

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name El Cabrillo

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

2. Location

street & number 1832-1850 North Grace Avenue NA  not for publication

city or town Los Angeles NA  vicinity

state California code CA county Los Angeles code 037 zip code 90029

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature] 10 FEB 2005  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

California Office of Historic Preservation  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register  
 See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register  
 See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

[Signature] 3/30/05  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

El Cabrillo  
Name of Property

Los Angeles, California  
County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in count.)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

| Contributing | Noncontributing |            |
|--------------|-----------------|------------|
| 1            |                 | buildings  |
|              |                 | sites      |
| 1            |                 | structures |
| 1            |                 | objects    |
| 3            |                 | Total      |

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

**Number of Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

N/A

N/A

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/multiple dwelling  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/multiple dwelling  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Revivals/Spanish Colonial  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

|            |              |
|------------|--------------|
| foundation | Concrete     |
| walls      | Concrete     |
| roof       | Terra Cotta  |
| other      | Wood         |
|            | Ceramic Tile |
|            | Metal        |

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

El Cabrillo  
Name of Property

Los Angeles, California  
County and State

## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

### Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

### Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

### Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

### Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

### Period of Significance

1928

### Significant Dates

1928

### Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

### Cultural Affiliation

N/A

### Architect/Builder

Zwebell, Arthur and Nina

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**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** Less than one acre

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

|   |                |                   |                    |   |       |         |          |
|---|----------------|-------------------|--------------------|---|-------|---------|----------|
| 1 | <del>KIX</del> | <del>377128</del> | <del>3774617</del> | 3 | _____ | _____   | _____    |
|   | Zone           | Easting           | Northing           |   | Zone  | Easting | Northing |
| 2 | 11             | 377220            | 3774380            | 4 | _____ | _____   | _____    |

See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Christy Johnson McAvoy/Managing Principal and Jessica N. Ritz/Preservation Planner  
organization Historic Resources Group date \_\_\_\_\_  
street & number 1728 North Whitley Avenue telephone (323) 469-2349  
city or town Los Angeles state CA zip code 90028

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps**

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs**

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

**Additional items**

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

**Property Owner**

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name DeMille Apartments, LLC  
street & number 5121 Franklin Avenue telephone (323) 965-2130  
city or town Los Angeles state CA zip code 90027

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listing. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*)

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P. O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20303.

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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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El Cabrillo  
1832-1850 Grace Avenue  
Los Angeles, California

## Section 7: Description

El Cabrillo, located in the Hollywood area of Los Angeles, is an outstanding example of multifamily courtyard housing designed in the Spanish Colonial Revival style. Situated north of Hollywood Boulevard at the southeast corner of Franklin and Grace Avenues, the property is located in a heavily trafficked and densely populated section of central Hollywood near the foothills and the National Register listed subdivision of Whitley Heights. The property is situated on two lots which total approximately 13,000 square feet. The ten units are contained within a two-story, four-sided contiguous structure with three passageway openings at the ground level. A central courtyard with an original and significant multi-tiered fountain and landscaped grounds comprises the focal point of the rectangular "hacienda" site plan. The apartment complex is divided asymmetrically into blocks by exterior stairs and covered passages. Spanish Colonial Revival style features and elements of high merit are present throughout. As is the case with other courtyard apartments designed by Arthur and Nina Zwebell – the foremost practitioners of the form in 1920s Los Angeles – careful site design, a concrete masonry wall, and the relatively simple outward facing façades belie the complexity and detail found within. The wall also provides a sense of seclusion, which is typical of Spanish Colonial Revival style courtyard housing. The property has been minimally altered and retains a high degree of physical integrity.

## Site and Setting

The exterior of the building is faced in nonstandard sized concrete masonry blocks that were manufactured to emulate adobe. In keeping with the Spanish Colonial Revival style, barrel vaulted red clay tiles cover the roof. The west, north and a portion of the south sides of the property are enclosed with a perimeter masonry wall (counted as a contributing structure), emphasizing El Cabrillo's privacy from the street. This structure is constructed of the same concrete masonry as the apartment building. The wall is in roughly three segments due to the west entrance break. The height varies as a result of the grade changes on the site, but each section is at least six feet tall. The west wall wraps to the south to enclose the southerly end of the west patio and extends only a short length of the elevation.

The Grace Avenue entrance is now the main point of entry into the "hacienda" plan courtyard complex. An entrance was formerly located in the concrete masonry wall facing Franklin Avenue. Due to street widening in 1932, however, this entrance no longer remains (information is based on secondary sources; historic photographs and building permits pertaining to the north entrance and wall were not located.) The former main north entrance on Franklin was filled in and the north wall appears to have been moved closer to the property to accommodate the street widening. The northwest corner of the wall was also reconfigured so that the north and west walls meet at a 45-degree angle. Despite the apparent move, the north wall retains its physical character and materials match those dating from the period of significance. Therefore, it contributes to the overall historic integrity of the property.

The exterior surfaces of the north wall and the north portion of the west wall are covered with vines. The walls contain a stepped profile cast stone cap, except for the east portion of the north wall, where wood boards were added to extend the height due to the downward slope. (The date of this change is unknown.) Approximately 18-inch-high

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concrete masonry planters, mostly capped with brick, are attached to the walls on the interior of the complex. (The date of this feature's construction is unknown.) Within the property, six additional concrete masonry walls with brick caps stand perpendicular to the outer walls and enclose the discrete west and north patio areas. These lower walls vary in height; two walls on the north side of the property are approximately six feet high, and the remaining four walls at the north and west stand approximately four-and-a-half feet. The center portion of the west patio walls curve inward. Repointed mortar joints are visible in areas of the outer walls and low patio walls where joints have failed and structural weaknesses have occurred. One of the patio walls in the north area of the property contains a section of red brick infill. Select portions of the west wall have been painted gray for graffiti abatement.

The wrought iron gate located at the current primary entrance at Grace Avenue opens onto a patio that spans the width of the building. This area, which contains the two low masonry walls, serves as additional private outdoor areas for units 1832 and 1850. An axial walkway bisects the patio. The brick path leads from the gate to a passage with an arched opening and flat ceiling with stained and varnished wood beams. This opening leads to the focal point of the complex – the rectangular brick-paved patio that contains a prominent original three-tiered fountain (counted as a contributing object). The concrete fountain contains square decorative ceramic tile inserts at the base that measure approximately 5½ inches each. Landscaping enhances the fountain area, with four planting beds that define the walkway and separate entrances to individual units. Vegetation located on both the building perimeter and within the courtyard enhances the sense of enclosure, seclusion and privacy of the site in its busy urban context. Vines that cover the north wall and a portion of the west outer wall help make the complex more difficult to see from the street. A chain link fence with vines partially encloses the east end of the property. The driveway that abuts the south elevation and the parking garage located underneath the east portion of the building accommodate yet marginalize vehicular access and parking. The designers maximized use of the site's grade changes in order to achieve this objective. Window openings are located in the east wall of the garage.

## Exterior

The nuances that distinguish El Cabrillo begin with the exterior. The elevations which front the courtyard are adorned with loggias, French doors, and discrete passageways. Arched passages with flat beamed and barrel vaulted ceilings are located in the west, north, and east portions of the complex, while the south wall of the courtyard contains an arcaded portico. A leaded window with a Baroque cast stone surround punctures the wall above the north passage. A wood loggia at the upper level of the east façade facing the courtyard contains a dark painted wood walkway. Two arched openings divided by an Ionic colonette are situated in the west wall of the courtyard. Barrel vaulted clay tiles are set into the parapet wall sections in this location and form a scalloped pattern. French doors located at the second level of the round tower room at the southeast corner of the complex dramatically open onto the patio and fountain. Projecting elements including staircases, balconies, and walkways are also located at elevations that face the property's exterior surroundings. Barrel vaulted clay tiles cover all the roof surfaces, which are also finished with dark wood overhang soffits and decorative brackets. Chimneys project from the four sections of the building. The concrete masonry bricks show evidence of wet sandblasting, which was performed in 1966.

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## Units

The ten individuated and unique units are located on all four sides of the courtyard. Six units are two-stories, and the four units located in the east section of the building contain one story. As is often found in courtyard housing designed in the Spanish Colonial Revival style, the public living spaces are the focus of each unit, and the private and utility spaces are located towards the sides and rear. Most units contain one bedroom and one bathroom, with one two bedroom/two bathroom unit, and two three bedroom/two bathroom units. The two units in the west portion of the complex (1832 and 1850) are adjacent to the main entrance and west patios. The doorways are located in the west elevation, and a secondary door with an exterior staircase connects to one of the upper floor bedrooms of each unit. These two units contain the largest number of rooms. French doors in the east wall face the fountain and courtyard but are subtly set behind arched openings to provide some distance from the communal space. Unit 1832 contains a particularly distinctive combination of wood textures and finishes. A wall with horseshoe arch openings that separate the living room from the staircase and kitchen area is a special feature of unit 1850.

Primary entrances to units located in the north and south sections face the courtyard. Access to the south units (1834 and 1836) is set within the arcaded portico, and landscape features and walkways help to define the north units (1846 and 1848). Rear doors are also located in the kitchens that open to at-grade private patios at the north area of the complex and two exterior staircases located at the south units. These four units are also two-stories. Unit 1836 occupies the round tower massing at the southeast corner of the patio. The four units located in the east portion are one-story each. The two units located at the ground level (1838 and 1844) have doorways that face each other across the east passage. As a result of the sloping site, an above-grade walkway at the east elevation is accessible via the east passage and ground floor units. Upstairs units (1840 and 1842) are reached via the exterior stairs in the east passage. These units contain French doors in the west wall that open onto the walkway loggia overlooking the patio, dining areas set behind pointed arches, and clerestory hopper windows. A wood walkway at the east elevation provides views of the street and hills. Storage and utility rooms are located underneath the east and south areas of the building, portions of the board-formed concrete foundation are visible.

The configurations and character-defining features within the ten units remain largely intact. The public spaces in the units are expansive, particularly the double-height living rooms with mezzanine-level walkways. Two-story units were designed to provide additional light and space with amenities such as porthole windows and recessed niches. Doorway and passage openings are generally arched throughout the complex in keeping with the Spanish Colonial Revival style. Frequently occurring character-defining interior features in units include stained wood beamed ceilings, wood and steel casement windows, mezzanine-level walkways with wood balustrades and soffits, wall sconces, staircases ornamented with glazed ceramic tile risers and wrought iron, and original hardwood floors. Several types of fireplaces exist with decorative mantles and friezes, some of which are painted and some are exposed brick, plaster, and/or cast stone. Bathrooms and kitchens also retain original features and finishes, such as tiled bathtubs/showers, countertops, built-in cabinetry, and sinks. Most kitchens and bathrooms contain tiled kitchen counters and backsplashes, original ceramic kitchen sinks, bathroom pedestal and wall-mounted sinks, and yellow

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tub/shower tiles. A minority of kitchens and bathroom elements have been modified or replaced. All units have front and rear entrances, and most of the original doors remain.

## Conclusion

El Cabrillo retains a high degree of physical integrity. The plan and configuration of the courtyard housing complex remains largely intact. Most original finishes and materials are intact and in good condition. The quality of construction and materials observed at El Cabrillo is outstanding. The outer and patio walls (counted as a contributing structure), concrete building masonry, and exterior wood elements remain, as well as patio features such as brick paving and the three-tiered fountain with glazed ceramic tile insets at the base (counted as a contributing object). Original steel and wood casement windows, leaded windows, and French doors are in place throughout the property. Almost all original doors and light fixtures remain. As previously mentioned, the entrance is now located on Grace Avenue. According to secondary sources, the Franklin Avenue entrance was closed and wall appears to have been moved as a result of street widening in 1932. Despite this change, the wall retains its historic character. Permits pertaining to the north entrance and wall were not available.

El Cabrillo epitomizes the grace, charm, and romanticism of enclosed Spanish Colonial Revival courtyard apartments, an important style and type that were integral to the building boom of multifamily housing in Hollywood during the 1920s and 1930s. It is a remarkably evocative site. Furthermore, the presence of the three-tiered fountain and the perimeter walls mitigate the sound of Franklin Avenue traffic. These buffers help convey a sense of anachronistic refuge that is suggestive of Hollywood during the 1920s before Los Angeles became the major metropolis it is today. Most multifamily housing complexes along Franklin and Grace Avenue were built after El Cabrillo was completed. The property's corner position juxtaposes it with later construction and the evolving streetscape. Bungalow courts located south of El Cabrillo date from the World War I era and the 1920s. Other multifamily apartment structures and bungalow courts that line Grace Avenue collectively articulate the story of housing and density in Hollywood during the early- to mid-twentieth century.



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El Cabrillo  
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## Section 8: Statement of Significance

### Summary

El Cabrillo is a two-story courtyard apartment complex located at 1832-1850 North Grace Avenue at the southeast corner of Franklin Avenue in the Hollywood neighborhood of Los Angeles. It was constructed in 1928 by the design and build team of Arthur and Nina Zwebell. The property qualifies for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C at the local level of significance as an outstanding example of courtyard housing designed in the Spanish Colonial Revival style. El Cabrillo is also an important work by the Zwebells, whose short career and few completed 1920s-era multifamily housing developments were hugely influential in Los Angeles. In comparison with other apartment developments built in the area during the same period, El Cabrillo stands out as a rare and outstanding example of its type and style.

### Significance under Criterion C

#### *Multifamily Housing in Hollywood*

El Cabrillo is located in the portion of the Franklin Avenue corridor that runs along the foot of Whitley Heights, a prestigious residential, National Register listed neighborhood north of Hollywood Boulevard in central Hollywood. Whitley Heights bears the name of H. J. Whitley, a developer who was responsible for the development of much of this area of Hollywood. In the first few years of the century, Whitley acquired a large amount of land north of Hollywood Boulevard between Highland and Wilcox Avenues and developed Whitley Heights, the first neighborhood to be known as a residential colony of well-known film stars.

The development of El Cabrillo and the other apartment buildings in its surroundings was the result of a heavy period of growth and urbanization in Hollywood. As the population of Hollywood increased, mainly due to the establishment of the film industry around the time of World War I, most of the residences on Hollywood Boulevard were demolished in favor of commercial buildings. The side streets north of Hollywood Boulevard were developed with apartment buildings that filled the zone between the Boulevard and the exclusive hillside residential neighborhoods to the north, such as Whitley Heights.

The apartment buildings filled a need for denser, less expensive housing for the large number of new arrivals to the city and for those who preferred apartment living. Many of the apartments in more prestigious buildings such as El Cabrillo were quite large or contained a level of detail and opulence that surpassed that of many single family residences of the time. Numerous residential properties such as El Cabrillo came furnished, which was an additional convenience for recent migrants. Other apartment districts were initiated in the same period at nearby locations, including the Wilshire corridor, West Hollywood, and Rossmore Avenue to service the Hollywood area.

Buildings like Chateau des Fleurs, La Leyenda, the Fleur de Lys, the Fontenoy, the Havenhurst, and the Montecito, all constructed between 1926 and 1930, are examples of the other major apartment buildings in period revival styles (excepting the Montecito, an Art Deco landmark) in the adjacent blocks west of El Cabrillo. Stylish multifamily

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housing complexes were accessible to those on a limited income, but the more ornate buildings were considered elegant and acceptable to residents of higher social status and greater economic means.

Bungalow courts and courtyard apartments proliferated throughout Hollywood and West Hollywood from around 1909, with the increase in the number of people needing temporary or rental housing, until the mid-1920s, after which higher-density apartment buildings became the norm. Before World War I these courts were usually composed of wood vernacular or sometimes Craftsman style one-story buildings. After World War I it was more common for the courts to be composed of larger buildings, reflecting the increasing density of Los Angeles and Hollywood itself, but they were still arranged in the characteristic pattern with separate entrances (often small porches) for each unit directly from the outside, an even number of buildings facing a central court, and a building (often a different or larger one) at the center rear. Although these buildings did not have the same character as the earlier one- or two-unit bungalow courts, they were a step in the transition in courtyard housing from true bungalow courts consisting of single or duplex units to U-shaped courtyards that are the focus of the 1986 typological study, *Courtyard Housing in Los Angeles* by Stephanos Polyzoides, Roger Sherwood, and James Tice.

This courtyard complex is an example of how the apartment buildings of Hollywood provided for a concrete need—housing for people moving to Los Angeles and Hollywood in particular—while also meeting the expectations of those who came to the city hoping to find an exotic, fantasy fulfilling environment compared to what migrants left behind. It also captures the allure of the Spanish Colonial Revival style. Apartment buildings like El Cabrillo changed the streetscapes of the city as Los Angeles boomed in the 1920s.

### *Courtyard Housing*

The low-rise, high-density courtyard structure was a common multifamily housing type in 1920s Los Angeles. Its form emerged as a pragmatic response to the changing character of Los Angeles and continued to evolve as the city grew. The type began with the bungalow court, which consisted of small single-unit detached bungalows clustered on large lots that first began to appear around 1909. The early courts were first designed as vacation residences for those “wintering” in the state, although they were eventually more likely to serve as year-round rental housing for people with moderate or lower incomes. Most of the residents of courtyard housing were Midwestern retirees or newly arrived migrants in the employ of the burgeoning entertainment industry.

The typical early bungalow court is composed of simple repetitions of the single-family house arranged in a series, commonly with the central axis running down the center of the property perpendicular to the street. Often a larger building, such as a single- or two-story duplex, was placed in the center at the rear of the court to provide a visual terminus for the main axis. Typically the courts were located on double lots or on lots that were originally intended for much larger houses with gardens, when the area was expected to be much less densely developed. The type extended to higher-density variations such as duplexes and two-story buildings, some earlier examples of which were similar in style to the smaller, earlier bungalow courts and their vernacular or Craftsman style wood exteriors. The common courtyard to which the units are oriented takes the place of the individual front yards of single family houses. Courtyard apartment complexes delicately blend into residential streets where single family homes were more common than multifamily housing.

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El Cabrillo and other courtyard developments incorporate the practical considerations of the early bungalow courts' site plans and design while introducing Spanish genres of dense and sophisticated living environments. A communal patio space provides the focal point to this configuration that is often set within an enclosed courtyard. However, features such as individual entrances, porches, and rooflines serve to differentiate the units. Deluxe apartment houses such as El Cabrillo provide many of the amenities found in single family dwellings, including two-story plans, fireplaces, lavish decorative details, and multiple bedrooms. As the exterior suggests, differences among the layouts and details seen in the units are pronounced, thereby adding an air of dignity and distinction rarely seen in multifamily housing.

Courtyard housing combined affordable living quarters with the provision of communal outdoor spaces for contact with neighbors. This social factor helped attract many of the early residents of courtyard housing who were new to Southern California. Since many of these new arrivals had modest incomes and did not know many people in the area, courtyard housing was an appealing alternative to the dominant housing type in the region, namely the single-family home. This property type offered additional psychological benefits. Polyzoides et al. explain that enclosed courtyard multifamily housing such as El Cabrillo provides a discrete transitional space that mediates between the public realm of the greater neighborhood and the private dwelling unit. The inward focus and shared space that allows for residents to enjoy privacy in deluxe units strikes a unique balance. The emphasis on fluid indoor/outdoor living also takes advantage of Southern California's mild climate.

Most often inexpensively built by contractors instead of architects, multifamily courtyard housing complexes vary in their architectural styles. In the period before World War I, the vernacular versions of the Craftsman style were most common. After the war, period styles were often used, the most popular of which were a simple Mediterranean Revival or Spanish Colonial Revival. Bungalow courts were also built in the Tudor, Norman, and Dutch Colonial Revival styles, and later Art Deco and Moderne styles. Prominent local architects experimented with the type. Particularly notable examples include Irving Gill's Horatio West Court which is located steps from the beach in Santa Monica (1919) and the Strathmore Apartments in Westwood by Richard Neutra (1938). This proved to be a consistently rich architectural type for exploration throughout the first half of the twentieth century, since it addressed vital issues of density and urban living while incorporating what Polyzoides et al. identify as four principal ideals of Southern California: mobility, instant place, instant culture, and entertainment. Moreover, it provided much-needed housing during a period of immense population growth.

### *The Spanish Colonial Revival Style*

Elaborate Spanish Colonial Revival courtyard housing with private enclosed patios did not fully emerge until the 1920s. The movement began with the late nineteenth century revival of the mission and rancho histories, and the Anglo romanticizing of the region's Spanish past. This ideology was a significant component in the search for and evolution of California's cultural, social, physical, and geographic identity. The 1915 Panama-California International Exposition in San Diego was a watershed event that also helped catalyze the region's embracing of the style. Designed by New York-based architect Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue, the impressive Spanish Colonial Revival

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structures showcased the aesthetic with elements such as clay tile roofs, arched openings, wrought iron work, and highly decorative glazed tile surfaces that were influenced by motifs dating back to the Moorish invasion of Spain.

Following the Exposition, an abundance of residential, commercial, and civic buildings were constructed in the Spanish Colonial Revival style throughout Southern California. Although not as elaborate and ornate as the high style buildings in the Exposition, Mediterranean style structures capitalized on the 1920s real estate boom and desirable intangible qualities with connotations of romantic appeal, dramatic flair, and historical legitimacy. Other factors accelerated this trend. American architects who embarked on their European "grand tour" during World War I traveled through Spain as an alternative to venturing through countries that were engulfed in the conflict.

Both formal and vernacular Spanish models provided inspiration for California-based designers. Interest in the aesthetic dovetailed with both the perception of a shared Hispanic past and with a fascination with "exotic" cultures and aesthetics. This impression deeply resonated with the public and with many California-based architects who were charged with fashioning a new built environment. In addition to the cultural meaning, Spain also offered numerous prototypes of courtyard dwellings that were extremely well suited to the dry, hot climate and the demands of the Southern California housing market.

During the 1920s, period revival styles borrowing heavily from other cultures were the most popular architectural mode in Los Angeles. These period revival styles were basically a contemporary interpretation of various European and sometimes Asian architectural types and styles which were adapted and combined to suit modern uses, tastes, and building types. The cityscape of Los Angeles (as well as the image of the city to outsiders) became defined in this period by the period revival and fantasy architecture that was created with the construction of such buildings. The film industry and its products are thought to have contributed in large measure to this perception, with movies set in exotic locales being very popular and produced in great number in the 1920s and the 1930s. Many features of the building are derived from Spanish architecture of the Andalusia region, which inspired architects practicing in Southern California during the early twentieth century.

The region's Hispanic past was a crucial influence on the architecture that dotted Los Angeles during the early twentieth century. This impulse to evoke Spanish references was a product of the search for an "authentic" regional style that, as Polyzoides et al. explain, either imitated or transformed Spanish, and in particular, formal and vernacular Andalusian forms and elements. In fact, El Cabrillo shares the same massing as the Zwebells' celebrated Andalusia complex built in West Hollywood shortly before El Cabrillo. The spatial and formal design elements of this type include: a central courtyard that is most commonly rectangular with both hard and soft landscape features; pedestrian access located in courtyard; accommodation for vehicular access carefully incorporated into the site yet relegated to the periphery; living spaces organized around the court; shared living spaces which are directed towards the court; utility rooms at the rear and sides; and amenities that are comparable to those found in a single-family dwelling.

Furthermore, the importance of individual dwelling units is secondary to that of the overall spatial configuration, yet the units themselves are highly complex and distinctive from one another. Details and flourishes associated with the style are used to achieve this effect. Spanish Colonial Revival materials and components include the barrel vaulted clay tile roofs; ornate wrought iron and glazed ceramic tile details; arched portals and doorways; the central courtyard

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El Cabrillo  
1832-1850 Grace Avenue  
Los Angeles, California

with multi-tiered fountain at the focal point; French doors; ornamental chimneys; irregular and asymmetrical massing; and arched or porthole window openings. These elements are all used to dramatic effect at El Cabrillo and perfectly suited the cultural climate of Hollywood during the 1920s. This housing type and style were celebrated and embraced, yet relatively few deluxe complexes on par with the Zwebell courts were built, and today are rare.

While eclectic architectural styles had been used for the homes of the wealthy before the turn of the century, by the 1920s the period revival styles had become popularized and were used for every level and size of residential building, from the mansion to the apartment building. El Cabrillo, in its name as well as its design, is meant to evoke a centuries-old building in the south of Spain that is actually in the midst of a new and growing urban area. A 1928 classified advertisement for El Cabrillo touted the “charm of Old Spain” with “modern habiliments.” Along with the romanticism of Europe and the revival of California’s Spanish past, the property also plays on the exoticism of life in California as it was perceived by outsiders, with its courtyard orientation and the sense of enclosure derived from the frontier mentality, as well as the connection to the cultural fantasy of the movies with its eclectic architectural style.

El Cabrillo was declared City of Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument number 773 on December 16, 2003. It is listed in the California Register of Historic Resources as having “3S” status, meaning it appears eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places as a separate property. Other courtyard housing complexes designed by the Zwebells are also designated landmarks. The Andalusia (1926) was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on August 21, 2003, the Patio del Moro (1926) was listed on September 11, 1986 and the Ronda (1927) in West Hollywood was listed on February 28, 1985. The Andalusia was declared City of Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument number 435 on May 16, 1989, and the Villa Primavera (1923) and the Patio del Moro are located within the City of West Hollywood Courtyard Thematic District.

### **Arthur and Nina Zwebell, Designers and Builders**

Arthur and Nina Zwebell migrated to Los Angeles from the Midwest in 1921. During their short lived career as developers of multifamily housing, the couple created eight influential courtyard complexes in addition to a few single-family residences. The Zwebells served as self-taught architects, interior designers, and builders, as well as operators of a furniture design studio that Nina oversaw. Sometimes the couple used professional architects and engineers to sign plans, but otherwise theirs was a completely self-sufficient and insular operation. Both autodidacts, Polyzoides et al. note that the Zwebells “combined a Midwestern pragmatism with a keen eye for Spanish architectural detail.” El Cabrillo was constructed two years after the Andalusia, which is widely considered to be their masterwork. Most of the courtyard complexes designed by the Zwebells are extant.

The Zwebells became set designers and eventually branched out into furniture design and manufacture when the Depression hit and the housing market ceased to be a viable profession. This line of work was well-suited to their expertise as purveyors of period revival, fantasy laden architecture. Arthur Zwebell tried to produce modular housing in 1934-36 but only advanced to the prototype phase. His strained relationship with the Federal Housing Authority—the project’s sponsor—and a weather storm that nearly ruined his plant in Van Nuys led him to claim an insurance settlement and leave the housing business. He built three more homes for his own family in North Hollywood. Arthur and Nina Zwebell passed away in 1973 and 1974, respectively.

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The small repertoire of special properties with enclosed site plans and nuanced flourishes, including El Cabrillo, ranks the Zwebells among the finest creators of this property type. Polyzoides et al. identify the team as “the originators of the highly refined deluxe court in Los Angeles,” citing a “brief” yet “extraordinary” role in the history of a unique multifamily housing types. The Zwebells utilized landscape design techniques, the individuality and distinctiveness of each unit, attention to and respect for urban context, and the idiosyncratically complex cultural climate to develop beautiful and functional courtyard housing in Los Angeles. The Zwebells fully embraced historical period revival architecture and shunned modernism, unlike a number of their peers. However, the Zwebells also accounted for elements of modern life, such as their careful and subtle incorporation of parking facilities.

## Conclusion

El Cabrillo qualifies for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C as an exceptional example of multifamily courtyard housing and the Spanish Colonial Revival style. The influence of Andalusian formal and vernacular architecture is evident throughout. It retains a high degree of physical integrity, with character-defining features that exemplify the style and type. El Cabrillo also showcases the skills of the design and contractor team of Arthur and Nina Zwebell. It shares the high artistic values and numerous characteristics of other significant courtyard housing in the Zwebell’s repertoire, most notably the Andalusia. Most of these multifamily residential complexes have been recognized with local and national landmark status.

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Los Angeles, California

## Section 9: Bibliography

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El Cabrillo  
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## Section 10: Geographical Data

The property is bounded by Franklin Avenue to the north and Grace Avenue to the west. A driveway forms the southern boundary. The site slopes downwards towards the east.

## Verbal Boundary Description

As delineated by the attached Assessor's Map of Los Angeles County, California, the boundary of El Cabrillo includes Lots 11 and 12 of Tract 6562, as recorded in Book 70, Pages 62 and 63 of Maps in the office of the Los Angeles County Recorder. The boundary includes the north and west walls that are built to the sidewalk and partially covered with vines. A chain link fence partially encloses the east area. The southern elevation of the building meets the driveway and contains exterior staircases.

## Verbal Boundary Justification

These are the current boundaries of the property. Based on secondary sources, the original property boundary extended further north before Franklin Avenue was widened in 1932. The north and west walls are included in the property boundary due to the integrity of materials and significance to the site.



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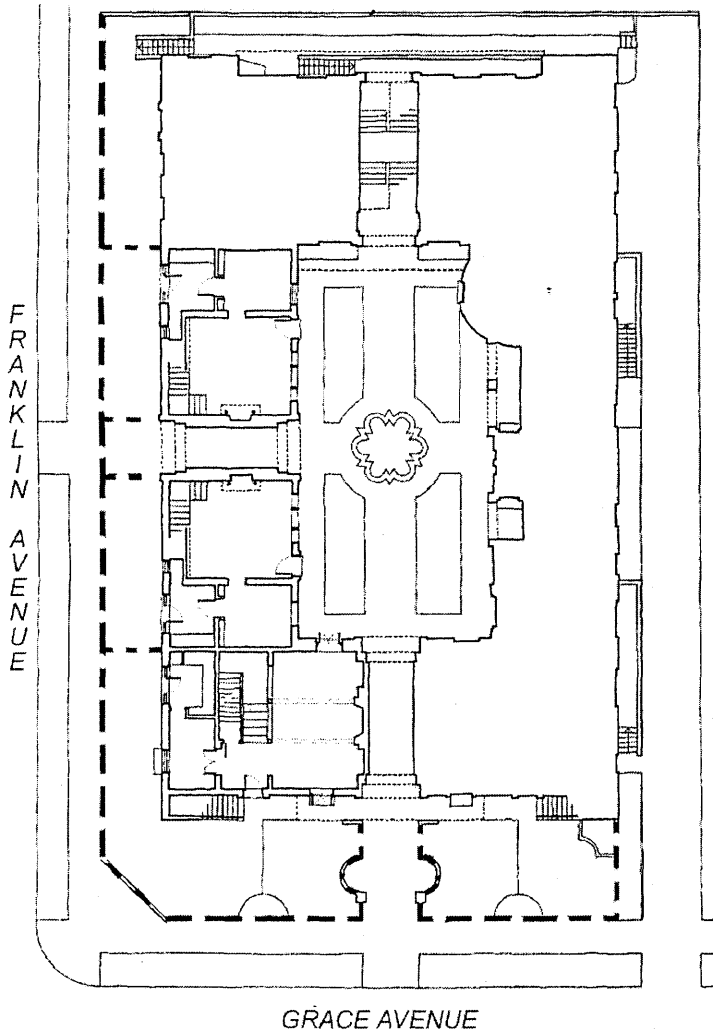
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El Cabrillo  
1832-1850 Grace Avenue  
Los Angeles, California

## Sketch Map

Plan adapted from *Courtyard Housing in Los Angeles*, p. 91



Concrete Masonry Wall  
- - -

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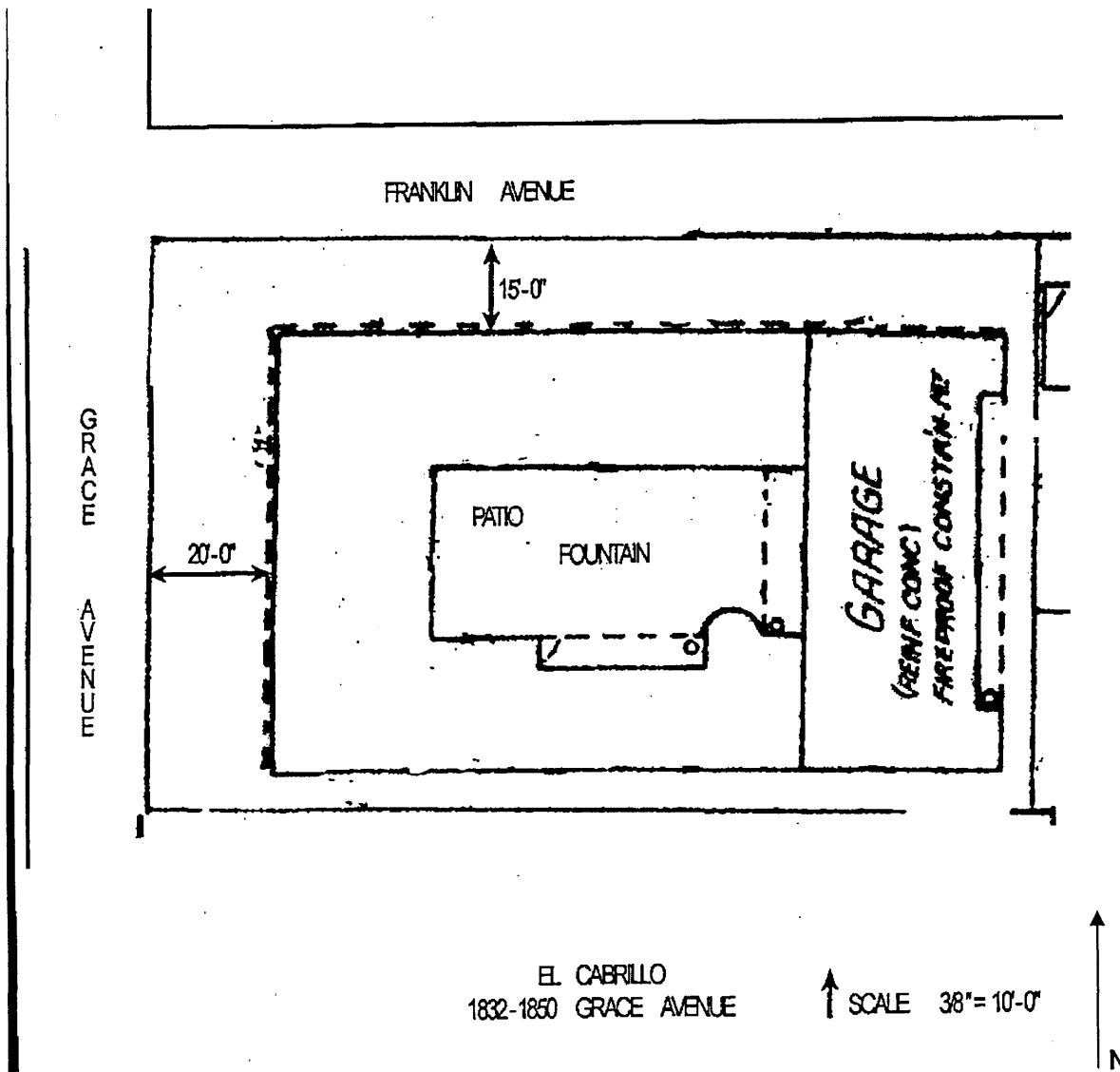
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El Cabrillo  
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Sanborn Map (c. 1955) with site sketch map (2003)



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El Cabrillo  
1832-1850 Grace Avenue  
Los Angeles, California

Assessor's Map

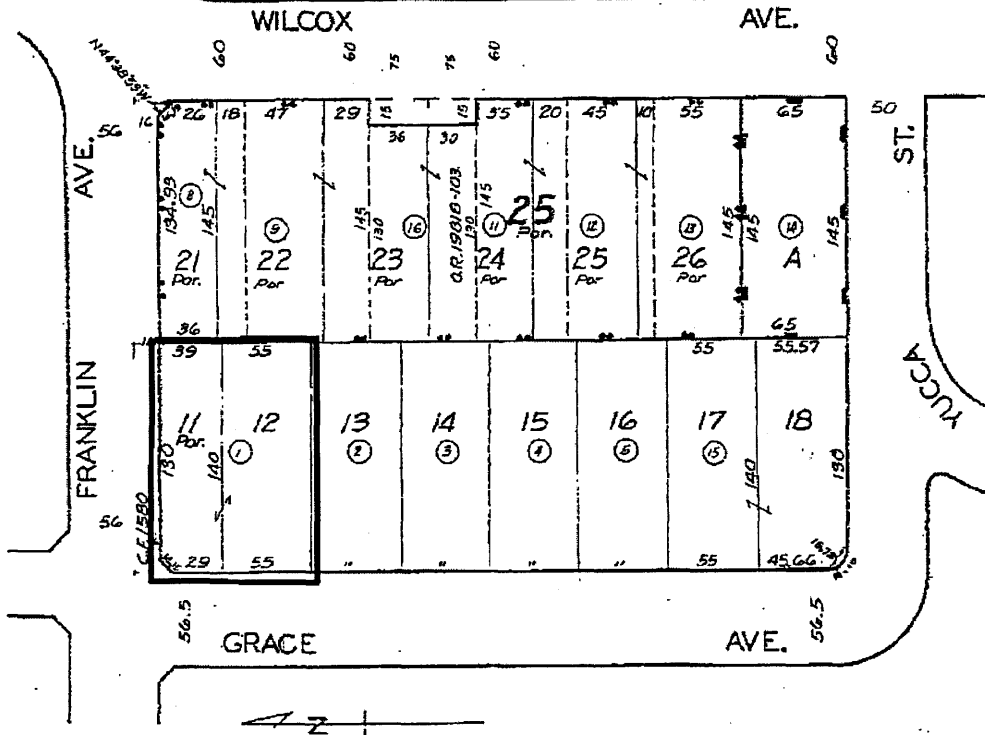
County of Los Angeles: Rick Auerbach, Assessor

5547 | 6  
SCALE 1" = 60'  
**2002**

TRACT NO. 6562  
M.B. 70-62, 63

TRACT NO. 8413  
M.B. 111-79, 80

HOLLYWOOD  
M.R. 28-59, 60



CODE  
200

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## Additional Documentation: Photographs

Name: El Cabrillo

Location: 1832 – 1850 North Grace Avenue  
Los Angeles, California 90028

Photographer: Steven T. Moga

Date of Photographs: September 7, 2004

Location of Negatives: Historic Resources Group  
1728 North Whitley Avenue  
Los Angeles, California 90028

1. Site from corner of Franklin and Grace Avenues, Southeast view
2. Site from sidewalk on Grace Avenue, East view
3. Courtyard Patio, East view
4. Courtyard Patio, Southeast view
5. Courtyard Patio from above, Southwest view
6. Courtyard Patio from above, Northwest view
7. Courtyard Patio, North view
8. West elevation, Southeast view
9. West elevation, Northeast view
10. North elevation and 1850 patio, Southeast view
11. East elevation, Southwest view
12. South elevation, Northwest view
13. South elevation, Northeast view
14. East exterior stair landing, East view
15. Unit 1832, Living Room, Southeast view
16. Unit 1836, Living Room, Northeast view
17. Unit 1842, Living Room, Northeast view
18. Unit 1842, Living Room, West view
19. Unit 1836, Bathroom, Southeast view
20. Unit 1836, Kitchen, Southeast view