

EASTER HILL VILLAGE, BUILDING NO. 32
South side of Corto Square
Richmond
Contra Costa
California

HABS CA-2783-Y
CA-2783-Y

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
PACIFIC GREAT BASIN SUPPORT OFFICE
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1111 Jackson Street
Oakland, CA 94607

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Location: South side of Corto Square

U.S.G.S. Richmond Quadrangle (7.5'), Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: northwest corner 10.4197417.557557; northernmost point 10.4197464.557687; northeast corner 10.4197354.557875; southeast corner 10.4197235.557872; southwest corner 10.4197233.557673.

Present owner: Richmond Housing Authority

Present use: Demolished in 2004.

Most recent use: Public housing project (until late 2003)

Significance: Easter Hill Village has been determined eligible for the National Register under Criteria A and C. Easter Hill is eligible under Criterion A because of its local significance as part of the effort to address the critical Post-World War II housing shortage in City of Richmond. Easter Hill Village was the most significant public effort to provide affordable permanent housing for many families displaced by the demolition of temporary war housing. Easter Hill Village is eligible under Criterion C because it had significant influence on the design of multi-unit housing. Easter Hill Village was the first multi-unit residential development to combine the twin themes of the planned unit development with the individuation of units. The design was also unique for its time in the care given to integrating a multi-unit residential development to its site. Easter Hill Village also is an important design by master architects Donald Hardison and Vernon DeMars, and landscape architect Laurence Halprin. The design of Easter Hill Village had at least statewide, if not national significance and influence. The period of significance under Criteria A and C is 1953 to 1954. The boundary of the eligible resource is the boundaries of the original Easter Hill Village project except Buildings 2, 3, 4 and 6 that have lost their historic integrity.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

Please refer to the "Narrative" report, HABS No. CA-2783.

B. Historical Context

Please refer to the "Narrative" report, HABS No. CA-2783.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

Building 32 is one of forty-one surviving buildings in the Easter Hill Village complex. As originally built in 1953-1954, the complex consisted of forty-eight buildings that were similar in construction, finishing materials, and general architectural character. All buildings were one or two stories in height and consisted of one or more modules that were linked end-to-end. The buildings varied principally in the finish of their second stories and in the number of modules that they contained. (The basic modules are identified on original plans with a letter from A to E; variations were indicated by a number suffix, and by the letter "R" for reverse plans.)

Building 32 consists of one rectangular module, which is labeled on original plans as module A. It originally contained four living units, but was remodeled as a child care center in 1982. The second story units were reached by exterior staircases made of wood. One of these has been removed, but the other still exists. Of the eight exterior wooden staircases that could once be found in Easter Hill Village, this is the last survivor.

Originally, there was no obvious main façade in Building 32, as the entrances were in the short "side" facades. A one-story addition on the north façade, however, gave that façade prominence, so that it now appears to be the front of the building.

The building is clad solely in stucco, without any wooden siding on the second story. In these respects, Building 32 is similar to the other "module A" buildings, numbers 30, 31, and 42, and is different from the other two-story buildings in Easter Hill Village. Another difference between the "module A" buildings and other two story buildings in the complex is that the second story in these buildings does not overhang the first story; the walls are flush from the ground to the roofline.

The "module A" buildings are also distinctive in the way the gabled roofs extend several feet beyond the end walls to cover the exterior staircases.

Please refer to the "Narrative" report, HABS No. CA-2783, for a description of the elevation, plan, and architectural character of this module, and of the Easter Hill complex as a whole.

B. Description of Exterior

1. Overall dimensions

In its plan, Building 32 consists of one rectangular module, module A. The building is two stories in height, 44'-6" in length, and 26'-0" in depth. The long sides face north, toward Corto Square, and south, toward a steep bluff. An addition on the north side of the building is one story in height, approximately six feet in depth, and approximately thirty-five feet in length. An extension to the west façade is narrow, perhaps seven feet in width, and rises to the roofline.

2. Foundations

Building 32 has a reinforced concrete perimeter foundation.

3. Walls and structural system

Like all buildings in Easter Hill Village, Building 32 is stud-framed in construction. Both stories are clad in stucco on all four sides.

In contrast with the other buildings in the complex, Building 24 is painted blue, in all likelihood to denote its use as a child-care center. This color is non-original.

4. Porches

One original porch and staircase survives centered on the east side of Building 32. The first story porch has a concrete deck, sides of wooden boards, and wooden railing. Directly above it, supported by wooden posts, is a second story porch with a wooden deck, balusters, and railing. A wooden staircase leads from the north side of the building up to this porch. The staircase has wooden treads, sides of wooden boards, and wooden railing.

The addition to the north side of the building has an enclosed room at its east end, but is otherwise open to the north, and functions as a porch. A rear porch (facing south) is also an addition. It has a concrete deck, flat wooden roof supported by wood posts, and open sides.

The original staircase on the west side of the building has been removed.

5. Openings

Original paired windows can be found in the second story of the north and south façade, and in the first story of the south façade. Original single windows can be found in the east façade and in the second story of the west façade. Original bathroom windows can be found centered in the north façade. New single windows and new doorways can be found in the first story of the north and south facades, in the areas bounded by the one-story addition and the added rear porch. Finally, a single window can be found in the second story of the extension of the west façade.

6. Roof

The roof is side gabled, with extended eaves on all sides. On the east and west sides, the eaves extend about five feet beyond the walls in order to cover and protect the porches and second story landings. The soffits of these extended eaves are made of wood. Both the purlins and rafters are exposed in this roof. Metal gutters run the length of the long sides of the roof.

The roof altered when an extension was made to the west façade of the building. This extension is covered by a gabled roof that relates to the main gabled roof.

C. Description of Interiors

The interior of Building 32 was not examined for this report due to lack of access. The floor plan and interior finishes may have been altered when the building was converted to child care use.

D. Site

1. General setting and orientation

Building 32 is one of a cluster of three originally-identical buildings located around the south end of Corto Square. (The others are buildings 30 and 31.) South and east of Building 32 is a steep bluff. This bluff overlooks buildings 8 and 10 (to the south) and Building 19 (a considerable distance to the east). Building 33 is directly east of Building 32, and on the same level as it. Please refer to the "Narrative" report, HABS No. CA-2783 for more on the general setting at Easter Hill Village.

2. Historic landscape

Please refer to the "Narrative" report, HABS No. CA-2783.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Original Architectural Drawings

The original 1953 Easter Hill Village plans and specifications are on file at the architectural firm of Hardison, Komatsu, Ivelich & Tucker, 538 Ninth Street, Suite 240, Oakland, CA 94607.

B. Interviews

Please refer to the "Narrative" report, HABS No. CA-2783.

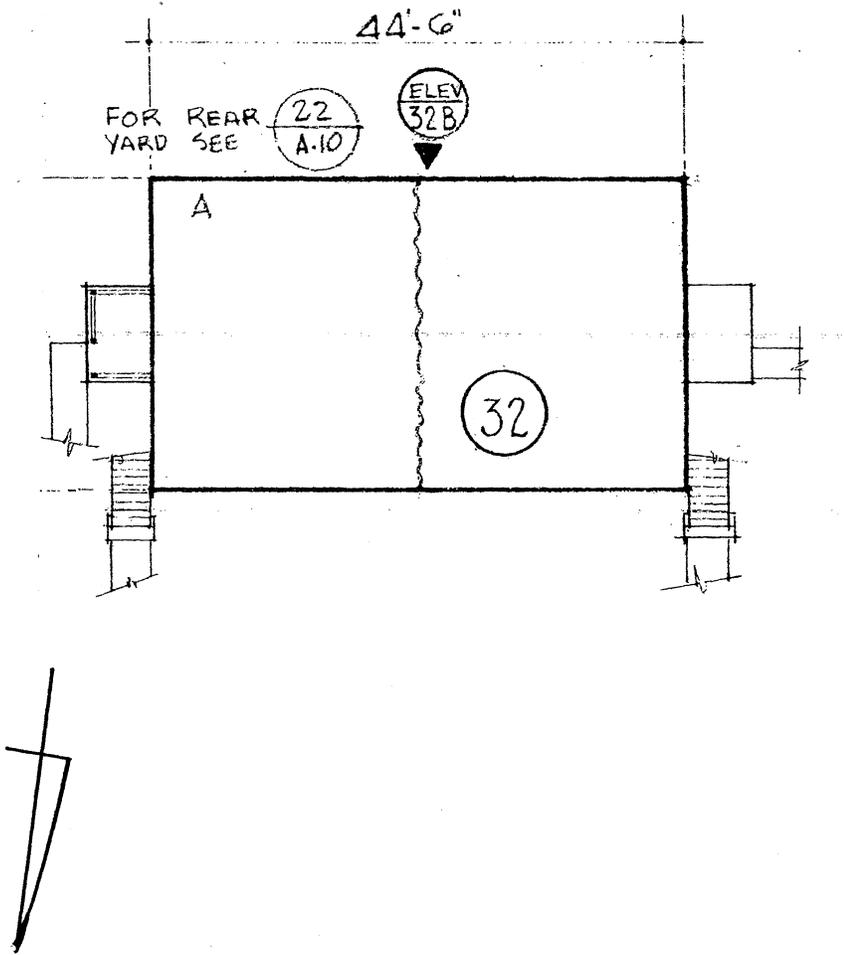
C. Bibliography

Please refer to the "Narrative" report, HABS No. CA-2783.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

The Historic American Building Survey documentation was undertaken as a mitigation measure as per the Memorandum of Agreement between the Richmond Housing Authority and the California State Office of Historic Preservation. The City of Richmond Housing Authority as part of the Hope VI Revelopment Project demolished forty-one (237 units) buildings of the existing forty-five buildings in the Easter Hill Village complex (including removing existing landscape features) in May 2004 for the construction of 219 new multi-family rental-housing units, thirty for-sale detached houses, and fourteen for-sale town-homes would be developed. On a vacant site just east of Easter Hill Village, an additional forty for-sale detached houses would be developed. A total of 303 new housing units will be constructed as part of this project.

The documentation was prepared during the period of October 2003 to July 2004. The narrative report is a collaboration of three individuals: Historian Marjorie Dobkin prepared the sections on social history regarding Richmond during and after World War II and on Easter Hill Village and the section on the history of the Easter Hill Village design; Landscape historian Denise Bradley prepared the description and historic background sections on the Easter Hill Village landscape design and the biographical material on landscape architect Lawrence Halprin; Architectural historian Ward Hill prepared the sections on the Modern Movement in architecture, the Bay Region Tradition and the general historical background of the City of Richmond. Architectural historian William Kostura prepared the Outline Format reports on the forty-one individual Easter Hill Village buildings (original building numbers 8 to 48) demolished for the project.



Sketch plan for Building No. 32. For a module plan, please refer to the "Narrative" report, HABS No. CA-2783.