

(Oct. 1990)

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM**

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

HISTORIC NAME: Eddingston Court
OTHER NAME/SITE NUMBER: N/A

2. LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER: 3300 Proctor Street
CITY OR TOWN: Port Arthur
STATE: Texas **CODE:** TX **COUNTY:** Jefferson **CODE:** 245
NOT FOR PUBLICATION: N/A
VICINITY: N/A
ZIP CODE: 77642

3. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

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

Signature of certifying official Date

State Historic Preservation Officer, Texas Historical Commission
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is:	Signature of the Keeper	Date of Action
<input type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet		
<input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> other (explain): _____	_____	_____

5. CLASSIFICATION

OWNERSHIP OF PROPERTY: Private

CATEGORY OF PROPERTY: District

NUMBER OF RESOURCES WITHIN PROPERTY:	CONTRIBUTING	NONCONTRIBUTING
	9	1 BUILDINGS
	1	0 SITES
	1	1 STRUCTURES
	0	0 OBJECTS
	11	2 TOTAL

NUMBER OF CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES PREVIOUSLY LISTED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER: 0

NAME OF RELATED MULTIPLE PROPERTY LISTING: *The Sculpture of Dionicio Rodriguez in Texas*

6. FUNCTION OR USE

HISTORIC FUNCTIONS: Recreation and Culture / work of art
Landscape / street furniture
Domestic/ multiple dwelling, single dwelling, secondary structure=garage

CURRENT FUNCTIONS: Recreation and Culture / work of art
Landscape / street furniture
Domestic/ multiple dwelling, single dwelling, secondary structure=garage
Vacant/Not in Use

7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: Late 19th and 20th Century Revivals: Tudor, Classical Revival
OTHER: Faux bois sculpture

MATERIALS: FOUNDATION CONCRETE
WALLS BRICK
ROOF ASPHALT
OTHER CONCRETE; OTHER/seashells

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION (see continuation sheets 7-5 through 7-7).

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

APPLICABLE NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA

- 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 VALUE, 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: N/A

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE: Art, Landscape Architecture, Community Planning and Development

PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE: c.1929

SIGNIFICANT DATES: c.1929

SIGNIFICANT PERSON: N/A

CULTURAL AFFILIATION: N/A

ARCHITECT/BUILDER: Dionicio Rodriguez (sculpture); building architect unknown

NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (see continuation sheets 8-8 through 8-10).

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

BIBLIOGRAPHY (see continuation sheet 9-11).

PREVIOUS DOCUMENTATION ON FILE (NPS): N/A

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

PRIMARY LOCATION OF ADDITIONAL DATA:

- State historic preservation office (*Texas Historical Commission*)
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository:

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF PROPERTY: approximately 12 acres

UTM REFERENCES	<u>Zone</u>	<u>Easting</u>	<u>Northing</u>
1.	15	411852	3307516
2.	15	411954	3307638
3.	15	412157	3307475
4.	15	412040	3307358

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION: LT 7 2 BLK MCHANKS, LESS D D 7 EASEMENT (Jefferson County Texas Central Appraisal District).

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION: Nomination includes all property historical associated with the district, including the apartment buildings, house, and sculpture by Dionicio Rodriguez

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME/TITLE: Patsy Light and Maria Pfeiffer

ORGANIZATION:

DATE: February 2004

STREET & NUMBER: 300 Argyle

TELEPHONE: (210) 824-5914

CITY OR TOWN: San Antonio

STATE: Texas

ZIP CODE: 78209

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

CONTINUATION SHEETS

MAPS

PHOTOGRAPHS (see continuation sheet Photo-14)

ADDITIONAL ITEMS (see continuation sheets Figure-12 and Figure-13)

PROPERTY OWNER

NAME: M. Aquilina and Sons

STREET & NUMBER: PO Box 2544

TELEPHONE: 702-616-3352

CITY OR TOWN: Port Arthur

STATE: Texas

ZIP CODE: 77643

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Eddingston Court
Port Arthur, Jefferson County, Texas

Eddingston Court is an apartment complex on the northeast side of Port Arthur, Texas, near the Sabine-Neches Canal. The complex features 2 pairs of 2-story Tudor brick apartment buildings facing each other across a central sculpture garden and pond (now dry). The garden, along with an extensive concrete and conch shell wall along Proctor Street, is the work of noted sculptor Dionicio Rodriguez. A 1-story brick ranch house with a classical pedimented entry anchors the district opposite the main entrance, and wood-frame garages are at the rear of the apartments.

Paralleling Proctor Street is a conch shell-encrusted wall adorned with shell-covered pillars. The two main sections of the wall are 2 1/2' high with alternating square and diamond shaped apertures along their 98' lengths. Two openings for foot traffic separate the long wall lengths from the gateway features flanking the central drive. Each side has an 8' high pillar, capped by a hipped roof lantern, adjoining a curving 8' length of wall that meets a 5 1/2' tall capped pillar along the driveway. Cement plaques attached to pillars on each side read "Eddingston Court 1929." At both the eastern and western edges of the property are 10' wide utility easements flanked by 5' high shell covered pillars.

Pairs of brick apartment buildings are on the east and west sides of the entry boulevard that is bisected by a grassy median with a fish pond. The pond measures 21' in diameter and rests on a 28' platform. Areas of cement "rocks" line the edges of the pool and extend over the sides creating natural appearing layered ledges. A 4 1/2-foot-tall sculpted "rock" fountain (no longer operating) provided water for the pond. The fountain and the pond are in moderately good condition.

The four apartment buildings share some Tudor design elements, but each has varying details. All have front gables, 6/6 double hung wood frame windows and pitched roofs, clad with composition shingles. Building 1, which measures 82' x 31,' has a left gable with a decorative brick design over a first floor metal roofed bay. A square entry porch frames a Tudor door opening. An oriel window is over the main entrance, and the right gable has a metal roofed bay on the second floor. Building 2 measures 81x25" and has a left gable centered with triple windows surrounded by half timbering of wood and plaster. The center section is pierced by a rounded cast stone doorway with an oriel window above. The right gable is half-timbered with triple windows trimmed with a cast stone label molding. Building 3 measures 35' x 90' and is similar to 4, but has brick castellation capping the second story wings above the doorways. Building 4, also 35' x 90,' has two prominent cross gables of cross timbering. Each end gable has tripartite fenestration on lower and upper floors. The upper window grouping is trimmed with a patterned brick detail, and the lower is capped with brick arches infilled with plaster. Entrance porches feature flattened cast stone arches. Above the doorways are long and narrow 4/4 windows capped with label molds.

The four frame garages have vertical board and batten siding and corrugated tin shed roof. A storeroom was built on the end of each building. Similar in design, the garages have varying numbers of spaces for vehicles: Number 5 had nine bays; number 6, six bays; number 7, eight bays and number 8, seven bays.

The single-story four-bedroom frame house (noncontributing) with brick veneer measures 104' x 55", and the attached garage measures 20' x 23'. The composition shingle roof has several intersecting gables. The main entrance of the residence borrows decorative details from neoclassical style architecture. The front (west) façade with the main gable has two wooden columns supporting the porch roof which is capped with a white wooden pediment, embellished with a 12 paned shield. Dentil molding trims the fascia. Triple 2/2 wood frame windows on either side of the front door are trimmed with white shutters. Fenestration varies and includes regular and smaller sized windows, some with white shutters. The rear (south) façade has a glassed-in porch with sliding glass doors, overlooking the tennis court. An asphalt paved driveway branches off the main driveway, and leads to the garage.

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Eddingston Court
Port Arthur, Jefferson County, Texas

Sculpture by Dionicio Rodriguez at Eddingston Court

A fishpond is sited in the middle of the median in the entry boulevard. The pond measures 21' in diameter and rests on a 28' irregularly-shaped base. Areas of cement "rocks," some with recesses for plants, create natural appearing ledges, project over the pool like floating cave formations. A 4 1/2' tall fountain, with edges of sculpted "rock" hanging downward like stalactites, provided water for the pond. Beulah Ayhsen remembered that the parkway on either side of the pond was landscaped with Sweetheart Rose bushes. Although not functioning, the fountain and the pond are in moderately good condition.

A section of the central garden was called the Garden of Tranquility. One of the garden's main features, a 9' high fountain of successive layers of "rock," is capped by a large semicircular form. Water from a spout on the top would spill onto a top layer of "rock," drip over the lower layers into the pond over an area of "rock" ledges and finally, into a wide kidney shaped lagoon (now covered with weeds and underbrush) which measures thirty- three and one half feet long and twenty-nine feet wide. Still evident (in 2002) were three additional areas where water flowed into the pond. The fountain and pond remain in good condition.

On the eastern edge of the pond is a small "stump," with heavy "bark" texture that measures 33' tall and 2' in diameter. Textured roots raise the piece to an overall height of 6'. One root of the stump is broken away, but lies nearby. This may have been a planned feature by Rodriguez, as rebar and mesh are not exposed. The seat is in good condition.

"The Sound Cave," on the east side of the pond, has exterior and interior walls faced with conch shells and rests on a platform of layered "cement" rocks that extends beyond the base of the walls. The cave is similar to the hollow "tree houses" that Rodriguez built at various sites, although this shape is open on three sides. The solid back wall has a built-in concrete bench. Two large shell-covered columns at each front corner support the roof. The front entrance is decorated with a conch-shell-encrusted stalactite and a stalagmite in the center. The cave was wired for electricity as evidenced by a remaining socket. The exterior of the cave measures 10' wide, 8' tall, and 9' deep; interior measurements are 7' by 8' and the height is 7 1/2'. The shells are moderately covered with graffiti, and the "rock" ledge platform has been undermined by water flow. The entire structure is in danger of tipping over, but otherwise, the cave is in good condition.

A very large "tree stump" seat with six large roots extending from the base is on the western edge of the lagoon. The deeply grained "bark" seat portion is 2' in diameter, the height of the seat is 4 1/2' and the back is 16" high. Overall height of the structure (including the roots) is 5'5" and the width is 5'8". The soil under the roots has eroded, but the piece is in good condition.

Similar in shape to a diving board, a "wood plank" with an attached "stump" is poised on the edge of the southeastern edge of the lagoon. "Branch" supports below the plank would have raised the structure above the water level of the lagoon. The overall height is 5' and the width is 6 1/2'. The very realistic "stump" is 18" tall. The piece is in good condition.

West of the lagoon, and south of the landowners' residence, is the tennis court area where there are two textured seats, each approximately 2' high, with hollowed out smooth seats, and a log support that measures about 18" by 4'. A steel bolt protrudes from the top of the log that indicates that there may have been an additional part to this piece. These pieces are in good condition.

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Eddingston Court
Port Arthur, Jefferson County, Texas

A flat-topped table supported by delicate, twisted small branches that converge into a “stump” base is south of the seats. The tabletop is 2’5” in diameter. The “twigs” are 17” high and the “stump” base measures 2’3” wide and is 10” high. The table is in good condition.

Near the table is a large stone-lined planting bed that is 17’ in diameter. The central feature of the bed is a large cement basket (6’ by 4’) with a 3’10” bale. Overall height of the basket is 7’. The exterior of the basket is faced with small stones, and the interior is sculpted cement. The base of the basket is surrounded by large marble (or granite) rocks. Outside the bed’s perimeter are approximately fifteen “cactus” forms including two three-branched cement “cactus” that stand 3’ high, a three leafed “prickly pear cactus,” and a “pincushion cactus.” The basket and “cactus” are in good condition, but the entire bed area is overgrown, and is in danger of being damaged by roots of saplings.

Property	Category	Status
Eddingston Court lot, including garden, fountain and objects	site	Contributing
Apartment 1 - NW	building	Contributing
Apartment 2 - SW	building	Contributing
Apartment 3 - SE	building	Contributing
Apartment 4 - NE	building	Contributing
Garage (property 5)	building	Contributing
Garage (property 6)	building	Contributing
Garage (property 7)	building	Contributing
Garage (property 8)	building	Contributing
1951 owners’ house	building	Noncontributing
c.1925 residence	building	Contributing
Conch Wall (2 parts)	structure	Contributing
Tennis court	structure	Noncontributing

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Continuation SheetSection 8 Page 8Eddingston Court
Port Arthur, Jefferson County, Texas

Tugboat Captain Ambrose T. Eddingston built Eddingston Court apartments c.1929 in response to a need for housing in the growing oil-refining city of Port Arthur, Texas. The four-building apartment complex, the first of its type in Port Arthur, is in the 3300 block of Proctor Street, along the Sabine-Neches Ship Channel. Eddingston hired Dionicio Rodriguez and a group of fellow artisans from San Antonio to embellish the grounds with unique sculptures, several of which are encrusted with conch shells. Captain Eddingston commissioned fellow ship captain, Leonard Tibbetts (of the ship, *Smaland*), to deliver 5,200 shells from Grand Cayman Island, Eddingston's birthplace. The locally-designated landmark is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C, in the areas of Art and Landscape Architecture as monumental work by noted sculptor Dionicio Rodriguez, as part of the Multiple Property Submission *Sculpture of Dionicio Rodriguez in Texas*. Eddingston Court is also significant as an intact early 20th century residential development and is thus also nominated under Criterion A, in the area of Community Planning and Development.

Port Arthur is on State Highway 87, 17 miles southeast of Beaumont in southeast Jefferson County. In 1895, Kansas railroad promoter Arthur E. Stilwell and his financial backers established the city of Port Arthur on the western shore of Sabine Lake as the terminus of the Kansas City, Pittsburg and Gulf Railroad. In 1897 the Port Arthur Channel and Dock Co. began cutting a canal to reach deep water at Sabine Pass. With the completion of the canal in 1899, Port Arthur became a true port. By the fall of 1897, the population reached 860, and the city incorporated the following year. The railroad went into receivership in the spring of 1899, but the city's proximity to the Spindletop oilfield (first tapped in 1901), placed Port Arthur near the heart of the state's primary oil region. Major oil companies soon established facilities in Port Arthur, including Gulf and Texaco, which built refineries in 1901 and 1902, respectively. By 1914, the city had become the second largest oil-refining point in the nation, and the population exploded to 7,663 in 1910 and 50,902 by 1930.¹

Dionicio Rodriguez Sculptures at Eddingston Court Apartments in Port Arthur

In the early 20th century, immigrants from the Cayman Islands in the British West Indies began to arrive in the Port Arthur area. By the 1980s, more than 500 Cayman families called Port Arthur home. Among the early group were Ambrose T. Eddingston and his wife, Eurina, who settled in Sabine Pass (which was a large port) in 1907, where Eddingston initially served as the cook on the Sabine Pilot's boat, later becoming a tugboat captain. He became a partner in the Sabine Ice, Coal and Water Company which supplied these commodities to the shipping industry. This company later became the Sabine Transportation Company. Other Caymanians became captains for the Texaco and Gulf Oil fleets. In 1908, the Eddingstons moved to Port Arthur. Captain Eddingston realized the need for housing for new people in the area, and in 1922, he built the Nonpareil, a rooming house for teachers at 2735 Procter Street. According to his daughter, Mrs. A.A. Shirley, Eddingston saw the need for additional rental housing as Port Arthur's population grew, and in 1928 he acquired property for a new project: a 5.15 acre track of land, part of the Horatio McHanke Subdivision, bounded on the northwest by Procter Street and on the southeast by the United States Canal (the Sabine-Neches Ship Channel) (Jefferson County Deed Records, Volume 308, page 311).

In 1929, Eddingston awarded a \$90,000. contract to L.W. Lindsay of Houston to build a four unit apartment complex, Eddingston Court, on this property (*Texas General Contractors Association Monthly Bulletin* 1929, p.32). This set of buildings resembles the picturesque manorial style buildings and houses that Lindsay's firm was designing and building in

¹ "PORT ARTHUR, TX." The Handbook of Texas Online. <<http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/view/PP/hdp5.html>> [Accessed Mon Nov 3 14:34:19 US/Central 2003].

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Eddingston Court
Port Arthur, Jefferson County, Texas

Houston; one of them is the 1929 J.M. Frost house at 1645 North Boulevard in the Boulevard Oaks National Historic District. Lindsay, who represented himself as an architect-builder, did not design projects himself, but hired designers. As there are no existing set of plans for this project, the identity of the designer is not known (Fox to Light). William Farrington, a Houston engineer, worked with Lindsay around this period, and the *Port Arthur News* credits him with Eddingston Court's construction (*Port Arthur News* 1990, pp. 1-8C).

To embellish what he would later describe as "the garden spot of Texas," Captain Eddingston commissioned his nephew, Leonard Tibbetts, captain of the ship of the Smaland, to collect and bring 5,200 conch shells from the Caymans, and subsequently hired Dionicio Rodriguez, and a group of fellow artisans from San Antonio to build a shell wall, cave and additional cement sculptures to decorate the grounds of the project (Del Toro to Pfeiffer and Light). The ninety-eight foot wall and entrance gate bordering Proctor and the "Sound Cave," both made of the bright pink shells, are unlike any other of Rodriguez's projects. Other sculptural pieces, two "rock" fountains, log seats, chairs, and a rock encrusted basket share similarities of his work at other sites.

Four brick veneer contributing two-story buildings (two on each side) with Tudor-influenced details border a paved esplanade with an illuminated and landscaped median ending in a cul-de-sac. At the end of the cul-de-sac, an open space faced toward the canal providing residents with a view of the passing ships, prior to the construction of a one-story house with an attached garage built by subsequent owners. Each of the two buildings on the left (numbered 3 and 4 on site map) has eight efficiency apartments furnished with Murphy beds. The building (numbered 1) on the right has four 1-bedroom/1-bath units, and building 2 has four 2-bedroom/1-bath units. Gravel and shell-surfaced drives lead to shed roofed frame garages sited behind each unit. Inside the front wall on Procter is a one-story house, clad with horizontal lapped siding and capped with a composition shingle hipped roof. The residence (referred to as the "little house" by family members) was on the property when Captain Eddingston purchased the land for apartments. The Eddingston's son, Harley, his wife and two children lived in the house until "Mom" Eddingston purchased a home for them nearby.

Visible on early maps are the tennis court, which was lighted, near the water and a boat slip, both built by the Eddingstons. The boat slip was later eliminated when the improved seawall was built. The earliest photograph reveals a paucity of landscaping, but Eddingston's daughter, Mrs. W.E. Shirley, recalled that later "the oak trees in back were brought from Louisiana, and my mother had the trees in front planted" (Shirley, 1992). By 2003, overgrown foundation plantings almost obscure the facades of the four buildings and both houses. Mrs. Shirley also commented on the relaxed and cozy atmosphere at the apartment complex: "We were all just one happy family at the court. The residents played bridge and tennis and enjoyed the companionship." Some tenants remained for forty years.

Captain Eddingston committed suicide in 1931, and his widow, "Mom" Eddingston (as she was known to her tenants,) moved into one of the apartments and continued their management until they were sold in 1943 to local real estate developer, Marion Acquilina, Jr. and his two sons, Sam and John. (*Port Arthur News* 1990, page 1C). In 1951, Mr. Acquilina and his wife, Angela, built the brick home where they lived with their sons, daughter Beulah Ahysen and her daughter, Angela. Beulah managed the apartments for 10 years, later John managed the project and finally, Sharleen York, personal secretary to John, became the manager. After the death of their parents, the two brothers continued to live in the house until Sam died in 2002, and John moved to Houston to live with his family. Ownership is now includes John, Beulah Ayshen, and another sister, Mary Romeo. A historical marker placed at the entrance by the Port Arthur Historical Society reads "Eddingston Court, Erected 1929, Local Historical Landmark, 1993."

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Eddingston Court
Port Arthur, Jefferson County, Texas

Eddingston Court is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C, in the areas of Art and Landscape Architecture as monumental work by noted sculptor Dionicio Rodriguez, as part of the Multiple Property Submission *Sculpture of Dionicio Rodriguez in Texas*, at the state level of significance. This level of significance is merited because it is Rodriguez's most monumental and complete work in Texas, featuring not only his sculptures but also all of the original buildings, resulting in an intact designed landscape. The use of imported conch shells as a decorative device on the walls is also unique in Rodriguez's known body of work. Eddingston Court is also significant as an intact early 20th century residential development reflecting the need for housing in the growing oil refinery city, and is thus also nominated under Criterion A, in the area of Community Planning and Development, at the local level of significance.

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Eddingston Court
Port Arthur, Jefferson County, Texas

BIBLIOGRPAHY

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Del Toro, Mrs. Guadalupe, and Emma Bailey. Telephone interview with Patsy Light; December 21, 1998.

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Stansbury, Jack, A.I.A. Assistance with site map of Eddingston Court, September-October, 2003.

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Eddingston Court
Port Arthur, Jefferson County, Texas

Eddingston Court
Photograph, possibly used as a postcard image, c.1930 (Source: Port Arthur Public Library)



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Eddingston Court
Port Arthur, Jefferson County, Texas

Plan (no scale)

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Eddingston Court
Port Arthur, Jefferson County, Texas

Eddingston Court
Port Arthur, Jefferson County, Texas
Photographs by Tracie Middleton (except as noted)
Negatives on file with Patsy Light (except as noted)

Conch shell entrance gate and wall
Camera facing east
April 2002
Photo 1

Fountain and apartment buildings at entrance
Camera facing south
April 2002
Photo 2

Large fountain at lagoon
Camera facing north
April 2002
Photo 3

“Sound cave”
Camera facing northeast
April 2002
Photo 4

“Stump” seat
Camera facing west
April 2002
Photo 5

Basket and “cactus”
Camera facing south
April 2002
Photo 6

Aquilina Residence
Camera facing east
September 2003
Photo by Mussie Ligh Acomb
Photo 7