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NAT. REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

1. Name of Property

historic name The California Club

other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 538 South Flower Street N/A ☐ not for publication

city or town Los Angeles N/A ☐ vicinity

state California code CA county Los Angeles code 037 zip code 90071

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 x 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** x **local**

[signature] /State Historic Preservation Officer — 19 MAY 2010
Signature of certifying official/Title — Date

Office of Historic Preservation
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official — Date

Title — State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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)

for Edson Beall — JUL 6 2010
Signature of the Keeper — Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- [X] private
- [ ] public - Local
- [ ] public - State
- [ ] public - Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box.)

- [X] building(s)
- [ ] district
- [ ] site
- [ ] structure
- [ ] object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		district
		site
		structure
		object
1		**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

None

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

SOCIAL/clubhouse

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

SOCIAL/clubhouse

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Late 19th and 20th Century Revivals/
Italian Renaissance Revival

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: concrete
walls: brick
roof: clay tile, built up
other: stone

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with **a summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

See next page, continuation sheet.

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.
- [x] 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.)

Property is:

- [ ] 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.

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Architecture

Period of Significance

1930

Significant Dates

1930 – Original construction

Significant Person
(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Farquhar, Robert D., architect

Kelham, George W., consulting architect

Walker, P.J., & Co. Builders, contractor

Period of Significance (justification)

Construction was completed in 1930, and the building has had no major alterations since that time.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

None

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Please see Section 9, Major Bibliographical References Continuation Sheet, Page 1.

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
__X__Other
Name of repository: The California Club

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): N/A

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one acre
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

UTM References
(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1	11	384100	3768280	3			
2				4			

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

The property consists of Lots 3, 4, 5, 13, 14 and 15 of Block 103 of the Bellevue Terrace Tract in downtown Los Angeles. It is bounded by S. Flower Street to the west, S. Hope Street to the east, the property of the Los Angeles Central Library to the north, and the south edge of a private alley between the subject property and the neighboring property (the Superior Oil Company Building, now known as the Standard Hotel) to the south.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

These are the historic and current boundaries of the property and contain only the subject building.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Jennifer Trotoux, Architectural Historian and Historic Preservation Planner
organization Architectural Resources Group date December 28, 2009
street & number 65 N. Raymond Avenue, Suite 220 telephone (626) 583-1401
city or town Pasadena state California zip code 91103
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Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **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. Key all photographs to this map.

- **Continuation Sheets**

- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Please see Additional Documentation Continuation Sheet, page 1.

Property Owner:

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name The California Club (Peter J. Schaub, CCM, General Manager)

street & number 538 S. Flower Street telephone (213) 622-1391

city or town Los Angeles, CA state California zip code 90071

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 18 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.

Summary Paragraph

The California Club, located at 538 South Flower Street in downtown Los Angeles, was designed by Robert D. Farquhar in the Italian Renaissance Revival style and was constructed in 1929-30. Situated on a rectangular parcel, the eight-story building is located in a dense, urban setting directly south of the Los Angeles Public Library (1925) and the park that fronts it; the Library, with its setbacks and tower, was among the largest buildings in the immediate area when the site was chosen by the Club. The site is bordered by the Public Library to the north; the twelve-story Superior Oil Company building (1957) to the south; S. Flower Street to the west (location of the main entrance) and S. Hope Street to the east, which dead-ends at the adjacent Public Library property and provides access to the rear of the Club. The building has a broad rectangular base and two setbacks. Significant exterior features include the Roman brick cladding; steel casement windows and transoms; ornamentation throughout based on Italian Renaissance models; the stone entryway with a Classical entablature at the South Flower Street (west) façade; the stonework at the window surrounds, beltcourses, and cornice; and the massing, wherein major rooms are contained in a base with a large footprint and smaller spaces occupy a set-back tower, which is capped with a hipped, clay tile roof. The interior decoration is rich in materials and details such as oak paneled walls, doorways and other features of varying types of marble, and plasterwork of the coved and coffered ceilings. The building has very high historic integrity.

Narrative Description

Exterior

The eight-story Italian Renaissance Revival style California Club is oriented toward Flower Street, but the generous site allows major rooms to be oriented toward the Library Park and toward the relatively quiet dead-end of Hope Street as well. It has a rectangular plan, steel frame construction and a concrete foundation. The massing is characterized by a series of setbacks: the high, two-story base (plus exposed basement) is surmounted by a terrace and a set-back, four-story mass; the top two floors are set back again and encircled by a smaller terrace. The hipped roof is clad in clay barrel tile and ridge tiles and punctuated by four large chimneys that are paired at the east and west ends of the roof. An additional, narrow terrace skirts the area outside of the Main Lounge and Main Dining Room, on the rear half of the north façade and the east (Hope Street) façade. The impression of the exterior is that of a building with broad, planar surfaces clad entirely in brick of a warm, mellow color and restrained amounts of stone decoration and articulation. It is unusual in this regard, since it does not follow the Beaux Arts formula for tall buildings, an effect associated with commercial buildings, of a stone base, a brick-clad shaft with stone window surrounds and quoins, and a mostly stone "capital."

The symmetrical main (west) façade is five bays wide at the base and the tower. The exterior is clad in red-brown Roman brick laid in 1:5 bond (a repeating pattern of five rows of stretchers to one row of headers). A stone beltcourse is located above the raised basement level along the west façade and the western portions of the north and south façades. A prominent stone cornice caps the base around all sides.

A narrow forecourt defines the main entrance on the Flower Street, where two freestanding Roman brick walls covered in ivy flank stone steps define the separation from the public sidewalk. Accessed by bullnosed stone steps, the entrance features a restrained Classical stone door surround and bronze and plate glass double doors, sidelights and transom. The transom is defined by a curved bronze header topped with finials and supported by scrolls. The stone entablature at the top of the surround is carried on prominent modillions with an acanthus leaf motif that are punctuated by small lion heads. It supports a balconette with a flag pole and wrought iron railing with access from the central second-floor window; the window is surmounted by a semicircular arched pediment similar to those over the Main Lounge windows, here with a central shell motif. A dentil molding lines the juncture between the underside of the balconette and the central panel below, which is flanked by low-relief scrollwork.

Nearly all fenestration consists of multilight double-hung steel sash and some casements with multilight steel transoms. The first- and second-story windows at the main (west) façade and the first bay of windows at the westernmost ends of the north and south façades (i.e., closer to the front of the building) all have stone surrounds. The smaller first-story windows have stepped, flat lintels integrated into flat surrounds. At the second story, the windows are taller and have more pronounced surrounds that include projecting lintels and sills carried on small modillions. The double-height windows of the Main Lounge on the north side (facing the Library park) are

capped by round-headed pediments with a central cartouche. These windows also have historic iron railings. The windows at the exposed basement have historic iron grilles with a curved profile. The minor window openings, those located back from the main façade and on the upper floors, have no surround molding. This includes the guest rooms located above the first setback, with their multilight steel double-hung sash. Small, hexagonal steel windows mark the two uppermost stories. Most glazing above the base of the building is wire glass due to building codes at the time of construction.

Secondary entrances are concentrated on the north façade. A curved concrete driveway leads from South Flower Street to a basement-level garage opening with a wide stone lintel; the footprint of the building steps out into the driveway to accommodate this entrance. Directly to the west of the garage entrance is a single, paneled wood door with a stone slab overhead through which pedestrians enter and exit the garage. To the west of that door, a building entrance is sheltered by a later metal and glass canopy and flanked by sconces. The south façade also contains a secondary entrance on the alley, sheltered by an original projecting metal and glass canopy.

Along the south side of the building is a private alley with delivery, parking, and garage access behind a historic wrought iron gate. On the east (Hope Street) façade a driveway leads to a basement garage with a non-historic metal roll-up door and a wide stone lintel. Paired metal vents exist above the garage door and run the length of the wall. A small brick wing wall at the south end of the east façade has a historic metal gate at the opening.

The flat roof of the base of the building forms the Garden Terrace, an outdoor patio area on the north side overlooking the park and the Public Library. The terrace is partially enclosed by a freestanding Roman brick wall laid in 1:5 bond with twelve-light, steel windows set into it to admit light; this wall creates a sheltered space for outdoor lounging and dining. The terrace at the second setback is very narrow and more utilitarian in character, complementary to the athletic uses of the seventh floor.

While the building's footprint and driveways cover nearly the entire site, the extensive terraces allow for the provision of plantings around the building lessening the urban intensity of the site. The terrace outside the Main Lounge begins over the garage entrance, where it is edged by a historic iron railing and landscaped with trees and flowers. Other landscape features include young and mature trees in planters along the north and east terraces, and at the other entrances. A row of bushes lines the sidewalk in front of the east façade.

Interior

The massing of the three setbacks reflects the interior organization of the building. The base contains the double-height Main Dining Room on the east (Hope Street) side of the building and the double-height Main Lounge on the north (Public Library) side. A double-height space known as the Great Hall bisects the first floor from east to west, on axis with the steps leading upward from the main entrance and culminating in the Main Dining Room at the east end. The front of the base contains offices on the first floor and the former Ladies' Dining Room and Ladies' Lounge on the second floor. The middle of the building is set back and reads as a broad tower down the spine of the building. The third floor, at the terrace level, contains a library, patio, meeting rooms, and dining rooms; the next three floors, basically repeating in plan, contain guest rooms that are organized around a double-loaded corridor. The third setback mass contains the last two floors with a health club as well as service and mechanical spaces. The basement levels house garages, storage space and mechanical equipment.

The interior of the clubhouse is accessed by several entrances; the main entrance is centered on the west façade; side and garage entrances and the former Ladies' Entrance exist on the north facade. Inside the main entrance, steps lead up toward the main floor on axis with the Great Hall. Elevators provide access to the second floor Ladies' Annex, which includes the Ladies' Dining Room and Ladies' Lounge. The entrance adjacent to the garage at the basement level leads to a broad hallway with a small (altered) store and a historic marble-paneled barber shop.

The interiors of the club contain some of the largest and most refined historic spaces in Los Angeles. The scale of the rooms ranges from the voluminous to the intimate, and the décor of these spaces is much more restrained than was generally the fashion in Los Angeles during most of the 1920s.

The main entrance to the building is through the forecourt and the plate glass and bronze doors described above, which give way to an entrance lobby with a black and white marble checkerboard floor and an imposing white and gray-veined marble staircase lined with

elaborate wrought iron railings and wood hand rails. Ascending the stairs, one has a very long view down the Great Hall toward the Main Dining Room, terminating at a large window and planted terrace beyond. Offices and reception are located off the lobby at the top of the staircase. The main circulation stairs are located on the north side of the lobby, secondary to the elevators but generous in dimension with a simple wrought iron railing. The elevators are located on the south (right) side along the axis leading into the Great Hall.

The Great Hall is carpeted and has plaster walls articulated with full-height green marble (known as "Vert Racega") pilasters, paired in some places. The deep ceiling cove is punctuated by multilight false or vent windows along the north side. A prominent cornice runs below the cove. Three large-scale metal chandeliers hang down the center of the space. A wood-paneled and mirrored bar lies to the south of the dining area. The kitchen occupies most of the south side of the building, parallel to the Great Hall and mirroring the Main Lounge on the north side in plan.

Transitional spaces on the north side of the Great Hall lead to the Main Lounge. The Main Lounge is carpeted and an elongated octagon in shape. Its paneled walls are of quarter-sawn oak from trees found in bogs near London, England; the natural coloring of the unstained wood is the result of being submerged for centuries. The paneling has segmental arches over the window openings and true arches over the doorways (on the south wall) and over the marble-surround fireplaces at each end of the space. Ellipses are set in the pilasters between the main panels. The coffered ceiling is executed in ornate plasterwork with a dentiled cornice molding, with the medallions in the coffers concealing heating grilles. Bronze chandeliers hang down the center of the room.

The Main Dining Room is the largest, most significant space in the building, one hundred ten feet long and forty feet wide. The carpeted room is paneled in the same dark oak as the Main Lounge, with a more rectilinear motif in the paneling and a marble base. The twenty-four-foot high, coffered plaster ceiling is large in scale to match the volume of the room and highly ornate, with a dentiled crown molding and grilles that conceal heating outlets. A series of large sterling silver chandeliers hangs down the center of the room, and sconces of similar design line the walls. The tall, proportionally narrow, rectangular windows are nearly floor-to-ceiling in height and set deep into the walls. The windows have views onto the narrow, planted terraces that surround the room.

A suite of significant spaces on the second floor makes up the former Ladies' Annex of the Club. The Ladies' Lounge, now known as the French Room, retains its original plaster paneling defined by diaper-patterned pilasters capped by molded plaster fruit baskets; bronze Venetian glass chandeliers; and a marble fireplace at the east end. The Ladies' Dining Room has amethyst Venetian glass chandeliers and hand-painted paper murals on the long west wall by the significant Los Angeles decorator Anthony Heinsbergen. Painted paneling forms a wainscot below the murals and continues onto the other walls. Variegated marble ionic pilasters flank the windows and define the mural panels. The long, rectangular space known as the Gold Room serves as a lounge and anteroom to the other two spaces. A ladies' restroom and a series of small private lounges are located on this level as well, along with a number of private meeting rooms along the south side.

The third floor is surrounded by a full terrace due to the setback. On the north side of the building, the terrace is used for outdoor dining and it is partially enclosed by a brick screen wall with windows to admit light, as described above. Two rooms project onto the terrace (with the screen wall connecting them): the Library and the Fireside Room. The Library, to the west, has quarter-sawn oak paneling and built-in bookshelves, with French doors leading to the terrace. The Fireside Room is used as a private dining room; it also has oak paneling, here in a quad pattern. The center of the third floor is a dining room that echoes the layout of the Great Hall on a smaller scale. The larger of the building's two bars (without historic features) is located at the west end of the third floor. A transverse hallway at the east end of the space gives access to private dining and meeting rooms.

Guest rooms for short- or long-term stays occupy the fourth through sixth floors. Most consist of a bedroom, dressing room, and bathroom. The hallways on the guest room floors retain their plaster ceiling cove and moldings; mirrors were added to the walls of the elevator lobbies. All room entry doors and hardware are replaced, with a few exceptions in the shorter transverse hallways. Some original bathrooms remain, but most have been remodeled in a manner that is compatible with the original features of the building.

Historic Integrity

The California Club retains an exceptionally high level of historic integrity, and it is in excellent condition, despite the ongoing maintenance challenges that affect any building of eighty years. It has remained in the same location. The setting has changed somewhat with the construction of new buildings and the loss of some contemporary landmarks (notably the 1928-29 black and gold glazed terra cotta Atlantic Richfield Building) in its immediate surroundings, but the library and park next to which it was originally built – and views it was built to take advantage of -- remain. The design, workmanship, and materials have been scrupulously stewarded over a period of eighty years, speaking for the stability of the Club and the loyalty of its membership and management to the facility. The historic feeling of the building is very much intact due to this stability; it also translates to very high integrity of historic association, since the Club still inhabits the building and adheres to the same values that guided its original design and construction.

The few exterior alterations are limited to the addition of a canopy over the pedestrian entrance adjacent to the garage. There have been very few alterations to the interior of the building. The features of the major spaces, including wall paneling and articulation, coved and coffered ceiling treatments, fireplace surrounds, and historic light fixtures of a wide variety of sizes and styles, are all intact. There has been almost no reconfiguration of rooms. The service spaces, including maintenance, kitchens, pantries, and others, are partially intact. The vast, open kitchen was remodeled but in some limited areas it retains the original flat-profile subway tile on the walls and the swinging doors with elliptical windows at the east end.

The setting is perhaps the most changed, as this location was considered just beyond the business district of Los Angeles when the site was chosen and would see a high degree of change in the coming decades. The Atlantic Richfield Building (1928, Morgan Walls and Clements), new when the Club was built, was replaced by the ARCO Plaza across Flower Street in 1972 (two fifty-two story towers, A. C. Martin and Partners). The Superior Oil Company Building (1957, Claud Beelman) closed in the Flower Street end of the Club's south side, though most of the southward view remained unobstructed due to the parking lot at W. 6th and S. Hope Street created at the same time. The Bible Institute of Los Angeles on the site across Hope Street from the Club (1913-15, originally the largest building in the immediate surroundings) was demolished in 1988, and the twenty-five-story California Bank and Trust was built in its place in 1989. Despite the inevitable intensifying of the land uses surrounding its downtown location, the Club's most significant neighbor, the one that set the tone for the building's surroundings, is the Los Angeles Public Library. The selection of a site next to a public facility and park essentially guaranteed at least some stability in the setting.

The design of the building is highly intact. The exterior has seen very few changes and expresses Farquhar's design intent completely. Although the Club's interiors (furnishings, carpets, paint, etc.) have been updated and renewed many times, the architectural details and the significant decorative interiors have been safeguarded, as have some major original pieces of furniture. The restrained quality of the interiors, with their reliance on enduring materials, appears to have aided the preservation of the character-defining features as the century progressed through increasingly simple tastes. The materials and workmanship are likewise intact and well-preserved, due to the lack of alteration to the building's significant spaces, materials, and features and the high level of upkeep.

The California Club also has high integrity in the less tangible aspects, historic feeling and association. Its integrity of historic feeling is high, since the building itself projects both the discreet aspects of a private club and the ongoing high profile of the membership in business and public affairs in Los Angeles and the role of the so-called "downtown establishment" in the city.

The building's integrity of association is high due to its ongoing occupation by the Club for whom it was originally designed; and the high degree of continuity in the Club's status and practices. The direct link between the Club building and the work of the architect remains highly present due to the strength of the architectural scheme and the relatively small impact that redecorating over the years has had on the building's appearance and integrity as a work of its architect. In all aspects of integrity, the California Club is perhaps the best building to represent the professional life and the body of work of Robert D. Farquhar.

Statement of Significance

Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)

The California Club is eligible for the National Register at the local level of significance under Criterion C. It is significant as one of the most important works of the architect Robert D. Farquhar; it stands as his most prominent accomplishment in Los Angeles, where he spent most of his career. It was designed and built for, and for eighty years has housed, one of the most significant and long-established private clubs in Los Angeles. Farquhar created for the California Club a building that was, and continues to be, emblematic of the Club's prominence and its aspirations. The period of significance is 1930, the year its construction was completed. The building has undergone few significant changes since that time, and possesses a very high level of historic integrity. The building was listed as City of Los Angeles Cultural-Historic Monument #43, early in the history of that program, on November 2, 1966. Other survey evaluations, completed in the late 1970s, identified the building as eligible for the National Register under Criterion C.

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

The California Club is significant in the area of Architecture as a work of a master, the architect Robert D. Farquhar. Farquhar was trained at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris in the last years of the nineteenth century, and became one of a small number of architects practicing in California to have such a distinctive education. Most of his work consisted of educational, institutional, and residential buildings, specifically schools, libraries, and significant houses. The California Club was Farquhar's largest commission, but it is distinguished in his body of work and in downtown Los Angeles well beyond its sheer size. Farquhar produced a building that was not dependent on the standard model of an urban club building (which is discussed below). Instead, he created a building that distinguished the California Club within downtown Los Angeles with a grand new building, but at the same time provided the kind of discreet presence the Club required of its large and costly new facility. In balancing these two demands – prominence and privacy – Farquhar succeeded in making his largest building his most complex and subtle. Within the interior, he provided grand and imposing spaces balanced with small and intimate ones, meeting the needs of both the individual Club member for a comfortable refuge in the city as well as the needs of the entire body – the Club as an institution – for multiple scales of dining facilities and other gathering spaces.

Developmental history/additional historic context information (if appropriate)

History of the California Club

The California Club is one of the oldest private clubs in Los Angeles; among the city's private clubs still existing, only the Los Angeles Athletic Club (1880) predates it. Its sheer longevity, however, is only a part of its mystique, for the Club has maintained a membership of the most influential people in the city and has continued to grow as Los Angeles has grown. The Club persists as one of the principal bastions of what has long been known as the "downtown establishment."

The California Club was formed on May 20, 1887 and incorporated a year and a half later on December 17, 1888. In the mean time, a name was chosen and officers were elected. The by-laws and regulations that the Club adopted were based on those of the Pacific-Union Club of San Francisco; San Francisco being the "metropolis of the west," its practices

served as a model for establishing a similar social and business association in Los Angeles. The Club was founded for the "social recreation of its members and affording facilities for the entertainment of visiting friends."

The Club was conceived, in part, to serve as a suitable attraction to visiting guests of its prominent members with the thought that they too could be induced to move westward and make their contributions to the growing city. Since private clubs held an important role in business and social relationships in most major cities around the nation at the time, a similar organization in Los Angeles was an expected component of the city's growing social infrastructure. The California Club's founding occurred in the context of a number of other similar organizations around the country, but just as Los Angeles was later to develop, the dates of establishment of its major clubs are later as well. Four of Chicago's surviving major clubs were established between 1869 (the Standard Club) and 1887 (The University Club).

Growth of the Club and Previous Quarters

The California Club had a modest start in the second floor of the grandly-named Board of Trade Building, a two-story brick building that housed a stable on the ground floor. The building was located in the heart of late-19th century Los Angeles on the northwest corner of First and Fort Streets (later Broadway). The building was located on a corner where Fort Street began its ascent towards Bunker Hill. A large archway in the center of the primary façade, facing Fort Street, provided entry to the stables, which were situated the central length of the building under a long skylight down its spine.

The status and position in the city that the Club intended to occupy was clear with the outfitting of its first clubhouse. The *Los Angeles Times* reported, "These gentlemen were given carte blanche to go ahead and fit up the rooms regardless of expense, their only instructions being to provide every luxury that money could buy and to have everything of the latest style and pattern" (quoted in Clark, page 7). Even allowing for a certain amount of journalistic excess, it was clear that the Club's quarters would be outfitted to communicate the Club's prestige. The *Times* was headquartered across Fort Street from the Club, and its publisher, Harrison Gray Otis, was an early member and famous for his tireless campaign to attract to Los Angeles just the sort of business people who would be welcomed as members of the California Club. Clark notes that "in his memoirs, Boyle Workman noted that there was no incongruity, in the Los Angeles which had just emerged from its frontier period, in locating the 'swankiest' club in town over a livery stable" (7).

With the Club facilities being a major draw for continued and new membership, the club periodically found itself under pressure not only to keep up with what was considered the best, most modern facilities, but the most desirable location as well. Los Angeles's best addresses, for both residential and commercial real estate, were in constant flux through the later twentieth century. Changing location four times in a period of forty years, the California Club followed the city's pattern of migration of new construction and investment in a southwesterly direction.

In the last decade of the nineteenth century, the development of downtown Los Angeles began to move southward along Broadway and Spring Streets, which, through World War I, were the center of the city's retail, entertainment, and business activity. In 1895 a large new business block, the Wilcox Building, was constructed at the corner of Second and Spring Streets. The Club arranged to occupy the top floor of the building, and moved in once construction and furnishings were completed in August of 1896. Between 1894 and 1896 the Club saw its membership increase from 143 to 236 members. The growth of the Club depended on the ability to accommodate more people in its facilities as well as on how attractive the facilities were.

Each time the Club moved, they took an enormous risk. The financial demands on the members to pay for the new quarters (accomplished through the issuance of promissory notes to Club members at 5% interest) meant that older

members often left the organization rather than invest in its future. The Club had to believe, each time it moved, that the risks of the move would lead to greater rewards in the near enough future.

A fire in the Wilcox Building in 1900 was among the circumstances that prompted the leadership to begin planning for the next site (Clark 38), where the Club would construct its own building for the first time. At around the same time, the Jonathan Club moved to the top floors of the Pacific Electric building, accepting the invitation of Henry E. Huntington; Huntington was a member of the Jonathan and California Clubs and offered the space to both, but the California Club was already planning its move elsewhere (Read 26). Architect John Parkinson, the most prominent commercial architect in Los Angeles at the turn of the century, was a member of the Club and was selected to design the new facility on a site at the northwest corner of Fifth and Hill Streets, across the street from Central Park (later Pershing Square). The site was advantageous for transportation, being at the hub of the city's trolley lines, and was centrally located for Club members who worked downtown (which would have included most of the membership).

The palazzo-like, Italian Renaissance Revival style building had a symmetrical façade with the entrance on Hill Street. A base of ashlar masonry comprised the first story; the main reception rooms were located on the second floor, distinguished by their pedimented window surrounds and balustrades. A belt course above the third floor defined the cap of the building, composed of the fourth and fifth floors. The scale at the top floors of the building was smaller, and an inset terrace was accessed from the fourth floor; the fourth and fifth floors formed a U-shape around this terrace, which was open to a southward view of Central Park.

The California Club ultimately would occupy this building for twenty-six years. By the early 1920s, however, the Fifth and Hill Streets building was found to have a number of significant drawbacks for the Club. The qualities that gave the location its prominence and convenience also meant that it was noisy; the site was small, and not suitable to build a larger building (which would have meant a period of construction during which the Club would have the expense and inconvenience of setting up elsewhere), even with the proposed acquisition of a small adjacent site that was offered in 1921; and the lack of parking facilities meant that the Club's convenience factor dropped considerably as downtown Los Angeles (following the region) became more oriented to automobile transportation.

In 1925, the rival Jonathan Club moved from the Pacific Electric Building westward to Sixth and Figueroa Streets and built a height-limit building (150 feet, a limit that lasted until 1957) with full athletic facilities, dining rooms, lounges, and 250 guest rooms. Their new clubhouse essentially dwarfed the old California Club, and comparing the two facilities it is clear that the California Club would simply have ceased to compete with the Jonathan Club had it stayed in its old quarters. Despite significant misgivings about the move and expansion on the part of many members, the Club chose to look to the future by constructing a facility that would meet the expectations of 1920s Los Angeles.

In later years, the clubhouse at Fifth and Hill Streets would be remembered as smaller and more intimate surroundings. Clark quotes an older member, Harry L. Dunn, who noted that: "the old Club was like walking into a home, rather than walking into the great palace that we have today [the present Flower Street building]. There was a closer feeling between the members, when the place was smaller and more home-like." Other prominent members of the Club seemed to have similar recollections. Nonetheless, the Club accepted the challenge of the changing and growing city and moved toward a more prominent facility that would provide suitable resources for the Club's future.

Architects of the New Clubhouse

George W. Kelham, (1871-1936)

The California Club's new building was designed in 1929-1930 by Robert D. Farquhar, architect, with George W. Kelham as consulting architect. Farquhar is discussed below. George W. Kelham was a fellow member of the California Club based in San Francisco. Like Farquhar, he was trained at the Ecole des Beaux Arts, completing his studies in 1896, the year Farquhar arrived. He came to San Francisco early in his career to supervise the construction of the Palace Hotel for the New York firm of Trowbridge and Livingston, and remained in the city. Kelham would have been familiar with Robert Farquhar in his position as Chairman of the Architectural Committee for the 1915 Panama-Pacific Exposition in San Francisco, for which Farquhar designed the Festival Hall (see below). He was also the architect of the San Francisco Public Library and a number of large commercial buildings in the city. Kelham went on to become the Supervising Architect of the new campus of the University of California at Los Angeles; he designed the first four buildings on the campus and supervised the construction of later buildings. Kelham's position of authority in California architecture gave the California Club reason to value his input as the design of the building went forward. Although the building is a distinctive work of Robert Farquhar, it appears to have been the most complex and largest of Farquhar's commissions and he may have benefitted from the input of an architect experienced with commissions of this scale. Records at the California Club do not give much information about the working relationship between the two architects, but they do indicate that Kelham's role was largely advisory.

Robert D. Farquhar, 1872-1967

Robert D. Farquhar was born February 23, 1872 in Brooklyn, New York. Farquhar's social and family connections made him the quintessential "society architect." His half-brother, fifteen years his junior, was Francis P. Farquhar, an accountant by profession who was known for his extensive historical writings on the mountains of California and leadership of the Sierra Club. Farquhar married Miss Marion Jones, the daughter of former U.S. Senator from Nevada, John Percival Jones. Her father had been a founder of Santa Monica and resided at his estate, Miramar (later the site of the Miramar Hotel), which may have precipitated the Farquhars' move to Santa Monica in 1905 after several visits that were recorded in the social pages of the *Los Angeles Times*. Mrs. Farquhar was a tennis champion, politically active, and a sponsor of musical and charitable events. The Farquhars lived at Miramar until 1911, when they were reported by the *Times* to be building a house on San Vicente Drive in Santa Monica at a cost of $11,000. They later moved to Pasadena in 1929, where Farquhar had mixed socially with other architects who lived and worked in the city. He resided there until 1950 or 1951, when he moved to Berkeley at the age of 78 to live with his half-brother, Francis P. Farquhar.

Robert Farquhar's architectural education and his work experience put him well ahead of most architects on the Los Angeles scene in the first decades of the twentieth century. After attending Phillips Exeter Academy for his schooling, he went on to receive an undergraduate degree from Harvard in 1893. Two years of studies at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, from 1893 to 1895, resulted in a degree in architecture. He then entered the prestigious architecture division of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris in 1896, receiving a diploma in 1901. His years at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts coincided with those of Julia Morgan (who came to Paris in 1896) and Arthur Brown, Jr., both native Californians and protégés of Bernard Maybeck, who entered the Ecole in 1898; all three went on to substantial careers in California.

Farquhar's architectural work was exclusively in the residential and institutional sectors. He was noted as the architect of several major houses, including the Fenyes Mansion (1906, listed on the National Register), once the Finnish Consulate and now the home of the Pasadena Museum of History; the Eaton estate in San Marino (1913); the Thomasella Graham residence ("Mia Italia"), set in Italian-style formal gardens in Sierra Madre (1910, demolished); and the highly theatrical Canfield-Moreno estate (1923, Los Angeles Cultural-Historic Monument #391) on a hilltop in the Silverlake neighborhood of Los Angeles.

Farquhar's Beaux Arts training is evident in the Festival Hall he designed for the Panama Pacific Exhibition of 1915 (overseen by Bernard Maybeck), a temporary building that does not survive. Festival Hall was a fevered Beaux Arts fantasy, its proportions almost startlingly exaggerated. Most of the building is a giant dome that held the auditorium for the exposition, with a concave, semicircular entrance colonnade and four corners anchored by cupolas, all mirrored in a vast reflecting pool.

Libraries and educational buildings make up a significant portion of Farquhar's work. Among his most noted buildings is the still-extant William Andrews Clark Memorial Library (1928-29), operated by UCLA in the West Adams district of Los Angeles. This building is similar in style and materials to the California Club, although it is much smaller and set in the middle of a relatively large site surrounded by lawns and trees. It shares with the California Club its Italian Renaissance Revival style, its symmetricality and formality, and its brick exterior with stone trim. Farquhar designed other libraries as well: the public library of Torrance, California (1913) and the Barlow Medical Library (1907). The latter was a miniature Pantheon, a domed building clad in brick with stone trim, that later became the Library of the Los Angeles County Medical Association; in 1934 the library moved to larger quarters. Farquhar was the architect in 1927 of the new Beverly Hills High School building, which is still in use. Soon after, he designed Washington Elementary School in Santa Monica (1928).

Later in his career, Farquhar was among the architects of the Pentagon (1941), along with George Edwin Bergstrom. Farquhar's career appears to have followed the same trajectory as that of many Southern California architects who were prominent in their profession in the boom decade of the 1920s. Most of these men (and nearly all of them were men) saw a steep decline in business in the 1930s, and have little work to their credit until the 1940s, when they became involved in wartime building projects and public housing efforts, usually in collaboration with teams of other architects.

Farquhar's involvement with the California Club over the decades seems to reflect this pattern of changing fortunes. He was a young man in his early thirties when he moved to Southern California and became a member of the Club a year later, in 1906. After twenty years of membership in the California Club, Farquhar was chosen to design the Club's new facility. In 1938, $995.50 in debt that he owed the Club (possibly for the assessment for the new building) was officially excused. In 1947 his financial circumstances forced him to resign. However, by 1949 the board voted him to honorary membership, an action they continued through at least 1952, by which time he was living in Berkeley. From his new home in Berkeley, Farquhar placed several orders for Club domino and chess sets, indicating his pride in association with the Club; such mementos may have also represented his professional high point to him. His brother Francis Farquhar joined the California Club as a non-resident member in 1944; he resigned in 1959 upon his retirement, explaining that he no longer expected to have much occasion to travel to Los Angeles.

In 1966, at an awards dinner held at the California Club by the Southern California Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, Robert D. Farquhar was given a "Distinguished Award of Honor" by the chapter for the design of the Club building, an honor he shared with the Club itself and P. J. Walker, Builders. Farquhar died the following year at the age of 95 in Berkeley.

Significance Under Criterion C

The California Club is a significant landmark in Downtown Los Angeles, and the most important architectural contribution that Robert Farquhar made to the cityscape. As noted above in the introduction to this section, the building

succeeds in making a very large facility for a significant organization a grand yet unpretentious landmark within its context. It is both easily distinguished from other buildings in downtown and from the standard model of a club building. Beyond this, its discreet presence on S. Flower Street belies the large size of the building and the extensive facilities that it provides to its members, and by extension, the broader community of leaders in business and civic affairs.

The California Club exterior arguably does not resemble any other building in downtown Los Angeles, a quality by which it expresses the out of the ordinary use of the building, the uniqueness of the Club, and the exclusivity of its membership. Farquhar was not a commercial architect; his most prominent buildings were residences, schools, and libraries. He avoided the standard Beaux Arts formula for tall buildings used throughout the 1920s: a stone (or glazed terra cotta or cast stone) base, a brick-clad shaft with stone window surrounds and other details, and a mostly stone "capitol." This approach served to distinguish the building from surrounding commercial buildings and express its private, non-commercial character. The design of the Jonathan Club (1925) by Schultze and Weaver may have provided a counter-example in this regard. In Farquhar's own words, addressed to the Club membership, the exterior was to be "a simple and dignified design. There is nothing about it that is extravagant... (it was designed) to avoid what we might call, for lack of a better term, the hotel type" ("Report of Architects," *California Club: the New Building* 1928). The Jonathan Club building follows just this standard pattern for a tall building, and was designed by architects who were mainly noted for their designs for hotels, including the Biltmore Hotel (1922-1926; 1928), which was the most prominent new hotel downtown in the 1920s, a block from the California Club site.

Farquhar allowed the specific needs and desires of the Club to determine the shape that the building would eventually take, rather than beginning from the standard, recognizable urban club building type. The Jonathan Club building is the best local exemplar of this type. It includes a symmetrical façade, Beaux Arts massing with a high first-floor base clad in stone, a central entrance arcade, colonnade, or archway marked by a number of flagpoles overhead, a row of large second-floor arched windows (indicating the main rooms) surmounted by a stone coat of arms, and multiple stories of rooms to accommodate members and guests overnight. An inset terrace at the upper floors is sometimes a part of the main façade as well. Many clubs nationwide adhere to this design, including the Jonathan Club (1925), the Olympic Club of San Francisco (1911), the University Club of Chicago (1908), The Chicago Athletic Association (1893), the University Club of Washington D.C. (1921), and the New York Racquet and Tennis Club (1918). Although the style of the buildings varies from Italian Renaissance Revival to Venetian Gothic Revival to Georgian Revival, these characteristics made the buildings identifiable within a typical early twentieth century urban American context. The California Club's 1904 building at Fifth and Hill Streets, in fact, was a diminutive variation on this model.

In its historicism and in its understated design, the Club created a sharp contrast with this neighbor in an increasingly eclectic downtown. The dramatic black and gold terra cotta Atlantic Richfield Building (Morgan Walls and Clements, 1928-29) across Flower Street from the Club hinted at a new commercial modernism that was rising as 1930 approached.

At the street entrance to the California Club the screen walls form a private forecourt, partially shielding the first floor from the sidewalk. This manner of relating to the street directly contrasted with the Jonathan Club's 1925 building, where the sidewalk-adjacent glass doors open directly to the lobby through a small exterior vestibule. The Jonathan Club building also went so far as to include retail spaces in the street frontage adjacent to the entrance. The California Club, however, is a step removed from the commercial world that surrounds it. Even after crossing the threshold, one is faced with a rather imposing staircase to ascend before reaching the reception area.

The selection of a site next to the Public Library was critical in the development of the building, where the street wall of buildings was already broken by varied site planning and massing. Rather than selling off the Flower Street frontage of

the large site they purchased and maximizing the remaining building envelope available to them -- one option considered during the site's acquisition – they chose to retain the large site (4.75 acres) and, while using almost all of the ground space, employ setbacks at the upper floors to maximize the amount of space around the building.

The idea of an inset terrace in the front of the building was a common one for early twentieth century urban buildings in Los Angeles and elsewhere. The 5th Street club of 1904 had incorporated such a terrace through the U-shape of its upper floors. The Biltmore Hotel, with its multiple upper-story wings, incorporated several such terraces into its broad street frontage. The terraces provided a private outdoor space well above street level, and they also allowed for more light and air to reach upper floors.

Farquhar used a different approach to urban terraces at the California Club. Rather than outdoor space partially enclosed by upper-story wings, the terraces are located all around the exterior with views in every direction. The alley on the south side, street frontage on the east and west sides, and the library and park to the north meant that the building was not obligated to buffer the terraces from any directly adjacent neighbors. The sense of space around the building was achieved mainly through the setbacks; they created a greater distance from neighboring buildings on the higher floors, and, significantly, they provided terraces at multiple levels where people could step outside, dine or lounge, or have a view of a planted terrace from an interior room.

The provision of outdoor space also gave the building some breathing room in the increasingly dense city. The proximity to the Central Library, on the north side of the property, was repeatedly touted as a draw in the selection of the site, and a rendering of the library and its park illustrated the 1928 pamphlet for members about the proposed new club. The prior club house was separated from Pershing Square by 5th Street, and it was located on a busy corner with neighboring buildings abutting it on the other two sides. The move to Flower Street gained the club not only a significantly larger building and expanded facilities, but also the land and space that they lacked at 5th and Hill Streets (a property one-fifth the size of the new site). The new location essentially guaranteed that the building would overlook a public park to the north and would not be hemmed in, at least on one side, by future commercial buildings filling out the boundaries of their parcels.

The emphasis on space surrounding the building served to allow for large windows and expansive views out of the two major spaces (the Main Dining Room and Main Lounge) on two different sides of the building, since there were no immediately adjacent neighbors. The same was also true of the guest rooms, which also took advantage of distance from the street and traffic of downtown. Although the surroundings of the building are considerably more dense than they were in 1930, the interaction between the building and its surroundings functions in much the same way as it did when the building was new.

Conclusion

The California Club is a major part of downtown Los Angeles, both in terms of its importance to the social and business fabric of downtown and in its physical presence in a prominent location. The building that Robert D. Farquhar created for the Club in 1930 has served the institution for eighty years and will continue to do so into the future. Its appearance, its distinctive embodiment of a fairly unusual building type, and its high level of historic integrity make the California Club one of the most significant buildings in downtown Los Angeles and qualify it for the National Register of Historic Places as an important work of Robert D. Farquhar.

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Photographs:

Name of Property: The California Club
City or Vicinity: Los Angeles
County: Los Angeles County **State:** California
Photographer: Shayne E. Watson, Architectural Resources Group
Date Photographed: November 3, 2009

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

1 of 13: Primary façade, view northeast.

2 of 13: South façade, view north from Sixth Street.

3 of 13: North façade, view southwest.

4 of 13: Main entrance, view northeast from Flower Street.

5 of 13: Entrance lobby, view northeast.

6 of 13: Great Hall, view northwest.

7 of 13: Main Lounge, view east.

8 of 13: Main Dining Room, view north.

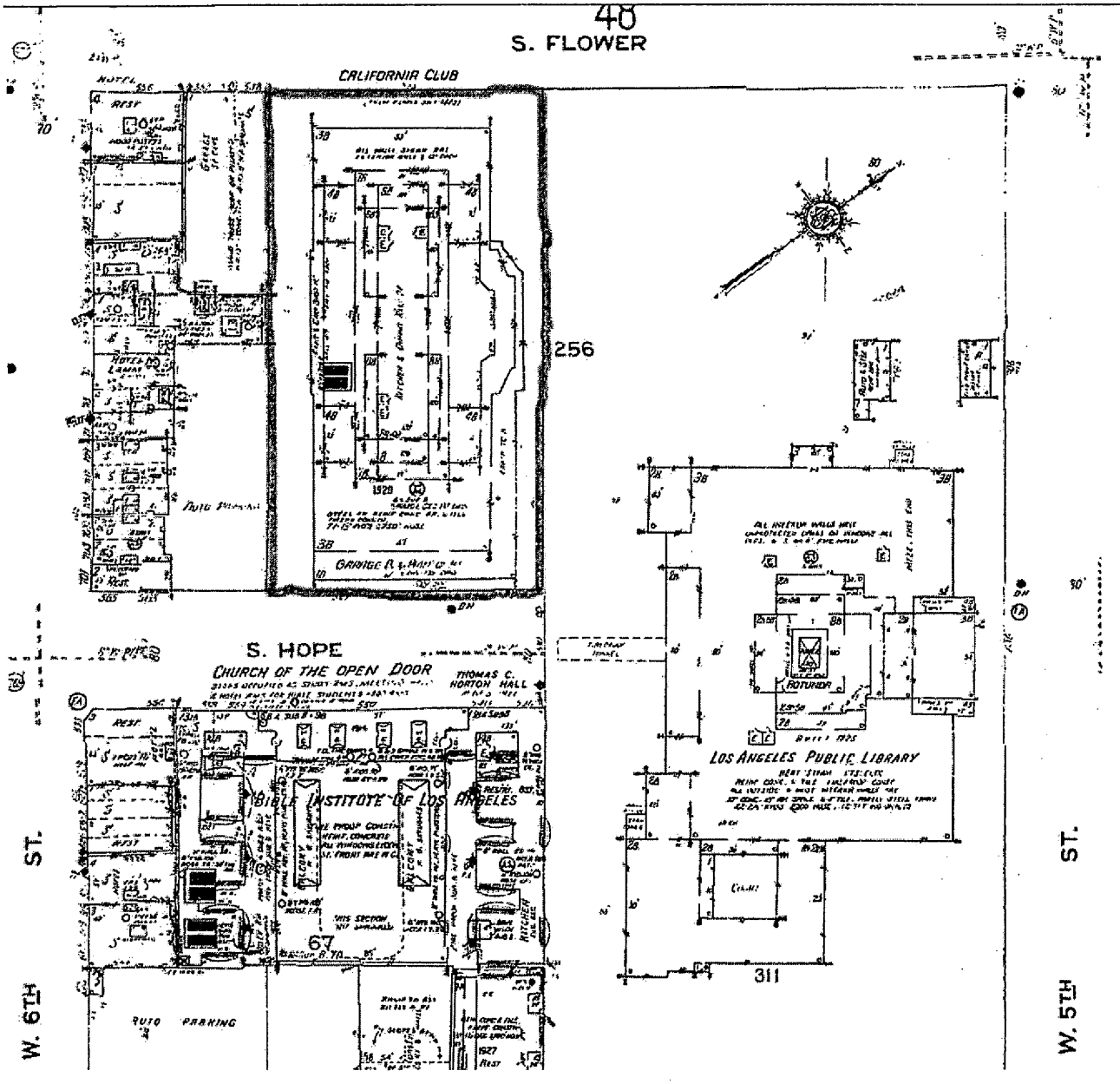
9 of 13: Third floor, elevator lobby and dining room, view east.

10 of 13: Second Floor Dining Room, formerly Ladies' Dining Room, view north.

11 of 13: The French Room, formerly Ladies' Lounge, second floor, view east.

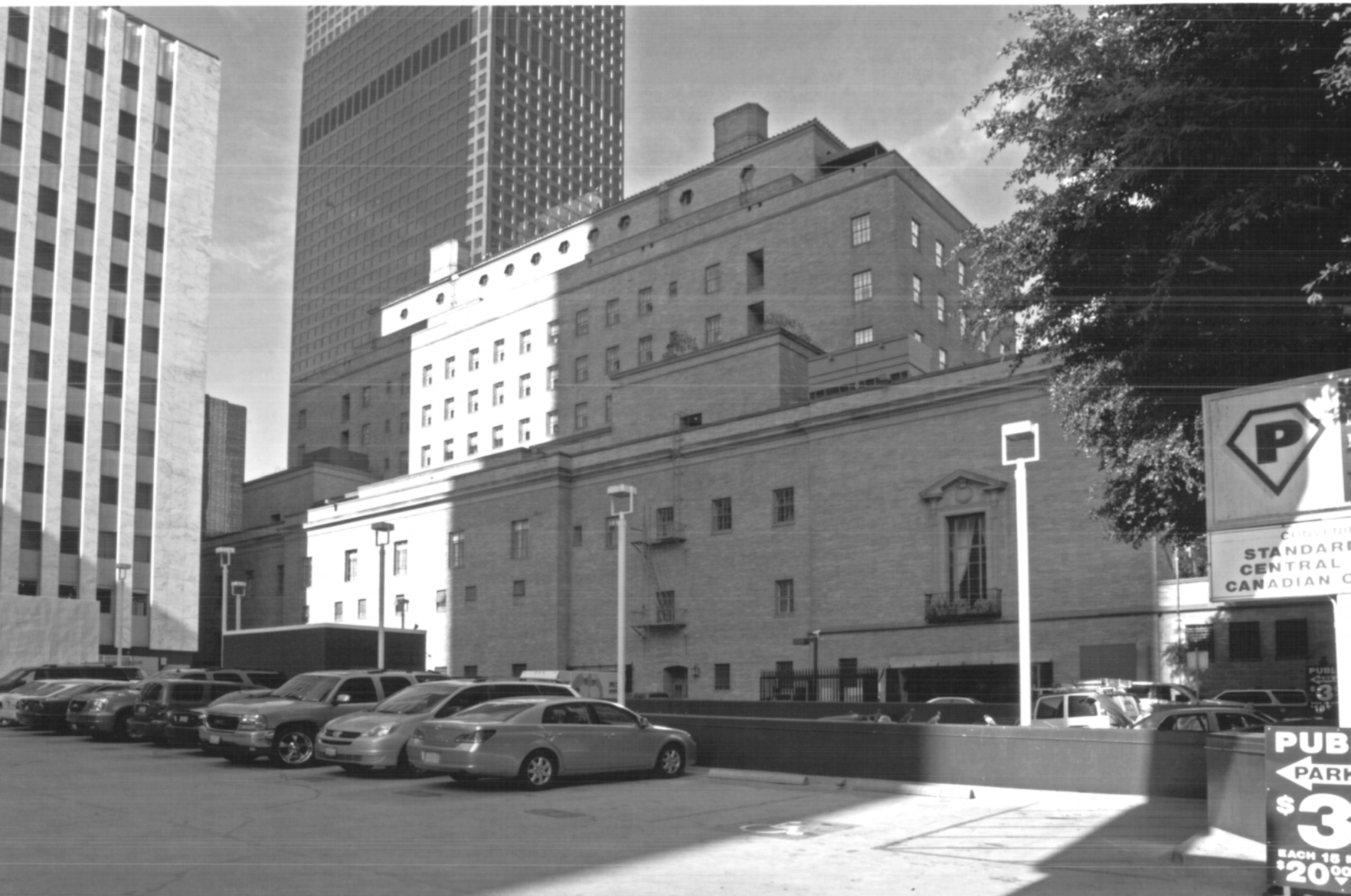
12 of 13: Library, third floor, view east.

13 of 13: Garden Terrace, third floor, view east.



Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Los Angeles, California: Volume 1, Page 50, 1906 corrected to 1955.

Photograph 1 of 13, The California Club, Los Angeles County, CA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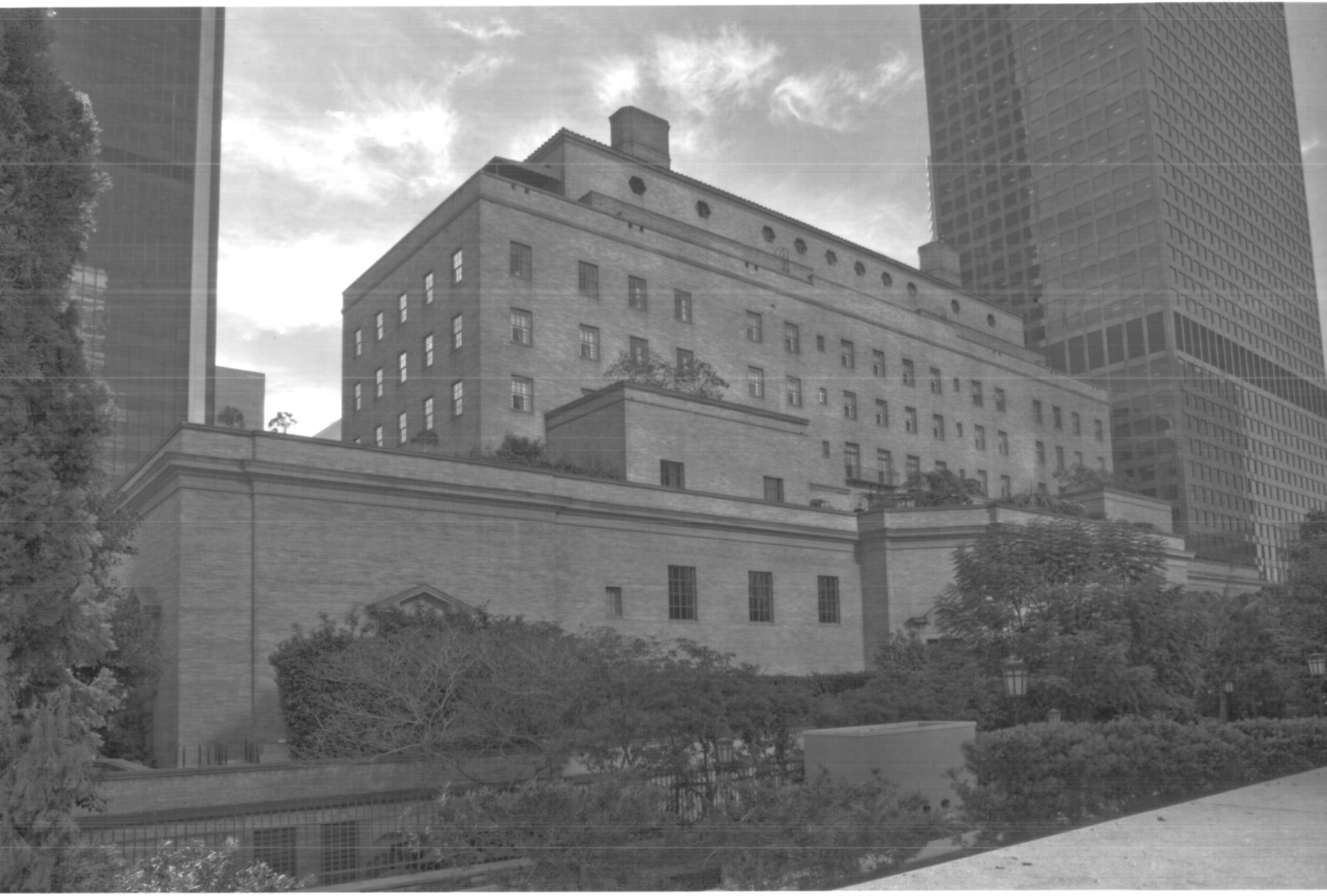
Photograph 2 of 13, The California Club, Los Angeles County, CA



Photograph 3 of 13, The California Club, Los Angeles County, CA

Photograph 4 of 13, The California Club, Los Angeles County, CA

Photograph 5 of 13, The California Club, Los Angeles County, CA

Photograph 6 of 13, The California Club, Los Angeles County, CA

Photograph 7 of 13, The California Club, Los Angeles County, CA

Photograph 8 of 13, The California Club, Los Angeles County, CA

Photograph 9 of 13, The California Club, Los Angeles County, CA

Photograph 10 of 13, The California Club, Los Angeles County, CA

Photograph 11 of 13, The California Club, Los Angeles County, CA

EXIT

Photograph 12 of 13, The California Club, Los Angeles County, CA

Photograph 13 of 13, The California Club, Los Angeles County, CA