



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 Women's Athletic Club of Alameda County

other names/site number The Bellevue Club; Women's Athletic Club; Bellevue Club Building

2. Location

street & number 525 Bellevue Avenue  not for publication N/A

city or town Oakland  vicinity N/A

state California code CA county Alameda code 001 zip code 94610

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.)

Stephan Nutcracker DST/PO 3/10/09  
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): \_\_\_\_\_

Edson H. Beall \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply)

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

**Category of Property**

(Check only one box)

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

**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**

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

N/A

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

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

SOCIAL/clubhouse

RECREATION AND CULTURE/sports facility

DOMESTIC/hotel

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

SOCIAL/clubhouse

RECREATION AND CULTURE/sports facility

DOMESTIC/hotel

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Late 19th and 20th Century Revivals

Other: Chateausque (exterior)

Classical Revival (interior formal spaces)

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE

roof slate

walls CONCRETE

STUCCO

other GLASS

OTHER (cast stone)

**Narrative Description**

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

**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.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

SOCIAL HISTORY

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

**Period of Significance**

1928-1959

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

**Significant Dates**

1928-1929

1934

1939

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

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

**Architect/Builder**

Roeth, Charles F.B. (architect)

Bangs, E. Geoffrey (architect)

**Criteria Considerations** N/A

(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 a 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**

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

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):** N/A

- 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 # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary Location of Additional Data**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

archives of The Bellevue Club

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of Property 0.7

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	10	564730	4185160	3	_____	_____
2	_____	_____	_____	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 John Sutton English, consultant for the Bellevue Club Foundation

organization Bellevue Club Foundation (client) date October 13, 2008; revised January 22 and 31, 2009

street & number 2500 Hillegass Avenue, Apt. 3 telephone (510) 845-6116

city or town Berkeley state CA zip code 94704-2937

**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 the SHPO or FPO.)

name Bellevue Club

street & number 525 Bellevue Avenue telephone (510) 451-1000

city or town Oakland state CA zip code 94610-5027

**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 listings. 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 the 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 Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Women's Athletic Club of Alameda County, Alameda County, California

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**Architectural Classification (Continued)**

No style (1964 garage addition)

**Materials (Continued)**

*foundation:*

STUCCO

*roof:*

CONCRETE

OTHER (built-up composition)

CERAMIC TILE

*other:*

METAL

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Women's Athletic Club of Alameda County, Alameda County, California

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**Narrative Description**

**Summary.** The nominated property's resource is a clubhouse that contains some 47,000 square feet of floor area plus its own internal parking garage and covers virtually all of a 0.7-acre parcel. It was built in two basic stages. The first was constructed in 1928–1929; has a roughly squarish footprint; is five stories high (plus partial basement and attic) in its primary, front portion and one story (but now partly two stories) high behind that; is mostly of steel frame and reinforced concrete construction; is essentially Chateausque on the exterior; and has Classical Revival indoor formal spaces. A major garage addition at back was built in 1964; has a roughly rectangular footprint; is one story high; and is of reinforced concrete and plain contemporary design. The property appears to be generally in good condition, but there are problems with water infiltration, rusting, and spalling. It has in general retained very good historic integrity in terms of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. The main walls' primary surface material is stucco, with a float finish, on the front facade and formed concrete elsewhere. The sloping roofs are surfaced with slate, apparently of the weathering type. The formal entry has a glass-and-bronze vestibule, and ornamented doors, set within an arched opening flanked by carriage lamps. This opening is located within a large rusticated surface that forms the middle bay of the facade composition's two-story-high base. To either side of that rustication the base has a windowed but generally plain bay and then, after a setback, a short bay that includes an entry or exit for cars. A shallow cornice runs along the base's top, but is interrupted at left of center by a corbelled projecting stair tower that rises to the fifth floor, and displaced at the right end by a mostly enclosed fire escape, with decorative railings, that descends from the fourth floor. East of its middle bay the third story is set back, creating a wide terrace. There is also a small terrace, near the west end. The third story is visually divided from the upper stories by an intermittent series of bracketed and balustraded balconies or half balconies—and by the bottom of the bracketed, two-story-high bay window that projects from the upper floors' middle portion. East of that portion, there are four large, tall windows. West of it, massing is irregular. There is a mostly continuous (and partly duplicated) upper cornice, with a curved pediment above the bay window. The rear elevation is plainer but its upper eastern part has five tall, arched windows. The building has an east-west main hipped roof that interlocks with smaller hipped roofs. There are four tall chimneys with decorative caps. Behind the front doors is the classically ornate Lobby, with a high main ceiling and overlooked by balustraded second-floor corridors. From one corner rises the decoratively railed main staircase. North of the Lobby is the big, high-ceilinged swimming pool. Behind the facade's bay window is the lavish Mural Lounge, with its two-story-high ceiling, marble chimneypiece, and other ornamented elements. Behind the facade's four tall windows is the high-ceilinged Dining Room, with its arches, mirrors, marble chimneypiece, and rich ornamentation. The Musicians' Balcony overlooks both those rooms. Other important spaces include the fourth floor's Terrace Room and Wisteria Room and the fifth floor's Crystal Lounge. The property is located in Oakland in a distinctive area of 1920s apartments and it directly faces Lakeside Park and Lake Merritt.

**General Description of the Property.** The nominated property's single "resource" is a clubhouse.

*Size, Construction Type, and Style.* The building has some 47,000 square feet of floor space (not counting

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Women's Athletic Club of Alameda County, Alameda County, California

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**Narrative Description (Continued)**

parking)<sup>1</sup> plus its own parking garage. It now covers virtually all of Assessor's parcel 010-0776-009-02, which has a land area of approximately 0.7 acre. It was built in two basic stages, which are structurally connected.

What will for convenience be called here the "main building" was constructed in 1928–1929. Its footprint is roughly squarish. The overall width is about 140 feet but the depth is somewhat less, and varies. At the south, the variation is partially to leave room for short open driveways at each side. At the north, part of the footprint goes 15 feet farther back than the rest. The main building's primary, front portion is five stories high, plus partial basement and attic, and is of steel frame and reinforced concrete construction.<sup>2</sup> Its portion behind that is partly one story high and partly, as a result of post-1929 extensions, two stories high, and is presumed to be basically of reinforced concrete construction. The primary exterior architectural style is Chateausque. (That style is conveyed here especially by the steep roof slopes, tall chimneys, and projecting stair tower.) Inside, the main formal spaces have a Classical Revival style that often is particularly evocative of the 18th century.

What will be called here the "1964 garage addition" was constructed in that year behind the main building and extending westward to Ellita Avenue. It consists of a major extension of the main building's garage. The addition's footprint is roughly rectangular, with an east-west dimension of about 195 feet but with its north-south dimension varying between 60 and 75 feet. The addition is one story high and has both covered and rooftop parking. It is built of reinforced concrete<sup>3</sup> and is of plain contemporary design.

*Physical Condition and Historic Integrity.* It appears that in general the property is in good physical condition but that there are noteworthy problems with water infiltration, rusting, and spalling. A 1997 report by Govan Associates examined various elements and concluded, in part, as follows:

The exterior concrete walls are generally in good condition with the exception of the locations noted elsewhere in this report....Small diagonal cracks, paint peeling and other conditions were noted in the field of the walls. Generally however, locations of damaging water infiltration can be traced to windows, penetrations or ornamentation damage....

The exterior concrete walls appear sound at this time. However the building is experiencing significant water infiltration at the edge of the roof, around window openings and doorways, and there is spalling of ornamentation and concrete which should be addressed soon.<sup>4</sup>

Presumably those and/or comparable problems have persisted to the present. For more about physical condition, see certain descriptive passages later within this nomination.

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<sup>1</sup> GAB Robins, *Building Appraisal*, 1.

<sup>2</sup> Roeth and Bangs, "Women's Athletic Club of Alameda County"; Sanborn Map Company, Insurance Maps for approximately 1951 and 1970.

<sup>3</sup> Sanborn Map Company, Insurance Maps for approximately 1951 and 1970.

<sup>4</sup> Govan Associates. *The Bellevue Club*, 8.

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**Narrative Description (Continued)**

Over the years, a number of alterations or extensions have been made; see relevant passages below for specifics. But neither those changes nor physical deterioration have greatly weakened historic integrity. (See also the discussion of integrity within this nomination's Narrative Statement of Significance.)

The property in general has retained very good historic integrity in terms of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

**The Main Building's Exterior.** The primary wall surface material is stucco, with a float finish,<sup>5</sup> on the front facade, and formed concrete elsewhere. It is currently painted a very light gray.<sup>6</sup> The 1997 Govan report stated that "[t]he exterior walls have some minor cracks which are not creating significant damage at this time" but pointed out that, more worrisomely, the west elevation had some places where rebar was exposed and rusting at the level of the fifth floor.<sup>7</sup>

Ornamental details such as moldings, pilaster capitals, and balusters are generally of cast stone. To quote from the Govan report:

There are portions of the baluster railings, chimney cap molding and column capitals which have split, cracked and in some locations fallen off. This damage is a result of water infiltration getting to metal reinforcing which causes rust [and resultant expansion and cracking]....The baluster rails outside the main dining room and the terrace porch [at the west end of the front facade's fourth floor] have been patched numerous times.<sup>8</sup>

The front windows appear to generally have bronze sashes, but the first-story sashes (and perhaps some on the third story) may be of some other metal. It appears that originally all the facade's windows had wood sashes (see Illustration 29). The present bronze sashes adjoining the Dining Room (see Photograph 6) and the metal ones on the first story were installed in 1954 or 1955.<sup>9</sup> The facade's other bronze sashes likely were put in at about the same time.

On the rear elevation, the large second-story windows adjoining the swimming pool and the Garden Room (some of them seen in Photograph 8) evidently retain their original wood sashes. So may at least some windows of the third story's rear guest rooms. Higher up, the original wood sashes of the main Dining Room's five tall rear-facing windows (see Photograph 7) were partially replaced by bronze ones, likely in about the mid-1950s, but their wood fanlight portions have been retained. Elsewhere on the main building's back and sides, window sashes are metal and some of these may be original.

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<sup>5</sup> Roeth and Bangs, "Women's Athletic Club of Alameda County," sheet 8.

<sup>6</sup> Initially the wall surfaces may have been left unpainted. If so, it has not been determined when they were first painted.

<sup>7</sup> Govan Associates, *The Bellevue Club*, 8.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>9</sup> City of Oakland, Office of Planning and Building, building permit and related information on microfiche.

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**Narrative Description (Continued)**

Window sashes in general, and doors as such, presumably are in reasonably good condition. But the Govan report pointed out problems of water infiltration around window openings and said:

[Some] wood window sills and jambs may have rot. Many wood sills are no longer protected by paint and are weather checking.<sup>10</sup>

Some windows have broken or missing hardware such as handles.

The sloping roofs on the main building's tall portion are surfaced with slate, apparently of the weathering type. The gutters, counter flashings, copings, and counter flashings there are copper.<sup>11</sup> The Govan report found major weathering of slate in some locations, weathering of gutters, slippage of counter flashings, and visible efflorescence and warned about the effects.<sup>12</sup>

The upper roofs have various flat portions that presumably are surfaced with built-up composition material. The third story's wide front terrace is paved with ceramic tile (which the Govan report found to have apparently insufficient drainage below it<sup>13</sup>). The third story's two smaller terraces likely also are paved with ceramic tile.

The second story's large rear terrace (partly shown by Photograph 8) seems to have a painted concrete surface. The Govan report found serious leakage and related effects in the concrete slab here.<sup>14</sup> The corrugated canopy along this terrace's west side presumably is metal. The sloping roof of the adjacent storeroom addition (see Photograph 10) is of undetermined material. Beyond that, the flat roof over part of the Exercise Room contains skylights of glass or some translucent synthetic.

*Front Facade.* To help understand the front facade's composition, see especially Photographs 1 and 6.

At center across the public sidewalk there is a canopy (apparently of canvas, with thin metal supports) that did not originally exist. It, or maybe a predecessor,<sup>15</sup> dates from sometime between 1935 and 1949.<sup>16</sup>

Within the property itself there is a glass-and-metal vestibule (see Photograph 2) that also did not originally exist. It was installed in 1939 or 1940.<sup>17</sup> It has twin doors, side and upper lights, and some ornamental treatment along its upper edge. A forward-angled flagpole rises above it.

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<sup>10</sup> Govan Associates. *The Bellevue Club*, 7.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 4–5.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>15</sup> In City of Oakland records there is a puzzling 1967 letter regarding someone's inquiry about "creating" a canopy.

<sup>16</sup> Compare the photographs on page 41 and the cover of *Brief History*.

<sup>17</sup> *Brief History*, 46.

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Women's Athletic Club of Alameda County, Alameda County, California

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**Narrative Description (Continued)**

The vestibule projects from within an arched opening (see Photograph 2) at the lower facade's center. At the vestibule's back are the original paneled and decorated twin oak doors and ornate glass-iron-and-wood twin inner doors, with similarly ornate lights above them.

The arched opening is surmounted by a cast-stone volute and flanked by bronze carriage lamps. It is located within a large rusticated surface that forms the middle bay of the facade composition's two-story-high base (see Photograph 1). To either side of that rustication the base has a windowed but generally plain bay. The eastern bay has four first-story windows (which probably combine transoms with fixed lower lights)<sup>18</sup> and four second-story windows (of a combination casement-plus-transom type). The western bay, which is stepped slightly forward, has two such first-story windows and two such second-story ones. Each of these bays is terminated by quoining.

Then at each far end there is a setback defining a short bay (see Photographs 4 and 5) that includes a shallow-arched opening, topped by a simple keystone. Set within these openings are canvas-or-synthetic-and-metal doors that roll up and back to permit entry or exit for automobiles. An original architects' drawing indicated decorative grille-type version here.<sup>19</sup> It is not known when the present doors were installed. The wall segment that faces sideways into the east-end setback has extensive rustication and at ground level contains a paneled wooden door. The wall segment that faces sideways into the west-end setback has, at its lower edge, a small louvered opening that ventilates part of the basement.

Running along the top of the facade composition's base there is a flat molding topped by a simple shallow cornice (see Photograph 6). But this is interrupted, somewhat west of center, by the prominent, corbelled projecting stair tower that rises from a few feet above ground level up to the fifth floor. At each of its four landings this stair tower has a casement-plus-transom-type window, the surround of the highest of which is topped by a symbolic keystone. Above the shallow-arched opening behind the facade's east-end setback, the cornice is displaced by a mostly enclosed fire escape that descends from the fourth story. This fire escape has two rectangular openings, with decorative metal railings, that face the street and a similar one that faces west.

East of its middle bay the third story is set back, thereby creating a wide terrace. There is also a small terrace, near the west end. The terraces are accessed from adjoining guest rooms. These rooms' terrace-facing windows are shaded by light-colored synthetic or canvas awnings that evidently were attached sometime between 1949 and 1975.<sup>20</sup>

The third story's windows vary somewhat but seem to combine casement elements, transoms, and/or—in

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<sup>18</sup> In front of each of these first-story windows' sashes there is now (probably since the mid-1950s) a fixed-in-place wire screen. *Behind* at least some of the sashes there are (plausibly original) perforated and ornamentally designed wood or metal shutters or screens.

<sup>19</sup> Roeth and Bangs, "Women's Athletic Club of Alameda County," sheet 8.

<sup>20</sup> They currently are supplemented by portable beach-type umbrellas set out on the terraces.

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**Narrative Description (Continued)**

most of the terrace-facing ones—integral doors. There are about 14 windows and/or doors. Evidently some of their predecessors, before the 1950s, were French doors.<sup>21</sup>

The third through fifth stories as a whole essentially has two vertical divisions. This is because the third story is visually distinguished from the upper stories by an intermittent series of four bracketed, balustraded balconies or half balconies (one of which faces west)—and by the bottom of the two-story-high bay window that projects from the upper floors' middle portion. The brackets supporting the bay window are especially prominent and (see Photograph 2).

The bay window's wide central facet is flanked by shallow pilasters with simple capitals. This facet and each of the two shorter, diagonal ones contains a casement-plus-transom(s) window. The original wood-sash windows here were taller. When the existing bronze sashes were installed in probably the 1950s, the windows' previous top portions were plastered in.

East of the upper floors' middle portion, the widest balcony extends all the way to the fire escape enclosure. This balcony has ceramic tile paving but is quite shallow. Rising behind it there is a prominent series of four large, tall windows. Each of these contains a combination of fixed lights and upper, awning-type lights. The two end windows also contain a door component for access to the balcony. The original four wood-sash windows were taller, with a fanlight portion at the top. When the present bronze sashes were installed in 1954 or 1955, the fanlights were plastered in (see Figure 1).

West of their middle bay, the upper stories have irregular massing. Just past the projecting stair tower, the fourth story has a portion whose south wall comes all the way out front but which is surmounted by part of a hipped roof, rather than by a fifth-story counterpart. West of that, the basic south wall line of both the fourth and fifth floors rises behind a substantial setback. But at the fourth-story level this setback has been reduced by the 1939 construction, on the previously open adjacent balcony, of a flat-roofed light structure called the "Terrace."<sup>22</sup>

The south wall of the fourth story's portion that is just west of the stair tower has a single window, which apparently includes awning and fixed or casement lights and a door. The initial wood sash was taller: the 1950s replacement involved plastering in the upper part. The original rectangular window opening is flanked and surmounted by a flat molding that features a symbolic keystone. Just around the corner, the same fourth-story portion's west-facing wall has a similar window (but without a door element), with its own plastered-in upper part and adjacent flat molding and keystone. Beyond that, still another such window has been blocked (see Photograph 9) by the above-mentioned terrace structure.

The south wall of the fourth and fifth stories' set-back portion originally contained four multi-light rectangular windows, arrayed in vertical pairs each of them flanked and surmounted by a flat molding

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<sup>21</sup> *Brief History*, 27.

<sup>22</sup> *Brief History*, 46.

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**Narrative Description (Continued)**

with keystone. The lower two windows here have been blocked by the flat-roofed terrace structure (and replaced by interior doorways). The terrace structure's glazed south face has six fixed lights within a bronze framework. The fifth story's two windows and their adjacent flat molding and keystone remain, though their bronze sashes that were installed in the 1950s contain just a single, fixed light. Fronting the lower part of these two windows there is ornamental metalwork, which is original.

Along the top of the fifth story (see Photograph 6) there is a flat molding topped by a simple cornice. The cornice is mostly continuous but at left of center is interrupted by a descending hip roof. In the same vicinity but higher up, it is duplicated on a sizable mass located at attic level. Above the central bay window's middle facet, the cornice forms the base of a curved pediment.

*Side and Rear Walls and Terraces.* The main building's walls that are immediately along the side property lines are mostly blank. Each of them has a large industrial-sash window adjoining the first story's garage area. The west wall has one metal-sash window, perhaps with sliders, at its third-story level—and two metal-sash casement-plus-transom windows on each of its fourth and fifth stories.

The front facade's main upper cornice continues along the side walls and most of the rear elevation.

The first-story part of the rear elevation (visible in Photograph 27) is mostly a blank wall. Its ends have openings for automobile ramps that link the original garage to the 1964 garage addition's upper deck.

The area atop the main building's garage has a complex history. Originally all or nearly all of it was an open terrace, and accommodated one or more tennis courts. In 1940 much of the terrace's western third was covered by construction of a "Deck Storeroom,"<sup>23</sup> which remains and has a sloping roof (see lower part of Photograph 10). Adjoining that, the terrace's westernmost part evidently was in the same year converted into a "Deck Garden" (or "Garden Deck") furnished with flower boxes, seats, and hair driers.<sup>24</sup> But it appears that at some later time, much of this garden space was replaced by a flat-roofed, skylighted extension of what is now the second story's Exercise Room. A small portion does remain, visible and accessible through the window wall (containing a door) at the Exercise Room's north end. Meanwhile, the overall terrace's eastern two-thirds saw change in 1960 when it was made into what a contemporary newspaper article called "a charming roof garden."<sup>25</sup> To facilitate this, what is evidently the present wide, sloping-roofed canopy was in the same year built along most of its west side and what apparently are the existing translucent fiberglass panels (with metal supports) replaced the previous wire screening along the north and east sides. At one point along the north side there is now a plain wood or metal door that plausibly was installed in 1964 for access to steps descending onto that year's garage addition.

Facing the big rear terrace's south side, the main building's second story has six square-shaped, wood-

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<sup>23</sup> *Brief History*, 48.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 8–9, 48.

<sup>25</sup> "Smart Women's Athletic Club Sports New Roof Garden."

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**Narrative Description (Continued)**

sash windows with multiple lights (in at least some cases including casemented ones). These windows (some of them seen in Photograph 8) probably are original except for the two easternmost ones, which apparently date from 1937.<sup>26</sup> The wood-sash double French doors here may also be original.

Generally above there, the third story has eight rectangular windows evidently with double-hung sashes at least some of which are wood rather than metal, and possibly original. At the west end of the third story's rear elevation, where a guest room adjoins a small terrace, there is an approximately square opening whose elements include a door and whose sash may be either metal or wood.

The rear wall's most prominent feature is the series of five tall, arched windows in its upper east portion. They originally had complete wooden sashes. Probably in the 1950s, those were largely replaced by bronze sashes containing awning, fixed, and/or casement elements. But unlike their four counterparts on the Dining Room's front side, these five rear windows retain their original wood-sash fanlights.

Elsewhere on the main building's rear elevation, there are about 10 other windows, of various shapes and apparently with industrial sash or other metal sash. Among them are the vertical series of windows on the projecting rear stair tower, and the three windows on the upper stories' outward-cantilevered food-preparation areas.

*Upper Roofs and Chimneys.* The main building has a complex pattern of roof shapes, sizes, and flashing transitions. The primary hipped roof runs east-west for the building's full width. It interlocks with most of the smaller hipped roofs that run southward. Of the secondary hipped roofs, the most prominent is the one that is located above the Mural Lounge—and which therefore, when viewed head-on from some distance, reads as a triangle visually extending the upward thrust of the front facade's middle bay. The steepest and narrowest hipped roof is the separate little one atop the projecting main stairwell.

There are also various flat roof areas, such as over the rear elevator penthouse and some kitchen preparation or storage spaces.

Four tall chimneys rise prominently skyward. One is at the west side, one is at the east side, and the others are spaced irregularly in between. Each chimney has a decorative cap featuring a triangle that seems to echo the roof-slope triangle above the Mural Lounge.

**The Main Building's Interior.** In general there are three functional zones. The first two stories (and basement) provide for athletic and related activities, as well as access (lobby and parking). The third floor has the guest rooms. And the fourth and fifth stories provide for meetings, socializing, and dining.

The interior's materials of course vary from place to place. Most wall and ceiling surfaces are plastered. Many floor surfaces are cement; many are carpeted. Most interior spaces appear to be in good or excellent

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<sup>26</sup> *Brief History*, 42.

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**Narrative Description (Continued)**

physical condition. However, some carpets and drapes are worn or frayed. The 1997 Govan report found various locations, especially in the attic, where effects of water infiltration were evident inside.<sup>27</sup>

*Basement.* The bottom of the large swimming pool is actually at basement level. The basement also includes showers and changing rooms for swimmers and other exercisers, as well as building facilities such as the two gas-fired boilers.<sup>28</sup>

*Lobby.* On the first floor behind the entry doors is the classically ornate Lobby (see Photographs 11–13). While the Lobby's northern, western, and eastern periphery is only one story high, the big central portion has a two-story-high ceiling. Along this space's north side and much of its west side, the Lobby is overlooked by balustraded second-story corridors.

Around that central space, piers are treated architecturally as square columns or pilasters, with modified Doric capitals, that support beams treated like entablatures. At the second-story level in most places where there are walls instead of open-sided corridors, the latter's balusters and rails are visually continued in engaged form. Higher up, a running-scroll-like frieze, modillions, and a crown molding run around the top of the Lobby's central space. A chandelier hangs from the middle of the ceiling.

At first-floor level, the Lobby's north side features a large mirror, flanked by original paintings donated in 1934 by noted California landscape painter Chris Jorgensen.<sup>29</sup> Along the west side are the opening for the main elevator's doors; the opening to a corridor that runs westward; and, in the southwest corner, the bottom of the main staircase. Each of the two openings is topped by a cartouche. Along the Lobby's east side are the opening (also topped by a cartouche) to a corridor that goes eastward; the quasi-open "front desk" area; and, just west of part of that area, the translucent-windowed office of the club president.

*Staircases and Elevators.* Both the main staircase and the main elevator connect the Lobby to the second through fifth stories. The staircase has decorative metal railings, which are particularly ornate on the flights at the corner of the Lobby (see Photograph 14). On the second through fifth floors the main staircase and the elevator doors adjoin what can be called elevator lobbies: north-south corridor spaces that, in turn, connect with other corridors and/or rooms. The building also has a back staircase and a freight elevator (both rising from basement to attic) and some other, shorter staircases.

*Swimming Pool.* Immediately behind the Lobby's north wall is the swimming pool, which extends east-west for over half of the building's total width. It has five lanes and is "of championship proportions."<sup>30</sup> The poolside deck is tiled. It appears that some wall surfaces originally had "soft green and buff

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 4, 7, 9–12, 16, 19.

<sup>28</sup> GAB Robins, *Building Appraisal*, 2.

<sup>29</sup> *Brief History*, 76.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 7.

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**Narrative Description (Continued)**

murals."<sup>31</sup> However, these may have suffered damage from moisture and they evidently were painted over sometime after 1949.

As measured from deck to ceiling, the spacious pool area is two stories high. All along the south side, though, a second-story wall and floor are cantilevered outward by several feet. This wall contains many windows, through which views down into the pool can be had from the adjoining second-story corridor segments. Along the upper part of most of the pool area's north side, light comes in through large windows that adjoin the main rear terrace.

*Garage and Driveways.* Nearly all of the first story's north half consists of the original parking garage. This garage's layout was somewhat altered in 1964 by inserting, through its north wall, four automobile ramps connecting to the garage addition built in that year. These include one-way ramps at each end for access to or exit from the addition's upper deck and, adjoining those, one-way ramps that serve the addition's lower level. Farther south, the first story's original side driveways continue to link the garage to and from Bellevue Avenue.

*Other First-Story Spaces.* East of the pool area itself are athletics-related spaces that include lockers (and the top of stairs that lead down to the basement's showers and changing rooms). Also on the first floor are a library, an office, a cloakroom, and rest rooms.

*Second-Story Spaces.* In the second story's southwest corner there is a group of small rooms or cubicles that originally contained the building's beauty salon. This area is now partly empty or apparently used for storage, and partly used as a small, informal eating space called Cafe Belle.

Farther north is the lengthy Exercise Room, which has numerous devices including weight machines. The room's portion that adjoins the pool area originally was an open-fronted balcony from which spectators could watch swimming events.<sup>32</sup> But in 1940 this portion was converted into an expansion of the beauty salon<sup>33</sup> with a wall separating it from the pool area. (This wall does, though, contain windows overlooking the pool.) The Exercise Room's northernmost section occupies what originally was part of the building's rear terrace. This section's eastern wall surface contains a soft mural (see Photograph 16) featuring trees.

East of that, the addition that was built in 1940 contains storeroom space, as well as a corridor that connects with the present main rear terrace.

The corridor that generally adjoins the pool area's south side gives access to various rooms. One of them is the Committee Room, which is designed for small meetings and is located immediately east of the

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> The spectators' gallery initially may have wrapped around so as to also include at least part of the second-story corridor that adjoins the pool area's south side. However, sources differ on whether or not it did.

<sup>33</sup> *Brief History*, 48.

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**Narrative Description (Continued)**

Lobby's high central space. East of the Committee Room there is a complex of rooms and cubicles called the Conditioning Salon, reportedly for services such as hydro- or electro-therapy. East of the pool area is a big space that originally was called the Exercise Room but in 1948 or 1949 was converted and renamed the Garden Room.<sup>34</sup> This accommodates sizable meetings. Sometimes it is used for exercises.

*Third-Story Spaces.* The third story contains guest rooms (with bath, and some combinable into suites). It appears that originally there were 19 of them.<sup>35</sup> However, two have been combined into a meeting facility called the Emerald Room and three or four are now used for auxiliary purposes such as a manager's office. Most guest rooms are accessed from a long east-west corridor. The third floor also has storage spaces for things like linens.

*Mural Lounge.* Immediately behind the upper street facade's central bay is the lavish Mural Lounge, which has a two-story-high ceiling. It is entered through either of two open doorways.

About midway along the lounge's eastern wall—and approximately on axis with the west doorway—there is an ornate marble chimneypiece (see Photograph 18). Above the mantel there is a rectangular frame surrounding a large mural painting donated by a club member.<sup>36</sup> Still higher up there are a curved pediment, with an intricate medallion, and plaster festoons.

The areas around the west entry (see Photograph 17) and the east entry also have mural paintings and are elaborately decorated. Above the east entry's pediment there is a sizable opening that gives a view into the Mural Lounge from the adjacent fifth-story room.

Along most of the Mural Lounge's east, west, and north sides the walls have multiple rows of panels, with plaster flower baskets in the upper row.<sup>37</sup> Along the room's south side, drapery descends from the inside top of the bay window (see Photograph 19) and the short segments beside the bay window are treated like wide pilasters. Running along the top of all the walls there are a vegetative running-scroll-like frieze, another decorative band, and a crown molding. At each of two places on the ceiling there is an intricate radial plaster decoration, from the center of which descends a crystal chandelier.

In the lounge's northeast corner sits a hand-decorated Hamlin Concert Grand Piano.<sup>38</sup>

*Dining Room.* Behind the upper front facade's series of four tall windows, and also bordering the upper rear elevation's five tall windows, is the Dining Room with its two-story-high ceiling. Public entry to this large room is through a doorway from the fourth floor's east-west corridor that adjoins the Mural Lounge.

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 10, 68.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 30–31. All three of the room's paintings were donated by her, and installed in 1931.

<sup>37</sup> The baskets were added in 1935 or 1936 (*Brief History*, 38). Some smaller decorative details may be post-1929.

<sup>38</sup> *Brief History*, 33.

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**Narrative Description (Continued)**

Within the Dining Room, a high arcade running east-west defines two subspaces: the primary one and a side aisle. The latter (see Photograph 21) directly adjoins the front facade.

At the center of the primary subspace's east wall there is an ornate marble chimneypiece. Above the mantel there is a tall mirror with an arched surround and festooned spandrels. The chimneypiece is flanked by pilasters and additional mirrors with arched surrounds.

At the primary subspace's opposite end, the middle of the west wall has a tall arched molding, with festooned spandrels, that surrounds the rectangular entry doorway and a balcony opening from a fifth-story room (see Photograph 22). The balcony opening has an ornate metal railing, into which the present clock was integrated in 1932.<sup>39</sup> The arch is flanked by pilasters and then additional arched moldings. The upper parts of the surfaces defined by the latter sport plaster flower baskets (added in 1935 or 1936<sup>40</sup>).

The basic pattern of arches is repeated around all the north wall's five windows, in the arcade that defines the side aisle, and around the south facade's four windows. The piers have panels containing small plaster ornaments and the spandrels have decorative treatment. The arches have ornamental keystones, some in apparently human form. Draperies hang within the north wall's five arches and the south wall's four. The Dining Room's ceiling has prominently visible beams that run north-south and include thin bands of dentils. From the ceiling of the primary subspace hang two crystal chandeliers.

*Musicians' Balcony.* As previously indicated, there is a room that has openings overlooking both the Dining Room and the Mural Lounge. This small fifth-story room is called the Musicians' Balcony.

*Terrace Room.* West of the fourth story's elevator lobby (and the elevator itself) is the Terrace Room (see Photograph 23), part of which formerly was called the Games Room. It is meant for things like card playing and miscellaneous gatherings.<sup>41</sup> This relatively plain yet stately space has paneled walls (the present version of which may date from 1939 or 1940<sup>42</sup>). Midway along the west side there is a prominent chimneypiece. Centered above the hearth is a large mural painting, evidently installed in 1946.<sup>43</sup>

This room originally was much smaller. In 1934 it was enlarged by incorporating an area that previously had been a women's rest room.<sup>44</sup>

*Wisteria Room.* Nearby is the fourth story's dignified little Wisteria (perhaps formerly "Wistaria") Room. This has paneled walls and is suitable for small gatherings.

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<sup>39</sup> *Brief History*, 31.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 36; Collaborative Design Architects, "Bellevue Club," sheet A1.4.

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**Narrative Description (Continued)**

*Crystal Lounge.* Occupying generally the southwest part of the fifth floor is the roughly L-shaped Crystal Lounge (see Photographs 25–26). It has paneled walls and, as its name implies, several mirrors. Midway along its west wall there is a broad, ceiling-high structure that rather resembles the Terrace Lounge's chimneypiece and surround but lacks a hearth. In the lounge's northeast portion there is a long oaken bar.

The Crystal Lounge with its bar resulted from a change made in 1939, when the former "Empire Room" was greatly enlarged by adding what had been a rest room, part of a corridor, and other space.<sup>45</sup>

*Other Fourth- and Fifth-Floor Spaces.* At the fourth floor's extreme southwest corner, a small room called the Terrace occupies the previously mentioned flat-roofed addition that in 1939 was built on what had been an open balcony.<sup>46</sup> French or folding doors (typically left open) connect this space with the adjacent Wisteria Room and Terrace Room. The fourth and/or fifth stories also have kitchen or related facilities, and rest rooms.

*Attic.* In the attic there are miscellaneous facilities such as storage areas.<sup>47</sup>

**The 1964 Garage Addition.** The garage addition built in 1964 has two parking levels. Both the rooftop one (see Photograph 27) and the lower deck appear to have concrete paving. The lower level seems to be partly excavated below grade.<sup>48</sup> Atop the garage addition's north, east, and west sides there are concrete-block walls with, above them, open metal fencing topped by barbed wire. The upper deck's south side has three small roofed structures. Two of them shelter auto ramps that connect with the main building's garage area. The other one encloses steps connecting with that garage area and has a plain metal or wood door (presumably in good condition). The addition's west side has a little roofed structure containing exit steps leading to a plain metal door (apparently in good condition) adjoining Ellita Avenue.

**Landscaped Strips.** Within much of the main building's shallow setback from Bellevue there is shrubbery and some trees. The garage addition's shallow setback from Ellita also has trees and shrubbery.

**The Surroundings.** The nominated property is located in the Bellevue-Staten Apartment District, which the City of Oakland has officially designated as a historic district. This distinctive little area (much of it visible in Photograph 28) extends for about two and a third blocks along gently curving Bellevue Avenue, and about a half block or so northward along intersecting Ellita and Staten Avenues. It is developed mostly with apartment structures built in the 1920s.

That small vicinity is part of the greater Lake Merritt area. Directly across narrow Bellevue Avenue from the nominated property there is a segment of Lakeside Park (see Photograph 1), which of course adjoins

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid.; Roeth and Bangs, "Women's Athletic Club," sheet 6.

<sup>46</sup> *Brief History*, 46.

<sup>47</sup> GAB Robins. *Building Appraisal*, 2.

<sup>48</sup> Collaborative Design Architects. "Bellevue Club," sheet A3.4A.

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**Architect/Builder (Continued)**

Couchot (Maurice) & Rosenwald (Jesse) (consulting engineers)  
G.M. Simonson (consulting engineer)  
W.J. Keating Co. (builder)

The preceding names are for the original design or construction. Engineer and builder for the 1964 garage addition were:

Walter B. Clausen (engineer)  
W.E. Lyons Construction Co. (builder)

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**Narrative Statement of Significance**

**Summary.** The building's main portion was constructed in 1928–1929. Alterations or additions were made in 1934, 1939, and other years. The property is significant at the local level under Criterion C in the subject area of architecture, and the important context of clubhouse architecture in California, 1900–1932. In this regard its periods of significance were 1928–1929, 1934, and 1939 and its significant dates were the same. In comparison with pertinent other properties of its important type, the nominated property is strongly representative and in some ways outstanding. It well embodies distinctive characteristics of a type, period, and method of construction. It contains a range of athletic, social, and other facilities that is characteristic of women's athletic club buildings. Unusually, the building also has always included a sizable garage. Use of concrete construction had become common among large urban clubhouses, but for this building site conditions prompted a special solution at the basement level. The building's unusual Chateausque exterior style was especially apt and ably executed. Inside, the design of prime formal spaces is impressive and displays fine craftsmanship. The building takes great advantage of its unique location facing Lakeside Park and Lake Merritt. The property retains ample historic integrity to convey its important design qualities. It is also significant at the local level under Criterion A in the subject area of social history, and the important context of women's athletics and athletic clubs in California, 1900–1959. In this regard the property's period of significance was 1928–1959 and its significant dates were 1928–1929, 1934, and 1939. Here again, the property is strongly representative of its type and in some ways outstanding. Related in part to general increase of women's participation in athletics, development of women's athletic clubs was an important aspect of the overall Women's Club Movement. Early members or advisors of the Women's Athletic Club of Alameda County included some especially redoubtable clubwomen and prominent Californians. The club's status and functions were well-expressed by the building's apt facade and elegant formal rooms and the unique, prestigious location with its broad recreational connotation. The clubhouse has long accommodated diverse social, athletic, cultural, and philanthropic activities. Provision for some of these was enhanced by the Terrace Room expansion in 1934 and creation of the Crystal Lounge in 1939. The property strongly retains its original feeling and recalls its important historical associations.

**Brief Chronology of the Property.** Before the main building was constructed, the land it sits on contained a structure reportedly called the Wild Duck Inn,<sup>49</sup> in obvious reference to the lake's own frequent fliers. In 1926 the newly formed Women's Athletic Club of Alameda County bought the site and hired the architectural firm of Charles F.B. Roeth and E. Geoffrey Bangs to draw up plans for a clubhouse. In September 1927 there was a "Ground Breaking Ceremony" at the site. In January 1928 a contract with the builder was signed and a building permit was issued.<sup>50</sup> Construction proceeded, and the clubhouse opened its doors on March 11, 1929.<sup>51</sup>

Changes during ensuing decades included the Terrace Room enlargement within the fourth story in 1934; establishment of the Crystal Lounge within the fifth story, and a small addition onto a fourth-story front

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<sup>49</sup>*Brief History*, 21. Another source calls it the Wild Duck Tea Room.

<sup>50</sup>*Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>51</sup>*Ibid.*, 3.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance (Continued)**

balcony, in 1939; storeroom construction on part of the rear terrace in 1940; replacement of many windows' wood sashes by bronze or other metal ones in the 1950s; and construction on some further parts of the rear terrace in 1960 or later. Additional land was acquired, to the north and northwest, and in 1964 a big garage addition was built.

In the 1990s the organization changed its name to The Bellevue Club.

**Significance regarding Architecture.** The nominated property is significant at the local level under National Register Criterion C in the subject area of architecture. The pertinent context is clubhouse architecture in California, 1900–1932. In this regard the property's periods of significance were 1928–1929, when the main building was constructed; 1934, when the Terrace Room enlargement occurred; and 1939, when the Crystal Lounge was created. Its significant dates were the same.

The relevant property type consists of women's athletic club buildings. As will be discussed more specifically below, the nominated property is strongly representative of this type and in some ways outstanding.

*General Background.* At first, men's clubs in American cities occupied rented spaces or converted houses. But in the nineteenth century's last decades and the early twentieth century, many built their own big, luxurious clubhouses.<sup>52</sup>

Development of women's clubhouses followed a similar trajectory but began later and at a generally smaller scale. Women's clubs met in members' homes or in rented spaces, but starting in the 1890s some groups built their own clubhouses.<sup>53</sup> According to one study the women's "club house movement"—the time when the most such clubhouses were built—started around 1894 and ended in the early 1930s.<sup>54</sup> For some time even these purpose-built clubhouses remained residential in scale.<sup>55</sup> But beginning in the twentieth century's second decade, a number of bigger and more conspicuous women's clubhouses were built in California. Among other reasons for this, women wanted more visual prominence in the cityscape and a look that asserted equality with male institutions.<sup>56</sup>

Especially costly, in terms of both facilities and membership dues, were the clubhouses built by what typically were called women's athletic clubs.<sup>57</sup> These luxurious and prestigious buildings offered to club members a wide range of amenities including athletic facilities like swimming pools; related services such as Turkish baths or beauty parlors; elegant spaces for dining, socializing, and meetings; and comfortable

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<sup>52</sup> Corbett, *Nomination to the National Register*, Section 8, 37.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> Breckinridge, *Women in the Twentieth Century*, 43, 83.

<sup>55</sup> Corbett, *Nomination to the National Register*, Section 8, 38.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> Breckinridge, *Women in the Twentieth Century*, 82–83.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance (Continued)**

sleeping rooms for overnight stays. Several large clubhouses of this kind (including the nominated property) were built in California.

Meanwhile, the State's population rose from about 1,485,000 in 1900 to some 3,427,000 in 1920 and 5,677,000 in 1930. Oakland's population more than doubled between 1900 and 1910, abetted by extensive annexation and by massive exodus from San Francisco due to the 1906 quake and fire. Between 1910 and 1930 Oakland's population nearly doubled again.<sup>58</sup>

Car ownership was increasing even faster. For example, in Alameda County as a whole the number of registered cars per thousand inhabitants leapt from 29.6 in 1914 to 298.9 in 1928.<sup>59</sup> The automobile would greatly affect Oakland's physical development during the vitally formative early twentieth century.<sup>60</sup>

Lake Merritt in its present form and Lakeside Park resulted from far-sighted improvements made in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>61</sup> The lake area "has continued to exist as a desirable place of residence and has performed the vital function of a great public open space and recreational center."<sup>62</sup> It has been recognized as "perhaps the single most important element in the city's desired image."<sup>63</sup>

*Other Properties for Comparison.* Briefly described below are five properties in California that are suitable for comparison with the Women's Athletic Club of Alameda County. They will be referred to again during specific evaluation of the nominated property.

- *Woman's Athletic Club of San Francisco.* The first part of the Woman's Athletic Club of San Francisco's building opened in 1917 and a very large addition was constructed in 1922–1923.<sup>64</sup> The building is six stories high and has the look of an Italian Renaissance palazzo.<sup>65</sup> It contains diverse social, athletic, and other facilities, including guest rooms and two swimming pools. It is located at 640 Sutter Street in a densely developed area that adjoins Downtown San Francisco's main retail district. In 1965 the club reincorporated as the Metropolitan Club.<sup>66</sup>
- *Women's Athletic Club of Los Angeles.* The clubhouse of the Women's Athletic Club of Los Angeles reportedly was built in 1924.<sup>67</sup> It is six or seven stories high, with a Mediterranean look that at the time

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<sup>58</sup> Longstreth, *A Short History*, 17.

<sup>59</sup> Dykstra, *History of the Physical Development*, 227.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 264.

<sup>61</sup> Longstreth, *A Short History*, 7, 12, 15.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> Corbett, *Nomination to the National Register*, Section 8, 1, 31.

<sup>65</sup> Cerny, *An Architectural Guidebook*, 28.

<sup>66</sup> Corbett, *Nomination to the National Register*, Section 8, 12.

<sup>67</sup> Gebhard and Winter, *Los Angeles*, 236.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance (Continued)**

of construction was described as Italian Renaissance. It provided diverse social, athletic, and other facilities, including guest rooms, a plunge, and a roof garden.<sup>68</sup> It is located in the southern part of Downtown Los Angeles. However, the building's name (and possibly its usage) may have changed.

- *Women's City Club of Oakland.* Though the Women's City Club of Oakland did not call itself an "athletic club," it did offer some athletic activities. The clubhouse was built in 1927–1928 and is six stories high, in a Mediterranean palazzo style.<sup>69</sup> It provided diverse facilities including meeting or dining rooms, a large auditorium, numerous guest rooms, a basement swimming pool, and rooftop tennis courts.<sup>70</sup> However, the swimming pool has been filled in and tennis can no longer be played on the roof. The property is now the Malonga Casquelord Center for the Arts.<sup>71</sup> It is located at 1428 Alice Street in a high-density-residential part of Oakland's Downtown.
- *Berkeley Women's City Club.* Though never called an "athletic club," the Berkeley Women's City Club has offered some athletic activity. It was constructed in 1929–1930, is six stories high, and has been described as "Moorish-Romanesque."<sup>72</sup> Its facilities include various meeting and dining spaces, lounges, many guest rooms, and a swimming pool.<sup>73</sup> In the 1960s the name was changed to Berkeley City Club. The property is at 2315 Durant Avenue in the neighborhood just south of the central campus of the University of California, Berkeley.
- *Women's Club of San Francisco.* Though it, too, was never called an "athletic club," the Women's Club of San Francisco has offered some athletic activity. The building was completed in 1927 and is twelve stories high. Its style has been described as Spanish Baroque.<sup>74</sup> It provided dining rooms, a theater, hotel rooms, clubrooms for rent to small clubs, and a swimming pool.<sup>75</sup> Its basement still has a gym with a lap pool. At some time it was renamed the Marines Memorial Club.<sup>76</sup> The property is on Sutter Street, near the Metropolitan Club.

*Specific Evaluation of the Nominated Property.* The nominated property well embodies distinctive characteristics of a type, period, and method of construction.

It contains a range of athletic, social, and other facilities that is characteristic of women's athletic club buildings. The nominated property's vertically three-part facade design ably implies the facilities'

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid.; Morrow, "The Women's Athletic Club," 54, 56–57, 75.

<sup>69</sup> Cerny, *An Architectural Guidebook*, 242.

<sup>70</sup> Lavoie, "Oakland Regains Creative Center."

<sup>71</sup> Carson, "Oakland Mayor Sued."

<sup>72</sup> Puchall, "Miss Morgan Made Waves," 7.

<sup>73</sup> Landmarks Heritage Foundation, "Welcome to the Berkeley City Club."

<sup>74</sup> Cerny, *An Architectural Guidebook*, 28.

<sup>75</sup> Corbett, *Nomination to the National Register*, Section 8, 24.

<sup>76</sup> Cerny, *An Architectural Guidebook*, 28.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance (Continued)**

presence and general location: athletic and related functions and access in and below the first two stories, guest rooms on the third floor, and meeting, dining, and socializing spaces on the fourth and fifth floors.

Unusually, the building also has always included within itself a sizable garage. This was an amenity especially relevant for the club's upscale membership. It appears that none of the above-listed five comparison buildings were built containing such a garage.

The use of concrete construction had by the 1920s become common among large urban clubhouses. But for this building special site conditions prompted an unusual solution at the basement level. To quote from a history of the club:

The swampy character of the land and unevenness of the building's weight, due to the fact that the plunge would have to be emptied and filled, had created an unusual engineering problem which was solved by making the foundation, in effect, a concrete barge with ballast in the form of sand to provide stability.<sup>77</sup>

Consulting engineer Maurice Couchot was an internationally noted structural engineer and an early specialist in reinforced concrete.<sup>78</sup>

Period revival architecture was characteristic of the era, but this property's particular Chateausque exterior style is rare in California, especially for urban public or institutional structures. The result is very distinctive, standing out stylistically from the above-listed comparison buildings.

For the elite Women's Athletic Club of Alameda County the Chateausque style, with its aristocratic connotations, was very apt. On this clubhouse the style was applied with deftness and vigor. The facade's massing is robust, dynamic, and eye-catching. Its details such as brackets and chimney caps are very appropriately chosen, designed, and arrayed.

Inside the clubhouse, the prime formal spaces are impressively designed and display fine craftsmanship.

To quote from a club history, "The basic motif for the interior decoration was inspired by Marie Antoinette's Petit Trianon."<sup>79</sup> (After Louis XVI became king in 1774 he gave that building in Versailles to Queen Marie-Antoinette.<sup>80</sup>) The source of inspiration is quite plausible.

The clubhouse has not only fine individual rooms but also some fascinating interplays between spaces. One of them is the relationship between the Musicians' Balcony and the Mural Lounge and Dining Room.

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<sup>77</sup> *Brief History*, 25.

<sup>78</sup> Oakland Cultural Heritage Survey, Historic Resources Inventory form for Women's Athletic Club, 4.

<sup>79</sup> *Brief History*, 7.

<sup>80</sup> Van der Kemp, Hoog, and Meyer, *Versailles*, 150.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance (Continued)**

The building's location, facing Lakeside Park and Lake Merritt, is unique and splendid. None of the five comparison properties has an immediate setting like this, nor as good. The facade's design takes excellent advantage of the setting.

The building's post-1929 extensions have mostly been at the back, where they are scarcely if at all visible from public streets. The fourth story's flat-roofed "terrace" structure that was built in 1939 on a front balcony is small and unobtrusive. The most noticeable change was replacing the wooden sashes of the front facade's windows with differently patterned metal sashes, and plastering in the upper parts of about nine of these windows. This did somewhat detract from the facade. But the work was probably done in about 1955 and if so thus also fell within the 1928–1959 overall period of significance. For the nine or so windows whose upper parts were plastered then, their surrounds still express the original shape. In any case, the change to the windows is minor when considered in relation to the visual power and general intactness of the exterior and the excellent preservation of the prime formal interior spaces.

The property retains ample historic integrity to convey its important design qualities.

**Significance regarding Social History.** The nominated property is significant at the local level under National Register Criterion A in the subject area of social history. The pertinent context is women's athletics and athletic clubs in California, 1900–1959. In this regard the property's period of significance was 1928–1959. This period began with construction of the clubhouse. Its end point of 1959 is simply 50 years before the present. Relevant activities continued to have importance after then and no more specific end point can be defined. The property's significant dates were 1928–1929, when the main building was constructed; 1934, when the Terrace Room enlargement occurred; and 1939, when the Crystal Lounge was created.

The relevant property type consists, again, of women's athletic club buildings. And again, the nominated property is strongly representative of its type and in some ways outstanding.

*General Background.* What is often called the Women's Club Movement began in the 1860s and 1870s when women across America who had been active in social causes such as emancipation, better education for women, and human rights formed women's clubs.<sup>81</sup> Around 1900, memberships in women's clubs became a symbol of elite status. Newspapers would list the clubs that they considered fashionable.<sup>82</sup>

Meanwhile, women had increasingly engaged in athletic activities. In the 1860s and 1870s several women's colleges opened whose curricula included physical training. One of them was Mills College in Oakland.<sup>83</sup> These physical education programs appeared to prove that women were not by nature feeble,

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<sup>81</sup> Corbett, *Nomination to the National Register*, Section 8, 22.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> Corbett, *Nomination to the National Register*, Section 8, 7.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance (Continued)**

and they strongly influenced popular thought.<sup>84</sup> In the 1890s it became fashionable for affluent women to partake of golf, yachting, tennis, and horseback riding.<sup>85</sup> Also in the 1890s, standards of beauty began to change from Victorian plumpness toward a slimmer, even athletic look.

As the twentieth century dawned popular interest had burgeoned in sports in general. This would combine with women's changing status to bring growing attention to the "athletic girl" as a symbol of modern womanhood.<sup>86</sup> In the century's second decade the sportswoman emerged as a powerful cultural symbol.<sup>87</sup> Widespread acceptance of the importance of athletics for women was reflected by the holding, in 1923, of a White House conference on women's athletics.<sup>88</sup>

A distinct and important aspect of the overall Women's Club Movement was the development of women's athletic clubs.<sup>89</sup> In 1915 the *San Francisco Chronicle's* Grace Armistead Doyle wrote, "Perhaps nothing that has taken place within the past few years gives one a better idea of the change of views of the world at large toward its feminine component or of femininities [sic] change of views toward the old-time scheme of things, than the establishment of women's athletic clubs."<sup>90</sup>

Sport for affluent women had entered a new era in 1903 when female socialites formed the Chicago Women's Athletic Club. Its clubhouse provided a lavish setting for exercise and leisure. During the next three decades, similar clubs sprang up in major cities across America.<sup>91</sup> Quite unlike YWCAs (which often also provided facilities for exercise), these women's athletic clubs combined athletic facilities with the amenities and comforts of an elite social club.<sup>92</sup> With their special cachet, they became important foci of community life.

In the mid-1920s three women proposed filling "a long-felt want in the social life of the East Bay." They were Alice F. (Mrs. Eugene K.) Sturgis, who became the resulting club's founder president; Mrs. Louis J. Breuner; and Mrs. Waldron Gregory (subsequently married to S.H. Wainwright Jr.). The response was immediate and enthusiastic. On March 19, 1926, Articles of Incorporation were signed for the Women's Athletic Club of Alameda County. Well-organized and vigorous membership drives ensued. The proceeds from these, plus a loan from Bank of America, enabled constructing the clubhouse on Bellevue Avenue.<sup>93</sup>

(See also this nomination's background discussion under "Significance regarding Architecture.")

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<sup>84</sup> Stanley, *Rise and Fall*, 50.

<sup>85</sup> Corbett, *Nomination to the National Register*, Section 8, 17.

<sup>86</sup> Cahn, *Coming on Strong*, 7.

<sup>87</sup> Stanley, *Rise and Fall*, 71.

<sup>88</sup> Zophy, "Athletics/Sports, 49.

<sup>89</sup> Corbett, *Nomination to the National Register*, Section 8, 1, 25.

<sup>90</sup> Doyle, "San Francisco Women."

<sup>91</sup> Cahn, *Coming on Strong*, 17.

<sup>92</sup> Corbett, *Nomination to the National Register*, Section 8, 18.

<sup>93</sup> *Brief History*, 21-22, 25.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance (Continued)**

*Other Properties for Comparison.* The same five properties that were listed above as suitable for comparison regarding architecture are also pertinent as to social history.

*Specific Evaluation of the Nominated Property.* Built during an important period for women's athletics and athletic clubs, the nominated property strongly recalls the time and topic.

The Women's Athletic Club of Alameda County drew heavily from the upper class. Officers or directors included the wives of prominent men like retail magnate Louis J. Breuner and the politically powerful newspaper owner Joseph R. Knowland. The club had a Financial Advisory Committee, composed of men, that included for at least two decades Mr. Knowland himself and for at least eight years industrial titan Henry J. Kaiser.<sup>94</sup>

Early members of the club included some especially redoubtable clubwomen. One of them was the founder president, Alice Sturgis, who eventually became an outstanding authority on parliamentary law.<sup>95</sup> An important part of this nationally recognized expert's early experience was her activity with the Women's Athletic Club of Alameda County. Another remarkable clubwoman was Marion W. (Mrs. John Louis) Lohse, who was club president from November 1929<sup>96</sup> to 1964.

For upper-class people, who by the 1920s regularly went about by private motorcar, the clubhouse's highly convenient and secure all-weather garage parking was an especially relevant feature. As already pointed out, none of the above-listed five comparison properties was built with such a garage.

The club's social status and presence were reinforced and well-symbolized by the building's unusual and unusually striking facade, which is so different from that of the comparison buildings. The Chateausque style brought connotations very apt for a high-status club. Inside, the ethos and history of elite, refined leisure are expressed by the aptly designed, elegant formal spaces. Suitably evocative artworks are placed not only in the Mural Lounge but also elsewhere such as in elevator lobbies.

In a vital sense the club and its activities have represented self-actualization, and empowerment, of women. This mission appears to be expressed by ornament, on the oaken front doors, that features what may well be the face of Venus—symbolizing Womanhood.

The club's status and functions are very well-served by its unique and splendid lakeside setting, which again is so different from that of the comparison buildings. Lake Merritt with its surrounding park has very special cachet, rather like a California version of New York's Central Park. Its broad association with recreation makes for a great match with an athletic club. Lake Merritt contains the oldest officially

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<sup>94</sup> *Brief History*, various pages.

<sup>95</sup> "Alice Sturgis, Expert."

<sup>96</sup> *Brief History*, 5, 26.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance (Continued)**

declared wildfowl refuge in America.<sup>97</sup>

The club has, so to speak, returned the favor. Its activities and high status and the quality and strong presence of its clubhouse have helped to maintain the character and image of the Lake Merritt area, as a desirable place to live in or otherwise frequent. It has thereby indirectly helped stimulate construction of upscale new apartments or, in recent decades, offices in various places around the lake.

Over the years the clubhouse has accommodated a very broad range of activities. The athletic component has changed somewhat but remains substantial. The original rear-terrace tennis court or courts disappeared by 1940. Today, the Exercise Room offers weight machines and stationary bikes. The capacious swimming pool continues to be used. Cultural activities have included innumerable classes, lectures, dramatic readings, and musicales. There have been various charitable activities, such as preparing surgical dressings for the Red Cross. Social activities have included numerous dances, fashion shows, receptions, other private events, and special celebrations.

Use of the building has not been limited to club members and their families or specific guests. The clubhouse has also been an important resource for the greater community. Countless groups and individuals have used it (albeit often for a fee) as a fine setting for diverse events such as civic and business meetings, musicales, charity fund-raisers, bar mitzvahs, and weddings. Activities in the clubhouse have helped support and stimulate the social and cultural life of the community at large.

Accommodation of some activities was enhanced by the Terrace Room expansion in 1934 and creation of the Crystal Lounge in 1939.

The organization's name itself has changed, to The Bellevue Club. And for quite some years men have been admitted to full membership. But the essential feeling of the Women's Athletic Club of Alameda County has strongly endured. In this regard the nominated property differs markedly from the former Oakland Women's City Club—in which (despite preservation of architectural features on the exterior and in spaces like the lobby) the original basic atmosphere has been lost.

Despite the various physical alterations and additions over the years, the nominated property in general has retained very good historic integrity. (See also the discussion of integrity under "Significance regarding Architecture.") The clubhouse vividly retains its original feeling and tangibly recalls its important historical associations.

**Previous Historic Ratings.** On an evaluation sheet of its own, the City's Oakland Cultural Heritage Survey gave the clubhouse a rank of "A" (highest importance).<sup>98</sup> On a Historic Resources Inventory (DPR 523) form, the survey rated the main building as appearing individually eligible for the National

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<sup>97</sup> Bagwell, *Oakland*, 126.

<sup>98</sup> Oakland Cultural Heritage Survey, Evaluation Sheet for 525 Bellevue Avenue.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance (Continued)**

Register.<sup>99</sup>

The survey also identified the main building as one of the historic Bellevue-Staten Apartment District's two primary, "pivotal" contributors.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Oakland Cultural Heritage Survey, Historic Resources Inventory form for Women's Athletic Club, 1, 2.

<sup>100</sup> Oakland Cultural Heritage Survey, Historic Resources Inventory form for Bellevue-Staten Apartment District, 3-4.

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**Primary Location of Additional Data (Continued)**

There is also considerable information in the archives of the Oakland Cultural Heritage Survey, which is part of the City of Oakland's Office of Planning and Building. The survey archives are in the building at 250 Frank H. Ogawa Plaza, Oakland, CA 94612.

**Verbal Boundary Description**

The boundaries of the nominated property are the same as those of Assessor's parcel 010-0766-009-02.

**Boundary Justification**

During the 1928–1959 overall period of significance, only part of what is now Assessor's parcel 010-0766-009-02 was associated with the Women's Athletic Club of Alameda County. But according to rules in National Register Bulletin 16A, the building's original portion and the 1964 garage addition (built on adjoining land that had by then been acquired) together comprise a single "contributing building." Thus defined, the contributing building covers virtually all of parcel 010-0766-009-02. So in order to include all of the contributing building, the nominated property's boundaries coincide with those of the entire current Assessor's parcel.

**Form Prepared By (Continued)**

The address and phone number shown in section 11 of NPS Form 10-900 are those of John Sutton English himself, who as a consultant prepared the form for his client, which is the Bellevue Club Foundation. (He is not a member of that organization.) The foundation's address is 525 Bellevue Avenue, Oakland, CA 94610-5096. Its phone number is (510) 451-1000.

**Property Owner (Continued)**

The Bellevue Club is the fee simple owner of the nominated property. The Bellevue Club Foundation holds a conservation easement protecting some of the property's features. The foundation's mailing address is 525 Bellevue Avenue, Oakland, CA 94610-5096.

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**Photographs and Illustrations**

<i>Number (Item 7)</i>	<i>Name of Photog- rapher (Item 3)*</i>	<i>Date (Item 4)</i>	<i>Location of Original Negative (Item 5)**</i>	<i>Description (Item 6)</i>
1	English	Sept. 19, 2008	Bellevue Club	View looking northwest (from park) toward front facade of clubhouse
2	English	Sept. 19, 2008	Bellevue Club	View looking northeast toward main entry and nearby parts of front facade
3	English	Sept. 19, 2008	Bellevue Club	Close-up view looking west (and up) at back of opened oaken front door
4	English	Sept. 19, 2008	Bellevue Club	View looking north toward lower western parts of front facade
5	English	Sept. 19, 2008	Bellevue Club	View looking north toward southeastern parts of clubhouse
6	English	Sept. 19, 2008	Bellevue Club	View looking northeast toward front facade
7	English	Sept. 19, 2008	Bellevue Club	View looking south or southeast toward rear of clubhouse
8	English	Sept. 19, 2008	Bellevue Club	View looking southwest, from large rear terrace, toward some of the second story's and third story's rear windows
9	English	Sept. 19, 2008	Bellevue Club	View looking southeast, from a Crystal Lounge window, toward nearby roof surfaces
10	English	Sept. 19, 2008	Bellevue Club	View looking northwest or west, from a Dining Room window, toward parts of storeroom and Exercise Room roofs
11	English	Sept. 19, 2008	Bellevue Club	View looking east or southeast toward Lobby side of main entry

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**Photographs and Illustrations (Continued)**

<i>Number (Item 7)</i>	<i>Name of Photog- rapher (Item 3)*</i>	<i>Date (Item 4)</i>	<i>Location of Original Negative (Item 5)**</i>	<i>Description (Item 6)</i>
24	English	Sept. 19, 2008	Bellevue Club	View looking southeast into Wisteria Room
25	English	Sept. 19, 2008	Bellevue Club	View looking west or southwest in Crystal Lounge
26	English	Sept. 19, 2008	Bellevue Club	View looking southwest, from inside Crystal Lounge, toward park and lake
27	English	Sept. 19, 2008	Bellevue Club	View looking southeast, across 1964 garage addition's upper deck, toward clubhouse's main portion
28	English	Sept. 19, 2008	Bellevue Club	View looking east or northeast along Bellevue Avenue, with clubhouse facade in middle distance
29***	Unknown	C. 1939	Unknown	View looking northwest (from park) toward front facade of clubhouse
30***	Roger Sturtevant	C. 1929	Unknown	View looking east in Dining Room

\*"English" is John Sutton English.

\*\*"Bellevue Club" means that the negative is in the archives of The Bellevue Club, which is located at 525 Bellevue Avenue, Oakland, CA 94610-5027.

\*\*\*Numbers 29 and 30 are photocopied from published articles instead of printed from negatives. So they are called "illustrations" rather than photographs. However, their numbering continues from that of the photographs. Illustration 29 is photocopied from Rood, "Women's Clubs and Organizations," *Oakland Tribune (1940) Year Book*, 81. Illustration 30 is photocopied from "Women's Athletic Club, Oakland," *California Arts & Architecture* 38, no. 5 (May 1930), 46.

Figure A  
SKETCH MAP

Women's Athletic Club of Alameda County,  
Oakland, Alameda County, CA

(X) Photo or Illustration Number,  
Vantage Point, and Direction

For information about *indoor*  
pictures, see Figures B-E.

-  Boundary of Nominated Property
-  Contributing Building
-  1964 Garage Addition

