



**DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION  
OFFICE OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION**

Armando Quintero, Director

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November 29, 2023

Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors  
Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration  
500 W Temple Street, Room B-50  
Los Angeles, California 90012

**RE: National Register of Historic Places Nomination for Luther and Adah Blair House**

Dear Board of Supervisors:

Pursuant to Federal Regulations 36 CFR Part 60.6(c) I am notifying you that the State Historical Resources Commission (SHRC) at its next meeting intends to consider and take action on the nomination of the above-named property to the National Register of Historic Places (National Register). Details of that meeting are on the enclosed notice. The National Register is the federal government's official list of historic buildings and other cultural resources worthy of preservation. Listing in the National Register provides recognition and assists in preserving California's cultural heritage. If the item is removed from the scheduled agenda, you will be notified by mail.

Local government comments regarding the National Register eligibility of this property are welcomed. Letters should be sent to California State Parks, Attn: Office of Historic Preservation, Julianne Polanco, State Historic Preservation Officer, 1725 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, Suite 100, Sacramento, California, 95816. So that the SHRC will have adequate time to consider them, it is requested, but not required, that written comments be received by the Office of Historic Preservation fifteen (15) days before the SHRC meeting. Interested parties are encouraged to attend the SHRC meeting and present oral testimony.

As of January 1, 1993, all National Register properties are automatically included in the California Register of Historical Resources (California Register) and afforded consideration in accordance with state and local environmental review procedures.

The federal requirements covering the National Register program are to be found in the National Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, and in Federal Regulations 36 CFR Part 60. State law regarding the California Register is in the Public Resources Code, Section 5024. Should you have questions regarding this nomination, or would like a copy of the nomination, please contact the Registration Unit at (916) 445-7009. **Note that staff revises nominations throughout the nomination process.**

Sincerely,

Julianne Polanco  
State Historic Preservation Officer



DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION  
OFFICE OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
STATE HISTORICAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

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COMMISSION MEMBERS

Adam Siro, Chair  
Lee Adams III  
Bryan K. Brandes  
Janet Hansen  
Alan Hess  
Luis Hoyos  
René Vellanoweth, PhD

## MEETING NOTICE

*Pursuant to Government Code Section 11133, board members/commissioners of a state body may participate in public meetings remotely. The public may observe, provide public comment during the public comment periods, and otherwise observe remotely in accordance with Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act.*

**FOR:** State Historical Resources Commission Quarterly Meeting

**DATE:** Friday, February 2, 2024

**TIME:** 9:00 A.M.

**PLACE:** Stanley Mosk Library and Courts Building  
914 Capitol Mall, Room 500  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**The Commission Meeting will also occur through teleconference, available via Zoom through CAL\*SPAN. Dial-in access will also be available.**

**Information on how to log in or phone in to this meeting, including web address and passcodes, will be posted no later than February 19, 2024, at <http://ohp.parks.ca.gov>.**

If you need special accommodations pursuant to the Americans with Disabilities Act, please call Executive Secretary, Monica Newman, at (916) 445-7000. Questions regarding the meeting should be directed to the Registration Unit at (916) 445-7008. In accordance with the *Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act* an agenda for this meeting will be published on the Office of Historic Preservation website no later than January 19, 2024.

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.

## 1. Name of Property

**DRAFT**

Historic name: Blair, Luther and Adah, House

Other names/site number: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

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

## 2. Location

Street & number: 508 S. Ivy Avenue

City or town: Monrovia State: California County: Los Angeles

Not For Publication:  Vicinity:

## 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 at the following level(s) of significance:

national statewide local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

A B C D

_____ <b>Signature of certifying official/Title:</b>	_____ <b>Date</b>
_____ <b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b>	

In my opinion, the property <u>meets</u> does not meet the National Register criteria.	
_____ <b>Signature of commenting official:</b>	_____ <b>Date</b>
_____ <b>Title: State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b>	

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#### 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:) \_\_\_\_\_

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Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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#### 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



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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE VICTORIAN: Queen Anne

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**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: brick, weatherboard, asphalt roof

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

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#### Summary Paragraph

Blair House is a large (2,218 square foot) two-story wood-framed building whose design is influenced by the Queen Anne and Eastlake styles. The building is located on a small, flat lot in a mostly residential neighborhood in the city of Monrovia, approximately twenty-three miles from Los Angeles. The house has been moved twice since its construction, both times within city limits. The house retains original design features such as heavy turned posts with heavy decorative brackets, stained glass doors and transoms, porches, wood windows, skirting with stylized crane cutouts, and interior moldings and ornamentation. The residence retains virtually all of its original millwork, much with its original finish, and retains integrity of design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

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#### Narrative Description

##### Setting

Blair House is located in a mostly residential neighborhood in the middle of the block between E. Lemon Avenue on the north and an unnamed alley on the south. The rear faces back yards of

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houses that front E. Lemon Street. There are houses on either side and a commercial building across the street. The yard retains shrubs and a large palm tree.

### **Exterior**

A large two-story, wood-frame dwelling, Blair House is clad in lapped wood siding and designed in a simple version of the Queen Anne style with Eastlake influence on the interior. The house is set on a conventional foundation hidden by vertical board skirting. Each of the skirting boards along the front porch features a cutout in the shape of a stylized crane. A water table encircles the house. Each corner of the house is finished with a narrow corner board. Small, curved brackets are located at the top of each corner board and visually support the slight roof overhang.

The house faces west and is topped by a complex shingle-clad roof composed of a hipped central portion with a projecting gable on the façade, east elevation, and a smaller projecting gable on the north elevation. The roofline on the rear of the house is slightly lower and is sheltered by a gable roof. The south slope of the hipped roof has three slopes reflecting the semi-hexagonal end of the front of the house. Two brick chimneys pierce the roof at the end of the south and east gables. A small, one-story hipped roof wing extends from the rear, or east, elevation.

A three-bay, one-story shed-roofed front porch stretches across the façade, west elevation, and is accessed by a set of replacement wooden steps without railings or newels. The porch is supported by four heavy turned posts linked by an open frieze. Heavy decorative brackets at the top of the posts visually support the porch soffit. There are two engaged turned posts set in the wall of the house at each inside corner of the porch. The porch has a wooden deck and sloped board ceiling. The front entrance is accessed from the porch and is a centrally located single-leaf entrance which contains a wood door of three panels, two square panels topped by a single rectangular panel, which is turned and topped by a glazed area of a large central etched glass light flanked on the sides and across the top by square and rectangular margin lights of stained glass in shades of blue, green, and yellow. Above the door is a transom of etched glass with margin lights of stained glass in shades of blue, yellow, orange and maroon. The entire entrance is surrounded by a simple frame with corner blocks with simple rosettes.

A paired window composed of one-over-one wooden sash with plain trim, corner blocks with simple rosettes and a decorative apron is located to the north of the entrance and is the only other opening on the façade under the porch. The porch wall to the south of the entrance is set back slightly from the rest of the wall plane. Above the porch a double window is located directly above the double window on the porch and a single window, matching those in the double window, is located above the entrance. While there is no other fenestration on the second floor, a vertical board—essentially a faux corner board—is located between the paired and single window to give articulation to the elevation. This board also visually supports the front facing gable that is centered above the double window.

The front facing gable is divided from the second-floor wall by a skirt roof supported by simple brackets. The face of the gable is clad with decorative wooden shingles. A square attic vent is located in the center of the gable. The louvers of the vent are cut with an undulating edge.

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Margin lights surround the vent on the sides and the top. The frame of the vent is further decorated with brackets at the top corners supporting a heavy window hood. Sawtooth molding runs between these brackets below the hood. The lower corners of the frame contain similar brackets, mounted upside down. The apex of the face of the gable above the vent is ornamented by a wooden grid filled with simple rosettes. A bargeboard of alternating squares, with cut-out circles, and rectangles, with central fluted panels, completes the ornamentation of the gable.

The southwest corner of the south elevation is a semi-hexagonal bay, the outer angles of which have a single one-over-one wood window on each floor trimmed like the porch windows. The central portion of the bay contains a double window on the first floor composed of single lights above decorative wooden panels in a squared sunburst pattern with a central rosette. The entire window composition is trimmed out like the rest of the windows, with a decorative wooden panel between the windows composed of wooden ornament of squares of fluted ornament set in a basket weave pattern, below which between the sunbursts is a panel of decorative spool work. The wall above this window is solid. Past the angled bay is a three-bay shed roofed porch and is accessed by a set of replacement wooden steps without railings or newels.

The porch is supported by three heavy turned posts linked by a fretwork frieze as well as two engaged turned posts set in the wall of the house where the porch terminates into the house walls. The porch has a wooden deck and sloped board ceiling. The entrance from this side porch, located in the west most bay, is virtually identical to the front entrance. Two one-over-one wooden sash windows occupy the bays to the east of the door. Above the porch is a small one bay second floor covered porch located in the west bay. The second-floor porch has a decorative chamfered post supporting the hipped roof at the southeast corner; an engaged chamfered post is located in the west and north wall. An area of decorative wooden shingles stretches from the porch deck to the shed roof of the first-floor porch. The second-floor porch is accessed via a single-leaf five-paneled door from the west wall. A small one-over-one double-hung window also opens onto the porch from the north wall. The top sash has margin lights of decorative painted glass. The remainder of the second floor is a lower slope gable roof with no fenestration on the south elevation.

A one-story, hipped roof with a gabled vent, kitchen addition with a single, centered one-over-one window with a simple frame lights the south elevation. The east end of the kitchen contains, going south to north, a single-leaf, three-panel door, a single one-over-one wooden sash window and a boarded over door. Both door and window have simple frames. Two one-over-one wood double-hung windows with simple frames light the gable end of the second floor.

The north elevation of the kitchen has a single one-over-one wood double-hung window with a simple frame at its north-west corner. Going west there are two one-over-one wood double-hung windows with frames that match those of the rest of the windows on the house. Past these windows a slightly projecting gable holding a double window composed of two one-over-one wood double-hung windows which is set slightly above the level of the rest of the first-floor windows because they light the landing of the staircase. The gable ornament matches that in the west facing gable of the façade. However, the frame of the double window, as well as the

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architectural treatment above and below, is different here and reflects the stick style in the use of crossed wooden members, one above the double window and one below each individual sash. The entire projecting gable is visually supported by three equally spaced brackets and a decorative saw tooth molding completely encircles the base of the projecting gable. Past this gable element there are two additional one-over one wooden sash windows that match the remainder of those on the house, one on each floor.

### **Interior—First Floor**

From the front porch the front door opens into a reception room. Directly opposite the entrance is a single-leaf five-panel door with original hardware that opens into the stair hall. Located to the left, or north, of the entrance, a set of pocket doors located in the middle of the wall open into the parlor. To the right, or south, of the entrance is a semi-hexagonal bay. Each of the outer angles of the bay contains a single one-over-one wood window. The center of the bay contains two smaller fixed-pane windows flanking a chimney and fireplace. Beaded stained trim surround art tiles that frame the firebox. There is no mantle shelf or mantelpiece in the traditional sense. The hearth is a simple concrete slab. The doors and windows are all surrounded with original Eastlake inspired trim. Baseboard and picture rail encircle the room. All the woodwork retains its original stained finish. The walls and ceilings are plaster, and the floor is wood. A historic kerosene light fixture, which has been electrified, hangs from the center of the ceiling.

To the north of the reception room is the parlor, accessed from the reception room via a set of original pocket doors. To the right, east, is a single-leaf opening from the parlor into the stair hall. A double window in the west wall opens onto the front porch. A single one-over-one window is in the northeast edge of the north wall. While the door and window trim, baseboard and picture rail are intact, they have been painted. The walls and ceilings are plaster, and the floor is wood. An electrified oil lamp hangs from a decorative ceiling medallion.

East of the parlor and reception room is the stair hall. Dominating the stair hall is the highly decorated Eastlake inspired staircase with a prominent square newel, a heavy molded handrail and a balustrade of turned and beaded elements. The staircase rises on the east wall to a landing which is lit by a double window of two one-over-one wood double-hung windows, trimmed to match the woodwork in the stair hall. The underside of the flight leading from the landing to the second floor is heavily paneled. The staircase retains its original wood finish. Located opposite the staircase in the south end of the stair hall is the door to the side porch. The door frames in the stair hall incorporate Eastlake detailing similar to that in the parlor and reception room and include corner blocks with rosettes. The trim retains its original finish. The ceiling and walls are plaster, and the floor is wood.

East of the stair hall and accessed via a single-leaf door in the east wall of the stair hall is the dining room. The dining room occupies the entire space running north to south with two one-over-one wood double-hung windows opposite each other in the north and south walls. The east wall contains a single-leaf entrance into the kitchen opposite the door into the room from the stair hall. Also on the east wall, towards the north end, is a built-in cupboard. All the doors and windows, as well as the storage cupboard, are framed in Eastlake inspired trim similar to that in

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the stair hall. A baseboard, wainscot with a top rail that includes a frieze with rosettes, and picture rail encircle the dining room. All of the trim has been painted. The ceiling and walls are plaster and the floor is wood. An electrified oil light fixture hangs from the ceiling.

To the east of the dining room is the kitchen, accessed from the dining room via a single-leaf door in the south end of the east wall. Directly opposite the entrance from the dining room on the back, east, wall of the house is a single-leaf three-panel door. To the left, or north, is a single one-over-one wood double-hung window. A single one-over-one wood window is located in the south wall. Door and window trim is a simplified version of the trim seen in the more formal areas of the house and it has been painted. A simple board wainscot with a simple rail encircles the kitchen. This wainscot is higher in the northeast corner of the room. The walls are plaster while the ceiling is clad in paneling. A scuttle hole to the attic is in the kitchen ceiling. The north end of the room is partitioned off into a pantry which is accessed through a centered single-leaf door from the kitchen. The pantry has a single one-over-one wood window in the north wall. A historic built-in storage cabinet occupies the west end of the pantry. The ceiling and walls of the pantry are plaster.

### **Interior—Second Floor**

A rectangular hallway running perpendicular to the stair hall is located at the top of the stairs. Three bedrooms and one bathroom open off this hallway. All doors and windows on the second floor have simple painted trim inspired by the Eastlake style. All door openings into the hallway have transoms. The hallway and each bedroom are encircled by a picture rail. The walls and ceilings are plaster, and the floors are wood. At the west end of the hallway is a bedroom located over the parlor, which has a double window in the west wall and a single one-over-one wooden window in the north wall. Two closet doors open from the south wall of the bedroom.

The next bedroom, located to the south of the first bedroom, is above the reception room and contains a semi-hexagonal bay with a single one-over-one double-hung wood window in the outer angles of the bay. The center of the bay contains a wood-burning stove and no windows. The north wall of the bedroom has one closet door. A single window is located in the west wall and a single-leaf door opening to a small second floor porch is located in the east wall. A bathroom located across from the top of the stairs contains a historic cast-iron claw foot bathtub. A single one-over-one window lights this space. The upper sash has decorative painting in the margin lights.

The last bedroom is located at the east end of the hall and is over the dining room. The side walls of this room are truncated as this space is located within the east-facing gable. Two one-over-one wood windows are located in the east wall and flank the chimney stack from the kitchen. A closet door opens into the truncated south wall.

### **Alterations**

This house is truly intact with respect to its original design and materials. There are no alterations from the original except for the overlay of the kitchen floor with linoleum. A new use for the house is proposed as a bed and breakfast. This will necessitate the addition of two

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carefully positioned bathrooms on the second floor. A Historic Preservation Certification Application is under review and alterations will adhere to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines.

### **Integrity**

*Location and Setting:* The house has been moved twice since its construction in 1887. Both moves have been within the boundaries of the city of Monrovia. The original location was on the northwest corner of Olive and Ivy Avenues. There were houses on all sides at this location and a commercial building three lots to the west. In 1927, the house was moved sixteen blocks to 319 W. Duarte Road. When it was threatened with demolition, it was moved back to Ivy Avenue, just a block from its original location. While the house no longer retains integrity of *location* due to the move, the setting is very similar to the original, and integrity of *setting* is retained.

*Design:* The design of the house remains entirely as it was when it was built and therefore the house retains integrity of design.

*Materials:* The house retains its original timber frame, painted wood siding, windows, and doors. Original materials remain on the interior as well, such as doors, built-in cabinet, wood floors, staircase, and original millwork. Therefore, Blair House retains integrity of materials.

*Workmanship:* Evidence of the craftsmen's labor and skill in construction is evident in the original materials and finishes, many of which remain intact and do not need replacing. Therefore, the house retains its integrity of workmanship.

*Feeling:* Blair House has the character of a late nineteenth-century house. The houses surrounding the property on all sides vary in design reflecting the growth and development of the neighborhood that has been the setting for the house since its relocation to this site in 1993. Therefore, Blair House retains integrity of feeling.

*Association:* Blair House retains the significant materials and design that were a part of its original construction. The house was used as a single family residence until its last purchase in 2022. If the plans to rehabilitate the house into a bed and breakfast come to pass, the house will continue to be a residential building and the changes will not be evident from the exterior. Therefore, the house retains integrity of association.

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## 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.)

- 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

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**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1887

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

N/A

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Blair, Luther Reed

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

Blair House is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places at the local level of significance under Criterion C in the area of Architecture as a property that embodies the distinctive characteristics of its period of construction. The period of significance is 1887, the year of construction. The house retains the features that define the tenets of the Queen Anne style. While the house has been moved twice, its third location is similar to its original location and only one block away. Each lot was similar to the others in relationship to the street, sidewalk, and other houses. Each move was carefully executed, thus preserving the house's original architectural details both on the exterior and the interior. As a moved property significant under Criterion C, Blair House retains enough historic features to convey its architectural values; retains integrity of design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association; and meets Criteria Consideration B: Moved Properties.

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

**Criterion C: Architecture**

Blair House is significant as an intact and fine local example of a single-family residence that embodies the distinctive characteristics of the Late Victorian Queen Anne style. Of the 143 buildings designated as historic landmarks by the City of Monrovia as of November 2017, there are only six Queen Anne residences on the list. The majority of listed houses were designed in the Craftsman style. Of those six, two are one-story houses, two (255 N. Mayflower Avenue and 336 N. Ivy Avenue) are high style examples of the style, 623 W. Colorado Boulevard has an unusual overhanging canted bay on the second floor, and 225 Monroe Place is a rather plain example with a one-story porch supported with turned posts. By contrast, the Luther Blair house exhibits characteristics of a more classic example of the Queen Anne style with its two stories, asymmetrical façade, hipped central roof with projecting gables, and a one-story porch with turned posts and brackets.

Per Monrovia's architectural context statement, listing a Queen Anne residence requires the building must have been constructed during the period of significance (1885-1905), exemplifies tenets of the Victorian era and Queen Anne style, retains character-defining features, and retains the essential aspects of integrity. The characteristics of Blair House satisfy each of these requirements. It was built in 1887 and maintains Queen Anne style features including asymmetrical façade, steeply pitched roof of irregular shape with a dominate front-facing gable, wood exterior with decorative shingles, one-story porch with ornamentation, bay windows, and wood double-hung windows. In addition, the house retains its integrity of design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

The Monrovia context statement registration requirements also note that the retention of integrity of design, workmanship, and materials will usually be more important than integrity of location,

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setting, feeling, and association. More importantly, the original massing of the building should be retained, the original doors and windows should be retained, and the distinctive elements such as shingle patterns, bargeboard, porch posts and railings should be in evidence.

### **Queen Anne Style**

The Queen Anne style was popularized in England and became very common in the United States from the 1880s until about 1900. Despite the name, the style had nothing to do with the style of architecture dominant during the reign of Queen Anne; rather, it combined elements of Elizabethan and Jacobean eras.<sup>1</sup> The American interpretation of the style included cross-gables, elaborate spindle work, and wood details that were more easily accessible due to the expanding railroad lines across the country. Queen Anne avoids flat surfaces by using elements such as bay windows, towers, overhangs, and wall projections, as well as a wide variety of materials with differing textures when possible.

Characteristics of the style are curved brackets; posts of porches and exposed framing members of roofs bearing a marked resemblance to table legs; rows of spindles in friezes or fascias; elaborately detailed gable ends with incised boards, pendants, and brackets; and the use of numerous porches and bay windows.

The rise of industrialization made it easier and more affordable to add mass produced decorative details to buildings. Many communities had local sawmills equipped with sophisticated woodworking machinery that could easily produce elaborate jigsaw cut trim in a variety of patterns or turn spindles in an endless number of sizes and types to adorn new houses built in variations of the newly popular Queen Anne and Eastlake Styles. Other mass-produced architectural elements could be shipped in via the railroads, which crisscrossed the nation from coast to coast allowing ever more elaborate houses to be constructed in areas recently settled. Many new towns had neighborhoods of houses that easily compared or even surpassed in elegance and detail those found in older more settled communities.

The Victorian era in California was shorter than it was back east, with fewer style variants. The style coincides with Monrovia's incorporation in 1887, and most of the city's earliest surviving buildings reflect the Queen Anne style most popular at the time. Stick, Shingle, and more vernacular Folk Victorian style examples are also found in Monrovia.

### **History of Monrovia, California**

The native people of the area known as Monrovia were the Tongva, or Gabrieleno Indians. Before Spanish colonization of Central America and Alta California, the San Gabriel Valley was occupied by indigenous people of Native American Shoshonean Tribes as early as 500 BCE, although archaeological investigations have documented human habitation of southern California as early as 12,000 years BCE. Later, this tribe became known as the Gabrielinos, after the Mission San Gabriel Arcángel. The indigenous tribes living at the foot of the San Gabriel Mountains were said to be the "wealthiest, most populous and most powerful ethnic nationality

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<sup>1</sup> Virginia McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), 268.

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in aboriginal southern California.”<sup>2</sup> The tribes were sustained by the rich land they occupied in and near the arroyos in the steep mountains to the north, which seasonally carried water down into the valley, joining the San Gabriel River and eventually reaching the Pacific Ocean.

Recorded history of California began in the sixteenth century with Spanish colonization of Central America and Alta California. In 1771, Spanish missionaries arrived in the area and established Mission San Gabriel Arcángel. After Mexico won independence from Spain in 1821, California territory fell under the jurisdiction of the Mexican government. This led to the secularization of the missions by the 1830s, which resulted in the transference of mission land to Mexican ranchos. The 9,000-acre Rancho Santa Anita, within which present-day Monrovia is located, was granted to Hugo Reid in 1841.<sup>3</sup> The same year, Mexican Governor Juan Alvarado granted the eastern half of the rancho to Andreas Duarte, which created Rancho Azusa de Duarte. In 1848, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo established California as part of the United States. Two years later, it became the nation’s thirty-first state.

In the 1850s, the strong demand for beef in the rapidly growing mining areas and cities in northern California had led the owners of some large ranchos in agricultural southern California to overextend their cattle operations. A period of flood and extended drought in the early 1860s destroyed the livestock and left them unable to pay their taxes. Many of the large ranchos were divided and sold, and both Rancho Santa Anita and Rancho Azusa de Duarte were sold to a series of owners. Large portions of both ranchos were eventually purchased by Elias “Lucky” Baldwin, who held most of the land holdings of present-day Monrovia in the mid- to late nineteenth century.

Following the completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869, the Southern Pacific Railroad built a rail line to Los Angeles in 1876. Its competitor, the Santa Fe Railroad, was also building a line west from Texas, reaching Needles, California, in 1883.<sup>4</sup> Stanley Jewett, an engineer who moved to Pasadena in 1879, proposed to James Crank—who owned the Fair Oaks Ranch north of Pasadena and was the first vice-president when the First National Bank of Los Angeles was organized in 1875—the construction of a rail line between Pasadena and Los Angeles. Crank organized the line as the San Gabriel Valley Railroad (SGVRR) and raised the funding for its construction. The first track was laid in 1884, and the line was built to Mud Springs (present-day San Dimas) on the San Gabriel River, where it met the westward construction of the Santa Fe Railroad in 1887, opening the line to trains from Chicago and the East.<sup>5</sup> The construction of the SGVRR initiated an increase in interest in land along its route, contributing to a major real estate boom in southern California in the mid-1880s.

William N. Monroe had been a superintendent for the Southern Pacific’s rail construction in Utah before retiring to California in 1875. Monroe became a member of the Los Angeles City

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<sup>2</sup> Lowell J. Bean and Charles R. Smith, *Handbook of North American Indians, Vol. 8* (Washington DC, Smithsonian Institution, 1978), 570-574.

<sup>3</sup> Peter C. Ostrye, *Monrovia Centennial Review, 1886-1986* (Monrovia: Monrovia Centennial Committee, 1986), np.

<sup>4</sup> Glenn S. Dumke, *The Boom of the Eighties in Southern California* (San Marino: Huntington Library, 1966), 22.

<sup>5</sup> Dumke, 23.

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Council in 1880, and was acquainted with Collis P. Huntington, one of the partners of the Southern Pacific Railroad.<sup>6</sup> In 1884, Monroe and his brother C. O. Monroe purchased 120 acres of the former Rancho Santa Anita from Lucky Baldwin, and an additional ninety acres the following year. He moved his family into a tent on the property while he built a small cottage and then later their permanent home in 1885, "The Oaks." In partnership with Crank, Edward Spence (Monroe's cashier at First National Bank), and attorney John D. Bicknell (who succeeded Crank as first vice-president of the First National Bank in 1888), Monroe laid out a 120-acre town centered at Orange (later Colorado Boulevard) and Myrtle Avenues, with eight square miles of farm and orchard lots around it, and organized the first auction-excursion in May 1886.<sup>7</sup> The men, as officers and directors of the Monrovia Light and Water Company, promised to plant 8,000 pepper trees along the streets, to provide free water and to install electric streetlights. More than forty tracts and additions to the original town area were filed in 1886 and 1887.<sup>8</sup> In 1887, Monrovia was incorporated as the fourth city in Los Angeles County.

Monrovia was one of the most successful of the many towns in Los Angeles County that were started during the boom period. In part, this was most likely due to the fact that Monrovia required that all property purchased for residential purposes must have a building constructed within six months, which generally cost at least \$2,000. This requirement helped decrease speculation that resulted in the collapse of other communities in Los Angeles County during the recession that hit in the 1890s.<sup>9</sup> The rise in price of Monrovia lots was phenomenal for a boom town. The first lots available for purchase in May 1886 sold from \$100 to \$150 each. Monroe sold lots much cheaper than lots in surrounding developments, on condition that substantial improvements would follow. The increase in value of the lots reflects those improvements. For example, in 1887, \$8,000 was offered for a lot bought the year before for \$150, while another lot 100 feet by 150 feet bought for \$3,500 was sold in thirteen months for \$13,500.<sup>10</sup>

Despite the recession of the late 1880s, Monrovia continued to grow. In 1887, nineteen months after the first lot was sold in Monrovia, the local newspaper reported the city had already had as much as a half million dollars' worth of construction in that year, which included two banks, two brick commercial buildings, several hotels and boarding houses, churches, and schools, with more planned for 1888.<sup>11</sup> Local utilities were first developed when the Monrovia Electric Light and Power Company established electrical services shortly before 1900.

Soon after the first lots were sold, the promoters of Monrovia made plans for building a railroad to Los Angeles. The San Gabriel Valley Rapid Transit Railroad Company was organized on April 26, 1887 for the purpose of constructing a railroad from some convenient point in the City of Los Angeles to the town of Monrovia. Directors of the railroad included Spence and

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<sup>6</sup> Ostrye, xviii.

<sup>7</sup> Dumke, 79-80.

<sup>8</sup> Dumke, 80.

<sup>9</sup> Ostrye, np.

<sup>10</sup> Joseph Netz, "The Great Los Angeles Real Estate Boom of 1887," *Annual Publication for the Historical Society of Southern California*, Vol. 10, 65.

<sup>11</sup> "Monrovia Planet," December 31, 1887.

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Monroe.<sup>12</sup> Construction of the railroad was begun in Monrovia, and by August 1888, the eastern boundary of Los Angeles had been reached.<sup>13</sup> By January 1892, the company was operating four trains to Monrovia on weekdays and two on Sundays. Two months later the railway was leased by the Los Angeles Terminal Railway, and in June it was announced that the line was being broad-gauged and turned over to the Terminal Railway.<sup>14</sup> The Los Angeles Terminal Railway did not renew its lease and in 1893, the Southern Pacific was persuaded to take over the railroad for an undisclosed price.<sup>15</sup> In 1903, the Pacific Electric rail line established an interurban railway line to Monrovia. Known as Red Cars, the line traveled through Los Angeles, Orange, and San Bernardino Counties and was an important part of southern California history as it made traveling easy for those inland to take day trips to the beach, for commuters to travel to downtown Los Angeles, and for the public to explore other areas of southern.<sup>16</sup> City officials desired the establishment of railway stops within their community as it resulted in increased population, easy and reliable accessibility to other locations, and economic development and prosperity. The Pacific Electric played an important role in Monrovia's growth between 1900 and 1910.<sup>17</sup>

By 1905, the city's boundaries stretched out to Fifth Avenue on the west, Shamrock Avenue on the east, and south of Santa Fe Avenue (later Duarte Road) on the south. To the north, Monrovia extended up into the foothills.<sup>18</sup> In 1906, the 50-acre Oak Park tract on the east side of town, formerly part of the Bradbury estate, was subdivided and opened for development. Residential development began to fill the lots on streets north of the Southern Pacific rail line at Chestnut Avenue, between Myrtle and Shamrock Avenues. By 1910, the city's population had almost tripled in just a decade to 3,576 residents.

In 1915, 500 acres between the western city limits and neighboring Arcadia were annexed by Monrovia.<sup>19</sup> There was a decline in the number of building permits issued between 1912 and 1916, with World War I causing stagnation in building activity. The pace of construction resumed at the war's end, with the number of permits issued in 1923 exceeding all previous years.<sup>20</sup> Between 1920 and 1930, Monrovia's population doubled from 5,480 to 10,890 residents. Residential construction infilled available lots in the neighborhoods closest to Monrovia's downtown and increased in the outlying areas beyond. In the mid-1930s, the Bradbury Ranch on the east side of Monrovia was subdivided.<sup>21</sup> The city's growth slowed during the Great Depression, with the population reaching 12,807 by 1940.

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<sup>12</sup> Franklyn Hoyt, "The San Gabriel Valley Rapid Transit Railroad," *The Historical Society of Southern California Quarterly*, September 1951, 213.

<sup>13</sup> Hoyt, 215-216.

<sup>14</sup> Hoyt, 219.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Jimenez, 2008.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Craig Jimenez, *North Encinitas Historic District: Historic Context and Survey* (Monrovia Department of Community Development, 2017), 8.

<sup>19</sup> John L. Wiley, *History of Monrovia* (Pasadena: Press of Pasadena Star News, 1927), 155.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 190.

<sup>21</sup> Ostrye, 61.

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The beginning of World War II ended the Great Depression and resulted in a boost in the economy in California through government war contracts and support for military installations, and concurrently, an increase in jobs. After the war, the United States economy exploded, and families arrived in southern California drawn by the plentiful jobs in the booming aerospace and automobile industries. Between 1968 and 1971, Interstate 210 was constructed from Arcadia through Monrovia and east to Pomona. The construction of the interstate marks a change in the history of the community. As a result of new transportation connections, easy financing through government-sponsored housing programs such as FHA loans, and new technologies that allowed for more efficient building techniques, Monrovia, like the rest of the San Gabriel Valley, opened to residential and commercial suburbanization and rapid expansion of housing, which quickly replaced many of the vineyards and orchards. As a result, downtown Monrovia experienced redevelopment and renovation in the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>22</sup> In 2021, Monrovia had a population of 37,500 and is headquarters for companies including Naked Juice, Trader Joe's, and Original Tommy's. It has also been featured in television commercials, pilots, and films.

### **Luther Reed Blair and Subsequent Owners**

Luther Blair, an architect, built this house for his personal residence at the corner of Olive and Ivy Avenues in 1887 for \$3,500. His partner in business was Uriah Zimmerman, a building contractor. Together they built a number of early buildings in Monrovia including Mills View for Milton S. Monroe (William Monroe's son) at 329 N. Melrose (extant), Dr. C. H. Stewart's home at 117 N. Magnolia (extant), and Orange Avenue School (not extant). *The Monrovia Planet* on May 28, 1877 mentions that the men had plans almost ready for the school, as well as for the residences of M.S. Monroe, Jefferson Patten, E. P. Large, and Dr. Stewart. Several months later, the *Planet* reported that Blair's personal residence was nearing completion at the corner of Ivy and Olive Avenues.

In 1895, Blair sold the house to Andrew Ryder, who then sold it to Thomas Wardall in 1906. In 1910, Wardall moved into a new home and rented out Blair House. In 1927, Wardall moved the house sixteen blocks to 319 W. Duarte Road. He later sold it to the Lisle family and when the last Lisle family member moved to a retirement home, the house was placed on the market. When Blair House was slated for demolition in 1993, Steve Baker had it moved again to its location at 508 S. Ivy Avenue, adjacent to his family home, the John F. and Julia Brossart House, at 512 S. Ivy Avenue.

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

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

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<http://kcet.org/history-society/a-brief-history-and-geography-of-the-san-gabriel-valley>.  
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Ostrye, Peter C. *Monrovia Centennial Review, 1886-1986*. Monrovia: Monrovia Centennial Committee, 1986.

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Wiley, John L., *History of Monrovia*. Pasadena: Press of Pasadena Star News, 1927.

**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  
 Other

Name of repository: Monrovia Department of Community Development

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreeage of Property** less than one acre

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_  
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 34.146747 Longitude: -118.001065

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

AIN parcel #8516021013 Monrovia S. 110 ft or Lots 11 and Lot 12 Blk J.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary is the lot on which the building sits, where it was moved to in 1993.

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## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Nancy H. Bell  
organization: Vicksburg Foundation for Historic Preservation  
street & number: 1107 Washington Street  
city or town: Vicksburg state: MS zip code: 39183  
e-mail: [vburlfoundation@aol.com](mailto:vburlfoundation@aol.com)  
telephone: 601-636-5010  
date: January 2023; Revised June 2023, October 2023

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### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A USGS map or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

### Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

### Photo Log

Name of Property: Blair, Luther and Adah, House  
City or Vicinity: Monrovia  
County: Los Angeles  
State: California  
Photographer: Joshua Cain  
Date Photographed: October 14, 2022

No rehabilitation work has begun, so photos still accurately represent property at the time of nomination.

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1 of 11 Front (west) elevation, view to east

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- 2 of 11 Front (west) elevation; close up of front porch and crane cutouts in skirting, view to east
- 3 of 11 South elevation, view to northwest
- 4 of 11 Ornament on south elevation, view to northeast
- 5 of 11 Rear elevation, view to west
- 6 of 11 Right parlor, view to southwest
- 7 of 11 Left parlor, view to south
- 8 of 11 Dining room built-in cabinet, view to east
- 9 of 11 Stairs, view to north
- 10 of 11 Second floor, view to north
- 11 of 11 Second floor bedroom, view to southeast

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for nominations 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.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

- Tier 1 – 60-100 hours
- Tier 2 – 120 hours
- Tier 3 – 230 hours
- Tier 4 – 280 hours

The above estimates include time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and preparing and transmitting nominations. Send comments regarding these estimates or any other aspect of the requirement(s) to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1201 Oakridge Drive Fort Collins, CO 80525.

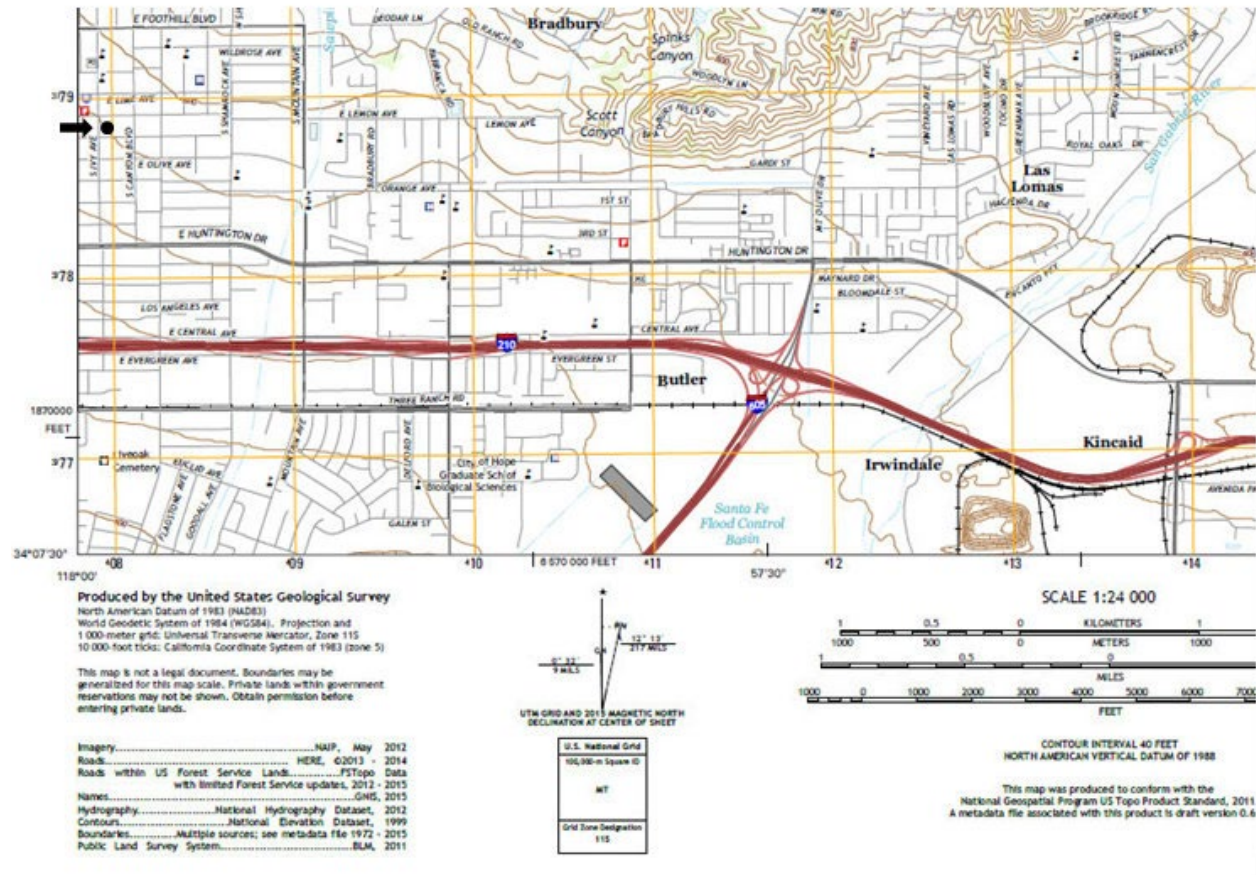
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**Location Map**

Latitude: 34.146747

Longitude: -118.001065



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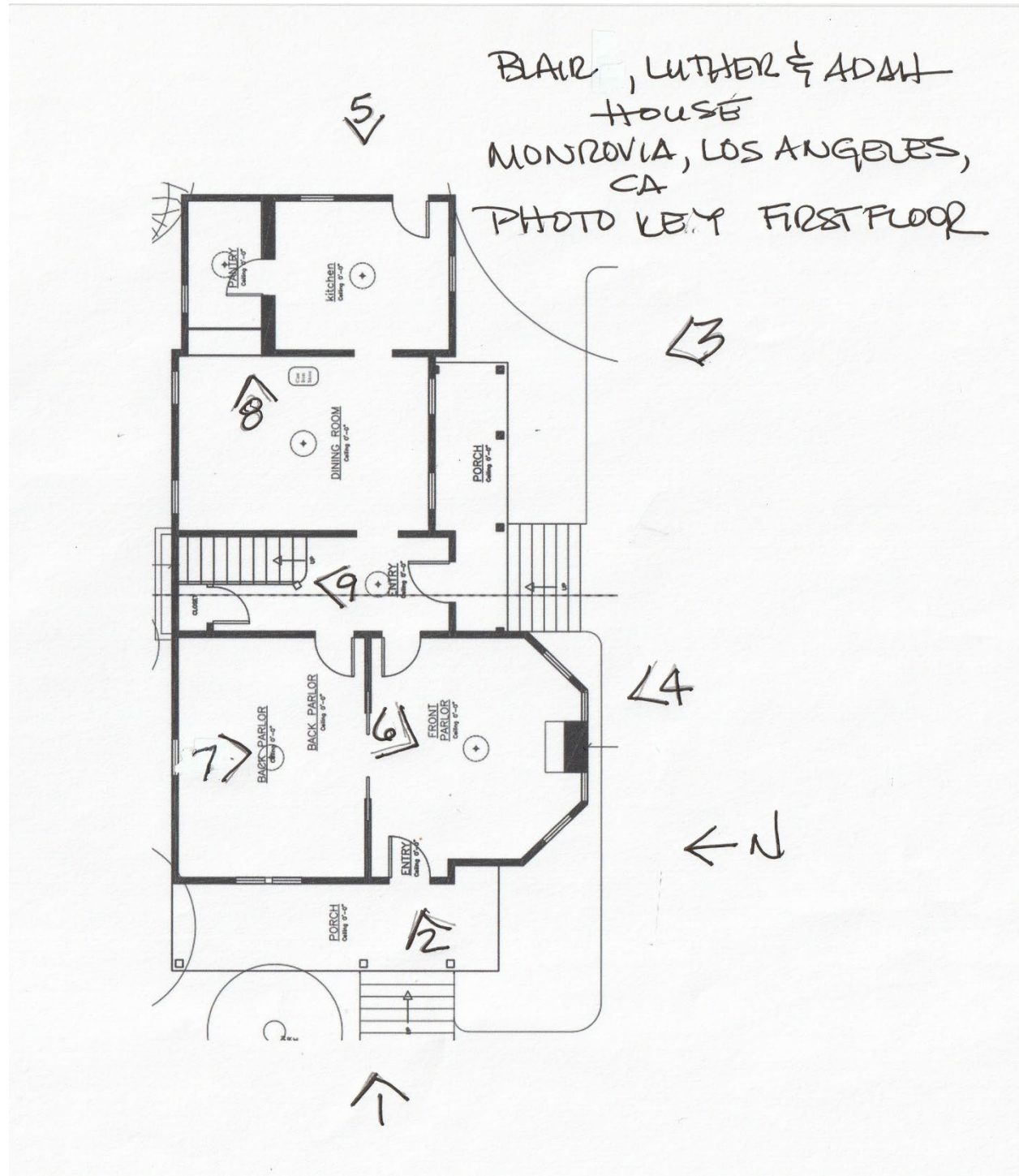
**Vicinity Map**



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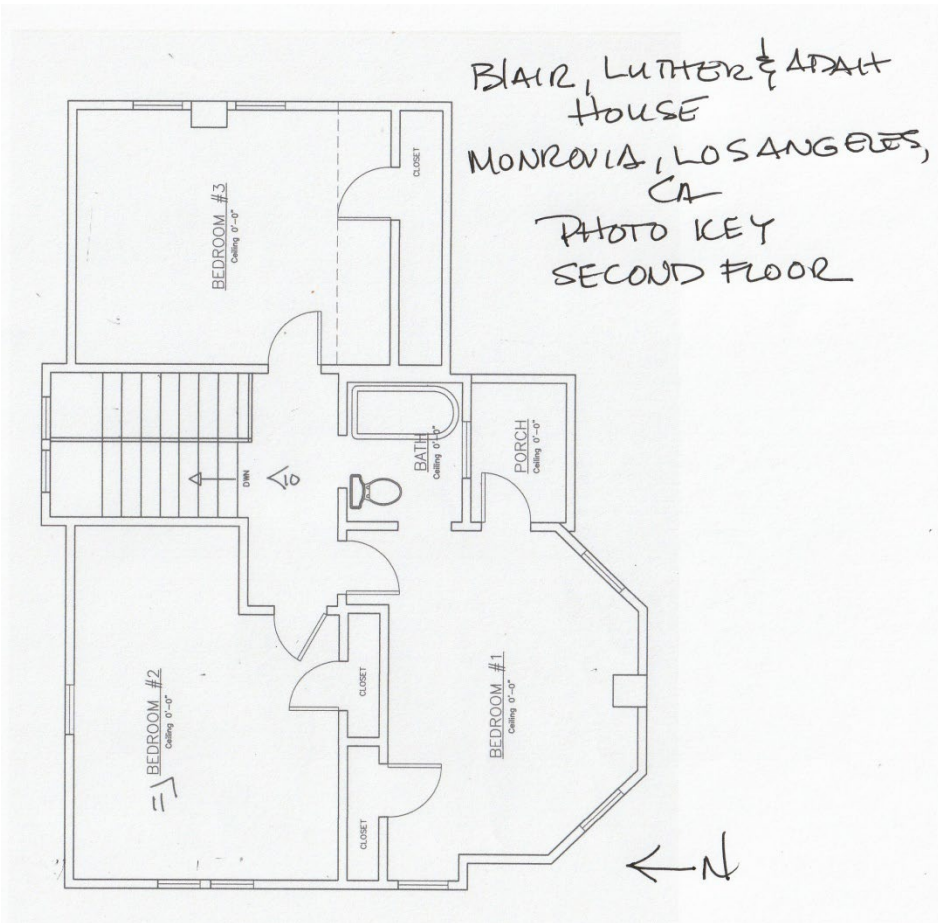
Sketch Map/Photo Key: First Floor



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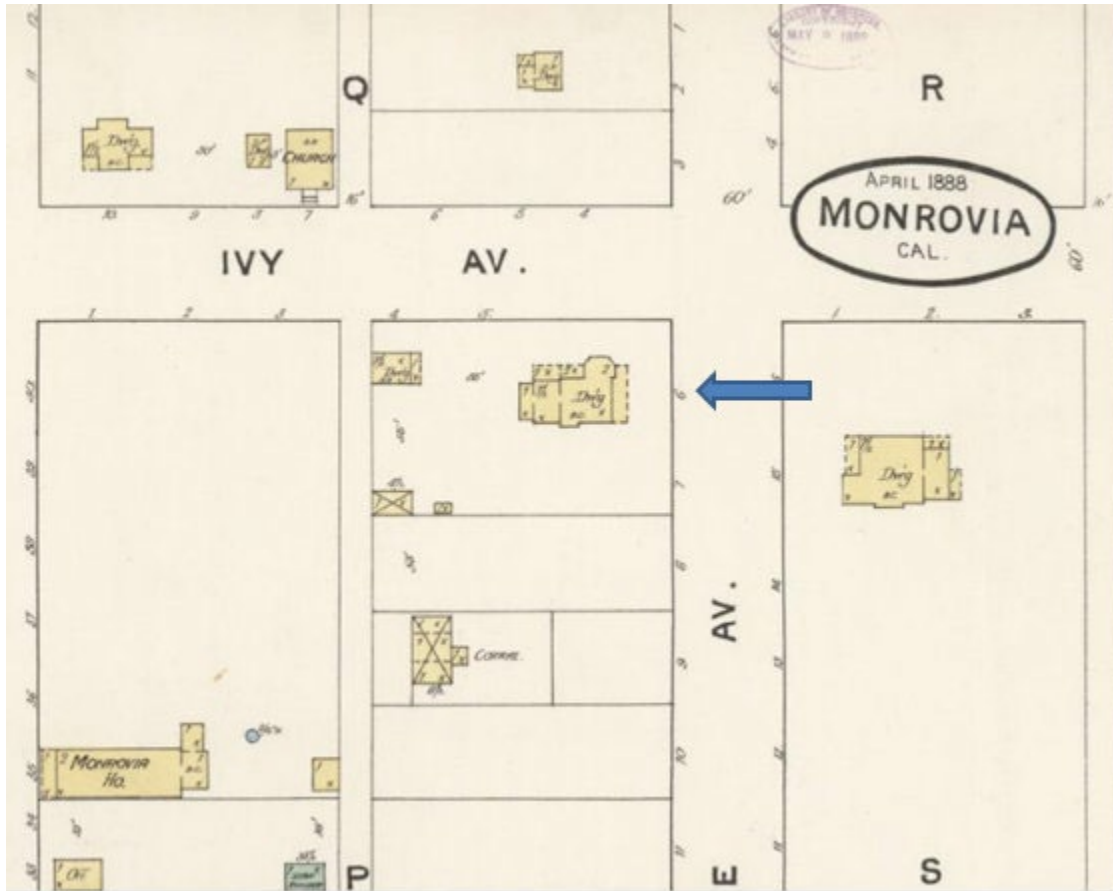
Sketch Map/Photo Key: Second Floor



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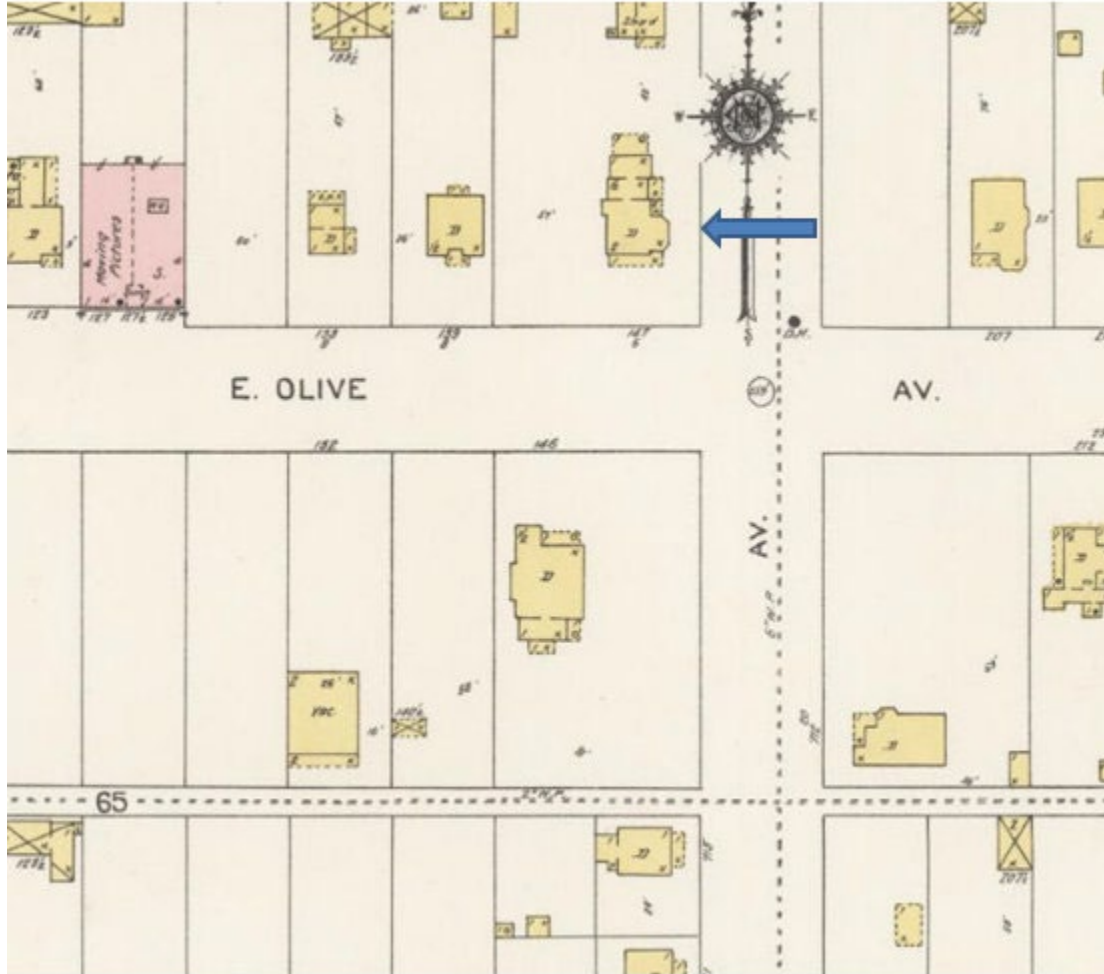
**Figure 1** Blair House, 1888 Sanborn Insurance Map



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**Figure 2** Blair House, 1913 Sanborn Insurance Map



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**Photo 1** Front (west) elevation, view to east



**Photo 2** Front elevation; close up of front porch and crane cutouts in skirting, view to east



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**Photo 3** South elevation, view to northwest



**Photo 4** Ornament on south elevation, view to northeast



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**Photo 5** Rear elevation, view to west



**Photo 6** Right parlor, view to southwest



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**Photo 7** Left parlor, view to south



**Photo 8** Dining room built-in cabinet, view to east



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**Photo 9** Stairs, view to north



**Photo 10** Second floor, view to north



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**Photo 11** Second floor bedroom, view to southeast

