### National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

otion number Page		
SUPPLEMEN	FARY LISTING RECORD	
NRIS Reference Number: 890008 Ramsey-Durfee Estate Property Name	Date Listed Los Angeles County	7/24/89 CA State
N/A Multiple Name		
This property is listed in the in accordance with the attache the following exceptions, excite National Park Service ceredocumentation.  Signature of the Keeper	ed nomination document Lusions, or amendment	ntation subject to is, notwithstanding in the nomination
Amended Items in Nomination:	;======================================	=======================================
Since this property is owned a Consideration A should be chec	oy a religious organi cked.	ization, Criteria
Discussed and concurred in by	the California SHPO.	
DISTRIBUTION:		

Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)

National Register property file

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

JUN 0 9 1989

NATIONAL

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties of the first state. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

( om 10 000a). Type an emmoor			
1. Name of Property			
historic name Ramsay-Durfee E	state		
other names/site number Villa Ma			
2. Location			
	estern Avenue	N/A L	not for publication
city, town Los Angeles	23 CCT III AVCTIME	Ν/Α	vicinity
	CA county Los Angeles	code 1037	<b>zip code</b> 90018
State Cultivativa Codo C	county 200 migares	0000 00.	2.5 0000 000.0
3. Classification			
	Category of Property	Number of Resour	rces within Property
			• • •
private	building(s)	Contributing 3	Noncontributing  O buildings
public-local	district	$-\frac{3}{0}$	
public-State	site	<del></del>	
public-Federal	structure		0 structures
	object	0	0 objects
			0 Total
Name of related multiple property listing:		Number of contrib	uting resources previously
		listed in the Nation	• • • •
4. State/Federal Agency Certificati	on		
Signature of certifying official	Dustrei		Date Date
State or Federal agency and bureau			
In my opinion, the property meets	does not meet the National Registe	er criteria. 🔲 See co	ontinuation sheet.
Signature of commenting or other official			Date
State or Federal agency and bureau			
5. National Park Service Certificati	on		
, 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.			
rational negister.	-		
removed from the National Register.			
<del></del>			<del></del>
other, (explain:)			
	Signature of the	KAADAr	Date of Action

6. Function or Use	·	
Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)	Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)	ions)
Domestic - single dwelling	<u>Religion - church related reside</u>	nce
7. Description		
Architectural Classification (enter categories from instructions)	Materials (enter categories from instructions)	
,	foundation Stone - sandstone	
Late 19th and 20th century revivals	wallsStucco	
Tudor Revival	Wood	
	roof Stone - slate	
		ss.

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Ramsay-Durfee Estate, now known as Villa Maria and located in the heart of Los Angeles' West Adams District, is an architecturally complete and well preserved and maintained example of the Tudor Revival style as applied to domestic American architecture at the end of the 19th century with minor evidence of Victorian and British Arts and Crafts Movement influences. The estate consists of the three-story main residence, two-story chauffeur's living quarters over a three-car garage, and a one-story two-stall carriage house in the back. Other features include a vine covered pergola terrace overlooking the tennis court and a vine covered arbor surrounding a "grotto" on three sides. Both of these are skillfully incorporated into a system of brick perimeter walls.

Presently surrounded by commercial and institutional uses, this area, at the turn of the century, was the setting of some of the City's most opulent homes and a fine residential neighborhood. Through unique circumstances, the property remains one of the best preserved examples of a private residential estate of that period. Designed by architect Frederick L. Roehrig and constructed in 1908 for William E. Ramsay, and acquired by the Durfee family in 1924, the house was exclusively occupied by Nellie Durfee, an eccentric reclusive widow, who kept it in its original condition, forbidding any changes to the grounds, buildings or interior spaces, for over half a century. When acquired by the Brothers of St. John of God through an estate sale in 1979, much of the original furniture, including oriental rugs, had been sold at auction. Photographs accompanying this nomination document conditions which existed at the time of this sale and which, for the most part, still exist today. Thus, the buildings remain virtually intact in their original setting, an unusual architectural memorial of the age and culture which gave rise to such grand homes and neighborhoods.

8. Statement of Significance		
Certifying official has considered the significance of this proposed nationally	perty in relation to other properties: statewide X locally	
Applicable National Register Criteria A B XC	□D	
Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)	□D □E □F □G	
Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)  Architecture	Period of Significance 1907 - 1908	Significant Dates 1907 1908
	Cultural Affiliation	
Significant Person	Architect/Builder Roehrig, Frederick Lou-	is

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above. SUMMARY: The Ramsay-Durfee Estate is significant under National Register Criterion "C" because it represents the work of a master, namely, Architect Frederick Louis Roehrig. It is also of interest because (although significance is not claimed for the fact that) it represents the first full flowering of the development of the West Adams residential district of the City of Los Angeles as an area selected by the wealthy for the construction of substantial, architect-designed homes, and because the residence on the estate, which, together with its surrounding landscaping and outbuildings, is substantially intact as designed by Roehrig, represents an early 20th century interpretation of the Tudor Revival architectural style.

HISTORIC CONTEXT: The context for the Ramsay-Durfee Estate includes the historical context of the development of the West Adams residential district of the City of Los Angeles, and the arichitectural context of the development of the Tudor Revival architectural style in the early twentieth 20th century and the career of Architect Frederick Louis Roehrig. The West Adams district developed soon after the turn of the century as a prime residential neighborhood. Several factors contributed to this. First, the next preceding prime neighborhood had been the area just north of the University of Southern California, including Chester Place, a gated subdivision, and St. James Park immediately to the west. West Adams had several attractions as the next prime neighborhood: it lay little more than a mile to the west along the West Adams streetcar line, which had been extended to Arlington Avenue in 1897. West of St. James Park, development was basically single-family homes on 50-foot lots. catering to the middle class. But around Western Avenue, Adams climbed a hill, rising in elevation from about 180 to about 210 feet above sea level. This created neighborhoods with the potential for homesites with views or at least the selling point of better access to breezes from the Pacific Ocean, some ten miles distant. The Ramsay-Durfee Estate is sited on the eastern edge of this hill, with what was originally a clear view over the lower ground to the southeast. The estate dates from the first fully active period of residential development in West Adams; in fact, its land was never subdivided as part of a tract, but is simply about 2-1/2 acres, described as a portion of

	A STATE OF S
	X See continuation sheet
Previous documentation on file (NPS):	See continuation sneet
preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67)	Primary location of additional data:
has been requested	State historic preservation office
previously listed in the National Register	Other State agency
previously determined eligible by the National Register	Federal agency
designated a National Historic Landmark	Local government
recorded by Historic American Buildings	University
Survey #	Other
recorded by Historic American Engineering	Specify repository:
Record #	<u>Cultural Heritage Commission</u>
	City of Los Angeles
10. Geographical Data	
Acreage of property 2.85	
UTM References	
A 1 1 3 7 9 1 2 0 3 7 6 6 4 4 0 Northing	Zone Easting Northing
	See continuation sheet
Verbal Boundary Description	
Commencing at the southwest corner of V	Vestern Avenue (as widehed to 80 feet)
and the alley south of 24th Street, the	en West 633 feet along the south line of
the alley to the southeast corner of th	ne arrey and st. Andrew's Prace, then
	W •
	X See continuation sheet
Boundary Justification	
•	
These are the original boundaries of the	ne property assembled by willidm c.
the eastern edge for widening Western	7, except for a 10-foot strip taken from
the eastern edge for widening western i	Avenue in about 1990:
	See continuation sheet
44 Fam Banand B	
11. Form Prepared By	
name/title William Howard Wittausch	data. No. 1 . 1 . 1 . 1 . 1 . 1 . 1
organizationArchitect_Civil Engineer street & number131A East Anapamu Street	date November 4, 1988
city or town Santa Barbara. CA 93101	telephone 805-965-8766 state California zip code 93101
Jailla Dai Dai da On Jotot	state zip code zip code

9. Major Bibliographical References

## **National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet**

Section numb	er <u>7</u>	_ Page	1
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The 2.85 acre rectangularly shaped site, with 225 feet of frontage along Western Avenue, extends about 630 feet back into a full city block bounded by Western Avenue on the east, Adams Avenue on the south, St. Andrews Place (formerly Adams Place) on the west, and 24th Street on the north. A complex of traditional garden features is skillfully integrated with the main residence and outbuildings into a romantic and leisurely setting appropriate to the style and scale of the architecture. Formal public access is physically separated and effectively screened from service access by garden walls and landscaping. A continuous masonry retaining wall along Western Avenue frontage maintains the building site level about 12' above the street and is broken in two places for the main driveway entrance, with pilasters and gates (now removed), and for the service alley, bordering the northern edge of the property (figures 2, and 3). Brickwork patterns in the retaining wall are playfully reinterpreted in a system of garden walls which screen the peripheral service routes from the main house. Garden walls are of a dark red, rough brick laid in a modified English bond alternating with decorative rows of mortar laid flat tiles (figures 4 and 5). In key places, and on axis with major paths and doorways, walls are perforated by Gothic pointed arches with decorative brick surrounds (figures 6 and 7). The highly articulated texture of the walls also results from the occasional thickening, or stepping, and recessing of the surface to provide for niches and small storage rooms (figure 8). Additionally, the diminutive scale and less formal character of the walls are closely related to those of the outbuildings.

The relationship of the gardens to the Tudor style of the house is especially evident in the grotto at the northern edge of the property (figure 9). The garden wall, with massive masonry tile-backed brick benches on each side, forms the back wall of the sunken grotto, lending it the effect of a romantic ruin (figures 10, 11, 12). Other significant features in the landscape include a tennis court, and a vine covered pergola, and brick terrace in the rear of the main house, a large ginko tree on the front lawn, stands of mature rafus palms at the south entrance, date palms, and bamboo (figures 13, 14, 15).

The focus of the garden is the 3-story wood framed "L" shaped mansion with a cross-gabled, steeply pitched roof covered by red Vermont slate tile. Architectural features which distinguish the house as belonging to Post-Medieval English Domestic Architectural style include a prominent stepped ashlar stone chimney, asymetrical composition of the facade, wide eaves with overhanging brackets and exposed rafters, gabled dormers, the extension of the dominant wall material into the gable, stucco wall surfaces elaborated by false half timbering, and the overhanging second and third stories (figure 16). True to the English Gothic Revival style of the early 1800s, the house's "L" shaped plan, rough faced, square cut ashlar stone base and extensive side porches and terraces reach out and connect the house with its landscape (figure 17). The building exhibits both the eclectic training of the architect as well as Victorian influences characteristic of 19th century

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section	number	<u> </u>	Page	2
Section	HUHHUGH		raye	<u> </u>

American domestic architecture. The Tudor style is evidenced in the overall treatment of the exterior wall surfaces. Half timbering, stucco, ashlar stonework, and painted courses of wood shingle combine to form highly decorative planar surfaces (figures 18 and 19). Strings of leaded glass windows on the first floor and screened wood double-hung windows on the second floor are detailed such that they are flush with the exterior cladding thus contributing further to surface articulation (figure 16). The front entrance porch is an unusual departure from the Tudor style in that the crenellated stone parapet and columns are treated as a facade element, applied to the exterior wall surface so that the entrance appears more recessed.

The front entrance opens into a reception hall (figure 20) connecting the living room at the north end (figure 21), the dining room at the south end (figure 22), the Venetian room or den (figure 23) to the east, the grand stair hall leading up to the second floor (figures 24 and 25) and the rear hall leading back to the service area in the west wing (figure 26). Formal spaces on the first floor are characterized by beamed ceilings, columns, paneled walls, and door and window trim articulated in the classical manner. Wall surfaces are typically divided into three registers: a bottom register of mahogany stained oak paneling, a middle register comprising either large windows, window seats or built-in cabinetry, and an upper register covered by decorative plaster work or cloth. Segmented arches lead into the rooms and alcoves, and casework and openings are trimmed with egg and dart, and cornice mouldings (figures 20, 21, 22). Ornament derived from Medieval sources includes exposed half timbering in the stair hall, open-beam ceilings, and leaded glass windows throughout major spaces (figures 22, 23). Ornamental glass and wall covering designs, however, appear to be inspired by highly stylized interpretations of natural forms, characteristic of the British Arts and Crafts Period.

The Venetian room or den features vaulted ceilings, arches, and trompe-1'oeil panels painted to look like colored marble (figure 23). Five large sleeping chambers upstairs are distinguished by such amenities as full double baths, firepalces, sitting alcoves, adjoining linen and dressing rooms, and verandahs. These rooms typically feature coved plaster ceilings, prominent picture moldings, painted or paper plaster walls, heavy baseboard mouldings, flattened arches, and doors fronted with wood panels or leaded glass inserts (figure 27).

Complimenting the picture of this bygone way of life are the large assembly hall/ballroom and small study on the third floor, and the extensive servants' quarters in the west wing. The ballroom originally measured over 90 feet in length from gable to gable and 26 feet in width and featured oak floors, plaster walls, and a large fireplace with a copper hood. The east and west walls are sloped as a result of applying finishes to the underside of steeply pitched roof framing. A portion of this grand space is now partitioned to create a small meeting room and office at the south end. These alterations

## **National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet**

Section number	r	Page	3
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were carefully planned to preserve existing structure and interior finishes (figure 28). Architectural consideration extends to the servants' quarters, where hallways are articulated by a wainscot of shiplapped wood paneling, and dark stained wood door frames, baseboards, chair, and ceiling mouldings (figure 6).

Outbuildings on this estate compliment the style of the main house borrowing its Tudor ornament and motifs from garden elements. The garage wall features false half timbering filled in with stucco, and two columns similar to those in the pergola and grotto (figure 29).

The 2-1/2-story carriage house, with a painted, wood shingle roof, is a freely styled smaller version of the main house. Tudor elements such as board and batten doors, leaded glass windows, half timbering filled in with stucco, exposed rafters, and overhanging floor upper stories are playfully combined in the studied asymetrical facade. Varying eave heights and the intersection of the garden wall with the building facade combine to integrate the carriage house and the landscape (figure 30). The carriage house includes a large garage room on the first floor closed by three sizeable sliding board-and-batten fronted wood doors, an entry hall, and a residence on the second and third floors for the chauffeur and his family.

Additions and alterations made to the main residence by the Durfees predate 1927 and include redecorating the east den, now called the Venetian room, by closing in the fireplace, and installing paneling and arches with vaulted ceiling; extending the storeroom in the west wing out into the terrace and converting it to a breakfast room; glassing in the screened laundry porch at the northwest corner of the west wing; restoring the master bedroom west balcony, which had been converted to a glassed-in sun porch, to its original open-air condition; making balconies over east (front) and south (service) entrance accessible, and adding a storage building between the carriage house and garden wall to the alley (figures 31 and 32).

The Brothers of St. John of God recognize and appreciate the historical value of this fine old estate and with the exception of the above described modifications to the ballroom on the third floor, and minor changes to landscaping and flatwork, for maintenance and safety, intend to preserve it as long as they occupy the premises.

In conclusion, the Ramsay-Durfee Estate represents a well-preserved residential estate which not only commemorates a lifestyle characteristic of Los Angeles' growth and development at the turn of the century, but also stands as a tribute to architect Roehrig's skill in integrating buildings and landscape into a historic setting and is a notable example of the Tudor Revival style in American domestic architecture.



### **National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet**

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Section 35 in Township 1 South, Range 14 West, San Bernardino Base and Meridian.

The residence on the Ramsay-Durfee Estate represents an early 20th century version of the Tudor Revival style, one in which meticulous replication of a Tudor original is not attempted; rather, the architect borrowed freely from Tudor architectural imagery, most notably the half-timbered exterior wall surfaces, to create something characteristic of its period. Frederick Louis Roehrig was born in Le Roy, New York, in 1857; his father was Professor F. L. O. Roehrig, an orientalist and philologist. He graduated from Cornell University in 1883 with a Bachelor of Architecture, following which he continued his architectural studies in England and France. He practiced architecture, beginning in Pasadena, California, in 1886, and moving to Los Angeles in 1890. A recent list of 163 Roehrig-designed buildings and projects shows that Pasadena commissions continued to outnumber those for Los Angeles buildings, even after the move. The works are primarily single-family residences, with a scattering of business blocks. Among his most famous projects are the Hotel Green Annex (now "Castle Green Apartments") and Bridge, on south Raymond Avenue in Pasadena (1897), the Maria Antonia Wilcox Residence, West Adams at Hoover, Los Angeles (1898), the Castaneda Hotel, Las Vegas, New Mexico (circa 1898), the Frederick Hastings Rindge Residence, 2263 South Harvard Boulevard, Los Angeles (1902), the John B. Miller Residence, Pasadena (1905-06). By the Twenties, most of his work was on electrical substations for the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power. He appears to have retired by the mid-Thirties and died on October 7, 1948. He utilized a variety of architectural styles, including mixtures of Mission Revival and Moresque (Hotel Green Annex), Tudor Revival (Ramsay-Durfee Residence), and Prairie Style (Scofield Residence).

The Ramsay-Durfee Estate is significant among Roehrig's works in that it is one of only two major projects by him in the West Adams Heights district of Los Angeles, the other being the Rindge Estate at 2263 South Harvard Boulevard, a little over a block to the east. The Rindge home is in a different architectural style (semi-Chateauesque), and has not been as well maintained as the Ramsay-Durfee property, particularly in regard to the landscaping. The Ramsay-Durfee Estate possesses the higher degree of integrity as compared with the other major Roehrig projects in the area.

The site of the Ramsay-Durfee Estate was acquired by William E. Ramsay in three parcels: the large, 2.57-acre rectangular parcel fronting on Western Avenue was acquired in November of 1906 from Mira Hershey, and two 50-foot by 145-foot lots fronting on Adams Place (renamed St. Andrews Place by the City of Los Angeles in May of 1914) in September of 1907. On May 23, 1907, a contract was filed for the foundations of the residence; contractor was the Barber-Bradley Construction Co., amount was \$3,820 and time limit was June 29, 1907, but completion was not certified by Ramsay until July 10, 1908. The



## **National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet**

Section number8_ Page	2
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principal contracts were filed on July 22, 1907; construction, with Alta Planing Mill Co., for \$41,875, limit April 1, 1908; plumbing, with Guercio Bros., for \$4,679, limit March 1, 1908; electrical, with F. E. Newbery and Co., for \$818, limit March 1, 1908; and painting, with J. E. Johnson, for \$2,463, limit May 1, 1908. The residence was built under Los Angeles Building Permit No. 4331 of 1907, issued on July 26. These contracts were certified as complete on September 10, 1908. Meanwhile, Ramsay contracted with H. P. Weichmann to build a two-story frame garage for \$4,877, limit April 15, 1908, for which Permit No. 527 was taken out on February 4. Completion was certified on June 26, 1908.

Ramsay (a retired Louisiana lumberman) and his wife did not enjoy their new home together long. On February 9, 1909, Katherine M. Ramsay filed a petition for probate of the will of William E. Ramsay, deceased. She received a one-half interest in the property, since it had been community property; the remaining half went to the four children equally subject to a life estate in Mrs. Ramsay. She continued to live there until her death on July 27, 1916, whereupon three of the four children succeeded to the one-half interest; the other half went one-third to a son and two-thirds into a trust for two daughters. In August of 1924, the trustee and the children conveyed the property to William G. Durfee (a horse trainer) and his wife Nellie; they too did not enjoy it long, as he died in 1927. She continued to live there until her death at 99 in 1976; the furnishings, unchanged for over half a century, were auctioned and the property conveyed to its present owners, who have not altered it.



## **National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet**

Section nu	ımber _	<u>9</u>	Page	1
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Verbal Boundary Description (cont.)

south along the east line of St. Andrew's Place 100 feet, then east 145 feet, then south 125 feet, then east 488 feet to the west line of Western Avenue, then north along the west line of Western Avenue to the point of beginning.

Ramsay-Durfee Estate - BIBLIOGRAPHY:

#### PERIODICALS:

The Los Angeles Builder and Contractor, May 30, July 25, August 1, 1907; January 30, 1908.

The Los Angeles Times, July 28, 1916; October 11, 1948.

Pasadena Heritage, Spring, 1908

Terra, Summer 1977.

#### B00K:

Anon., Now and Then in Historic West Adams, Los Angeles, West Adams Heritage Association, 1987, pp. 22-23.

#### **GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS:**

**BUILDING PERMITS:** 

Los Angeles: No. 4331 of 1907; 527 of 1908; 13330 of 1913.

#### DOCUMENTS IN RECORDER'S OFFICE:

In Deed books: 2862, pp. 173-174; 4638, pp. 10-18; 6312, pp. 319-3121 6451, pp. 251-253; 3117, pp. 243-4; 3229, pp. 46-47; In Official Record Books: 1624, pp. 76-82; 1462, pp. 311-315; 3167, pp. 332-333; 3406, pp. 349-350; 4033, pp. 294-295; 4049 pp. 216-217, 220-221; 4050, pp. 146-147; 4125, pp. 275-276; 4209, pp. 101-102. In Miscellaneous Records: 146, pp. 159-160; 147, pp. 243-244; 145, pp. 135-136.

#### ASSESSOR'S MAP BOOKS:

Book 46, p. 41 (1901-1910); 256, p. 9 (1911-14); 257, p. 1 (1914-1920), p. 1 (1920-27), p. 1 (1927-39), p. 1 (1939-46), p. 1 (1947-51), p. 1 (1952-56), p. 1 (1957-60).

#### MISCELLANEOUS:

Impastato, Nancy, "The Works of Frederick L. Roehrig", 36-page typescript, Urban Conservation Office, City of Pasadena, 1988.

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number Photos Page One

- A. The following information is the same for photograph (figure) no.'s 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 11, and 12:
  - 1. Ramsay-Durfee House, 2425 So. Western Avenue
  - 2. Los Angeles, California
  - 3. Wm. Howard Wittausch, Architect
  - 4. September 1988
- 5. Wm. Howard Wittausch, Architect, 131A E. Anapamu St., Santa Barbara, Ca. 93101.
- B. The following information is the same for photograph (figure) no.'s 1, 3, 9, 10, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, and 32:
  - 1. Ramsay-Durfee House, 2425 So. Western Avenue
  - 2. Los Angeles, California
  - 3. Elo Garrison (Rockwell Interational)
  - 4. 1980
  - 5. Elo Garrison, 1859 Benecia Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90025
- C. Numbered arrows on accompanying sketch map correspond to figure numbers for each photograph listed below. Direction of camera (approximate) is indicated in parenthesis.

Figure/	Description
Photo No.	Main Residence - Main Entrance (southwest).
2	Service Entry Gates (north).
3	Main Residence - Service Entrance (east).
4	Brick Perimeter Wall along driveway (north)
5	Brick Screen Wall at Carriage House (east).
6	Gothic Arch in Brick Screen Wall (west).
7	Arched doorways in screen wall at south end of Tennis Court (east).
8	Service Driveway (south).
9	Grotto (northwest).

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section	number Photos	Page	${f Two}$	
Section	Hullingi		, ago	

10	Grotto - fountain (north).
11	Grotto - trellis and backwall (north).
12	Grotto - tile bench against brick screen wall (north).
2.0	
13	Main Residence - Pergola covered terrace overlooking Tennis Court in foreground (east).
14	Main Residence from adjacent property adjacent (northeast).
15	Bamboo in planter on west side of Tennis Court (west).
16	Main Residence - Front Facade (west).
17	Main Residence - Front entrance terrace (southwest).
18	French doors and sunporch opening onto terrace (east).
19	Stained Glass Wall at main stair hall side entrance (south).
20	Reception Hall looking at Grand Stair Hall (northwest).
21	Living Room looking at fireplace (northeast).
22	Dining Room looking at built-in buffet (southwest).
23	Den looking through vaulted arcade (southeast).
24	Main Stair Hall (northwest).
25	Main Stair Hall from second floor balcony (northeast).
26	Stair at second floor in Servant's Wing (east).
27	Master Bedroom - fireplace (east).
28	Ballroom (north).
29	Garage (southwest).

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

### Section number Photos Page Three

30	Carriage House (northwest).
31	Breakfast Room (north).
32	Service Entrance Porch (north)

