

# Los Angeles Department of City Planning

## RECOMMENDATION REPORT

### CULTURAL HERITAGE COMMISSION

CASE NO.: CHC-2008-4979-HCM

**HEARING DATE:** January 15, 2009  
**TIME:** 10:00 AM  
**PLACE:** City Hall, Room 1010  
200 N. Spring Street  
Los Angeles, CA  
90012

Location: 1817 Hillcrest Road  
Council District: 4  
Community Plan Area: Hollywood  
Area Planning Commission: Central  
Neighborhood Council: Hollywood Hills West  
Legal Description: Lot 3 of Pinehurst Terrace Tract

**PROJECT:** Historic-Cultural Monument Application for  
VILLA BONITA

**REQUEST:** Declare the building a Historic-Cultural Monument

**OWNER/  
APPLICANT:** Villa Bonita Partners  
17001 Ventura Blvd.  
Encino, CA 91316

**APPLICANT'S  
REPRESENTATIVE:** Robert Chattel  
Chattel Architecture, Planning, and Preservation  
13417 Ventura Blvd.  
Sherman Oaks, CA 94123

### RECOMMENDATION

#### That the Cultural Heritage Commission:

1. **Take the property under consideration** as a Historic-Cultural Monument per Los Angeles Administrative Code Chapter 9, Division 22, Article 1, Section 22.171.10(c)4 because the application and accompanying photo documentation suggest the submittal may warrant further investigation.
2. **Adopt** the report findings.

S. GAIL GOLDBERG, AICP  
Director of Planning

**[SIGNED ORIGINAL IN FILE]**

Ken Bernstein, AICP, Manager  
Office of Historic Resources

**[SIGNED ORIGINAL IN FILE]**

Lambert M. Giessinger, Preservation Architect  
Office of Historic Resources

Prepared by:

**[SIGNED ORIGINAL IN FILE]**

Edgar Garcia, Preservation Planner  
Office of Historic Resources

Attachments: November, 2008 Historic-Cultural Monument Application

## **DISCUSSION**

Built in 1929 and located in the Hollywood area, the Villa Bonita is a seven-story residential apartment building exhibiting character-defining features of the Spanish Colonial Revival style. The subject building has a rectangular plan, constructed of reinforced concrete with a smooth stucco finish, and organized in the base-shaft-capital composition. The roof is flat with a tower element of the southeast corner capped with tile on a slightly hipped roof. The primary entrance is located in the central bay and set within an arched opening with decorative molding. Windows are wood casement windows with some exhibiting elaborately shaped tops. Projecting angled bay windows define the shaft of the south bay and the main elevation. The seventh floor and rooftop is characterized by elaborately ornamented terra-cotta and window openings. Significant interior features include a lobby space with ceiling molding and metal light fixtures.

The subject building was designed by architect Frank Webster. Various residents of the subject building have been associated with the Hollywood entertainment industry.

The proposed Villa Bonita historic monument appears to be a good example of the luxury apartment home building type designed in the Spanish Colonial Revival style.

The subject building was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1986.

Alterations include the addition of a penthouse and a metal roof sign in the early 1930s and addition of a sunroom in 1989.

## **CRITERIA**

The criterion is the Cultural Heritage Ordinance which defines a historical or cultural monument as any site (including significant trees or other plant life located thereon) building or structure of particular historic or cultural significance to the City of Los Angeles, such as historic structures or sites in which the broad cultural, economic, or social history of the nation, State or community is reflected or exemplified, or which are identified with historic personages or with important events in the main currents of national, State or local history or which embody the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type specimen, inherently valuable for a study of a period style or method of construction, or a notable work of a master builder, designer or architect whose individual genius influenced his age.

## **FINDINGS**

Based on the facts set forth in the summary and application, the Commission determines that the application is complete and that the property is significant enough to warrant further investigation as a potential Historic-Cultural Monument.



CULTURAL HERITAGE COMMISSION

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# **HISTORIC-CULTURAL MONUMENT APPLICATION**

## SIGNIFICANCE WORK SHEET

TYPE OR HAND PRINT IN ALL CAPITAL BLOCK LETTERS

*Complete One or Both of the Upper and Lower Portions of This Page*

### ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

THE \_\_\_\_\_ IS AN IMPORTANT EXAMPLE OF

NAME OF PROPOSED MONUMENT

\_\_\_\_\_ ARCHITECTURE

ARCHITECTURAL STYLE (SEE LINE 8)

AND MEETS THE CULTURAL HERITAGE ORDINANCE BECAUSE OF THE HIGH QUALITY OF ITS DESIGN AND THE RETENTION OF ITS ORIGINAL FORM, DETAILING AND INTEGRITY.

A N D / O R

### HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

THE \_\_\_\_\_ WAS BUILT IN \_\_\_\_\_

NAME OF PROPOSED MONUMENT

YEAR BUILT

\_\_\_\_\_ WAS IMPORTANT TO THE

NAME OF FIRST OR SIGNIFICANT OTHER

DEVELOPMENT OF LOS ANGELES BECAUSE \_\_\_\_\_

# HISTORIC-CULTURAL MONUMENT APPLICATION

TYPE OR HAND PRINT IN ALL CAPITAL BLOCK LETTERS

## IDENTIFICATION

1. NAME OF PROPOSED MONUMENT \_\_\_\_\_
2. STREET ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_  
CITY \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP CODE \_\_\_\_\_ COUNCIL DISTRICT \_\_\_\_\_
3. ASSESSOR'S PARCEL NO. \_\_\_\_\_
4. COMPLETE LEGAL DESCRIPTION: TRACT \_\_\_\_\_  
BLOCK \_\_\_\_\_ LOT(S) \_\_\_\_\_ ARB. NO. \_\_\_\_\_
5. RANGE OF ADDRESSES ON PROPERTY \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. PRESENT OWNER \_\_\_\_\_  
STREET ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_  
CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP CODE \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_  
OWNER IS: PRIVATE \_\_\_\_\_ PUBLIC \_\_\_\_\_
7. PRESENT USE \_\_\_\_\_ ORIGINAL USE \_\_\_\_\_

## DESCRIPTION

8. ARCHITECTURAL STYLE \_\_\_\_\_  
(SEE STYLE GUIDE)
9. STATE PRESENT PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE OR STRUCTURE (SEE OPTIONAL DESCRIPTION WORK SHEET)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
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# HISTORIC-CULTURAL MONUMENT APPLICATION

NAME OF PROPOSED MONUMENT \_\_\_\_\_

10. CONSTRUCTION DATE: FACTUAL \_\_\_\_\_ ESTIMATED \_\_\_\_\_

11. ARCHITECT, DESIGNER, OR ENGINEER \_\_\_\_\_

12. CONTRACTOR OR OTHER BUILDER \_\_\_\_\_

13. DATES OF ENCLOSED PHOTOGRAPHS \_\_\_\_\_  
(8X10 BLACK AND WHITE GLOSSY)

14. CONDITION: ☐ EXCELLENT ☐ GOOD ☐ FAIR ☐ DETERIORATED ☐ NO LONGER IN EXISTENCE

15. ALTERATIONS \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

16. THREATS TO SITE: ☐ NONE KNOWN ☐ PRIVATE DEVELOPMENT ☐ VANDALISM ☐ PUBLIC WORKS PROJECT  
☐ ZONING ☐ OTHER \_\_\_\_\_

17. IS THE STRUCTURE: ☐ ON ITS ORIGINAL SITE ☐ MOVED ☐ UNKNOWN

## SIGNIFICANCE

18. BRIEF STATE HISTORICAL AND/OR ARCHITECTURAL IMPORTANCE: INCLUDE DATES, EVENTS, AND PERSON ASSOCIATED  
WITH THE SITE (SEE OPTIONAL SIGNIFICANCE WORK SHEET)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

19. SOURCES (LIST BOOKS, DOCUMENTS, SURVEYS, PERSONAL INTERVIEWS WITH DATES) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

20. DATE FORM PREPARED \_\_\_\_\_ PREPARER'S NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ORGANIZATION \_\_\_\_\_ STREET ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP CODE \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

## PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

The Villa Bonita is a seven-story, multi-family residential building positioned at the southwest corner of Hillcrest Road and Bonita Terrace in the Hollywood neighborhood of Los Angeles. Located close to Franklin Avenue, the site slopes down from north to south (Exhibits A-B; Photographs 1-9). Six stories high with penthouse and basement, the building exhibits decorative elements of Spanish Colonial Revival style. It is rectangular in plan with a flat roof, three bays wide along the east façade on Hillcrest Road and four bays wide along the north elevation on Bonita Terrace. The building is constructed using reinforced concrete with a smooth stucco finish, largely covered with vines on the street-facing elevations. Fenestration consists of wood casement windows, some of which have elaborately shaped tops. A tower element at the southeast corner is capped with a Mission tile clad, hipped roof and displays the building name in script surface-mounted letters on the south elevation. An asymmetrical, two-story mechanical penthouse sits at the approximate center of the roof.

The east façade is set back from the sidewalk by a small but densely landscaped gated garden surrounding the building's primary entrance. The tower element at the south side of the façade steps forward. Projecting angled bay windows define the shaft of the south bay while a metal fire escape is located within the central bay and a vertical column of windows extends the length of the north bay.

The main entrance, located in the central bay and accessed by a six-step, tile-clad stoop, is set within an elaborate, arched opening. The arched opening is defined by fluted pilasters, ornamented with an array of decorative motifs, including fleur-de-leis, bows and acanthus leaves. A cornice with several rows of horizontal banding crowns the top of the opening and finishes in a scalloped pediment. A fabric canopy extends from the arched opening. The main entrance is inset and consists of a pair of wood doors with single glass panels and an arched, glass transom. Decorative wrought iron panels cover the glazed panels and a wrought iron ceiling fixture illuminates the recessed entry.

The east façade and north elevations are organized in a base-shaft-capital composition. Ground floor fenestration consists of arched windows while sixth floor fenestration consists of scalloped arched windows, framed by pilasters. On the east façade, decorative moldings surround ground floor windows. Windows in the outer bays of the sixth floor are crowned with broken pediments with central three-dimensional urns that extend slightly above the roofline. Decorative medallions are placed above windows and the wall surface is textured with a geometric pattern.

The north elevation is constructed along the sidewalk edge. Its four bays are each defined by a vertical column of windows. Fenestration pattern along the shaft, the second through fifth floors, consists of pairs of windows within the two center bays flanked by sets of three windows within projecting angled bays.

The south and west elevations are largely utilitarian with painted, board-formed concrete finish. The seventh floor of the south façade has one embellished arched window in the east bay. Visible from the south and west, a portion of the roof was enclosed as an addition to the seventh floor penthouse. The west elevation is equipped with a fire escape that extends to the roof of the building.

On the interior, upper floor apartments are accessed through a small entry lobby, which contains a wrought iron ceiling light fixture, metal mailboxes and decorative plaster ceiling. The

building's original elevator contains wood and fabric paneling. An open central stair also provides access to each floor. Notable features of interior units typically include built-in cabinetry, tiled bathrooms and kitchens.

## ALTERATIONS

Alterations to Villa Bonita are minimal and include the early addition of a penthouse in 1931,<sup>1</sup> addition of a metal roof sign in 1933,<sup>2</sup> expansion of the penthouse in 1940,<sup>3</sup> fire ordinance corrective work in 1974,<sup>4</sup> and addition of a "sunroom" adjacent to the penthouse in 1989.<sup>5</sup> Red clay tile roofs have been overpainted (date unknown). These alterations have not affected the integrity of the building.

## SIGNIFIANCE

Villa Bonita was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on September 12, 1986 and is eligible for local designation as a Historic-Cultural Monument for its unique Spanish Colonial Revival style designed by local architect, Frank Webster.<sup>6</sup> It is significant for its high quality design, which remains architecturally distinct in the area, and is a remarkably intact example of a multi-family residential building constructed during Hollywood's heyday as a film and entertainment center in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It has been used as an apartment house since its construction in 1929. The original building owner was Sidney M. Ullman,<sup>7</sup> a motion picture art director,<sup>8</sup> and title to the property is currently held by Villa Bonita Partners, LP. The period of significance is its year of construction, 1929.

Villa Bonita is located in close proximity to the commercial center of Hollywood, only a few blocks northwest of the intersection of Hollywood Boulevard and Highland Avenue. Built during a period of time when Hollywood was undergoing rapid urbanization of residential areas in which low density properties were replaced with multi-family dwellings, Villa Bonita is reflective of the change in residential development resulting from Hollywood's increasing popularity as a hub of entertainment and opportunity. Five years after the 1910 annexation of Hollywood to the City of Los Angeles, the area was in the midst of a real estate boom.<sup>9</sup> No longer a small

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<sup>1</sup> "Penthouses on Three Buildings Now Completed," *Los Angeles Times*, 9 August 1931, D2.

<sup>2</sup> This sign does not exist today and is not mentioned in any later permits or other historic documentation. (City of Los Angeles Department of Building and Safety, Building Permit #1933LA17764).

<sup>3</sup> City of Los Angeles Department of Building and Safety, Building Permit # 1940LA05199.

<sup>4</sup> City of Los Angeles Department of Building and Safety, Building Permit # 1974LA87341.

<sup>5</sup> City of Los Angeles Department of Building and Safety, Building Permit # 1989LA27142.

<sup>6</sup> National Park Service, National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form ID #86001950, (12 September 1986).

<sup>7</sup> The 1986 National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form for the Villa Bonita indicates that the original building owner was Sydney George Ullman, agent of Hollywood film star Rudolph Valentino. The nomination explains in detail Sidney George Ullman's significance as a Hollywood player. However, further research has shown that this is incorrect and that the true original building owner is Sidney M. Ullman. The *Los Angeles City Directory* from 1929 lists both "S. George Ullman," a "booking agent", and "Sidney M. Ullman," an "art director." The first building permit for the Villa Bonita, dated February 23, 1928, lists "Sidney M. Ullman" as the building owner. In addition, the first available tax records for the building from 1929 indicate that the heirs of Sidney M. Ullman paid the taxes on the property. Based on this information, it is clear that a mistake was made in naming Sydney George Ullman as the original building owner on the National Register Nomination Form for Villa Bonita. (National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form ID #86001950, City of Los Angeles Building Permit # 1929LA1303, *Los Angeles City Directory*, 1929, and *United States Federal Census*, 1930.)

<sup>8</sup> *Los Angeles City Directory*, 1929; *United States Federal Census*, 1930.

<sup>9</sup> Gregory Paul Williams, *The Story of Hollywood: An Illustrated History* (Los Angeles: BL Press, 2005), 78.



independent city struggling to deal with infrastructural problems, but instead a thriving suburb of Los Angeles, Hollywood increasingly attracted both residential and commercial interests.

Soon after Hollywood's annexation, the fledgling movie industry took hold in the area. The upscale ambience, varied topography, and glamour associated with the rise of the movie industry were some of the qualities of Hollywood that were particularly appealing to potential residents.<sup>10</sup> However, as land values escalated in the 1920s, the large estates of the elite that characterized much of Hollywood's development toward the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century gave way to the more intensive land use associated with a population boom. While the population of Hollywood had been little over 4,000 people upon incorporation, the area boasted a population of 153,000 by the 1930s.<sup>11</sup>

Although Villa Bonita residents held a variety of jobs,<sup>12</sup> tenants of the building, particularly in the 1930s and 1940s,<sup>13</sup> tended to be employed in the local entertainment industry<sup>14</sup> as artists, singers, musicians, film corporation executives, etc. For example, Ethelind Terry is recorded in the 1939 *Los Angeles City Directory* as residing in the Villa Bonita. She was an opera and musical comedy actress starring in several productions, including "Sons O' Guns" at the Carthay Circle Theater in Los Angeles in 1932, and "Rio Rita" on Broadway in New York City.<sup>15</sup> The proximity of Villa Bonita to Hollywood's core commercial and entertainment district made 1817 Hillcrest Road a desirable address for those working in the local industry.

In addition to being associated with an important trend in Hollywood residential development, the Villa Bonita is, both in design and stature, an exemplary representation of Spanish Colonial Revival architecture. Complete with a square tower feature capped in red tile, smooth stucco cladding, carved entry detailing, and shaped focal windows on the ground and top floors, the masterfully integrated design features make this building an outstanding example of 1920s period revival style architecture in Hollywood. While these decorative elements are typical of other neighboring multi-family residential buildings, Villa Bonita remains one of the most elegantly composed and well-maintained examples of period revival style architecture in the area. Other noteworthy extant period revival style buildings constructed around the same date as and in close proximity to Villa Bonita include the Gothic themed First United Methodist Church (1928), located at 6817 Franklin Avenue,<sup>16</sup> the Renaissance Revival style H.L. Farr

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<sup>10</sup> Richard Longstreth, *City Center to Regional Mall; Architecture, the Automobile, and Retailing in Los Angeles, 1920-1950* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1997), 83.

<sup>11</sup> Richard Longstreth, *City Center to Regional Mall; Architecture, the Automobile, and Retailing in Los Angeles, 1920-1950* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1997), 83.

<sup>12</sup> Non-entertainment industry tenants of the Villa Bonita included individuals with a variety of occupations, including Margaret Hogan, a Los Angeles County auditor (1939 Directory), Jane Hendricks, a clerk (1942 Directory), and John C. Teague, a draftsman (1942 Directory), to name few residents listed. (See *Los Angeles City Directories*, 1936, 1938, 1939, 1942).

<sup>13</sup> Most of the listings for Villa Bonita tenants in the Los Angeles City Directories contain only names and do not list occupations. Further research would have to be done cross referencing the names given with other historic documents in order to determine definitively that the Villa Bonita has or has not housed individuals of profound significance, cultural or otherwise.

<sup>14</sup> The Los Angeles City Directory lists the following Villa Bonita tenants: Fred Locher, an artist (1936 Directory), F.W. Spalding, a singer (1936 Directory), Jaro S. Churain, a musician (1942 Directory), Albert Fiedler, a film corporation executive (1942 Directory).

<sup>15</sup> See "Songster Stars in Musical Comedy," *Los Angeles Times*, 1 March 1932, A7; "Tenor Heads Variety Bill at Downtown," *Los Angeles Times*, 18 Feb 1932, A9; and "Ethelind Terry Here Tells of Juarez Divorce," *Los Angeles Times*, 10 Jan 1932, 12.

<sup>16</sup> Noteworthy design features include a nine story tower, pointed arches, and stained glass windows (See *Hollywood Redevelopment Area Historic Resources Update Survey Report*, 2002).

Apartments (1928), located at 6720 Franklin Place,<sup>17</sup> and the Spanish Colonial Revival apartment building (1924), located at 1813-1815 Grace Avenue.<sup>18</sup>

Spanish Colonial Revival, along with a variety of other period revival styles, including Classical, Colonial, and Gothic, were popular and commonly used for residential buildings in Hollywood during the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The extensive use of historic styles grew out of the Chicago World's Fair (Fair) of 1893,<sup>19</sup> which has been described as one of the most culturally significant events in American history because of the way it made Americans think about the built environment. Visually dramatic, the Fair boasted a collection of striking white, Classical style buildings arranged according to Beaux Arts design principles along an axis of water features and expanses of lush green lawns. David Gebhard, noted architectural historian and author, writes, "What Americans saw at the Fair was noble order, something that they had not seen in their cities since the 18<sup>th</sup> Century."<sup>20</sup> The so-called "White City" profoundly affected subsequent architecture and urban planning efforts in the United States. Urban planner William Fulton states, "The White City so captured the American imagination that its neoclassical architecture was soon mandatory for most civic buildings..."<sup>21</sup> In addition to designing Classical Revival buildings, American architects experimented with a wide variety of period revival styles in the early 1900s.

This fervor for period revival styles, Spanish Colonial Revival in particular, was also popularized by the Panama-California Exposition (Exposition) of 1915 in San Diego, California.<sup>22</sup> By commemorating the opening of the Panama Canal a year earlier, the Exposition served to boost San Diego as the closest American port to the canal. The Exposition, with Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue<sup>23</sup> as chief architect, was a "statement of local industry clothed in a Southern California architecture"<sup>24</sup> and had as much influence on subsequent use of Spanish Colonial Revival style as the Fair did for historic period revival styles in general and Classical Revival style in particular.<sup>25</sup> Use of the Spanish Colonial Revival at the Exposition represented Spanish historical antecedents more faithfully than the Mission Revival and "emphasize[d] the richness of Spanish precedents found throughout Latin America."<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> This five-story apartment building is relatively minimal in terms of architectural detailing but remains a good example of a multi-family revival style building constructed in Hollywood in the late 1920s. (See: *Hollywood Redevelopment Area Historic Resources Update Survey Report, 2002*).

<sup>18</sup> Spanish Colonial Revival design features on this building includes a red clay tile roof, an arched main entry, smooth stucco finish, arched focal windows, and decorative tile window shutters. (See: *Hollywood Redevelopment Area Historic Resources Update Survey Report, 2002*).

<sup>19</sup> The Chicago World's Fair of 1893 is also often referred to as The World's Columbian Exposition.

<sup>20</sup> David Gebhard, Rodger Montgomery, Robert Winter, John Woodbridge, Sally Woodbridge, *A Guide to Architecture in San Francisco and Northern California*, Second Edition (Santa Barbara: Peregrine Smith, Inc., 1973) 19.

<sup>21</sup> William Fulton, *Guide to California Planning*, Point Arena: Solano Press Books, 2005, 47.

<sup>22</sup> David Gebhard, "The Spanish Colonial Revival in Southern California (1895-1930)," *The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol. 26, No. 2 (May 1967), 136.

<sup>23</sup> Like many architects working at that time, Bertram Goodhue (1869-1924) worked in a myriad of period revival styles. Prior to working on the Panama-California Exposition, much of his work was executed in the Gothic Revival style as a partner of Ralph Adams Cram in New York City from 1891 until 1914. Bertram Goodhue's work on the Episcopal Cathedral, Le Santissima Trinidad, in Havana, Cuba in 1905 and a later trip to Mexico influenced him to such a degree that he wrote a detailed study of Spanish Colonial architecture in Mexico, the principles of which he adapted to his work at the Panama-California Exposition.

<sup>24</sup> Paul Gleye, *The Architecture of Los Angeles*, Los Angeles: Rosebud Books, 1981, 87.

<sup>25</sup> David Gebhard, "The Spanish Colonial Revival in Southern California (1895-1930)," *The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol. 26, No. 2(May 1967), 136.

<sup>26</sup> Virginia and Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005, 418.

Architect Frank Webster embraced the turn-of-the-20<sup>th</sup> century period revival style architecture trend with his design for Villa Bonita.<sup>27</sup> Webster lived and worked in the Los Angeles area,<sup>28</sup> completing designs for a variety of buildings in southern California, including a two-story multi-family residential building located at 2601-11 Beachwood Drive in Hollywood (c. 1926),<sup>29</sup> a three-story hotel in Topanga Canyon (c. 1925),<sup>30</sup> several buildings in Santa Monica,<sup>31</sup> and a five-story hotel and apartment building in San Diego (c. 1925).<sup>32</sup> Due to the lack of scholarship regarding his work, it is difficult both to assess the extent of Webster's architectural impact on southern California and whether or not the buildings identified above are extant. The Villa Bonita, however, appears to be among his significant work.

In addition, a review of the Hollywood Redevelopment Area Historic Resources Update Survey Report (2002) indicates that few multi-family residential buildings in Hollywood are extant from Hollywood's "Golden Era" in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and possess a quality of design equaling that of Villa Bonita. It also represents the trend in the 1920s and 1930s of increasing urbanization in Hollywood. Highly visible from several major Hollywood thoroughfares, Villa Bonita was originally and is today an architectural focal point in the community. Its masterful assemblage of Spanish Colonial Revival design features, coupled with its location at the base of an upward sloping street, creates a powerful point of entry for the elite residential neighborhoods of the Hollywood Hills. In a community where few multi-family residential buildings executed with such a high level of design remain, the Villa Bonita is an enduring and increasingly rare example of an early 20<sup>th</sup> century apartment house that retains an exceptional degree of architectural integrity from its period of significance.

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<sup>27</sup> City of Los Angeles Department of Building and Safety, Building Permit # 1929LA1303.

<sup>28</sup> *Los Angeles City Directory*, 1929, 2213.

<sup>29</sup> "Tract Adding Many Homes: Hills subdivision developing rapidly as builders weekly begin work on residential projects," *Los Angeles Times*, 28 March 1926, E4.

<sup>30</sup> "Change Prices on One Hundred Residence Lots," *Los Angeles Times*, 26 July 1925, G6.

<sup>31</sup> The *Santa Monica Historical Resources Inventory*, 1985-86 indicates that "Frank Webster" is the architect responsible for the design of a building located at 1337-39 Third Street and originally owned by National Investment Company. It also notes that an individual by the name of "F.H. Webster" (presumably Frank Webster) is responsible for the design of a building located at 933 Ocean Avenue. Both buildings are dated 1925.

<sup>32</sup> "Cahuenga Plan Aid to Highland," *Los Angeles Times*, 20 December 1925, E7.

## SOURCES

### *Books:*

Gebhard, Patricia, *George Washington Smith: Architect of The Spanish Colonial Revival*, Salt Lake City: Gibbs Smith Publishers, 2005. p37.

Gleye, Paul, *The Architecture of Los Angeles*, Los Angeles: Rosebud Books, 1981.

Longstreth, Richard, *City Center to Regional Mall; Architecture, the Automobile, and Retailing in Los Angeles, 1920-1950* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1997).

McAlester, Virginia and Lee. *A Field Guide to American Houses*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005.

Marc Wanamaker, *Images of Early Beverly Hills*, (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2005).

Williams, Gregory Paul, *The Story of Hollywood: An Illustrated History* (Los Angeles: BL Press, 2005).

### *Government Documents and Public Information:*

California Death Index <<http://vitals.rootsweb.ancestry.com/ca/death/search.cgi>>.

City of Los Angeles Department of City Planning, Parcel Profile Report for 1817 Hillcrest Road.

City of Los Angeles Zoning Information and Map Access System (ZIMAS) <<http://zimas.lacity.org/>>.

Department of Building and Safety, City of Los Angeles building permits for 1817 Hillcrest Road.

*Los Angeles City Directory, 1929* Los Angeles Public Library, p. 2213, 2143.

Los Angeles County Registrar—Recorder/County Clerk, *County of Los Angeles Deeds Book*.

United States Census Bureau, *United States Federal Census, 1920*, <<http://www.census.gov/>>.

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United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, ID 86001950*, September 12, 1986.

ProQuest, *Digital Sanborn Maps, 1867-1970*, <<http://sanborn.umi.com/>>.

### *Historic Resource Inventories:*

Johnson Heumann Research Associates, consultants to the City of Santa Monica, *Santa Monica Historical Resources Inventory 1985-86*.

Myra L. Frank & Associates, *Hollywood Redevelopment Area Historic Resources Update Survey Report*, 2002.

*Magazine and Newspaper Articles:*

"Apartment Furnishings Made Here," *Los Angeles Times*, 7 June 1931, E4.

"Cahuenga Plan Aid to Highland," *Los Angeles Times*, 20 December 1925, E7.

"Change Prices on One Hundred Residence Lots," *Los Angeles Times*, 26 July 1925, G6.

"Deals Closed for \$500,000," *Los Angeles Times*, 6 Jul 1941, A6.

"Ethelind Terry Here Tells of Juarez Divorce," *Los Angeles Times*, 10 Jan 1932, 12.

Gebhard, David, "The Spanish Colonial Revival in Southern California (1895-1930), *The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol. 26, No. 2 (May 1967), 131-147.

"Penthouses on Three Buildings Now Completed," *Los Angeles Times*, 9 August 1931, D2.

"Songster Stars in Musical Comedy," *Los Angeles Times*, 1 March 1932.

"Tenor Heads Variety Bill at Downtown," *Los Angeles Times*, 18 Feb. 1932, A9.

"Tract Adding Many Homes: Hills subdivision developing rapidly as builders weekly begin work on residential projects," *Los Angeles Times*, 28 March 1926, E4.

Exhibit A: Sanborn Map

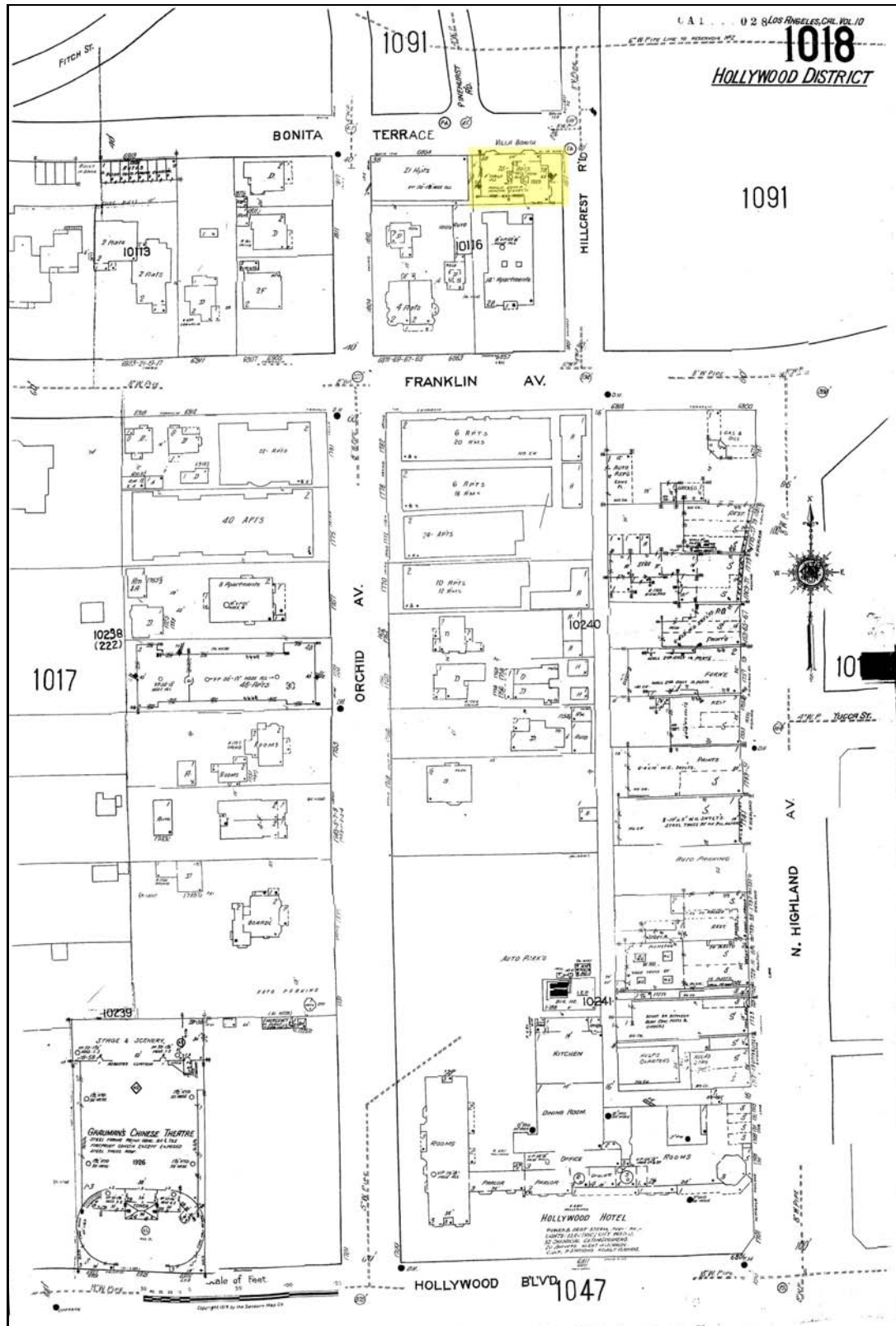


Exhibit A: Sanborn Map, showing proximity of Villa Bonita to Hollywood Boulevard and Highland Avenue, with subject property highlighted in yellow (Los Angeles 1906-Jan. 1951, vol. 10, 1919-Nov. 1950, Sheet 1018)

Exhibit B: National Register of Historic Places  
Nomination Form





United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received JUL 30 1986

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*

Type all entries—complete applicable sections

## 1. Name

historic The Villa Bonita

and/or common The Villa Bonita

## 2. Location

street &amp; number 1817 Hillcrest Road n/a not for publication

city, town Hollywood n/a vicinity of

state California code 06 county Los Angeles code 037

## 3. Classification

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

## 4. Owner of Property

name Albert V. Siniscal/Villa Bonita Properties

street &amp; number 1817 Hillcrest Road

city, town Hollywood n/a vicinity of state CA 90028

## 5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Los Angeles County Hall of Records

street &amp; number 511 W. Temple Street

city, town Los Angeles state CA 90012

## 6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title N/A has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☒ nodate ☐ federal ☐ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records

city, town state

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet.

## 10. Geographical Data

Acres of nominated property 0.1 acre

Quadrangle name Hollywood

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

### UTM References

A 

1	1
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3	7	6	5	2	0
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3	7	7	4	3	8	0
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Zone

Easting

Northing

B 

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Zone

Easting

Northing

C 

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E 

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G 

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D 

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F 

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H 

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### Verbal boundary description and justification

The east 90 feet of Lot 3 of Pinehurst Terrace Tract, Page 90 of Maps, office of the Los Angeles County Assessor. Boundaries encompass the building on its original 50' x 90' lot.

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

state	code	county	code
N/A		N/A	

state	code	county	code
N/A		N/A	

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Dawn T. Jacobson/Christy Johnson McAvoy

organization Johnson Research Associates

date September 1985

street & number 3103 Lindo Street

telephone (213) 851-8854

city or town Hollywood

state CA 90068

## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

☐ national

☐ state

☒ local

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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

*Kathryn Gustafson*

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date 6/18/86

For NPS use only

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

*William B. Bushong*

date 9/12/86

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

Chief of Registration

## 7. Description

### Condition

☐ excellent

☒ good

☐ fair

☐ deteriorated

☐ ruins

☐ unexposed

### Check one

☐ unaltered

☒ altered

### Check one

☒ original site

☐ moved

date

N/A

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Hillside siting and Eastern tradition combine to make this Hollywood apartment an example of the adaptation of Eastern formality to the Southern California of the 1920s. Sited on a narrow hillside lot on the southwest corner of Hillcrest Road and Pinehurst Street, the Villa Bonita is a seven-story classically designed apartment building, constructed of reinforced concrete, which exhibits both medieval and Spanish Renaissance decorative motifs. Roughly rectangular, the structure's main facade is the Hillcrest Road (east) elevation. This facade is irregularly stepped, and set back from the street, as it proceeds north. The southernmost portion is devoted to a canted bay extending from the second through seventh floors, fenestrated by a pair of casement windows flanked by single casements. The northern two-thirds of the building step back from the facade, and carry a pair of casement windows on each floor in the northernmost bay, and a fixed pane window and a tall, one-over-one double-hung sash opening onto a firescape. Alterations are minimal.

The north facade, facing Pinehurst Street, is arranged into bays with an A-B-B-A arrangement. The central bays are made up of pairs of four-light casement windows, each pair separated by a muntin. These bays are flanked by canted bays which reflect the design of the east facade. While the placement of elements and the design give distinct verticality to the structure, the exterior retains the traditional tripartite divisions of Classical Revival styles. The ground level of both the east and north is highly ornamented with pairs of arched, casement windows aligned vertically with the casements above. The center bay of the front facade contains the entry. The central entry is recessed in a stepped, square-columned arch, flanked by heavily decorated Composite order columns, and surmounted by a broken pediment carrying a scalloped parapet and capped with finials. The entrance is slightly elevated, creating a small vestibule; the entry doors are a simple pair of wood-framed glass doors, topped by a wood-framed lunette. As in most structures of this style, most of the ornament is contained on the ground floor and then at the upper levels. The fifth and sixth stories are separated by a corbeled frieze on the east and north facades. Above this frieze, the vertical rhythm is echoed in the alignment of scallop-arched pairs of casement windows, flanked by piers with Corinthian capitals. Medallions are placed at intervals above the windows, and the building service itself is also heavily decorated with a diamond motif. The building is topped with a broken pediment, hiding the flat roof, with urns over each canted bay. The seventh floor consists of a penthouse and roof garden, a uniquely private space with a commanding view of the city and the Hollywood hills. The highly ornamented parapet serves as a garden wall. The south and west facades are treated in a more utilitarian fashion, with each facade carrying rows of casement windows on each level. Alterations are confined to the enclosure of a portion of the roof garden in 1940, an addition to the original penthouse, and security grilles in a style compatible with the building on the ground floor openings.

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Item number 7

Page 2

The building has a small lobby with marble floor, ornate moldings and brackets, and original chandelier. Metal mailboxes occupy a portion of the north wall. An original panelled elevator and a central stairway provide access to the upper floors. The building is bisected by an east-west hallway. Each of the twenty-four apartments contain living/dining area, kitchens with breakfast nooks, and baths. Interiors are largely intact, featuring casement windows, entry halls, original cabinetry, and hardware.

A low wall surmounted by an ornamental iron fence encloses a small landscaped courtyard at the front of the building. No other features are present within the boundaries.

## 8. Significance

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

**Specific dates** 1929 **Builder/Architect** Frank Webster

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Villa Bonita is a seven-story Spanish Renaissance Revival style apartment building located in the foothills of Hollywood just a few blocks north of Hollywood Boulevard. Designed by local architect Frank Webster in 1929, the building's owner was Sidney Ullman, Rudolph Valentino's business manager and agent. The quality of detailing throughout the structure is remarkable for a building of its size, making it a prime representative example of multi-unit housing in Hollywood during its prime period of significance.

Nestled in the single-family residential Hollywood Heights area of Hollywood, the intimate Villa Bonita offered quality apartment living for those who preferred the formality of an East Coast plan and yet wanted the quiet of a hillside setting. The Hollywood of the 1920s and '30s was experiencing tremendous growth, as the film industry continued to have a major impact on the area. The small town became "urbanized", building more apartments and multi-family units to house its growing population. This is an atypical pattern for a suburb, and as a result, the Hollywood area today boasts a collection of vintage apartment buildings acknowledged to be among the finest in the city. The Hollywood Historic and Cultural Resources Survey, conducted in 1978 through 1980 and updated in 1984, identified approximately thirty such sites as a thematic grouping of special merit. The structures ring the commercial core, with the finest examples concentrated along the Franklin Corridor and in the Hancock Park/Rossmore area. While not included in the original survey due to its location north of Franklin Avenue, the Villa Bonita displays all the characteristics of size, scale, detailing, and function of those surveyed and is an integral part of this body of housing stock. The smallest of the high-rise apartment buildings constructed above Hollywood Boulevard to serve the needs of part-time residents connected with the entertainment industry, the siting of the building and its styling set it apart from other structures of its type along the Franklin Corridor. Of particular merit is the detailing of the entry and the upper stories, where the architect has embellished window surrounds and bays with exceptionally varied patterns to enhance the verticality of his creation. While its larger neighbors, most in the Spanish Colonial Revival, Chateausque, or Art Deco styles, functioned as apartment/hotels and provided a variety of services, the Villa Bonita integrated itself into the residential neighborhood as a security apartment building, catering not to stars or directors, but to those behind the camera. Reminiscent of urban East Coast apartments, the arrangement and plan is formal with a small, well-appointed lobby and panelled elevator as its main ground floor accouterments. The views, penthouse, and private roof garden are additional features which enhance the well-appointed, small luxury

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building of the 1920s. Views were a primary consideration, and roof gardens a popular component of the major buildings. Few examples remain. Along with the neighboring Methodist Church of Gothic design, the Villa Bonita provides a buffer for its hillside neighbors from the busy flatlands of Hollywood. The building was constructed in 1929 by Sidney Ullman, well known in Hollywood as Rudolph Valentino's agent. Like many in the industry, Ullman used his profits to invest in real estate. This tremendous source of capital enabled Hollywood buildings to exercise their creativity without regard to cost, as each builder tried to outdo the others. Local architect Frank Webster designed this building, which was built at a cost of \$75,000 in May of 1929. Webster also built several less ornate four- and five-story structures in the flatlands of Hollywood, and designed a number of Spanish Colonial Revival and bungalow residences. The Villa Bonita is the best intact example of his extant work. Webster's extraordinary attention to detail, from the siting of the building to both the interior and exterior detailing, is remarkable. Although still close by to the studios, and the shopping areas of Hollywood Boulevard, the apartment's proximity to homes and churches made it appealing to those wishing for a haven from the hustle and bustle of the Boulevard. Restored by the current owner, the Villa Bonita is in excellent condition, and continues to provide a comfortable retreat for its residents. There is no other comparable resource of its type and style in the area.

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Page 2

Hollywood Historical and Cultural Resources Survey, Hollywood Revitalization  
and Hollywood Heritage, 1977-80 and 1984.

Los Angeles City Building Permit Records.

Los Angeles County Tax Assessor Files.

Ullman, Sidney. Valentino, as I Knew Him. Macy-Masius (New York: 1926).



The Villa Bonita  
1817 Hillcrest Road  
Hollywood, CA 90028

(Los Angeles County)

Pinehurst Street

Hillcrest Road

Franklin Avenue

50'  
90'

## DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION

P.O. BOX 2390

SACRAMENTO 95811

(916) 445-8006



JUL 2 1986

Mr. Jerry Rogers, Keeper  
National Register of Historic Places  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
P.O. Box 37127  
Washington, DC 20013-7127

Dear Mr. Rogers:

We are submitting the Villa Bonita for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. This property is located in Hollywood, Los Angeles County, California.

The property was initially submitted for a determination of National Register eligibility as a Part 1 under the tax certification process. However, on September 13, 1983, the property was denied by the Western Regional Office of the National Park Service; a copy of the denial letter has been enclosed. The National Register application was submitted to the State review board as an appeal. The documentation was strengthened and the property was viewed on site by our staff architectural historian. Based upon the new information and the on-site visit, our staff recommendation (copy enclosed) was favorable; the review board voted subsequently to approve the property for its exemplification of its architectural type and period, and the rarity of such a survival in the Hollywood community. In addition, it was noted that some secondary significance accrued from the building's relationship to the early years of the film industry in Hollywood.

We are submitting the property for formal nomination; we hope you will concur in our opinion that the Villa Bonita meets the criteria for listing in the National Register at the local level of significance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Kathryn Gualtieri".

Kathryn Gualtieri  
State Historic Preservation Officer  
Office of Historic Preservation

Enclosures

B-3923H

JUL 30 1986

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Patt

RECEIVED  
SEP 21 1983

F78 (WR)RR

OHP

September 13, 1983

Mr. Albert V. Siniscal  
Villa Bonita Properties  
1817 Hillcrest Road  
Hollywood, California 90068

Re: Villa Bonita Apts., 1817 Hillcrest Rd., Hollywood, CA. 90068  
Project No.: 0301-83-CA.

Dear Mr. Siniscal:

The Division of National Register Programs has completed review of your Part 1 application for a preliminary certification of the above property as being eligible for individual listing in the National Register of Historic Places. After considering the documentation submitted and the recommendation of your State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), your request has been denied. This property therefore will not qualify preliminarily as a "certified historic structure" for purposes of the Economic Recovery Tax Act of 1981, as amended.

In order to be certified preliminarily, a property must meet the criteria of significance for listing in the National Register (36 CFR Part 60.4, copy enclosed). Based on the documentation submitted, we find that the property does not appear to have sufficient architectural significance under Criterion C as a distinctive example of a type or as possessing high artistic values to merit individual listing as a Historic Place. The building exhibits a mixture of medieval and renaissance decorative motives in what may be described loosely as a Mediterranean mode. Although the property appears to have retained a high degree of integrity to its original appearance, its overall design and eclectic detailing appear rather standard and conservative considering the 1929 date of construction. This assessment has been made within the context of Los Angeles' fine stock of twentieth-century high-rise apartment houses.

Because this is only a preliminary rather than final decision, you cannot appeal this denial of certification. You may however continue to pursue the listing of this property in the National Register. If you do proceed with the nomination, we suggest that research into the significance of the penthouse apartment, considering its plan, detailing, and any special appointments or features, might help support points regarding the property's significance as a distinctive example of a type and period.

CALIFORNIA SHPO  
STAFF EVALUATION - Villa Bonita

Property has been viewed on site by staff. Integrity remains very high. The interior alterations are confined to the roofgarden and penthouse. An earlier application for tax certification was denied by the Western Regional Office of the National Register (letter attached); this application is an appeal. Additional information has been provided to strengthen the application. (NOTE: The negative comments of the Los Angeles County Historical Landmarks/Records Commission are based upon an earlier draft which did not include much of the information in the current application). The building is a handsome small-scaled luxury apartment building of Hollywood of the 1920s; it remains remarkably intact. The architect created a strong period statement on Spanish Renaissance styling--the quality of design is high, and a review of the Hollywood Survey funded by the Office of Historic Preservation confirms the fact that no other examples of its style survive in the Hollywood area. The building has some secondary significance for its association with film industry personnel during the "Golden Era" of Hollywood. The Villa Bonita is an intimately-scaled, unaltered Spanish Renaissance gem which still conveys a sense of the Hollywood of the 1920s and 1930s. Staff recommends approval at the local level of significance.

Aaron Gallup

4-30-86

# *Villa Bonita Properties*

---

RECEIVED  
OCT 21 1985  
OHP

October 14, 1985

Mr. Aaron Gallup  
State Office of Historic Preservation  
P.O. Box 2390  
Sacramento, CA. 95811

Dear Mr. Gallup,

This letter is to document that I have retained Mrs. Christy Johnson McAvoy, Johnson Research Associates, Historic and Architectural Research, 3130 Lindo Street, Los Angeles, CA. 90068, to prepare the nomination and request that The Villa Bonita be placed on the National Register.

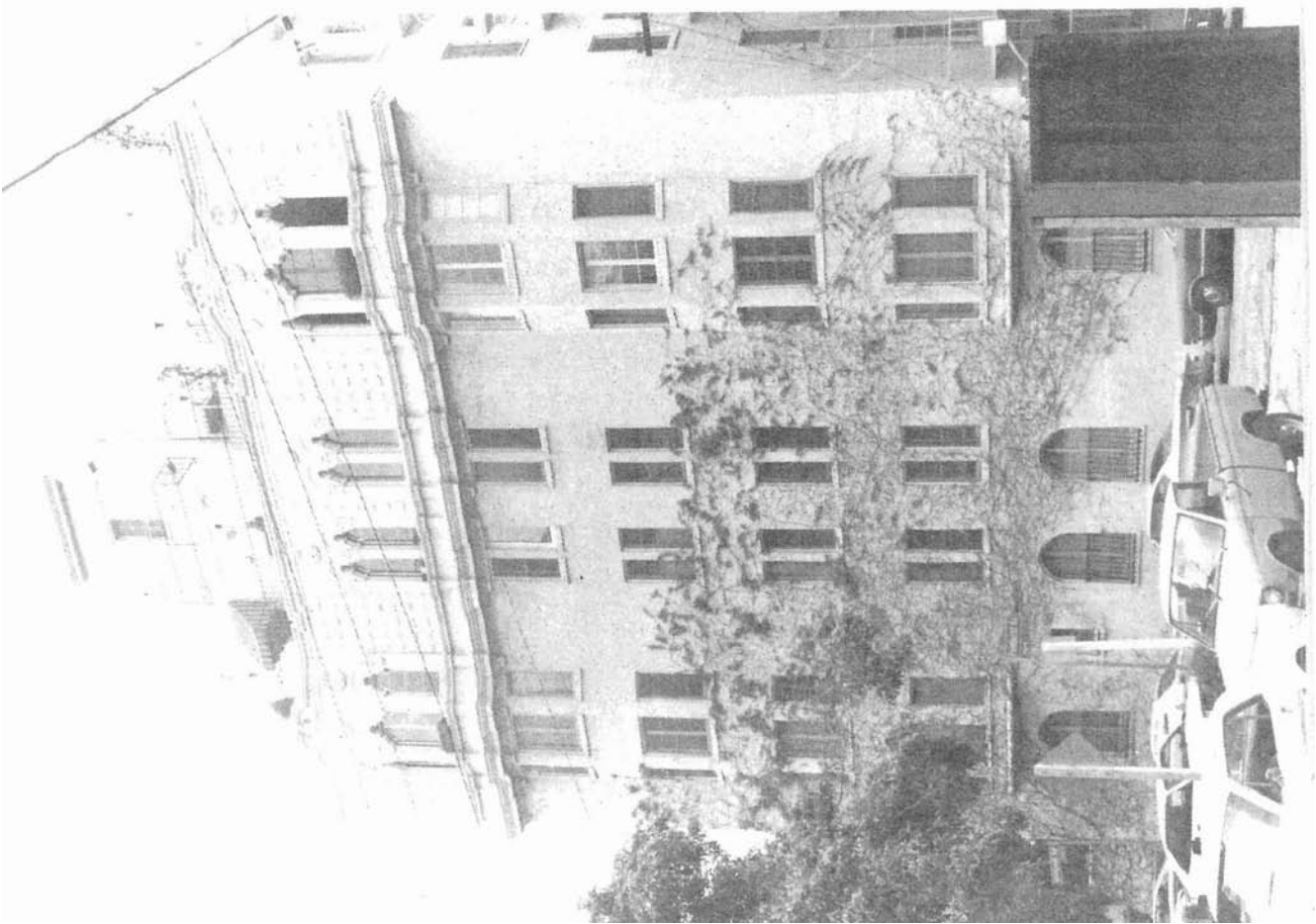
Thank you for consideration,

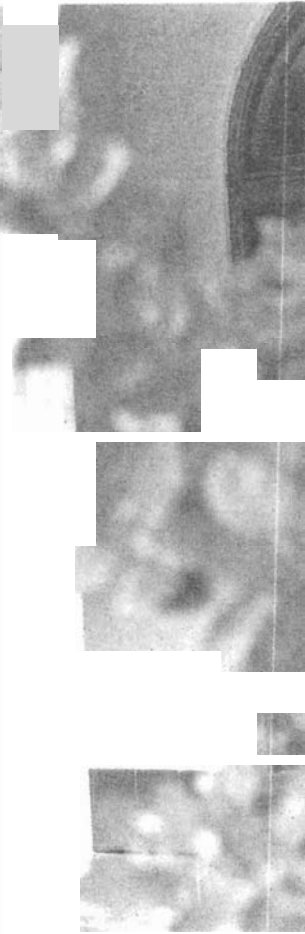
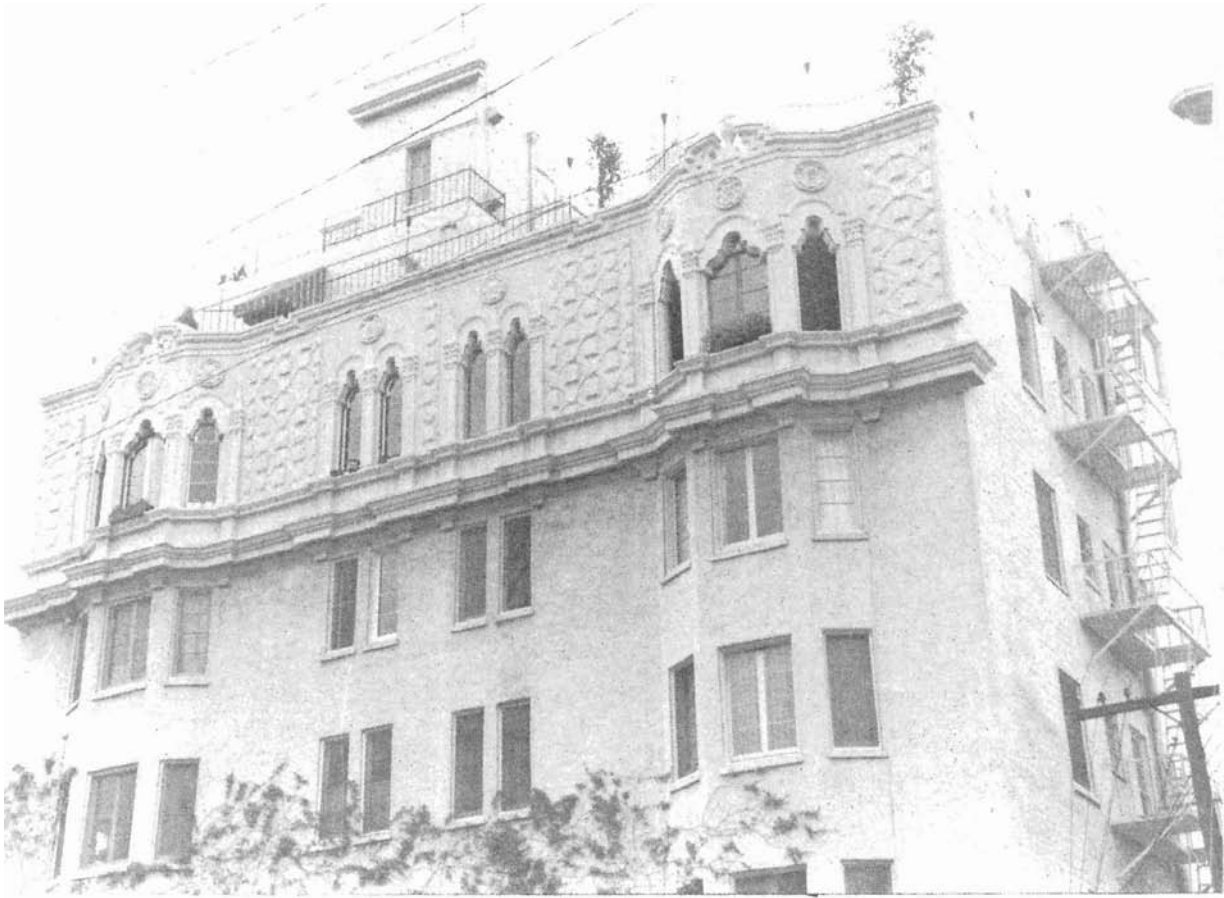
Very sincerely,

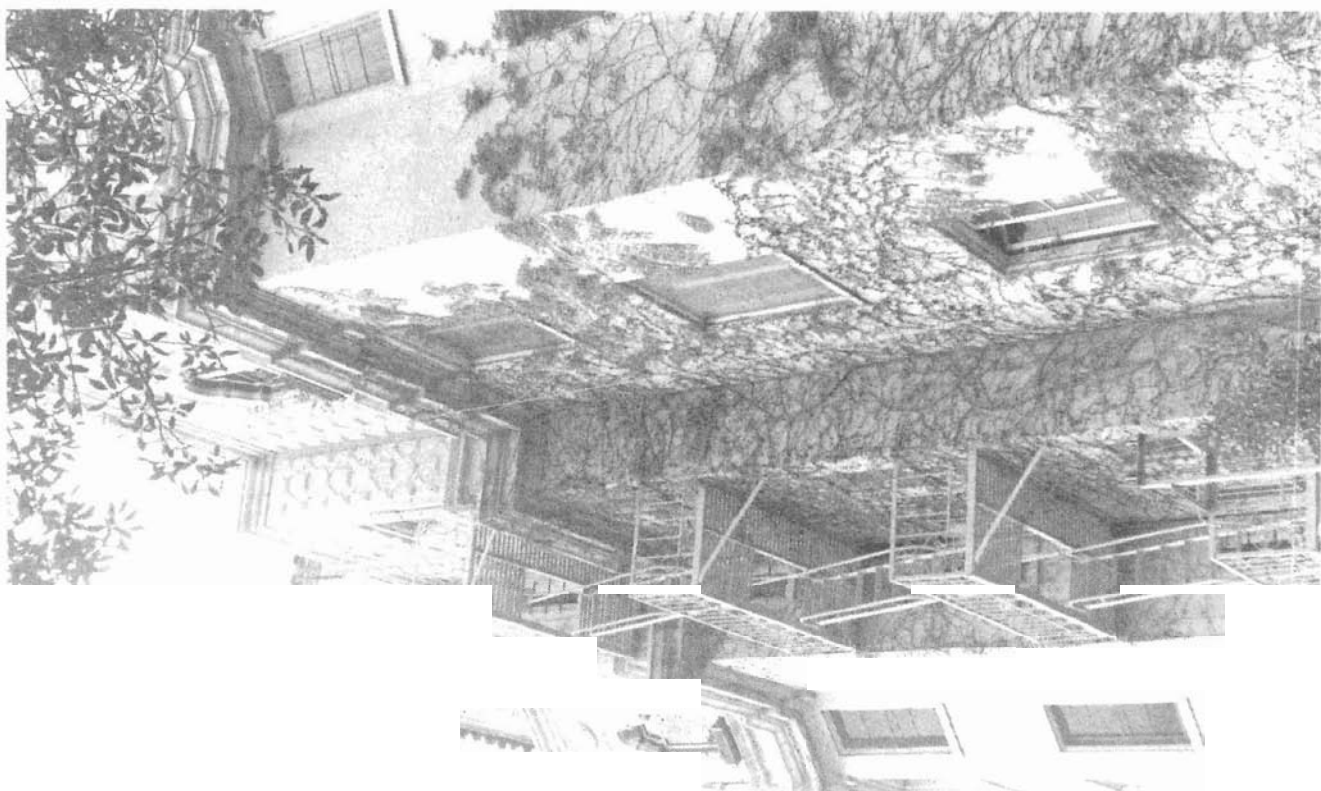


Albert V. Siniscal  
Owner  
The Villa Bonita  
1817 Hillcrest Road  
Hollywood, CA. 90068

AVS/sd  
cc. Mrs. Christy Johnson McAvoy





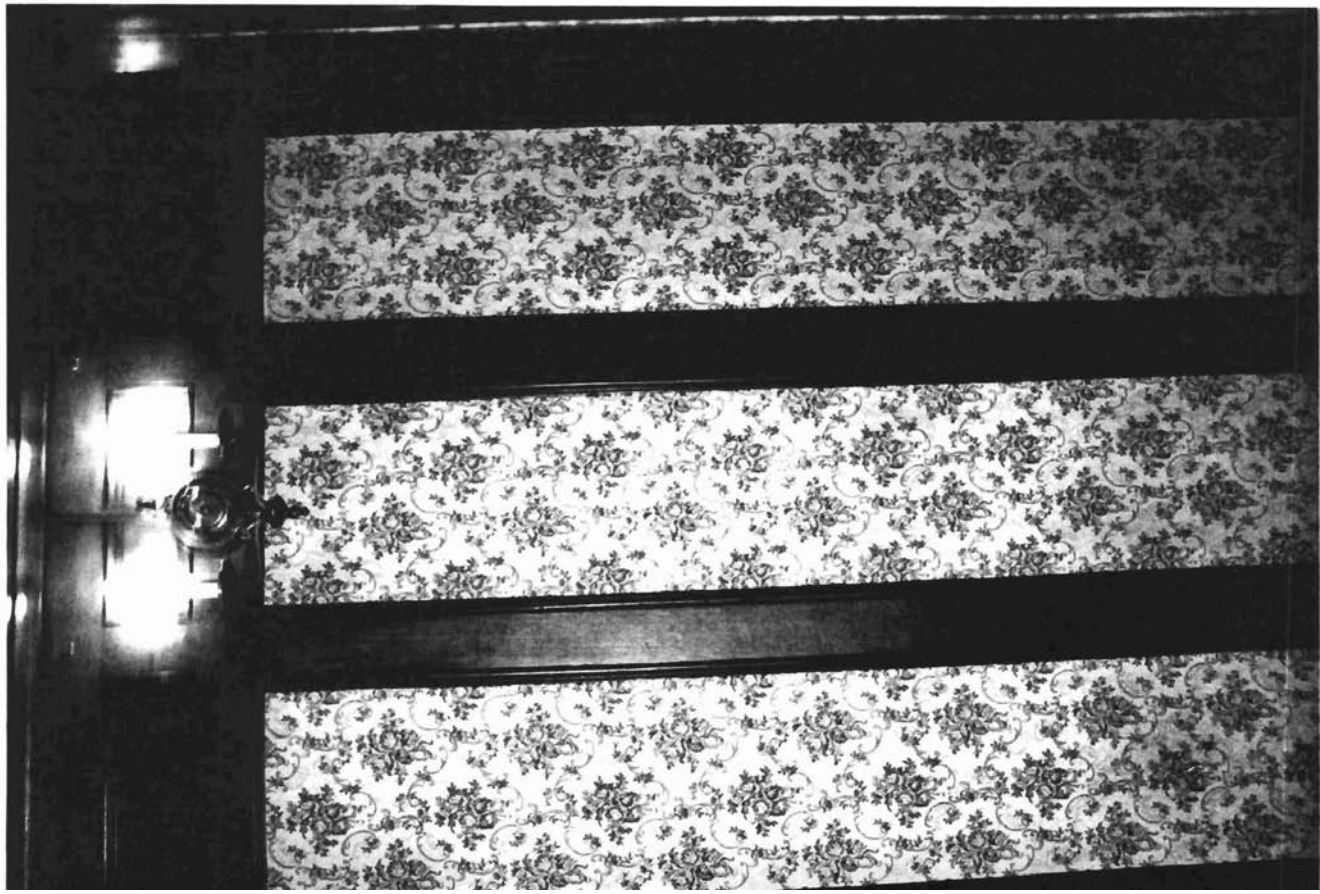
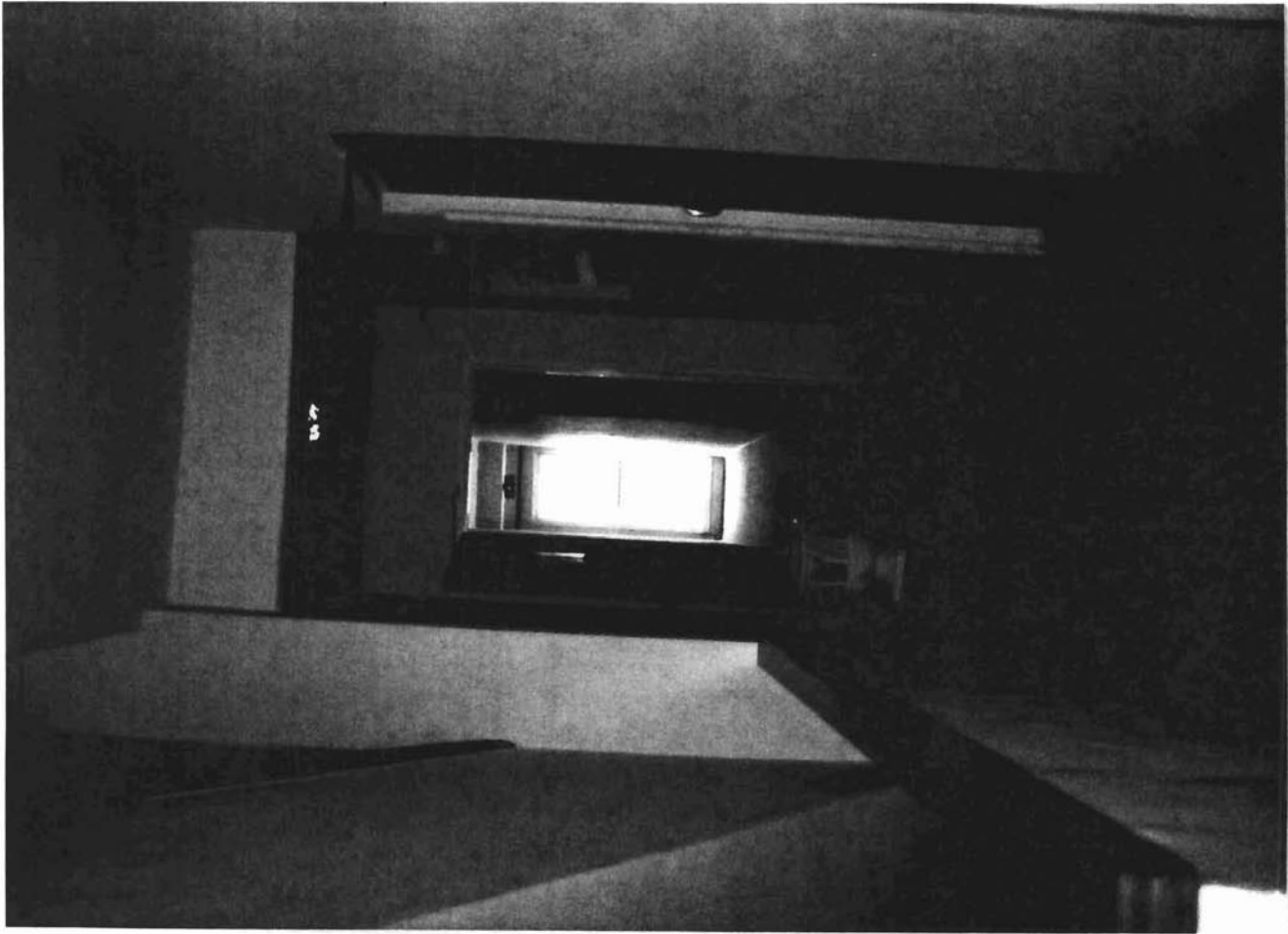




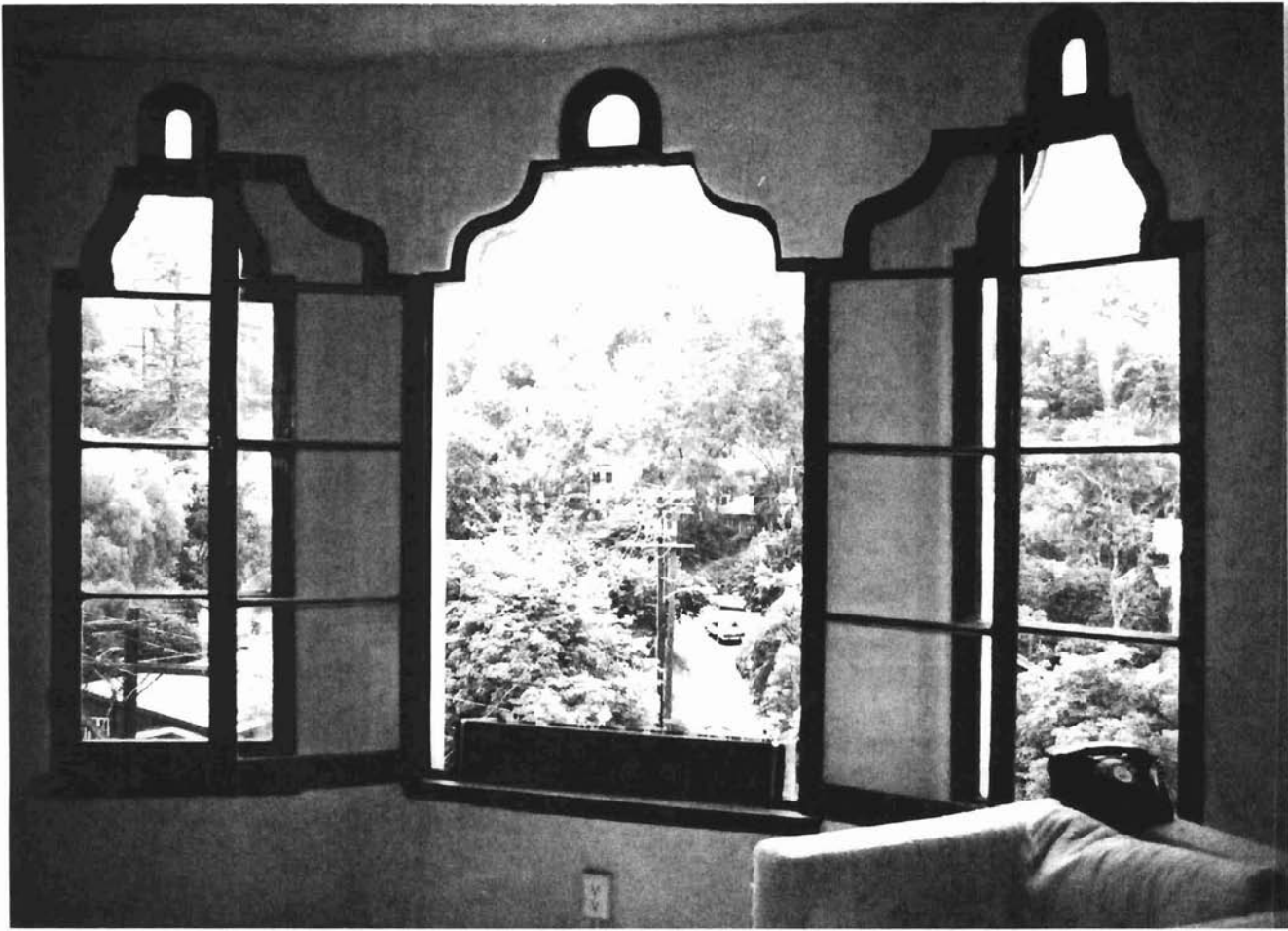














Photographs 1-9



Photograph 1: Overall view northwest, south (left) and east (right) elevations (photo: Chattel Architecture, 2008)



Photograph 2: Detail view south, north elevation showing upper floor fenestration (photo: Chattel Architecture, 2008)





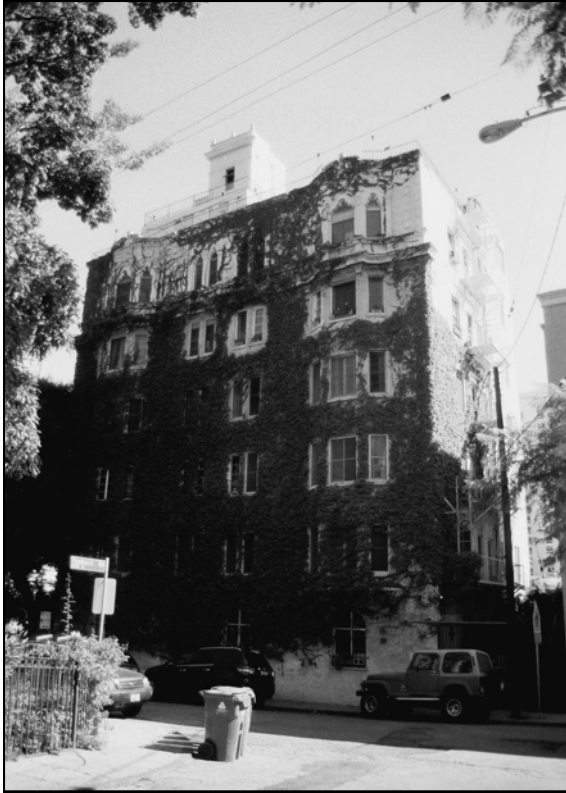
Photograph 3: Interior view northwest, entrance lobby (photo: Chattel Architecture, 2008)



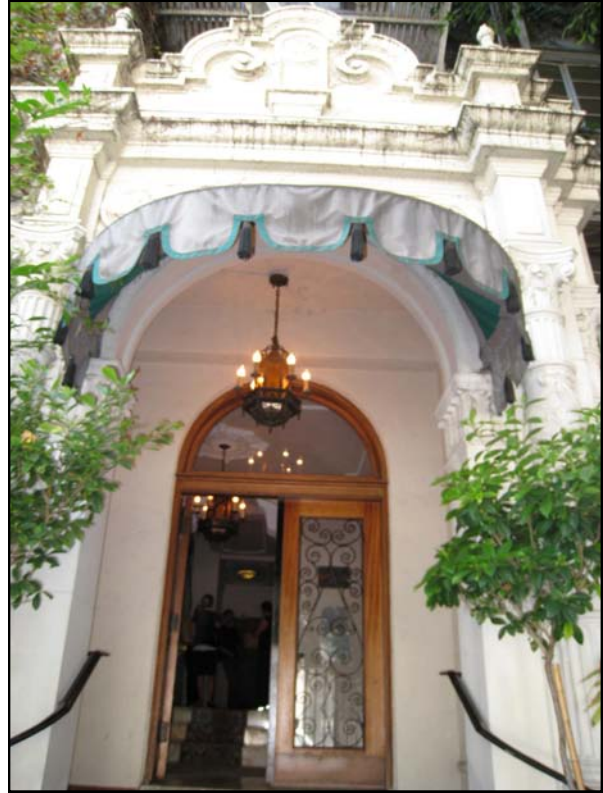
Photograph 4: Interior view, typical apartment unit kitchen (photo: Chattel Architecture, 2008)



Photograph 5: Exterior view southwest, main entry fronting corner of Hillcrest Rd (left) and Bonita Terrace (right) (photo: Chattel Architecture, 2008)



Photograph 6: Overall view southeast, north elevation fronting Bonita Terrace (photo: Chattel Architecture, 2008)



Photograph 7: View west, main entry on east elevation (photo: Chattel Architecture, 2008)



Photograph 8: Interior view northeast, sixth floor apartment unit (photo: Chattel Architecture, 2008)



Photograph 9: Interior view, historic elevator cab  
(photo: Chattel Architecture, 2008)