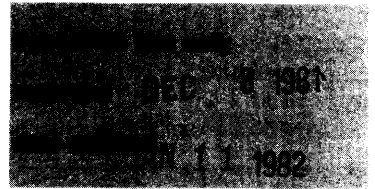


**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**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 The Frank Romain Home <sup>House</sup> **RECEIVED**  
OCT 16 1980  
and/or common The Romain Home

**2. Location**

street & number 2055 San Joaquin St. \_\_\_ not for publication  
city, town Fresno \_\_\_ vicinity of congressional district 15th  
state California 93721 code G.S.A. 06 county Fresno code G.S.A. 019

**3. Classification**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Present Use</b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name The Romain Home Partnership  
street & number 2055 San Joaquin  
city, town Fresno \_\_\_ vicinity of state California 93721

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Fresno County Hall of Records  
street & number 2281 Tulare  
city, town Fresno state California 93721

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

City of Fresno Official Register  
title of Historic Resources; State Historic Resources Inventory has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no  
date 1978 \_\_\_ federal  state \_\_\_ county  local  
depository for survey records Planning and Inspection Department, City of Fresno  
city, town Fresno state California

# 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<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
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		date _____

## Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

### Form

Two story cross-hipped roof, wood frame residence with a partial basement. Rectilinear in form with long axis oriented parallel to San Joaquin Street. Approximately 4700 square feet enclosed area plus the partial basement. Attached hip roof porch on San Joaquin Street facade of single story height engages projecting dining room bay at westerly end of structure and turns corner--extending along Van Ness frontage approximately ten feet. Porch is supported by framed columns of approximately 16" square cross section. Projecting five-sided bay window structure on south west corner--single story in height with shingle roof. First floor set at  $\pm$  32" above grade.

### Siding

Building is sheathed with 1 x 4 redwood drop siding laid horizontal extending from water table trim piece to bottom of simple frieze band under flat roof soffit. Siding broken only by a simple milled-mold belt course at mid height. Brick foundation walls exposed approximately 20" below siding.

### Trim

Very simple trim detail. Frieze band of  $\pm$  30" depth is flat with one applied milled-shape moulding near bottom. Windows are trimmed with flat 1 x 6 and 1 x 4 boards. Belt course made up of 3 pieces--one milled shape and the remaining flat trim. Columns on porch are panelized with applied 1 x 3 corner boards. The frieze band on porch is similar to the one on the main structure. No corner trim on siding. Soffit of roof at second floor is simply detailed with applied 4 x 4 pieces representing, visually, the rafters above.

### Windows

Original first and second floor sash exists throughout with some exceptions. Top floor windows are double hung wood. Bay windows are wood casement. Two windows removed from first floor--one on Van Ness side and one on San Joaquin side. Fixed sash above San Joaquin Street side of recent vintage.

### Site

Building sits on corner lot and is surrounded by single or two story commercial structures dating from 1920's. Trees are not of same vintage as house although varieties are consistent with the period. Main trees on site are "camphor". Steel fencing surrounding building is of recent vintage.

### Style

The structure is of a form that was once very common in the area. Little remains

(see continuation sheets)

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

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of a similar nature. Some stylistic features of the "prairie school" of architecture. Interior detailing in living room is Greek revival. An individualistic style basically not categorized in any style books.

### Interior

The building has been modified to a considerable extent although the original plan is still intact and much of the original trim is in place. The main entry hall and stairwell is in original condition excepting some very minor modifications in finish. The stairwell is "U" shaped with a large landing at mid height. All newells, posts, etc., are rectangular in cross section. Applied finials at the corner newells are rounded with flutes. Material is pine. Living room detailing is Greek revival with dentils. Some trim has been removed in building due to air conditioning duct installation. Wood lathe with plaster walls and ceilings throughout. Pine floors on second floor and oak floors on first. Basement is unfinished. The kitchen has been removed but original toilet fixtures remain.

### Original Appearance

The building remains basically unchanged from its original construction. Known changes include the following:

1. Removal of window on San Joaquin Street frontage. First floor. Covered with siding.
2. Removal of window on Van Ness Street frontage. First floor. Covered with siding.
3. Enclosure of inset porch area above San Joaquin Street entrance. Wall glazed with large fixed glass sash.
4. Enclosure of sleeping porch on north west corner - second floor.
5. Concrete floors installed in basement in 1930.
6. Attached service porch area added at rear of building in the 1940's. This involved infill work around rear entry and under sleeping porch.
7. Enclosure added to north wall of living room in 1933. Approximately 7' x 24'. It is unclear at this time if this involved infill work on a porch or whether it included an entire new structure.
8. Fireplace on first floor living room covered over.

(see continuation sheets)

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9. Numerous modifications of minor nature to interior during life of building. Most probably were done when building was changed into a funeral home. The kitchen equipment was removed and a number of infills were made in the service area. It is difficult to determine when this work was done as no permits were taken on the work.
10. A garage was constructed in 1915 but has since been demolished.

All modifications mentioned above are basically minor in scope. The character of the building is maintained and a number of the modifications such as the window removal, fireplace covering, etc., are easily replaced and restructured. Trim work where removed is easily duplicated by reference to existing adjacent.

Basic Information

Architect: E. Mathewson  
Date Built: 1905  
Contractor: Unknown

## 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Industry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

**Specific dates** 1905 **Builder/Architect** E. Mathewson

### Statement of Significance (In one paragraph)

The Romain Home has been closely associated for some seventy-five years with individuals who have made significant contributions to the City of Fresno, the San Joaquin Valley, and the State of California. This impressive residence, located on a corner lot at the intersection of Van Ness and San Joaquin, was constructed for Frank Romain in 1905. Frank Romain was one of the pioneering developers of agricultural history in the central San Joaquin Valley. In the late 1880's, Romain established the Griffin-Skelly packing plant in the Central California Colony just outside of Fresno. According to one later account, this was the first or one of the very first packing companies in the district. The erection of his fine residence in 1905 is an indication of the success of Romain's early efforts and of his position of responsibility in the development of the local economy. Moreover, when the Griffin-Skelly plant was merged with several others in 1916 to become the California Packing Corporation, Romain became the manager responsible for the corporation's operations in the central San Joaquin Valley. By 1923, this responsibility included supervision of sixteen packing houses and several thousand employees. Following Frank Romain's death in 1928, the new owners (Michael Sullivan, Hugh Burns, and Earl Blair) utilized the residence as a funeral home. Although one partner died and another withdrew, the residence nevertheless functioned as the Sullivan, Burns, and Blair funeral home from 1929 until 1959. Although all three partners were involved in community affairs, one, Hugh Burns, was also a prominent member of the California Legislature where he served from 1936-1970. When Burns retired in 1970, he was credited with having held the second longest record of continuous service in the State Legislature in the history of California. The Romain Home's association with prominent members of the community continued after William Whitehurst leased it in 1959 for use as a funeral home (he purchased it in 1970). In addition to his activities in the community, William Whitehurst served for seven years on the State Highway Commission. His son, Daniel Whitehurst, involved in the family business, was in 1976 the youngest person ever to be elected to the Fresno City Council. In the following year, he became the youngest person ever to be elected Mayor of Fresno and also the youngest elected mayor of a large American city. The Romain Home also possesses architectural significance through its representation in the current urban environment of a typical house form and style of architecture that was once very prominent but which has all but disappeared. Its honest, non-eclectic approach to housing of the upper middle class society is representative in form and materials of much of what early Fresno was all about. The building remains basically unchanged in form and appearance and, as it stands, it is an important local historical artifact.

Historically, the residence at 2055 San Joaquin is known as the Frank Romain Home. Born in Toronto, Canada in 1861, Frank M. Romain came to Riverside, California

(see the continuation sheets)

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet.

# 10. Geographical Data

ITEM NOT VERIFIED  
ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

Acreeage of nominated property .275  
 Quadrangle name Fresno South, Calif.

Quadrangle scale 7.5 (1:24000)

UMT References

A 11 250330 4069640  
 Zone Easting Northing  
 C                 
 E                 
 G               

B                 
 Zone Easting Northing  
 D                 
 F                 
 H               

Verbal boundary description and justification

Fresno City Lots 14, 15, 16 and S.E. 5 feet of Lot 13, Block 343. Assessor's Parcel Number 466 134 07.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Dr. Ephraim Smith, Professor of History; William Patnaude, A.I.A.  
 organization California State University, Fresno date October 8, 1980  
 street & number Shaw Avenue telephone 209 487-2153  
 city or town Fresno state California 93740

# 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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature [Signature]

title State Historic Preservation Officer date 10-13-81

For HCERS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

[Signature]  
 Keeper of the National Register

Entered in the National Register 1/9/82

Attest:

Chief of Registration

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
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after graduating from a business school and after an initial period of employment with the Canadian Pacific Railroad. In Riverside, Romain acquired a modest position with the Griffin-Skelly Company. Within one year, he was in charge of the entire plant. In the late 1880's, Romain arrived in Fresno with orders to establish a packing plant for his company. The site for this new endeavor was on T.C. White's "Raisina Vineyard" in the Central California Colony south of Fresno. A few years later, the Griffin and Skelly operation moved into a new packing facility at Ventura and G Streets. According to one later account, the Griffin-Skelly Company in Fresno "was probably the first company to operate in this district and were [sic] among the pioneers in the raisin business as they started packing raisins in a small way in 1886." (Bibliographical Reference, #21)

Although Romain initially divided his time between Fresno and Riverside, he ultimately made Fresno his home. The construction of his impressive residence in 1905 is evidence not only of the prosperity of the packing and canning industry but of Romain's own influential role in that activity. By 1905, Romain, as manager of the local plant, was supervising an operation which employed 500 people during the height of the packing and canning season.

Romain's responsibilities increased in 1916 when the Griffin and Skelly Company was merged with the J. K. Armsby Company, the Central California Canneries, the California Fruit Cannery Association, and the Alaska Packers' Association to create the California Packing Corporation. With assets of over \$16 million, this new corporation operated around one hundred canneries and packing plants in California, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington. Assuming an important role in the new organization, Frank Romain was the manager of sixteen plants in the San Joaquin Valley employing several thousand workers.

Frank Romain was widely respected for his role in the development of the packing industry. As early as 1919, one local historian wrote that Romain's biography was an indication of "how much of the prosperity of a great business concern depends on the make-up of its leaders, and especially on the personality, as well as the varied capacity of those actually managing the details . . . ." Romain, this local historian noted, was "among the most enterprising developers of California and her countless interests." (B.R. #23) Upon Frank Romain's death in 1928, all of the valley plants of the California Packing Corporation closed down at noon on the following day as a mark of respect. The Roeding Fig and Olive Company and the Merchants Warehouse also suspended their operations for an afternoon.

It seems obvious that Frank Romain played an important role in the pioneering development and operation of the packing industry in the San Joaquin Valley. This industry was intimately associated with the economic growth of Fresno, the San Joaquin Valley, and the entire state. By the mid 1930's, California produced most of the national tonnage of dried and deciduous fruits - with the San Joaquin Valley

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being the top producer of the state's districts. Thanks to this industry, Fresno had become a major shipping center. Indeed, it was said in 1936 that "the packing, processing, canning and shipment of fruits is Fresno's major industrial activity" with the various plants employing 7,500 individuals at the peak of the season. (B.R. #19) Frank Romain was involved with the early development of this industry and had over four decades of experience at the managerial level. Clearly, Frank Romain was thus among those individuals who, to a greater or lesser degree, helped to lay the foundation which made agriculture California's greatest industry and which ultimately made Fresno County the nation's leading agricultural county.

Although the significance of Frank Romain and his residence lies basically in the field of agricultural industry, it should be noted that he was also active in the community. In addition to being "high in the councils of the Republican party," Romain was a member of the Old Fellows, the Elks, the Sequoia Club and the Commercial Club. He was also one of the four original promoters of the Sunnyside Club and later served as President of that organization. (B.R. #25) Lastly, his estate bequeathed \$5,000 to the Parks Department of the City of Fresno. In recognition of this contribution and the part that Romain had played in the development of Fresno, the city subsequently named a playground on First Street north of Belmont in his honor.

After the death of Frank Romain in 1928, Michael Sullivan, Hugh Burns, and Earl Blair acquired his residence and converted it into the Sullivan, Burns, and Blair Funeral Home. During the next half century, it was one of the more prominent funeral homes in the community. Of course, ownership changed several times over the years. Michael Sullivan died in 1939, and in 1947 Hugh Burns sold his share of the partnership to Earl Blair. In 1959, Blair sold the Romain Home to William Whitehurst who continued its operation as a funeral home. Whitehurst sold the property to its present owners in 1980. It is being converted into professional offices.

Under its new owners after 1928, the Romain Home continued its association with the lives of individuals prominent in the community. Michael Sullivan, for example, first came to Fresno in 1894. During the 1890's, he was a member of Company H of the California National Guard and also served as a member of the Fresno volunteer fire department. From 1906 to 1918, he served as a deputy sheriff. In 1918, he ran for county recorder and in 1932 was appointed to the Fresno City Civil Service Board. Prior to his death in 1939, Sullivan had served as a past Grand Knight of the Knights of Columbus, a past President of the Fresno Aerie of the Eagles, and as a member of the Foresters, the Red Men, the Yeomen, the Fraternal Brotherhood, and St. Therese's Catholic Church.

Another partner in the firm, Hugh Burns, was not only prominent in the community but in the state. Having been brought to Fresno in 1907 at the age of five, Hugh Burns was described in 1941 as "One of the most prominent and best known young men of Fresno County . . . ." (B.R. #25) At that time, Burns was President of the San



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Joaquin Valley Funeral Directors' Association, a former President of the Junior Chamber of Commerce, a former President of the 20-30 Club, and a past Grand Knight of the Knights of Columbus. Active in politics, he had been the first President of the Young Mens' Democratic Club of Fresno. He was also a member of the Eagles, Moose, Valley Rod and Gun Club, Edison Club, the Fresno County Peace Officer's Association, the Fresno County Sportsmen's Club, and the Portuguese organizations - I.D.E.S. and the U.P.E.C.

Hugh Burns also spent some four decades in public service at the state level. First elected to the California Assembly in 1936, Burns served three more terms in that body until he was elected to the State Senate in 1942. Burns served in the State Senate from 1942 to 1970. In 1950, Burns, who had just won reelection unopposed, was appointed to the powerful Rules Committee of the Senate. Commenting on the new member of the Rules Committee (who had won appointment over other Senators with more seniority), Senate President Harold Powers stated that "Senator Burns is an outstanding member of the legislature and a distinguished senator." (B.R. #5) When Burns retired from the Senate in 1970, he was credited with having "had the longest record of continuous service in the legislature--34 years--in California history." (B.R. #4) Burns then served six years on the Alcoholic Beverage Control Appeals Board until he retired from public service in 1976. Altogether, he had remained in state service for four decades.

The Romain Home's association with prominent community leaders continued after William Whitehurst leased the property in 1959 (he purchased it in 1970) for operation as a funeral home. As one local publication noted in 1975, "Politics seems to run in the Whitehurst family. . . ." (B.R. #28) Prior to coming to Fresno in 1959, William Whitehurst served on the city councils of Los Banos and Dos Palos. In Fresno County, he served as Co-Chairman for the John Kennedy, Edmund G. Brown, and Lyndon Johnson campaigns. In 1963, he was appointed by Governor Edmund G. Brown to the State Highway Commission. At the local level, Whitehurst was President of the Fresno County chapter of the American Cancer Society, a member of the Board of Directors of Saint Agnes Hospital, a member of the Board of Directors of the International Institute, and the founder of Safe-D--a program involving teenage driving.

William Whitehurst's son, Daniel, was an attorney associated with the family business. Dan Whitehurst continued the family tradition in community involvement and politics. In 1976, Dan Whitehurst became the youngest individual ever to be elected to the Fresno City Council. In 1977, Councilman Whitehurst was elected Mayor of Fresno at the age of 28. By virtue of that successful campaign, Whitehurst became at that time the youngest elected mayor of a large American city (over 100,000 in population). Prominently involved with the United States Conference of Mayors, Dan Whitehurst has been the subject of a recent two page analysis in David Broder's Changing of the Guard - an examination of the changing patterns of American political leadership.

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The Romain Home is architecturally significant to the community for two very important reasons. It is one of the very few remaining examples of a style of architecture that was once prominent in the Fresno County area. It is also one of the oldest residential structures still standing in the city.

Standing in relatively unchanged form from its original construction, the building is a fine artifact of the quality of housing that the upper middle class enjoyed in the community. Built in a style that was responsive to this area's climatic extremes and not alluding to any eclectic styles from the past, except for one interior formal room, the structure is representative of the "down to earth", solid society of which it was a part. Constructed of local redwood, fir and pine and supported by brick from the local brick works, the building in its materials and form is an example of early Fresno that is not replaceable.

It is very logical and fitting that this building should be identified with so many of the prominent men of this area. It stands, in its solidity and honest, unpretentious form, as a symbol of much of what these men have based their careers upon.

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4. "Burns Ends 40 Years in Public Life," Fresno Bee, June 2, 1976.
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12. "Confirm Merger Of Fruit Cannerys And Packers," Fresno Morning Republican, August 25, 1916.
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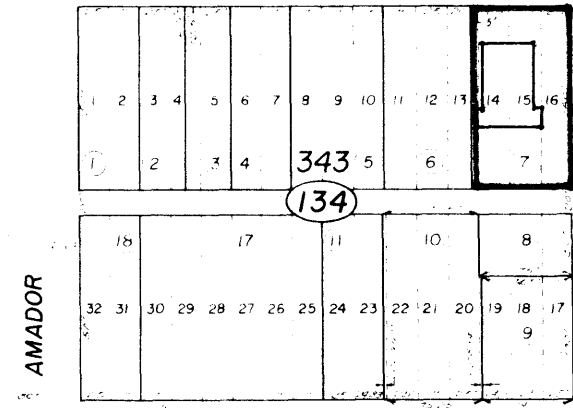
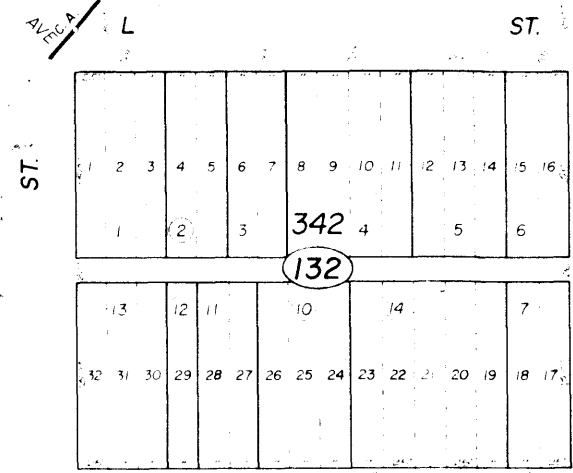
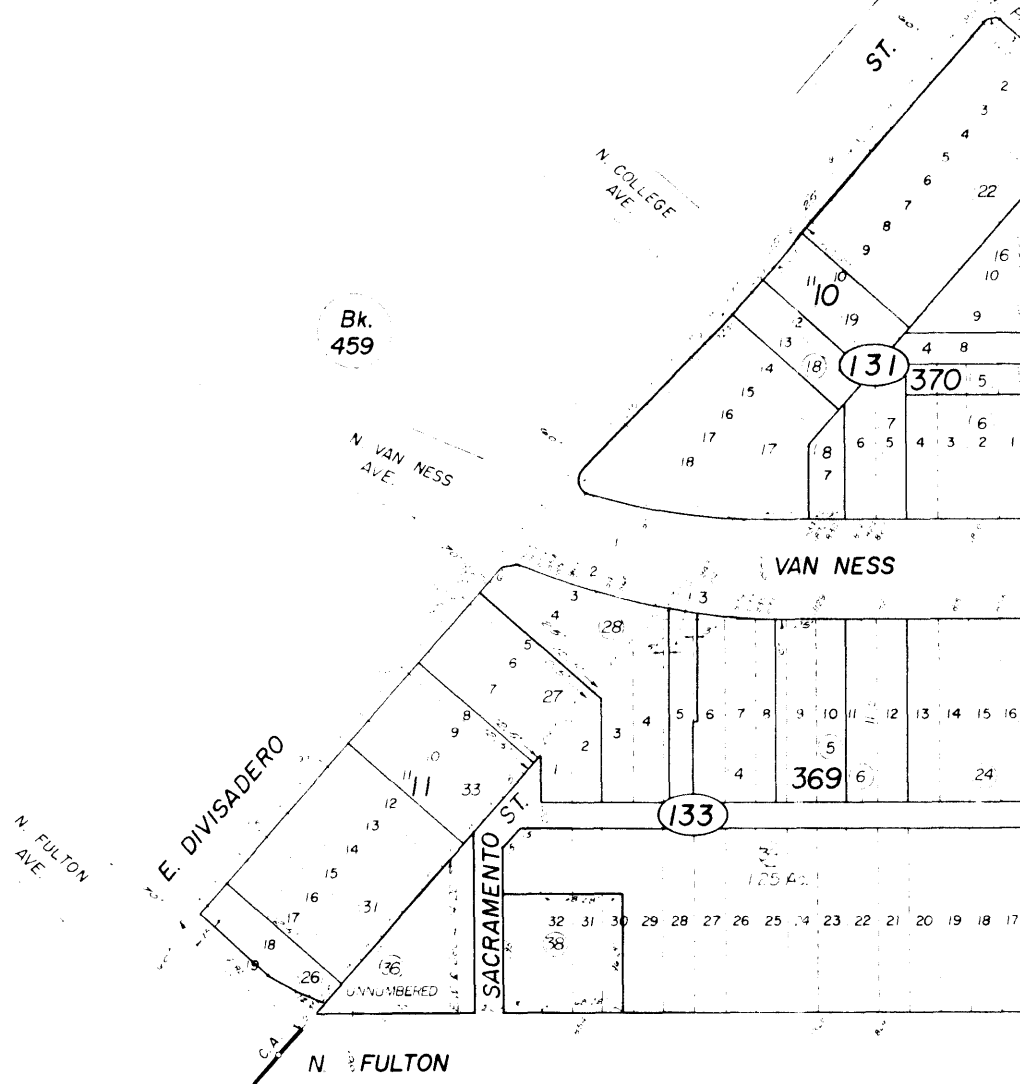
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30. "Work Will Start Soon On New Romain Field," Fresno Bee, September 23, 1947.



Bk. 459

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132

133

134

19 Romain Residence  
2055 San Joaquin St.

Assessor's Map Bk. 466 - Pg. 13  
County of Fresno, Calif.

JAN 11 1942

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FRESNO COUNTY  
ASSASSOR'S OFFICE

Central Addition - Plat Bk. 1, Pg. 30

NOTE: Assessor's Block Numbers Shown in Ellipses  
Assessor's Lot Numbers Shown in Circles