

City Landmark Assessment and Evaluation Report

822 Euclid Santa Monica, California

(APN: 4281-016-004)







August 2007



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PREPARED FOR:

CITY OF SANTA MONICA

Planning Division

Prepared by:

PCR SERVICES CORPORATION

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August 2007

Multi-Family Property

822 Euclid Street City of Santa Monica APN: 4281-016-004 City Landmark Assessment and Evaluation

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Description of site or structure, note any major alterations and dates of alterations

The subject property is situated on the west side of Euclid Street between Montana Avenue to the north, and Idaho Avenue to the south. The property encompasses Lot E and the northwest 15 feet of Lot F on Block 14 in the Town of Santa Monica Tract. The lot size of the subject property is approximately 65 feet by 150 feet. The multi-family residence and detached rear garage is located in a primarily multi-family residential neighborhood, although there are some single-family homes on Euclid Street and commercial properties nearby on Montana Avenue. The detached rear garage is accessed via the alley, 12th Court, on the west side of the subject property. The residence is an irregular L-shaped building that runs along the north side of the lot. There is a landscaped side-yard along the south side of the property. The garage is a U-shaped building on the west side of the alley, 12th Court, between Euclid Street and 12th Street.

This property has been previously identified and assessed under the City's ongoing survey process on two separate occasions. It was initially evaluated in 1993-94 under Phase III of the City's historic resources inventory process. At that time, the subject property was assigned a status code of "5S3" (California Historical Resource Status Codes), which states, "Appears to be individually eligible for local listing or designation through survey evaluation."¹ Following the 1994 Northridge earthquake, the property was resurveyed and evaluated for historical significance in 1995 as part of the City's assessment to determine the earthquake's overall effects to those properties listed in the City's Historic Resources Inventory at the time. The earthquake caused modest damage to the exterior stucco surfaces of the building, and the building was green tagged by the City of Santa Monica. Green tagged buildings were buildings damaged by the earthquake that presented no apparent hazard, but repairs were needed.² According to the Historic Resources Inventory Update for the City of Santa Monica, September 30, 1995, "all stucco repairs have been completed and the building repainted except for the wood trim, the building appears to be in very good condition."³ In the December 19, 2006, City of Santa Monica Historic Resources Inventory list, the subject property retains its 5S3 status code.

¹ California Historical Resource Status Codes.

² <u>Historic Resources Inventory Update for the City of Santa Monica</u>, September 30, 1995, page 7.

³ *Ibid*, 31.

The subject property was erected in 1938 as an eight-unit, multi-family dwelling with a detached garage building. The residence is situated towards the east, street-facing end of the parcel. It is a two-story, wood-frame, Streamline Moderne apartment building with stucco exterior walls and four decorative raised wood bands that run horizontally along the exterior walls at the windowsill and lintel levels on both the first and second floor. The garage is also wood-frame with stucco siding.

The multi-family residence has a flat roof with wide eaves that extend a few feet beyond the primary elevation. At the corners of the building, the roof eaves curve, as opposed to having sharp perpendicular edges. On all four elevations, the soffit of the roof is sheathed with three wide strips of flat board that are spaced, roughly, two inches apart creating a gap to amplify the curvilinear form of the eaves and soffit. Also, on all four elevations, the exterior elevations are organized with a pair of horizontal decorative wood bands between the windowsill and lintel at both the ground floor and the second story. Between the decorative bands and the windows, the stucco is painted the same color as the windows and window frames, which is different than the stucco façade, to create the contrasting appearance of the two wide surface bands that run horizontally along the length of the elevation.

On the east street-facing elevation both the north and south corners of the primary elevation's ground and second floor have corner wrap-around windows with four fixed panes divided by wood muntins. Adjacent to each of the four fixed windows and divided by a wood mullion, there is a four-light flanking casement window. There are tall mature landscape plantings on the street-facing elevation that rise to the height of the building.

The south elevation is the primary elevation of the building that provides circulation to the individual units from the heavily landscaped south side yard. Originally the yard opened onto Euclid Street, but in February 1999, a high stucco wall with a door was added, dividing the yard from the sidewalk. The south elevation is composed of three bays. On the west side of the ground floor there are two unevenly sized four-light casement windows. The west end of the ground floor does not have a corner wraparound window because it is on staircase. Instead, on the staircase-side of the east bay there is a block glass window with 42 separate blocks. The staircase at the bottom moves east to west, then turns south to north and rises to the second level. The treads and risers are decorated with a thin recessed line pattern that moves up the stairs in an orthogonal pattern of east-west and north-south lines. A strip of the eastern bay wall continues across the staircase and then curves north to meet the middle bay creating the visual continuity of surfaces across the south elevation. A slender metal pole is attached to the curvilinear stucco wall strip and to the soffit. Also attached to the east bay wall is the curved flat awning with wood board sheathing. The awning is supported by two tension cables attached to the stucco façade at an angle. The awning covers the ground floor door and three concrete stairs.

The central bay of the south elevation has stucco walls bordered by a staircase on both its east and west sides. At each staircase, the walls of the central bay curve north. There are no corner windows on the central bay. Instead, all the windows are four-light casement windows. There is a single door on the east side of the central bay at the ground floor. The staircase at the bottom moves east to west, then turns south to north and rises to the second level. The treads and risers are decorated with a thin recessed line pattern that moves up the stairs in an orthogonal pattern of east-west and north-south lines. The handrails on both the east and west stairs of the central bay terminate into the ground in a steep curve rather than attaching to a vertical baluster. There is an arched walkway beneath the stairs.

The west bay of the primary elevation has a stucco surface. On the second story of the west bay of the south elevation there is a narrow exterior walkway that connects the staircase to the second level units. Like on the east bay of the south elevation, a slender metal pole is attached to the curvilinear stucco wall strip and to the soffit. On both the east and west corners of the primary elevation's second floor and on the east corner of the ground floor, there are corner wraparound windows with four fixed panes divided by wood muntins. Adjacent to each of the four fixed windows and divided by a wood mullion, there is one or two four-light casement windows.

The rear (west) elevation has a stucco surface. On both the north and south corners of the rear elevation's second floor there are corner wraparound windows with four fixed panes divided by wood muntins. Adjacent to each of the four fixed windows and divided by a wood mullion, there is one four-light casement window. There are several other double-hung, slider, and fixed wood windows with wood frames on the second floor of rear elevation. There is one fixed window on the north side of the rear elevation second story that rises from, roughly, the interior floor level to the top horizontal wood band, breaking the horizontal plane that runs the entire length of the second story. On the ground floor, both the north and south corners of the rear elevation's second floor have corner wraparound windows with four fixed panes divided by wood muntins. There are several other double-hung, slider, and fixed wood windows with wood frames on the ground floor. On the north side of the rear ground floor there is a double-door that opens outward onto a porch bordered by a low stucco wall.

The north elevation has a stucco surface. On both the east and west corners of the north elevation's second floor there are corner wraparound windows with four fixed panes divided by wood muntins. Adjacent to each of the four fixed windows and divided by a wood mullion, there is one four-light casement window. There are several other double-hung, slider, and fixed wood windows with wood frames on the second floor of north elevation. On the ground floor, both the east and west corners of the north elevation's second floor have corner wraparound windows with four fixed panes divided by wood muntins. There are several other double-hung, slider by wood muntins. There are several other double-hung, slider by wood muntins. There are several other double-hung, slider, and fixed wood windows with wood frames. There are two exterior doors with two concrete stairs on the west side of the west

elevation's ground floor.

West of the west elevation, the garages are arranged in a U-shaped plan. The nine garages are accessible from 12^{th} Court, which is the alley between Euclid Street and 12^{th} Street. The garage spaces form the outer edge of a large U-shaped concrete driveway. The garages are stucco with wood garage doors with horizontal wood shiplap siding. The garages were part of the original improvement of the property. The original cost was \$1,600.00 and they cover 1,600 square feet.

It appears that little of the original landscaping is extant. A building permit from 1999 lists the new construction of two raised patios, two on grade patios, the six foot wall that divides the property from the street on the east side, a concrete pond, and a concrete walkway. Likewise, the plantings around the building perimeter appear to be recent. The surrounding buildings within sight of the subject property appear to date from the second half of the twentieth century.

SURVEY EVALUATION

Statement of Architectural Significance

The subject property located at 822 Euclid Street is a very good example of the Streamline Moderne style. Throughout the 1930s, the Streamline Moderne architecture was a relatively common design style for both single- and multi-family housing, commercial, and industrial buildings. Although there are several existing examples of the style in the City of Santa Monica, Streamline Moderne architecture is much less commonly seen in the City's neighborhoods today.⁴

Following the height of Art Deco in the early 1930ss, the Streamline Moderne style was an economic and stylistic response to the ravaging effects of the Great Depression. Streamline structures continued to suggest modern values of movement and rejection of historic precedents, but with far less opulence and more restraint than Art Deco of the late 1920s and early 1930s. Yet the Streamline Moderne differed from the "High Art Modern Architecture" of the early 1930s in that it "continued to regard design as 'styling' and that architecture should represent or perform as an image rather than be a used as a space to radically change ones everyday life. The boosters of Streamline Moderne argued that their purpose was not to create an architecture that functioned in the same way as the ocean liner, airplane, or locomotive; rather, the buildings would symbolize those things and therefore remind one of the 'modern' future."⁵

While many people were fascinated with modern buildings that represented progress, such as the movie theatres, service stations, and other commercial buildings, these same people seemed less inclined to give up traditional notions of domestic architecture when it came to their residence. In Los Angeles, both single- and multi-family residential architecture embodied the ideology of California living. Even though 1930s Los Angeles had more Modern residential architecture than anywhere else in the country, modern housing was still a small fraction of the total housing built. The majority continued to be constructed using traditional eclectic revival design precedents.

Yet, because of the popular appeal of Streamline design, which was centered on its ability to be both an image of modernity and decorative, Streamline Moderne housing offered a third choice after traditional and Modern housing. In fact, it was the details of Streamline Moderne architecture with its curvilinear forms, corner windows, and pipe handrails that established the style's popularity. Los Angeles had many architects and builders who specialized in the Streamline Moderne house, including Milton Black, Jock Peters, Wesley Eager, Edgar

⁴ Los Angeles Times, <u>Streamline Modern architecture in Santa Monica</u>, June 19, 1983, N1.

⁵ Patrick Pascal, Kesling Modern Structures Popularizing Modern Design in Southern California 1934-1962, (Los Angeles: Balcony Press, 2002) 10.

Bissantz, Adrian Wilson, Carl Kay, J. Knauer, Robert Derrah, and William Kesling.⁶

The subject dwelling displays many characteristic features of the Streamline Moderne style in its architectural design. The exterior of 822 Euclid has many of the character-defining features of Streamline Moderne architecture. The exterior elevations are dominated by the horizontality of the windows, the handrails, and decorative stucco banding that runs the horizontal length of the elevations between the window lintels and sill on each floor. Also, while the flat roofs and corner windows derive from Modern architecture, the curvilinear walls, roof, and handrails clearly anchor the home in the Streamline tradition. The curvilinear roof eaves, the slender pipe columns and the handrails along the exterior stairs that terminate into the ground in a steep curve rather than attaching to a vertical baluster, are all important character-defining details.

A current windshield survey of surrounding neighborhoods has identified one other multi-family residence, 947-953 11th Street, from the late 1930s that is similar in architectural style to the subject property and exhibits a high degree of architectural integrity. The Fitzgerald Apartments (Voss Apartments) are a Streamline Moderne apartment complex where the massing on both sides of the complex steps inward at each new unit creating a V-shaped plan. The apartment complex has flat roofs, corner windows, casement windows, and fascia bands much like 822 Euclid Street. Additionally, there is a one-story Streamline Moderne apartment complex in the southeast section of Santa Monica at 2310-2332 33rd Street.

In sum, the subject property is an excellent representative example of the Streamline Moderne style as applied to a multi-family residence and associated garage that exhibits an unusually high level of architectural integrity.

Statement of Historical Importance

Santa Monica. In 1875, the original townsite of Santa Monica was surveyed, including all the land extending from Colorado Street on the south to Montana on the north, and from 26th Street on the east to the Pacific Ocean on the west. Between 1893 and the 1920s, the community operated as a tourist attraction, visited mostly by wealthy patrons. Those areas just outside of the incorporated city limits were semi-rural in setting and were populated with scattered residences. Following the widespread acceptance of the automobile in the 1920s, Santa Monica experienced a significant building boom, with homes being constructed in the tracts north of Montana and east of Seventh Street for year-round residents.

The City's commercial district was established between Wilshire and Colorado, at Second, Third, and Fourth Streets. Also in the 1920s, Santa Monica saw the

⁶ Elizabeth McMillan, Deco & Streamline Architecture in L.A., (Atglen: Schiffer Publishing Ltd., 2004) 170.

arrival of large companies, such as Merle Norman Cosmetics and Douglas Aircraft. In the years immediately prior to America's entry into World War II, Santa Monica's development escalated as Douglas Aircraft received increasing numbers of government contracts. After the war, when Southern California was flooded with returning veterans and their families seeking homes, the demand for housing continued to be high in Santa Monica, and apartment construction in particular escalated.

822 Euclid Street and Vicinity. The area that includes the property at 822 Euclid Street is part of the original town of Santa Monica. Early Sanborn maps indicate that none of the 24 parcels with frontage along the east or west side of the 800 block of Euclid Street were improved by 1918. Building activity did not begin to pick up until the early 1920s when Santa Monica experienced a prolonged population and building boom. The subject property was constructed in 1938. By 1950, 11 of the 12 parcels were improved with multi-family residences. It appears the subject property and two multi-family Tudor Revival buildings constructed in 1931 at 851-853 and 855-857 Euclid Street are the only remaining extant buildings from the pre-World War II era. The remaining dwellings in the 800 block of Euclid Street have been replaced with post-World War II apartment buildings and condominiums.

During the regional population boom of the 1920s, the construction of residential properties for investment or speculative purposes was common in Santa Monica and throughout the Los Angeles area. Research indicates, contractor/architect Frank Bivens was an important investor, developer, builder, and architect in Santa Monica and West Los Angeles during the 1920s and 1930s. Based on a windshield survey of existing buildings attributed to Frank Bivens, it appears that he was a highly skilled architect and builder of the Spanish Colonial Revival style. Although most buildings attributed to Bivens are of excellent quality, the A.D. Williams House at 534 Alta, and the Bivens Houses at 2158 and 2230 La Mesa are particularly exceptional examples of the Spanish Colonial Revival style in Santa Monica. Bivens was also the architect of actress Shirley Temple's childhood home at 259 19th Street.

In the original survey forms for the subject property, Frank Bivens is listed as the builder of the residential dwelling at 822 Euclid Street. Since there is no architect listed on the original building permit, it is likely that Bivens also designed the building. It is unclear why owner Claire Armstrong hired Bivens to produce a Streamline Moderne multi-family residence, when he had spent much of his career focusing on the Spanish Colonial Revival style; however, the skillful articulation of the Streamline Moderne detailing inherent in the design at 822 Euclid Street reveals the skill of Bivens as a designer.

Since 1950, the physical surroundings of the neighborhood have changed markedly to reflect the continued replacement of duplexes, bungalow courts, and small apartment buildings with multi-story condominium complexes and apartment buildings. The marked change in the neighborhood's character since the 1950s has been repeated in the residential neighborhoods that surround the 800 block of Euclid Street north of Wilshire Boulevard and throughout the original town of Santa Monica tract. Today, the area is composed primarily of multi-family residences with older, single- and multi-family homes from the first third of the 20th century isolated or clustered in small groups. The encroachment of newer buildings, however, does not appear to compromise the integrity of the subject property or detract significantly from the historic characteristics that make the building an excellent representative example of its period, type, and style (late 1930s-early 1940s Streamline Moderne Multi-family residence).

Person(s) of Historical Importance

Claire S. Armstrong, according to the original building permit, was the first owner of the subject property. On the original survey forms from 1992, the owner of the building was still listed as Claire S. Armstrong, indicating the property remained under the ownership of the original owner until at least 1992. The current owner is Gregory Chazanas. The building has eight units, which according to the city directories, have generally been occupied since the building's construction. It appears that the subject property has never been associated with a person of historical importance.

Statement of other significance

No other evidence was discovered in current research of the property to indicate other significance.

Is the structure representative of a style in the City that is no longer prevalent?

The subject property located at 822 Euclid Street is an excellent representative example of the Streamline Moderne architectural style as applied to multi-family housing. After reviewing the City's Historic Resources Inventory and having conducted a windshield survey of the area, it appears that there are few examples of the architectural style and property type that are similar to the subject property in the surrounding neighborhood. In comparison with the few other known examples, the subject property exhibits a high level of physical integrity. Therefore, the residence is an excellent representative of a style no longer prevalent in the city.

Does the structure contribute to a potential historic district?

The subject property, situated within the original Santa Monica Townsite, has not been previously identified in the City's Historic Resources Inventory or in subsequent survey updates and evaluations as being a contributor to a potential historic district within the City. The area in which the subject property is located does not possess a significant concentration, linkage, or continuity of buildings that are united historically or aesthetically by plan, architectural style, or physical development. Additionally, the surrounding area does not reflect a unifying entity that conveys its overall historic context. Specifically, the area's setting, feeling, and associations have been substantially altered over the decades by the appearance of numerous postwar apartment buildings and condominiums, which, in turn, have negatively affected the design, materials, and workmanship associated with single- and multi-family residences of similar mass and scale associated with the years prior to World War II. Because of compromised integrity issues, there appears to be no identifiable district with which the subject property would be associated as a potential contributor.

CONCLUSION

In summary, based on current research and the above assessment, the property located at 822 Euclid Street appears to meet several City of Santa Monica Landmark criteria. The property was evaluated according to statutory criteria as follows:

Landmark Criteria:

9.36.100(a)(1) It exemplifies, symbolizes, or manifests elements of the cultural, social, economic, political or architectural history of the City.

The subject property is a very good example of the Streamline Moderne architectural style as applied to a multi-family dwelling constructed during the late 1930s. Additionally, the property exhibits a high degree of architectural integrity. Though the neighborhood setting along Euclid Street between Montana Avenue and Wilshire Boulevard has been extensively developed with post-war apartment buildings and condominiums, the property at 822 Euclid Street retains a high degree of architectural and historical integrity in its design, workmanship, and materials to manifest the architectural history of the City of Santa Monica. Although the property's historical integrity in terms of location and association has been compromised by post-war infill, the setting still relates the feeling of residential life in the community during the 1930s. Therefore, the subject property appears to satisfy this criterion.

9.36.100(a)(2) It has aesthetic or artistic interest or value, or other noteworthy interest or value.

The resource does not appear to meet this criterion. The building lacks sufficient aesthetic or artistic interest or value necessary for designation.

9.36.100(a)(3) It is identified with historic personages or with important events in local, state or national history.

Current research did not reveal any information on the property's owners and/or occupants to indicate historical significance or notability. Therefore, the subject property does not appear to satisfy this criterion.

9.36.100(a)(4) It embodies distinguishing architectural characteristics valuable to a study

of a period, style, method of construction, or the use of indigenous materials or craftsmanship, or is a unique or rare example of an architectural design, detail or historical type valuable to such a study.

The property appears to satisfy this criterion. The subject property is an excellent representative example of a late-1930s Streamline Moderne multi-family residence. The dwelling incorporates the massing, roof form, curvilinear eaves, corner windows, curvilinear handrails, horizontal bands and fascia, and other signature trademarks of the idiom in its overall design. Because it is one of the best remaining and most representative examples of this style as applied to multi-family housing within the general area between Wilshire Boulevard and Montana Avenue north of the Central Business District in the original Santa Monica townsite, it is important in illustrating the historic architectural context of that area.

9.36.100(a)(5) It is a significant or a representative example of the work or product of a notable builder, designer or architect.

Frank Bivens is an important builder and architect in the history of Santa Monica's development and the quality of his work rises to the threshold of significance for him to be considered a notable builder, designer, or architect. Frank Bivens was an important local investor, developer, builder, and architect in Santa Monica and West Los Angeles during the 1920s and 1930s. Based on a windshield survey of existing buildings attributed to Frank Bivens, it appears that he was a highly skilled architect and builder of the Spanish Colonial Revival style. The A.D. Williams House at 534 Alta, and the Bivens Houses at 2158 and 2230 La Mesa are exceptional examples of the Spanish Colonial Revival style in Santa Monica. Bivens was also the architect of actress Shirley Temple's childhood home at 259 19th Street. The skillful articulation of the Streamline Moderne detailing inherent in the design at 822 Euclid Street reveals the skill of Bivens as a designer. The subject property appears eligible for local landmark designation under this criterion.

9.36.100(a)(6) It has a unique location, a singular physical characteristic, or is an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood, community or the City.

The subject property is located on the west side of Euclid Street between a twostory multi-family housing building to the north and a two-story multi-family residence to the south. The two-story subject property's massing and proportions with its primary elevation facing south towards the side yard does not make it a particularly distinctive or established visual feature of the neighborhood. As a result, the duplex located at 822 Euclid Street blends into the neighborhood and is not especially prominent, particularly as viewed by motorists. Therefore, the subject property does not appear to meet this criterion.

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PHOTOGRAPHS



Perspective view showing part of the primary (south) elevation and east elevation, view northwest.



Primary (south) elevation and east elevation, view west.



Rear (west) elevation, view south.



North side elevation, view west.



Detail, corner window and curvilinear eaves.



Detail, curvilinear handrail and stair.



Detail, corner windows, curvilinear eaves and wall surface.



Detail, awning with metal tension cables.



Detail, curvilinear handrails.



Detail, arched walkway and curvilinear wall surface.

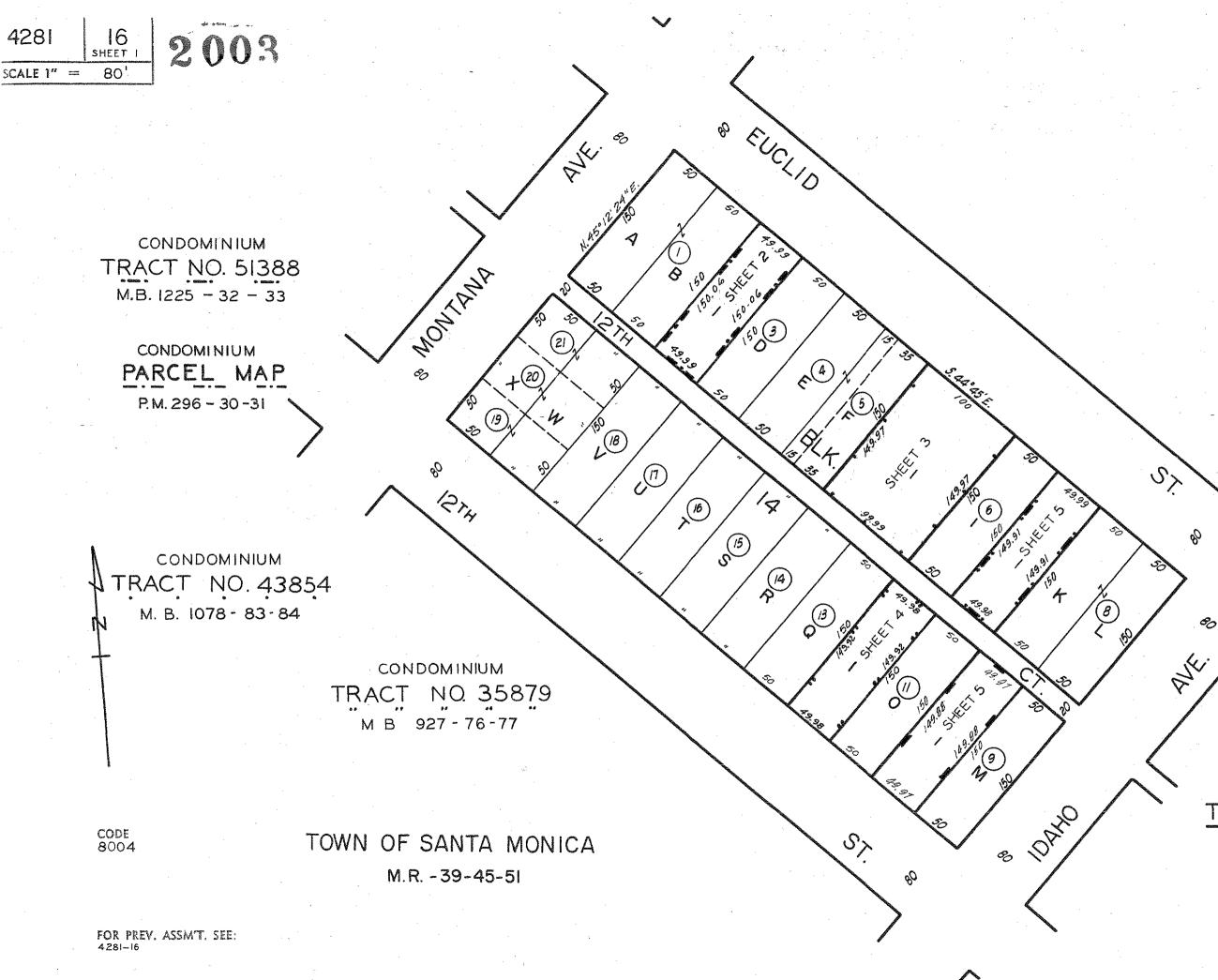
MISCELLENOUS ATTACHMENTS

Parcel Map

Sanborn Fire Insurance Map (1918)

Sanborn Fire Insurance Map (1918-50)

Parcel Map



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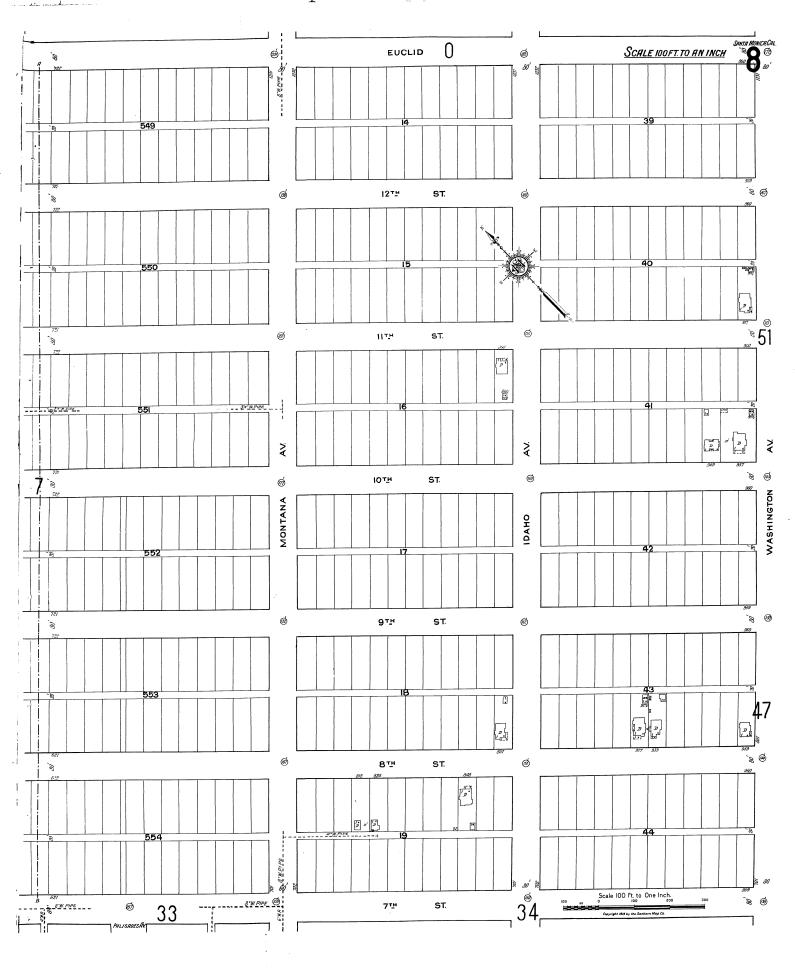
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ASSESSOR'S MAP COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES, CALIF. Sanborn Fire Insurance Map (1918)



Sanborn Fire Insurance Map (1918-50)

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