National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use	only			
received	MAR	5	1987	
date entere	d	APR	2	1987

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms* Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic V	enetian Court Ap	partments		
and/or commo	n Venetian Court			
2. Loc	ation			
street & numb	<mark>er</mark> 1500 Wharf Roa	ıd	N/ <u>1</u>	A not for publication
city, town	Capitola	N∠A_ vicinity of		
state Cali	fornia co	ode 06 county	Santa Cruz	code 087
3. Cla	ssification			
Category <u>X</u> district building(s structure site object	Ownership public private both Public Acquisition in process being considered X N/A	Status X. occupied unoccupied work in progress Accessible yes: restricted yes: unrestricted no	Present Use agriculture commercial educational entertainment government industrial military	museum park _X_ private residence religious scientific transportation other:
4. Ow	ner of Prope	erty		
name Mu	ltiple Ownership	(see list attac	ched)	
street & numbe				
city, town		vicinity of	state	
5. Loc	ation of Leg	gal Descripti	on	
courthouse, re	gistry of deeds, etc. Sa	nta Cruz County F	Recorder's Office	х х
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	anta Cruz		state	California
	presentation	in Existing		
	ola City Survey		operty been determined eli	
	going			
**************************************		ola City Planning		
city, town ^{Caj}	ριτοια		state	California

7. Description

Condition

excellent	deteriorated	unaitered	
X good fair	ruins unexposed	X altered	

Check one X original site

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Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Chack and

The Venetian Court Historic District is a unified residential development, built in 1925 in a mediterranean character. It is nestled on the edge of Capitola Beach between the Stockton Avenue Bridge and the Capitola Wharf, both also local landmarks. The district consists of a three-tier, five structure complex separated by walkways. It is separated from the beach by a low sea wall and outer walkway which extend from the bridge to the wharf and provide public access It is built on a sloping, tear-shaped site and each to the beach. structure is constructed in a basically long, rectangular plan with the outer corner of each clipped back to form irregular edges. The configuration conforms to the curvilinear site and maximizes views and site density; 24 townhouses, a 17 unit motel and its adjacent office occupy the one-acre site. Aside from some window replacements and minor remodeling, the property retains a high degree of its original appearance.

The one story and $1\frac{1}{2}$ story structures are of wood frame construction with a heavy stucco surface, and designed in a manner influenced by 1920s Spanish Colonial Revival-Mediterranean design, and has Venetian detailing in the form of decorative relief work. Major architectural features include flat roofs with parapet walls that rise to a point and small towers with pyramidal caps; entryways are varied in that they are both centered and offset, and have different setbacks. Architectural details include decorative roof tile, and repeating decorative plaster arches and relief work featuring smiling gargoyles and dolphin.

Modifications have occurred to many of the units in the structures in the form of the replacement of the original wood casement windows and french doors. In addition, one structure has been subdivided to create four units from the two original, while the motel has been split from eight apartments into seventeen rental units. In both cases the changes are primarily internal remodelling and the addition of new doorways. The changes have not affected the complex's integrity.

The district contains no non-contributing structures and no accessory structures. The site is minimally landscaped.

Structure A

This one-story, beachside building has five units:

#1. It has an irregular floor plan. Its features include its staggered facade and a small tower with a pyramidal cap over an arched entry leading to a small, low-railed porch, just above ground level. Deails include red roof tile and decorative plaques. Modifications include the new porch railing, aluminum-sash windows and a remodelled doorway.

8. Significance



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Specific dates 19
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1925

Builder/Architect Henry J. Roth/ Wolfe & Higgins

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Venetian Court, The built in 1925, is significant for its mediterranean architectural imagery, appropriate to a California The complex's fanciful, yet functional seaside resort of the 1920s. design has been a Capitola landmark since its completion, one that has influenced local architectural styling through to the present. It typifies the resort development in Capitola during the rise of the automobile. It was one of the earliest motel and "condominium" developments in the state.

Camp Capitola was established in 1869 by F.A. Hihn and is recognized as California's first seaside resort community. ¹ Hihn, one of Santa Cruz County's leading figures and a German by birth, secured the waterfront land on both sides of Soquel Creek, then known as Soquel Landing (earlier La Playa de Shoquel) with the intent of building a European type spa on the shores of Monterey Bay. The coastal camp had humble beginnings but when Hihn secured railroad passenger service the Victorian era resort began to flourish, attracting thousands of summer visitors from central California.² The culmination of Hihn's vision was the completion of the 160 room Hotel Capitola in 1895. One of the grand hotels of its time, it stood on the opposite side of the beach from the Venetian Court for a period of time in the 1920s.

When Hihn died in 1913, his extensive Capitola holdings passed to his daughter, who sold them in 1919 to H. Allen Rispin, an oil millionaire. These were optimistic times:

When Rispin purchased the resort enterprise at Capitola, it was evident that expectations were rising. "When the news of the purchase was made public it was freely stated that plans for improvements will undoubtedly have a marked beneficial effect on the entire resort section lying on the northern shore of the Monterey Bay"...observed the Watsonville Evening Pajaronian.3

It was later noted:

Henry Allen Rispin descended upon Capitola like a summer storm...Personally quiet and shy; his ideas and plans were a striking contrast, and once committed there was no turn back. It was a storm that lashed brightly and briefly....In Capitola he envisioned a second Venice.⁴

9. Major Bibliographical References

Lydon, Sandy and Carolyn Swift, From Soquel Landing to <u>Capitola-by-the-</u><u>Sea</u>, (California History Center, DeAnza College, Cupertino), 1978.

Additional sources are cited in "Notes" at the end of Section 8

10. Geographical Data

Quadrangle name <u>Soque</u> UTM References	<mark>ĺ,</mark> California		Quadrangle scale <u>1:24000</u>
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11. Form Pre	epared By		
ame/title Charles Ro	we		
rganization		da	August 15, 1986
treet & number 3554	Paul Sweet Roa	d tel	ephone (408) 479-1010
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San Jose, CA 95117

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4 1 Continuation sheet Item number Page VENETIAN COURT HISTORIC BUILDING UNIT NUMBER & ADDRESS ASSESSOR'S PARCEL NUMBER OWNER OWNER'S ADDRESS BLOCK "A" #1 1500 Wharf Rd. 35-204-01 Toby & Ellen Salciccia P.O. Box 9605 San Jose, CA 95117 #2 1500 Wharf Rd. 35-204-02 Albert & Anne Ribisi 910 Island Dr. Rancho Mirage, CA 92270 #3 1500 Wharf Rd. 35-204-03 Virginia Watson 6142 Crystal Blvd. Diamond Springs, CA 95619 #4 1500 Wharf Rd. 35-204-04 (same as above:Watson) #5 1500 Wharf Rd. 35-204-05 Arthur & Colleen Lund 2 W. Santa Clara St. San Jose, CA 95115 BLOCK "B" #6 1500 Wharf Rd. 35-194-03 Vincente & Donna Sanfilippo 1314 Lincoln Ave. San Jose, CA 95125 $6\frac{1}{2}$ 1500 Wharf Rd. 35-194-04 John & Rosemary Shaffer et al. 3628 Lynn Oaks Dr.

Continuation sheet

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Page

BLOCK "B" continued #7 1500 Wharf Rd. 35-194-05 David Steimle Sr. 4575 Cherryvlae Ave. Soquel, CA 95073 #7½ 1500 Wharf Rd. 35-194-06 Ted & Grace Dreyer, Trustees Trust Division P.O. Box 7560 San Francisco, CA 94120 BLOCK "C" #8 1500 Wharf Rd. 35-203-03 Joseph Hart 110 Southwood Dr. Scotts Valley, CA 95066 #9 1500 Wharf Rd. 35-203-04 John & Barbara Webster et al. 14766 Live Oak Ln. Satatoga, CA 95070 #12 1500 Wharf Rd. 35-203-01 Lou & Isabel Bartfield 128 Shelter Lagoon Dr. Santa Cruz, CA 95060 #12½ 1500 Wharf Rd. 35-203-02 Lawerence Mak 200 Estates Dr. San Bruno, CA 94066 #14 1500 Wharf Rd. 35-203-08 Erline Baker 14920 Easthills Dr. San Jose, CA 95127 #15 1500 Wharf Rd. 35-203-07 Howard & Marie Hochman 2663 Kring Dr. San Jose, CA 95125

3

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Item number

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Page

Continuation sheet BLOCK "C" continued #16 1500 Wharf Rd. 35-203-05 Royce & Roberta Jones 3530 Mauricia Ave. Santa Clara, CA 95051 #17 1500 Wharf Rd. 35-203-06 Zilpha Miller % Mr. & Mrs. Maurice Owens 1576 Crescent Point Ln. Virginia Beach, VA 23456 BLOCK "D" #10 1500 Wharf Rd. 35-193-03 Earl & Winoma Berryman 6362 El Paseo Dr. San Jose, CA 95120 #11 1500 Wharf rs. 35-193-04 Alonzo & Eva Mullin, Trustees 1500 Wharf Rd. Capitola, CA 95010 #18 1500 Wharf Rd. 35-193-01 John & Alice Brownie 1513 Blackhawk Dr. Sunnyvlae, CA 94087 #19 1500 Wharf Rd. 35-193-02 Michael & Bridget Taylor 1278 Mayette Ave. San Jose, CA 95125 #20 1500 Wharf Rd. 35-193-07 Emil & Germaine Hartman 1264 Fremont St. San Jose, CA 95126 #21 1500 Wharf Rd. 35-193-06 James Reding & Barbara Grace, et al. 1500 Wharf Rd. Canitloa. CA 95010

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Continuation sheet	Item number 4	Page 4
BLOCK "D" continued		
#22 1500 Wharf Rd.		

35-193-05 William & Ann Bucher P.O. Box 608 Capitola, CA 95010

BLOCK "E" AND ADJACENT OFFICE

Venetian Court Motel 1500 Wharf Rd. 35-202-03 Lou & Isabel Bartfield 128 Shelter Lagoon Dr. Santa Cruz, CA 95060 Continuation sheet

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#2 and #3. They are built in rectangular floor plan and together present a symmetrical facade. Features include matched entryways beneath decorative semi-circular insets. Modifications include replacement windows.

#4 and #5. They are built with rectangular floor plans and together present a symmetrical facade. Features include matched entryways and a small tower with a pyramidal cap that straddles both units; decorative semi-circular insets surmount the entrances. Modifications are in the form of replacement windows in both. Doors are original or in the original 10-paned French door type.

Structure B

This one-story, beachside building now has four units, a result of subdividing the original two.

#6 and $\#6\frac{1}{2}$. Its major features include a small tower with a pyramidal cap above an offset arched entryway and a decorative arch above the view window of #6. Modifications have occurred in the form of an aluminum sash window on the side. Changes have resulted from the wall cut to create a new doorway for $\#6\frac{1}{2}$ and expand the front window.

#7 and $\#7\frac{1}{2}$. Once one unit, it, like #1, has an irregular floor plan with the facade narrowing toward the rear wall. #7 features facade length view windows. Modifications to it have occurred by the addition of a new doorway and enlarging the windows. $\#7\frac{1}{2}$ features an arched doorway beneath a small tower with a pyramidal cap. Details include decorative tile and relief work. Modifications have occurred through the reduction of one window on the facade and the elimination of a small endwall window.

Structure C

This one and one half story structure is flanked by Structure A and the motel. It contains 8 units:

#8. A two-level, rectangular unit that is accessed by the interior walkway. It features a flat facade with two windows on each level and a slightly overhanging, open, wood-railed modern balcony. Modifications have occurred with the addition of aluminum sash windows and reconstruction of the balcony.

#9. A two-level, rectangular unit that is accessed by the interior walkway. Its features include a flat facade and an open balcony which is accessed by a stairway that protrudes into the walkway. Modifications have been made by the addition of aluminum sash windows.

#12. This two-level, end unit has an irregular floor plan and has

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been made to windows within the original surrounds.

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				above w									
aı	n upp	er le	evel er	trance,	with	а	decora	tive	parape	t wal	l to th	ne le	ft.

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#12 $\frac{1}{2}$. This two-level, rectangular floor plan unit is constructed in a one front level and two rear level configuration with entries at both levels. It features a narrow facade and an offset entry adjacent to a single windowed wall with a decorative parapet wall above. The lower section is used as a rental. Windows up and down appear original.

It has a rental unit below the primary residence. Modifications have

#14 and #15. These are symmetrical, upper level only units. They feature narrow, open, recessed patios behind sloping stucco walls and centered entryways with decorative parapet walls above. Original doors and windows have been replaced. Both have symmetrical floor plans.

#16 and #17. Built in a rectangular plan these symmetrical units have upper and lower level configurations similar to $#12\frac{1}{2}$. They feature offset entrances and decorative parapet walls. #17 has added louvered windows and has a rental unit on the lower level.

Structure D

This one and one half story structure is flanked by Structure B and the motel parking lot. It contains seven units:

#10. A two-level, rectangular unit that is accessed from the interior walkway, and is similar to #9. Its features include an open balcony which is accessed through an arched entry and stairs that protrude into the walkway. Modifications have occurred in the form of aluminum sash windows and a replacement door.

#11. A two-level, rectangular unit that is accessed directly from the interior walkway. Its features are modernized view windows and a modern balcony resulting from remodelling.

#18 and #19. These symmetrical, two-level units have rectangular floor plans and have double front, single rear configurations similar to #16 and #17 which they mirror. Their features include offset, slightly recessed entries adjacent to single-window walls with decorative parapets above. Windows have been shortened in #19.

#20 and #21. These one-level, symmetrical units have rectangular floor plans and are similar to units #14 and #15. They feature narrow, open, recessed patios behind sloping stucco walls and centered entries with decorative parapets above. Original doors and windows have been replaced.

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#22. This large, two-level end unit has an irregular floor plan. Its primary access is from the upper level. Its features include multiple view windows and a small tower with a pyramidal cap above an arched entry to two balconies. Details include decorative relief work and tile work along the roof line. Windows and door are replacements.

Structure E

The one and one half story motel is a rectangular building with a clipped outer corner on the street side to conform to the street alignment. It has 17 units, eight up, eight down and the irregular end unit. Originally there were eight apartment units which were basically split up from down. There are eight step-up entryways on the upper level and eight corresponding balconies on the ocean side. There are also eight decorative parapets on each side. There are The building features are the balconies, eight new entrances below. the decorative parapet walls, and carved modern doors, some with themes that relate to Venice. The 17th unit's entry is on the clipped It features a small tower with a pyramidal cap and a two corner. story chimney.

Modifications include replacement windows and doors, remodelling of the balconies, and extensive internal remodelling. In spite of the changes its original architectural integrity remains.

Motel Office

This small one-story triangular building maintains stylistic continuity with the Venetian Court complex. It has an irregular parapet encircling the flat roof, stucco walls, and a small shed roof of red tile over the corner entrance. It was built as a separate office to serve the newly created motel. Constructed about 1927.

Resource Count: 24 contributing buildings

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Rispin, as Hihn had done, put his stamp on Capitola, but in his own style. He first renamed it "Capitola-by-the-Sea" and then began an upgrading program involving a series of physical changes and improvements, including the construction of his own 22 room mansion on the shores of Soquel Creek in 1921. Built in a Spanish Colonial Revival-Mediterranean style it represented his own design preferences and contrasted with the Victorian that dominated Hihn's era. It was Capitola-by-the-Sea also a statement that was fashionable and contemporary, as the architectural style was the choice of the wealthy elsewhere in California and Florida.

Next, Rispin's Head-of-the-Bay Company began to subdivide and sell land. The subdivisions were the first in the Capitola Village area since Hihn created the Depot Hill section in 1888. This was significant as it allowed a new generation of Californians the opportunity to own coastal related property and it would lead to the transition of the summer resort to a year-round community and eventually an incorporated city.

One subdivision led to the development of the Venetian Court Apartments. The site was located at the foot of the Capitola wharf, opposite the Hotel Capitola, and had been occupied by fishermen's shanties for some time. But with Rispin's upgrading they were phased out and the once productive fishing industry relocated. After the shacks were incorporated into a western movie involving a coastal village they were razed.

> Capitola's picturesque fishing village at the entrance to the whar, setting for at least one William S. Hart movie, was completely demolished, and the land graded, and marked off into lots; although in 1924 or soon thereafter the portion east of Wharf Road was developed under multiple ownership as a single unit: The Venetian Court. The builders of this fine complex observed the flavor Rispin wished to impart to the town. Young old-timers remember their comment at the time it was built, "It won't last." But, the Venetian Court has lasted, over 45 years.5

The local prophets were almost proven immediately correct:

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In 1926, Capitola was hit by a storm strong enough to damage the beach front buildings. Hardest hit that February was the bathhouse near the mouth of the Soquel Creek, and the foundations of the recently-completed portions of the Venetian Courts.

Since that time and through the years the complex, particularly the front units, have been subject to storm damage (windows, doors, interiors) but the architectural integrity of the units has not been lost.

The subdivision with Rispin's signature was filed in 1924 and soon sold to Henry J. Roth, a San Jose realtor and the project's developer.⁷ Because of the subdivision's configuration of lots and walkways, and because of its architectural styling it was clear Rispin determined what would be built. The first attached unit sold in 1925 making it the area's first condominium -- prior to the word being coined -- and possibly the state's.⁸

The five structure, 24 unit complex was designed by architects Wolfe and Higgins of San Jose. Records indicate they were compensated by transfer of an apartment unit to them. They were reported to be active in the Santa Clara Valley, though not associated with major projects, and this was their only Santa Cruz County project.⁴

Designed in a Spanish Colonial Revival-Mediterranean style, it, along with the Rispin Mansion, are among the city's earliest such architectural examples.¹⁰ Since the mid-1920s many more stucco, arched and tile roof structures, through remodelling and new construction came into being indicating the Rispin era influence.

From the onset the Venetian was newsworthy:

The last installment of the Venetian Court Apartments are about ready for inspection. They are very pretty just at the edge of the lagoon. The back row is built so one can look over the tops of the others and see the beach.

And, the real estate venture was an apparent success. A number of sales by Roth were recorded in 1925 and 1926, but none beyond, indicating a quick sell-out of apartments. The project benefited directly from the opening of the Glenwood Highway (now Highway 17) in 1923, which linked the San Jose area with coastal Santa Cruz County and began a pattern of weekend traffic which continues through to today. Currently nine condo owners have San Jose addresses and three are located elsewhere in the Santa Clara Valley.

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The highway and weekend auto traffic gave quick rise to the Venetian Court Motel.

Capitola-by-the-Sea found itself along the state's coastal highway, anxious to court both the weekend overnighter and the year-round tourist....The 1920s saw the development of gas sta-tions at every intersection and auto camps near every resort.¹²

One account places the first "motel" in San Luis Obispo in 1926.¹³ In the same year, a Frank T. Blake, one of the original apartment buyers, began assembling the complex's street-side units and became the Venetian Court's first motel owner.¹⁴ As by definition it required parking land that had been considered for additional units (see Exhibit A) that was used as a parking lot, a use that still continues. The Venetian Court Motel may be the oldest continuing such operation in the state.

Once described as "It won't last," the Venetian Court has survived the times and the forces of nature continuing its original functions, while conveying to contemporary Capitola a sense of time and place that was the Rispin era.

For footnotes see the following continuation sheet.

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Notes:

Continuation sheet

1. California Registered Historical Landmark plaque, #860, Camp Capitola Superintendant's Office, 201 Capitola Ave., Capitola.

2. Sandy Lydon and Carolyn Swift, <u>Soquel Landing to</u> <u>Capitola-by-the-Sea</u> (California History Center, DeAnza College), 1978, p. 35.

3. Ibid., p. 80.

4. <u>Santa Cruz Sentinel</u>, "A Time change...The Rispin Years, 1919-1928," by Phil Walker. Vol. 9, No. 1 (undated clipping believed to be c. 1970).

5. Ibid.

6. Lydon and Swift, op. cit., p. 82.

7. Rispin filed the **bub**division on March 21, 1924 and Roth bought it on May 24, 1924. Information from County Recorder's Office.

8. Lydon and Swift, op. cit., p. 101 and p. 78.

9. Personal communication with Higgins' son, George C. Higgins, also the architect. The 1979 Santa Clara Valley architectural inventory lists architects whose work is listed. Higgins, William L. is not listed. Wolfe in other associations is listed for bungalow projects in the San Jose area.

10. Ongoing architectural inventory, 1986: Sara Boutelle, Roger Hatheway and Charles Rowe.

11. <u>Santa Cruz</u> <u>Morning Sentinel</u>, "Lively Times at Capitola Resort," July 12, 1925, p. 12.

12. Lydon and Swift, op. cit., p. 76.

13. <u>Smithsonian</u>, "America's Home away from Home is Still a Good Motel," March, 1986, p. 127.

14. County Recorder's Office and personal communication with Edna Messina, former motel owner (1950-1975) who resides at the Venetian Court.

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which opcompages the hi	atoria complex including a aligh	ht dag to	

which encompasses the historic complex, including a slight jog to include the motel office. See attached map.



