

Dunbar Hotel

4255 S. Central Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90011
(Constructed 1928)

W.E.B. Du Bois, celebrated author, Harvard's first African American Ph.D. graduate, and hotel guest described the Dunbar Hotel as "a jewel done with loving hands... a beautiful inn with soul."

Timeline

- 1928: Dunbar Hotel Constructed
- 1928-1970: Period of Significance
- 1974: Designated a Historic-Cultural Monument (#131)
- 1974-1987: Dunbar Hotel vacant and in decline
- 1976: Listed on National Register
- 1989-1990: Dunbar Hotel unsympathetically rehabilitated & hotel rooms converted into SRO units
- 2008: National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Form for historic resources associated with African Americans in Los Angeles
- 2009: CRA hired PCR to Prepare HSR
- 2011: Thomas Safran Associates took ownership of Dunbar Village through competitive proposal process held by Los Angeles Housing Department and CRA
- 2011-2013: PCR provided guidance to Steven Fader Architects
- 2013: Rehabilitation completed (41 affordable senior units)

Significance

- Built as the Hotel Somerville by Dr. John Alexander Somerville in 1928, the Dunbar Hotel played a key role in L.A.'s African American community for decades.
- The hotel provided first-class accommodations for African Americans in segregated Los Angeles, who were denied comparable lodging elsewhere, and was considered the finest African American hotel in the nation.
- At the heart of the Central Avenue jazz scene, many prominent jazz musicians stayed or performed there, including Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Count Basie, and Bessie Smith.
- Mediterranean Revival style architecture constructed by African American contractors and craftsman

HSR: Documentation of Historic Appearance



Primary (East) Central Avenue Elevation, Circa 1928



Secondary (South) 42nd Place Elevation, Circa 1928

HSR: Documentation of Historic Appearance



115 ROOMS—75 ROOMS WITH BATH. RATES \$1.00 PER DAY AND UP. WEEKLY RATES \$5.00 AND UP.

Postcard, Circa 1938

HSR: Documentation of Alterations



Circa 1987

HSR: Condition Survey

Dunbar Hotel Inventory Record

ID: 52
Space: 42nd Place Entrance Lobby
Type: North Wall
Quantity: 1

Description:

Original textured plaster wall. Some new plaster texture coating on north pilasters.

Notes:

For the original portions of the wall retain and clean. The "gentlest means possible" of removing dirt from a building surface can be achieved by using a low-pressure water wash, scrubbing areas of more persistent grime with a natural bristle (never metal) brush. Steam cleaning can also be used effectively to clean some historic building fabric. Low-pressure water or steam will soften the dirt and cause the deposits to rise to the surface, where they can be washed away. For the texture coated portions re-plaster walls in-kind to original plaster appearance.



Finishes: Painted textured plaster.
Condition: Good
Priority: 4-Low

Observation Date: 8/18/2009
Recorder: Amanda Kainer

Photo Range:
P1050200

ID: 63
Space: 42nd Place Entrance Lobby
Type: Pendant Lamp
Quantity: 1
Finishes:
Condition: Good
Priority: 4-Low

Description:

Pendant lamp with copper frame trim.

Notes:

Retain and clean.

Observation Date: 8/18/2009
Recorder: Amanda Kainer

Photo Range:
P1050281



Documentation of 425 character-defining features and spaces associated with the Dunbar Hotel's period of significance (1928-1970) in Access, along with written description, condition (poor, fair, good, or excellent), priority for rehabilitation (urgent, high, medium, or low) and treatment recommendations.

Rehabilitation: Project Scope

- Conversion of the upper floors from SRO to apartments
- Rehabilitation of the public spaces for use by residents
- Rehabilitation of the historic retail spaces
- Preservation of historic fabric, both exterior and interior

Rehabilitation: Philosophy

- Preserve historic fabric wherever possible
- Maintain the historic spatial arrangements of the public spaces (and undo prior incompatible alterations where possible)
- Recreate lost elements
- Provide contemporary interventions that are compatible with but distinguishable from the building's period of significance, all within the available budget.



Historic Appearance of Lobby, Circa 1928



Historic Appearance of Mezzanine, Circa 1928



Lobby Before Rehabilitation, 2011



Lobby Before Rehabilitation, 2009



Lobby **Before** Rehabilitation, 2009



Lobby Mural **Before** Restoration



Lobby During Rehabilitation



Mural Restoration by Chameleon Paintworks, Inc.



Lobby After Rehabilitation, 2013



Lobby After Rehabilitation, 2013



Historic Appearance of Atrium, Circa 1928



Atrium **Before** Rehabilitation, 2009



Atrium Enclosed Circa 1989 Rehab



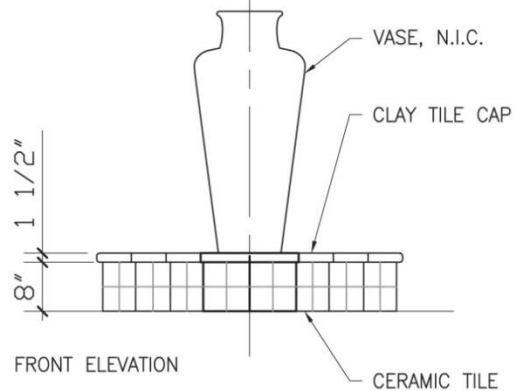
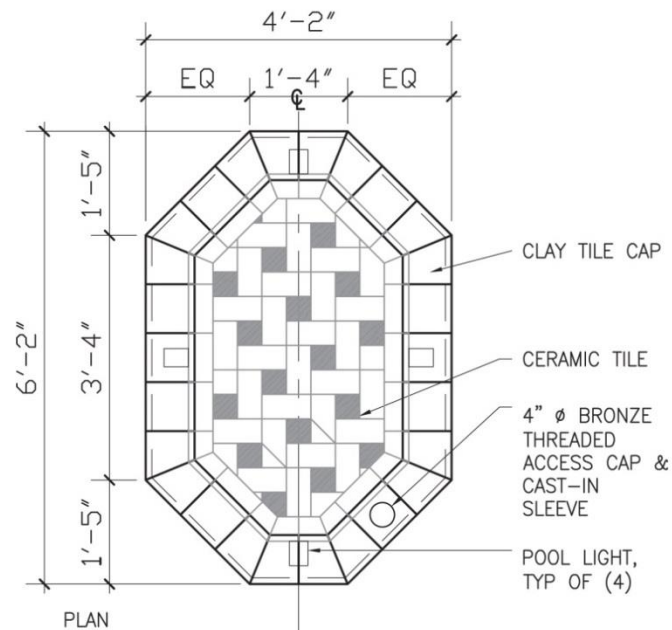
Atrium **Before** Rehabilitation, 2009



Atrium During Rehabilitation



Atrium After Rehabilitation, 2013



Atrium Fountain

COLOR #1

COLOR #2

COLOR #3

COLOR #4

COLOR #5

COLOR #6

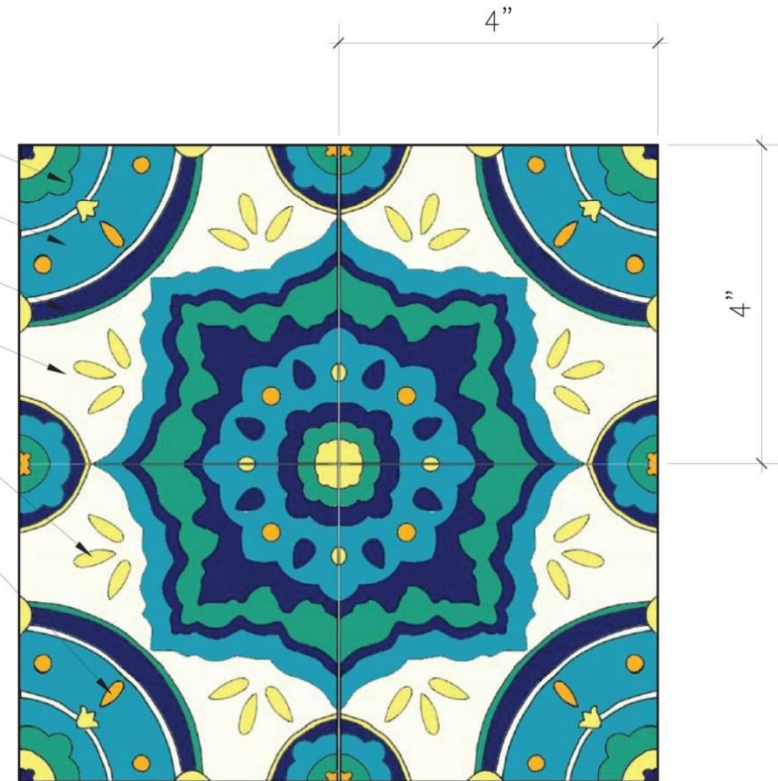
COLOR #1: CP 96

COLOR #2: TEAL

COLOR #3: CP 106

NOTE: VERIFY COLORS WITH ARCHITECT

Custom Tile Pattern



COLOR #4: CREAM

COLOR #5: CP 44

COLOR #6: CP 65

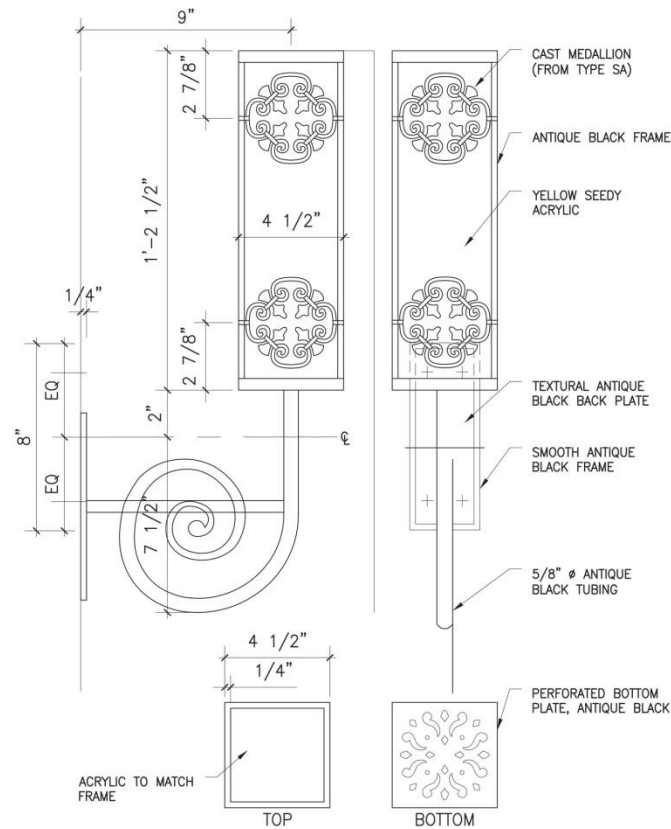
One Original Fountain and Ceramic Tile in Atrium Replicated



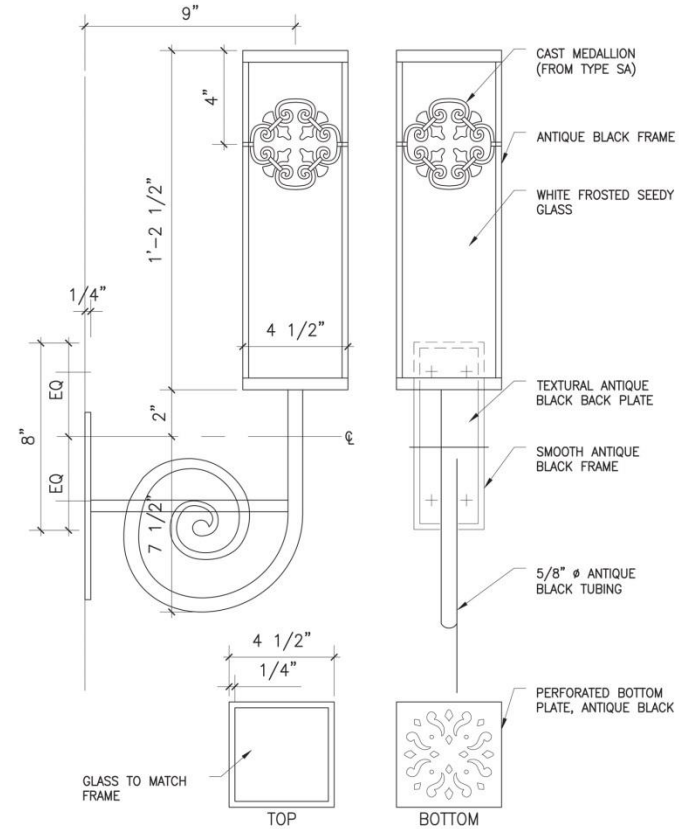
Atrium After Rehabilitation, 2013



Exterior - Historic



Exterior - New



Atrium - New

Replication of Exterior and Interior Wall Sconces



Atrium After Rehabilitation, 2013



Corridor Floors 3 to 5 **Before** Rehabilitation, 2009



Corridor Floors **After** Rehabilitation, 2013



Patterned Carpet in Mezzanine and Corridors Replicated to Match Original



Historic Appearance of Hotel Room, Circa 1928



SRO Unit Before Rehabilitation, 2011



SRO Unit Converted into Apartment, **After** Rehabilitation, 2013



Secondary (South) Elevation, **Before** Rehabilitation, 2009



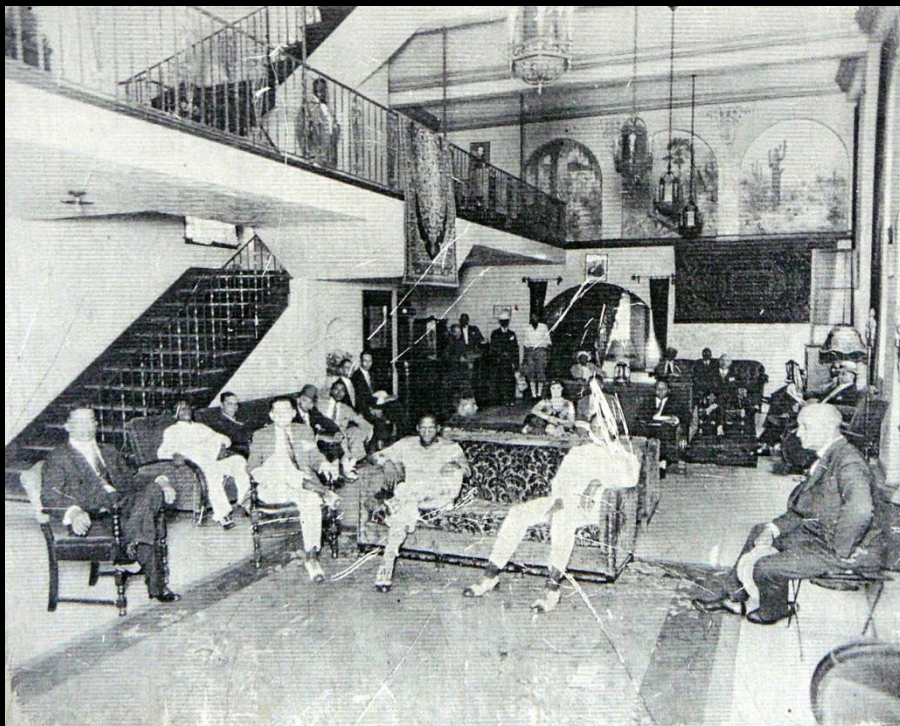
Restored and Enhanced Residential Entry,
Secondary (South) Elevation, **After** Rehabilitation, 2013



Primary (East) Elevation, **Before** Rehabilitation, 2009



Primary (East) Elevation, **After** Rehabilitation, 2013



Open House, June 26, 2013