

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

PHO 685054
FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED SEP 1 1978
DATE ENTERED NOV 15 1978

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

MABEL DODGE LUHAN HOUSE / VICTOR HIGGINS HOUSE

AND/OR COMMON

BIG HOUSE / ST. TERESA HOUSE

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

Luhan Lane

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Taos

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

1

STATE

New Mexico

VICINITY OF

CODE
35

COUNTY
Taos

CODE
55

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

PRESENT USE

- AGRICULTURE
- COMMERCIAL
- EDUCATIONAL
- ENTERTAINMENT
- GOVERNMENT
- INDUSTRIAL
- MILITARY
- MUSEUM
- PARK
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- RELIGIOUS
- SCIENTIFIC
- TRANSPORTATION
- OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

George Otero and Roy Krosky

also: Michael Fagan

STREET & NUMBER

Luhan Lane

981 11th Street

Boulder, Colorado

CITY, TOWN

Taos

STATE

New Mexico

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Taos County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Taos

STATE

New Mexico

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

New Mexico Register of Cultural Properties

DATE

December 12, 1977

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

New Mexico Historic Preservation Program

CITY, TOWN

Santa Fe

STATE

New Mexico

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

In 1918 Mabel Dodge Sterne purchased some property which adjoins Taos Pueblo land and through it runs the Acequia Madre del Pueblo, the oldest water rights in New Mexico and on it were two small adobe houses. Mabel writes of one as a four room coffin-shaped house which dates to the late 18th or early 19th century. The other was two rooms with a portal and was built somewhat earlier. Once the land was obtained Mabel hired Tony Lujan as foreman of the construction crew. All the construction was that traditionally used -- adobe walls, wood or dirt floors, and vigas and latias supporting a dirt roof. Construction around the coffin-shaped house has been quite well described by Mabel and her guests. There is, however, a strange silence about construction around the other house despite their being worked on simultaneously. When construction was completed in 1922 the two houses spread out from a common central entrance court.

The first known addition, completed in 1919, was to the south end of the coffin-house and it consisted of adobe storage rooms, a maids' room, and a log cabin for John Evans. At the south side of the log cabin a placita which opens on the garden was built. The storage rooms along the placita were not finished as bedrooms until about 1970.

The next year an L-shape living room, dining room, and kitchen wing was added to the north side of the coffin-house and a portal was built across the front. The living room or Big Room had two sections each with a fireplace and with twisted columns between. The twisted columns found here and in other parts of the house were carved by Manuel Rena. This element is rarely found in New Mexico architecture and was probably brought from Florence by Mabel. The front section of the room with its corner fireplace serves as an entrance hall and the rear section is cozier with its larger wall fireplace.

The dining room, several steps down from the Big Room, is filled with a large table and leather chairs and these are among the few pieces of New Mexican furniture remaining in the house. The latias are painted red, black, and white forming a blanket-like chevron design. Off the dining room is a small alcove with a large fireplace. Traditionally, the women built the fireplaces and accordingly one was being constructed. Tony apparently did not like the fireplace, took an ax to it, and built himself a fireplace with a peyote altar.

The kitchen, the northern-most room, is the only room in the house which has been completely remodeled and altered since 1922. New cabinets, tiles, and appliances have been added and the room is in keeping with the character of the house.

The following year the Rainbow Room was built. It is a salon added to extending the "L" of the Big Room. It has its name from the multitude of colors painted on the latias and their glowing effect. The room is several steps up from the Big Room and is entered through a pointed arch doorway, an element once again imported from Europe.

The final addition to the Big House was second story bedrooms for Mabel and Tony and a third story sun room. Tony's room is small with a corner fireplace, a light blue ceiling of vigas and latias, and small windows looking to the mountains. Off it is a large sleeping porch. One of the highlights of this section of the house is the bathroom which has windows on three sides. During a day of boredom Brett and Lawrence painted geometric designs on the windows. These were recently restored.

Mabel's room, seven steps down from Tony's, is large and airy with white twisted columns, large windows, and a stairway down to a patio. There is a sitting room at one side and a bed chamber at the other with a large bed with twisted column posts. Above and accessible by a narrow staircase is a sun room. In the 1930s Mabel described the walls as being of helioglass set in wood, as they are now. When built the room was an open sleeping porch accessible from an exterior staircase.

The St. Teresa House was apparently constructed simultaneously with the Big House. It too was built around an older house, is of traditional adobe construction, and is a linear one-story house with a two-story section. It presents a solid facade with small window openings. Most of the rooms are similar to the Big House in size and shape.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1918 to present

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Mabel Dodge and Tony Lujan

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Mabel Ganson Evans Dodge Sterne Luhan was born in Buffalo, N.Y. in 1879 to one of the city's leading banking families. She was an obstinate child who was greatly affected by her parent's quite open dislike of each other and the resulting coldness of the Ganson house. From childhood she had a love of the mysterious, superstitious, magical side of life. Although Mabel wrote copious journals about her life from the time she was young, she scrupulously avoided dates, making a biography a difficult task.

In 1899 Mabel married Karl Evans, a local sportsman with whom she was intrigued because his activities and interests differed from hers. In about 1901 they had a son, John, who was to be Mabel's only child. After several years of marriage, Karl died in an accident.

A year or two later in 1904 Mabel boarded a ship for Europe. There she met Edwin Dodge, an American architect headed for Italy. Mabel and Edwin were married several months later in Paris and in 1905 moved to Florence. There they bought a house, the Villa Curonia, which Mabel actively set about furnishing and found she had talent in the area and loved doing it. Another thing she loved doing and actively set about was collecting and gathering people. Most Americans living in or passing through Florence, especially those in the arts, attended Mabel's salons. By 1912 Mabel had grown tired of Florence and Edwin and moved back to New York and soon divorced Dodge.

Once settled in an apartment in New York, she began to hold evening salons for artistic and literary figures. As a result she became quite a well-known figure in the New York artistic scene. She became involved with people such as Alfred Stieglitz, Georgia O'Keeffe, John Collier, Isadora Duncan, and others. Mabel was engrossed by the Armory Show of 1913 and wrote an article for the catalogue Arts and Decoration, "Speculations or Post-Impressions in Prose."

Among the artists she met was Maurice Sterne, a painter. At some point they began an affair and were married about 1916. The two had quite an unhappy marriage partly because of Mabel's possessiveness. In 1917, it was decided that Maurice would take a trip to the west to paint and to take the pressure off the marriage.

He went first to Wyoming and then Santa Fe. Mabel joined him in Santa Fe in December 1917. Soon after arriving Mabel took them to Taos and she fell in love with the place, though Maurice was reluctant about it.

She found quarters to rent with Mr. Manby and the Sternes moved from Santa Fe to Taos. Mabel, who immediately was attracted to the Indians, began making frequent trips to Taos Pueblo. There she met Tony Lujan and the two developed a strong friendship. In 1918, Tony found some property suitable for Mabel to buy and Tony became foreman of the construction crew for a house. Daily Mabel went to inspect progress and talk with Tony. Maurice was busy painting and finally began sculpting some busts, a project he had always wanted to undertake. Mabel's and Maurice's relationship deteriorated and he left Taos in August 1918. The two were divorced somewhat later. When Maurice left Taos, Mabel and Tony's friendship developed into a love affair and in April 1923 the two were married.

In 1922, the big house was completed and Tony began a house for himself across the acequia on his allotment. He also became Mabel's Mayordomo and chauffeur. With this Big

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Bainbridge Bunting. "Residence of Mabel Dodge Luhan, Taos, N.M.," New Mexico Architecture, Sept.- Oct. 1961. pp. 11-13
 Emily Hahn. Mabel, A Biography of Mabel Dodge Luhan. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1977.
 Interviews with owners. George Otero and Roy Krosky, August 31, 1978; Michael Fagan, Sept. 6, 1978.
 Mabel Dodge Luhan. Edge of Taos Desert: An Escape to Reality: Volume 4, Intimate Memories. New York: Harcourt, 1937.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY about 2 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A	1 3	4 4 9 3 8 0	4 0 2 9 1 6 0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Beginning at the brass capped monument, P.C. 194, p.2 on the southerly bank of the Acequia Madre; proceed along the Acequia Madre del Pueblo which makes an arc on the north, west, and south sides of house; at the intersection of the ditch and a point 50 feet east of the east edge of the house proceed north to the starting point.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Ellen Threinen / Architectural Historian

9/14/78

ORGANIZATION

New Mexico Historic Preservation Program

DATE

827-2108

STREET & NUMBER

P.O. Box 1629

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

Santa Fe

STATE

New Mexico 87503

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

Thomas W. Mel...

TITLE

State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

9-20-78

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST:

William Laboriel
 WILLIAM LABORIEL
 DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHITECTURE AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER
 DATE Nov 13, 1978

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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CONTINUATION SHEET #1

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 1

The dining room of the house has a ceiling supported with hand-carved corbeles. The St. Teresa Garden, the placita of the house, has a painting on tile of St. Teresa. The house served as a guest house until Victor Higgins bought it perhaps in 1925. There is a notable lack of information on the St. Teresa House and Victor Higgins. The lack is so obvious that one must speculate that Mabel had a reason for not mentioning it.

The two houses though under separate ownership for many years, were conceived as one unit. In 1922 a studio and portal were added to the north end of the St. Teresa House and the two houses were joined by a large common entrance court. Thus the two achieve the difficult concept of unity and privacy.

By 1922 the house in its present structural form was complete. The entrance court and the garage and shop had been constructed. In about 1970 the garage was finished as a residence and since then the gate house has been remodeled. The gate to the Big House garden was built around pieces from the altar from the church at Ranchos de Taos which had been recently remodeled. In the garden of the Big House a root cellar and an open pavilion summer house were built. Across the acequia were vegetable gardens and an alfalfa field. After completing the Big House Mabel and Tony built five smaller houses -- the Two-story House, the Pink House, the Tony House, the Studio, and the Architect's House.

It is not clear when Mabel moved into the Big House. She bought the property in 1918 and mentions moving her only possessions, Santos. However, she probably moved in 1921 or 22 because Maurice Sterne left Taos in 1918 and never lived in the new house, Mabel had a great deal of furniture, and she mentions visiting the house during construction. When the D.H. Lawrences arrived in 1922, the house was fully completed and Mabel was settled in the house.

Mabel and Tony continued to live in the house until Mabel's death in 1962. The house was in the estate's and John Evans' possession until 1969 or 1970 when it was sold to Dennis Hopper, the creator of the movie Easy Rider. He had a commune in the Big House and during this time the house was allowed to deteriorate. In 1977, the current owners purchased the house and they have made the essential repairs. The St. Teresa House has been kept in good condition.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

#2

ITEM NUMBER 8&9 PAGE 2

House completed Mabel also went back to people collecting. In 1921, she had written D.H. and Frieda Lawrence suggesting that they come to Taos. The two arrived a year later and began their much discussed relationship with Mabel. Also in the circle were Andrew Dasburg, Victor Higgins, Mary Austin, and Willa Cather. While staying at the Big House, Willa Cather wrote Death Comes for the Archbishop.

John Collier, a New York acquaintance of Mabel's, also came to Taos and became interested in Indian affairs through his discussions with Tony. Mabel got him a position with the Bureau of Indian Affairs and in 1932 he became commissioner. Most of his attitudes and opinions about Indians came from Tony and he depended on Tony to explain the BIA's decisions to the Pueblos. He was the first commissioner to have sympathy for the Indians, a significant breakthrough for the BIA.

Frieda and Lawrence left Taos for Mexico after a short stay; however, Mabel urged them to return and when they did in 1924, they brought Dorothy Brett, an English artist. The Lawrences moved into the Pink House and Brett into the Studio, both across the field from the Big House. Soon the Lawrences and Brett longed for the countryside and Mabel gave them John Evans' ranch which Lawrence called Lobo. Brett took a small cottage on the ranch. Frieda paid Mabel for the ranch with the hand-written draft of Sons and Lovers. In 1930, Lawrence died in Venice and Frieda returned to Taos soon after. Without Lawrence around to arouse jealousies, Mabel, Frieda, and Brett developed a close friendship.

Upon Lawrence's death Mabel began to seriously take up writing and publishing. In 1932, she wrote and had published Lorenzo in Taos, a description of her relationship with Lawrence. She had always written journals and had them published in a series called Intimate Memories. The first, Background, appeared in 1933, the second European Experiences in 1935, in 1936 Movers and Shakers appeared, and the fourth and Last Edge of Taos Desert was published in 1937. Winter in Taos appeared in 1934 and Taos and Its Artists in 1947 and these were among her best books. Winter in Taos displays a warmth that must have attracted people to her, but rarely appears in other books. Taos and Its Artists is well-illustrated and displays her personal acquaintance with many of the artists.

Mabel continued as Grande Dame of Taos with Tony as her self-described "rock" or "mountain" for many years. She died in 1962 at the age of 83 and Tony died shortly after.

The house was and remains a very personal statement on Mabel's part of the sort of life she led and wanted to lead. She put together a house that blended Pueblo, Spanish Colonial, and Tuscan architectural elements. And she included her personal desires for acceptance, rebellion, intrigue, warmth, and privacy.

#9

Mabel Dodge Luhan. Lorenzo in Taos. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1932.

Mabel Dodge Luhan. Winter in Taos. Denver: Sage Books, Inc., 1935.

Lois Palken Rudnick. The Unexprigated Self: A Critical Biography of Mabel Dodge Luhan. Providence, RI: Brown University dissertation, 1977.

PART OF
PT. TR 48, M9, S. 2

MABEL LUJAN ESTATE

TOWN, TADOS COUNTY, NEW MEXICO
SCALE 1"=50' D/M/T/O
BY J. H. ...
N.M.L.S. NO. 1195



TOTAL AREA 5.897 AC.
(EXCLUDING ENCLOSURES)

P. of PC 194, P2

P. of Tr. 48, M9, S. 2

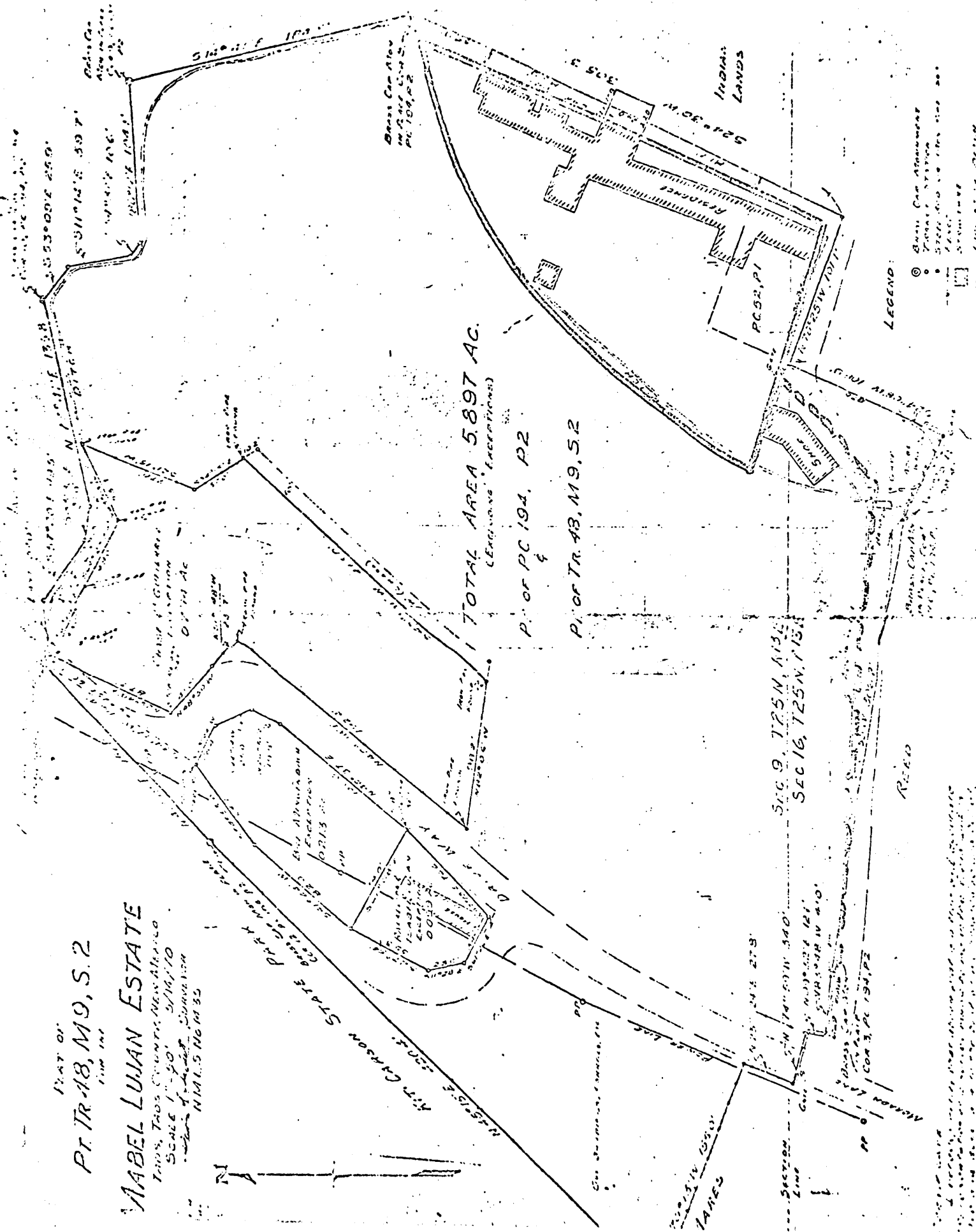
SEC. 9, T. 25N, M. 19E
SEC. 16, T. 25N, M. 19E

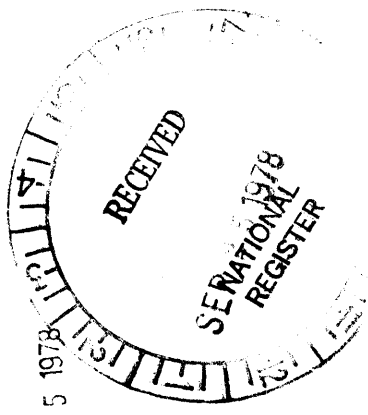
RECO

LEGEND:

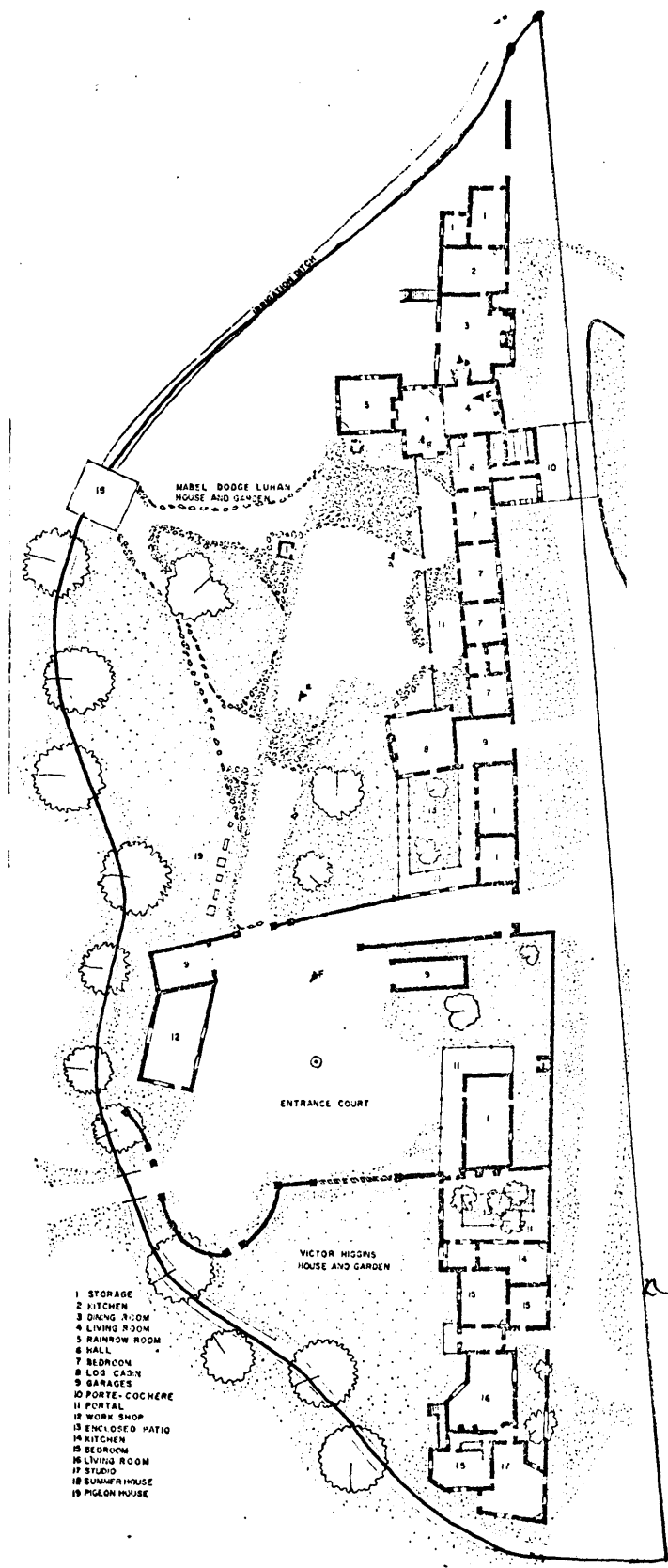
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- Survey Station
- Enclosure
- ▭ Enclosure
- ▨ Enclosure

20 - 25 March 1952

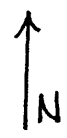




NOV 15 1978



- 1 STORAGE
- 2 KITCHEN
- 3 DINING ROOM
- 4 LIVING ROOM
- 5 BATHROOM
- 6 HALL
- 7 BEDROOM
- 8 LOG CASH
- 9 GARAGES
- 10 PORTE-COCHERE
- 11 PORTAL
- 12 WORK SHOP
- 13 ENCLOSED PATIO
- 14 KITCHEN
- 15 BEDROOM
- 16 LIVING ROOM
- 17 STUDIO
- 18 SUNBATH HOUSE
- 19 PIGEON HOUSE



a boundary

No Scale