

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

DATA SHEET

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	APR 26 1978
DATE ENTERED	JUN 13 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 Henry A. Rengstorff House

AND/OR COMMON
same

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

1737 Stierlin Road

___NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Mountain View

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

___ VICINITY OF

12th

STATE

California

CODE
06

COUNTY

Santa Clara

CODE

085

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
___DISTRICT	___PUBLIC	___OCCUPIED	___AGRICULTURE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	___MUSEUM
___STRUCTURE	___BOTH	___WORK IN PROGRESS	___COMMERCIAL
___SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	___EDUCATIONAL
___OBJECT	___IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	___ENTERTAINMENT
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	___YES: UNRESTRICTED	___RELIGIOUS
		___NO	___GOVERNMENT
			___INDUSTRIAL
			___MILITARY
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER: vacant

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Newhall Land and Farming Company

STREET & NUMBER

27050 Henry Mayo Road

CITY, TOWN

Valencia

___ VICINITY OF

STATE

California 91355

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Santa Clara County

STREET & NUMBER

70 West Hedding Road

CITY, TOWN

San Jose

STATE

California

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

Listed on five.

TITLE

Survey of the Rengstorff House

DATE

July 18, 1972

___FEDERAL ___STATE ___COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

City of Mountain View City Hall

CITY, TOWN

Mountain View

STATE

California

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input 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

As described on the application for Point of Historical Interest: "The architectural style of the house is Georgian Neo-Classical, (with Italianate overtones, ed.). The 16 room house, once the finest residence in Mountain View, is laid out symmetrically. The central entrance, defined by a pillared portico and large pediment at the roofline, is flanked on either side by bay windows. The upper edge of the windows and of the portico are decorated with cornice and balustrade. There is a segmental pediment window in the center of the second story. The facade is decorated with further cornices and brackets along the roofline with quions defining the wall edges. A widows walk balustrade tops the roof."

In an October 1973 field report by the National Trust for Historic Preservation it was stated, "the Rengstorff House is a fine example of its architectural type and the alterations which have been made to it are minor." To quote further, "the Rengstorff House is a fine example of late Victorian Italianate architecture in the bay area. The apparent date of construction of the house is 1887." Research conducted by the Junior League and Phyllis Butler for their definitive survey of Santa Clara County architecture indicates the date of construction as 1867. (See attached from Phyllis Butler.) Thus, it is the oldest known existing building in Mountain View.

Now, the windows have been boarded up and the widows walk and other detailing removed, however, the basic lines of the structure retain the integrity of its style and the building remains structurally sound. The interior of the building has been badly damaged, however, some important features remain to allow authentic reconstruction and several photographs exist to assist in replacing the hardware, marble mantelpieces and the trim that has been removed. The modifications to the building have been minor, consisting of addition of foundation and plumbing and enclosure of the rear and side porches. The foundation was placed in 1906 and the other modifications appear to have been done at the same time. The present floor area of the building is approximately 3400 square feet.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

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

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Architectural significance:

Characteristic of the period, the building has overtones of several styles; Italianate, Georgian, classical. The following are the observations of representatives of the National Trust for Historic Preservation in 1974: "the Rengstorff House is a fine example of late Victorian Italianate architecture in the Bay Area. The apparent date of construction of the house is 1867. The principal facade is divided into three bays, with the central bay a slightly projecting pavilion topped by a classical pediment. The one-story entrance is surmounted by a balustrade. The flanking bays include handsome bay windows, again topped by balustrades and the second-story windows above each bay are a pair of segmental arched openings. Handsome cornices and brackets survive along the roof line. Exterior wall corners are quoined throughout. The house is essentially an "H" shape — the kitchen to the rear with the bar of the "H" serving as a dining room. The original slate roof survives and is largely undamaged. The roof is topped by a widow's walk (now removed). To the rear of the house is a badly deteriorated water tower.

While the exterior appears to have survived well, the interior has been badly vandalized. Ceiling medallions, plaster consoles, hardware, marble mantelpieces and much trim have been removed. However, several examples of all but the mantles survive and could be reproduced. Interior plaster is badly deteriorated and the upper portions of the stair rail and balusters have been torn out. The interior would need extensive restoration and rehabilitation."

Although a fine architectural statement in and of itself, the architecture takes on its greatest significance in the local setting. It is felt to be the style and grace of the period. Fire and redevelopment have taken the few that originally existed in the City.

Historic significance:

Henry Rengstorff, one of Mountain View's and Santa Clara County's most important pioneers and successful businessman, purchased in 1864 the land upon which the house is now located. The house, built a few years later (c.1868), remained Rengstorff's residence until his death in 1906 at the age of 77. During those three decades, Rengstorff developed extensive agricultural lands and operated a highly successful barge landing. The landing was located in an area adjoining the home farm and not far from the foot of Stierlin Road, an area now being developed as Shoreline Regional Park. Built in 1869, it was one of four area landings which were located on navigable sloughs which emptied into the southern end of San Francisco Bay. Rengstorff owned not only the landing but the barges which transported the cargo up the bay

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Santa Clara County Heritage Resource Inventory, San Jose (1975)
- Butler, Phyllis Filiberti, The Valley of Santa Clara: Historic Buildings 1792-1920, San Jose (1976)
- Foote, H.S. (ed.) Pen Pictures from the Garden of the World, Chicago (1888)
- Gwinn, Prof. J.M. Santa Clara County (Biographical Record Coast Counties), Chicago, 1904
- Leu, Anna Jagels Early Landings of Mountain View, Mountain View, 1969

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY on current site approximately 2 acres; house is approx. 3400 square feet

QUADRANGLE NAME _____			QUADRANGLE SCALE _____			
UTM REFERENCES						
A	1 0	5 8 1 7 7 0	4 1 4 1 4 6 0	B		
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING
C				D		
E				F		
G				H		

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION The structure is situated on approximately 2 acres at the southwest corner of a 17.15 acre parcel of land, APN 116, page 11, lot 9. The parcel fronts Stierlin Road for a distance of 2622 feet and is 300 feet deep. The land is in the same ownership (Newhall) as the 125 acre parcel to the east and is currently used

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY Ken Alsman, Princ. Planner City of Mountain View and Marlene Sarnat, member of the Shoreline Regional Park Subcommittee and Phyllis Butler, Former Chairman Santa Clara County Historic Heritage Commission and Emily Lyon,

ORGANIZATION Councilwoman, City of Mountain View and John Carlson, Project Manager of	DATE 12/28/76
STREET & NUMBER Shoreline Regional Park.	TELEPHONE
CITY OR TOWN addresses and telephone numbers are on supplemental page	STATE

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL ___ STATE ___ LOCAL XX

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 Thore Mellon DATE April 4, 1978

TITLE Original application signed by former SHPO, Herbert Rhodes on State Historic Preservation Officer DATE March 10, 1977

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER	
ATTEST: <u>Walter Cole</u>	DATE <u>6/13/78</u>
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER	KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER
CHIEF OF REGISTRATION	DATE <u>5-12-78</u>

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- 2) Santa Clara County Historical Heritage Commission Inventory 1975
Historical Heritage Commission, Santa Clara County Building

- 3) Included on the priority list for monies funded by the "State Beach, Park,
Recreational and Historical Facilities Bond Act" of 1974 as approved by
the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors.
Historic Heritage Commission, Santa Clara County Building
70 W. Hedding
San Jose, California 95110

- 4) State of California
Point of Historical Interest 11/1/72 Reg #SCI-024
State of California Resources Agency
Department of Parks and Recreation
Sacramento, California (Copy Attached)

- 5) California Inventory of Historic Resources
California Department of Parks and Recreation 3/76
P. O. Box 2390
Sacramento, California 95811

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and the grain and hay harvested from his fields which was brought in wagons to the landing. Rengstorff Landing was a major San Francisco Bay shipping point for grain, hay and lumber.

Henry Rengstorff, whose name has been given to one of the area's major thoroughfares, donated the land for Mountain View's first educational facility, the Whisman School. It stood on a portion of this same property. He held, at one time, six farms in Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties totaling over 2,000 acres.

The house may be moved from its current location, as it is in a flood plain and in a developing industrial area. The feasibility of moving it the short distance into Shoreline Regional Park, where it could be used as an historic museum, a natural history museum, a nature interpretive center and/or park headquarters is currently being studied. As has been suggested by the County Historic Commission, in the park, very close to its original setting and adjoining the old Rengstorff Landing, it would be a significant reminder of the area's economic and cultural roots. A trail from the house could be constructed to the area of the original landing, thus affording young people an appreciation of their heritage as they explore the environment of the bay marsh life.

The House has been designated by the State of California as a Point of Historical Interest. In the major survey of 1,500 historic buildings in Santa Clara County, the Rengstorff House was selected as one of the 48 most significant.

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Ken Alsman, Emily Lyon and John Carlson can be reached at the Mountain View City Hall, 540 Castro Street, Mountain View, California
(415) 967-7211

Phyllis Butler
14 Farm Road
Los Altos, California 94022
(415) 969-4633

Marlene Sarnat
1915 Mt. Vernon Court #12
Mountain View, California 94040
(415) 961-3654

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RENGSTORFF MANSION

1737 Stierlin Road

Henry Rengstorff was just 21 when the ship that had brought him 20,000 miles around The Horn dropped anchor in San Francisco Harbor. It was the Fall of 1850 and the port was awash with ships abandoned by gold-hungry crews.

Henry's avowed purpose when he set out on the year long journey from his native Germany had been "to sail toward the horizon and in a newer country hew out a fortune from raw materials." But he didn't go off to search for gold. Instead, fresh off the schooner, Rengstorff went to work aboard the Bay steamer "Jack Robinson" plying between San Francisco and Alviso. Noting the feverish activity at the landings scattered about the Bay, the shrewd German saw where his future lay. Within the decade he had saved enough of his wages to buy two farms and put up a warehouse and store on the Bay marshland near Mountain View.

By 1860 Rengstorff Landing was the major shipping point for the enormous stores of grain raised in the west side of the Santa Clara Valley. Henry made a fortune both before and after the advent of the railroad in 1864.

That year Rengstorff purchased his third parcel of land, 164 acres that he called his home farm.* Here he had built a somewhat eclectic version of an Italian villa, the fashionable choice of the 1860's and 70's. Deservedly proud of his prosperity, his official biography in 1888 notes, "he came to this country ignorant . . . of its manners . . . customs . . . and language"— (with only the customary \$4.00 in his pocket). It mentions that in building his "commodious residence representative of the era . . . nothing necessary to comfort that money can procure is lacking."*

Henry and his wife, Christina, raised six children in the once proud, now deserted mansion, which stands alone on the old Bay Road (now Stierlin Road), three-quarters of a mile from his prosperous landing.

*Santa Clara County Deeds - Deed Book B.

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Henry Rengstorff's father had been a teacher as well as a tavern keeper in the Old Country and a proper education for his children was Henry's major concern. The Rengstorffs arranged for the Whisman School to be established on their ranch, naming it for Mountain View pioneer John Whisman who had once owned the adjoining land.

The girls--Marie, Helena, Elise and Christina--later were sent to Mills Seminary (for young ladies). As befitted ladies of their set, a room was kept at home just for thier personal dressmaker who came regularly to outfit them in the latest fashions.

The boys--John and Henry--attended Washington College, a short-lived private school of some note in the East Bay. The Regnstorffs had "arrived."

Before the turn of the century Rengstorff owned six ranches in the area all of which he rented out except for the home place. Ten to twelve hands were employed to work the ranch, living in a bunkhouse near the family home. For \$30 a month and board they harvested the grain and tended cattle for the then wealthy Rengstorff.

In the last years Henry retired and Henry Junior managed the landing. John was off in the Klondike and the girls were all married to upstanding young men.

Henry Rengstorff died at home in 1906, and his widow was soon joined by her daughter Elise (Mrs. William) Haag and her little orphaned grandson, Perry Askam. His mother, Helena had died in 1902 and his father, Dr. Oliver P. Askam, Mountain View's only physician, died in 1906. The young boy grew up in the house, attending local schools and the University of Santa Clara.

Both Perry and his older brother Earl were interested in music and studied voice in between helping out on the Rengstorff ranch.

First joining the French Army when World War I broke out during their European studies, the Askam brothers transferred to the American Ambulance Corps (of Hemmingway fame) after the U. S. entered the war. When the war was over they landed in New York and pursued their musical careers. Both managed to break

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into Broadway shows in the early 1920's. Baritone Perry went on to become a matinee idol of the New York stage. His 1927 role as the Red Shadow in "The Desert Song" was a classic in the American musical theatre.

In 1945 Perry and his wife Frances returned to the Santa Clara Valley to stay with his 83 year old Aunt Elise Haag who Perry considered a second mother. It was Elise Haag who realized the house being built in 1867.* Between trips to the East and concert appearances with the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra Perry lived in his boyhood home until two years before his death in 1961.

The Newhall Development Company who purchased the Rengstorff mansion and ranch has been open to ideas for preservation of the old place. After a close call in the summer of 1972 when it was about to be dismantled and moved to Pescadero--a plan which luckily never took place--the fate of the Italianate homestead, with its widow's walk, Colonial columns and Romanesque form, has been tenuous at best.

Plans for its preservation have been in and out of the Mountain View City Council several times. Lack of funds has prevented the suggested removal to the City's 540-acre park near the Bay where it would be an outstanding reminder of the town's early days--once the finest house in town and Mountain View's last import landmark.

*Information from interview with Mrs. Perry Askam, May 1975.

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1

**HENRY A. RENGSTORFF HOUSE
INFORMATION ON PROPOSED MOVE**

The Rengstorff House is the last remaining, significant building in the City of Mountain View of its style and age. It is unique to this community and the immediate surrounding communities both because of its relationship to the formation of the industry in this area through its builder Henry A. Rengstorff, but also because of its unique architecture. The National Register designation will facilitate preservation of the Rengstorff House by: (1) recognition and focusing public attention on the building; (2) making federal grant funds available; and (3) providing an incentive for commitment of County and City funds for renovation.

The City plans for the building to be relocated to the Shoreline Regional Park, a 700-acre park now under construction within the City of Mountain View. The attached article (I) describes this unique park facility.

The following describes the reasons the building must be moved and the manner in which it would be accomplished.

Reason for the Move

The Henry A. Rengstorff House is located on approximately 140 acres of land still in agricultural use (II-a). The adjacent lands have already been developed with industrial uses and the subject property is also expected to be developed in the near future. The property owner has agreed to give the building to the City for public use, but has no intention or apparent motivation to utilize the existing structure. The City has an option for the building through January 31, 1978. The house has sat vacant and subject to extensive vandalism for the past five to six years. Unless immediate public action is taken, the building will likely be destroyed through vandalism or demolition by the property owner. Private efforts to relocate the house have been attempted in the past but never realized. Because the surrounding area, within a reasonable moving distance, is mostly industrial, relocation in a historically similar setting is unlikely.

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In addition to the immediate threat, the land is in an area where extensive subsidence (sinking of the land) has taken place and will likely continue. The land is subject to flooding and is so identified on the National Flood Insurance Maps. In order to develop, it will be necessary to raise the land elevation for flood protection.

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HENRY A. RENGSTORFF HOUSE RELOCATION

Effect on Historic Integrity

The Henry A. Rengstorff House once sat on a broad, open agricultural area oriented to the main road leading to the Bay, Stierlin Road. The House as indicated on the attached map (III) was in relatively close proximity to the then existing limits of San Francisco Bay and to the dock or the wharf used for shipment of wheat to the North.

Much of its earlier relationship has been destroyed as the Bay was diked for salt production, as urbanization replaced agricultural uses, and as much of the area north of the site was devoted to dumping and sanitary land fill.

The proposed setting (II- b & c) in Shoreline Regional Park would attempt to reestablish many aspects of the original setting. The building would be located on a major extension of Stierlin Road, oriented to the roadway and set back approximately the same distance. The land would be generally flat, but elevated providing a vista of the surrounding hills and Bay. The proximity to the Mountain View slough would in some ways be much closer than the original relationship, but would provide an opportunity for orientation to the wildlife refuge and natural setting of the area. The intent is to maintain a broad open area around the house which could be used in conjunction with open air public functions.

The objective is to preserve the historic integrity of the exterior of the building and general orientation to Stierlin Road, the immediate landscape, and the Bay. No specific plans have been prepared. However, it is intended to adapt most of the 3700 square feet interior to park related office use. Portion of the first floor would also be restored. Consideration will also be given to establishment of a Bay environment interpretive center.

The New Site

As described above, the new site is within the 700-acre Shoreline Regional Park, in close proximity to San Francisco Bay. The site affords a vista which is reminiscent of the view of the Bay prior to extensive urbanization of the area. The attached aerial photographs indicate the general location relative to the existing and proposed sites. The move could be relatively easily accomplished as part of park construction.

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HENRY A. RENGSTORFF RELOCATION

The site is on engineered fill. Since the area was excavated within the past five years, we are assured that there are no underlying sites nor does the proposed historic site possess historic significance which would be adversely affected by the structure.

There remain options for the specific location of the building in Shoreline Regional Park, however, none possess the relationship to Stierlin Road and the Bay that the proposed location has. Additionally, this is an area which will be one of the first developed in the park and will provide an essential immediate occupancy and protection from vandalism.

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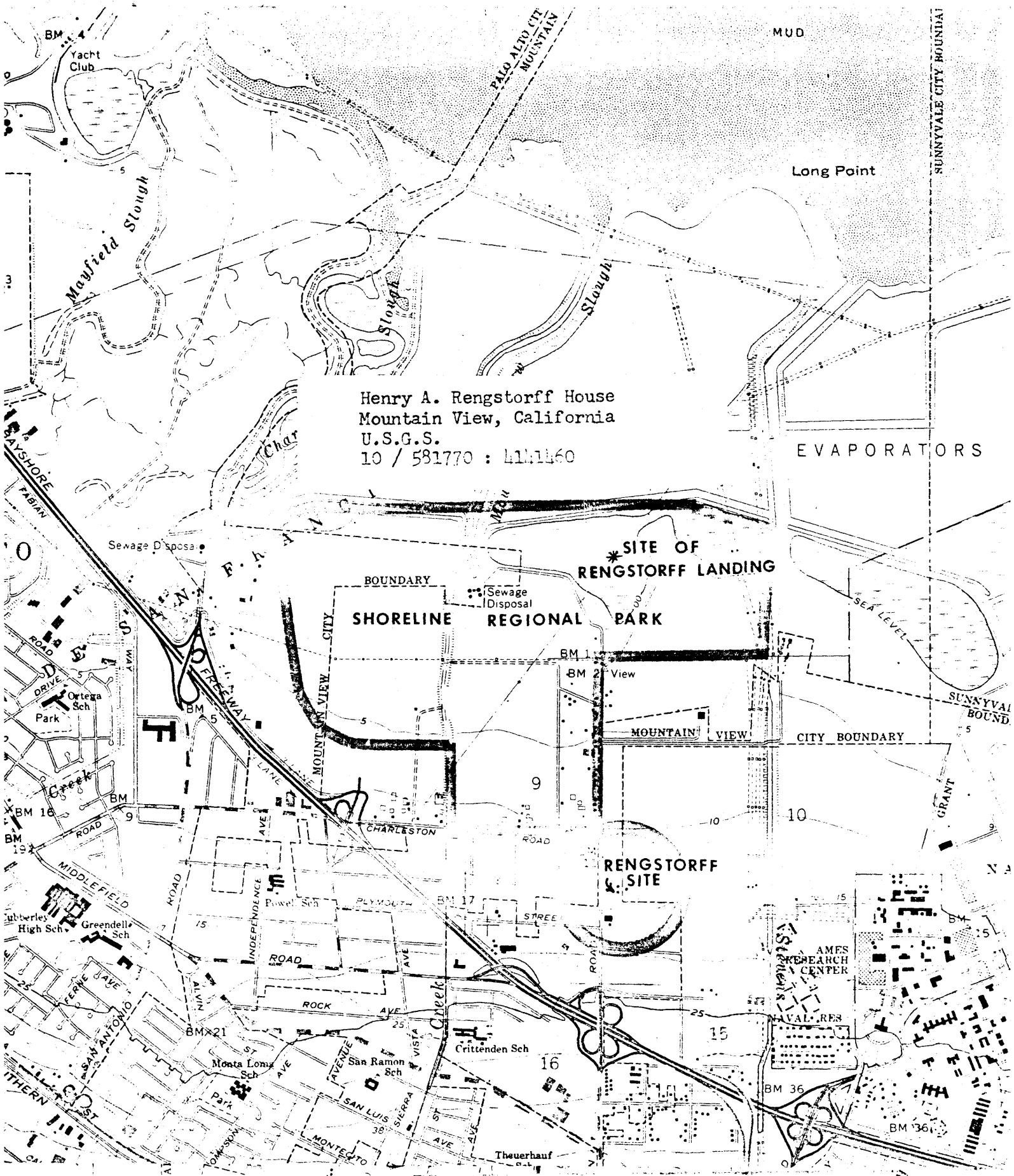
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Newspaper Articles:	<u>Palo Alto Times</u>	9/19/56
	<u>Palo Alto Times</u>	9/27/56
	<u>San Jose Mercury</u>	1/13/72
	<u>San Jose Mercury</u>	7/7/72
	<u>Valley Journal</u>	10/25/72
	<u>Palo Alto Times</u>	12/24/76
	<u>San Jose Mercury</u>	12/28/76



Henry A. Rengstorff House
Mountain View, California
U.S.G.S.
10 / 581770 : 4111460

* SITE OF
RENGSTORFF LANDING

SHORELINE REGIONAL PARK

RENGSTORFF
SITE

EVAPORATORS

MUD

Long Point

SUNNYVALE CITY BOUNDARY

SEA LEVEL

SUNNYVALE BOUNDARY

CITY BOUNDARY

AMES RESEARCH CENTER

NAVAL RES

Thuerhauf

Yacht Club

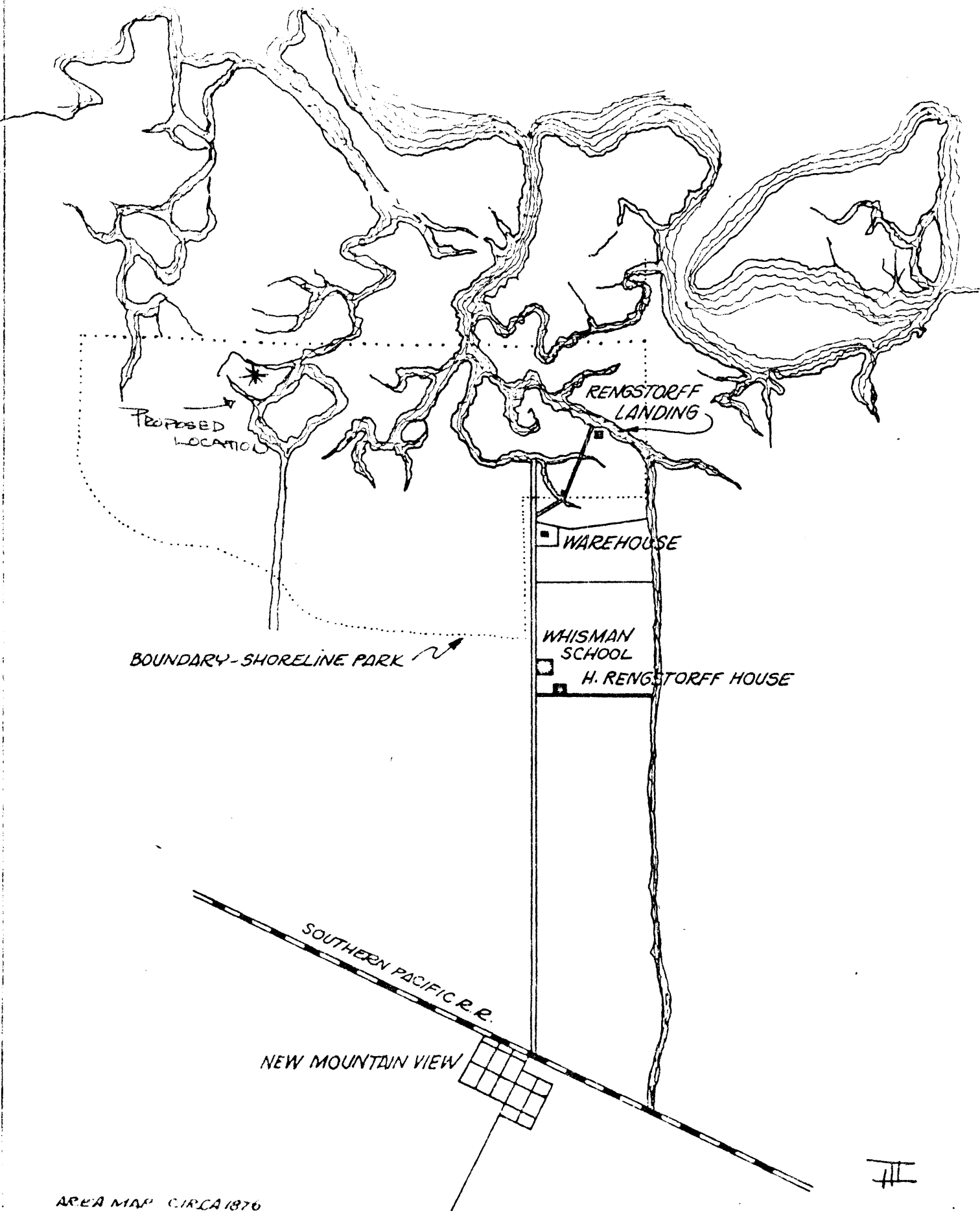
ORANGE PARK

Greendell Sch

San Ramon Sch

Thuerhauf Sch

AMES RESEARCH CENTER



PROPOSED
LOCATION

RENGSTORFF
LANDING

WAREHOUSE

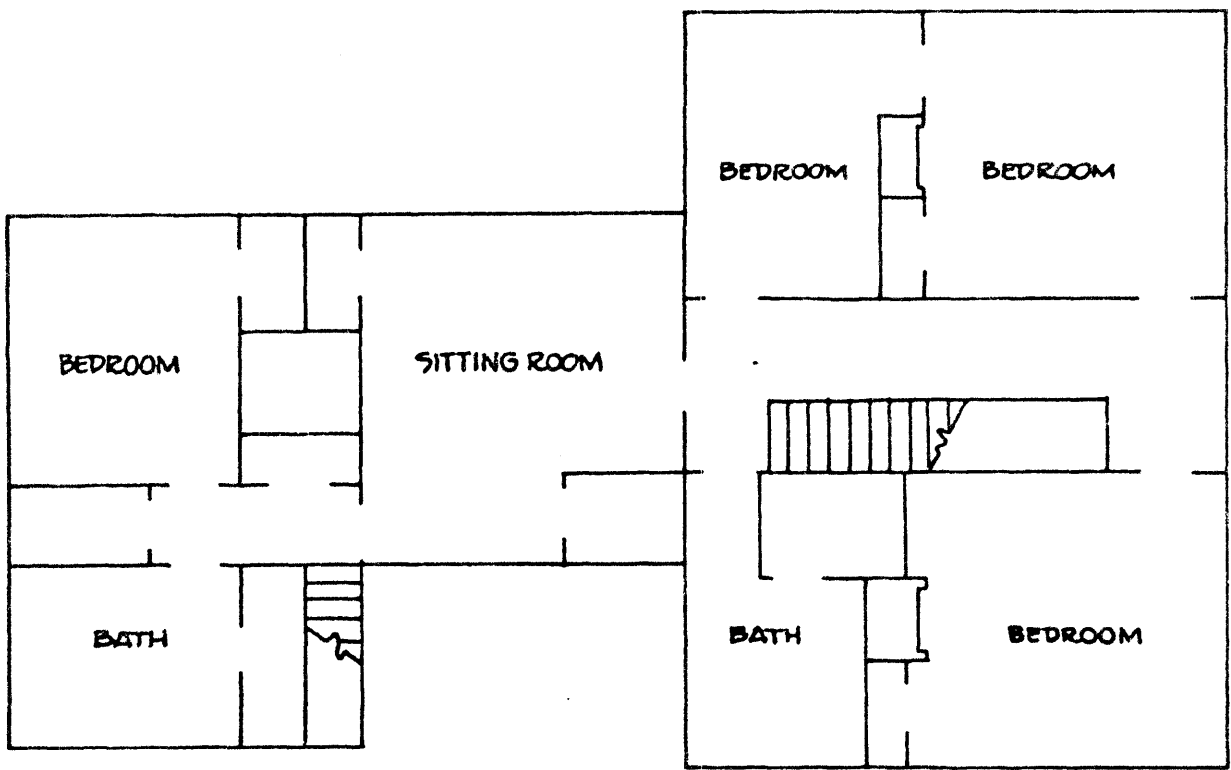
WHISMAN
SCHOOL

H. RENGSTORFF HOUSE

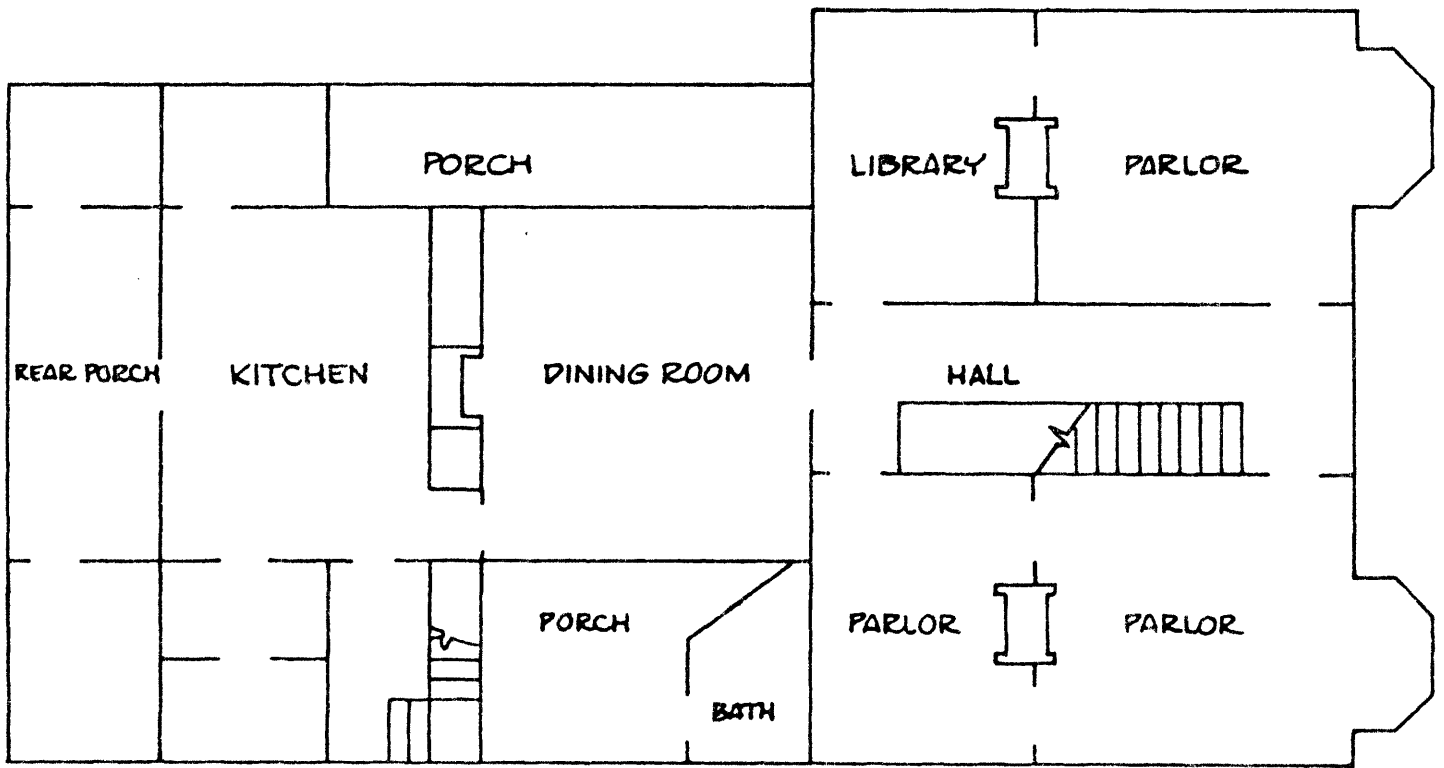
BOUNDARY-SHORELINE PARK

SOUTHERN PACIFIC R.R.

NEW MOUNTAIN VIEW



SECOND FLOOR



FIRST FLOOR

FLOOR PLAN - H. RENGSTORFF HOUSE