

**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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. 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.



## 1. Name of Property

Historic name: Ellison, The  
 Other names/site number: The Ellison Apartments  
 Name of related multiple property listing:  
N/A  
 (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

## 2. Location

Street & number: 15 Paloma Avenue  
 City or town: Venice State: California County: Los Angeles  
 Not For Publication:  Vicinity:

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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 at the following level(s) of significance:

\_\_\_ national      \_\_\_ statewide      \_\_\_ local  
 Applicable National Register Criteria:  
 \_\_\_ A      \_\_\_ B      \_\_\_ C      \_\_\_ D

_____ <b>Signature of certifying official/Title:</b>	_____ <b>Date</b>
_____ <b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b>	

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.	
_____ <b>Signature of commenting official:</b>	_____ <b>Date</b>
_____ <b>Title :</b>	
<b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b>	

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#### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

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Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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#### 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

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**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>          </u>	buildings
<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	sites
<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	structures
<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/hotel  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/multiple dwelling  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> & 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY REVIVALS

Mediterranean Revival

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**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Brick

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

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### Summary Paragraph

The Ellison stands at 15 Paloma Avenue in Venice, CA. The Mediterranean Revival style five-story, H-shaped building sits on a flat, rectangular parcel and is primarily clad in red brick with glazed, white brick detailing. The building faces Paloma Avenue to the south, Speedway to the west, Dudley Court to the north and a narrow, paved alley to the east. Along the west elevation there is also a very narrow concrete sidewalk. There are no significant landscape features. The surrounding area is primarily residential with single- and multi-family properties ranging from one to five stories. Ocean Drive Walk, located one block to the west, is a heavily commercial thoroughfare with hotels, restaurants, and shopping. The building retains all aspects of integrity.

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### Narrative Description

The building is one block east of Ocean Front Drive and the beach, and two blocks south of Rose Avenue, traditionally considered the northern boundary of Venice. The Venice Canals Historic District (1904, NR 2015) is located approximately one mile to the south. The Lincoln Place Apartments (1949-1951, NR 2015) is located approximately 1.5 miles to the east.

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The south, primary, elevation, faces Paloma Avenue (**Photographs 1-3**). The east and west sections of the elevation are each three bays wide, with a deep courtyard separating the two. The west section is primarily clad in red brick with glazed white brick detailing, and stepped portions of the first through fourth floors are clad in scored stucco resembling blocks. The stucco was added to the exterior as early as 1933, as part of earthquake repair and reinforcement. On the first through fourth floors, the two westernmost bays contain 1/1 original wood windows and the easternmost bay has no openings. On the fifth floor, the two westernmost bays contain 1/1 original wood windows and the easternmost bay has been infilled with glazed white brick. The east section is primarily clad in red brick with glazed white brick detailing, and stepped portions of the first through fourth floors are clad in scored stucco resembling blocks. On the first through fourth floors, the two easternmost bays contain 1/1 original wood windows and the westernmost bay has no openings. On the fifth floor, the two easternmost bays contain 1/1 original wood windows and the westernmost bay has been infilled with glazed white brick.

The west elevation faces Speedway and is thirteenth bays wide (**Photographs 4 and 5**). The west section is clad in red brick with glazed white brick detailing. The first, fourth, sixth, ninth, tenth, and thirteenth bays from the south contain larger rectangular window openings with a combination of plywood and scored stucco infill and paired 1/1 original wood windows. The second, third, seventh, eighth, eleventh, and twelfth bays from the south contain smaller rectangular window openings with a combination of plywood and scored stucco infill and paired 1/1 original wood windows. In the fifth bay from the south, the first floor contains a secondary entrance with plywood infill and a late-twentieth century security gate. The elevated entrance is accessed by three painted cast stone steps and has an arched glazed white brick surround with a stucco keystone. Above the entrance are three window openings that are staggered between the floors and contain 2-light replacement windows.

The north elevation faces Dudley Court (**Photograph 6**). The east and west sections of the elevation are each two bays wide, with a deep courtyard separating the two. The first through fourth floors of each section are clad in stucco. The fifth floor of each section is clad in red brick with glazed white brick detailing. On both sections, each bay on all floors contains paired 1/1 original wood windows.

The east elevation faces a narrow alley (**Photograph 6**). It is thirteen bays wide and primarily clad in red brick. A portion of the first and second floors in the center of the elevation is clad in stucco. The first, fourth, sixth, ninth, tenth, and thirteenth bays from the south contain larger rectangular window openings with a combination of plywood and scored stucco infill and paired 1/1 original wood windows. The second, third, seventh, eighth, eleventh, and twelfth bays from the south contain smaller rectangular window openings with a combination of plywood and scored stucco infill and paired 1/1 original wood windows. In the fifth bay from the south, there is no first floor opening. Above the entrance are three window openings that are staggered between the floors and contain 2-light replacement windows.

The south courtyard faces Paloma Avenue (**Photographs 7 and 8**). On the east and west sides of the courtyard, the southernmost bays match the remainder of the south elevations and are clad in

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red brick with glazed white detailing and each contain a paired 1/1 original wood window. The remainder of the elevations contain open balconies with painted concrete floor plates, painted concrete columns, and painted open metal railings. On the lower portions of the elevations, the columns are clad in matching red brick. The open balconies provide the only access to the units, as there are no interior hallways. The exterior walls of the building are clad in red brick and each unit has a slightly recessed, single, 1-light single-leaf wood door with an original painted wood surround and a single or paired 1/1 original wood windows.

The north elevation of the courtyard is the formal entrance to the building. The first floor of the elevation contains a straight-run set of painted concrete steps with brick wing walls topped by painted brick coping and concrete planters at the end. The second floor is enclosed with red brick with glazed white brick detailing around the openings. There is a painted wood cornice below a red brick pediment and flanking angled walls, all of which have glazed white brick coping. Centered in the pediment is a tiled sign with a white background and red lettering reading "The Ellison." The sign is also surrounded by glazed white brick. The elevation contains a centered single-leaf wood door with narrow 1-light wood sidelights, all of which has a marble surround. The outermost bays contain 1-light wood windows.

The third floor contains an open walkway with a canvas awning above. The fourth and fifth floors contain open walkways that have decorative painted metal railings. On each floor, the walkways provide access to a centered, open cinderblock elevator shaft, added in 1967.<sup>1</sup> The elevator doors open to the walkways in the south courtyard. The shaft is topped by a steep roof with a canvas awning on the south side. The floor of the courtyard has a centered painted concrete walk flanked by extensive landscaping and trees. An open metal gate separates the courtyard from the sidewalk.

The north courtyard faces Dudley Court and is slightly deeper than the south courtyard (**Photograph 9**). Like the south courtyard, the east and west elevations consist of open balconies with painted concrete floor plates, painted concrete columns and painted open metal railings (**Photograph 11**). The open balconies provide the only access to the units, as there are no interior hallways. The exterior walls of the building are clad in red brick and each unit has a slightly recessed, single, 1-light single-leaf wood door with an original painted wood surround and a single or paired 1/1 original wood windows. The north elevation of the courtyard consists of partially painted brick on the first and second floors and the rear of the open balconies and cinderblock elevator shaft. The floor of the courtyard has a centered painted concrete walk flanked by extensive landscaping and trees. An open metal gate separates the courtyard from the sidewalk.

Both sections of the building have a flat roof with a red brick parapet topped with glazed, white brick. There is a stucco band below the roofline on the north, west and south elevations and a brick cap along the roofline (**Photographs 1-6**).<sup>2</sup> The west section has a large one-story

<sup>1</sup> The building permit for the elevator dates to December 29, 1967 (Permit #1967LA58671).

<sup>2</sup> A building permit for the removal of the cornice and the stucco repair was issued on August 5, 1953 (Permit #1953VE08745).

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penthouse to the south of the center of the floor plate, which spans the width of the section (**Photographs 24 and 25**). It is clad in brick and stucco with a gabled roof. The south elevation contains a single, late twentieth century single-leaf door. The west elevation has two replacement window openings. The north elevation has a centered single, late twentieth century single-leaf door flanked by two 2-light wood windows. There is also a one-story, brick, stucco penthouse with late twentieth century siding and a shed roof near the northeast corner (**Photograph 25**). The south elevation has a single, late twentieth century single-leaf door. The west elevation has two window openings with early twentieth century windows. The east section has a one-story, brick and stucco penthouse with a flat roof near the northwest corner. The south elevation has a single opening. The west, north, and east elevations have no openings. There is also a one-story, brick and stucco penthouse with a flat roof to the south of the center of the floor plate (**Photograph 26**). The south and west elevations each have a single opening. The north and east elevations have no openings. There is also mechanical equipment and solar panels scattered throughout both sections. Each of the open balconies has a shed roof with asphalt shingles.

### *Interior*

The interior of the building is largely the same on all floors. The open balconies in the courtyard provide access to the units, which are arranged in a linear fashion in the east and west sections of the building. There are six units on each floor of each section. In general, each unit contains two larger rooms, traditionally used for a living room and a bedroom, and three smaller rooms, traditionally used as a bathroom, closet, and cold kitchen (**Photographs 13-16 and 20-23**).<sup>3</sup> Throughout the building, the finishes are primarily original, including exposed wood floors, painted plaster and exposed brick walls, painted plaster ceilings, painted wood window and door trim, painted wood picture rail and baseboards and painted wood interior doors. The two main rooms are separated by painted wood pocket doors. One of the most interesting and unique elements in each unit is a built in painted oak wood cabinet, which appears to have drawers below and open shelving above (**Photographs 13, 16, 20, and 21**). The bottommost portion of the cabinet contains a bed that can be pulled out like a drawer. This enabled each room to be used as a private sleeping area. The bathrooms are typically located behind the wood cabinet and are elevated two steps above the main floor, to accommodate the roll out bed in the closed position. The bathrooms retain their original cast iron claw foot bathtubs. The kitchens throughout have late twentieth century finishes. In the lobby, located in the hyphen of the H-shape on the second floor, the finishes include a wooden reception desk and wood trim, painted plaster walls and a late twentieth century tile floor (**Photograph 10**).

The building also has two stairways and two elevators. The U-return stairways are located to the east and west of the hyphen of the H-shape (**Photographs 12 and 19**). They have wood treads and risers, painted wood railings, wood landings, and painted plaster walls, and provide access between all floors. The primary elevator, added in 1967, is located in the center of the hyphen of the H-shape (**Photograph 10**). The original elevator is located to the south of the center of the floor plate in the west section, adjacent to the stairway (**Photograph 19**). Both elevators provide access between the second and fifth floors.

<sup>3</sup> A cold kitchen does not have any kind of stove, oven, or formal cooking device.

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*Integrity*

The Ellison retains a high degree of integrity. Both the overall form and the defining exterior characteristics remain, including its red and glazed white brick, regular window openings, unique open balconies and recessed entrance, and open courtyards. The only significant exterior alterations are the occasional replacement window and late twentieth century infill, installed in the original window opening, and the application of exterior stucco in select locations, as part of a seismic retrofit effort. Neither prevent the building from continuing to be read as a residential hotel from which it derives its significance, nor do they detract from its overall significance. There have been no significant additions or demolitions and no new openings have been added. On the interior, all of the original apartment layout and circulation patterns remain. The existing interior finishes are also largely original, with the exception of new kitchen finishes and an occasional replacement exterior unit door.

There has been no change to the location of the building since the time of construction and that location was the primary catalyst for the building's construction. The setting is also intact with no changes to the immediate surroundings, either inside of or adjacent to the property boundary. The design elements that characterize the building as a residential hotel remain, including the individual units, lobby, open balconies and walkways, and large courtyards, meaning that the property retains integrity of design. Regarding the materials and workmanship, there have been no substantial changes to any of these elements, other than sections of exterior stucco, and, as such, the building continues to read as an archetypal early twentieth century residential hotel. The building also retains integrity of feeling and association, because it retains the other aspects of integrity and because the building continues to operate in the residential function for which it was constructed.



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## 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

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

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

**Period of Significance**

1913

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

**Significant Dates**

1913

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

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

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

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

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

**Architect/Builder**

Unknown

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

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**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Ellison is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places at the local level of significance under Criterion C in the area of Architecture, as a significant local example of a new, late nineteenth and early twentieth century property type: a multi-family, residential hotel building. Built during a time of demographic shifts for Venice—an influx of new residents and lessening of a dependence on traditional housing situations—these types of buildings offered a novel alternative to the city’s new residents, and relates to the broader theme of commercial development in the city in the 1910s and 1920s. As one of the earliest, largest, and most intact examples of its type in Venice, The Ellison is representative of this initial wave of multi-family residential hotel housing in which the length of stay was longer than that of a traditional hotel but did not have the same level of permanence as a standard apartment. The period of significance is 1913, the date of construction of the building.

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

*Brief History of the Neighborhood*

Venice, California was established in 1905 by developer Abbot Kinney as a resort town. Kinney not only laid out and sold parcels of land, but also zoned for both the fundamentals that comprise a formal city, such as single- and multi-family dwellings, hotels, commercial enterprises and post offices and the amenities associated with resort towns, such as roller rinks, dance pavilions, swimming pools, dance halls, aquariums and restaurants. His crowning achievement in this latter category was Kinney Pier, completed in 1910. Venice was initially successful not only because of its comprehensive appeal as a beach town, but also because of its proximity to greater Los Angeles. The early trolley system connected Venice to downtown Los Angeles by 1900, giving the area the best of both worlds: life at the beach with adjacent urbanity.<sup>4</sup> Between 1910 and 1920, Venice experienced substantial growth, with the population increasing from 3,119 to 10,385.<sup>5</sup> The built environment saw a comparable rise during that time, particularly as concerned multi-family dwellings and hotels, built to “accommodate the influx of visitors.”<sup>6</sup> By the middle of the decade, approximately only half of the lots in the North Walk Streets neighborhood had been developed but, by the end of the 1920s, nearly all of the lots were full, particularly among those fronting the ocean.<sup>7</sup> Growth in Venice continued solidly until 1920 when Kinney died and there was no established plan to further his vision. In 1926, the town was officially consolidated

<sup>4</sup> “The Venice Canals Historic District.” *National Register Nomination* (1976): 8;1.

<sup>5</sup> “Venice Timeline.” <https://www.westland.net/venicehistory/articles/1910.htm>. Accessed on July 7, 2017.

<sup>6</sup> SurveyLA, “Historic Resources Survey Report – Venice Community Plan Area,” 10. [http://preservation.lacity.org/sites/default/files/Venice%20Survey%20Report\\_FINAL\\_0.pdf](http://preservation.lacity.org/sites/default/files/Venice%20Survey%20Report_FINAL_0.pdf). Accessed on July 6, 2017.

<sup>7</sup> “Santa Monica and Venice City Directory,” 1915-1916; SurveyLA, “Historic Resources Survey Report – Venice Community Plan Area,” 19.

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with the city of Los Angeles and, while it continued to be a popular outpost, it would be nearly 100 years until interest in Venice once again reached its initial peak.

Although the area comprises less than 2,000 acres, Venice naturally contains a number of smaller neighborhoods. There are the heavily commercial areas concentrated along Ocean Front Walk, at the intersection of Windward and Pacific Avenues and along Abbot Kinney Boulevard. As well as the corresponding residential enclaves, including the Venice Canals district, the historically African American neighborhood of Oakwood, and the walk streets area,<sup>8</sup> located in the northwest section of Venice.

This latter neighborhood, which runs parallel to and just west of Ocean Drive Walk and the Pacific Ocean, is the setting for the nominated property. The significance of the neighborhood has been carefully detailed by SurveyLA in their “Historic Resources Survey Report – North Venice Walk Streets Historic District.” In summary, the “North Venice Walk Streets Historic District is significant as [a] unique example of early-20<sup>th</sup> century residential development oriented on walk streets in Venice.”<sup>9</sup>

In 1891, Abbot Kinney and Francis G. Ryan purchased a 1.5 mile, 275 acre beachfront portion of Santa Monica, which extended from Strand Street to Mildred Avenue and eventually came to be known as the “Venice of America.” Their first phase of development involved the north end of the tract in an area they called Ocean Park. After Ryan died in 1898, Kinney acquired three new partners in 1902: Alexander Fraser, Henry Gage, and George Merritt Jones. From 1902 to 1904, the partners moved their development efforts to the southern portion of the parcel, called the Country Club tract, and the center portion of the parcel, called the Golden Bay tract and in which The Ellison is located.

The Golden Bay tract is particularly known as the earliest local planning example of streets specifically allocated as drive streets, for vehicular use, or walk streets, for pedestrian use. Architecturally, the earliest buildings “reflected the simplistic aesthetic of the beach community and Craftsman, vernacular, and similar cottage styles prevailed.”<sup>10</sup> By the 1910s and 1920s, the use of Revivalist styles became more common, which reflects the date and style of The Ellison.

#### *Development of The Ellison*

As with much of Venice, the block on which The Ellison was located had been divided into a series of lots, as part of the Golden State tract. On February 20, 1912, the owners of the lot, Charles H. and Ella E. Crawford, sold the rear (east) portion to William and Myrtle Cornett Ellison for \$10.<sup>11</sup> On April 9, 1913, the front (west) portion was sold to the Ellisons by Ella J.

<sup>8</sup> A walk street is defined as having no vehicular access and is exclusively reserved for pedestrians.

<sup>9</sup> SurveyLA, “Historic Resources Survey Report – North Venice Walk Streets Historic District,” 176. [http://preservation.lacity.org/sites/default/files/Venice\\_Districts\\_175\\_330\\_0.pdf](http://preservation.lacity.org/sites/default/files/Venice_Districts_175_330_0.pdf). Accessed on July 6, 2017.

<sup>10</sup> SurveyLA, “Historic Resources Survey Report – North Venice Walk Streets Historic District,” 177. [http://preservation.lacity.org/sites/default/files/Venice\\_Districts\\_175\\_330\\_0.pdf](http://preservation.lacity.org/sites/default/files/Venice_Districts_175_330_0.pdf). Accessed on July 6, 2017.

<sup>11</sup> Deed Book #4985 (20 February 1912): 33-34.

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Clauson.<sup>12</sup> Shortly thereafter, the Ellisons began construction on a residential hotel with fifty-eight, 2-room units, which they would solely operate.<sup>13</sup> The residential hotel didn't include any commercial space but there was a "sun parlor" located on the roof, for the use of all the tenants.

Period advertisements for the building list it as being offered both by the week and the month, which was typical for a residential hotel at the time, thus differentiating it from a standard apartment building that would require a long-term lease, or a standard hotel that would offer rooms by the night, at a minimum. In 1916, a newspaper article listed the building as one of eleven in Venice that offered a "temporary home to transient visitors..."<sup>14</sup> By 1928, this classification still held as a newspaper advertisement offered the building as an option to both "transient and permanent guests."<sup>15</sup>

Shortly after the building opened, a 1914 advertisement listed it as "up to date and modern" being "convenient to cars, amusements and for having 3-room apartments with private bath."<sup>16</sup> This notion of having only a multi-room offering, in contrast to the standard hotel, which would have at least had a single-room option, again reinforced the notion that this configuration of building was an emerging type. By the 1920s, the 2- or 3-room unit was the most common room type in mid-priced residential hotels.<sup>17</sup>

By 1928, the weekly winter rate ranged from \$10-25 and the monthly rate ranged from \$35-85 and the hotel was touted as offering access to the "beach, church, golf, amusements. 30 minutes to theaters, shopping centers of Los Angeles and Hollywood" as well as providing furnished apartments with the early twentieth century conveniences of Frigidaire refrigerators, telephones in each room and an elevator (**Figure 9**).<sup>18</sup> The distinction of a seasonal, winter rate is important to note because it clarifies the transient nature of the rentals and also the nature of the residential community in Venice at that time.

In reviewing period newspaper articles and census records, The Ellison was home to a large range of transient tenants, most of who remained in the building for less than a year. Perhaps not surprisingly, there was a steady stream of semi-famous actors and actresses, who called the building home temporarily.<sup>19</sup> These included Helen Chandler (d. 1965), who played opposite

<sup>12</sup> Deed Book #5514 (9 April 1913): 26-27.

<sup>13</sup> The Ellisons continued to operate the hotel through the 1950s.

<sup>14</sup> "Venice Plans for Record Season." *The San Bernadino County Sun* (11 April 1916): 6. The other establishments listed included the Hotel Waldorf, Hotel St. Mark, Fremont Apartments, Ellison Apartments, Southern Apartments, Reed Apartments, Westminster Apartments, Yarmouth Apartments, Potter Apartments, Castle Apartments, and Dudley Apartments. The terms "hotel" and "apartment" were both somewhat loosely applied to the title of buildings.

<sup>15</sup> "Advertisement." *The Christian Science Monitor* (27 April 1928): 12.

<sup>16</sup> "Advertisement." *The Los Angeles Times* (14 June 1914): 104.

<sup>17</sup> Paul Groth, *Living Downtown: The History of Residential Hotel in the United States* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994): 69.

<sup>18</sup> "Advertisement." *The Los Angeles Times* (11 May 1923): A17; "Advertisement." *The Los Angeles Times* (16 November 1928): 14.

<sup>19</sup> Venice was a popular residential destination for those who worked in Hollywood. Notable residents from the early twentieth century included W.C. Fields, Isadora Duncan, and Fatty Arbuckle.

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Bela Lugosi in *Dracula*, and died at the hotel; Vera Steadman, an actress who starred in nearly 100 silent films, who lived there in 1921; and Peggy Hamilton, another silent movie actress who lived there in the 1920s.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, “so many writers, editors and composers made mid-priced hotels their homes that they became another distinct client group.”<sup>21</sup> Jim Morrison of *The Doors*, as well as celebrities Clara Bow, Philomene Long, and Charles Bukowski may have lived at the residential hotel, although no primary sources were found to document these claims.

The dominant resident type, however, was the average middle-income professional. The 1920 census shows that the building was primarily occupied by a combination of retired married couples without children and married couples with children, most of whom ranged from teenagers to those in their early 20s. All of the residents were white and able to read and write and most were native to the United States, coming from a huge range of states, including California, Pennsylvania, Idaho, Ohio, New York, Vermont, Tennessee, Florida, Iowa, Maryland and Oregon, in keeping with the semi-transient nature of the building. Of those few residents who had immigrated to the United States, the provided countries of origin included Russia, Denmark and Germany. Their range of professions was equally varied, including a dentist, composer, clerk, actor, bookkeeper at a country club, auditor at an oil company, account manager at a bank, a dry good merchant asset manager and car dealer. Other period professional directories show that the building was also inhabited by engineers, teachers, and movie directors.

Both the 1930 and 1940 censuses show a similar demographic, plus more families with young children and fewer residents born outside of the United States. The professional categories in both decades were similar to those of 1920 and included golf club janitor, riding stable instructor, custom tailor, grocery clerk, bank accountant, security salesman, magazine salesman, motion picture laborer, motion picture projectionist, drug store cashier, drug salesman, bookkeeper, automobile salesman, aircraft anodizer, and film cutter. It is important to note that, with the exception of the Ellison family, there are no consistent resident names between the censuses, again confirming the transient nature of the building.

In *Living Downtown: The History of Residential Hotels in the United States*, Paul Groth discusses the types of residents found in typical mid-level residential hotels, a description that coincides with those who lived at The Ellison at a number of points. Groth states that the entire reason that such a building type emerged was that it “supplied housing needed for a mobile professional population that was expanding the American urban economy.”<sup>22</sup> The range of professions listed above clearly fall into this category of expanding white-collar positions. It was also an “alternative choice of residence for people whose lives did not mesh with a six- to ten-room single-family suburban house,” particularly bachelors, young married, retired, or middle-income couples.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Michelle Tolini Finamore, *Hollywood Before Glamour: Fashion in American Silent Film* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013): 143.

<sup>21</sup> Groth, 64.

<sup>22</sup> Groth, 56.

<sup>23</sup> Groth, 56.

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Another aspect of The Ellison, both notable and in keeping with its typology, is the presence of Mr. and Mrs. Ellison as the building owners and managers. This was considered a particularly advantageous situation and was most common among mid-priced hotels where a single person or family could undertake such a project.<sup>24</sup> For a single person to develop a luxury hotel would clearly be a far more significant endeavor.

This new housing type of a residential hotel was particularly suited to Venice. As a newer city, there was more interest in and acceptance of the flexibility of residential hotels. As a vacation destination, it was more appropriate from a practical perspective that it catered to long-term, and not full-time, residents.

### *The Growth of the Residential Hotel in the Early Twentieth Century*

Hotels, as defined by early twentieth century standards, arose in the United States for a variety of reasons, the most common being rapidly increasing wealth of the American elite, a general restlessness of the American population, the rise of the city center and the phenomenal growth of the railroads.<sup>25</sup> The first hotel in the United States was the City Hotel, which opened in 1794 on Broadway in New York City.<sup>26</sup> Advancements in hotels quickly followed including the first hotel with a la carte dining in the 1820s, the first “modern” hotel in the 1830s and the first hotel with all private baths in 1888.<sup>27</sup> In general, there are four broad types of hotels: palace hotels, mid-priced hotels, rooming houses, and cheap lodging houses.<sup>28</sup> Of these, only the first two were still considered hotels in the twentieth century. Almost from the beginning, they catered to both temporary and more permanent residents, a trend that continued until the 1960s.<sup>29</sup>

In California in the early twentieth century, a hotel was defined as “any house or building, or portion thereof, containing six or more guest rooms which are let or hired out to be occupied or are occupied by six or more guests.”<sup>30</sup> In Venice specifically, a 1914 ordinance defined a “hotel, boarding house, apartment house or lodging house” as “any building having 15 rooms... in which furnished rooms are rented to the public.”<sup>31</sup> Several characteristics of a mid-priced residential hotel can help to put The Ellison into a larger context.

One of the most significant delineators between a hotel or residential hotel and a standard apartment building is the presence of a full kitchen.<sup>32</sup> In the early twentieth century, an apartment was defined as “families living independently of one another and doing their own

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<sup>24</sup> Groth, 170, 173.

<sup>25</sup> Brian McGinty. *The Palace Inns: A Connoisseur's Guide to Historic American Hotels* (Harrisburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1978): 14.

<sup>26</sup> McGinty, 13.

<sup>27</sup> McGinty, 16, 20.

<sup>28</sup> These are clearly classified in Groth, 26.

<sup>29</sup> Groth, 1.

<sup>30</sup> Groth, 5.

<sup>31</sup> Venice City Ordinance No. 510, 1914.

<sup>32</sup> Groth, 7.

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cooking.”<sup>33</sup> As The Ellison provided each a unit with a refrigerator only and not a hot plate or other cooking device, it falls squarely under the category of residential hotel.

The presence of a bathroom in every unit, as opposed to down the hall, for example, clearly place The Ellison in the category of a mid-priced establishment, rather than a rooming or lodging house, which would not have offered such a luxury.<sup>34</sup>

The rooftop sun parlor was another amenity that distinguished the building from a standard apartment offering. Given the climate of Venice and the proximity of the building to the ocean, this was a distinct circumstance that the owners were sensible to exploit. This was also a common feature among similar local hotels and residential hotels, all of who were eager to capitalize on their locations. The Potter Apartments (1912), located approximately half a mile south from The Ellison, added an observation room to their top floor in 1915.<sup>35</sup>

Architecturally, The Ellison was very much in keeping with both its immediate surroundings and the larger typology of residential hotels. When Abbot Kinney was designing Venice, he decreed that all exteriors should be completed in the Venetian Revival style. This approach was emulated in Venice through the building boom of the early 1920s.<sup>36</sup> The selection of the Mediterranean Revival style by the Ellisons, a style largely synonymous with the Venetian Revival style, firmly established the building both within the architectural vocabulary of Venice and as an intact, archetypal example of a multi-story dwelling.

The configuration of the building itself was also in keeping with national trends. E-, C-, or H-shaped buildings were common as they maximized the number of rooms, maximized number of desirable rooms and enabled the introduction of the cross-ventilation and light.<sup>37</sup> The two light courts at The Ellison were also typical in that they reflected the more stringent building requirements of the early twentieth century.<sup>38</sup> The use of the elevator also took advantage of the relatively small and narrow lot, as they did in most urban environments. the exterior hallways were also considered an asset, as “some residents also preferred hotels with side corridors to the street or cafeteria so they could avoid the public lobby and the routine surveillance of the hotel desk clerks.”<sup>39</sup> Even the location of the hotel adjacent to Ocean Front Walk reflected the larger urban trend of the “specialization of whole neighborhoods” by creating a “hotel district.”<sup>40</sup>

### *Mediterranean Revival Style*

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<sup>33</sup> Groth, 7.

<sup>34</sup> Groth, 70.

<sup>35</sup> Roger Brevoort, “Biltmore by the Sea, Apartment Hotel.” [http://www.venicenc.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/417\\_Ocean\\_Front\\_Walk\\_Historical\\_Study\\_Biltmore\\_By\\_the\\_Sea\\_October12015.pdf](http://www.venicenc.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/417_Ocean_Front_Walk_Historical_Study_Biltmore_By_the_Sea_October12015.pdf). Accessed on July 10, 2017.

<sup>36</sup> SurveyLA, “Historic Resources Survey Report – Venice Community Plan Area,” 8.

<sup>37</sup> Groth, 183.

<sup>38</sup> Groth, 72.

<sup>39</sup> Groth 183; Groth, 70.

<sup>40</sup> Groth, 191.



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The Mediterranean Revival style was originally inspired by the Italian Renaissance and Venetian Gothic villas along the Mediterranean Sea. As post-World War I America gained increasing exposure to and appreciation of Europe in general and its particular luxuries, there was a comparable increasing desire to bring those luxuries closer to home. The style was particularly popular in the vacation areas of California and Florida in the 1920s and 1930s as real estate developers counted on its ability to reference that seaside idyll.

The Ellison represents an early example of the Mediterranean Revival style in Venice, no doubt influenced by Kinney's overarching vision for his development, and also an intact one, as few examples remain either at all or in such good condition. Although certainly not one of the most elaborate manifestations of the style, it is typical of a more restrained, middle-class building and contains many of its traditional characteristics, including a symmetrical floor plan, regular fenestration pattern, and balanced façades.

Other prominent examples of the Mediterranean Revival style in in Southern California include the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles (1921, demolished 2005) and Pasadena City Hall (1927).

#### *Comparable Buildings*

Due to the somewhat vague nature of the building type and the absence of similar buildings in Venice that have been listed on the National Register of Historic Places, there are no absolute comparables to The Ellison. A number of similar establishments are located nearby, which serve to place the property in a larger context.<sup>41</sup>

In reviewing similar properties in Venice of a comparable function, age, scale, and function, The Ellison clearly stands out as an intact example of a large, architecturally distinct, multiple-unit building from the early twentieth century. Constructed in 1913, The Ellison was one of the earliest multi-story residential buildings in Venice. The oldest such building in Venice is St. Mark's Hotel (1905), located at 19 E. Windward Avenue. Numerous others were constructed in the early 1910s, including the Southern Apartments (1912), the Thornton Towers (1913) and the Ames Apartments (1913).

The Ellison stands at five stories, significantly larger than all of its counterparts. Based on a survey of thirteen similar buildings, the vast majority were only three stories in height. The only other similar five-story building is the King George Hotel (1912), at 5 Rose Avenue, two blocks away. The King George Hotel is approximately half the size of The Ellison, does not have any kind of lightwell or courtyard, and is much more aesthetically streamlined. The Hotel Waldorf (1913), at 1217 S. Ocean Front Walk, was originally built with four stories and a fifth floor was added circa 1915.

Typically, all multiple-unit buildings are long and narrow buildings to match the original parcel lines of Venice. The Ellison, however, sits on a double parcel, which makes it unique among comparable buildings. As such, the building is able to have an H-shape, affording it double

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<sup>41</sup> The comparables are based both first-hand surveys and on the existing comprehensive surveys of Venice recorded by SurveyLA.

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courtyards, which provide the units with additional light and air, increases the privacy between units, eliminates the central corridor, and takes advantage of the pleasant climate in which the building is located. The only other comparable buildings that depart from the standard rectangular floor plate are the Potter Apartments (1912), which has a T-shaped floor plate, the Phoenix House (1913), which has a shallow C-shaped floor plate and the Admiral Apartments (1924), which has a shallow I-shaped floor plate.

The use of the Mediterranean Revival style at The Ellison was typical of Venice in general and unique among its remaining buildings. The vast majority of comparable buildings are either designed without a specific style or have been altered so dramatically that no style remains. Exceptions to this are Biltmore by the Sea (1921), designed in the Venetian Revival style, the Ames Apartments (1913), designed in the Renaissance Revival style, and an unnamed building at 44 E. Navy Street (1910), designed in the Neoclassical style.

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**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- 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 # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
  - Other State agency
  - Federal agency
  - Local government
  - University
  - Other
- Name of repository: SurveyLA

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** \_\_\_\_\_

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**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** less than one acre

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 33.993753                      Longitude: -118.478748

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Lots 2, 4 and 6 of Block 4, Golden Bay Tract, City of Los Angeles, California.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary includes the property historically associated with the resource.

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### 11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Logan Ferguson, Senior Associate  
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telephone: (215) 636-0192  
date: July 2017, Revised August 2017

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### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

### Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

### Photo Log

Name of Property:	The Ellison
City or Vicinity:	Venice
County:	Los Angeles
State:	California
Photographer:	Robert Powers
Date Photographed:	July 2017

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 1 of 26 South and west elevations, view northeast
- 2 of 26 South elevation, Entrance, view north

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- 3 of 26 South and east elevations, view northwest
- 4 of 26 West elevation, view southeast
- 5 of 26 West and north elevations, view southeast
- 6 of 26 North and east elevations, view southwest
- 7 of 26 First floor, entrance, view north
- 8 of 26 First floor, south courtyard, view south
- 9 of 26 First floor, north courtyard, view south
- 10 of 26 Second floor, lobby, view west
- 11 of 26 Second floor, hallway, view north
- 12 of 26 Second floor, stairway, view east
- 13 of 26 Second floor, view east
- 14 of 26 Second floor, view west
- 15 of 26 Fourth floor, view northeast<sup>42</sup>
- 16 of 26 Fourth floor, view west
- 17 of 26 Fourth floor, elevator, view northwest
- 18 of 26 Fourth floor, hallway, view southeast
- 19 of 26 Fourth floor, stairway, view northeast
- 20 of 26 Fifth floor, view northeast
- 21 of 26 Fifth floor, view west
- 22 of 26 Fifth floor, view southeast
- 23 of 26 Fifth floor, view north

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<sup>42</sup> All third floor rooms were occupied, precluding photographs.

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24 of 26 Roof, view north

25 of 26 Roof, view south

26 of 26 Roof, view east

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Figure 7. Floor Plan/Photo Key—Fifth Floor

Figure 8. Floor Plan/Photo Key—Roof

Figure 9. “Advertisement.” *The Christian Science Monitor* (21 December 1928): 17.

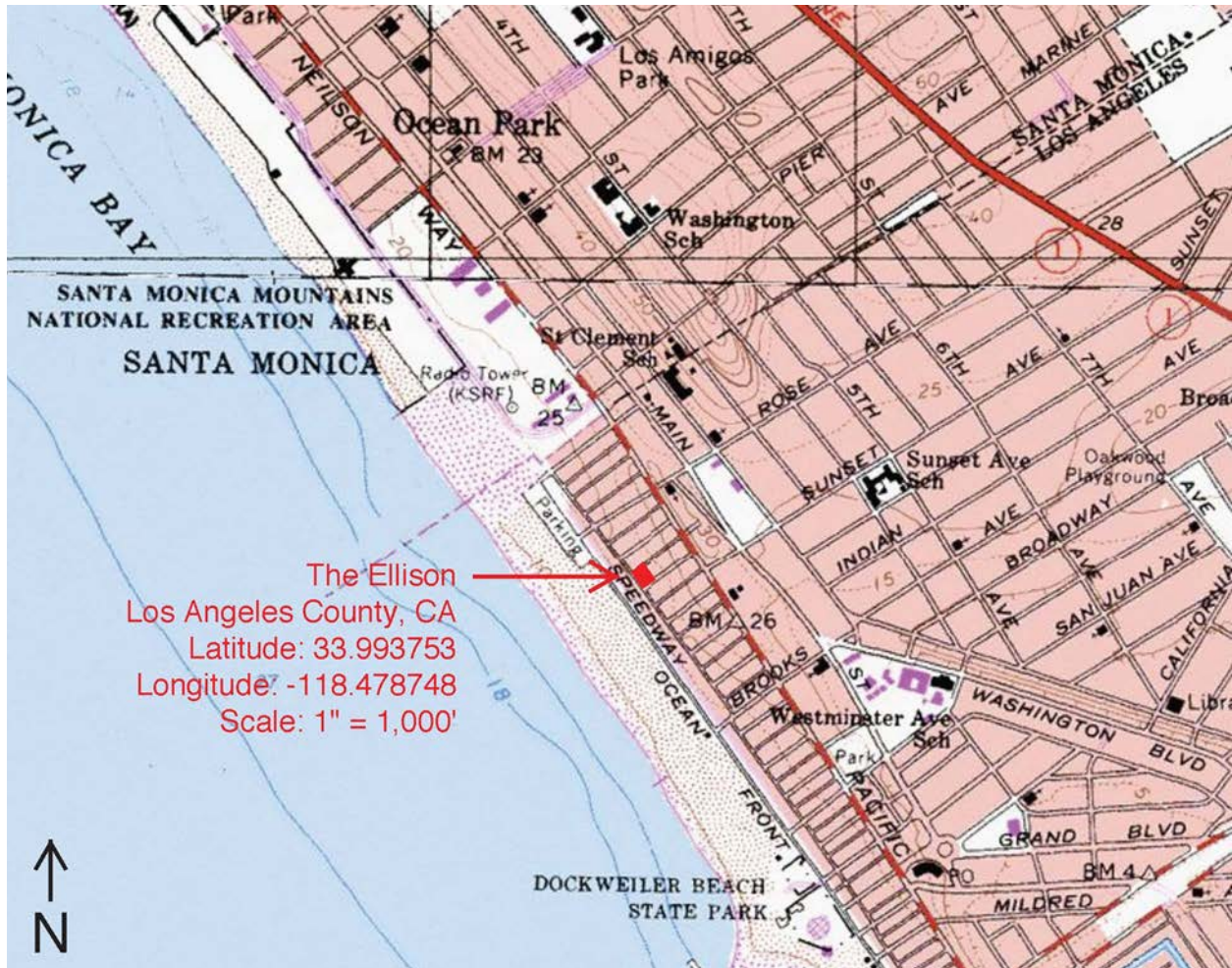
**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

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Figure 1. Location Map

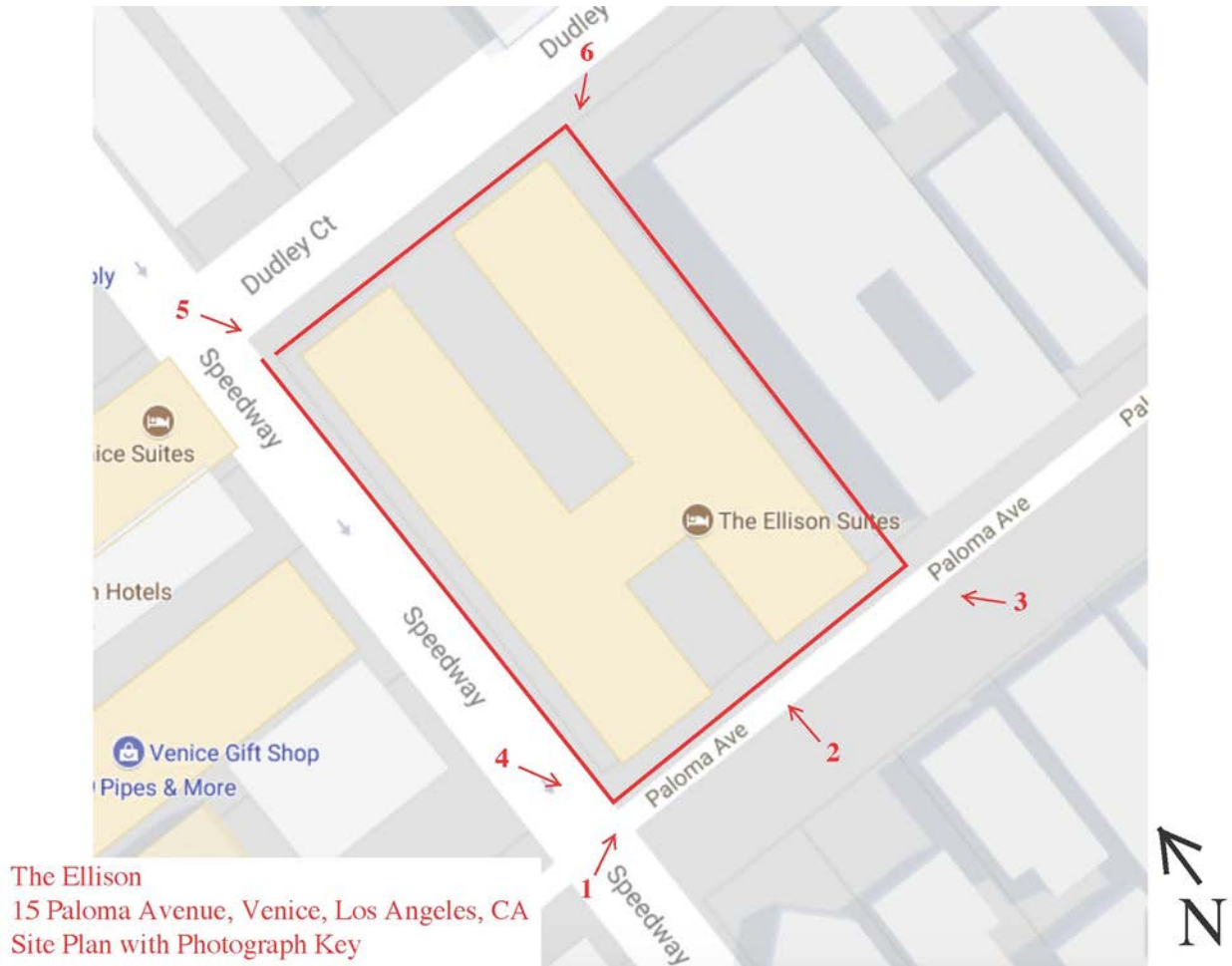




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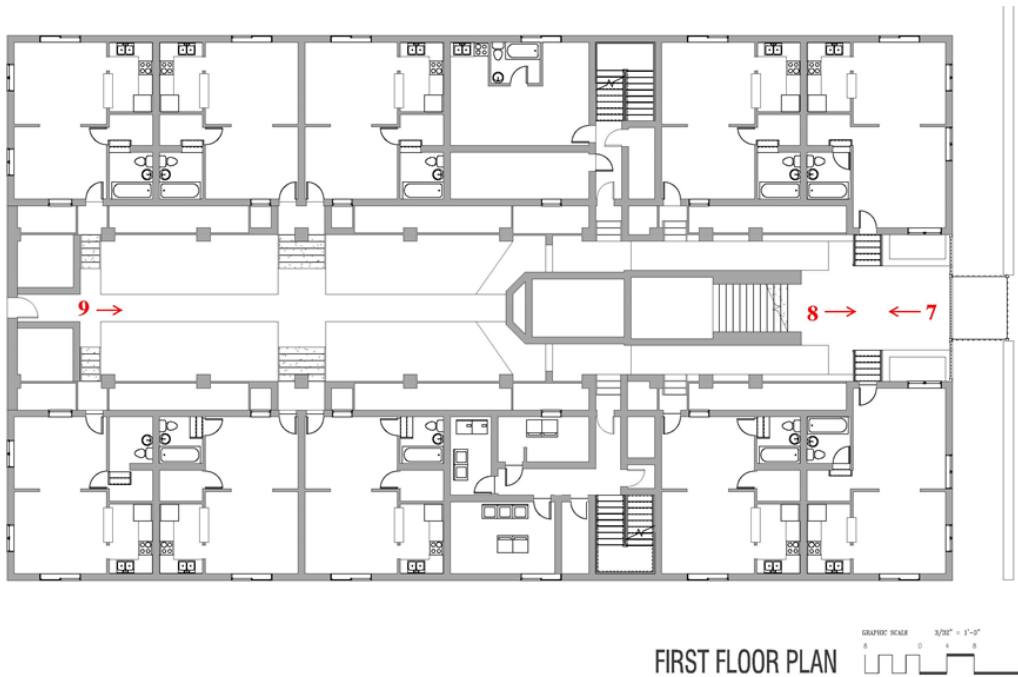
**Figure 2. Floor Plan/Photo Key—Exterior**



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**Figure 3. Floor Plan/Photo Key—First Floor**



**Figure 4. Floor Plan/Photo Key—Second Floor**



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**Figure 5. Floor Plan—Third Floor**



**Figure 6. Floor Plan/Photo Key—Fourth Floor**



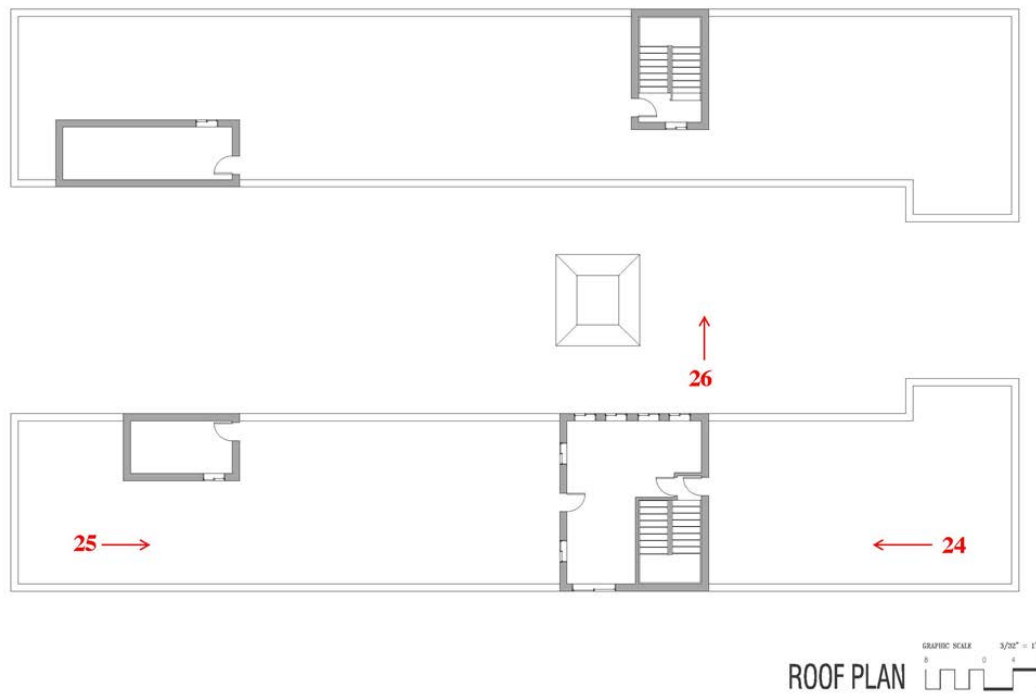
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**Figure 7. Floor Plan/Photo Key—Fifth Floor**



**Figure 8. Floor Plan/Photo Key—Roof**



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Figure 9. "Advertisement." *The Christian Science Monitor* (21 December 1928): 17.

**Ellison Apartments**



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