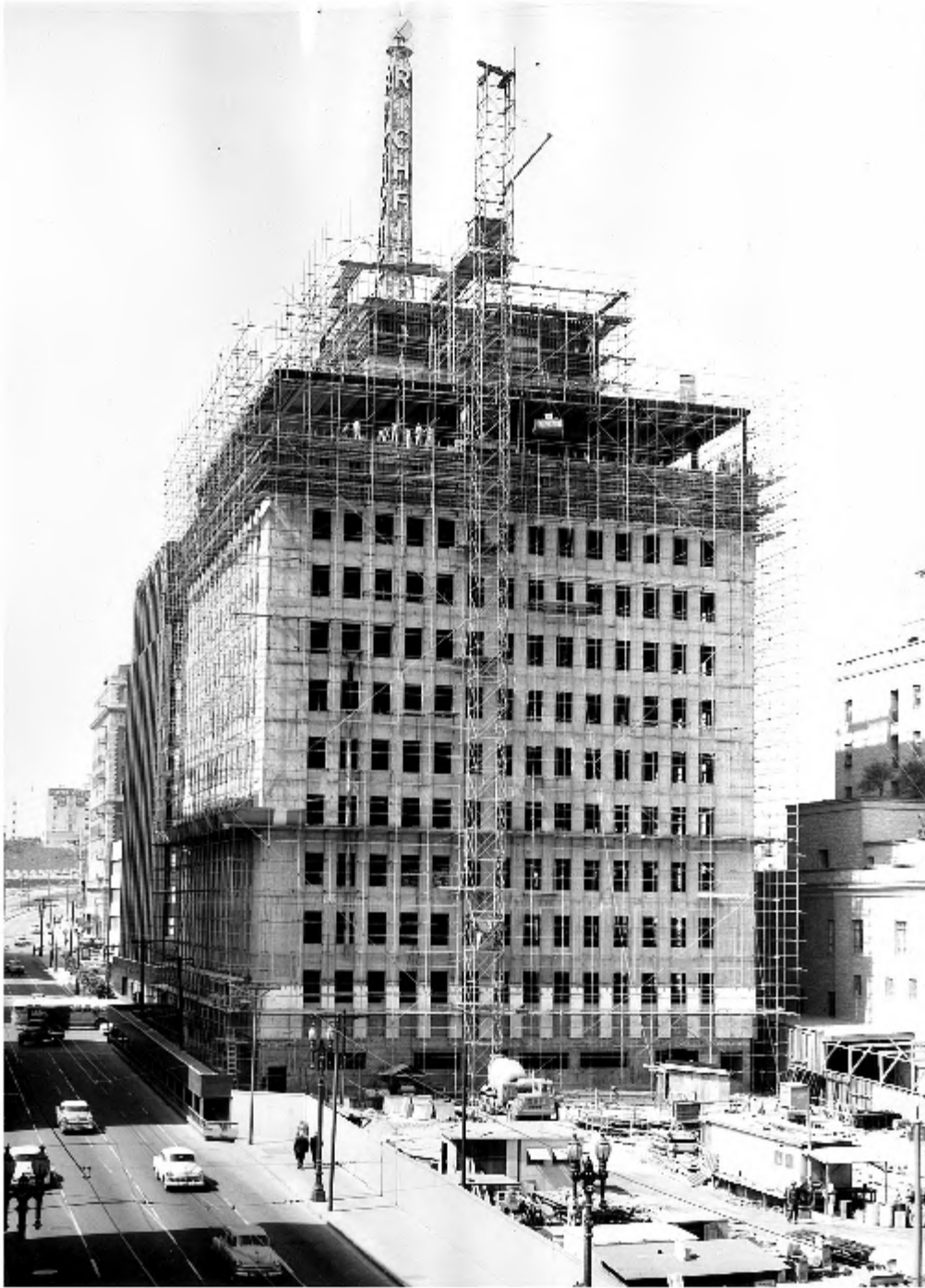


FIGURE 28. Superior under Construction showing the Concrete Sheathing Bradow Archives.



FIGURE 29. Superior/Standard (1955/56). This photograph nicely emphasizes Beelman's vertical fenestration. Bradow Archives.

The overall effect of the design is of smooth, clean, sharp edged surfaces rising in vertical harmony. This gives a feeling of upward motion to a twelve story building whose height had been constrained by the height restrictions then in force.¹⁰⁸ The twelve-story building is marked by a base of dark stone, now altered, above which rises eleven stories fourteen bays wide on each facade of the structure. Beelman's Corporate Moderne which emphasized a paring down of elevations to an essential expression of structure and of form without surface decoration is richly developed here.



FIGURE 30. Superior/Standard 1954/55 Entrance showing Beelman's use of the stainless steel edged canopy. Getty Research Institute Julius Schulman Archive.

¹⁰⁸ Until 1956 no building could be taller than city hall, thus keeping buildings to 11 or 12 stories.

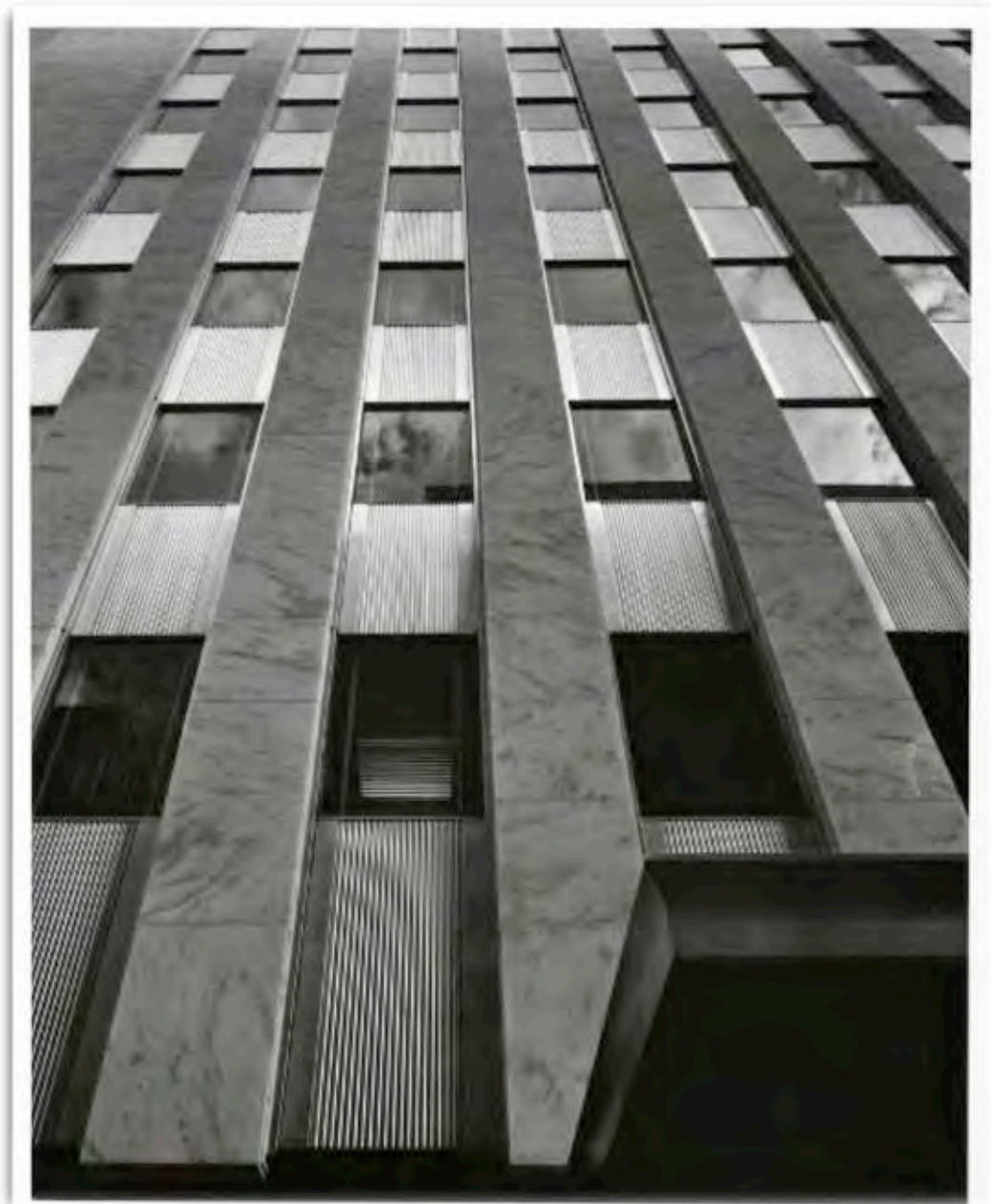


FIGURE 31. Superior Oil Showing Stainless Steel Paneling Getty Research Institute Julius Schulman Archive.

As with the buildings of the 20s and 30s, the congruency between the style expressed on the exterior and the interior design remained important with marble and stainless

steel used throughout. This continuity was also the result of Beelman's continuing to work with interior design consultants with whom he had an association going back to the 1920s. Beelman had designed the offices for the Heinsbergen Decorating firm in 1928. This relationship was still intact and it was with Heinsbergen that he worked on the Superior Oil headquarters.¹⁰⁹

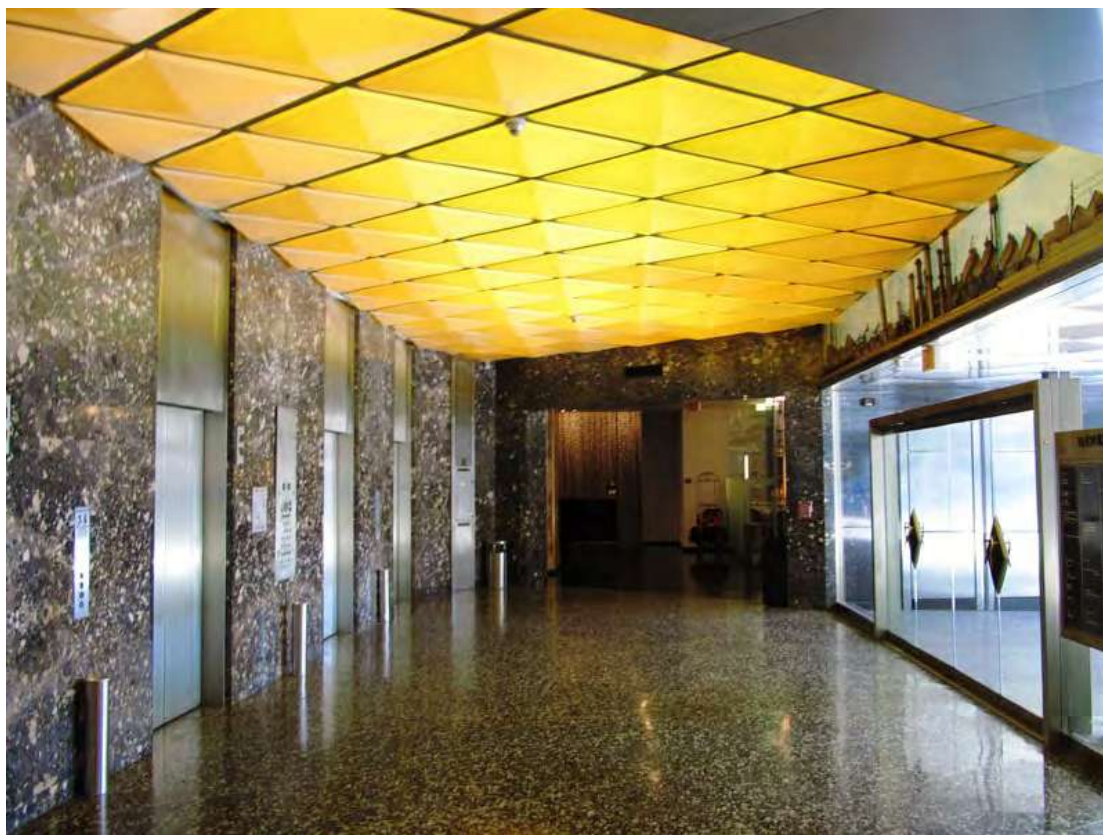


FIGURE 32. **Superior/Standard Elevator Lobby** Preservation News 2010.

The interior of the entrance lobby contains some of the building's original features of the interior design coordinated by Heinsbergen. It retains the terrazzo floors and the stainless steel doors of the elevators as well as the "world clock" to the left of the elevator bank. This vertical timepiece shows the time in various major cities around the

¹⁰⁹ Heinsbergen was a major interior design firm formed in the early 1920s in Southern California. This is mentioned in the National Register of Historic Places application, Section 7 page 3 Narrative Description.

world, a nod to Superior's operations being far flung in the 1950s and still relevant for hotel guests arriving from many distant locations and entering the lobby today.

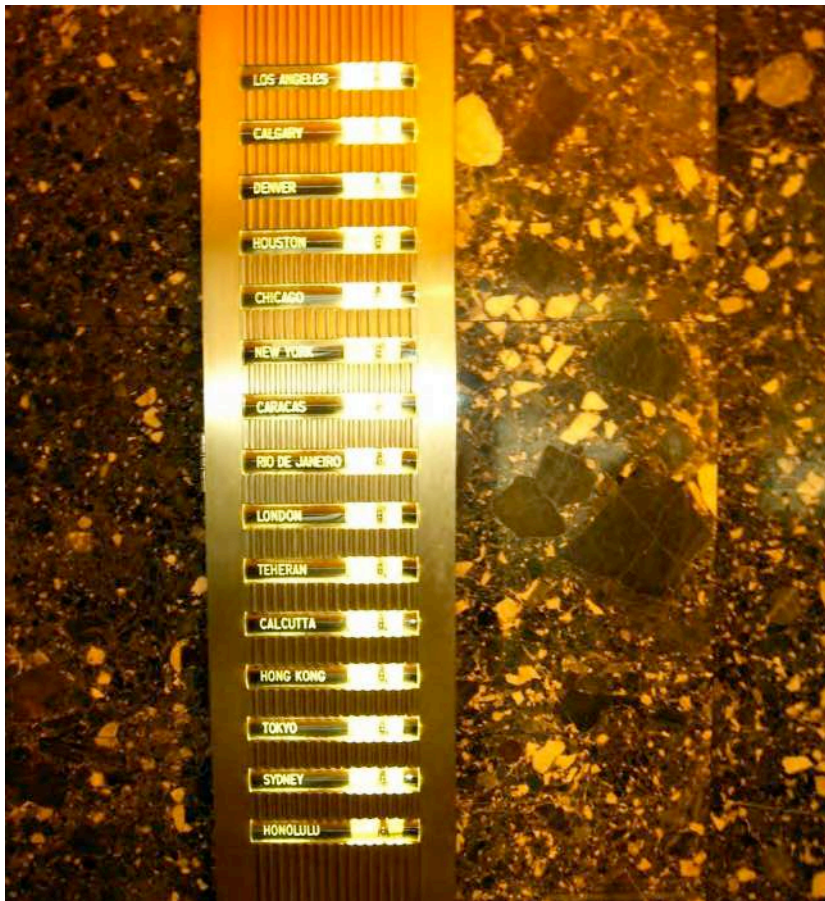


FIGURE 33. World Clock, Superior/Standard Lobby 2009 Credle.

Above the entrance there is a back lit mural depicting scenes from the oil industry which was part of the original decorative program, an echo of the building's first use. The entrance itself has a doorway floating in an area of glass. Additionally, some door handles form a stylized "s", for Superior another echo which has been left intact. The upper floors, now hotel rooms, generally reflect the original lay out of the office floors

and were easily adapted due to the open space inside provided by the structural spacing.

Following the Continental Assurance Building, Superior Oil absolutely confirmed Beelman's Corporate Moderne vocabulary which now had become the firm's signature style. In 1955 this was a striking statement of Superior Oil's, and therefore Keck's achievement, as well as being one of the dwindling number of first class office buildings built in downtown until the advent of Bunker Hill redevelopment.

Beelman's involvement with Keck also included designing a laboratory which Keck donated to Caltech (fig. 34)¹¹⁰ as well as a private residence for his son Howard and an aircraft hangar at Los Angeles International Airport.¹¹¹ Once Beelman had bonded with a businessman there was repeat business on small as well as large scales.¹¹² As can be seen in the illustration the laboratory shows trademark Beelman design features. The Keck Foundation continues to sponsor research and to donate to medical causes. The medical school at University of Southern California bears their name due to the foundation's ongoing generosity.

¹¹⁰ This is listed in the Brandow Archives as job number 58180.

¹¹¹ Plans for all three are in the Brandow and Johnston Archives.

¹¹² In the oral interview on Sept. 6, 2006 with Mrs. Ernest Wilson, she stated that her husband became a close friend to Mr. Keck, even trying to offer guidance to Howard Keck's troubled son.



California Institute of Technology
W.M. Keck Engineering Laboratories
Pasadena, California



FIGURE 34. Keck Laboratory Caltech 1959-60 Photo Brandow Archives.

Tidewater Oil

In 1958 another oil company, in this case, J. Paul Getty's Tidewater Oil, hired Beelman Associates to design its corporate headquarters at 4201 Wilshire Boulevard situated between Irving and Lorraine Boulevards at the intersection with Crenshaw Boulevard. The Tidewater building is located not too far from the Getty mansion in Windsor Square.¹¹³ Tidewater became a subsidiary of Getty Oil in 1951. Getty Oil was founded in 1908 by George Getty and headed after his death in 1930 by J. Paul Getty, who oversaw the company's continued growth as an independent oil enterprise. Postwar good fortune started in 1949 when Getty won the rights to explore for oil in the neutral zone between Saudi Arabia and Kuwait by offering an oil royalty to the Saudi family which far exceeded that offered by larger companies.¹¹⁴ The gamble proved successful as an enormous new field was discovered. Getty paid the high royalties, kept expenses low and undersold his competitors ensuring a cash flow to finance further expansion. In 1951, Getty achieved a long-standing goal of acquiring control of Tide Water Oil, as it was then known, and of the holding company Mission Holdings, which held a large block of Skelly stock and thus of Skelly Oil as well.¹¹⁵ A "Los Angeles Times" article of April 19, 1951 notes Getty's triumph. The article further notes that the acquisition of 50.12% of the voting stock in the holding company, then valued at \$300,000,000.¹¹⁶,

¹¹³ *Los Angeles Times*, Nov. 12, 1975, B 1. The Getty Mansion was donated to the City of Los Angeles in 1975 and named in honor of George F. Getty II.

¹¹⁴ Lenzer, Robert, *The Great Getty*. 97.

¹¹⁵ Lenzer, *The Great Getty*, 119

¹¹⁶ (\$2,490,146,508.) In 2010 dollars)

had come after an eighteen year effort.¹¹⁷ This prompted the new headquarters building as Getty wanted to move Tide Water's Headquarters from San Francisco to Los Angeles where it became known as Tidewater.¹¹⁸ Getty was as interested in real estate investment as in oil, having bought the Hotel Pierre in New York, where he had a suite, at a low price during the depression. In 1939 he bought the hotel for 25% of its original 1930 construction cost of \$10 million.¹¹⁹ The Tidewater project was envisioned by Getty as a way of concentrating Getty employees in one place as well as providing rental space. Getty, the shrewd money manager, essentially wanted rental income to pay for the headquarters building. Commercial space was rented to Bank of America, Security First Bank and E. F. Hutton.

The saga of Tidewater's construction began with a zoning battle, a not atypical Los Angeles fight over land development. The fight began in 1951 when Getty sought to obviate a deed restriction intended to keep the area solely residential, a restriction which was supposed to remain in effect until 1961. The wealthy neighbors to the north of what became the Tidewater site wanted to keep commercial development out and were named in Getty's suit.¹²⁰ Getty had originally tried to have the restriction removed from a larger area reaching all the way north to Sixth Street, which would have expanded commercial development deeply into the residential area of Windsor Square. In 1954 Getty won his suit against the 179 Windsor Square property owners with the judge

¹¹⁷ Los Angeles Times, Apr. 19, 1952, 19.

¹¹⁸ Lenzer, p. 114.

¹¹⁹ Lenzer, P. 62.

¹²⁰ "Los Angeles Times", Apr. 22, 1952, P. 19

ruling that the frontage along Wilshire would no longer have a restriction against any use other than residential, but that the restriction would not be removed from the rest of the area stretching to 6th Street. Getty immediately applied to have the Wilshire property zoned commercial.¹²¹

Getty already owned the future construction site which was occupied by “the ghost mansion” built by William O. Jenkins in the 1920s. At the time Jenkins was reputedly the richest man in Mexico. The mansion passed to Getty’s fourth wife Ann Rork as part of a 1936 divorce settlement.¹²² During the 1950s it was rented out by the former Mrs. Getty as a movie location and was used in the filming of *Sunset Boulevard* in which its pool became the setting for one of the film’s more memorable scenes. It remained largely abandoned until its destruction for the building of the Tidewater Headquarters according to Kevin Roderick in *Wilshire Boulevard*. Ever the aggressive pursuer of business, Beelman made a special effort to gain the Tidewater commission. In order to get the contract, Beelman flew to London to see Getty personally. The construction cost was \$10 million (\$74,537,000. in 2010 dollars) a contract well worth Beelman’s effort.

Like the earlier Superior Oil Building, the building has a very restrained yet rich marble and stainless steel clad exterior. Spandrels between the windows are of scalloped polished stainless steel. Again, Beelman plays metal against marble as he had at Superior Oil. The massing of the building is in the form of three blocks with a central mechanical block rising above two flanking masses. The Tidewater Building has a more horizontal profile than the Superior Building being half its height. However the central

¹²¹ *Los Angeles Times*, Feb. 9, 1954, A 3.

¹²² Roderick, *Wilshire Boulevard*, 115.

tower rises almost two stories above the flanking wings of the building, an idea earlier expressed in both Children's Hospital (fig.15 page 41) and the Savoy Garage (fig.16 page 42). The structure was also designed so that another six stories could be added.

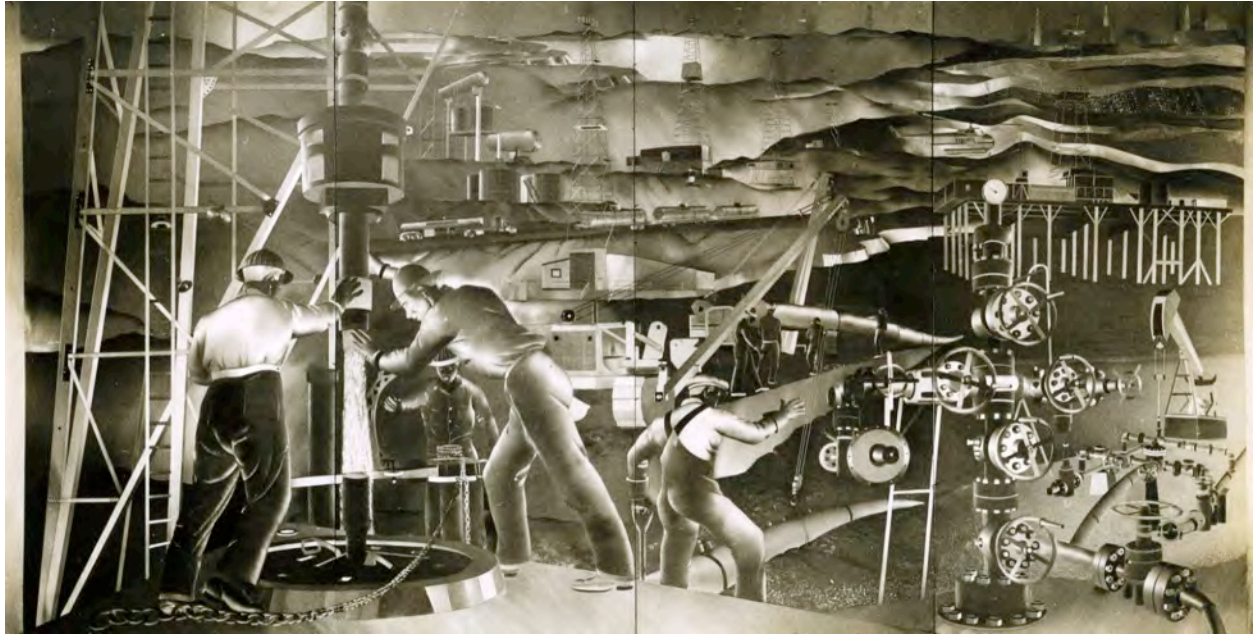


Figure 35. Oilfield Scene Originally in the Entrance Lobby of Tidewater Bel-Jon Studios.

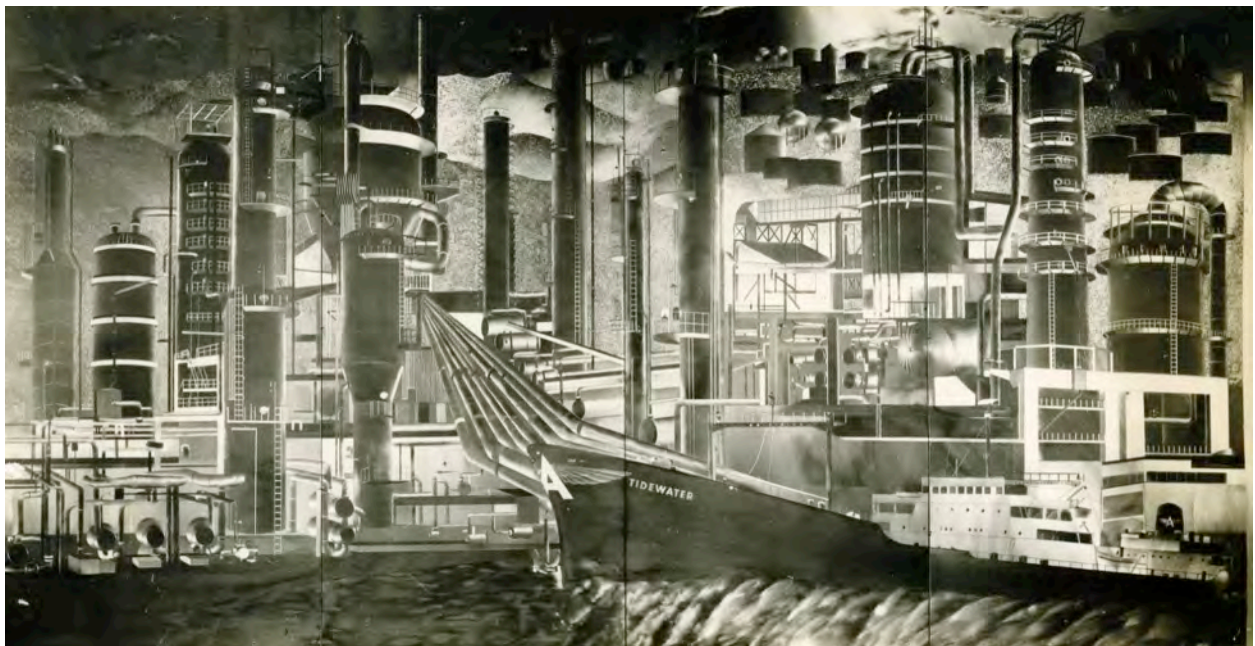


Figure 36. Refinery Scene which flanked the Oil Field Scene in the Lobby Bel-Jon Studios.



FIGURE 37. Tidewater Oil/Harbor Building (1958) Wilshire Boulevard Entrance in 2009 Credle.

Along with the mechanical systems on the roof was a penthouse for executive dining as was true at the Continental Assurance Building. Rising from a dark base the building's white marble wings have vertically emphasized fenestration. These elements made it a strong representative of Beelman's Corporate Modern style at its most elegant and comparable to the Superior Oil building.

The entrance has a stainless steel trimmed canopy and, like Superior Oil, a floating doorway, that is, a door frame surrounded by glass. As with Superior Oil, there was especially commissioned art in the lobby, in this case, brushed aluminum murals by Nicholas Bel-Jon¹²³ which depicted scenes of the oil industry.¹²⁴ Although the murals have been removed, the lobby still has rich marble walls and stainless steel elevator doors retaining an impressive elegance. The restrooms retain quality tile and marble work. Entrances along the hallways have richly grained solid wood doors.



FIGURE 38. Tidewater Oil/Harbor Building Wilshire Boulevard Facade (1958) in 2009 Credle

¹²³ Bel-jonstudios.com, Nikos Bel-Jon, 1911-1966, painted on aluminum using a method he perfected. The Tidewater murals showed a refinery scene and a scene of oil field workers.

¹²⁴ *Los Angeles Times*, Dec. 7, 1958, G-1.

In an article previewing the new building, George F. Getty II notes that the building will house some 600 employees, 375 of which were being transferred from San Francisco and with an annual payroll of \$5,000,000 (\$ 37, 268,385. in 2010 dollars).¹²⁵

The building was dedicated on December 6. 1958, the 80th anniversary of Tide Water/Tidewater's founding, having begun in 1878 in Pennsylvania.¹²⁶ Phillips Petroleum Company purchased the building in 1966 when Tidewater's Headquarters were moved to the Getty/Union Building at Wilshire and Western. In 1984 the building was sold to Harbor Wilshire Associates by Harbor Insurance Company a wholly owned subsidiary of Continental Corporation.¹²⁷ Even today, now known as the Harbor Building, it is an impressive structure and is still used for offices.

California Bank

Downtown height limits were lifted after 1956.¹²⁸ The theme of a soaring shaft could now be more literally expressed. Beelman and Associates design for the twenty-one story building explored the possibility. The \$13 million (\$96,897,802. in 2010 dollars), California Bank building was constructed from 1958 to 1960 on a site at Sixth and Spring Streets.¹²⁹ The California Bank spent an additional \$1,500,000 (\$11,180,515. in

¹²⁵ *Los Angeles Times*, Nov. 22, 1958, B 6.

¹²⁶ *Los Angeles Times*, Dec. 6, 1958, 5.

¹²⁷ *Los Angeles Times*, Nov. 18, 1984, 19.

¹²⁸ Permitting buildings to be taller than city hall, or 150 ft after 1956.

¹²⁹ *Los Angeles Times*, Feb. 23, 1958, F 1. The article notes that the effective 21/22 story height was possible due to the revocation of height limits and that this building was the first to take advantage of this loosening of restrictions.

2010 dollars)¹³⁰ for the land and \$1,000,000 (\$7,453,677. in 2010 dollars), on furnishings. The 370,000 square foot building was begun on March 10, 1958 and dedicated on Sunday August 14, 1960.¹³¹ Along with Superior Oil, it is the only other major downtown office project completed by Beelman and Associates during the late 50s and 60s. As with the Superior building it was the region's burgeoning prosperity which motivated the California Bank project. A Los Angeles Times article notes that the bank's assets had grown from \$147,000,000 (\$2,260,072,685 in 2010 dollars) in 1940 to \$1,054,000,000 (\$8,068,292,420 in 2010 dollars) in 1957.

Typical of Beelman's corporate moderne design work was the strong verticality which further emphasized the buildings twenty-two stories. The tower rose above a dark base/podium as did many of Beelman designs, in this case one clad in dark blue granite, allowing the white tower to soar from its horizontal, dark base into the sky. The horizontality of the base/podium, is akin to that of the Forman and Clark building of 1928. The base contained the banking floors which had an entrance deeply inset into the façade (see fig. 39). Beneath the podium which housed the banking lobby there was subterranean parking for 245 cars.

¹³⁰ Based on latest calculations possible using the inflation calculator maintained by S. Morton Friedman at www.morgan@westegg.com.

¹³¹ *Los Angeles Times Mirror*, Friday August 12, 1960, Part III, Business and Real Estate, 2.



FIGURE 39. California Bank Rendering of Spring Street Entrance Brandow Archive.



FIGURE 40. California Bank Lobby Showing Circular Plan Brandow Archives.

California bank's construction was like that of the Superior Oil Building, steel framing with a poured in place sheathing to which the finished surfaces were applied as seen in a photo from the Brandow Archives.



FIGURE 41. California Bank Under Constriction Brandow Archives.



FIGURE 42. California Bank in 1985 Ann Knudsen Los Angeles Public Library Images.

The only punctuation in this soaring design was a 23 foot landscaped setback atop the three story base/podium; after which the building then rose straight up to its full height. This differentiated from the Forman and Clark building where there was no dramatic setback to separate the tower from the base. The windows with the dark enamel panels underneath contrasted with the light Indiana limestone further accenting the verticality.

As with the Superior Oil Building the structure is now adaptively reused, having been remodeled into condominiums. Renamed the Shybarry Tower 1 building for its current owner, Barry Shy. It is another of the plethora of downtown conversions begun before 2009. The verticality of the design is now interrupted by balconies and the base has been punctuated with openings.



FIGURE 43. California Bank undergoing conversion in 2009 Credle.

Beelman Associates, the Final Products, Last Partner

The final three Beelman office buildings of the 60s were designed and completed during a time of change in the composition of Beelman Associates. They were begun in partnership with Langdon and Wilson who departed in 1961 and were completed in 1962 after the arrival of his last partner, Kent Attridge.¹³² These three buildings were: the Pacific Indemnity Insurance Building at Wilshire and Vermont, announced in January 1960, completed in February 1962; the Getty/Union Building, announced in March 1960, completed in early 1962; and lastly the Kirkeby/Occidental Building, announced in September 1960, and completed in August 1962.

Beelman's last year and a half of life was a period of declining health after an automobile accident in 1961 which caused injuries ultimately resulting in his death in late January of 1963. It was Attridge, formerly a vice president with Welton Becket Associates, who oversaw the completion of these last commissions and continued the firm until he formed his own firm in April 1963. At this point Beelman Associates had offices at 7421 Beverly Boulevard. After 1961, Langdon and Wilson who originally had their own firm before joining with Beelman now reformed it.

¹³² *Los Angeles Times*, Apr. 21, 1963, 113. In an announcement of his new firm, the article comments that the Getty/Union Building and the Pacific Indemnity Insurance buildings were two of his major projects while associated with Beelman.

Pacific Indemnity

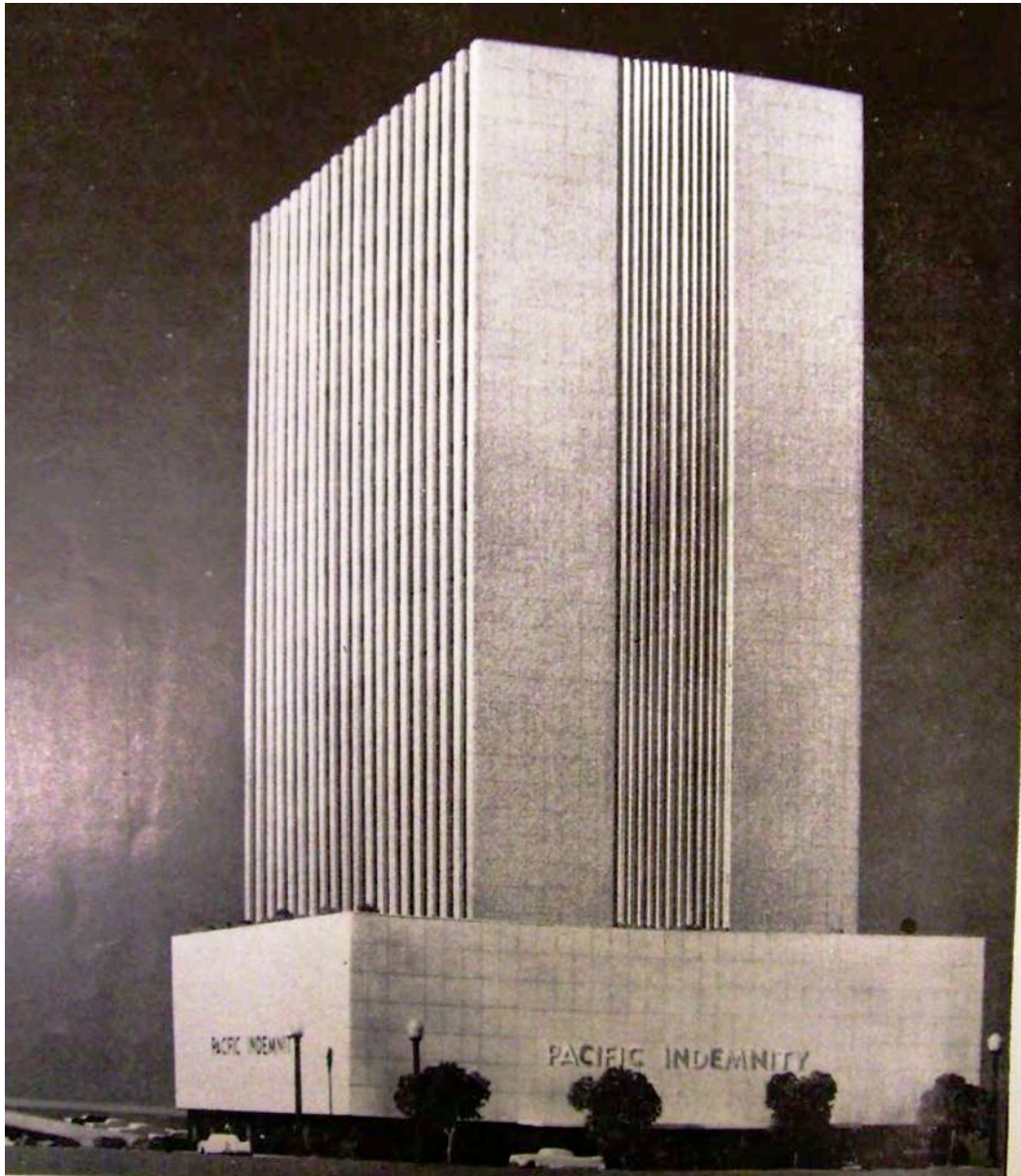


FIGURE 44. Photograph of Beelman's Model for Pacific Indemnity Brandow Archives.

The culminating period of Beelman's practice began with the 16 story Pacific Indemnity Building which was constructed between 1960-1962 at 3200 Wilshire Boulevard on the southwest corner of its intersection with Vermont¹³³. As with the California Bank building, prosperity certainly must have spurred the desire of Pacific Indemnity to construct a new headquarters. Los Angeles Times articles in 1960 and 1961 noted profitable years for the firm and the payment of dividends¹³⁴. The Los Angeles Times article notes that the firm, which was a multiple-line insurance company, was founded in 1926 by a group of Los Angeles businessmen who were convinced that the area would develop into a great western business center.

Its vice president, James Blalock, had come to Los Angeles in the 1920s to begin practicing law and had become a claims adjuster. The Times further notes that he was active in community affairs, particularly the Community Chest.¹³⁵ Not only was Blalock active in charity, but since 1954, as chairman of the Los Angeles Chapter of the National Safety Council, he is mentioned in a number of articles relating to traffic safety which has importance for the insurance industry and demonstrates his civic involvement as well.¹³⁶ Mr. Blalock also was an active volunteer for the hospital in Glendale where he resided. A Los Angeles Times article notes that he volunteered 1,500 hours at Glendale Memorial.¹³⁷ James Blalock also volunteered at Children's Hospital in Los

¹³³ *Los Angeles Times*, Feb 11, 1962, M 1 The article announces the opening of the building.

¹³⁴ *Los Angeles Times*, Feb. 19, 1960, P.22, May 19, 1961, C 8.

¹³⁵ *Los Angeles Times*, Feb. 11, 1962, M 1

¹³⁶ *Los Angeles Times*: Oct.12, 1956, A 1, Mar. 11, 1957, B 3, Aug. 6, 1959, B 32, Oct. 29, 1959, B 11.

¹³⁷ *Los Angeles Times*, Oct. 29, 1964, H 7.

Angeles. In 1956 he was recognized as having volunteered 700 hours in the gift shop.¹³⁸ While in 1957 he was listed as a host for an annual picnic honoring the Gift and salvage Shop.¹³⁹ The association with Children's Hospital should have acquainted Blalock with Beelman's 1951 addition to the hospital and thus provided an example which could be judged in considering Beelman for the commission to design Pacific Indemnity's headquarters. Blalock had been elected vice-president of Pacific Indemnity at its annual board meeting in December of 1954. In 1963 California Governor Pat Brown considered appointing Mr. Blalock state insurance commissioner.¹⁴⁰ Still active in community service, Blalock was chosen as the foreman of a county Grand Jury in 1964; among his credentials mentioned were having been an attorney and former vice-president of Pacific Indemnity.¹⁴¹ Like Blalock, Beelman himself had arrived in 1921 to begin a new phase of his career and had prospered. Not only is the building a strong representative of Beelman's architecture but its patron also reflects kind of businessman from whom he often received commissions.

The Pacific Indemnity building was in the final stages of construction in February of 1961 shortly after Beelman's debilitating automobile accident.¹⁴² Beelman's career was ending, yet Pacific Indemnity fully reflected Beelman's Corporate Modern idiom as it had evolved throughout the 1960s. The form of the building shows a kinship with its

¹³⁸ *Los Angeles Times*, Jun. 5, 1956, B 1

¹³⁹ *Los Angeles Times*, Aug. 19, 1957, A 3.

¹⁴⁰ *Los Angeles Times*, Jun. 19, 1963, A 1.

¹⁴¹ *Los Angeles Times*, Jan. 22, 1964, A 3

¹⁴² *Los Angeles Times*, Feb. 26, 1961, I 4.

predecessors, reflecting ongoing themes in Beelman's work. It has a rectilinear block base/podium this being the most pronounced form of Beelman's predilection for separating the street level. Like the California Bank the tower is faced with white marble. On the east and west facades the vertical fenestration it is accented by vertical ribs of white marble between the windows. On the north or Wilshire Boulevard façade the verticality is more strongly emphasized by closely spaced ribs. This is shown most strikingly in the model (fig. 44) which, because of its scale condenses the vertical effect. The rectangular tower was placed at a right angle at the base which assured that the windowed east and west façades would always have light and air. The fenestration of the tower was similar to that of the Getty Union Building and the California Bank Building, having dark enamel panels below the windows.



FIGURE 45. Pacific Indemnity Building (1962) Wilshire and Vermont Corner, 2009 Credle.

The structure contains 236,777 square feet of space and was built at a cost of \$7million (\$50,946,000. in 2010). Pacific Indemnity occupied 60% of the floor space with the rest rented to businesses affiliated with insurance. Like the Continental Assurance Building at Virgil, there was an attached garage to the south of the building with a capacity for 414 automobiles. Like the Tidewater and Assurance buildings it is still utilized as an office building.

Getty Oil/Union Bank

The second Getty building to be commissioned from Beelman Associates was the Getty/Union Bank Building of 1961/62 on the southwestern corner of Wilshire and Western, across the street from Stiles Clements' Pellesier Building/Wiltern Theater. This is also the second of the last group of Beelman buildings. The twenty-two story structure had as its principal tenant Union bank which occupied the first four floors and the twenty- second.¹⁴³ Union Bank acted as leasing agent, while ownership was held by Getty Realty Company, George F. Getty II, J. Paul Getty's son, being listed as president. The building is square like Superior Oil and California Bank. As is demonstrated in the sketch on page 98, when designing this building Beelman retained his preference for strongly accentuating the vertical elements.

Exterior surfaces of the building have white marble rising vertically for the height of the building beginning above the two story banking lobby level which is defined by pairs of piers with inset areas of glass.(Fig. 47) The fourteen bays of the upper floors had dark glass under which were dark panels.

¹⁴³ Beelman's first partner, Alexander Curlett, had been on the board of Union Bank.

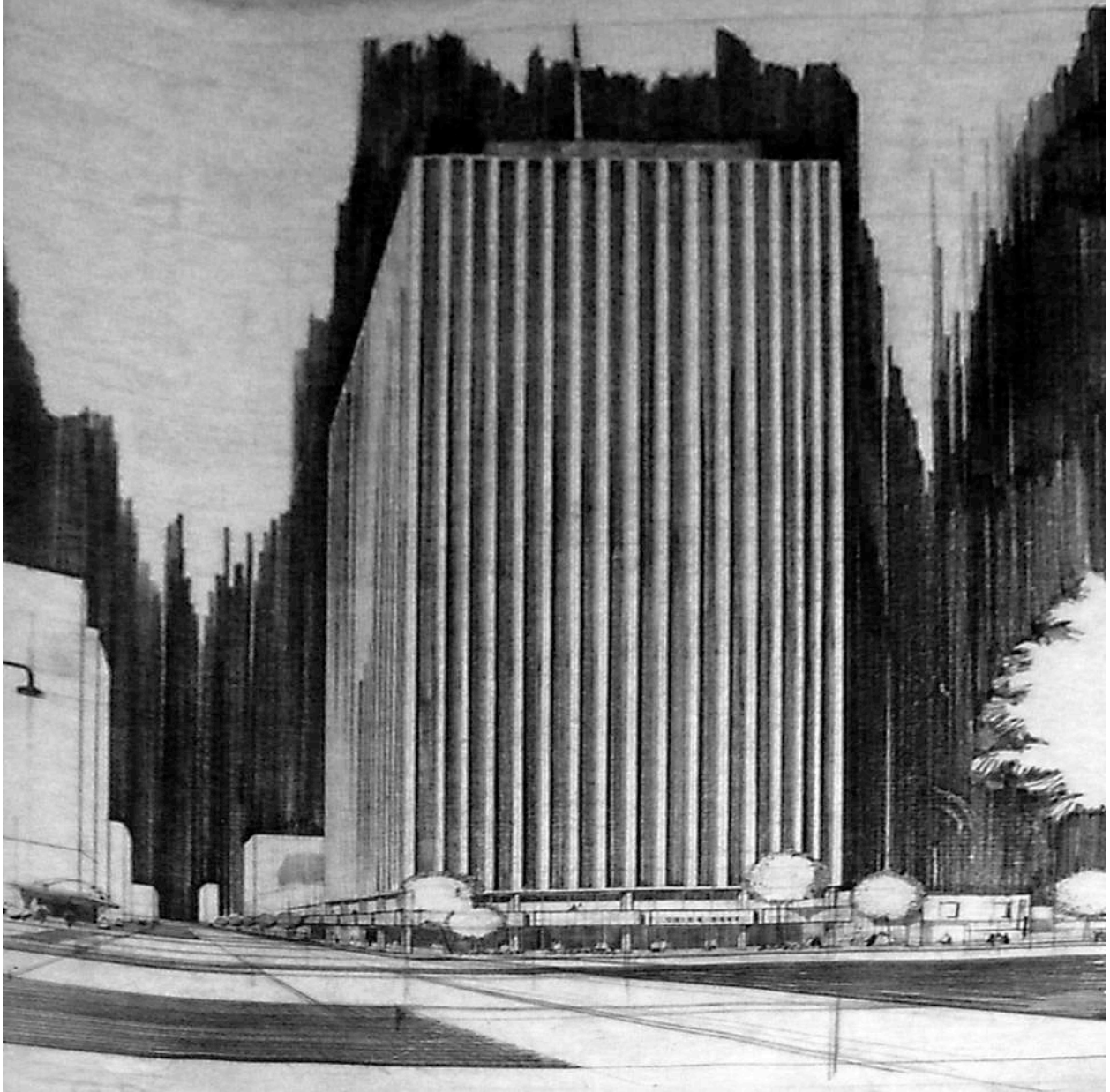


FIGURE 46. Beelman Sketch of Getty/Union showing the desire to accent the vertical aspect of the design Bradow Archives.

The banking area, which could be seen through large areas of glass, was accessed directly from Wilshire.



FIGURE 47. Beelman Rendering of Lobby Level from Wilshire Boulevard Brandow Archives.

This area had a circular center like that at California Bank. (Fig. 35 page 84) Further emphasizing the circular theme, a winding stairway led from the banking floor to the vault area. The vault itself becomes a decorative element with its size and bulkiness suggesting the security it provided.

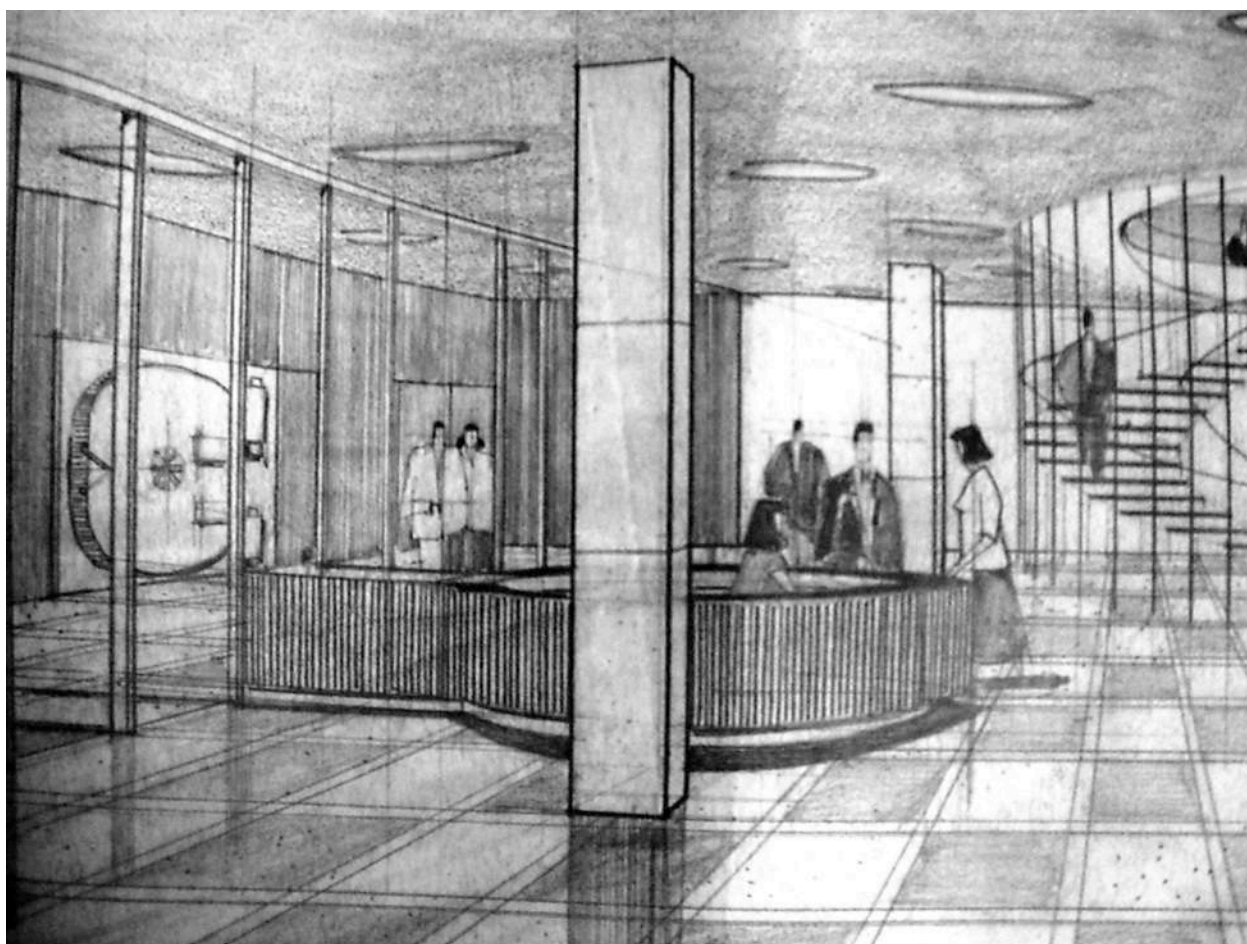


FIGURE 48. Spiral Stair and Vault Area below Main Banking Floor Brandow Archive.

Because of the possibility of future construction to the west the elevator core is located on that side. It is, in fact, quite similar to that of the Forman and Clark Building of 1929 (Fig.1 page 18) in this respect. Both leave the west side unfenestrated recognized the possibility of another tall building being erected to the west. The upper floors were open

to reconfiguration to suit the needs of prospective clients. An attached parking garage to the south meets an ongoing need for parking in Los Angeles.



FIGURE 49. Getty/Union/Mercury (1962) 2009 Credle.

As is true of both the Superior Oil Building and the California Bank, Getty/Union has recently been adaptively reused. It remained an office building until its recent purchase by Forrest City Residential Development which converted the building into condominiums called The Mercury. As with the Standard/Superior Building, the open floor plan and concentrated service core lends itself to adaptive reuse. Showing either

sensitivity in dealing with the exterior design or building code restrictions, the developer chose to inset the balconies rather than interrupt the verticality of the building as was done in the case of the California Bank building (fig. 41 page 89).



FIGURE 50. Getty/Union/Mercury (1962) Wilshire Boulevard Level 2009 Credle.

The developer provided a range of sizes from studio units of 750 square feet to two bedroom units of some 1500 square feet. Retail spaces are to be retained on the first two floors while the roof has been redeveloped as a recreational area. Located at the Wilshire terminus of the red line of the subway, this area has been undergoing considerable revitalization marking the most recent wave of development along Wilshire Boulevard. The restrained elegance of Beelman's Corporate Moderne exterior will remain intact. The Getty/Union Building is a consistent and solid contribution to the

group of Corporate Moderne structures designed by Beelman Associates which have also remained functional.

Kirkeby/Occidental

The last of the 60s buildings, the 1960 Kirkeby Building 10889 Wilshire Boulevard between Glendon and Lindhurst Avenues, is another of the Beelman's late designs begun with Langdon and Wilson. In 1960, just before Langdon and Wilson were about to depart and before Beelman's debilitating automobile accident, Beelman Associates was approached to design a headquarters building in Westwood for Kirkeby Realty. The firm was then headed by A. S. Kirkeby and remained so until his death in March, 1961 plane crash.¹⁴⁴ Kirkeby Center was announced in the Los Angeles Times on September 11, 1960 and the dedication noted in an article on August 26, 1962. Born in Chicago, Kirkeby was an international financier who sat on the board of City National Bank as well as being the owner of a number of well known hotels in the U.S. and abroad, including the Beverly Wilshire in Beverly Hills and the Sunset Towers Apartments in West Hollywood. In July of 1955 he and a group of associates purchased Westwood Village through his subsidiary Kirkeby Realty. Kirkeby lived on a 12 acre estate in Bel-Air which had been built in 1937 for \$1,600,000 (\$24,032,134. in 2010 dollars) by contractor Lynn Atkinson and was known as the "house of the golden door knobs"¹⁴⁵. Its elaborate gardens stood in for Vienna in the 1960 movie *Song Without End*. Kirkeby was a noted collector of impressionist art, whose collection included works by Monet,

¹⁴⁴ *Los Angeles Times*, March 2, 1962, 2, Obituary.

¹⁴⁵ *Los Angeles Times*, July 20, 1945, A 1. It cost \$1,600,000. at the time, \$24,032,134. in 2010 dollars.

Cezanne and Matisse. His estate was valued at \$10 million (\$71,276,079. in 2010 dollars) when probated in 1961. Mr. Kirkeby was among the financial and social elite of Los Angeles who, like J. Paul Getty and William Keck, sought Beelman to provide them with buildings which advertised their success.

While commissioned by Kirkeby to express the success of his real estate venture, the design of the Kirkeby Center evidently also appealed to Armand Hammer of Occidental Petroleum as emblematic of his own success, thus illustrating the enduring attraction of a Beelman design. Hammer, a newer arrival in Los Angeles than his fellow oilmen J. Paul Getty and William Keck, recognized the quality of the building and progressively rented more space in the structure until he bought it outright. Thus, Hammer was the last oil magnate to be the proud owner of a Beelman designed building.

Although trained as a medical doctor, Hammer gained wealth as a businessman, heading his father's pharmaceutical company and trading with the Soviet Union, where he played the role of consummate east-west dealmaker. In 1956, he was approached to finance wildcat oil exploration by Occidental Petroleum. Oil was found and Hammer increased his holdings in the company becoming its chairman in 1957. Under his management profits rose due to investments in Libyan oil fields and diversification into petrochemicals.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁶ Ingham, John, *Biographical Dictionary of American Business Leaders*, 533-536.



FIGURE 51. Kirkeby/Occidental (1962) 2009 Wilshire Boulevard Facade Credle.

The \$11,000,000 (\$80,058,000 in 2010 dollars) Kirkeby Center, in its original form, is vintage Beelman, with a base clad in black Swedish granite, some 83 tons of it, along with recessed areas of plate glass at the street level being in this respect similar to Tidewater Oil Headquarters (Fig.37 page 84). The stainless steel trimmed entrance canopy is another Beelman leitmotif going back to the MGM headquarters and repeated at Superior Oil, Tidewater Oil and Continental Assurance. The piers and corners of the tower were faced 583 tons white Italian marble. This rectangle of white marble floating on a dark base was a quintessential expression of Beelman's Corporate Moderne.



FIGURE 52. Kirby-Occidental (1961) Wilshire Boulevard Entrance 2009 Credle.

There is a penthouse at the top, which originally housed both a private club and a restaurant open to the public. Several reviews from the 1960s and 1970s praise the restaurant for its continental cuisine and panoramic view.¹⁴⁷ The original tenants included City National Bank on whose board Kirkeby had sat, and McNeil Construction Company, who built the building. A 775 space parking garage is attached to the north side of the building which recognizes the auto oriented nature of Westwood Village and for that matter of the Wilshire corridor in general. While Westwood Village was originally

¹⁴⁷ *Los Angeles Times*, April 19, 1964, H 1. A restaurant review which also dealt with its being a private club as well.

conceived as rather low density development, the parcel along Wilshire remained undeveloped making it available for later higher density development.¹⁴⁸

Even though the Kirkeby Center like Getty/Union and Pacific Indemnity was in the process of design and construction as Langdon and Wilson left and during a period in which Beelman's activities were proscribed by the debilities stemming from the 1961 automobile accident, its design reflects the heritage of Beelman designs going back to the Superior Oil building of 1955/56 (Fig.29 page 73). Even with Beelman's declining health and the changing of partners these last designs still maintain a continuity of style and quality which demonstrate Beelman's presence.

While the original building is still utilized as an office building the structure underwent considerable change in 1988/89 when construction began on the Armand Hammer Museum, an appendage on the north side of the building designed by Edward Larrabee Barnes. Barnes chose to continue the black and white motif of the original, wrapping the addition with white marble and gray-black granite which accent the horizontality of the addition and are in contrast to the verticality of Beelman's structure. The southern Wilshire façade still seems to "float" while the northern elements of the rear are firmly anchored to the ground by the museum and parking facilities.

¹⁴⁸ Longstreth, *City Center to Regional Mall*, 163-164.



FIGURE 53. Kirkeby/Occidental Building (1962) West Façade Showing both the Scalloped Stainless Steel Spandrels and the White Marble Piers and Corners 2009 Credle.

The building continues to function as a corporate headquarters as well as a museum for Hammer's art collection. The Armand Hammer museum opened in November of 1990 just before Hammer's death the following month at age 92. The Hammer Museum now operates under the auspices of UCLA. It is fitting that the building's owner after Kirkeby was also an art collector sharing his own collection with the public by means of the museum addition.



FIGURE 54. Kirkeby/Occidental (1962) North Façade with Hammer Museum Addition 2009 Credle.

Conclusion

Claude Beelman enjoyed a combination of generally fortuitous circumstances during his years of practicing architecture in Los Angeles. He arrived in the city with a mid western background as was true of many who arrived in the 1920s and had a set of professional skills which enabled him to benefit from the great boom of the twenties. Beelman had honed his architectural skills in his native mid west and arrived ready to undertake major commissions. He and his first partner, Alexander Curlett, produced an impressive number of major commissions between 1921/1922 and 1929. The design of these commissions reflected the architectural historicism then prevalent. The organization of their office reflected the national trend of corporate organizational structure in architectural practice which facilitated their producing such a volume of work.

During this first period Beelman developed ties with the business community in Los Angeles which endured through the Depression and World War II and enabled him to prosper again in the post World War II boom as he had prospered in the 20s. From the end of the 1920s until the end of his career in 1963, Beelman developed an approach to architecture which culminated in his designs of the 50s and 60s. As his career in Los Angeles unfolded, he retained preferences in construction methodology and design elements which evolved throughout his career and were carried forward. This combination of architectural elements resulted in his iteration of Corporate Moderne which represented the final stylistic of his design career. Even though this last period involved a succession of partners, design elements rooted in Beelman's practice from its Southern California beginnings in the 1920s through work of the 1950s demonstrated

a personal approach to architecture which was reflected in his last major commissions of the 1960s. This gives them a style which can be identified as uniquely Beelman's. He also proved a formidable teacher for his partners. In the case of Langdon and Wilson, they learned the skill of pursuing clients and of developing a relationship which might bring later contracts. Langdon and Wilson helped design two buildings for Getty Oil, and long after Beelman's death became the architects of record for the Getty Museum at Malibu.

These evolving design features included a consistent approach to the plan of an office structure. As well there was the preference for separating the upper floors of the building from the street level by using dark materials or placing the building upon a base or pedestal, while expressing the height of the offices above with a vertical stacking of fenestration separated by white vertical wall spaces. Finally, when the budget allowed, Beelman chose rich materials which served as decorative elements by virtue of their quality. While none of these design components was innovative, or unique in themselves, the specific combination became the hallmark of his work, united to express Beelman's own iteration of Corporate Modern.

The streetscape of Wilshire in particular is augmented by the presence of Beelman's designs. As is demonstrated by the buildings of the 60s still functioning in their original use, and through those which have been adaptively reused, the buildings have enduring quality. Beelman's use of steel framing permitted open interior spaces which could be easily reconfigured. The poured in place concrete cores and exterior concrete sheathing provide additional structural stability in an area where seismic considerations are important. The exterior cladding became increasingly more restrained. This reductive

process marked Beelman's evolution from historicism to Corporate Modern and reflected his desire to produce a product which reflected evolving design trends in Los Angeles and met the needs of the client for a "modern" building. Beelman was not a radical aesthetic innovator, but an architect who consistently produced a quality product which pleased his patrons and have staying power as useful, attractive buildings each bearing his unique stamp.

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Interviews

Mrs. Earnest Wilson at her home in Newport Beach, Ca., September 6, 2007.

Mr. Greg Brandon, by telephone, August 28, 2006, September 26, 2007, in person at his offices: November 8, 2011, December, 13 2011.

Appendix A

Curlett and Beelman Major Projects 1921-1930

First National Bank, 315 2nd St., Pomona, 1922

Cooper Arms, 455 E. Ocean Ave., Long Beach, 1922-1924

Union Oil Building, 617 W. 7th St. Los Angeles, 1923

Culver Hotel, 9400 Culver Boulevard, Culver City, 1924

Elks Club, 607 Park View St., Los Angeles, 1924

Barker Bros. 818 W. 7th St., Los Angeles, 1924

Security Pacific National Bank Building, 102-110 Pine Avenue, Long Beach, 1924

Talmadge Apartments, 3278 Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles, 1923-24

Pacific Southwest Trust and Savings Bank, 280 E. Colorado Blvd., Pasadena, 1924

Harris Newmark Building, 127 E. 9th St., Los Angeles, 1925

Farmers and Merchants Bank Tower, Pine Ave. at 3 rd., Long Beach, 1925

Pacific Coast Club, Long Beach, 1925 (Demolished)

Board of Trade Building/Bank of America, 111 W. 7th St., Los Angeles, 1926

Sun Realty, Alvarado and 6th, Los Angeles, 1927

Pacific Finance Building, Los Angeles, 1927

Garfield Building, 403 W. 8th, Los Angeles, 1928

Heinsbergen Decorating Company Building, 7415 W. Beverly Blvd., Los Angeles, 1928

Forman and Clark Building, 404 W. 7th and Hill Streets, Los Angeles, 1927-28

Roosevelt Building, 727 W. 7th St., Los Angeles, 1928

Hollywood bank Building, 6235 Hollywood Blvd. at Vine St., 1928-1929

Cedars of Lebanon Hospital, 4833 Fountain Ave., Los Angeles 1929-30

Sun Realty Company, 629 S. Hill St., Los Angeles, 1930

Appendix B

Claud Beelman Major Projects 1930-1945

9th and Broadway Building, Los Angeles, 1930

Eastern Columbia Building, 849 N. Broadway, Los Angeles 1931

Lloyd Corporation Building, 243-249 Beverly Dr., Beverly Hills, 1934

Ambassador Hotel (Addition), 3400 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles, 1935 (Demolished)

Consolidated Building (Remodel), SW Corner Sixth and Hill Streets, Los Angeles, 1935

Hollywood Post Office, NW Corner Wilcox and Selma, Los Angeles 1935 (with Allison and Allison)

Utah Street School (New Building), 174 N. Utah St., Los Angeles, 1936

Eastern Outfitters Warehouse, 2209 E. Sixteenth St. Los Angeles, 1936

Union Pacific Railroad (Remodel) 434 W. 6th St., Los Angeles, 1936

Millard Sheets Gallery, Los Angeles Co. Fairgrounds, Pomona, 1937

MGM Executive Offices, Culver City, 1937

Woodbury Business College, NW Corner Wilshire and St. Paul Pl., Los Angeles, 1937 (Demolished)

Philharmonic Hall (Remodel), NW Corner Fifth and Olive, Los Angeles, 1938 (Demolished)

Wayside Honor Farm County Prison (Plan), 1938-39

Laboratory, Cedars Hospital, North of Main Hospital at Fountain Ave. Los Angeles, 1940

Rose Hill Housing, Los Angeles, 1942 (with other architects)

Long Beach Naval Hospital, E. Seventh St. and Bellflower Blvd. Long Beach, 1941-43

Appendix C

Beelman Major Works 1945-1963

1947/48 Don Lee Mutual Broadcasting Building, 1313 Vine St., Hollywood,

1948 Farmers Insurance Building (Walker & Eisen) 4 story addition, SW Corner Wilshire and Rimpau, Los Angeles

1948 Barker Brothers, Crenshaw, SW Corner Martin Luther King Blvd and Marlton St. Los Angeles

1949 Barker Brothers, SW Corner of Lake and Delmar Streets, Pasadena

1949 Columbia Pictures Offices, N. Gower St. south of SE Corner of Gower St. and Sunset Blvd. Hollywood, Los Angeles

1949 Southwestern Portland Cement Building, 1034 Wilshire, Los Angeles (Demolished)

1950 Security First Bank, Wilshire at Bedford, Beverly Hills (Demolished?)

1950 Tishman Triple Buildings, 3440-3450-3460 Wilshire Blvd. at SE Corner of Mariposa St., Los Angeles

1951 McKesson & Robbins Drug Warehouse, Vanowen St. between Vineland and Tujunga, N. Hollywood, Los Angeles

1951 Children's Hospital, 4614 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles (Demolished)

1952 Savoy Parking, 1000 Car Garage, 537 S. Grand at 6th St. Los Angeles (Demolished)

1953 Aluminum Co. of America Building, NE Corner of Wilshire Blvd and Lucas St Los Angeles

1954/55 Superior Oil Building/Standard, 550 S. Flower St. Los Angeles

1956 Continental Assurance Building, NE Corner Wilshire Blvd and Virgil St., Los Angeles

1958 Tidewater Oil Headquarters, 4201 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles

1958 California Bank, 600 S. Spring St., Los Angeles

1958 Union Bank Annex, 323 W. 8th St., Los Angeles

1959 Keck Laboratory and Classroom Building, Caltech, Pasadena

1959/62 Kirkeby/Occidental Building, 10889 Wilshire Blvd between Westwood and Glendon, Westwood, Los Angeles

1961/62 Getty/Union Bank/Mercury, 3800 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles

1961/62 Pacific Indemnity Building, 3200 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles

1962 J.W. Robinson Department Store, Euclid and Loara Sts., Anaheim