

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number _____ Page _____

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 91002033 Date Listed: 2/5/92

Joseph and Lucy Foster Sexton House
Property Name

Santa Barbara CA
County State

N/A
Multiple Name

This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

fr *Austawicki*
Signature of the Keeper

2/6/92
Date of Action

=====
Amended Items in Nomination:

Classification: The Number of Contributing Resources is amended to read: 4 structures and 2 objects.

This information was confirmed with Cynthia Howse of the California State historic preservation office.

DISTRIBUTION:

- National Register property file
- Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)

2033

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

SEP 26 1991

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Sexton, Joseph and Lucy Foster House
other names/site number none

2. Location

street & number 5490 Hollister Avenue not for publication
city, town Santa Barbara vicinity
state California code CA county Santa Barbara code 083 zip code 93111

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<u> </u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>1</u>	<u>3</u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>5</u>	<u> </u> objects
		<u>8</u>	<u>4</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: none

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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. See continuation sheet.

Kathryn Guathieri 12/16/91
Signature of certifying official Date
CALIFORNIA OFFICE OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register. Autawietts Allee 2/5/92
 See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/hotel

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

Italianate

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation brick
walls wood

roof metal
other concrete landscape features

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Agriculture
Architecture

Period of Significance

1880-1917

Significant Dates

1880

Cultural Affiliation

n/a

Significant Person

Sexton, Joseph

Architect/Builder

Barber, Peter

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

9. Major Bibliographical References

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 # _____

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specity repository:

NPS/Western Regional Office

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property approximately 1.5 acres

UTM References

A

1	1	2	4	1	3	2	0	3	8	1	3	9	0	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

C

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

B

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Goleta Quadrangle 1952/1980; 7.5'

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Rebecca Conard
organization PHR Associates date September 21, 1991
street & number 275 Crescent Park Drive telephone 712/657-3347
city or town Lake View state Iowa zip code 51450

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 1

CFN-259-1116

Section 7: Description

The Sexton House, a two-story Italianate house built in 1880 sits, with its accompanying structures and features, on a parcel of approximately 1.5 acres along Hollister Avenue, the main street through old Goleta. It is partially screened from the thoroughfare by an expansive landscaped area containing several mature specimen trees and shrubs planted by the original owner, horticulturist Joseph Sexton. In 1990-91, the house was restored on the exterior and rehabilitated on the interior under the provisions of the Tax Reform Act of 1986. The historic district boundaries lie within a larger 5.2-acre parcel which encompasses a 75-unit motor hotel known as Quality Suites Inn. Restoration of the house was carried out as part of the Quality Suites development project.

The Sexton House is highly irregular in plan. A rectangular main block measures 24' wide x 35' deep, set on a north-south axis. A 16'x16' wing projects from the main block on the west, and a 24'x18'6" wing projects to the north. Four open porches are located on three facades: two on the south front, one on the east side, and one on the northwest rear. Inspection of the house foundation indicates that a bathroom situated off the northwest corner of the west wing is an early addition to the house. Oral history sources suggest that this addition was in place by 1910. More extensive alterations took place in about 1926, when three of the porches were either removed or radically altered. Damage to the house sustained during a severe earthquake in 1925 seems to have been the impetus for these changes.

After the Sexton family sold the house in 1954, it was occupied by a succession of tenants and owners who allowed the property to deteriorate. When the present owners acquired the property in the mid-1980s, the house had been further damaged by vandalism. Despite its poor physical condition, the house exterior still retained much of its integrity: the original wall cladding, house foundation, windows, trim and roof were generally intact. On the interior, several rooms had been remodeled, but most of the original walls, floors, and ceilings were still intact. Several historic photographs showed the design and details of the house during the 1880s, 1890s, and early 20th century, and these were used as the basis for the exterior restoration plan.

The house rests on a continuous foundation of sandstone footings and unreinforced double-wythe brick walls five courses high with a running bond. As part of the restoration, the

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 2

CFN-259-1116

existing foundation was braced on the interior. Brick footings that had been replaced with concrete when the porches were altered in 1926 were rebuilt to match the original materials and construction technique. The three porches themselves were rebuilt to replicate their original designs as evidenced by historic photographs, including concrete piers located at the steps to the main south porch.

A central 2x3 bay cupola dominates the low-pitched hipped roof, which is covered with standing seam metal. Three chimneys sit atop the roof, two of them symmetrically balanced on the south facade and a third located at the rear kitchen wing. These chimneys replicate the originals, which fell during a severe earthquake in June 1925. The exterior walls are sheathed in 8" redwood drop siding. Brackets and corbels support a moderately overhanging eave. Windows throughout are double hung two-light over two-light wood sash, embellished with bracketed cap moldings, bracketed sills, and decorative sawn-wood surrounds. Two pairs of floor-to-ceiling pocket windows flank the front entrance; each opens onto one of the two south porches. Functional shutters, features of the original design that had been removed at some unknown date, were restored.

Other notable features of the house include a one-story, rectangular bay which extends from the east facade of the main block, embellished with pilasters and an ornate entablature. A wood-panel front door contains two arched windows, another feature of the original house that was replicated.

A three-story pump house with 8" drop siding on canted walls is located off the northeast corner of the house. The tank and windmills were removed at some unknown date. As part of the restoration, the pump house was repaired, and it is now connected to the house by a wooden walkway at the same level as the east porch. A handicap ramp parallels the north side of the house and lands on the wooden walkway, thereby providing access to three interior rooms (kitchen, dining room, and library) which open onto this porch.

Various landscape features constructed around the turn of the century remain on the grounds, including a concrete cistern located off the back porch on the west facade; a rectangular concrete pool off the south facade, now filled and landscaped with bog-tolerant plants; a concrete retaining wall and steps located off the southeast corner of the house; a concrete planter stand; a concrete-and-rock sundial platform inscribed "Sexton SB" on one side, "APRL

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 3

CFN-259-1116

1908" on the other, located southwest of the house; and a polygonal concrete planter, relocated to a spot southwest of the house near the sundial platform.

A historic grove located south of the house contains several specimen trees and plants associated with the Sexton Nursery. These include a cork oak from Portugal; a bunya-bunya and a sweetshade tree from Australia; a Guadalupe palm from Baja California; a Chinese fountain palm, a Chilean wine palm, and a jacaranda tree from Brazil; a Norfolk Island pine; and a Strelitzia, or giant bird of paradise. In addition, the grounds hold one Sexton flame tree, a hybrid which Joseph Sexton developed by crossing the Australian flame tree with the bottle tree. The dates when these specimens were planted are unknown, and their ages have not been scientifically determined; however, the cork oak and the Norfolk Island pine were described as "old and venerable" in the March 1926 issue of *The Santa Barbara Gardener*. Judging by their size, all of the specimens are assumed to predate 1900.

A large three-portal, board-and-batten barn originally was located some distance northeast of the house. During the late 1970s, a religious group occupying the premises remodeled the building extensively, substantially compromising the integrity of the historic structure. New window and door openings had been cut into three facades, aluminum frame windows and hollow core doors had been installed, the front facade had been covered with plywood, and exterior stairways added to the front and rear. In 1989, the barn was dismantled and the remaining original materials salvaged. A new barn, replicating the design of the original and sheathed with the salvage boards and batts, was constructed at the rear of the parcel in 1990.

Sexton's horticultural enterprise required several ancillary buildings. An account of 1883 mentions the presence of large greenhouses. In addition to the main house, the pump house, and the barn, there was a bunkhouse for the Chinese workers Sexton employed, a tennis court, two outhouses, a blacksmith shop, a special barn for the pampas grass, and a pottery. A survey map drawn in 1918, shortly after Sexton's death, shows the main residence, the pump house, hot houses, a second house, one barn, and a water tank extant at that time. All buildings but the main residence, the pump house, and the barn were removed before the present owner acquired the property.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 4

CFN-259-1116

Eight contributing resources are located within the district boundaries. They are:

- the Sexton House;
- the pumphouse;
- a retaining wall and step;
- a rectangular pool;
- a polygonal pool;
- a cistern;
- a sundial platform; and
- specimen trees and plants located in the historic grove.

Portions of site CA-SBa-2204H, specifically features 22, 27, 29, 30, and 34/35, are included within the district boundaries. These five features do not at this time meet NRHP eligibility under Criterion D; however, further testing and analysis in the future may establish archaeological significance (see Section 8). The locations of these subsurface archaeological deposits are reported in *Archaeology of the Joseph Sexton House, Goleta, California (CA-SBa-2204H)* (Brock, 1990) and are treated herein as confidential information.

Other noncontributing features in the district include a circulating pump for the swimming pool and its housing, a paved driveway, and a sandstone wall and associated walkways. All of these were built as part of the motel development project.

The reconstructed barn lies outside the district boundaries.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 1

CFN-259-1116

Section 8: Statement of Significance

Summary Statement

The Joseph and Lucy Foster Sexton House, built in 1880, is significant under National Register criteria B and C. Under Criterion B it is significant for its association with Joseph Sexton, a pioneer nurseryman who was a key figure in the agricultural development of the Goleta Valley. Under Criterion C the house is significant and as one of two rural residences in the local area known to have been designed by Peter Barber, Santa Barbara's most prominent nineteenth century architect. The period of significance extends from 1880, when the house was constructed, until 1917, when Joseph Sexton died. The house and its associated features are the only extant structures associated directly with Joseph Sexton and his career as a horticulturist.

Future analysis of historic archaeological remains on the property may reveal significance under Criterion D. In 1988, the property was tested for archaeological remains and found to contain subsurface deposits of historic material. These deposits were partially excavated in 1988. Monitoring and subsequent salvage excavation occurred in 1989. Recovered artifacts were analyzed in 1990, and the analysis provided information concerning the lifestyle and domestic habits of the Sexton family, particularly with regard to foodways and leisure activities.¹ While these data corroborated documentary sources, they did not contribute substantive new information to the historical record. It must also be noted, however, that historic archaeological investigation of the Goleta Valley is in its infancy, and research questions focused on late nineteenth century EuroAmerican settlement have not yet been adequately formulated.

Criterion B

Joseph Sexton, a native of Ohio, took up residence in Santa Barbara in 1867 and appears immediately to have started a nursery near the oceanfront in the City of Santa Barbara. Within a year, however, he had sold this spot and purchased about 150 acres of La Goleta Rancho. Sexton's move to Santa Barbara coincided with the break-up of this rancho, one square league

¹ James Brock, *Archaeology of the Joseph Sexton House, Goleta, California (CA-SBa-2204H)*, prepared by Archaeological Advisory Group, Newport Beach, California for Invest West Financial Corporation, Santa Barbara, 1990. Findings are also summarized in James Brock, "Sexton House Archaeology" in *Goleta Historical Notes* 5:1 (Fall 1990):31-35.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 2

CFN-259-1116

of choice land between the ocean and the foothills that had been granted to Yankee trader Daniel Hill in 1846 by the Mexican governor Pio Pico. After Hill died in 1865, much of the rancho went on the market. One of the many buyers was Joseph Sexton.

On this land, Sexton built an extensive and well known nursery. He earned a reputation as one of the pioneer horticulturists who influenced the transformation of southern California's vast cattle ranchos into commercial farms and its dusty, semi-arid villages into well-ordered American communities with shaded streets and ornamental gardens. He was an experimenter, and the Sexton Nursery was as much a laboratory for developing stock suited to the southern California environment as it was a supply station. Historians have found it difficult to evaluate his contributions to horticulture because no catalogs from the Sexton Nursery or lists of plants he imported from abroad seem to have survived; at least none has yet been discovered. Nevertheless, his nursery "was considered to be one of the most complete and extensive" in the entire country during the 1870s.² He imported stock from Asia, Australia, and southern Europe. In later years he made several trips to Hawaii in search of plant materials for his experiments with avocado trees.

His specialty was the importation, propagation, and sale of fruits and ornamentals. Sexton sold his stock locally through his own retail business, Santa Barbara Nursery and Floral Depot, which he maintained in the heart of downtown Santa Barbara at 708 State Street. He also did a considerable mail order business, and as early as 1877 issued a 49-page descriptive catalogue. Specimen plants and trees still thrive on the grounds surrounding the Sexton House, lending a distinctive appearance to the property.

Sexton was particularly known for popularizing pampas grass plumes as decorative items during the late Victorian Era. The secret of his success appears to have been a method he developed for drying female plumes so that they would fluff up and become billowy. He shipped his first plumes to New York in 1874. By 1889, his nursery was producing over 500,000 plumes annually and shipping them as far as Europe. The craze for pampas grass plumes died out about 1900, but in the intervening years, pampas grass production provided a major source of income for Goleta farmers.

2 Victoria Padilla, *Southern California Gardens: An Illustrated History* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1961), p. 143.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 3

CFN-259-1116

Sexton also developed a commercially successful soft shell walnut which he reportedly propagated using several varieties of Chilean nuts he had brought with him when he moved to Santa Barbara in 1867. His experimental trees spawned a lucrative walnut industry in the Goleta Valley. Until the onset of blight in about 1910, walnuts represented a leading commercial crop of the valley. In the early twentieth century, Sexton also imported numerous varieties of avocados from Hawaii and Mexico to test their compatibility with Goleta's climate, though he died in 1917 before this orchard crop became commercially viable.

Although Sexton remained active in the nursery business until his death, he turned the Goleta operation over to his sons in 1894 when he purchased an 8000-acre cattle ranch in Ventura County. For several years he spent his weeks on the ranch and commuted by train to Goleta to spend weekends with his wife and family at the home place. Sometime early in the twentieth century he returned permanently to his Goleta home, and he continued plant propagation experiments until his death on August 17, 1917. His funeral took place in Sexton Hall, a community hall he built in 1890. The latter structure is nonextant, although his son Harry and daughter-in-law, Mary, built their home on the foundations.

Criterion C

During Sexton's lifetime, the Goleta nursery was considered the chief showplace of Goleta. By 1880, Sexton had become prosperous enough to hire the prominent Santa Barbara architect Peter Barber to design a house befitting his station and family size: he and his wife, Lucy Foster Sexton, ultimately raised twelve children. Barber, another transplanted Ohio native, studied with the French architect Prosper Huerne as well as architect Reuben Clark from Maine. Before coming to Santa Barbara in 1869, Barber spent nearly twenty years in San Francisco, where he gradually moved from his first occupation as a carpenter and cabinet maker into a career as a designer and architect. He spent another twenty active years in Santa Barbara designing over forty residential, commercial, and public buildings, virtually all of them in the ornately bracketed Italianate style which became his professional trademark. Among Barber's other noteworthy buildings are St. Vincent's Orphanage, listed on the National Register in 1982, and the Thomas Hope House, listed in 1978. Faith Mission (aka Hotel Savoy), listed in 1982, is attributed to Barber. Several other buildings either attributed to or known to have been designed by Barber have been designated as local landmarks.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 9 Page 1

CFN-259-1.116

Section 9: Bibliography

- Andre, Herb and Noel Young. *Santa Barbara Architecture, 2nd Edition*. Santa Barbara: Capra Press, 1980.
- Brock, James. *Archaeology of the Joseph Sexton House, Goleta, California (CA-SBa-2204H)*. Prepared for Invest West Financial Corp., Santa Barbara. Newport Beach, CA: Archaeological Advisory Group, 1990.
- Brock, James. "Sexton House Archaeology" in *Goleta Historical Notes* 5:1 (Fall 1990): 31-35. [Copy submitted as an attachment to the registration]
- Conard, Rebecca with Frances Franklin and Sydney Baumgartner. "Encore for the Sexton House" in *Goleta Historical Notes* 5:1 (Fall 1990): 1-30. [Copy submitted as an attachment to the registration]
- Conard, Rebecca and Christopher Nelson. *Santa Barbara: El Pueblo Viejo*. Santa Barbara: Capra Press, 1986.
- Franklin, Frances Dearborn. Personal interview with Rebecca Conard, January 19, 1989. Mrs. Franklin is a granddaughter of Joseph and Lucy Sexton and the sister of Evelyn Studebaker.
- Mason, Jesse. *History of Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties, California*. Oakland, Thompson and West, 1883.
- McClelland Engineers, Inc. *Final Environmental Impact Report for Sexton Inn 85-GP-2, 84-RZ-23, 84-DP-66, 85-EIR-10*. Submitted to Santa Barbara County Resource Management Department, December 1985.
- O'Neill, Owen H. *History of Santa Barbara County: Its People and its Resources*. Santa Barbara, 1939.
- Padilla, Victoria. *Southern California Gardens: An Illustrated History*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1961.
- Pursell, Carroll. "Sexton House: A Victorian in Peril" in *Those Were the Days: Landmarks of Old Goleta*. Goleta: Institute for American Research, 1986.
- Santa Barbara Daily Press*. News items from June, 20, July 21, August 20, August 28, and September 23, 1873.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 2

CFN-259-1116

Studebaker, Evelyn Dearborn. Personal interview with Rebecca Conard, January 19, 1989.
Mrs. Studebaker is a granddaughter of Joseph and Lucy Sexton and the sister of
Frances Franklin.

Tompkins, Walker and Horace A. Sexton. *Fourteen at the Table*. Goleta: Goleta Valley
Historical Society, 1983.

Van Laan, Gordon J. *A Penny a Tree: The History of the Nursery Industry in California from
1850-1976*. Sacramento, 1982.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 10 Page 1

CFN-259-1116

Section 10: Boundary Description and Justification

The Sexton House and associated structures are located on an irregularly shaped parcel of approximately 1.5 acres, which is bounded on the south by Hollister Avenue, on the west by an onramp to Ward Memorial Boulevard and Highway 101. On the north and east the historic property is bounded by the buildings of Quality Suites Inn development project. The boundaries include the following contributing structures; the house, the pump house, the cistern, two concrete pools, the sundial, the retaining wall and step, and the historic specimen trees and plants located south of the house. A reconstructed barn is excluded from these boundaries as are all the new buildings of the motor hotel complex. Five features of archaeological site CA-SBa-2204H are included within the boundaries although these are considered noncontributing elements at this time. The boundaries represent the geographical extent of the historic features remaining on the parcel as depicted on the accompanying map.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 10 Page 2

CFN-259-1116

Key:

Boundary = - - - -

Contributing:

- 1 Sexton House
- 2 pumphouse
- 3 cistern
- 4 retaining wall/step
- 5 rectangular pool
- 6 polygonal pool
- 7 sundial platform
- 8 historic grove

Noncontributing:

- 9 circulating pump
- 10 roadway
- 11 sandstone wall/walkways

