

EASTER HILL VILLAGE, BUILDING NO. 28
West side of Corto Square
Richmond
Contra Costa
California

HABS CA-2783-U
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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: West 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 28 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 28 consists of three modules linked end-to-end. The north module is set forward relative to the others, creating a staggered or stepped footprint. On the original plans, these modules are labeled as (from north to south) modules A-2, BR, and BR. (On the original plans, the northernmost module is labeled A-1, but this must be an error.)

There are two townhouses in each of the BR modules, plus two apartments, one per story, in the A-2 module, for a total of 6 units in this building.

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

B. Description of Exterior

1. Overall dimensions

Building 28 is two stories in height and 85'-5" in length, from north to south. The building faces east, toward Corto Square.

In its plan, Building 28 is divided into three modules: A-2 to the north, and two BR modules to the south. Each module is 26'-0" in depth and

contains two living units. The modules are staggered, with the BR modules set back 6'-6" from the A-2 module. The A-2 module is 22'-3" in length, and the BR modules are 31'-6" in length.

2. Foundations

Building 28 has a reinforced concrete perimeter foundation.

3. Walls and structural system

Like all buildings in Easter Hill Village, Building 28 is stud-framed in construction. The entire building is clad in stucco on all four sides, and all walls are flush from the ground to the roof. This is in contrast with most of the multi-module buildings in Easter Hill Village, which generally employ wooden siding and a second story overhang in at least one of the modules.

The main façade is along one of the long sides, that facing east. Entrances to four of the six units can be found in this façade. The rear of the building is in the other long façade, that facing west. four of the units have back doors on this side of the building. The north façade contains entrances to the two A-2 units.

The stucco surfaces are painted salmon-beige. This coloring is not original.

4. Porches

Each unit in this building possesses its own entrance porch. Four of the porches are located along the main (south) façade. These consist of concrete decks raised several inches off the ground, and plain wooden railings supported by plain wooden posts. The porches measure about five feet by eight feet. Metal awnings shelter each porch.

On the north side of the building porches can be found in each story, one directly above the other. The upper story porch deck is concrete laid in a steel frame, and is reached via a concrete and steel staircase. Both porches and the staircase are provided with metal railings.

The porches, including railings and awnings, and the staircase are all non-original.

5. Openings

All exterior doors are wooden hollow core doors, opening inward. Over each door is a security grille with dense metal screen that opens outward.

Both the doors and the security grilles have deadbolt locks. These doors and grilles are non-original.

As is the case elsewhere in Easter Hill Village, all windows in this building are of three types: single windows measuring about three feet in width by four feet in height, paired windows measuring about seven feet in width by four feet in height, and bathroom windows measuring about three and one-half feet in width by two feet in height.

In the main (east) façade, fenestration across the second story consists of four paired windows and four single windows in an essentially random arrangement. In the first story, the arrangement of four single windows, four paired windows, and four doors is likewise essentially random. Some doors are adjacent to single windows, and some are adjacent to paired windows.

In the rear (west façade), fenestration in the second story is symmetrical, with paired windows flanking pairs of bathroom windows, save in the A-2 module at the north end, where the pattern is broken with a paired window and one bathroom window. In the first story, the repeated arrangement of single windows flanked by back doors in the BR modules is likewise symmetrical, with a bathroom window and paired window in the A-2 module at the north end breaking the symmetry.

In the north façade, there is a single window next to a door centered in each story. In the south façade, there is a single window in the first story, and a covered vent in the gable.

6. Roof

The roof is gabled, with extended eaves. There is a break in the roofline where the BR modules are set back from the A-2 module, creating the impression of two separate roofs on this building. At the north end the roof extends several feet beyond the wall plane to cover the porches on that side. The eaves in this building have exposed rafters. Purlins are exposed in the eave at the north end. Metal gutters run the length of the long sides of the building. Two rectangular, wooden, stucco-clad chimneys can be found over the BR modules in this building.

C. Description of Interiors

1. Floor plans

a. Basement

Building 28 contains no basement.

b. Apartment floor plans

The northernmost module, A-2, contains two identical apartments, one on each story. In each apartment, the front door opens directly into the living room, which measures about eleven feet by seventeen feet. The living room, in turn, opens through a doorway into the kitchen. A hallway leads from the living room to a bedroom and a bathroom. The bedroom measures about eleven feet by thirteen feet in area.

Each BR module contains two townhouses, each with two bedrooms. The front door in each unit opens directly into the living room. Toward the rear of each living room is a doorway to the kitchen, which in turn connects with a storage room. A door to the back porch can be found in the back wall of the kitchen.

From the living room in each unit of Module BR a staircase leads to the second floor. A small hallway at the top of the staircase leads to each of the two bedrooms and a bathroom. The bedrooms measure about ten feet by eleven feet and eleven feet by twelve feet.

Each bedroom in the building has its own closet. In the A-2 module a coat closet is off of the living room and the linen closet is at the end of the hallway, near the hallway. In the BR module, the coat closet is off the living room and the linen closet is off a small hallway at the top of the staircase.

2. Flooring

Floors are covered with non-original twelve-inch vinyl tiles.

3. Wall and ceiling finish

Please refer to the "Outline" report for Building 8, HABS No. CA-2783-A.

4. Openings and trim

Please refer to the "Outline" report for Building 8, HABS No. CA-2783-A.

5. Doors to bedroom and linen closets, storage rooms

Please refer to the "Outline" report for Building 8, HABS No. CA-2783-A.

6. Kitchen fixtures

Please refer to the "Outline" report for Building 8, HABS No. CA-2783-A.

7. Bathroom fixtures

Please refer to the "Outline" report for Building 8, HABS No. CA-2783-A.

8. Lighting and heating fixtures

Please refer to the "Outline" report for Building 8, HABS No. CA-2783-A.

D. Site

1. General setting and orientation

Building 28 is located on the west side of Corto Square. A walkway runs along the front of this building, and connects with walkways on either side that run west, down a hill, toward Hinkley Court.

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

Hardison, Donald. Personal communication with Marjorie Dobkin. January 2003.

_____. Personal communication with Ward Hill and William Kostura.

October 2003.

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

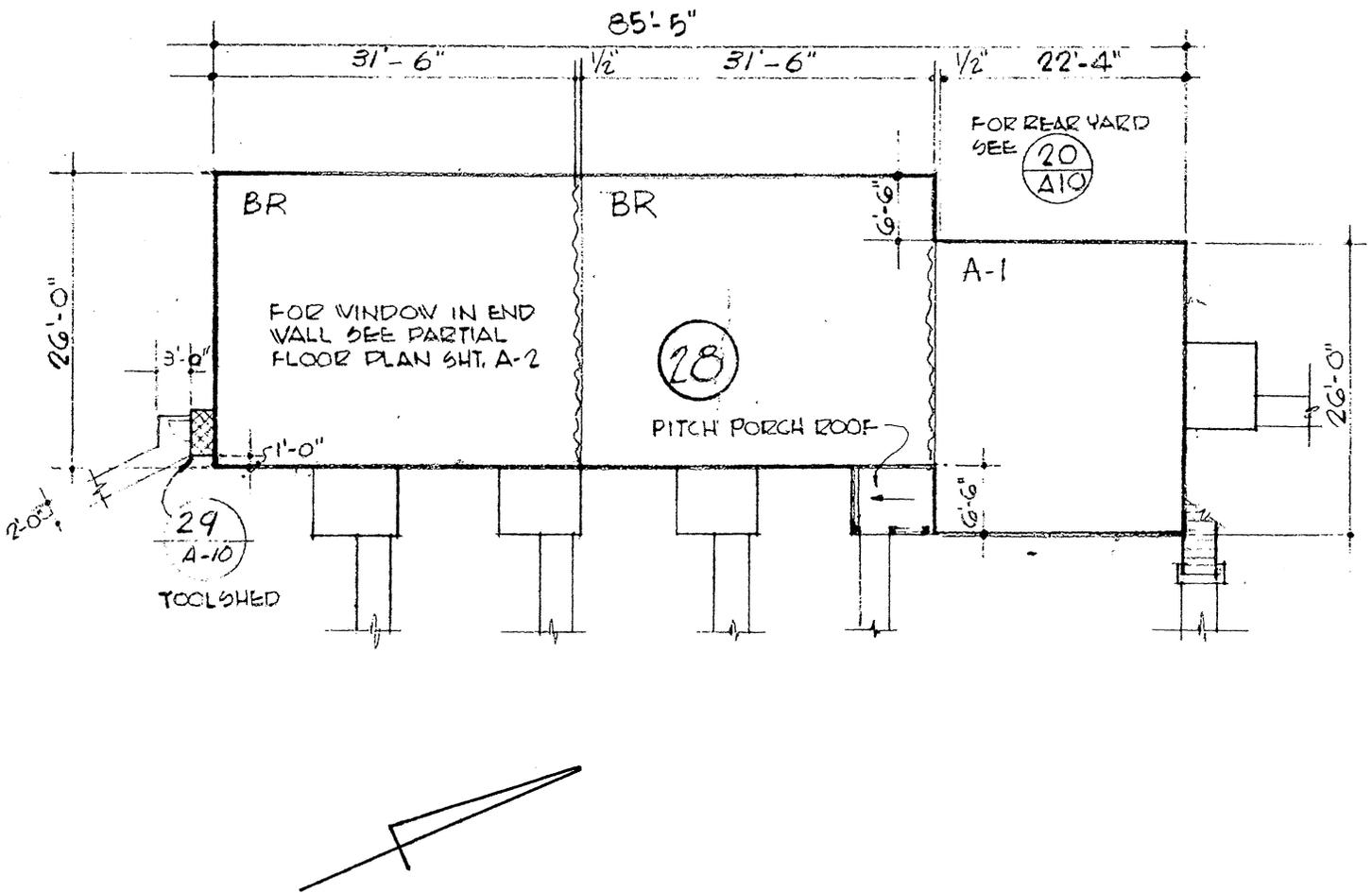
C. Bibliography

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. 28, showing the arrangement of modules. For module plans, please refer to the "Narrative" report, HABS No. CA-2783.