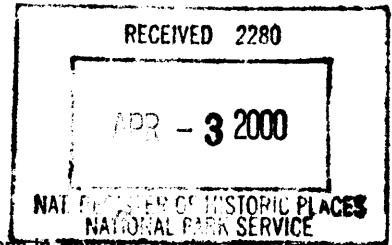


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

449



This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an 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 entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Villa St. Clara Apartments

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

2. Location

street & number 909 SW Twelfth Avenue  not for publication

city or town Portland  vicinity

state Oregon code OR county Multnomah code 051 zip code 97205

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature] March 20, 2000  
Signature of certifying official/Title /Deputy SHPO Date  
Oregon State Historic Preservation Office  
State of Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register.  See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register  See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

[Signature] 5/5/00  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action  
Edson H. Beall

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**Continuation Sheet**

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**VILLA ST. CLARA APARTMENTS (1910)**  
**909 SW Twelfth Avenue**  
**Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon**

**COMMENTS OF THE STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE:**

Located at 909 SW 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue, the Villa St. Clara Apartments was designed in 1910 by architect/contractor Frank Benchly. With elements of the Italian Renaissance style, the six-story building, including raised basement, was designed for Fred Fritz, and named after his wife, Clara.

Fred Fritz, having immigrated to the United States, from his native Germany first settled in Pennsylvania and Arkansas before finally settling in Oregon. He worked in the silver mines in southern Oregon and invested in the timber industry where he made his resources. When moving to Portland, Fritz worked first as a clerk, before finally operating a bar in 1894. By 1910, when he commissioned the construction of the Villa St. Clara, Fred Fritz owned a billiard parlor and lunchroom, saloon, and a theater/café. After completing the Villa St. Clara, Fritz then had the Panama Building (now the Willamette Building) constructed. In 1912 Fred Fritz and his partner, Jim Russell, purchased the Erickson Saloon. The saloon, also known as the Workingmen's Club (10 NW Third Avenue) underwent partial demolition and new construction incorporating part of the original building. Until his death in 1921, Fred continued to operate the Fritz-Russell Company as the president, while living at the Villa St. Clara with his wife who managed the apartment building.

Fritz commissioned architect Frank Benchly, who only lived in Portland from c.1910-12, to design the Villa St. Clara. The apartment complex was built for a cost of \$70,000. The *Oregonian* advertised the Villa St. Clara, in October of 1911 as "one of the most unique and attractive apartment houses built in Portland." The article went on to state that the "building is similar in construction and design to the famous Trebor apartment of Los Angeles. The rooms are furnished in mahogany, Wilton velvet carpets, and fancy leather chairs (all of the furnishing having come from Meier & Frank)." "It is said that there are few apartment houses on the Pacific Coast that are as modern and attractive as the Villa St. Clara," the article concluded.

Designed for middle class clientele, the Villa St. Clara Apartments had many luxury features similar to the grander upper scale apartment buildings. These features included a front desk, party room, banquet hall, roof garden, central vacuum system, mahogany finishes, and Art glass in built-in buffets.

The Villa St. Clara is situated at the corner of SW 12<sup>th</sup> and SW Taylor Street. The L-shaped building with raised basement sits on a concrete foundation. The flat roof has a richly embellished cornice with terra cotta

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ornamentation. The five-story building is construction of brick, with the east and north elevations are buff colored, while the west and south elevations are red brick. The building is divided into three distinct sections demonstrative of the Italian Renaissance style, including the rusticated base, the brick shaft, and the decorative cornice. These sections are further distinguished by a color change in the brick, which ranges from buff to burnt orange. The buff colored brick composing the frieze extends around the entire perimeter of the building. Deep raked joints with dark brown mortar accents the buff colored brick laid in a common bond pattern. Each recessed window opening contains a pair of double-hung wood sash windows with a red brick accented lintel.

The interior carries the Italian Renaissance style in the entrance foyer with faux marble wainscoting, mosaic tile floors, carved plaster ceiling and ornate light fixture. The spacious entrance foyer retains the original tile floors, faux marble wainscoting, molded plaster ceiling, and original chandelier. The original telephone paging system is still intact. Interior doors and frames are the original varnished Honduran Mahogany. Two stairwells, one the main staircase and the other a fire stairs, serve as access to the upper floors, in addition to the original elevator. The upper floors are identical to one another, with a north/south central hall, oak floors and plaster walls and ceilings. Doors and doorframes and moldings such as baseboards, chair rails and crown moldings are varnished or painted mahogany.

There are 27 one-bedroom apartments and 33 studios in the building. Apartments contain a living room, a bedroom/dining room combination, kitchen and bath. The door from the main hall accesses an apartment hallway. The bathroom and kitchen are on opposite sides of the hall. The hallway terminates in the living room. The living room provides access to the bedroom/dining room. Paneled pocket doors separate these rooms. The apartments have many of the original features intact, including wall safe, phone system, light fixtures, a built-in desk in the living room, and a buffet in the dining room that hides the slide out trundle bed, and contains leaded glass cupboards and drawers for silverware and linen storage. The bathrooms also retain their original pedestal sinks and claw foot bathtubs.

Alterations to the Villa St. Clara Apartments include historic alteration such as a storage unit in the basement in 1921 and a sprinkler system in 1925. More recently the building was re-roofed in 1969 and again in 1989. Metal fire stairs were added on the existing fire escapes in 1974, and additional fire sprinklers were added the same year.

The Villa St. Clara Apartments displays characteristics of the Italian Renaissance style in its deep pressed metal cornice with heavy modillions, dentilated frieze, and brick construction accented with deep rake joints. As such, the Villa St. Clara is eligible for listing in the National Register under criterion "C" as an excellent example of Italian Renaissance architecture in Portland. With the original exterior and interior of the building virtually intact, the building retains a high degree of integrity.

Villa St. Clara  
Name of Property

Multnomah County, Oregon  
County and State

**5. Classification**

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

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	0	Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Domestic/Multiple Dwelling

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Domestic/Multiple Dwelling

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Late 19th and 20th Century Revivals/  
Italian Renaissance

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete  
walls \_\_\_\_\_  
roof composition  
other \_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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### Summary

Located at 909 SW 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue, the Villa St. Clara Apartments was designed in 1910 by architect/contractor Frank Benchly. With elements of the Italian Renaissance style, the six-story building, including the daylight basement, was designed for Fred Fritz and named after his wife, Clara.

The Villa St. Clara Apartments displays distinctive characteristics of the Italian Renaissance style in its deep pressed metal cornice with heavy modillions, dentilated frieze, and brick construction accented with deep raked joints. The building is divided vertically into three distinct sections; the rusticated base, the brick shaft, and the decorative cornice. These sections are further distinguished by a color change in the brick from buff to burnt orange. The interior carries the Italian theme in the entrance foyer with its faux marble wainscoting, mosaic floor tiles, carved plaster ceiling and ornate light fixture.

Designed for middle class clientele, the Villa St. Clara Apartments had many luxury features similar to the grander upper scale apartment buildings. These features included a front desk, party room, banquet hall, roof garden, central vacuum system, mahogany finishes, and Art glass in the built-in buffets.

The Villa St. Clara Apartments are eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion 'C' as an excellent example of a street-car era apartment building in southwest Portland in downtown. The Villa St. Clara Apartments are in good condition, and virtually intact on the exterior and interior.

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### Setting

Located in what is called the 'west end' of downtown in Southwest Portland, the Villa St. Clara Apartment building is surrounded by hotels, churches, and commercial buildings. The Villa St. Clara is in walking distance to the Park Blocks accessing the theatre district and museums. It is also located within seven blocks of Portland State University. Historically, these apartments would have housed middle and upper middle class residents.

The apartment complex sits at the corner of SW 12<sup>th</sup> and SW Taylor streets. South of the building, on the same block, is a paved parking lot. Behind the building to the west is a small, narrow courtyard that separates the apartments from the two-story neighboring Portland Women's Club (currently the Movie House). The First Baptist Church is across SW 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue to the east, and First Unitarian Church is across Salmon Street to the south. The First Unitarian Church was designed by prominent Portland architect, Jamieson Parker in 1924. Further north, are newer commercial buildings.

### Exterior

The L-shaped building measures 96 ft. north-south and 70 ft. 8 in. on its longest east-west axis (north elevation). The five-story building, plus raised basement, has a flat roof. The building is constructed of brick; the east and north façades are buff colored, and the west and south facades are constructed of red brick. The buff-colored brick composing the frieze extends around the entire perimeter of the building. Deep, raked joints with dark brown mortar accents the buff colored brick laid in a common bond pattern. Each recessed window opening has a pair of double-hung wood sash windows. Exterior storm windows cover each window. The apartment is supported on a concrete foundation.

#### *Primary Elevation (East Elevation)*

The primary façade, the east elevation, is composed of six stories including the raised daylight basement. A distinctive, deep pressed metal cornice embellishes the top of the building; a dentilated frieze and modillions decorate the cornice. The upper floors are constructed of buff colored brick. The top floor is separated from the lower three floors by a corbeled beltcourse. The basement and first floor levels are separated from the upper floors by a wide beltcourse. The basement and first floors are constructed of rusticated concrete.

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A row of eight windows compose each floor; each window opening contains a pair of windows. The window openings are recessed approximately 18 inches and are decorated with contrasting burnt orange colored brick label moldings and sills. The same burnt orange brick is used to accent the beltcourse. Another corbeled beltcourse divides the fourth and fifth floors. A fire escape extends down the front of this elevation.

The front entrance is located on the east elevation. According to oral interviews and stylistic details, these doors may have been installed at a later date or salvaged from another building, possibly Fritz's saloon.

Recessed from the building surface, the front of the entrance is flanked by two octagonal columns covered with light-colored marble panels; the base and capital of the columns are clad with black marble. The side walls of the recessed entrance are clad with tan marble wainscoting with black trim. Three wooden doors with large oval glass panels extend across the opening; only the central door is functional (the flanking doors are stationary). Ornate wooden Corinthian pilasters flank the central door and narrow transom windows are above the three oval doors. The central transom has decorative beveled glass with the number "203" in the center. This was the original street number for the apartment building. The entrance floor is composed of small, gray-green tiles laid in a mosaic pattern.

### *Secondary Elevations: South, West, and North*

The south elevation is composed of red brick with irregular fenestration and is void of decoration. A series of stair windows are located in the center of the facade. Smaller windows flank the stair windows. The one over one double-hung window have segmental arches and brick sills. Buff colored brick defines the cornice line on this elevation.

The west elevation (rear) is constructed of red brick with irregular fenestration. The window openings have segmental arches with brick sills. A fire escape extends down this elevation. A narrow concrete courtyard is located between the Villa St. Clara and the adjacent building. This area, enclosed by a chain link fence, is used as an outdoor sitting area.

The north elevation is similar to the front (east) façade as it is constructed of buff brick with orange accent brick. There is a fire escape on this elevation. Fenestration is irregular. The east half of the elevation has a single window opening, repeating on all

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floors, with a series of three smaller windows that follow and also repeats on each floors. The west half of the elevation has three window openings that repeat on all floors.

### Interior

#### *First Floor-Foyer*

The entrance foyer is a spacious room with original tile floors, faux marble wainscoting, molded plaster ceiling, and an original chandelier. The space is virtually intact as built, with the exception of the entrance and office doors (may have been installed at a later date).

Six foot high faux Italian marble wainscoting decorates the foyer walls. The floor is composed of small rectangular tiles, ochre in color, that are laid in an elaborate mosaic pattern. The faux Italian marble paneling is beige with red, green, and ochre veining. The original black marble base trim is intact. The wide crown molding around the ceiling is made of plaster as is the ceiling medallion. The ceiling medallion is an oval shape with the original chandelier in the center. The bowl-shaped chandelier is made of brass and art glass. The elevator lobby is directly behind the foyer. The door to the elevator lobby is original.

The north wall of the foyer has an opening surrounded by faux marble that originally accessed the front desk area. The window is now enclosed with a mirror. A pair of large mirrors decorate the west wall of the foyer; the original telephone paging system is between these two mirrors. The brass nameplate and phone are still intact, however, the system no longer functions. At the north end of this wall is a glass paneled wood door leading to the elevator/stair lobby. The south wall is comprised of double doors with central glass ovals (same as the entrance doors) flanked by high faux Italian marble wainscoting. These doors lead into an office. The office has an original exposed beam ceiling and the windows look out onto SW 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue. This room may have originally served as the "party room" as described in the Oregonian.

The elevator/stair lobby has the same faux marble wainscoting, but it is not as high. All doors and door frames are composed of the original varnished Honduran mahogany except for the elevator door which is metal. The flooring is composed of the same small mosaic tiles as the foyer. At the end of the elevator/stair hall are doors which lead to the first floor apartments. These swinging doors have large glass panels with a beaded

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molding around the glass. Two steps lead down to the hallways accessing the apartments; these apartments are below grade.

There are two stairwells; one accesses the main staircase to the upper floors. This stairway is centrally located in the building. The second set of stairs serves as the fire stairs and is a narrow stairwell at the south end of the building. The main stairwell has varnished mahogany railing and fir newel posts and balusters. Both the balusters and posts are square. The newel posts are capped with simple wood caps. Stair treads and risers are wood and covered with a central carpet runner. The enclosed fire stairs are lit by a narrow double-hung window at each landing.

### Upper floors

#### *Plan*

The plan of the upper floors is identical on each floor. A central hall runs north/south with rooms on each side. The rooms look out onto SW 12<sup>th</sup> (east) or the small courtyard area at the back (west).

#### *Halls*

The hallways of the upper floors are all identical. At the south end of each hallway is the fire stairwell and at the north end is a mahogany framed mirror. The topnailed oak floors are designed with inlaid mahogany border strips. All of the doors and door trim are original and are constructed of mahogany which has been varnished. The door trim projects approximately two inches from the wall and the doors are single panel. The chair rails and crown moldings are painted, however the trim molding is varnished mahogany.

#### *Apartments*

The apartment building consists of 27, one bedroom apartments and 33 studios. The apartment building floor plans are original as built. Almost all the units have varnished mahogany doors, trim, and built-ins. Only some of the woodwork has been painted.

A typical one bedroom unit has a living room, a bedroom/dining room, kitchen, and bath. The door opens onto a short hallway. The bathroom and kitchen doors are on opposite side of the hall, and the end of the hall opens onto the living room which has windows facing onto SW 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue or onto the back garden area. Adjacent to the living room is the bedroom/dining room. Paneled pocket doors separate these two rooms. The floors

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are oak with inlaid mahogany borders and the base trim is varnished mahogany. The lighting is original and consists of two hanging overhead lights in the living and dining rooms. All rooms are heated with steam and have cast iron registers in each room.

The living room has a built-in desk on the wall opposite the windows. A double size trundle bed is built under the desk area. A large closet is next to the built-in desk. The closet has a mahogany paneled door with inset mirror. Inside the closet are two steps that lead to a large space. The two steps contain drawers for storage and the height provides the storage space needed for the trundle bed.

The dining room has a built-in combination buffet and trundle bed. The upper half has leaded glass cupboard doors and a mirrored backboard. The leaded glass is decorated with a floral motif. Below are three drawers for silverware and linens. Underneath the drawers is a wood paneled drawer containing the pull-outs for the double size trundle bed. A wide plate rail extends around the perimeter of the room.

Behind the dining room is a short hall/pantry which leads to the kitchen. This hall has built-in cabinets similar to a butler's pantry. The cabinets are painted and have glass doors. A counter sits atop storage drawers. Beyond the pantry is the kitchen. Most of the kitchen has been updated with new appliances. The sink and cabinets are original. The bathrooms retain their original sinks and claw foot bathtubs. The toilets have been replaced. The flooring in the kitchen and bath is new. Each unit has an original built-in wall safe and phone system.

A typical studio apartment is identical to the one bedrooms in the detailing. The studio plan consists of a central hall with a bath on one side and a closet across the hall. Adjacent to the bath is the living/bedroom and the kitchen is across the hall adjacent to the closet. The living/bedroom and the kitchen have west facing windows.

### *Basement*

A basement houses a bike room, storage rooms, and the boiler. There is a back door at the daylight basement level (west elevation) that provides access to the small back courtyard.

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## Alterations

### *Historic Alterations*

Storage unit added to basement, 1921.  
Installed sprinkler system, 1925.  
Possible entrance modifications.

### *Recent Alterations*

Re-roofed, 1969, 1989-1990  
Two new sets of metal fire stairs installed on existing fire escapes, 1973.  
Fire sprinklers installed, 1974.

Villa St. Clara

Name of Property

Multnomah County, Oregon

County and State

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

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

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 of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

**Period of Significance**

1911

**Significant Dates**

1911

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

**Cultural Affiliation**

**Architect/Builder**

Frank Benchly

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**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 # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

\_\_\_\_\_

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**Statement of Significance**

The Villa St. Clara Apartments, located at 909 SW 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue, is eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion 'C' as an excellent example of a street-car era apartment building in downtown Portland built between 1905 and 1915. The apartment house was designed in 1910 by architect/contractor Frank Benchly with elements of the Italian Renaissance style; this is the only known building designed by Benchly in Portland. The six-story building, including the daylight basement, was designed for Fred Fritz and named after his wife, Clara.

The Villa St. Clara Apartments displays distinctive characteristics of the Italian Renaissance style in its deep pressed metal cornice with heavy modillions, dentilated frieze, and brick construction accented with deep raked joints. The building is divided vertically into three distinct sections; the rusticated base, the brick shaft, and the decorative cornice. These sections are further distinguished by a color change in the brick from buff to burnt orange. The interior carries the Italian theme in the entrance foyer with its marble wainscoting, mosaic floor tiles, molded plaster ceiling and ornate light fixture. Luxury features similar to the grander upper class apartment buildings include a front desk, party room, banquet hall, roof garden, central vacuum system, mahogany finishes, and Art glass in the built-in buffets. The Villa St. Clara Apartments are in good condition, and virtually intact on both the exterior and interior.

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Continuation Sheet**

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**Apartment Living**

In the United States, the concept of an “apartment” as chosen alternative to single family housing dates to the last half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The first building designed as an apartment house appeared in Boston in 1855. It offered permanent residence for families and bachelors. The real beginning of the movement came, however, in 1869 when Richard Morris Hunt designed the Stuyvesant on Irving Place in New York. The 5-story building offered 6-10 room suites on the lower floors for a rent of \$1,200 to \$1,800 per year, while the top floor studio apartments rented for \$920 per year.

Hunt imported the concept from France. It also came as a direct response to increased land costs that resulted from increasing population density. Building a multi-family building allowed developers to make money. A month before Hunt completed construction, the Stuyvesant was besieged with 200 applications. The return on the investment was clear; investors began to build more apartment complexes.

The notion of apartment living was sold on the basis of efficiency and unheard-of technological advances: the entrances and public spaces were sumptuous. Marble floor and paneling, crystal chandeliers, imported carpets, and walnut or mahogany wainscoting adorned public doorways, lobbies, staircases, and elevator cages. There were central hot-water heating, central gas main for lighting and fully equipped bathrooms for each unit.

Architects experimented with electric generators, later connecting the buildings to the streetcar electric service, and installed central vacuum cleaning systems with nozzles in each room connected to a large pump in the basement. Individual attachments could be used as hair driers or reversed as dust collectors. To increase light and ventilation, subsequent designs grouped apartments around a central courtyard with central corridors. The emphasis on efficiency resulted in some apartments separating the heat and discomforts of cooking and laundry from the living quarters with public dining rooms, kitchens, and laundries. Some provided servants for serving meals and cleaning clothes. The cooperative services, technologies advances and attention to public spaces made the apartment seem like one of the most advanced institutions in American society. Although a more modestly designed apartment building, the Villa St. Clara had many of the same features as the upper-class apartment buildings.

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National Park Service**

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## **The Park Blocks and Street Car-Era Apartments**

The Villa St. Clara Apartments are located two blocks west of the Park Blocks in downtown Portland. The land where the Park Blocks are located were once part of the Lowndale Donation Land Claim. In 1852, Lowndale, along with other prominent land owners, agreed to establish a green strip across the entire length of the young city, from south to north. The strip of land was dedicated for public use. At that time, the strip consisted of steep fir-covered land a mile from the river's edge. Between 1852 and 1876, the Park Blocks' land was used as a roadway for wagons and carriages. In 1876, the City Council began developing the blocks as parkland.

In 1883, the South Park Blocks had developed into a prime residential area with a public school, several churches, and many of the city's finest residences. After the turn of the century, the area became even more popular as the streetcar lines pushed their way through the Park Blocks. The street cars extended throughout the Park Blocks and downtown, and extended west on SW Morrison Street, and north-south on SW 11<sup>th</sup> and SW 14th avenues; in close proximity to the site of the Villa St. Clara Apartments.

Beginning with the streetcar and accelerated by the advent of the automobile, the neighborhood began to transition. Residents began to move farther away from the city center, former single family residences were turned into flats, boarding houses, apartments, and housekeeping rooms. Increasingly, wood frame homes were being demolished to make way for apartment buildings.

In the early 1900s, many apartment buildings were constructed along the Park Blocks and the nearby area. The area between SW Eighth and SW Thirteenth avenues, and SW Taylor and SW Market was the most concentrated area of development. This area continued to be a popular place to live, however, over the years this neighborhood has lost some of its multi-family residential character. New office buildings have replaced apartment buildings and there are many surface parking lots.

## **The Villa St. Clara Apartments**

The Villa St. Clara Apartments were built as upper-middle class apartments and had the highest quality of furnishings and modern features. The apartment's name sake, Clara Fritz (wife of Fred), managed the apartments. According to Clara's grandson, Fred A. Fritz Jr., Mrs. Fritz managed the apartment as a very "strait-laced establishment". The apartment building was designed by architect/contractor Frank K. Benchly who only lived in Portland from c. 1910-

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Section number 8 Page 4

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1912. The contractors for the apartment was Giebisch and Joplin; the building was constructed for a cost of \$70,000.

An April 26, 1912, *Oregonian* advertised the Villa St. Clara Apartments as the "most magnificently furnished apartments in the Northwest" with "every modern convenience including a banquet hall and roof garden". The advertisement states each apartment had "phones in all apartments" and had "high class service". References were required when applying for residency. The interior of the apartments were furnished by the Meier and Frank Department Store. Each unit had a central vacuum system, wall safes, pull-out trundle beds, built-in desks, pocket doors, and stained glass in the built-in buffets. An October 29, 1911, *Oregonian* article describes the Villa St. Clara Apartments as:

*One of the most unique and attractive apartment-houses built in Portland this year is the Villa St. Clara located on the corner of Twelfth and Taylor Streets. The building is similar in construction and design to the famous Trebor apartment of Los Angeles. The building is so arranged that each apartment has a private hall giving direct access to the living room, dining room, kitchen, bath, and dressing room. The living room and dining rooms of each apartment fronts on the street. The rooms are furnished in mahogany, Wilton velvet carpets and fancy leather covered chairs. The furniture throughout is of the highest class.*

*Another feature of this house is the large amusement hall which has been provided on the first floor for the benefits of tenants to be used for tea parties, card parties, receptions, and balls. Another attractive feature is the roof garden, equipped with awnings, seats and hammocks. Potted plants are placed around the entire space occupied by the roof garden. The view from the roof is one of the best to be obtained in the city.*

*It is said that there are few apartment-houses on the Pacific Coast that are as modern and attractive as the Villa St. Clara.*

Although the free-standing furniture and carpeting have been removed, many of the original features remain intact and are in excellent condition. The Italian marble paneled foyer with its mosaic tile floor, the varnished mahogany trim in the upper halls, the oak floors with their inlaid mahogany borders are all intact. The cleverly designed built-in trundle beds remain in each apartment as do the pocket doors, pendant light fixtures, wall safes, original kitchen cabinetry, phone system, and cast iron bathtubs.

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Continuation Sheet**

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**Fred Fritz**

The Villa St. Clara Apartments were constructed in 1910-11 by Fred Fritz as luxury apartments. Fritz, a native of Germany, came to the United States with his father and brothers, first settling in Pennsylvania, then in Arkansas before moving to Southern Oregon. Fritz worked in the silver mines in Southern Oregon and invested in the timber industry where he accumulated resources before moving to Portland.

After arriving in Portland, Fritz working as a clerk for F. Butefuhr & Company. The following year, in 1894, Fritz began his long career in the saloon business, operating a bar near NW Third and Couch streets. By 1900, Fritz had a billiard's parlor and lunchroom on Second and West Burnside (242-244 Burnside) and by 1906, he had ventured into the theater business, owning and managing the Fritz Theater and Café at the West Burnside location.

Fritz expanded his business ventures in 1910 when he hired architect/contractor Frank K. Benchly to design the Villa St. Clara Apartments. The apartment house was completed in 1911. He also built the Panama Building (now the Willamette Building) on SW Third and Alder streets in downtown Portland.

In 1912, Fred Fritz purchased the Erickson Saloon with his partner, Jim Russell. The infamous Erickson Saloon was credited with having the longest bar in the world at the time, extending 684 feet. Clientele came from all over the world to drink at Erickson's saloon, known as the Workingmen's Club. The establishment offered the opportunity for its clients to meet, drink, gamble, socialize, and/or 'sample one of the joint hostesses for a night'. The saloon also featured a concert stage and pipe organ.

After Fritz and Russell purchased the saloon, the partners demolished a part of the bar and built the Erickson Hotel. The partners hired architect Aaron Gould to design the new buildings on the site incorporating some of the previous building into the design. When the building was rebuilt, the name of the saloon, the Workingmen's Club (10 NW Third Avenue), was retained. August Erickson continued to work for Fritz and Russell for a time after selling the business. By 1915, Fritz was listed in the city directory as the President of the Fritz-Russell Company with three business locations in the downtown area.

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National Park Service**

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Fritz's business ventures changed as Prohibition was enacted in Portland in 1916. The emphasis shifted from a saloon to a card and billiards room, and café. Fritz continued to operate his businesses turning over the management of the Workingmen's Club to his son, Fredrick Albert Fritz. Fred Fritz died in October 1921, at the age of 59. He was survived by his son and his wife, Clara. Fritz resided at the Villa St. Clara Apartment in Room 504 until his death.

**Comparative Analysis**

These properties in the comparative analysis were taken from the "Portland Historic Resource Inventory" and date from 1905 to 1915. These buildings are within southwest Portland; more specifically the area from SW Taylor to SW Market streets, and from SW Eighth to SW Thirteenth avenues.

In the area described, there are approximately 20 apartment buildings built between 1905 and 1915 that remain. Of these, three are comparable in scale, design, and style to the Villa St. Clara; the Carmelita (1910), The Cambrian (1911), and the Wheeldon Annex (1914). The Wheeldon is a larger Italian Renaissance building designed for an upper class clientele. The Cambrian has a very plain entrance and is in poor condition on the interior. The Carmelita is comparable to the Villa St. Clara and is in good condition on the exterior.

The area also has a few remaining apartment buildings which pre-date 1900. Approximately 12 apartment buildings in the described area date from the 1920s and 30s such as the Jeanne Manor, 1929 (not included in the analysis). There are approximately six apartment buildings dating from 1905-1915 not listed in the "Portland Historic Resource Inventory"; these have all been significantly altered and/or are extremely plain in design.

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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### Comparable Apartment Buildings

These three apartment buildings are comparable to the Villa St. Clara in style, scale, and design.

#### **929 SW Salmon Street**

OTHER NAMES: Wheeldon Annex, listed on the National Register

DATE BUILT: 1914

STYLE: Second Renaissance Revival

SPECIAL FEATURES AND MATERIALS: Five-story brick apartment building with raised basement and rusticated first story. Bracketed sheet metal cornice. Belt course with brick corbels. Courtyard.

#### **1129 SW Columbia Street**

OTHER NAMES: Cambrian Apartments

DATE BUILT: 1911

STYLE: Second Renaissance Revival

SPECIAL FEATURES AND MATERIALS: Four-story apartment building faced with brick. Raised basement and rusticated ground floor. Cast stone ornamentation includes corbels, consoles, label moldings, inset tiles, and piers and entablature around entry.

#### **1232 SW Jefferson Street**

OTHER NAMES: Carmelita Apartments

DATE BUILT: 1910

STYLE: Streetcar Era Apartments

SPECIAL FEATURES AND MATERIALS: Parapeted roof with bracketed cornice. Brick exterior finish. Decorative brick bands. Multi-light, double-hung windows. Glass-paneled door recessed in elliptical-arched opening transom.

### 1905-1915 Apartments (Different in scale, design and style)

These seven apartment buildings, included in the Portland Historic Resource Inventory, date from the same period but are different in design, style, and scale to the Villa St. Clara Apartments.

#### **1307 SW Broadway**

ORIGINAL NAME: Rose-Friend Apartments

DATE BUILT: 1910

STYLE: Jacobethan

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## **National Register of Historic Places**

### **Continuation Sheet**

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**1110 SW Clay Street**

DATE BUILT: 1909

STYLE: Streetcar Era Apartments

**1405 SW Park Avenue**

ORIGINAL NAME: Cumberland Apartments

DATE BUILT: 1910

STYLE: Jacobethan

**1025 SW Eleventh Avenue**

OTHER NAMES: The Pine Cone Apartments

DATE BUILT: 1909

STYLE: Classical style

**1415 SW Eleventh Avenue**

DATE BUILT: ca. 1908

STYLE: Colonial Revival, residential in character

**1515 SW Eleventh Avenue**

ORIGINAL NAME: Claypoole Annex

DATE BUILT: 1908

STYLE: Streetcar Era Apartments

**1510 SW Thirteenth Avenue**

ORIGINAL NAME: Luxor Apartments

DATE BUILT: 1908

STYLE: Streetcar Era Apartments

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## **National Register of Historic Places**

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#### **Significantly Altered Apartment Buildings**

These three apartment buildings included in the Portland Historic Resource Inventory have been significantly altered.

##### **1405 SW Eleventh Avenue**

DATE BUILT: 1903

STYLE: Streetcar Era Apartments

SIGNIFICANT ALTERATIONS: Appears to have been stuccoed on the upper floors.

##### **1125 SW Twelfth Avenue**

DATE BUILT: 1910

STYLE: Streetcar Era Apartments

SIGNIFICANT ALTERATIONS: All windows have been altered.

##### **1402-1406 SW Twelfth Avenue**

DATE BUILT. ca. 1908

STYLE: Queen Anne Vernacular

SIGNIFICANT ALTERATION: New siding.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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### Bibliography

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Clark, Rosalind. *Architecture Oregon Style*. (Portland: Professional Book Center, 1983).

DiLorenzo, John. Interview, 12 November 1999. Current owner of Villa St. Clara Apartments.

Fritz, Fred A. Jr. Phone interview, Portland, Oregon, November 1999. Grandson of Fred Fritz, original owner of the Villa St. Clara Apartments.

Heritage Investments. "Jeanne Manor". National Register Nomination, 1998.

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Holbrook, Stewart. *Holy Ole' Macanaw; National History of American Lumberjack*.

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MacColl, E. Kimbark. *Merchants, Money and Power, The Portland Establishment, 1843-1913*. (Portland: The Georgian Press Company, 1988).

MacColl, E. Kimbark. *Power and Politics in Portland, Oregon, 1915 to 1950*. (Portland: The Georgian Press Company, 1976).

MacColl, E. Kimbark. *The Shaping of a City. Business and Politics in Portland, Oregon 1885 to 1915*. (Portland: The Georgian Press Company, 1976).

*Oregon Journal*. 3 January 1911.

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

# **National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet**

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*Oregonian.* 21 May 1911; 29 October 1911; 8 December 1911; 26 April 1912; 16 October 1921; 30 January 1981; 29 January 1989.

*Pacific Engineer and Builder.* Seattle, Washington, 1911.

*Portland City Directories.* Portland, Oregon. 1890s to 1930s.

Portland Historic Resource Inventory. City of Portland.

Villa St. Clara

Multnomah County, Oregon

Name of Property

County and State

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreeage of Property** Less than an acre

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	1   0	5   2   4   6   6   5	5   0   4   0   4   7   0
	Zone	Easting	Northing
2			

3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing
4			

See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title John M. Tess

organization Heritage Consulting Group date 12-1-99

street & number 123 NW Second Avenue, Suite 200 telephone (503) 228-0272

city or town Portland state OR zip code 97209

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**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.

**Photographs**

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

**Additional Items**

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

**Property Owner**

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

name Villa St. Clair Inc. c/o John DiLorenzo

street & number 888 SW Fifth Avenue, 10th Floor telephone (503) 222-1812

city or town Portland state Oregon zip code 97204

**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. 470 *et seq.*).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 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 Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

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**Verbal Description**

The nominated area includes Tax Lot 500, more specifically defined as part of Lots 1 and 2, N ½ Block G in Portland Addition to Portland, Oregon, Section 4, T1S, R1E, of the Willamette Meridian. The property is located on the southwest corner of SW 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Taylor Streets in southwest Portland.

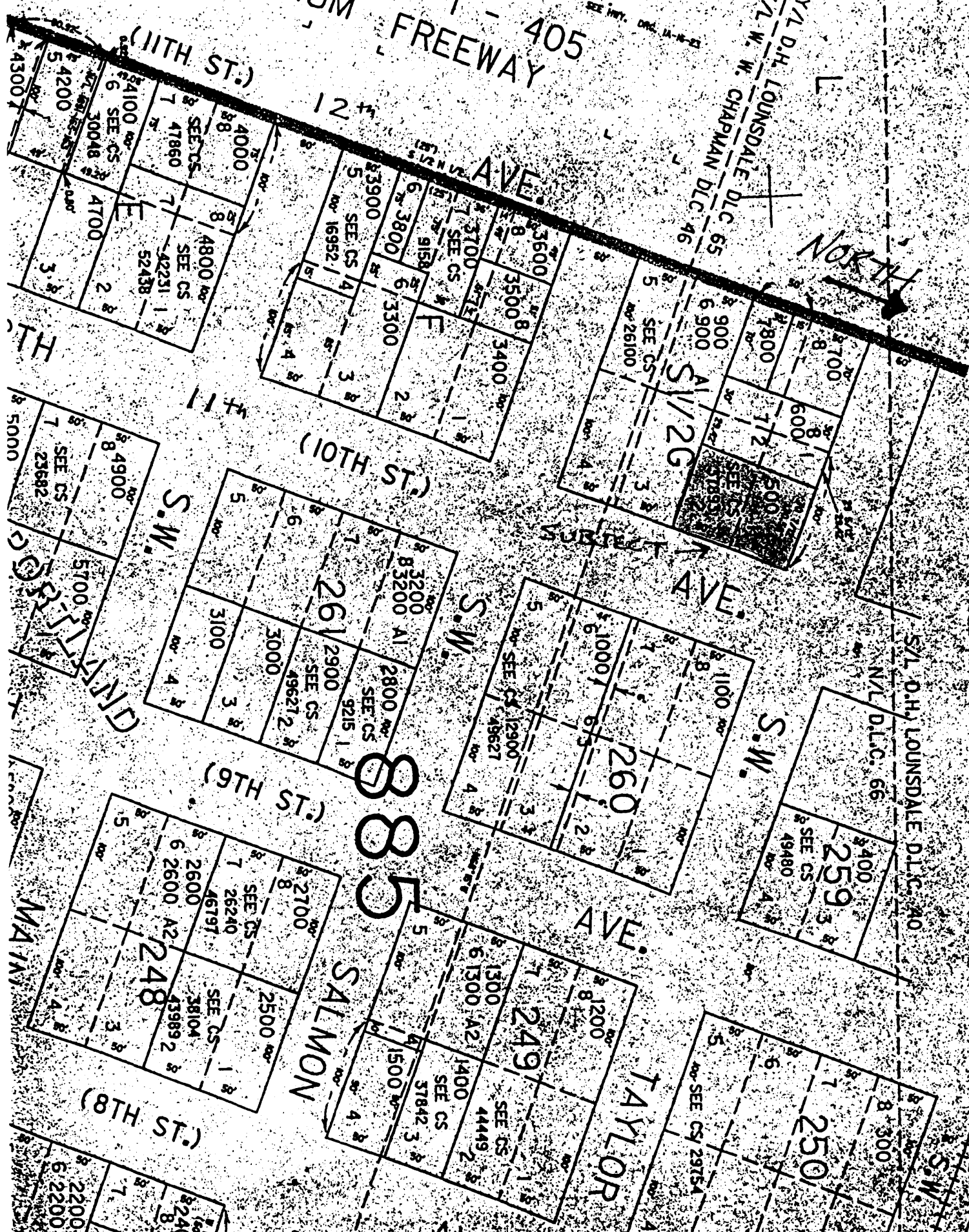
**Boundary Description**

The nominated area includes all of Tax Lot 500, Block G in Portland Addition to Portland, Oregon. This corresponds to the historic property lines of the Villa St. Clara Apartments.

STADIUM HWY. 405  
FREEWAY

S/L D.H. LOUNSDALE D.L.C. 65  
N/L W. W. CHAPMAN D.L.C. 46

NORTH



SEE MAP IN E 35DD

S/L D.H. LOUNSDALE D.L.C. 40  
N/L D.L.C. 66

885

SALMON

TAYLOR

(8TH ST.)

(9TH ST.)

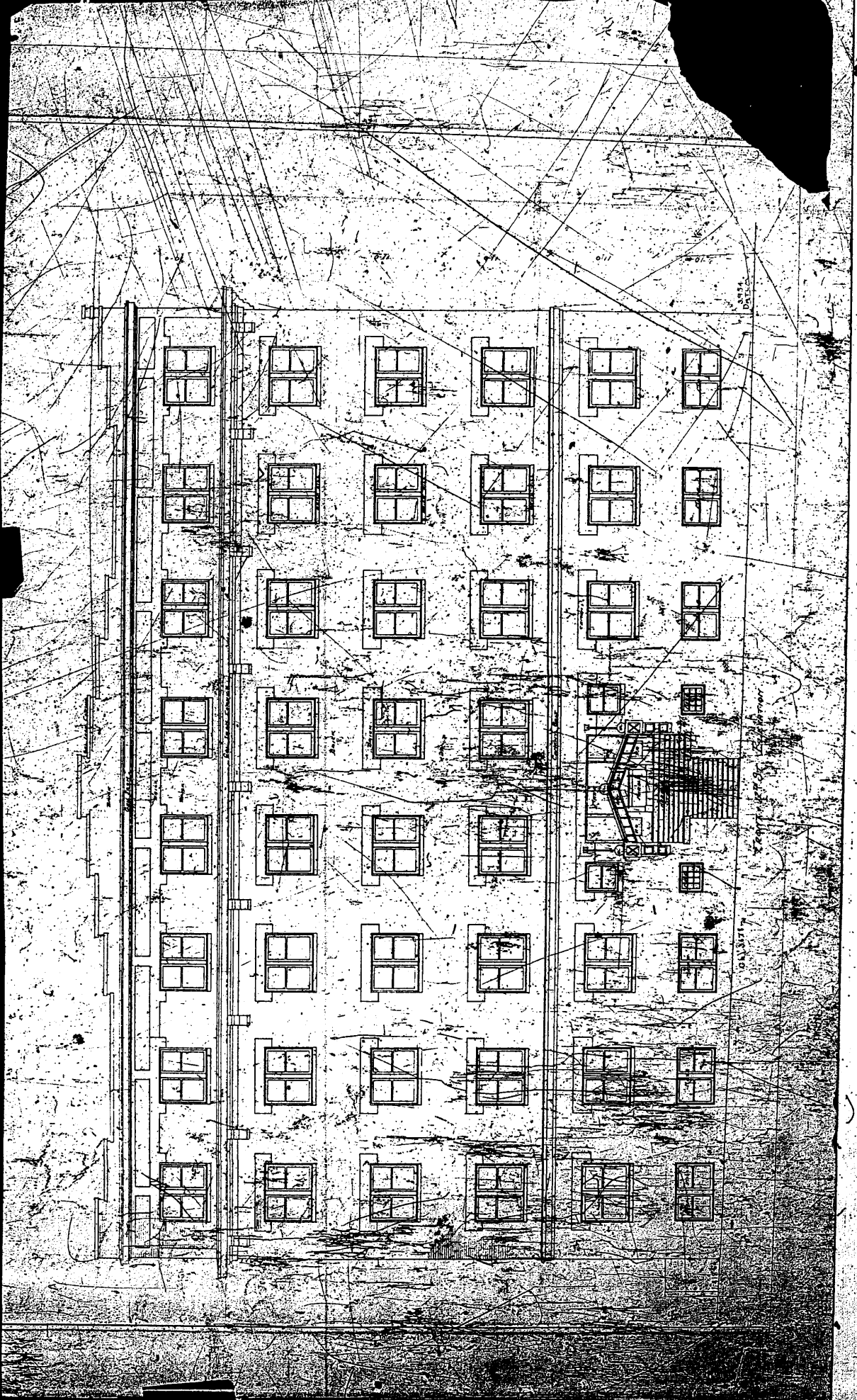
(10TH ST.)

(11TH ST.)

901-19 S.W. 12<sup>th</sup> Ave.

25044

7-9

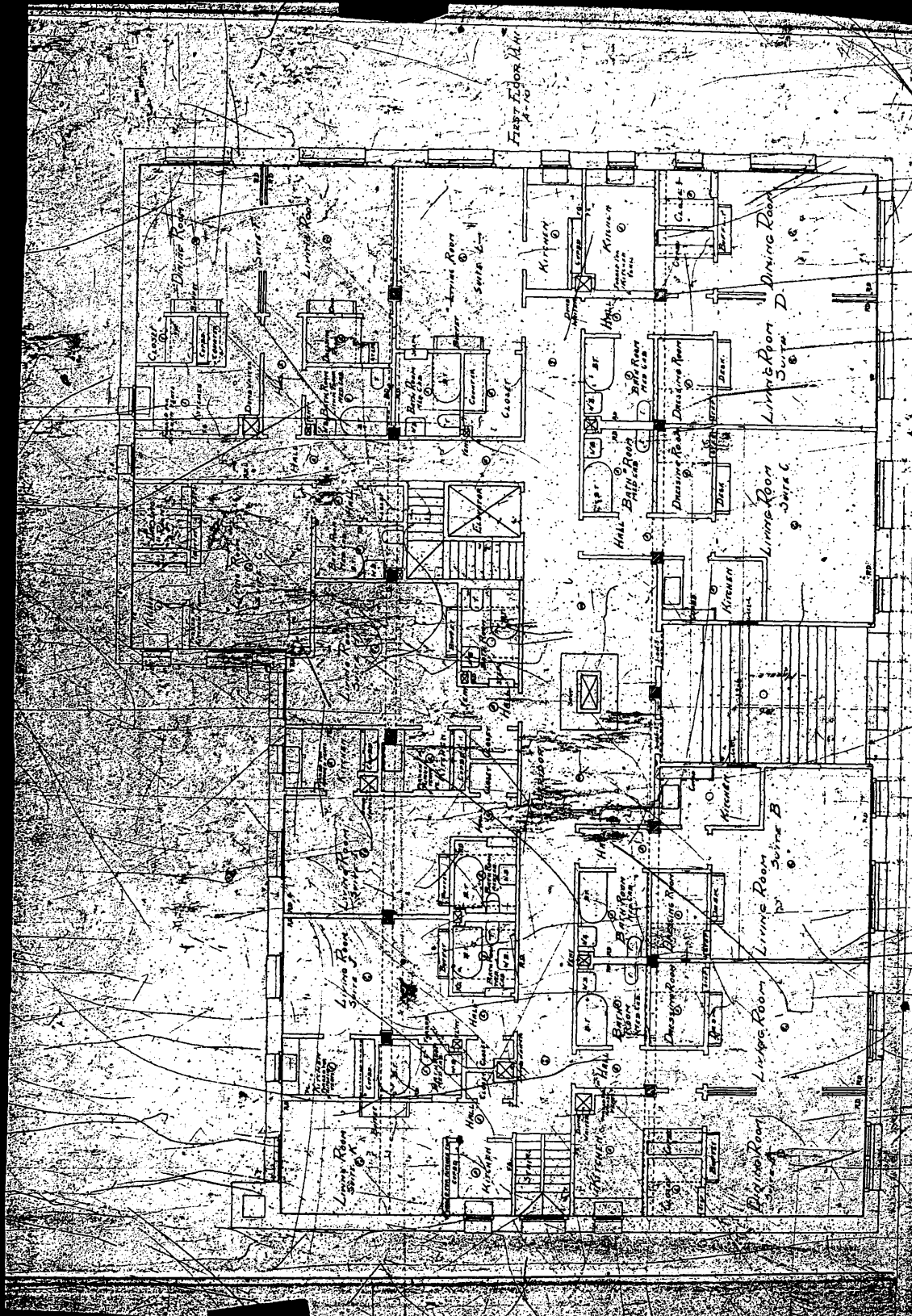


Villa St. Clara Apartments

Portland Permit Center

901-19 S.W. 12<sup>th</sup> Ave.

25044  
7-9



Villa St. Clara Apartments

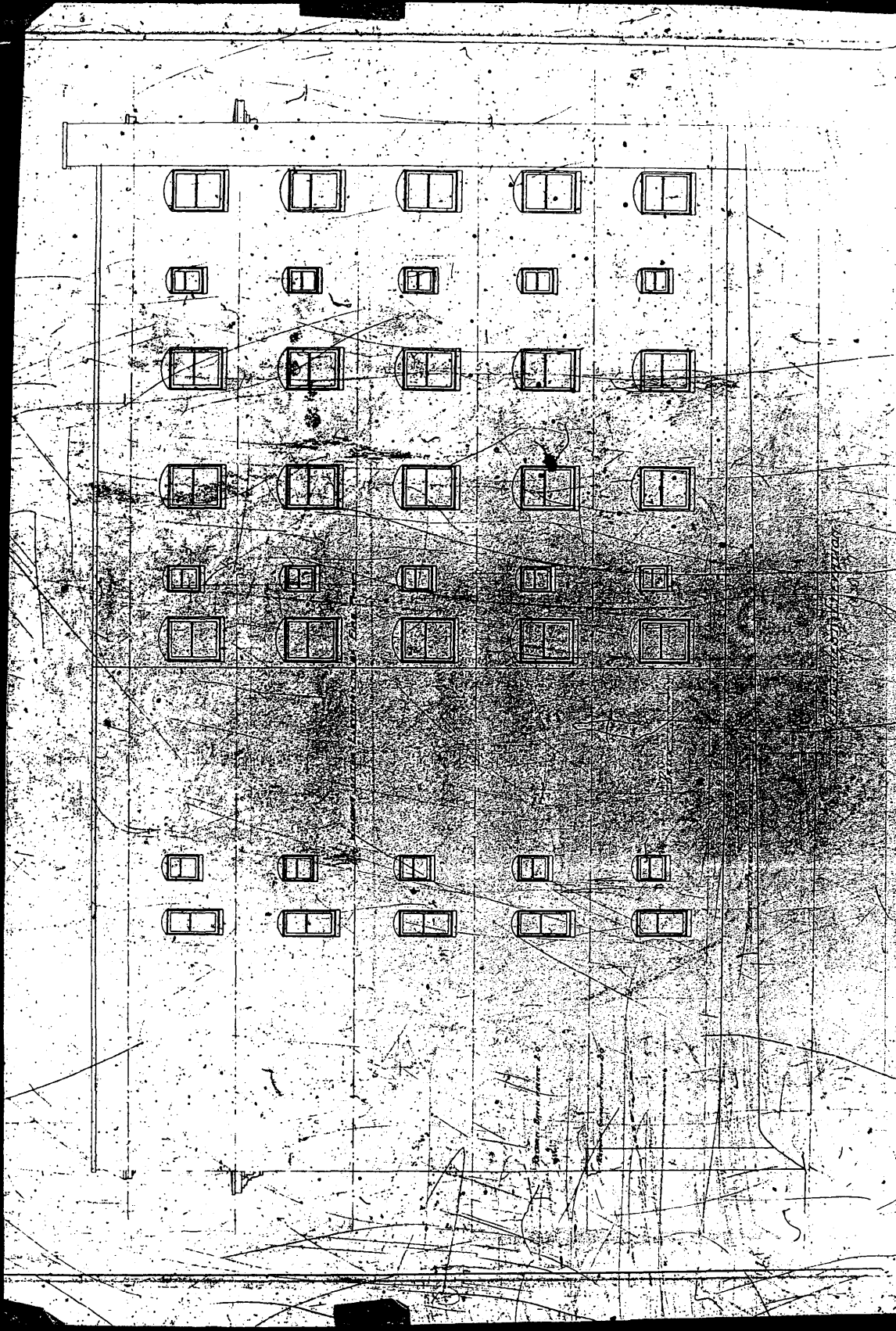
Portland Permit Center



901-19 S.W. 12<sup>th</sup> Ave.

25044

7-9



Villa St. Clara Apartments

Portland Permits Center

901-19 S.W. 12th Ave.

25044

7-9



Portland Permit Center

WILSON - CLINE ARCHITECTS

10111 S.W. 12<sup>th</sup> AVE.

VILLI ST. CLARA APARTMENTS

25044

7-9



Villa St. Clara Apartments

Portland Permit Center



Villa St. Clara  
909 SW 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon

Heritage Consulting Group Photograph

Description: E elevation looking W

Date: November, 1999

Negative location:

Heritage Consulting Group  
123 NW Second Avenue, Suite 200  
Portland, Oregon 97209  
(503) 228-0271

H  
Photo 1 of 12

2193



REFRESHMENT WITH A NEW TWIST

ZIMA

NEW ZIMA CITRUS

Villa St. Clara  
909 SW 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon

Heritage Consulting Group Photograph

Description: S elevation looking N

Date: November, 1999

Negative location:

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123 NW Second Avenue, Suite 200  
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(503) 228-0271

Photo 2 of 12

2193



REFRESHMENT WITH A NEW TWIST



NEW ZIMA CITRUS

Villa St. Clara  
909 SW 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon

Heritage Consulting Group Photograph

Description: S elevation looking N

Date: November, 1999

Negative location:

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Portland, Oregon 97209  
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N

Photo 3 of 12

2193



Villa St. Clara  
909 SW 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon

Heritage Consulting Group Photograph

Description: W elevation looking E

Date: November, 1999

Negative location:

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Photo 4 of 12

2193



THE MOVIE HOUSE

Villa St. Clara  
909 SW 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon

**Heritage Consulting Group Photograph**

**Description: N elevation looking S**

**Date: November, 1999**

**Negative location:**

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Portland, Oregon 97209  
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**Photo 5 of 12**

2193

909

THE GENTRY APARTMENTS

THE GENTRY



Villa St. Clara  
909 SW 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon

Heritage Consulting Group Photograph

Description: E elevation main entrance

Date: November, 1999

Negative location:

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H  
Photo 6 of 12

2193



Villa St. Clara  
909 SW 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon

Heritage Consulting Group Photograph

Description: Detail E elevation

Date: November, 1999

Negative location:

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H  
Photo 7 of 12

2193



Villa St. Clara  
909 SW 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon

Heritage Consulting Group Photograph

Description: Main entrance looking N

Date: November, 1999

Negative location:

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Photo 8 of 12

2593



Villa St. Clara  
909 SW 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon

Heritage Consulting Group Photograph

Description: Foyer, looking NW

Date: November, 1999

Negative location:

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Photo 9 of 12

02/07/99



Villa St. Clara  
909 SW 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon

Heritage Consulting Group Photograph

Description: Typical interior corridor

Date: November, 1999

Negative location:

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~~123~~ 123 NW Second Avenue, Suite 200  
Portland, Oregon 97209  
(503) 228-0271

11

Photo 10 of 12

2593



Villa St. Clara  
909 SW 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon

**Heritage Consulting Group Photograph**

**Description:** Typical interior apartment dining room

**Date:** November, 1999

**Negative location:**

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~~123~~ NW Second Avenue, Suite 200  
Portland, Oregon 97209  
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**Photo** 11 **of** 12

2593



Villa St. Clara  
909 SW 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon

**Heritage Consulting Group Photograph**

**Description:** Typical interior dining room with trundle bed

**Date:** November, 1999

**Negative location:**

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123 NW Second Avenue, Suite 200  
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N

Photo 12 of 12

0303