

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street & number 525 Bellevue Avenue not for publication N/A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

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:	Signature of the Keeper	Date of Action
<input type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> other (explain): _____ _____ _____	_____	_____

Draft

Name of Property _____

County and State _____

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.

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 # _____

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

SOCIAL HISTORY

Period of Significance

1928–1958

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)

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

Draft

Name of Property _____

County and State _____

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	<u>10</u>	<u>564730</u>	<u>4185160</u>	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

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.

Draft

NPS Form 10-900-a
(8-86)

OMB Approval No. 1024-0018

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

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

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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Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 2

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

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 primarily Chateausque on the exterior; and inside, has its main formal spaces in a Classical Revival style evocative of the 18th century. A major garage addition at back was built in 1964; has a roughly rectangular footprint; is one story high (plus rooftop parking); 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. Despite various changes, it has in general retained very good historic integrity in terms of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. The main building's primary wall 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. Behind a canvas canopy over the sidewalk, the formal entry has a glass-and-bronze vestibule, and ornamented oaken doors and ornate glass-iron-and-wood inner doors, set within an arched opening. This opening is surmounted by a volute and flanked by carriage lamps, and 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, with quoining at its end, and then, after a setback, a short bay that includes a shallow-arched entry or exit for automobiles. A simple molding and 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 (east) 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, thereby 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, 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. Behind the wide but shallow balcony east of that portion, there is a series of four large, tall windows. West of their middle portion, the upper stories have irregular massing. The main upper molding and cornice is mostly continuous, but at left of center is interrupted and/or duplicated. Above part of the bay window, it is topped by a curved pediment. The rear elevation is plainer but the eastern part of its highest stories has a prominent series of five tall, arched windows. The building has an east-west main hipped roof that interlocks with smaller hipped roofs that face southward. Four tall chimneys with decorative caps rise skyward. Behind the formal entry 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 upper front facade's prominent bay window is the lavish Mural Lounge, with its two-story-high ceiling and marble chimneypiece and other ornamented elements. Behind the facade's series of four tall windows is the high-ceilinged, mirrored Dining Room, with its arches, marble chimneypiece, and other richly decorative elements. The Musicians' Balcony overlooks both the Dining Room and the Mural Lounge. Other important interior spaces include the fourth floor's stately Terrace Room and Wisteria Room and the fifth floor's spacious Crystal Lounge. The property is located in a distinctive area of 1920s apartments and it directly faces Lakeside Park and Lake Merritt, in central Oakland.

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Section number 7 Page 3 Women's Athletic Club of Alameda County, Alameda County, California

Narrative Description (Continued)

General Description of the Property. The nominated property contains a single resource: a contributing building.

Type, Size, and Style. The building is a clubhouse that has some 47,000 square feet of floor space (not counting parking)¹ plus its own internal 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 in order 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.² 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 main building's primary exterior architectural style is Chateausque. Inside, its main formal spaces have a Classical Revival style that 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 from 60 to 75 feet. The addition is one story high and has both covered and rooftop parking. It is built of reinforced concrete³ 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.⁴

¹ GAB Robins, *Building Appraisal*, 1.

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

³ Sanborn Map Company, Insurance Maps for approximately 1951 and 1970.

⁴ Govan Associates, *The Bellevue Club*, 8.

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

Narrative Description (Continued)

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

Over the years, a number of alterations or extensions have been made; see relevant passages below for specifics. Many of them occurred during the 1928–1958 overall period of significance, some later on. But neither those changes nor physical deterioration have greatly weakened historic integrity. For more about integrity, see pertinent discussion 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. Massing of the main building is quite complex (for example see Photographs 1 and 6). Exterior details vary considerably from place to place.

The primary wall surface material is stucco, with a float finish,⁵ on the front facade, and formed concrete elsewhere. It is currently painted a very light gray.⁶ 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,⁷ the west elevation had some places where rebar was exposed and rusting at the level of the fifth floor.⁷

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.⁸

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 1955.⁹ The facade's other bronze sashes likely were put in at about the same time.

⁵ Roeth and Bangs, “Women's Athletic Club of Alameda County,” sheet 8.

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

⁷ Govan Associates, *The Bellevue Club*, 8.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.

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

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Section number 7 Page 5 Women's Athletic Club of Alameda County, Alameda County, California

Narrative Description (Continued)

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.

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

[some] wood window sills and jambs may have rot. Many wood sills are no longer protected by paint and are weather checking.¹⁰

Some windows have broken or missing hardware such as handles.

The sloping roofs on the main building's tall portion are surfaced with slate (for instance see Photograph 9). This apparently is of the weathering type. The gutters, counter flashings, copings, and counter flashings here are copper.¹¹ 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.¹²

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 it¹³). The third story's two smaller terraces likely also are paved with ceramic tile.

The second story's large rear terrace (part of which is 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.¹⁴ The corrugated canopy along this terrace's west side is presumably 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. The front facade's composition (see especially Photographs 1 and 6) juxtaposes formality with asymmetry, and the building's impressive width against a strong upward thrust. The latter is

¹⁰ Govan Associates, *The Bellevue Club*, 7.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹² *Ibid.*, 4–5.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 7.

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Section number 7 Page 6 Women's Athletic Club of Alameda County, Alameda County, California

Narrative Description (Continued)

reinforced by the windows, most of which, though of assorted sizes, shapes, and/or types, are noticeably taller than they are wide. The composition also reflects the general pattern of interior spaces and functions.

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 predecessor¹⁵—was installed sometime between 1935 and 1949.¹⁶

Within the property itself there is a glass-and-metal vestibule (see Photograph 2) that also did not originally exist. It was emplaced in 1939 or 1940.¹⁷ It has twin doors, side and upper lights, and some ornamental treatment along its upper edge. A forward-angled flagpole rises above it.

The vestibule projects from within a tall, arched opening (Photograph 2) at the lower facade's center. Set inside this opening are twin oak doors, paneled and with ornamentation that includes a woman's or goddess's face and shell-like motifs—and then ornate glass-iron-and-wood twin inner doors with an equally ornate fanlight above them.

The arched opening is surmounted by a large cast-stone volute. It is flanked by bronze carriage lamps, mounted on projecting spiral supports.

The opening 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)¹⁸ and four second-story windows (which are 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.¹⁹ It is not known when the present doors were

¹⁵In City of Oakland records there is a puzzling 1967 letter to someone regarding his inquiry about “creating” a sidewalk canopy at the clubhouse.

¹⁶This is based on comparison between the photographs on page 41 and the cover of *A Brief History of the Women's Athletic Club of Alameda County from 1926–1949*.

¹⁷*Brief History*, 46.

¹⁸In 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.

¹⁹Roeth and Bangs, “Women's Athletic Club of Alameda County,” sheet 8.

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Section number 7 Page 7

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

Narrative Description (Continued)

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 (which is not otherwise noticeable from outside).

Running along the top of the facade composition's base there is a flat molding topped by a simple cornice (see especially Photograph 6). But this is prominently interrupted, somewhat west of center, by a corbelled projecting stair tower that rises from a few feet above ground level up to the fifth floor. At each of its four inter-floor landings this stair tower has a casement-plus-transom-type window, the surround of the highest of which is (though rectangular) 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 (Photograph 5) 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 (as Photograph 1 shows), 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 inconspicuous, light-colored synthetic or canvas awnings that evidently were attached sometime between 1949 and 1975.²⁰

The third story's windows vary somewhat but seem to combine casement elements, transoms, and/or—in most of the terrace-facing ones—integral doors. There are about 14 windows and/or doors (counting the few sideways-facing ones). Evidently some of their predecessors, before the 1950s, were French doors.²¹

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 projecting from the upper floors' middle portion. (See Photographs 1 and 6.) The brackets that support the bay window are especially prominent and their decorative lower portions extend far downward over the third story (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. However, in each case the slightly recessed surround still reflects the original shape.

East of the upper floors' middle portion, their widest balcony extends all the way to the fire escape enclosure. The balcony itself has ceramic tile paving but is quite shallow. Rising behind the balcony there

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

²¹ *Brief History*, 27.

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Narrative Description (Continued)

is a prominent series of four large, tall windows (see Photograph 1). Each of these contains a combination of fixed lights and upper, awning-type lights. The two end windows also contain a door component permitting access onto 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. But in each case the slightly recessed window surround still reflects the original arched shape.

West of their middle bay, the upper stories have irregular massing (see Photograph 6). 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."²²

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 by the above-mentioned flat-roofed terrace structure—though (as Photograph 9 shows) its upper flat molding and keystone can still be seen above that 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 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. These are mostly continuous, though at left of center they are interrupted by a descending hip roof. In the same vicinity but higher up, they are duplicated on a sizable mass located at attic level. Above the central bay window's middle facet with its pilasters, the flat molding is treated like a simple entablature and the cornice serves as 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. However, each of these walls contains a large industrial-sash window

²² *Brief History*, 46.

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Section number 7 Page 9 Women's Athletic Club of Alameda County, Alameda County, California

Narrative Description (Continued)

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 molding and cornice continue 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 concrete wall. Its east and west 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. Apparently it was bordered on three sides by a relatively low concrete-block parapet wall with wire screening above that. In 1940 much of the terrace's western third was covered by construction of a "Deck Storeroom,"²³ 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, and bordered on two sides by a glazed screen (part of which still exists).²⁴ But it appears that at some undetermined 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."²⁵ 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 (discernible near the middle of Photograph 27) 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-sash windows with multiple lights (in at least some cases including casemented ones). These windows (some of which appear in Photograph 8) probably are original except for the two easternmost ones, which apparently date from 1937.²⁶ The wood-sash double French doors here may also be original.

Generally above those, 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

²³ *Brief History*, 48.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 8–9, 48.

²⁵ "Smart Women's Athletic Club Sports New Roof Garden."

²⁶ *Brief History*, 42.

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Narrative Description (Continued)

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 (see the left side of Photograph 7), where they light the Dining Room. 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 (see especially Photographs 1 and 6). 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. Some of them support things like exhaust systems or a cooling tower. Small flat areas occur above the Mural Lounge's sides and south end, and at various places as transition sections between slate-covered slopes.²⁷

Four tall chimneys (visible in Photographs 1 and/or 28) 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. Roughly speaking there are three general functional zones, arranged from ground upward. 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.

Supplementing and cutting across that broad pattern, there are of course distinctions between public areas and private or "back room" ones, and between impressively designed spaces and plain or utilitarian ones.

²⁷ Govan Associates, *The Bellevue Club*, 3.

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The interior's materials of course vary considerably 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 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.²⁸

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 like the two gas-fired boilers.²⁹

Lobby. On the first floor behind the glass-iron-and-wood 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 immediately behind the entry has a two-story-high ceiling. Along the central space's north side and much of its west side, the Lobby is overlooked by balustraded open sides of 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 the notable California landscape painter Chris Jorgensen.³⁰ Along the west side are the opening for the main elevator's doors; the opening to a side corridor that runs westward; and, in the southwest corner, the bottom of the main staircase. Each of the two openings is framed by moldings and topped by a cartouche featuring a shell motif. Along the Lobby's east side are the opening (also framed by moldings and topped by a cartouche with shell motif) to a side 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. This staircase has decorative metal railings. These are particularly ornate on the flights located at the corner of the Lobby. Here the railings (see Photograph 14) include cross-like emblems bordered by intricate wreath-type patterns.

On the second through fifth floors the main staircase and elevator doors adjoin what can be called elevator lobbies: north-south corridor spaces that, in turn, connect with other corridors and/or rooms.

²⁸ Ibid., 4, 7, 9–12, 16, 19.

²⁹ GAB Robins, *Building Appraisal*, 2.

³⁰ *Brief History*, 76.

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The building also contains a back staircase and a freight elevator—both of which rise from the basement to the attic—and some other, shorter staircases.

Swimming Pool. Immediately behind the Lobby's north wall is the swimming pool (see Photograph 15), or "Plunge," which extends east-west for over half of the building's total width. It has five lanes and is "of championship proportions."³¹

The poolside deck is tiled. It appears that some wall surfaces originally had "soft green and buff murals."³² 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 prominent cantilevered wall contains many windows, through which views down into the pool can be had from the adjoining second-story corridor segments—one of which (as mentioned above) also looks down into the Lobby. 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). These, and the pool itself, can be accessed via a doorway on the side corridor that runs eastward from the Lobby. Also accessed via that corridor are a library, an office, and a men's rest room. Along the side corridor that runs westward from the Lobby there are a cloakroom and a women's rest room.

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 (there is some exercise equipment here) 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 and stationary bicycles. The room's portion that adjoins the pool area originally was an open-fronted balcony

³¹ Ibid., 7.

³² Ibid.

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from which spectators could watch swimming events.³³ But in 1940 this portion was converted into an expansion of the beauty salon³⁴ with an enclosing wall separating it from the pool area. (This wall does, though, contain windows through which one can look down at the pool.) The Exercise Room's northernmost portion occupies what originally was part of the building's rear terrace. This portion's eastern wall surface contains a soft mural (see Photograph 16) featuring trees.

East of that, the addition that was built in 1940 contain 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 Lobby's high central space. East of the Committee Room there is a complex of rooms and cubicles called the Conditioning Salon. This reportedly accommodates 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.³⁵ This accommodates sizable meetings. Sometimes it is used for exercises. The room's eastern wall surface used to have soft murals depicting trees and hollyhocks,³⁶ but now is a very large mirror. The south wall is also mirrored.

Third-Story Spaces. The third story contains guest rooms, some combinable into suites, and each of which actually includes a bed-sitting room, a bathroom, and a walk-in closet. It appears that originally there were 19 of them.³⁷ 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 the club manager's office. Most of the guest rooms are accessed from a long east-west corridor. The third floor also contains storage spaces for things like linens for the guest rooms.

Mural Lounge. Immediately behind the upper street facade's central bay is the Mural Lounge, which has a two-story-high ceiling. It is entered through either of two open doorways. The west entry (seen in Photograph 17) is from the fourth floor's elevator lobby. The north entry is from the same floor's short east-west corridor.

About midway along the lounge's eastern wall—and approximately on axis with the west doorway—there is a marble chimneypiece (see Photograph 18). Each side element of this has a large, leaf-adorned volute. Above the hearth, which is fronted by a decorative fire screen, the upper part resembles an entablature and has a cornice-like mantel. Sitting on the mantel are an elaborate little bronze-and-marble

³³ 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.

³⁴ *Brief History*, 48.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 10, 68.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 10.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 11.

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clock and companion urns.³⁸ Above the mantel there is a rectangular frame surrounding a large mural painting donated by a club member.³⁹ Above that there are a sort of entablature and then a curved pediment that has, superimposed on it, a medallion with intricate carving around it. Finally, the wall panel above the marble pediment has plaster festoons.

The area around the west entry (see Photograph 17) is elaborately decorated. Over the doorway there is a mural painting. Above that there is a curved pediment. The wall panel above this pediment has plaster festoons.

The area at the north entry also has special treatment. Over this doorway is the room's third painting. Above the mural, but with its crosspiece running in front of that, there is a curved pediment. Somewhat above the pediment, the wall has a sizable opening that permits views into the Mural Lounge from the adjacent fifth-story room.

Along most of the room's east, west, and north sides the walls have rows of panels. The top row of panels is adorned with plaster flower baskets.⁴⁰ The walls also have some smaller yet intricate decorative details.⁴¹ Along the room's south side, drapery descends from the inside top of the bay window (see Photograph 19). The short segment to each side of the bay window is treated like a wide pilaster. 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 (Photograph 19), from the center of which descends a crystal chandelier.

Various of the room's fine details are emphasized by gold leaf paint. In the lounge's northeast corner sits a hand-decorated Hamlin Concert Grand Piano.⁴²

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 main Dining Room with its two-story-high ceiling (see Photograph 20). Public entry to this huge room is through a doorway at the end of the fourth floor's east-west corridor that adjoins the Mural Lounge.⁴³

Within the Dining Room, a high arcade running east-west defines two subspaces: the primary one and a

³⁸ Ibid., 76. The clock and urns were added in 1935.

³⁹ Ibid., 30–31. All three of the room's paintings were donated by her, and installed in 1931.

⁴⁰ The baskets were added in 1935 or 1936 (*Brief History*, 38).

⁴¹ Some of these may have been added after 1929.

⁴² *Brief History*, 33.

⁴³ A little north of that, double doors provide for staff or caterer access to and from the kitchen.

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side aisle. The latter (see Photograph 21), which directly adjoins the front facade's windows, has always been a little shorter because what would otherwise have been its easternmost part is replaced by the top of the fire escape.

At the center of the primary subspace's east wall—directly on axis with the entrance doorway—there is an ornate marble chimneypiece. This has voluted side elements and a classically treated upper portion. A decorative fire screen sits in front of the hearth. All above the mantel there is a tall mirror with curved top. The arched surround molding has a decorative keystone and spandrels adorned by plaster festoons. All this is flanked by pilasters with Corinthian capitals. Beyond each of these pilasters there is another tall mirror with arched surround and keystone.

At the primary subspace's opposite end, the middle of the west wall has a tall arched molding within which are fitted both the rectangular entry doorway and, above that, a curved-topped balcony opening from the adjacent fifth-story room (see Photograph 22). The balcony opening has an ornate metal railing, into which the present clock was integrated in 1932.⁴⁴ The arched molding has a decorative keystone and spandrels with festoons. It is flanked by pilasters with Corinthian capitals. Beyond the pilasters are other tall arched moldings with keystones. The surfaces within these ones do not contain mirrors but their upper portions sport plaster flower baskets, which were added in 1935 or 1936.⁴⁵

The basic pattern of arches is repeated around all the north wall's five windows, in the arcade that defines the side aisle (and on the wall surface beyond the arcade's east end), and around the four windows in the south facade. The piers have panels containing small plaster ornaments and the spandrels have decorative treatment. Each arch has an ornamental keystone. Draperies hang within the north wall's five arches and the south wall's four.

The Dining Room's ceiling has prominently visible beams running north-south. These are treated architecturally and include thin bands of dentils. From the ceiling of the primary subspace hang two crystal chandeliers.

Various fine details in the Dining Room are brightened by gold leaf paint.

Musicians' Balcony. As previously indicated, there is a room with openings overlooking both the Mural Lounge (as Photograph 17 demonstrates) and the Dining Room. This small fifth-story room, which is accessed from that floor's Crystal Lounge, is called the Musicians' Balcony. Its name reveals what is at least one of its intended functions.

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

⁴⁴ *Brief History*, 31.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 38.

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playing and miscellaneous gatherings.⁴⁶ This relatively plain yet stately space has paneled walls (the present version of which may date from 1939 or 1940⁴⁷). Midway along the west side there is a prominent chimneypiece with a decorative metal fire screen. The hearth's immediate side and top borders are dark marble. These, however, are set within a light-colored plaster surface, with simple moldings, whose sides reach up to the ceiling. Centered above the hearth is a large mural painting, evidently installed in 1946.⁴⁸

This room originally was much smaller. In 1934 it was enlarged by incorporating an area that previously had been a women's rest room.⁴⁹

Wisteria Room. Nearby is the fourth story's dignified little Wisteria (perhaps formerly "Wistaria"⁵⁰) Room (see Photograph 24). Located south of the elevator, this has paneled walls and is suitable for small gatherings.

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. A large mirror is mounted on part of its surface. 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. A need had long been felt for "a Cocktail Lounge where drinks could be served in a manner more fitting to the dignity of our Club than service in the Rooms on the Fourth Floor."⁵¹ To enable this, the former "Empire Room" was greatly enlarged by adding what had been a rest room, part of a corridor, and other space.⁵²

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.⁵³ 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 (in the northwest portion) and rest rooms.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 14.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 46.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 64.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 36; Collaborative Design Architects, "Bellevue Club," sheet A1.4.

⁵⁰ *Brief History*, 13, 39.

⁵¹ Ibid., 46.

⁵² Ibid.; Roeth and Bangs, "Women's Athletic Club," sheet 6.

⁵³ *Brief History*, 46.

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Attic. In the attic there are miscellaneous facilities such as storage areas.⁵⁴

The 1964 Garage Addition. As previously mentioned, 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.⁵⁵ 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. The tallest of them is the quasi-Art Deco tower called the Bellevue-Staten Apartments, which is individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

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 the water-edge. The lake's portion near Bellevue has special avian amenity in the form of little islands for safety from predators and booms to keep boaters at a distance. The Lake Merritt Wild Duck Refuge is on the National Register.

The north side of the nominated property's 1964 addition coincides with the back of properties that face onto Grand Avenue, a major east-west artery with both commercial and apartment structures along it. North of the Grand Avenue corridor there is a large area of apartments.

The lake's west side adjoins Downtown Oakland. The city has a population of roughly 400,000 and is located within the East Bay's largely long-developed bay-facing side. The two-county East Bay as a whole has been growing rapidly in recent decades. Even it is just part of the growing, nine-county Bay Region that already has some seven million residents—within a burgeoning State whose estimated 2005 population exceeded 36 million.

⁵⁴ GAB Robins, *Building Appraisal*, 2.

⁵⁵ Collaborative Design Architects, "Bellevue Club," sheet A3.4A.

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NPS Form 10-900-a
(8-86)

OMB Approval No. 1024-0018

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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 main building was constructed in 1928–1929. Alterations or additions were made in 1934, 1939, and other years. The nominated property is significant at the State level under National Register Criterion C in the subject area of architecture, and the context of clubhouse architecture in California, 1900–1932. In this regard the property's periods of significance were 1928–1929, 1934, and 1939 and its significant dates were the same. In comparison with pertinent other properties of its type, the nominated property is strongly representative and in some ways outstanding. During the 20th century's early decades large, visually prominent, and prestigious women's clubhouses were built in California and elsewhere. Generally the costliest were those of women's athletic clubs. 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 facade design ably implies the presence and general location of these facilities. Unusually, the building also has always included within itself a sizable garage. Access to and from the garage is fitted logically yet discreetly within the facade. 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. Period revival architecture was characteristic of the era but this building's particular Chateausque exterior style is quite rare in California, especially for urban public or institutional structures. On this building the style was especially apt, and was applied with deftness and vigor. Inside, the design of prime formal spaces—reportedly inspired by the Petit Trianon—is impressive and displays fine craftsmanship. The building's setting, facing the park and Lake Merritt, is unique and splendid. Despite the alterations and extensions that have occurred, the property retains ample historic integrity to convey its important design qualities. The nominated property is also significant at the State level under National Register Criterion A in the subject area of social history, and the context of women's athletics and athletic clubs in California, 1900–1958. In this regard the property's period of significance was 1928–1958 and its significant dates were 1928–1929, 1934, and 1939. Here again, the nominated property is strongly representative of its type and in some ways outstanding. Related in part to a general increase of women's participation in athletic activities, the development of women's athletic clubs was an important aspect of the overall Women's Club Movement. The nominated property strongly recalls that aspect. The club drew heavily from the civic elite. Its early members or advisors included especially redoubtable clubwomen and prominent Californians. The club's status and functions were well-expressed by the building's unusual, especially apt facade; its aptly designed elegant formal rooms; and the unique, prestigious lakeside setting with its broad recreational connotation. The clubhouse has accommodated—for club members and the greater community—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. Despite various physical changes, the nominated property strongly retains its original feeling. A stunning and instructive time capsule, it very tangibly recalls its important historical associations. The Oakland Cultural Heritage Survey has rated the main building as appearing individually eligible for the National Register.

Brief Chronology of the Property. Before the main building was constructed, the land it sits on

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Narrative Statement of Significance (Continued)

contained a structure reportedly called the Wild Duck Inn,⁵⁶ 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.⁵⁷ Construction proceeded, and the clubhouse opened its doors on March 11, 1929.⁵⁸

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 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 State 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. In American cities during the nineteenth century, London's earlier concept of men's clubs was adapted as comfortable retreats for well-off local men such as merchants and lawyers. Their typical amenities included such things as lounges, dining rooms, and a few rooms for overnight stays. At first these clubs occupied rented spaces or converted houses. But in the nineteenth century's last decades and the early twentieth century, many men's clubs built their own big, luxurious clubhouses.⁵⁹

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

⁵⁶*Brief History*, 21. Another source calls it the Wild Duck Tea Room.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁵⁹ Corbett, *Nomination to the National Register*, Section 8, 37.

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groups built their own clubhouses.⁶⁰ 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.⁶¹ For some time even these purpose-built clubhouses remained residential in scale and often (as with the Century Club's 1905 mansion in San Francisco) looked, from outside, like houses.⁶² This was perhaps quite understandable because for clubhouse interiors, it seems that all women's clubs have tried to provide a home-like atmosphere.⁶³ 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 like men's clubs.⁶⁴

Generally the costliest, in terms of both facilities and membership dues, were the clubhouses built by what typically were called women's athletic clubs.⁶⁵ These luxurious and prestigious buildings actually 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 sleeping rooms for overnight stays. Several large clubhouses of this kind (including the nominated property) were built in California.

Meanwhile, the State was growing rapidly. California'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.⁶⁶

And 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: a tenfold increase.⁶⁷ The automobile would greatly affect Oakland's physical development during the vitally formative early twentieth century.⁶⁸ Writing in 1915, planning consultant Werner Hegemann pointed out the connection between auto usage and "the wealthier part of the city's inhabitants."⁶⁹ He also noted that "[i]n the northeastern residential districts, including all the expensive residences in the hills between Lake Merritt and the University campus in Berkeley, originates quite a considerable part of...[the] so-called carriage trade...."⁷⁰

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Breckinridge, *Women in the Twentieth Century*, 43, 83.

⁶² Corbett, *Nomination to the National Register*, Section 8, 38.

⁶³ Ibid., Section 8, 39.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Breckinridge, *Women in the Twentieth Century*, 82–83.

⁶⁶ Longstreth, *A Short History*, 17.

⁶⁷ Dykstra, *History of the Physical Development*, 227.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 264.

⁶⁹ Hegemann, *Report on a City Plan*, 80.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 92.

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Narrative Statement of Significance (Continued)

Today's Lake Merritt owes very much to Samuel Merritt, who became Oakland's Mayor in 1867. Back then the vicinity had a large, muddy, and smelly side branch of the Oakland Estuary. Mayor Merritt's vision was to build a dam across this slough and thereby cover many of the swampy sections with water and enable creation of a lake north of the dam. The dam itself was completed by 1869. Filling of marshlands gave the lake a distinct, recognizable form.⁷¹ The lake was increasingly recognized for its recreational value, and the area as a desirable place to live.⁷² In 1891 the City acquired the lake and dredging got underway.⁷³ In 1907 a bond issue was passed that enabled formal creation of Lakeside Park. In 1909 the lake was dredged again and many remaining pockets of marshland were filled in.⁷⁴ Since the era of these and other early-twentieth-century improvements, 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."⁷⁵ It has been recognized as "perhaps the single most important element in the city's desired image."⁷⁶

Other Properties in California 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 1922–1923.⁷⁷ The building is six stories high and has the look of an Italian Renaissance palazzo.⁷⁸ It contains diverse social, athletic, and other facilities, including guest rooms and two swimming pools. The building, which is on the National Register, evidently remains in good condition. It is located at 640 Sutter Street in a densely developed area that adjoins the main retail district of Downtown San Francisco. In 1965 the club reincorporated as the Metropolitan Club.⁷⁹
- *Women's Athletic Club of Los Angeles.* The clubhouse of the Women's Athletic Club of Los Angeles reportedly was built in 1924.⁸⁰ It is six or seven stories high, with a Mediterranean look that at the time of construction was described as an example of Italian Renaissance. Evidently it has diverse social, athletic, and other facilities, including guest rooms, a plunge, and a roof garden.⁸¹ Presumably

⁷¹ Longstreth, *A Short History*, 7.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 8.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ Corbett, *Nomination to the National Register*, Section 8, 1, 31.

⁷⁸ Cerny, *An Architectural Guidebook*, 28.

⁷⁹ Corbett, *Nomination to the National Register*, Section 8, 12.

⁸⁰ Gebhard and Winter, *Los Angeles*, 236.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*; Morrow, "The Women's Athletic Club," 54, 56–57, 75.

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the**Narrative Statement of Significance (Continued)**

building remains in good condition. It is located at 1031 South Broadway in the southern part of Downtown Los Angeles.

- *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. Rather than being for just a single club, the building was envisioned as a meeting place for many women's groups, and for little theater and special events.⁸² The clubhouse was built in 1927–1928 and is six stories high, in a Mediterranean palazzo style.⁸³ It provided diverse facilities including meeting or dining rooms, a large auditorium, numerous guest rooms, a basement swimming pool, and rooftop tennis courts. Along parts of its ground-floor facade there were shops.⁸⁴ The building has had a checkered history. By the 1980s it became vacant. The Oakland Ensemble Theater moved in. Then the building was acquired by the Redevelopment Agency, renovated as a performing arts center, then damaged by the 1989 earthquake, and subsequently repaired. The renovations reportedly paid much respect to the building's architectural character.⁸⁵ However, the swimming pool has been filled in and tennis can no longer be played on the roof. The property is now formally called the Malonga Casquelord Center for the Arts. This center provides housing for numerous artists and persons in related fields, a large theater space, and dance studios.⁸⁶ It is located at 1428 Alice Street in a high-density residential part of Oakland's Downtown.
- *Berkeley Women's City Club.* Though it was never called an "athletic club," the Berkeley Women's City Club has offered some athletic activity. The building resulted from the effort of several women's groups to form an umbrella organization and combine their resources.⁸⁷ It was constructed in 1929–1930, is six stories high, and has been described as "Moorish-Romanesque."⁸⁸ Its facilities include various meeting and dining spaces, lounges, many guest rooms, and a swimming pool.⁸⁹ The building, which is on the National Register, appears to be in good condition. In the 1960s the name was changed to Berkeley City Club (and men were admitted as full members). The property is located 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. It was "not so much a single club as a center

⁸² Lavoie, "Oakland Regains Creative Center."

⁸³ Cerny, *An Architectural Guidebook*, 242.

⁸⁴ Lavoie, "Oakland Regains Creative Center."

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*; Allen, "Studio One Art Classes."

⁸⁶ Carson, "Oakland Mayor Sued."

⁸⁷ Puchall, "Miss Morgan Made Waves," 7.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ Landmarks Heritage Foundation, "Welcome to the Berkeley City Club."

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for clubs and clubwomen.”⁹⁰ The building was completed in 1927 and is twelve stories high. Its style

Narrative Statement of Significance (Continued)

has been described as Spanish Baroque.⁹¹ It provided dining rooms, a theater, hotel rooms, club rooms for rent to small clubs, and a swimming pool.⁹² Presumably the building is in good condition. Its basement still has a gym with a lap pool. The property is located on Sutter Street (very near the Woman's Athletic Club of San Francisco). At some time it was renamed the Marines Memorial Club.⁹³

Specific Evaluation of the Nominated Property. A recent book by architectural historian Susan Cerny says, “This concrete chateau facing the lake is one of the most ambitious of the many women's club buildings constructed in the 1920s.”⁹⁴

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. And it appears to have provided more diverse athletic or related facilities than the Berkeley Women's City Club, and perhaps the Women's Club of San Francisco and the Women's City Club of Oakland, likely did.

The nominated property's vertically three-part facade design ably implies the facilities' 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.

Access to and from the nominated property's garage is fitted within the facade logically, yet in a discreet manner that respects this urban building's architectural character.

The use of concrete construction had by the 1920s become common among large urban clubhouses. However, for this building special site conditions prompted an unusual solution at the basement level. Of the privately owned land north of Lakeside Park, the little area that is now the Bellevue-Staten Apartment

⁹⁰ Corbett, *Nomination to the National Register*, Section 8, 24.

⁹¹ Cerny, *An Architectural Guidebook*, 28.

⁹² Corbett, *Nomination to the National Register*, Section 8, 24.

⁹³ Cerny, *An Architectural Guidebook*, 28.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 263.

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District had been almost the last to be developed—likely because of drainage problems.⁹⁵ To quote from a history of the club:

Narrative Statement of Significance (Continued)

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.⁹⁶

Engineer Maurice Couchot evidently had quite relevant prior experience with lakeside soil conditions. He had been consulting engineer for structural design of the Oakland Municipal Auditorium that faces the opposite end of Lake Merritt.⁹⁷ Born in France, Couchot (c. 1871–1933) lived in Alameda. He was an internationally noted structural engineer and an early specialist in reinforced concrete.⁹⁸

Employing some variety or other of period revival architecture was characteristic of the era. However, this property's particular Chateausque exterior style is quite rare in California, especially for urban public or institutional structures. The result is very distinctive. It differs strikingly from the above-listed comparison buildings, whose general stylistic spectrum ranges from Romanesque to Mediterranean to Italian Renaissance.

For the elite Women's Athletic Club of Alameda County, the Chateausque style was very apt. It brought connotations of aristocrats' palatial estates in France (and perhaps also, subliminally, of Commodore Vanderbilt's Chateausque "Biltmore" mansion in North Carolina).

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. Within the facade, the locations of the lobby, the Mural Lounge, and the Dining Room are clearly implied.

Architect E. Geoffrey Bangs (c. 1894–1977⁹⁹) spent his early career working in the office of John Galen Howard. Subsequently he designed many public buildings and public housing projects in Northern California. Among them were UC Berkeley's Lewis Hall and the courthouses for Shasta and Butte Counties.¹⁰⁰ Architect Charles F.B. Roeth, who was his partner in designing the Women's Athletic Club of Alameda County, later designed several important buildings constructed in the 1930s on what is now

⁹⁵ City of Oakland, Oakland Cultural Heritage Survey, Historic Resources Inventory form, 8.

⁹⁶ *Brief History*, 25.

⁹⁷ Shelley, "Municipal Auditorium," 82.

⁹⁸ Oakland Cultural Heritage Survey, Historic Resources Inventory form for Women's Athletic Club, 4.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ University of California, Berkeley, Web page; Helfand, *University of California*, 25, 93, 96.

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UC Berkeley's Clark Kerr Campus.¹⁰¹ In collaboration with engineers Maurice Couchot and Jesse Rosenwald, Roeth designed the former Safeway headquarters on Fourth Street in Oakland.¹⁰²

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

Narrative Statement of Significance (Continued)

To quote from a club history, "The basic motif for the interior decoration was inspired by Marie Antoinette's Petit Trianon."¹⁰³ (That building in Versailles was constructed from 1762 to 1768. After Louis XVI became king in 1774 he gave it to his wife, Queen Marie-Antoinette.¹⁰⁴) The source of inspiration is quite plausible. For instance, the railing of the Petit Trianon's staircase¹⁰⁵ has an intricate element that appears to be paraphrased in the stairway railings (see Photograph 14) at the southwest corner of the nominated property's Lobby. As another example, the Petit Trianon's Louis XV Dining Room¹⁰⁶ has elements, such as doorway treatment, that seem to have been adapted in the nominated property's Mural Lounge.

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

The building's setting, facing the 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. Several of the third floor's guest rooms have access onto lake-facing terraces. Upper-floor public rooms offer fine views across the lake. The building itself has very little setback but its true front yard is Lakeside Park.

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 on a front balcony is small and unobtrusive, and its 1939 construction occurred well within the property's 1928–1958 overall period of significance. 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 1928–1958 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.

¹⁰¹ Helfand, *University of California*, 293–294.

¹⁰² Oakland Cultural Heritage Survey, Historic Resources Inventory form for Women's Athletic Club, 4.

¹⁰³ *Brief History*, 7.

¹⁰⁴ Van der Kemp, Hoog, and Meyer, *Versailles*, 150.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 178.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 179.

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

Significance regarding Social History. The nominated property is significant at the State 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, 1900–1958.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Continued)

In this regard the property's period of significance was 1928–1958. This period began with construction of the clubhouse. Its end point of 1958 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 like emancipation, better education for women, and human rights formed women's clubs.¹⁰⁷ The specific purposes for which they were organized varied enormously from club to club. Writing in 1933, University of Chicago professor Sophonisba Breckinridge observed that women had formed “a bewildering number of organizations” for every conceivable purpose.¹⁰⁸

Around 1900, memberships in women's clubs became a symbol of elite status. Newspapers would list the clubs that they considered fashionable.¹⁰⁹

As the twentieth century began “women were streaming into education, the paid labor force, and political reform movements in unprecedented numbers.”¹¹⁰ The vital struggle for women's suffrage gained momentum. In 1911 women achieved the right to vote in California. In 1919 they won this right at the national level.¹¹¹

Meanwhile, women had increasingly engaged in athletic activities. The history of this participation involved changing opinions about the need for, or desirability of, athletics for women; changing views on

¹⁰⁷ Corbett, *Nomination to the National Register*, Section 8, 22.

¹⁰⁸ Breckinridge, *Women in the Twentieth Century*, 11.

¹⁰⁹ Corbett, *Nomination to the National Register*, Section 8, 22.

¹¹⁰ Cahn, *Coming on Strong*, 7.

¹¹¹ Corbett, *Nomination to the National Register*, Section 8, 19.

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what activities were suitable for them; and a general, though uneven, increase of participation over time.¹¹²

By the mid-nineteenth century much concern had developed that, with urbanization and other societal changes, the health of Americans—especially women—was declining.¹¹³ Dio Lewis argued that women's health problems stemmed from lack of exercise in childhood. He complained that under then-current fashion, many people regarded the pale and fragile girl as more ladylike than one in obviously vigorous

Narrative Statement of Significance (Continued)

health. *Godey's Ladies' Book* proclaimed that exercise restored health—and advised that health should never be hindered by fashion. Many writers viewed the prevailing dress mode, with its tight corsets and heavy skirts, as a major obstacle. Dress reform became closely associated with the campaign for women's health.¹¹⁴

Yet many other writers asserted that women were weaker by their very nature.¹¹⁵ There were fears that strenuous physical activity could injure women and ruin their complexions. Victorian notions of propriety posed another obstacle. All of this lengthily impeded the growth of woman's sports.¹¹⁶

Nonetheless there was progress. In the 1860s and 1870s in America, several women's colleges were opened whose curricula included physical training. One of them was Mills College in Oakland.¹¹⁷ Bryn Mawr's president declared with pride that college women could now be regarded as the very models of feminine health. These physical education programs appeared to prove that women were not by nature feeble, and they strongly influenced popular thought.¹¹⁸

In the 1890s it became fashionable for affluent women to partake of certain sports: golf, yachting, tennis, and horseback riding.¹¹⁹ 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.¹²⁰ In the century's second decade the sportswoman emerged as a powerful cultural symbol.¹²¹

¹¹² Ibid., Section 8, 16.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Stanley, *Rise and Fall*, 42–47.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 41–42.

¹¹⁶ Zophy, "Athletics/Sports," 49.

¹¹⁷ Corbett, *Nomination to the National Register*, Section 8, 7.

¹¹⁸ Stanley, *Rise and Fall*, 50.

¹¹⁹ Corbett, *Nomination to the National Register*, Section 8, 17.

¹²⁰ Cahn, *Coming on Strong*, 7.

¹²¹ Stanley, *Rise and Fall*, 71.

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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.¹²²

A distinct and important aspect of the overall Women's Club Movement was the development of women's athletic clubs.¹²³ 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

Narrative Statement of Significance (Continued)

the old-time scheme of things, than the establishment of women's athletic clubs."¹²⁴

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.¹²⁵ 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.¹²⁶ 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 construction of the clubhouse on Bellevue Avenue.¹²⁷

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

Other Properties in California for Comparison. The same five properties that were listed above as suitable for comparison regarding architecture are also pertinent as to social history. They will be referred to again during the following evaluation.

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. Of the club's early

¹²² Zophy, "Athletics/Sports, 49.

¹²³ Corbett, *Nomination to the National Register*, Section 8, 1, 25.

¹²⁴ Doyle, "San Francisco Women."

¹²⁵ Cahn, *Coming on Strong*, 17.

¹²⁶ Corbett, *Nomination to the National Register*, Section 8, 18.

¹²⁷ *Brief History*, 21-22, 25.

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officers or directors, a dozen had been listed in the 1922 edition of *Who's Who Among the Women of California*.¹²⁸ 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.¹²⁹

Early members of the club included some especially redoubtable clubwomen.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Continued)

One of them was the founder president, Alice Sturgis. The daughter and wife of lawyers, she eventually became an outstanding authority on parliamentary law. Her first book on the subject came out in 1925. Her widely influential *Sturgis' Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure* was published in 1950 and later revised or reprinted as numerous organizations, among them the American Bar Association and the American Medical Association, adopted its rules.¹³⁰ 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. She was club president for three and a half decades: from November 1929¹³¹ to 1964. On the property now there is a plaque rightly recalling her "vision and persistence."

Devoted women like Marion Lohse led the club through good times—and bad. Like countless other groups, the club was seriously affected by the Great Depression and its accompanying huge societal changes, by World War II, and by postwar suburbanization and TV. Yet the club has always pulled through.

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. The one above the mantel in the Terrace Room is a copy (installed in 1946 or 1947¹³²) of

¹²⁸ Lyons, *Who's Who*, various pages.

¹²⁹ *Brief History*, various pages.

¹³⁰ "Alice Sturgis, Expert."

¹³¹ *Brief History*, 5, 26.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 64.

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the 18th century painting "Marionettes" by Jean Honoré Fragonard (1732—1806). The Mural Lounge has copies (painted by a club member, and donated in 1931 or 1932¹³³) of three works by Jean Baptiste Joseph Pater (1695–1736): "Blind Man's Buff" above the mantel and "Picnic Party" and "Garden Party" over the entries.

In a vital sense the club and its activities have represented self-actualization, and empowerment, of women. This mission appears to be subtly expressed by ornamental details at and near the building's entry. Above several openings at the Lobby's perimeter there are decorations with a shell-like element. On each face of the oaken front doors there are more shell-like elements, one of which is a nimbus rising

Narrative Statement of Significance (Continued)

from behind what seems to be the head and face of a goddess. Quite plausibly the goddess is Venus (mythologically associated with a shell)—and symbolizes 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 declared wildfowl refuge in America.¹³⁴ (Association with the refuge is implied by The Bellevue Club's present flying duck emblem.¹³⁵) The lake theme is even underlined, in the clubhouse's Lobby, by Chris Jorgensen's paintings entitled "Echo Lake" and "Glacier Lake."

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.

For generations the club has been cherished by its members. But it must be emphasized that use of the clubhouse has not been limited to the 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. (Countless brides have tossed their bouquets down from the Musicians' Balcony.) Activities in the clubhouse have helped support and stimulate the social and cultural life of the community at large.

Over the years the clubhouse has accommodated a very broad range of activities.

¹³³ Ibid., 76.

¹³⁴ Bagwell, *Oakland*, 126.

¹³⁵ Allen, "Lakeside Landmark."

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The club's 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 in active use.

Cultural activities have included innumerable classes, lectures, dramatic readings, and musicales. (The classes and lectures probably were especially important in the early years, at a time when even many affluent women did not attend college.) Over the years there were 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.

In the early 1940s the club devoted a great deal of its time to aiding the war effort. During much of the war the swimming pool was reserved for the Navy till 3:00 PM five days a week. Navy personnel

Narrative Statement of Significance (Continued)

would arrive in big vehicles for their swimming instruction.¹³⁶

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

In a recent newspaper article Marlene Zuehl of Oakland was quoted as saying:

[Marion Lohse used to] sit on her perch in the musician's alcove over the dining room and take copious notes. And if you were not using the proper fork or spoon, you'd receive a handwritten letter from her denoting the error of your ways.¹³⁷

Since Mrs. Lohse's time the ambiance has become less aristocratic. The organization's name itself has changed, to The Bellevue Club. And for quite some years men have been admitted to full membership. In fact the club's current president is a man.

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 at 1428 Alice Street—in which (despite preservation of architectural features on the exterior and in spaces like the lobby) the original basic atmosphere has been lost.

The nominated property is a stunning and instructive time capsule. Young (24-year-old) club member Marian Kidder was recently quoted as follows:

This place is like a mansion you can play in. A lot of people my age are really into retro, and this is a retro lover's paradise. There are people here who can tell you what it was like when Rudy Vallee ate here. That was really cool.¹³⁸

¹³⁶ *Brief History*, 55.

¹³⁷ Snapp, "Roaring Twenties to Cyberage."

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

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Another young club member is her sister Sarah Kidder, who is an events/marketing/etiquette consultant. She entertains clients, as well as friends, in the clubhouse. She loves the need to dress up, and much appreciates the good service.¹³⁹

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

Previous Historic Ratings. On an evaluation sheet of its own, the City's Oakland Cultural Heritage

Narrative Statement of Significance (Continued)

Survey gave the clubhouse a rank of "A" (highest importance).¹⁴⁰ On a Historic Resources Inventory (DPR 523) form, the survey rated the main building as appearing individually eligible for the National Register.¹⁴¹

The survey also identified the main building as one of the historic Bellevue-Staten Apartment District's two primary, "pivotal" contributors¹⁴²—the other one being the Bellevue-Staten Apartments tower, which is on the National Register.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Oakland Cultural Heritage Survey, Evaluation Sheet for 525 Bellevue Avenue.

¹⁴¹ Oakland Cultural Heritage Survey, Historic Resources Inventory form for Women's Athletic Club, 1, 2.

¹⁴² 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 1928–1958 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>
12	English	Sept. 19, 2008	Bellevue Club	View looking east inside Lobby
13	English	Sept. 19, 2008	Bellevue Club	View looking northeast toward second-floor corridor overlooking Lobby
14	English	Sept. 19, 2008	Bellevue Club	View looking west toward lowest flights of main staircase
15	English	Sept. 19, 2008	Bellevue Club	View looking west through pool area
16	English	Sept. 19, 2008	Bellevue Club	View looking southeast inside Exercise Room
17	English	Sept. 19, 2008	Bellevue Club	View looking southwest, from Musicians' Balcony, toward western side of Mural Lounge
18	English	Sept. 19, 2008	Bellevue Club	View looking south toward chimneypiece in Mural Lounge
19	English	Sept. 19, 2008	Bellevue Club	View looking south or southwest (and up) toward part of Mural Lounge's ceiling and southern side
20	English	Sept. 19, 2008	Bellevue Club	View looking east, from Musicians' Balcony, into Dining Room
21	English	Sept. 19, 2008	Bellevue Club	View looking east in Dining Room's side aisle
22	English	Sept. 19, 2008	Bellevue Club	View looking northwest toward Dining Room's western side and Musicians' Balcony
23	English	Sept. 19, 2008	Bellevue Club	View looking north or northwest in Terrace Room

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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.