

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

For NPS use only

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received MAR 1 1984

date entered

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

Received OHP 10/3/83

**1. Name**

historic SAN RAFAEL IMPROVEMENT CLUB

and/or common Same

**2. Location**

street & number 1800 Fifth Avenue N/A not for publication

city, town San Rafael N/A vicinity of #6

state CA code 06 county Marin County code 041

**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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: Clubhouse

**4. Owner of Property**

name San Rafael Improvement Club

street & number 1800 Fifth Avenue

city, town San Rafael N/A vicinity of CA state 94915

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Marin County Recorder's Office

street & number Marin County Civic Center

city, town San Rafael state CA

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title San Rafael Historical Architectural Survey has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date January 1978  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records City of San Rafael, 1400 Fifth Avenue

city, town San Rafael state CA 94915

# 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> moved
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		date <u>February 1, 1916</u>

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

Sited on a landscaped corner lot, the San Rafael Improvement Club is a one story structure of a Neo-classical Revival design with fluted columns supporting entablatures and pediments. Constructed in 1915 as a pavilion for the Panama-Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco, it was subsequently relocated to the City of San Rafael and reassembled as a permanent building for use as a civic organization clubhouse. The building has remained virtually unchanged since its relocation and renovation in 1916.

The San Rafael Improvement Club is a wooden building approximately 63 feet by 63 feet by 24 feet high. This structure, built as a pavilion in 1915 for the Panama-Pacific International Exposition and rebuilt as a clubhouse a year later, is a fine example of the Neo-Classic Revival style of architecture. It is set diagonally on the site and each of the three sides of the building visible from the streets has four fluted columns in the Doric Order complete with architrave and cornice over, crowned with pediment and attic. The cornices are especially fine with triglyphs and guttae decoration in the Greek tradition. The twelve columns have well-executed capitals and with entasis and fluting are perfect examples of the order. The two main entrances of the building are on the corners and have double doors with eighteen panels each. Over the doors are curved architraves and cornices. On the building's front and sides are three large plate glass windows, installed in the formerly open bays of the pavilion, making a total of nine. Over each window is a Classic window head with voluted scroll end brackets. Above each window is a Classic panel. At the two rear entrances of the building are four Doric pilasters to correspond with the columns of the front and sides.

In 1915 the structure was erected as the Victrola Pavilion inside the Liberal Arts Building at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco. In 1916 the pavilion was dismantled and barged across the Golden Gate to San Rafael. It was given to Mr. Leon Douglas of San Rafael, originator of the slogan identified with the Victrola, "His Master's Voice." Club members bought the pavilion in sections for \$500 and built a foundation at the corner of Fifth and "H" Streets on land leased from A. W. Foster. A permanent roof, floor, ceiling, windows and lower walls were added to the pavilion to comprise the present San Rafael Improvement Club. The building has remained virtually unchanged since its reassembly as a clubhouse after the move.

The San Rafael Improvement Club building is well-situated on a prominent site at the intersection of Fifth Avenue and "H" Street. This corner is the entrance to the extensive Sun Valley residential area of San Rafael. Fifth Avenue, a major thoroughfare, changes direction here, and the Improvement Club building is seen on the axis of the approach on Fifth Avenue. The building is set diagonally on the corner so the front and both sides are visible from the streets. Set against a contrasting background of trees, the light colored building is a handsome and impressive sight.

# 8. Significance

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

Civic Improvement

**Specific dates**      1915/1916                      **Builder/Architect**      William B. Faville

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

The San Rafael Improvement Club represents a significant historical resource to the local community because of the Club's extensive civic and cultural endeavors accomplished since its formation in 1902. The Club was one of hundreds of civic improvement organizations that were formed all over the country after the turn of the century which were part of the City Beautiful Movement. Civic projects, financed largely through theatrical presentations by Club members and carnivals, represented a major contribution to the City and County during the early development of the area. The Improvement Club building is additionally historically and architecturally significant because it is one of the few remaining structures from the Panama-Pacific International Exposition of 1915, converted from the Victrola Pavilion to its present use as a clubhouse in 1916.

Examples of civic improvement activities sponsored by the San Rafael Improvement Club included the large scale extermination and control of mosquitoes which led to an official Mosquito Abatement District in 1915, the planting and maintenance of 10,000 shade trees on city streets which led to the eventual adoption of a municipal tree program in 1919, and the repair and paving of substandard streets in the 1920's. During the Depression, the Club raised monies for the unemployed in the community; and during World War II, the Club organized defense classes, blood drives, first aid classes, promoted bond sales, and donated services to nearby Hamilton Air Force Base. The Club was also influential in protecting Mt. Tamalpais as a State Park. More recently, the Club has been involved in programs with the Marin Cancer Society, Hospice of Marin, the Red Cross, the Marin Symphony, the Marin Music Chest, Letterman Hospital, the Crippled Children TB Association, and the Marin County Historical Society.

As noted, the Improvement Club building was originally the Victrola Pavilion inside the Panama-Pacific International Exposition Liberal Arts Building in 1915. The Liberal Arts Building housed over 200 exhibitors. Among them was the Musical Instrument Department, which included the Victrola exhibit.

The pavilion was designed by the noted architect, William B. Faville, who designed several of the exhibits within the Liberal Arts Building. Faville was a native of California. He graduated from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and served four years in the offices of McKim, Mead and White, of New York. He was associated professionally with W. D. Bliss, and among the buildings this firm designed were the St. Francis Hotel, the Columbia Theater, and the Masonic Temple building in San Francisco.



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When the Exposition was dismantled in 1916, the Victrola Pavilion was dismantled and barged across San Francisco Bay to San Rafael and was floated up the San Rafael Canal to the present site. As it had been a building within a building, it had to be put on a new foundation and provided with a permanent floor, roof and ceiling. Although converted for a new use the interior and exterior walls of the structure have remained intact since its original use at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition. More importantly, the relocated structure retains its integrity from its primary period of significance to the local community in its role as the San Rafael Improvement Club.

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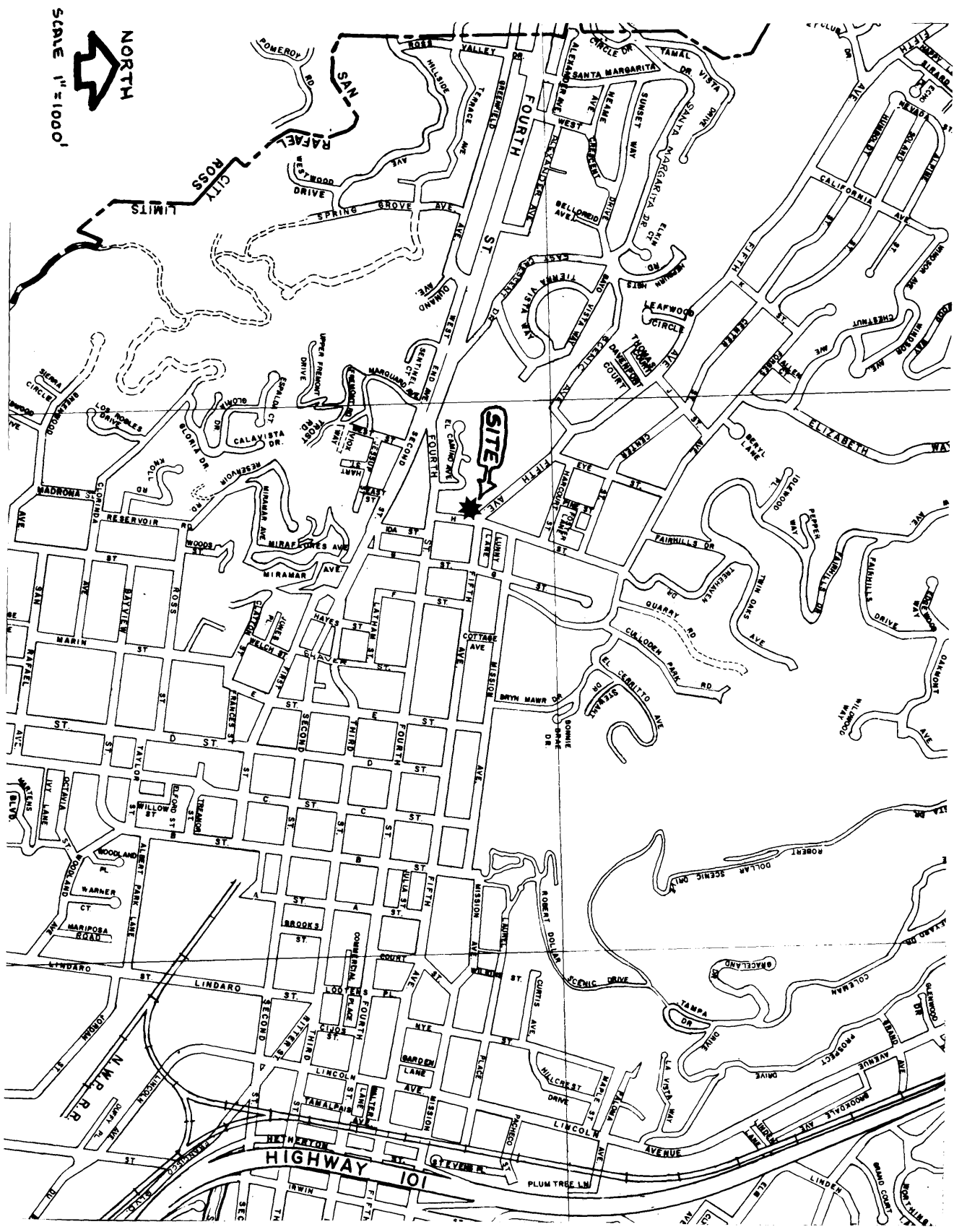
San Rafael Improvement Club, 1800 Fifth Avenue  
County Assessor's Parcel 10-291-16

Legal Description

Beginning at a point on the westerly line of "H" Street distant southerly along said line 133 feet from the point of intersection of the said westerly line of "H" Street with the southerly line of Fifth Avenue, formerly Culloden Avenue, thence running northerly along said westerly line of "H" Street 133 feet to the southerly line of Fifth Avenue, thence northwesterly along said southerly line of Fifth Avenue 140 feet thence southerly at right angles to Fifth Avenue 71-4/12 feet to a stake in center of creek thence southeasterly following center line of bed of creek 192 feet, thence in a straight line following the northerly line of property of F. Koenig and property of P. Stefani easterly 79½ feet to the place of beginning, being lots "A", "B", and "C" of Forbes Addition to the town of San Rafael as the same are marked and designated upon Map Number 1 of Forbes Reserve Town of San Rafael filed in the office of the County Recorder of the County of Marin, State of California, on March 22, 1882.

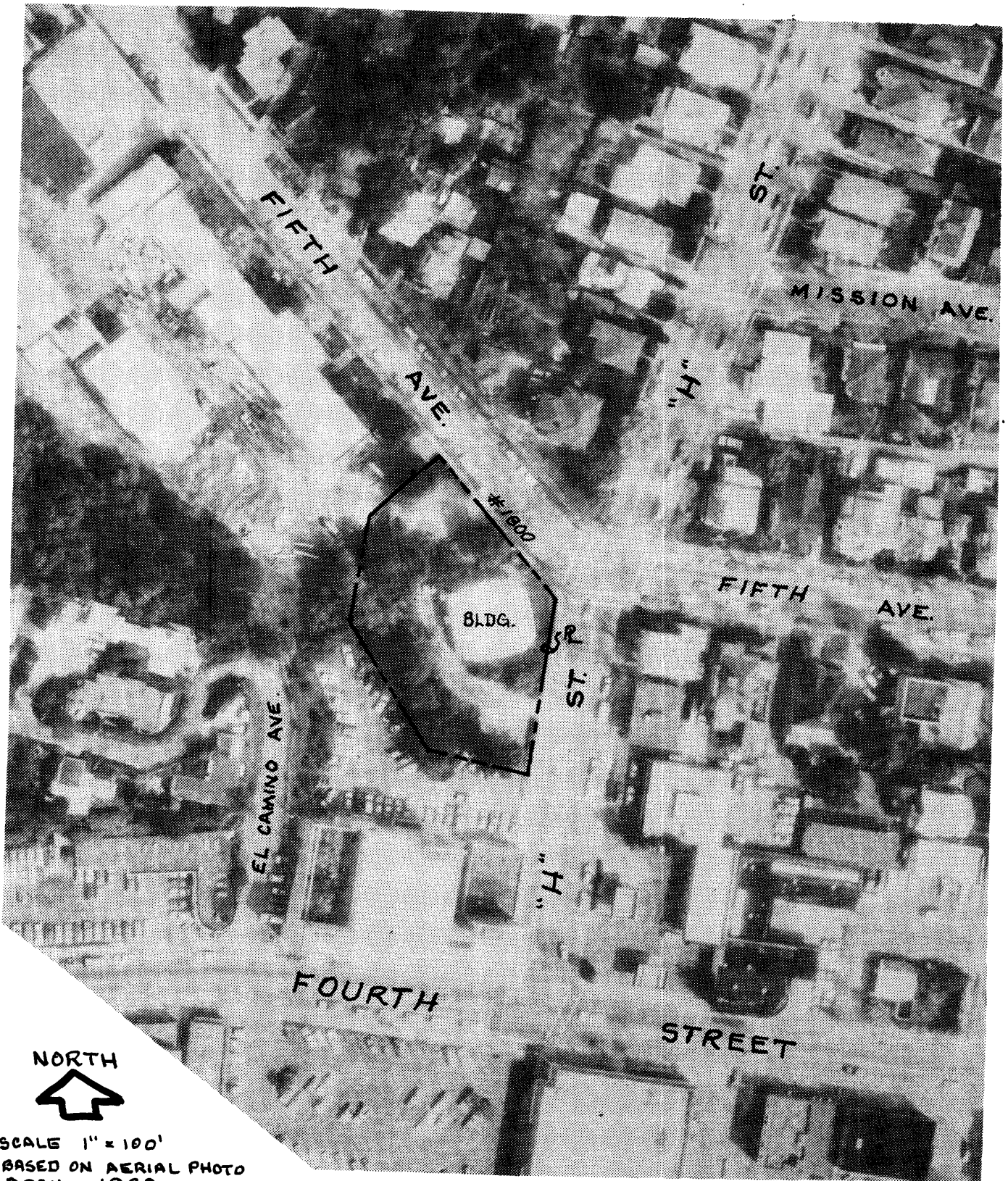
Boundaries encompass the building and its grounds and are drawn on the lot lines of the property, site of the building since its move in 1916.

APPLICATION FOR NATIONAL REGISTER  
OF HISTORIC PLACES



LOCATION MAP (Portion San Rafael C.B.D. & Vicinity)  
SAN RAFAEL IMPROVEMENT CLUB  
1800 FIFTH AVE.  
SAN RAFAEL, CA.  
Marin County





NORTH



SCALE 1" = 100'  
BASED ON AERIAL PHOTO  
APRIL, 1982.

VICINITY MAP - A.P. 10-291-16  
SAN RAFAEL IMPROVEMENT CLUB  
1800 FIFTH AVE., SAN RAFAEL, CA.  
Marin County

APPLICATION FOR NATIONAL REGISTER  
OF HISTORIC PLACES