

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received APR 7 1988

date entered MAY 16 1988

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

1. Name

historic Esslinger Building

and/or common same

2. Location

street & number 31866 Camino Capistrano N/A not for publication

city, town San Juan Capistrano N/A vicinity of

state California code 06 county Orange code 059

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 checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<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 Edward C. Lohrbach

street & number 31866 Camino Capistrano

city, town San Juan Capistrano N/A vicinity of state CA 92675

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Orange County Courthouse

street & number 700 Civic Center Drive West

city, town Santa Ana state California 92701

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Guide to Architecture in LA & So. Cal. has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1977 federal state county local

depository for survey records N/A

city, town state

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Esslinger Building is a long, low streamline moderne one-story office building in a mixed residential and commercial section of urban San Juan Capistrano. In the rear of the property is a two-car garage with an upstairs apartment, detached as a structure but attached to the front office building by a flat roof that connects the two buildings. A patio area is located behind the main building and the garage is completely walled in. This gives the whole property a rectangular shape. The front building, garage, and upstairs apartment are 3,775 sq. ft. in total. The foundation of both buildings and the walks are concrete. The exterior and interior of the structures and the wall surrounding the patio are smooth stucco over reinforced concrete. The roofs of both buildings are flat tarpaper with gravel. In the center of the main office building is a domed skylight approximately 50' long. Integrity of the buildings is moderately high. A remodeling/rehabilitation took place in 1982 but has not damaged the basic original appearance of the structures.

The east side front of the main office building consists of three parts. To the left is the main entrance which is recessed with a marquee and curved corners; the wooden door is plain with a circular glass window/porthole. The marquee has a 4-band molded trim and is 6" wide. The center part of the building is 70' long. The entire length of the center part has a 4' high glass block wall with 6 16" by 16" window openings. Each glass block measures 8" by 8". The end of the glass block wall curves to join the third segment of the building. This section is plain with two windows. Above the glass block wall is a marquee with 4-band molded trim. A stucco planter box with 4-band molded trim runs the length of the center part and curves the same as the glass block wall. The 4-band molded trim encircles the entire front building along the rim of the flat roof.

On the south side, Forster Street, the two structures are visible. To the left is the end of the main building and to the right is the two-story garage with an upstairs apartment. In the center is the recessed entrance to the patio area.

The south section of the main building has two corner windows and in the center a recessed entry with a glass paneled door and a curved marquee with 4-band molded trim. The patio door is set back from the front of the two buildings. Affixed to the wall of the garage and the front building are two decorative 8" wide stairstep-type walls for potted plants. The door is plain wood with a circular glass window.

A flat roof covering the walkway between the buildings, structurally connecting them, is a 1982 addition. The length of the roof runs the length of the garage building and has six glass panels serving as skylights. The same 4-band molded trim is used in front and back of the roof edge.

On the garage/apartment structure the original garage door has been replaced in the recent remodeling by a paneled window that covers the entire original opening. It now serves as office space. A marquee is above the window of the former garage door and has the 4-band molded trim. The cement staircase leading to the upstairs apartment is unaltered. The railing before renovation was iron and has been replaced by a solid cement wall which became part of the barbecue area downstairs. The landing is small, and the apartment contains two rooms and a small bathroom. There are three corner windows and over the entrance is a marquee with 4-band molded trim. The roof is encircled by a 4-band molded trim. In 1982 the barbecue area was added, with a curved low wall enclosing the barbecue serving as a counter. The present owner installed a paneled window in the extended garage wall that opens into the barbecue area and counter. A marquee is over that area with rounded corners and 4-band molded

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/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1938-9

Builder/Architect Dr. Paul H. Esslinger

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Esslinger Building represents a classic example of Streamline Moderne architectural design. The outstanding feature is the overall curved aerodynamic form and the use of a 70' glass block front. It is the only one of its kind in the San Juan Capistrano area. Other structures of various architectural styles nearby include the Mission of San Juan Capistrano to the north, a number of adobes, structures in the Spanish Colonial Revival mode, and some modern buildings of pseudo-Spanish style. Because of its rarity in San Juan Capistrano, and because of the high quality of design, the Esslinger Building, just slightly less than 50 years old, appears to be exceptionally significant when viewed in the local context.

A trip to Buenos Aires in 1937 influenced Dr. Paul Esslinger to design his future medical office in San Juan Capistrano in the Streamline Moderne style. Buenos Aires, at that time had a large German population. Many of its buildings were the design of German architects in the moderne style.

Construction for the medical building started in September 1938. When completed in 1939, Esslinger's clinic was a veritable emergency hospital. Among its 23 rooms were those for surgery, examination, diathermy, X-ray, and laboratory, plus a complete dental suite and quarters for an eye-ear-nose specialist.

The interior had an acoustical ceiling of "celotex," which deadened 78% of the sound, silent light switches, and hollow glass block which acted as insulation while admitting 92% of the outside light. All of these features were quite advanced for the time.

California's noted architectural historian David Gebhard has noticed this unusual and well executed example of the moderne in his book, A Guide to Architecture in Los Angeles and Southern California:

"One would not expect to encounter a strong exercise in the Streamline Moderne in this Mission town, but here it is. Everything is correct -- curved walls, glass bricks, and the original signing." (p. 431)

In conclusion, this building is particularly valuable to the San Juan Capistrano area because of its rarity and its fascinating and dramatic design incorporating a 70' glass block wall. Although San Juan Capistrano originally had another Streamline Moderne building, the High School, that structure has been substantially altered over the years and does not maintain its design integrity. The Esslinger Building, although it also has been subject to alteration, still retains much of its original 1930s appearance.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Please see continuation sheet.

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property Less than 1 acre

Quadrangle name San Juan Capistrano

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

1	1	4	3	8	5	8	0	3	7	0	6	7	1	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D

Zone		Easting				Northing								

E

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H

Zone		Easting				Northing								

Verbal boundary description and justification

Assessor's Map Book 124, page 16. Assessor's Block 8, Parcel 17. County of Orange
This parcel is the historic lot for the property.

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

state N/A code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Ilse M. Byrnes

organization Historical Society of San Juan Capistrano date May 20, 1987

street & number P.O. Drawer 1029 telephone (714) 493-4222

city or town San Juan Capistrano state CA 92693

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 Gueltz

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date 3/31/88

For NPS use only

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

Carol O'Shull

5-16-88

Keeper of the National Register

Attach:

Chief of Registration

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 6 Page 1

Representation in Existing Surveys:

City of San Juan Capistrano Cultural Resources Inventory

Date: In progress

Depository: Will be at Office of Historic Preservation, Sacramento, CA

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National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
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trim.

The back (east) side of the main building has three exits and windows partially covered by a marquee with rounded corners and 4-band molded trim. The north side of the main building has four large paneled windows and a plain facade except for the roofline trim.

The patio area is completely walled in. On the east side, starting at the garage, the wall extends the length of the main building. It is 7' high. In the center is a brick/stucco fireplace 10' high. The original fireplace had Spanish overtones. In 1982 the fireplace was cemented over to follow the streamline theme of the patio wall and the buildings. On the northeast corner of the property the wall turns west to connect with the front building. The 4-band molded trim runs on both sides of the top of the wall and encircles the rim of the fireplace.

The interior of the main office building consists of eleven suites of various sizes. All gain entrance from the center hallway. This hallway is illuminated by the added domed skylight. Walls are plain, corners often rounded and the only decoration is the 4-band molded trim at the ceiling/wall joints. In the area of the main entrance is a glass block softly-curved partition -- an addition -- that repeats the design of the exterior southwest glass block wall corner.

In 1982 the present owner completely restored the main and rear buildings. Alterations were done to the center part of the roof of the front building by installing the domed skylight and a flat roof connecting front and rear buildings, also with skylights. These alterations can hardly be noticed either from Camino Capistrano in front or El Camino Real in back.

The wooden garage door has been replaced by a paneled window and the garage converted into office space which includes the former storage room in back. This change is very compatible. The apartment above serves as additional office space and has all of the original windows.

Hardwood floors were installed throughout the front building over existing cement slab. Hardwood floors were also installed in the former garage and the upstairs apartment. Some of the glass blocks had to be replaced with the same type block.

All exterior doors had to be replaced. The owner used the same type of doors with circular window inset for the porthole effect.

Resource count: 2 contributing buildings

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
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Major Bibliographical References:

American Institute of Architects, Orange County Chapter, Letter, Jan. 30, 1987.

Coastline Dispatch, Feb. 4, Aug. 26, Sept. 2, 9, Oct. 7, 1938.

Gebhard, David and Robert Winter, A Guide to Architecture in Los Angeles and Southern California, Santa Barbara & Salt Lake City, 1977.

San Juan Capistrano Cultural Resources Inventory

Smith, Marilyn Esslinger, oral interview, April 1987.

Sleeper, James, Orange County Historian, oral interview, March, 1987.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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Section number Photos Page 1

Photo information: Esslinger Building
31866 Camino Capistrano
San Juan Capistrano, CA 92675
Orange County

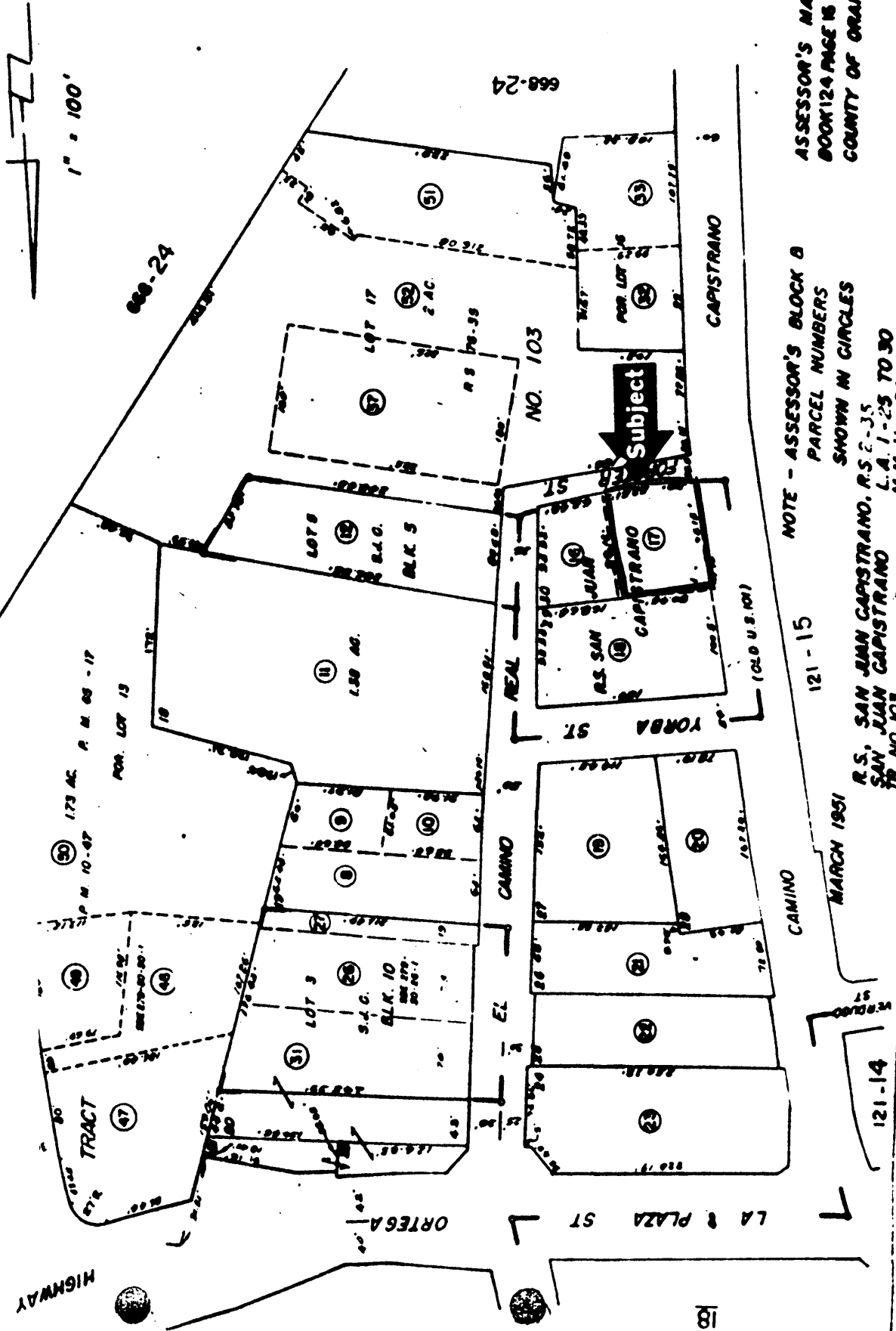
Photographer: Ilse Byrnes

Date: May 1987, except for Photo #5 which is 1939

Negative: P.O. Drawer 1029
San Juan Capistrano, CA 92693

- #1 Camino Capistrano Street facade, Photographer facing east
- #2 Close-up of Glass Brick Wall, on Camino Capistrano facade
- #3 Foster Street facade, Photographer facing north
- #4 Interior of main building showing skylight addition
- #5 1939 view of Camino Capistrano Street facade

Esslinger Building
31866 Camino Capistrano
San Juan Capistrano
Orange County, California



ASSESSOR'S MAP
BOOK 124 PAGE 16
COUNTY OF ORANGE

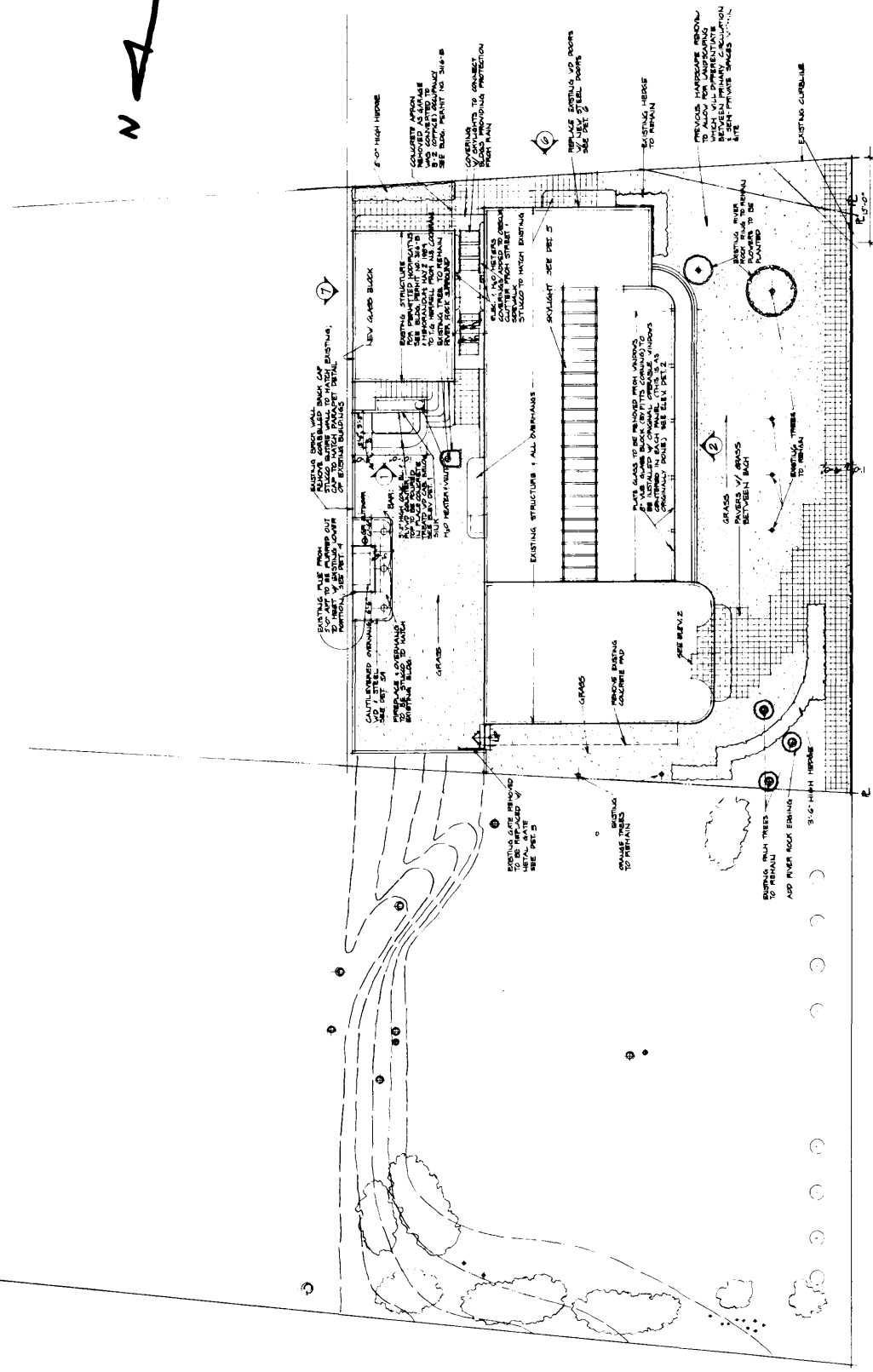
NOTE - ASSESSOR'S BLOCK B
PARCEL NUMBERS
SHOWN IN CIRCLES

121 - 15

MARCH 1951

R.S. SAN JUAN CAPISTRANO, R.S. 2-35
SAN JUAN CAPISTRANO L.A. 1-25 TO 30
TR. NO. 103 M.M. 11-29

N



31866 CAMINO CAPISTRANO
SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"

Esslinger Building
31866 Camino Capistrano
San Juan Capistrano
Orange County, California