



The City of Seattle
Landmarks Preservation Board

700 Fifth Avenue • Suite 1700 • Seattle, Washington 98124 • (206) 684-0228

Landmark Nomination Application

Name: Villa Costella **Year Built:** 1929

Historic Names: Spanish Court Apartments

Address: 348 West Olympic Place

Assessor's File No. 894411-0000

Legal Description: Villa Costella Condominium

All of Lots 10 and 11, the east 12 feet of Lot 12 and the south 2 feet 8 inches of Lots 19 and 20, Block "B," Supplemental Plat of Block 20, G. Kinnear's addition to the City of Seattle, according to the Plat thereof recorded in Volume 2 of plats, page 92, records of King County, Washington.

Present Owner: Villa Costella Condominium Association

Address: 348 W. Olympic Place, Seattle WA 98119

Present Use: Multifamily residence

Original Use: Multifamily residence

Original Owner: Everett J. Beardsley

Architect: Everett J. Beardsley

Administered by
The Historic Preservation Program, Seattle Department of Neighborhoods

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BUILDING DESCRIPTION

Setting

The Villa Costella condominium is located on the southwest slope of Queen Anne hill with a panoramic view of Elliott Bay and downtown Seattle. It sits on a 24,900 square foot lot on the northeast corner of West Olympic Place at Fifth Avenue West; the lot slopes down toward the south. This area saw a large amount of apartment development in the early twentieth century because of its spectacular views and easy streetcar access. Accordingly, West Olympic Place has long had a mixture of large single-family homes and apartment buildings. Some notable nearby buildings include the Chelsea Hotel (1907), the Kinnear ((1909), the Alexander Hamilton (1930) and Franca Villa (1930). After World War II modern apartments replaced many of the single family residences, and several more large residences have been replaced by low-rise apartments in recent years.

Just west of Villa Costella, where the roadway turns to the north, is Kinnear Park, the city's first completed park. It is a major feature of the neighborhood, with three landscaped acres along the hillside, providing recreational space with spectacular views of Puget Sound. Both the park and the nearby Chelsea Hotel are designated Seattle landmarks.

Exterior Description

Villa Costella is a 20-unit Spanish Eclectic apartment complex surrounded by extensive landscaping. It has a 152-foot frontage on West Olympic Place and extends 82 feet along the west side on Fifth Avenue West. It has an E-shaped plan that is essentially three three-story buildings (each 36 feet wide by 82 feet deep) connected in the middle on each floor; there are two shallow front courtyards and two long narrow rear courtyards. Its plan is relatively complex in order to maximize views and provide a private outdoor space for each unit.

The building is of wood frame construction clad with heavily-applied white stucco typical of the Spanish Eclectic style. The first floor is about three feet above grade and the landscaped front garden is surrounded by a stucco retaining wall. Each of the three main volumes of the building has a built-up flat roof. The two sections between these volumes have flat roofs with pitched roofs along the front, clad with red clay tile. The three main volumes are similar on the exterior. On the first floor, each has two units in front; each unit has a large arched window with 30-light wood sash. Between these two prominent windows is an arched doorway flanked by two multilight windows; this entry to the two units is sheltered by a pitched roof supported by heavy wood brackets painted brown and clad with red clay tile. The two recessed facades between the three main volumes have multilight French doors with a pitched tile roof above. Each of these first-floor units has a landscaped patio in front surrounded by a hedge.

The second and third floors are set back from the first floor facade to provide large terraces for the six second-floor units. As on the first floor, each unit has a large arched window with a staircase and arched doorway in between providing access to the two units on each floor. The three second floor entries are enclosed, with shed roofs clad with red clay tile. The front edges of the six

terraces are also clad with red clay tile. The two recessed facades between the three main volumes have two ten-light casement windows on each floor. The space between the two floors is accented with a long piece of dark ornamental woodwork. Each of the six third-floor units has a balcony with narrow wood balusters painted dark brown.

The west elevation has divided-light wood windows on each floor. The first floor windows are predominantly six-over-one double-hung sash. The upper levels have double-hung windows toward the rear, pairs of six-light casement windows in the kitchens and large 24-light windows toward the front. The at-grade entry to Unit 107 has a textile awning above it. The entry opens onto a private lawn. The stucco wall steps down the hillside on this side.

The east elevation is very close to the adjoining building, with a narrow concrete walkway along the fence. The entry to Unit 108 is toward the front of the building on this side, with an adjoining brick patio. Windows are similar to those on the west elevation.

The rear (north) side of the building has two narrow courtyards (approximately 14 feet wide and 38 feet long) separating the three main wings. These are well landscaped with fountains and extensive plantings but there is no direct access from the building to the courtyards. The rear entry to each of the three building wings projects out about two feet from the rear facade and is covered with a tile-clad shed roof. Windows on this elevation have six-over-one double-hung wood sash; lower floor windows have decorative security grills.

Behind the building is a paved parking area with 18 spaces sheltered by an open flat-roofed wood structure supported by steel posts. A nineteenth space, uncovered, is at the west end. The spaces are in a single row on the building side of the parking area, with a narrow walkway separating them from the building.

The landscaping, both in the front and rear common areas and on the individual terraces and patios, is notably lush and well maintained. The primary common-area landscaping, on the front and west of the complex, was installed in 1998, when the building was restored and sold as condominiums. It features palm trees, yucca, rosemary, magnolia, ornamental grasses and similar plant materials that complement the building's Spanish Eclectic style. The rear courtyards have a wide variety of shrubs, perennials and annuals that thrive in the shade; each courtyard has a small fountain; these also appear to date from 1998 or later.

Interior Description

Villa Costella's twenty units vary in size and configuration. They have plaster walls, oak floors in the living rooms and bedrooms and tile floors in the dining rooms and bathrooms. Many units feature amenities and design characteristics such as electric fireplaces, telephone niches, arched doorways, and varying levels, which speak to the fact that this was built as a high-quality, homelike apartment building.

The first floor has eight units. The units at each end (#101 and #106) have approximately 750 square feet each, with a living room, one bedroom and bath and a kitchen with a dining nook.

Behind each of these is a smaller one-bedroom unit (#107 and #108), with 650-700 square feet and a similar configuration. At the front of the building, between the two end units, are four units (#102, #103, #104, #105) with approximately 900 square feet each; these have one bedroom plus a dining room. Three interior staircases on the front of the building provide access to the units, with each staircase serving two units on each floor. The two rear units have exterior doors on the east and west ends of the building. Each unit also has a rear door. The six front units and the two side units each have a private patio.

The only common spaces are the central staircases in each wing and the first floor service areas. The rear portion of the first floor (other than the two end units) has a boiler room in the center wing, storage spaces for individual units and mechanical spaces. A narrow corridor runs along the center of each of these rear wings, providing access to the rear entries of the individual units. At the rear are two narrow courtyards, landscaped with fountains and extensive plantings.

The second floor has six units. As on the first floor, the two end units (#201 and #206) are smaller, with 1175 square feet; each has a living room, dining room, one bedroom and kitchen with a dining area. The four inner units each have a living room, a dining room, two bedrooms and one bath; #202 and #205 have 1265 square feet and #203 and #204 have 1274 square feet. Each unit has a large front terrace; these are the roofs of first floor units. Three front staircases provide access to the front entries. Each unit has a rear entry, reached by staircases from the carport area.

The third floor has essentially the same floor plan as the second floor, with six units. Instead of a terrace, each unit has a balcony with a balustrade of dark brown painted wood.

Building Alterations

The building appears to be highly intact with few alterations. The alterations that have been identified, primarily on the interior, are:

- Unit 107, at the northwest corner, was formed from a small office and three original maid's rooms. The exterior modification appears to be minimal, as there was originally a side door at that location.
- The two large laundry rooms at the rear of the first floor have been converted to storage rooms.
- The kitchens and bathrooms have been updated, but many of them retain original tilework and features such as cabinetry.
- According to condominium records, some windows have newer glazing, but these changes are not apparent.
- The parking structure was built in 1958, replacing three garages that were built as part of the original complex.
- The landscaping is relatively recent, dating primarily from 1998 and evolving over the past decade.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Development of Queen Anne Hill

In the first decade of the 20th century Queen Anne developed into a major residential area. The south slope became one of the city's premier locations for the homes of wealthy businessmen desiring panoramic views. The southern portion of Queen Anne Hill (south of McGraw Street) was annexed to Seattle in 1883, with the remainder being annexed in 1891. By the early 1890s, all of the south slope and much of the top of the hill had been logged off. An 1890 map¹ depicts more than 75% of Queen Anne as being subdivided and ready for sale, although it was only lightly developed by that time. The Panic of 1893 slowed development, but in 1897 the news of a gold rush in the Klondike jumpstarted a full-fledged recovery in Seattle. The city's population grew at a remarkable rate, from 42,830 in 1890, to 237,194 in 1910. Queen Anne experienced particularly strong growth, with nine new plats filed between 1899 and 1909.

Continuing transportation improvements were key to Queen Anne's development, connecting it to other areas of Seattle, and to points beyond. The Front Street Cable Railway erected its elaborate powerhouse and car barn on Denny Way in 1893, providing service from downtown Seattle halfway up the hill on Queen Anne Avenue. In 1901 this cable car was replaced by "The Counterbalance," which provided service to the top of the hill. It was called the counterbalance because on the portion of the hill between Mercer and Galer streets, which had a 20 percent incline, the cable car was linked with an underground "truck," weighing 16 tons, which acted as a counterweight to help pull the streetcar up hill, and restrain it going downhill. By 1905 two other streetcar lines climbed up the easier grade of Taylor Avenue, serving the north and east sides of the hill. A fourth line turned onto Roy Street past Kinnear Park as far as Tenth Avenue W. and McGraw Street. This line encouraged development on West Olympic Place, including several early apartment buildings that still stand near Villa Costella.

Public works projects also made Queen Anne a desirable place to live, thanks in large part to citizen activism and the influence of prominent local residents such as George Cotterill, a city engineer and progressive politician. By 1898 all north-south streets from Denny Way to Highland Drive were graded and improved, often with wooden sidewalks. An intensive street modernization program on the hill continued from 1907 into the 1920s, with vitrified brick replacing wood planks for street paving and, after 1914, macadam and concrete.

In the 1890s both the flat hilltop and the slopes of the hill began to fill in as contractor-builders built modest homes for middle-class families. By the turn of the century commercial and multifamily buildings appeared along the streetcar lines. The main commercial district took shape at the crest of the hill between McGraw and Galer streets. During the late 1910s and 1920s, other commercial districts took on much of their present form and dimension. The commercial enclave at the foot of Queen Anne was built out with one-story brick shops and stores. Other compact business clusters along the streetcar lines included a stretch along W. Galer Street and along W. McGraw Street where the West Queen Anne car line terminated.

¹ Anderson's New Guide Map 1890

Residential architecture of this period spanned several stylistic trends. The Queen Anne architectural style, which gave the hill its name, reached a pinnacle in the early 1890s. By the turn of the century, “period revival” styles gained popularity. Wealthy homeowners on the south slope shunned the fussy Queen Anne style for one-of-a-kind architect-designed homes. Notable remaining examples are: the Colonial Revival Ballard Mansion (1901, 22 W. Highland Drive), the Mission Revival home of lumber baron John Brace (1904, 170 Prospect Street), and three Tudor-inspired residences by noted architects Bebb and Mendel (for Harry Whitney Treat, T. D. Stimson and Charles B. Black). In the late 1910s, and again in the later 1920s, hundreds of single-family homes, often with detached garages, were constructed because land prices were low and home construction became affordable for the average family. Craftsman-style bungalows and period revival residences remained the most popular architectural mode in this period. House designs were readily available through plan books, trade periodicals, and plan services. Local architects and contractor-builders of the day also developed plans for direct sale.

Seattle’s economy had begun to coast after 1910, but accelerated rapidly with the build-up to World War I. Manufacturing employment in the shipyards and sawmills boomed as never before. Seattle’s population expanded to 315,685 in 1920, up from 237,194 in 1910, an increase of about twenty-five percent. Socially, the 1920s were a period of maturation for Seattle and for Queen Anne in particular. Strong high schools, including Queen Anne High School, gave a sense of identity to established neighborhoods. Community improvement clubs such as the Queen Anne Community Club flourished throughout the city. A multitude of women’s clubs formed and focused their attentions on art, music, literature, history, and current events. Every neighborhood had its movie theaters and various recreational activities.

Through the late 1910s and 1920s, Seattle caught up with the population growth of previous decades. Single-family home permits nearly tripled from 1920 to 1925, and apartment house construction flourished again in the late 1920s. The city’s first zoning code, enacted in 1923, guided apartment locations. On the southwest slope of hill, the zoning allowed for apartments, hotels, and boarding houses amidst the single-family homes in some areas. This boom in multi-family housing transformed parts of the south slope of Queen Anne to the densely urban neighborhood it is today.

As with all of Seattle, and in the country generally, development slowed dramatically during the Depression years of the 1930s. Most of Queen Anne was well developed by this time, except for its last major plat, Queen Anne Park, at the northwest corner. An increasing number of older mansions were converted to apartment use. It was not uncommon for large old houses on Queen Anne to hold three to six families. Apartment house construction, so strong in the late 1920s came to a virtual halt after 1931.

Apartment Development in Seattle and Queen Anne, 1900-1940

Early Seattle residents took advantage of a variety of multifamily accommodations, depending on their income and social level and family structure:

- **Attached Houses:** Seattle families who could not afford a single-family home could rent attached housing such as duplexes, triplexes or fourplexes, typically with an individual entrance for each unit or pair of units.
- **Rooming/Boarding Houses:** Two common residential options were often found within the single-family house form: rooming houses, where one rented a room and ate meals elsewhere; and boarding houses, where meals were served to residents.
- **Workers' Hotels:** A step up from the rooming house was the workers' hotel, which catered largely to single men (and some couples and families) who rented by the week or month. The main characteristic that differentiated these buildings from apartments is that the individual rooms did not include a kitchen or a bathroom, so that residents shared a toilet room and bathtub on each floor, and ate in nearby restaurants.
- **Apartment/Family Hotels:** Apartment hotels or family hotels catered to middle- and upper-class people who were in transition or did not want more permanent housing. Most hotels accepted weekly and monthly residents as well as transient visitors, providing the easiest way for a person to get acceptable and convenient living accommodations without renting a house. Rooms and suites typically included bath facilities and meals were provided in dining rooms or in the suites themselves.

However, the city's growth in the early 20th century, and changing social and economic forces, made these choices inadequate. Between 1900 and 1910 Seattle's population nearly tripled, from approximately 80,000 people to 237,000; it grew further to 315,312 in 1920. The city's role as a trade and manufacturing center solidified and downtown and neighborhood business districts boomed with offices, stores and restaurants. This growth brought an acute need for housing of all types—for travelers, short-term residents, permanent residents and families. The city's builders and developers responded with a variety of housing types. Changing social conditions also contributed to apartment development. The increasing role of women in the work force was a potent factor. Single women working in shops, offices and factories needed respectable and affordable housing, something that could not be obtained at the workers' hotels downtown.

Between 1900 and 1910, land uses became more separated, with people of all income levels moving out of downtown to developing close-in neighborhoods.² By 1902 more than a dozen streetcar lines allowed people to travel easily between neighborhoods.³ The business district rapidly moved northward from Pioneer Square. City Engineer R. H. Thomson sought to encourage further development to the north and by 1911 the western portion of Denny Hill had been sluiced into Elliott Bay. Much of the ensuing growth took the form of apartment buildings in Belltown and lower Queen Anne.

No regulations controlled the location of apartment buildings, but economics dictated that they were typically built on higher-value land close to downtown and near streetcar lines. As one plan catalog noted "Any fairly close-in lot in a good location, with good car service, is suitable, and the building, when completed and rented, will prove a source of satisfactory and permanent income."⁴ Apartments soon appeared in neighborhood commercial areas along street car lines,

² Roger Sale, *Seattle Past to Present* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1976): 80.

³ Leslie Blanchard, *The Street Railway Era in Seattle* (Forty Fort, PA: Harold E. Cox, 1968), endpaper.

⁴ Dose, West & Reinoehl, *Architecture of Dose, West & Reinoehl*, Seattle: 1908: 4.

with the greatest number in Queen Anne, Wallingford, First Hill, Capitol Hill and the University District. Some smaller buildings were also built in single-family areas.

One of the major events of the first decade of the century was the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition, held on the University of Washington campus in 1909. The city invited the world to commemorate the 1897 gold rush and see its accomplishments—more than 3 million visitors attended. The exposition influenced housing in two ways. One was that developers were eager to profit by accommodating visitors. The larger impact, however, was that this event was seen as a sign of the region's long-term growth potential, identifying it as a place that was worthwhile investing in. Two buildings near Villa Costella, both listed in the National Register, were directly connected with the exposition. The De la Mar apartment building was constructed by developer George Kinnear to house his friends who were visiting the fair. The Chelsea Hotel was built to accommodate families visiting the fair.

World War I and a subsequent recession slowed development, despite the critical need for housing. One of the first major post-war apartment projects was The Victoria on Queen Anne. The architect, John Graham, Sr., announced it with great fanfare in May 1921, saying that construction of the "mammoth community apartment house" indicated a "fast reviving building situation in Seattle...the first important answer to the campaign waged by the Chamber of Commerce to get the public to build now." Graham went on to predict "there will be a great influx of people to Seattle seeking homes this fall. We are following what we have been teaching: build now. It is especially needed."⁵ However, the building was not completed until 1923. The Victoria set a high standard among Seattle apartment buildings, as its units averaged more than 1200 square feet, and many had fireplaces, large foyers and libraries. A children's play area and servants' rooms were in the basement. A number of other buildings with similar amenities were built over the next decade, and Villa Costella's elegant apartments units show this influence.

By the early 1920s, apartments were well established as a viable and acceptable housing option for the middle class, typically for single people or for those saving to buy a single-family home. With the economic prosperity of the 1920s, apartments competed in offering amenities and luxuries that made them worthwhile alternatives to a single-family house. While this had been true to some extent in the preceding years, it became more common in the 1920s.

The city's 1923 zoning code made Seattle one of the first U. S. cities to adopt a comprehensive zoning ordinance to regulate land uses. This ordinance determined, for the first time, the location and form of new apartment buildings. The complex ordinance divided residential areas into First Residential (where only single-family residences were allowed) and Second Residential, where apartment buildings were allowed. The location of each zone was determined primarily by the existing uses and character of each area. Thus, the Second Residential zone was located in a ring around downtown that already had many apartments (Belltown, First Hill and parts of Queen Anne and Capitol Hill) and adjoining commercial uses along the neighborhood arterials. Overlaid on these use zones were four Area Districts that regulated setbacks, lot coverage and

⁵ *Seattle Times*, May 15, 1921.

building bulk and five Height Districts that determined allowable heights. Further apartment development was prohibited in single-family areas, but it was allowed in commercial zones, where larger buildings were possible.⁶ This provision encouraged the development of larger buildings in areas such as the University District and First Hill.

This change occurred just as the city was beginning a significant development phase. Population growth slowed in comparison to previous decades, increasing by only 16 percent between 1920 and 1930 (from 315,312 to 365,583). However, the strong economy and pent-up demand for housing and commercial buildings meant that downtown was transformed with large office buildings and hotels, neighborhoods gained new commercial districts and large residential areas, and apartment buildings were constructed throughout the city. The value of building permits issued between 1921 and 1930 equaled 48 percent of the value of all construction between 1921 and 1940.⁷ The increased popularity of the automobile made people less dependent on streetcars, and development spread out accordingly. The city limits extended to approximately N. 85th Street (NE 65th Street in the northeast), and by the end of the 1920s most of the city's land area was developed with residential suburbs.

The *Journal of Commerce* reported record amounts of construction in 1925, including "thousands of houses and scores of apartment houses." Multifamily development peaked in 1925 and continued strongly until 1929-30.⁸ The majority of the city's pre-World War II apartments were built during this period. Apartment blocks appeared along arterials in nearly every neighborhood. Many courtyard apartments were also constructed, with landscaped courtyards for residents to enjoy. While most buildings had predominantly one-bedroom or efficiency units, some buildings had larger apartments with amenities such as fireplaces.

The south slope of Queen Anne was one of the primary areas for apartment development during this period. More than twenty-five apartment houses built between 1921 and 1930 still stand, including:

- The Victoria (1923) and the Narada (1926) on West Highland Drive
- Chandler Hall (1924), the Iris (1930), the Westroy (1930) and the Sea View (1930) on West Roy Street
- Villa Costella (1929), The Ireland (1927), Olympic Arms (1925) and Olympus Manor (1930) on West Olympic Place
- The Alexander Hamilton (1929) on Olympic Way West
- The Leonard (1930), Seville Court (1927) and the Glen Eden (1929) on First Avenue West
- The Viking (1930) on Second Avenue West
- La Charme (1929), the West Coast Arms ((1928) and the Mercedes (1930) on Third Avenue West
- The Marianne (1930), the Charmaine (1929), the Chelan (1930) and the Naomi (1930) on Fourth Avenue West

⁶ City of Seattle, Multifamily Land Use Policies: 20

⁷ Schmid, *Social Trends in Seattle*: 33.

⁸ Schmid, *Social Trends in Seattle*; 34.

- Franca Villa (1930) on Ninth Avenue West
- The Franconia (1930), the Betty May (1929) and the Lola (1930) on West Mercer Street

However, both construction and population growth came to a standstill in the 1930s.⁹ Residential construction dropped precipitously, from 2,583 units in 1930 to 361 units in 1932, with an even greater drop in multifamily development, which continued to be erratic through the rest of the Depression.¹⁰ At the same time, the Depression also forced many homeowners into apartments. This occurred at all economic levels, as even some wealthy people downsized by moving from their large houses into apartments. This situation lasted until 1939-40, when defense contracts brought thousands of workers to the region.

Apartment Building Characteristics

Seattle's smaller apartment buildings are typically of wood frame construction. Some (predominately pre-World War I) examples of smaller apartment blocks are of brick masonry construction, but by the building boom of the 1920s, balloon frame was almost universal in the smaller buildings. Mid-rise buildings (3-6 stories) are often of reinforced concrete, as are virtually all larger buildings. The great majority of Seattle's apartment buildings have relatively simple plans (usually a rectangular or U-shape) that reflect utility and cost-effective use of the land. Narrow light wells on the rear or sides sometimes give larger buildings an L-, T-, E- or H-shaped plan. A relatively small number of properties have a triangular or irregular shape reflecting the topography or parcel shape. Many pre-World War I buildings are distinguished by multistory three-sided bay windows, a feature that was not seen on later buildings. Another common early feature was a prominent central entry bay with open balconies on the upper floors.

The majority of Seattle apartment buildings are faced with brick veneer. Stucco is also seen, especially on Mediterranean Revival buildings. Terra cotta trim is ubiquitous in older buildings, and in an elegant building may extend to terra cotta cladding on the first one or two stories, with brick above. Stone is seen only occasionally, in earlier buildings. Many of these early buildings (pre-World War I) were clad with wood siding or shingles, especially those in the Craftsman style. Wood siding is also common in smaller Modernistic buildings of the 1950s, as well as Roman brick and stone (often manufactured stone).

Apartment blocks were by far the most common multifamily building form of the pre-World War II era. The apartment block as it is known today, with a single primary entrance and living quarters, including kitchens, suitable for middle class residents, appears to have first been constructed in Seattle around the turn of the century. The first such building is believed to have been the St. Paul, constructed in 1901 at 1206 Summit Avenue on First Hill. The St. Paul (now altered) is a three-story block building with a center entrance flanked by three-sided two-story bays.

⁹ Berner, *Seattle 1921-1940*: 181-183.

¹⁰ Berner, *Seattle 1921-1940*: 181.

However, other apartment forms also proliferated, including bungalow courts, courtyard apartments and multientry buildings designed to fit particular site conditions. While these were designed and built by several developers and architects, developer Frederick Anhalt did the most to popularize them. He brought a distinctive sense of style and promoted high-quality apartments as an alternative to single-family homes. Today, his buildings are seen as setting the standard for pre-war apartment buildings and have become almost synonymous with the type. Anhalt was involved in apartment development for approximately five years (1925-1930). He began by building bungalow courts and small commercial buildings on Capitol Hill, Queen Anne, West Seattle, Beacon Hill and Ballard. By 1929 he focused on the higher-end market with elaborate Tudor and Norman French courtyard apartments. In 1929-1930 he built his best known projects, five luxury apartment buildings on Capitol Hill, based on Medieval English and Norman French prototypes. These later buildings are notable because of his goal of creating "apartment homes," refuges that were distinguished by their charm, fanciful detailing (exterior and interior) and quality landscaping. Although he used architects to complete his designs, Anhalt himself was very influential in freely combining elements such as steeply-pitched roofs, turrets, gables, dormers with highly decorative elements such as clinker brick, leaded and stained glass to produce the buildings that have come to be considered the epitome of the 1920s apartment building in Seattle.¹¹

Seattle's Spanish Eclectic Apartments

Most Seattle apartment buildings of the pre-World War II period have no intrinsic style, but are simple box forms with applied terra cotta or cast stone ornament that can exhibit a wide variety of stylistic influences. Most common are varied Neoclassical, English Tudor or Gothic-inspired elements such as shields, cartouches, medallions, columns, entablatures or Palladian windows. Ceramic tile, art glass, decorative brickwork or clinker brick are found in more ornate examples.

However, an important sub-set of Seattle apartment buildings exhibit Spanish Eclectic or Mission-influenced elements. The Mission style, derived from California mission architecture, began in the 1890s, predating Spanish Eclectic designs. It is generally simpler than the Spanish Eclectic style and is usually identified by a distinctive curvilinear parapet or dormer. The style was relatively short lived, almost disappearing after World War I, when the Spanish Eclectic style arose, drawing on a broader range of Old and New World Spanish buildings.¹²

The Spanish Eclectic style was popularized by the 1915 Panama-California Exposition in San Diego and the buildings designed by prominent architect Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue. In the 1920s it was adopted as an official architectural style to promote California and the Southwest; railroads and other companies used the style for stations and hotels and towns like Santa Barbara used it for their commercial districts. Magazines and plan books promoted it heavily as a residential style as well.¹³

¹¹ Lawrence Kreisman, *Apartments by Anhalt*, Seattle: City of Seattle Office of Urban Conservation, 1982: 6.

¹² Virginia and Lee McAlester, *The Field Guide to American Houses*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1986:409-410.

¹³ Robert Schweitzer and Michael W. R. Davis, *America's Favorite Homes*, Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1990: 219.

The major Spanish Eclectic characteristics include:

- Stucco cladding (occasionally brick veneer)
- Red barrel tile roofs
- Round arched windows and doors
- Multilight casement windows
- Heavy dark wood plank doors, brackets, balconies and ornamentation
- Wrought iron grilles on doors or windows
- Courtyards, arcades and balconies

More elaborate examples have more ornament, with twisted columns, colorful ceramic tiles, or wrought iron. In Seattle, these buildings are relatively few in number, but their distinctive style and detailing make them stand out, and many examples have become important neighborhood landmarks because of their contrast with surrounding buildings.

The most prominent local apartment developer of the 1920s, Frederick Anhalt built several Spanish Eclectic buildings, although he later preferred Tudor and French Norman styles. Architect William Whiteley (1892-1974) designed these buildings, including La Quinta (1927) on Capitol Hill and Seville Court (1927), Barcelona Court (1927) and Franca Villa (1930) on Queen Anne.

Villa Costella's designer, Everett J. Beardsley, appears to have worked on in this style. Although each of his buildings exhibits a variation of the Spanish Eclectic style, each one has a different form, tailored to its site. His identified works, in addition to Villa Costella, are:

- ***Hacienda Court, 1025 Summit Avenue E. (1925)***
This complex, at the southwest corner of the Harvard-Belmont Historic District, has 21 units in three buildings. The main two-story building is sited for views of downtown and Lake Union, high on a hillside above Belmont Avenue East. There is no front yard as the garage entrances are directly off the street below the units. The stucco-clad building is symmetrical with projecting wood balconies with red tile roofs are on each floor. No other ornament is apparent.
- ***2345 Franklin Avenue E. (1925)***
Another of Beardsley's earlier designs, this six-unit Eastlake building has a simple side-gable form and rectangular massing but is embellished with an arched entryway and twisted columns. It is clad with white stucco with a red tile roof.
- ***Morris Apartments, 2107 5th Avenue N. (1926)***
This fourplex on east Queen Anne was designed for owner Morris Williams. To integrate with its surroundings, it looks much like a large house with a central arched entry, arched windows and stucco ornament. Like the others, it has stucco cladding and a red tile roof.

- ***El Monterey, 4204 11th Avenue E. (1928)***
The El Monterey, a 20-unit condominium, is one of the more elaborate local examples of the style. It has three stories, with stucco and brick cladding, extensive decorative tile, terra cotta, wrought iron and leaded glass.
- ***El Cerrito, 608 E. Lynn Street (1931)***
The last of Beardsley's known designs, this nine-unit Eastlake building has two three-story buildings stepping down the hillside. The white stucco is ornamented with bright ceramic tile, arched windows with wrought iron grillwork and art glass details.

The style has become closely tied to a particular multifamily building form, the courtyard apartment or bungalow court. At the same time that the Spanish Eclectic style proliferated in all types of California buildings, this new housing form developed in Southern California. The region experienced significant population growth in the early decades of the twentieth century and developers looked to new housing forms that could be built quickly. The early groups of small cottages, known as bungalow courts, soon evolved into U-shaped buildings (one or two stories) that used land more efficiently. Each unit opened onto a lushly landscaped courtyard, a form that recalled early California buildings. Not surprisingly, most of these 1920s courtyard apartments were in variations of the Spanish Eclectic style. Their popularity allowed even those of modest income to enjoy the mild climate and semi-tropical vegetation that attracted people moved to California. Villa Costella is by no means a typical courtyard apartment, as the small courtyards are in the rear and no units open onto them. However, it is derived from this building type, adapted to its sloping site to provide each unit with both private outdoor space and a view.

Building History

Villa Costella was developed and designed in 1928-29 by Everett J. Beardsley. It was originally called Spanish Court, but its name was changed to the more romantic Villa Costella soon afterwards. Beardsley owned the building at least until the late 1930s. It had several owners during the 1940s before being purchased by the Sheridan Investment Company in 1948; this company also owned another prestigious apartment court, Hawthorne Square near the Woodland Park Zoo. Ralph D. Anderson purchased Villa Costella in 1969. In 1998 John Links purchased the complex, renovated it and sold it as condominiums.

The building appears to have been a popular one, which is not surprising given its prime location and unique design. City directories indicate that it was always full and attracted professional and managerial tenants. They were primarily couples, with a small number of widows. In 1938, Beardsley himself is noted as living there, in #15. Tenants at that time included a personnel supervisor for the telephone company, a real estate agent, the manager of Timken Roller Bearings, and the manager of the RKO Pictures distributorship. It was similar in 1948, with many of the same tenants as well as a chiropractor and the general secretary of the YMCA. Interestingly, the building was quite popular with oil company managers in the 1940s-50s, with people from the

The Architect: Everett J. Beardsley

Everett J. Beardsley, the architect and developer of Villa Costella, specialized in the design of elegant Spanish Eclectic apartment buildings. He worked primarily as a contractor and probably built numerous residences, although these have not been identified. In the 1920s he worked with several apartment developers in addition to developing this building himself. It is not known if he ever received any architectural training, but he designed at least six Spanish Eclectic apartment buildings, as discussed in the previous section. Villa Costella is one of Seattle's best examples of this style.

Beardsley was born March 30, 1890 in Woodbine, Iowa and attended Valparaiso University in Indiana. He appears to have first established himself in Billings, Montana, where he worked as a building contractor. He and his wife moved to Seattle in approximately 1917, living with his parents on Queen Anne at 363 Hayes Street. He again worked as a contractor, probably building single-family homes. In the mid-1920s, the local economy and apartment development were so strong that he successfully embarked on a new career in apartment development, design and construction. He remained a building contractor into the 1930s, when development slowed drastically. He was active in the community, being a charter member (in 1921) of Queen Anne Masonic Lodge Number 242 and of the Broadmoor Golf Club, in 1924. He died in Bellevue on January 26, 1963¹⁴

¹⁴ Pacific Coast Architectural database; <https://digital.lib.washington.edu/architect/architects/4967/>

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