

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

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section \_\_\_\_\_ Page \_\_\_\_

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**SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD**

**NRIS Reference Number: 03000472**

**Date Listed: 9/22/2003**

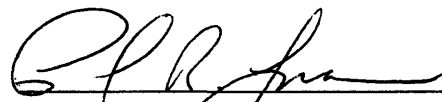
Rosecroft  
**Property Name**

San Diego  
**County**

CA  
**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.

  
Signature of the Keeper

9/22/03  
Date of Action

=====

**Amended Items in Nomination:**

**Level of Significance:**

The level of significance was not provided on the original nomination. The appropriate level based on the documentation provided is: *State*.

[While A. D. Robinson may have had national influence, the current documentation does not provide an adequate national context for the field of horticulture during the period in question. The documentation clearly establishes and supports significance at the local and state levels.]

**U. T. M. Coordinates:**

The correct U. T. M. Coordinates are: 11 476990 3619580.

These revisions were confirmed with the California SHPO office.

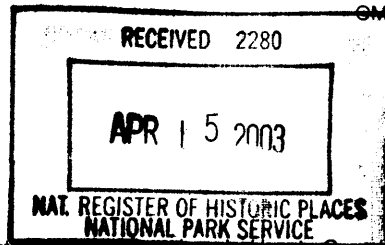
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**DISTRIBUTION:**

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

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Rosecroft

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

2. Location

street & number 530 Silvergate Avenue  not for publication

city or town San Diego  vicinity

state California code CA county San Diego code 073 zip code 92106

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Stephan M. Wilcox, DSAPO 4/11/03  
Signature of certifying official/Title 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 for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

entered in the National Register  
 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): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Name of Property

County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	3	buildings
		sites
	2	structures
		objects
1	5	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Domestic

Single Dwelling

Residence

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Domestic

Single Dwelling

Residence

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Italian Renaissance

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete

walls

Stucco Finish

roof

Slate

other

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Name of Property

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Agriculture (Horticulture)

Architecture

Period of Significance

1912-1942

Significant Dates

1912

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Robinson, Alfred D.

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Weaver, Emmor Brooke

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

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 # \_\_\_\_\_

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

San Diego Historical Society  
San Diego Floral Association  
Scott & Mary Clifton

Rosecroft  
Name of Property

San Diego Co., CA  
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property 2.4 Acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 111 471691910 31611751810  
Zone Easting Northing  
2

3  
Zone Easting Northing  
4

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Vonn Marie May, Cultural Resource Planning  
organization On Behalf of Owner date 30 September 2002  
street & number 2670 Worden St. #20 telephone (619) 223-4420  
city or town San Diego state CA zip code 92110

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location. Point Loma 1996

A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Scott and Mary Clifton  
street & number 530 Silvergate Avenue telephone (619) 222-3501  
city or town San Diego state CA zip code 92106

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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## Summary Paragraph

*Rosecroft* is a two-story wood frame residence on a concrete foundation with stucco exterior finish, in the Italian Renaissance style. The original floor plan is a modified 'H' shape, symmetrical, with projecting wings set back on either side, as well as two extending forward in both the front and rear of the residence. The roof is a low-pitched hipped roof, originally a greenish tile, with chimneys emerging from each wing. The primary façade's first floor fenestration is symmetrical and consists of six pairs of French doors. A central arched Palladian style entry door detailed by two pairs of Tuscan columns holds a small centered balcony above. The second level consists of vertical casement windows in pairs and a centered set of three, with two sets of double French doors flanking the ends. Balconies surround the forward and side projecting wings and are detailed with open balusters typical to the style. Although modified in recent years, the interior departs in style from a Mediterranean expression to the Arts and Crafts period with natural redwood and red birch floors. The neighborhood surrounding *Rosecroft* was developed one property at a time from around the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries in an upscale part of Point Loma that still retains its underlying agricultural zoning with the exception of some post WWII infill. The mature tree canopy is eclectic and personalized with no deliberate street planting evidenced, reflecting an almost rural character. Several trees are still extant on property from the Robinson era and are nearing their century mark; *Rhus integrifolia*, Sumac; *Pinus Torreyana*, Torrey Pine; *Cupressus macrocarpa*, Monterey Cypress; *Eucalyptus ficifolia*, Flaming Eucalypt; and *Ulmus parvifolia*, Chinese evergreen elm (see Site Map for locations) The residence is sited facing the east and originally had sweeping views of the San Diego Bay. It is accessed by a semi-circular drive with two entrance/ exit points on Silvergate Avenue. The property is in excellent condition and retains its historical character from the entry and sides even considering a significant amount of additions were added to the rear.

## Expanded Description

The 2.4 Acre property includes the original two-story main house w/ later period attached and detached additions to the rear. The later additions include: ancillary structures w/ attendant pergolas; a pool cabana room, a recreation/exercise room, a maintenance room, a family room and three car attached garage and a two car detached garage w/ storage. Tennis and racquet ball courts and a children's play area were added in the far rear of the property. All foundations are concrete, all construction is wood frame with stucco exteriors. (See Site Map & overhead aerial photo provided).

The roof was originally a greenish tile, but was changed to slate shingles in the late 1970's during the Khoury era. Other modifications during the Khoury era (1976-2001) are: introduction of some new wood sash single glass pane casement windows, a front door replacement w/ entrance brought forward a few feet, removal of low stucco wall and replaced by a concrete patio with matching balustrades, removal of central chimney, removal of wrought iron on central balcony w/ matching stucco balustrade.

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All added structures are set back and away from the main house in the rear of the property, deliberately, to retain the historic setting and historic views of the original residence.

The original 1912 historic residence is approximately 6000 sq. ft. , historically in tact and in very good condition. There are no Emmor Brooke Weaver architectural plans extant. In a 1965 interview with Weaver (then in his late 90's), San Diego architect John Henderson FAIA inquired as to the existence of any documents or drawings. Weaver's response was that there was nothing left. When owner Tawfiq Koury added to the site extensively in the 1970's there were architectural plans drawn for the new additions only. All work was done to the rear of the original residence and in the same style as to complement the original as well.

The following is a break down of the original residence by room:

### First Floor

Garden Room	280sf	Original room detailing
Formal Living Room	690sf	Includes decorative wood parquet floors, large fireplace with marble surround, glass built-in clock, curved ceiling, room detailing
Library	410sf	Includes marble fireplace, tin ceiling, built-in bookcases, wood paneling, wood parquet, detailing
Formal Dining Room	493sf	Wood parquet floors, original room detailing
Formal Entry	176sf	Large entry door (1970's), wood parquet floors, ornate
'Oriental' Bath	84sf	French doors, original sink fixtures, tile floors
Foyer/1 <sup>st</sup> Floor	125sf	Original room detailing, wood floors
'Orange' Bedrm	300sf	Marble fireplace, original room detailing
Adjoining Bedrm	180sf	Original room detailing, wood floors
Stairwell	100sf	Modified in 1970's

### Second Floor

North Bedrm	300sf	Wood floors, original room detailing
North Bath	300sf	Tile floors, original room detailing
Laundry	105sf	
'Blue' Bedrm	300sf	Wood floors, original room detailing

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Master Bedrm	682sf	Wood floors, built-in book cases, fireplace
Master Bath	300sf	Tile floors, original room detailing
Walk in Closet W/ Vanity	300sf	Wood floors, original room detailing
Hall/Bath	179sf	Original room detailing

**Non Contributing Additions**

Informal Dining Rm	810sf
Bedrm	222sf
Bedrm	222sf
Study	150sf
Hallway	176sf
Upstairs/ Attic	972sf+75sf
Downstairs	
Wine Cellar	600sf
Downstairs	
Game Room	510sf
Wine Tasting Rm	222sf
Attached garage	950sf

**Out Buildings/Pool**

Detached garage	700sf
Wine storage	192sf
Maid Qtrs	459sf
Gymnasium	500sf
Racquet Ball Ct.	800sf
Sauna/Pool Equip.	300sf



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### Summary Paragraph

*Rosecroft* is significant for its association with nationally recognized horticulturist, Alfred D. Robinson, who was the most notable authority of Begonias in the country during his lifetime. He is credited with hybridizing more than 100 species of Begonia from *Rosecroft* and establishing the American Begonia Society. Robinson also founded the San Diego Floral Association and its publication, California Garden Magazine; the longest running continually published horticulture periodical in the country. Robinson was also a notable early century civic figure who had great influence on the success of the 1915 Panama California Exposition held in San Diego. Built in 1912, *Rosecroft*, is an excellent example of early 20<sup>th</sup> century Italian Renaissance Revival architecture designed by a regionally significant architect, Emmor Brooke Weaver. Contextually it relates to the pre-Panamanian 1915 Exposition Spanish Colonial Revival era. Before 1915 architectural styles were predominantly Victorian, Mission Revival, Craftsman and European/Mediterranean Revival styles. San Diego and southern California was thought of as the new 'Riviera' and *Rosecroft* is a vision of an Italian villa derived from a parallel place that shares the same latitude, light and climate.

### Statement of Significance-Criterion B

The *Rosecroft* estate is eligible for placement on the National Register of Historic Places because it is historically significant under Criterion B; due to its association with the lives of persons significant in our past.

#### *Alfred D. Robinson (1866-1942)*

Alfred D. Robinson was born to a cultured family in Waton, England on October 9, 1866. He prepared for a career in the ministry but changed course and immigrated to the United States in 1887, at the age of 21. He aspired to become a cattle rancher but within a very short period of time as a rough and tumble cowboy he was cured of that ambition. During a stay in San Francisco he met Marion James Duncan, the only child of a wealthy couple, Hilarian and Charlotte Duncan. The couple married in 1895 and had their first child, Larona, born in December of 1901.

While living in San Francisco, Marion and A.D. attended lectures given by noted Theosophist, Katherine Tingley, who was soliciting financial sponsorship and participation for her newly formed utopian compound; Lomaland on Point Loma in San Diego. Madame Tingley was the West Coast contingent of the Theosophical movement that was brought to America by Russian spiritualist Madame H.P. Blavatsky. Blavatsky's books of doctrine, *Isis Unveiled* and *The Secret Doctrine*, espoused the existence of the 'Masters', and the inspiration of Theosophical writings that combined ideas from Asian religions within a cosmological framework that gave meaning to individual destiny; or as has been characterized; as the last great work on occultism at the turn of the century (19<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup>) in America.

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Tingley's varietal of Theosophy, however, was to educate the youngest of children hoping the new generation would change the world. In 1896 when she heard of a 132-acre tract of land available on Point Loma in perfect climate, surrounded by the Pacific Ocean she moved quickly to acquire. She established the Raja-Yoga School in Lomaland and within a few years three hundred children of all classes and twenty nationalities were in attendance. At its height Lomaland had a preschool for 3-5 yr. olds, primary and secondary schools, a university, a School of Antiquity, a scientific research department, and a school of music and drama. The Robinsons were so enamored by what they heard from Tingley's lectures they immediately relocated to Point Loma in 1903 and purchased 10 acres adjacent to the Tingley homestead property. They enrolled their young daughter, Larona, in Tingley's school which required the child to live on site in a saturation learning environment. It allowed Marion and A.D. time to establish their home and gardens and to travel throughout the U.K. and Europe. Another daughter, Charlotte, was born to the couple in 1908.

In an unfortunate turn of fate while traveling abroad, friends sent word to the Robinsons that upon visiting Lomaland and checking in on Larona they found her gaunt and non responsive, questioning if she had any parents. The Robinsons booked passage immediately for home and collected their frail daughter from the school. The child passed away in 1910 from a heart malady at the age of nine, but from that moment on the Robinsons severed ties with the school and Madame Tingley. The experience profoundly affected A.D., as can be read in his hand-typed, original manuscript with photographs of the beautiful little girl he had taken himself, entitled *Larona*, truly a father's lament.

Marion was an active partner to A.D. in regard to the gardens and construction of their beautiful Italian Renaissance home. Her interests in horticulture and civic issues paralleled that of her husbands. Marion unexpectedly passed away in 1918, leaving Charlotte and A.D. on their own. In 1922, Robinson married Charlotte's governess Annie, and produced another family of five more children, Marion, Virginia, Alfred D., Jr., Margaret and Richard. Alfred D. Robinson passed away in 1942, and Annie sold the property in 1944. The residence was subdivided to a 2.4 acre lot apart from the gardens in 1947. The gardens eventually became residences over time.

### *Alfred D. Robinson, the Horticulturist*

Robinson began his horticultural career more or less as an avocation. The Robinsons were of independent means thanks to Marion's family. His new life with his second wife, Annie, was a long and productive union as the two were inseparable in family and aesthetic interests. Initially interested in roses and dahlias, Robinson had experimented with begonias from the beginning, hybridizing and documenting the genus. The pursuit of knowledge of the subject elevated him to a national authority.

From the primary reference of horticulture history in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, *Southern California Gardens*, Victoria Padilla writes, "One of the most prominent of the newer nurserymen was Alfred D. Robinson, who earned the reputation of growing the 'finest begonias in the world.' A man of independent means, Robinson was also the guiding spirit behind most horticultural activities, was a conspicuous figure at all flower shows, and was also able to assist when financial aid was otherwise lacking. His Rosecroft Nursery at Point Loma was a 'vision of delight,' attracting visitors the world over.

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Mr. David Fairchild, the head of the United States Government horticultural work in the Bureau of New Plant Introductions said to Robinson (on his visit to Rosecroft in 1921); *"Nowhere in the world do I know of a place where such a wonderful opportunity is presented for the hybridization of begonias as your collection possesses. First, you have the climatic conditions for a successful growth and development of the seed pod; second, you have such a large collection of varieties, and you have the skill to detect fine differences in plants."*

Rosecroft was visited by many famous horticulturists who all agreed there was no display anywhere in the world that equaled that of Robinson's begonias. In the September 1928 issue of California Garden Magazine it stated, *"On August 7, Mr. and Mrs. A.D. Robinson received the San Diego Floral Association and their friends at their Begonias lathhouse, Rosecroft, Point Loma...The public in general probably does not realize that this display of begonias is not equaled anywhere in the world. The Gold Medal Growers of Begonias in England, Blackmore & Langdon, in their exhibit at the Royal Horticultural Exhibit in London, during May and June 1925, has nothing to equal Mr. Robinson's show."*

Originally the lot was ten acres and adjacent to the Theosophical Society's homestead. The gardens occupied all the land on the south and west portions of the acreage. Rosecroft Gardens were accessed by visitors from Rosecroft Street its boundary to the south or Garden Street the boundary to the north and Silvergate Street to the east. Several structures, and lathhouses were in the garden area, the office where Robinson met with San Diego Floral Association members, and as editor of the California Garden Magazine were the volumes were written on site.

Although Robinson sought diligently to establish correct botanical information, he did not take himself too seriously: *"I am laughing over being classed by an Eastern editor as too much of a scientist to write for the general public. Why, I have to keep a glossary of botanical terms on my desk...When L.H.Bailey (the international horticultural authority of the 20<sup>th</sup> century) visited Rosecroft on three occasions, I sweated internally and infernally for fear he might ask me the difference between petiole, peduncle and pedicel. Though I know it at this minute, I won't in half an hour, and I never did when he was here."*

Robinson perfected his search for the best micro-climate for his precious begonias. He built his own water tower to collect rain water, he believed the Colorado River water was not conducive to healthy plant growth, he imported leaf mold from the surrounding mountain forests and he began to regulate the intense effect of the sun through his lathhouses. *"The sun shining through the lath making the gridiron on the path. The stripes of shadow and sunlight change places every five minutes and this is why laths must run north and south, otherwise the sunlight travels down instead of across the opening".* Robinson noted, *"I would justify...that with few exceptions, the begonia family does not belong in a greenhouse. It wants filtered sunlight and temperate weather with a fair degree of moisture; it dislikes heat almost more than cold."*

Robinson produced over 100 hybrids of the genus Begonia. He sold or traded species and cultivars to other scientists, horticulturists and collectors. He wrote, lectured, and shared information and specimens with his contemporaries. As one of the most active plantmen in southern California at the lion's share of his time was spent developing better begonias. His greatest contribution, however, was in the field of the rubra or cane-type begonias, tall and erect begonias gaining heights of twelve feet or more. He also worked with the rhizomatous and

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hirsute groups, with rexes and fibrous, and with tuberous and small border species. In one telling scientific exercise of horticultural curiosity, Robinson's patience and persistence as a hybridizer was obvious. At *Rosecroft* he was in possession of a *Begonia dregei macbethii*, which he thought might be a species, as all the seedlings were alike. He decided to test its efficacy by growing a thousand plants from its seed. They all came true—except one. Appropriately, he named the single one-in-a-thousand begonia for his father, Richard Robinson, an English magistrate. It appeared under that name in the *Rosecroft* catalog in 1925. Robinson was diligent in all issues regarding his beloved begonias and invited the California Begonia Society to *Rosecroft* in 1934 to propose to the group a name change—to the American Begonia Society. A motion was made, a unanimous vote followed.

### *San Diego Floral Association and California Garden Magazine*

Founder of the San Diego Floral Association (1909) and its publication; *California Garden Magazine*, Robinson found his voice and instrument of aesthetic interests and civic matters. He was editor of the magazine for its formative first decade and launched new awareness on an emergent city that thirsted for beauty and sophistication. S.D. Floral maintained a membership of civic patrons, foreign members, and general horticulture enthusiasts. Its first elected board included Robinson's close friend, Lyman Gage; former U.S. Treasury Dept. secretary under Presidents McKinley and Theodore Roosevelt. Noted pioneer horticulturist, Kate Sessions, was a constant force and source of knowledge and inspiration for the fledgling association. Floral was essentially the first who's who of civic interests, predating other civic and beautification groups until the late twenties.

The group rallied the entire city to improve and contribute to its image and to the upcoming exposition through the City Beautiful movement. Floral facilitated street planting, seed and cutting donations, educational sessions on soil and planting techniques. By 1910, and clearly in anticipation for the 1915 exposition, they calculated that with a population in San Diego of 40,000, they had recruited 25,000 citizens to contribute to the effort. It was not uncommon for someone to donate mature tree specimens on a flat bed pulled by a team of horses to the exposition grounds.

Robinson had editorialized consistently for the establishment of a public southern California botanical garden. However, the exposition planning and city-wide improvements consumed all of his and Floral's efforts and the concept was put aside. A southern California botanical garden didn't come to fruition until and 1926 in Santa Barbara.

In a retrospective article in 1959 by *California Garden Magazine* editor, Roland Hoyt, FASLA, wrote; "*Alfred D. Robinson, a thinking man of parts!*"...*You look around, and there is that tall man, tall in mind and heart as well, who, for twenty years, in the shadow of the Campanile of Balboa Park, has tried to hold back the asphalt tide that would engulf our heritage, as he warns, in "Are Parks Here to Stay?"* Robinson left his imprint and his legacy on Balboa Park, Point Loma, San Diego, and southern California.

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***1915 Panama California Exposition Botanical Building***

In the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Robinson was very active with other city fathers and mothers in shaping an emergent city with beauty and sophistication, and the Floral Association was his vehicle for implementing these aesthetic values. San Diego Floral Association vice president Lyman Gage wrote in *California Garden Magazine*, "...is it not a proper question for the San Diego Floral Association to ask itself, What can we do as an Association to co-operate in the great project (1915 Panama California Exposition) in order to strengthen the movement (City Beautiful), and give dignity and beauty to its accomplishment? It is undeniable that the Association has done much to make the homes of San Diego more beautiful and attractive."

In a pre-exposition era the political context was a divisive time in San Diego's history known as the Smokestacks vs. Geraniums era. The City Beautiful movement and its social ethic were alive and embraced by those who would be considered the Geraniums. George W. Marston, an important benefactor and urban visionary funded the internationally known town planner and landscape architect, John Nolen, of Cambridge to generate an urban plan for San Diego, both in 1908 and a follow up in 1926. Robinson was clearly a part of the Geraniums persuasion and supported Nolen and Marston. Yet despite the actions of this dedicated group the Smokestacks gang prevailed more often than not.

Yet, in 1911 the San Diego Chamber of Commerce approached A. D. Robinson, because of his demonstrated City Beautiful interests and horticulture advocacy, to consult on the upcoming 1915 Panama California Exposition. The federally sanctioned Panama Pacific Exposition was to be held in San Francisco, but San Diego was mobilizing itself to host the world, realizing it was the first American port-of-call north of the Canal. Aggressive planning and funding mechanisms were employed and ultimately the outlaw San Diego exposition, in its two year run from 1915-1916, hosted 3.7 million people.

Agriculture, floriculture and irrigation technologies were as much a part of the exposition planning as was the architecture. A U.S. Agricultural Experiment Station was planned; the Little Landers model farm exhibit was sited to the north of El Prado; Sir Thomas Lipton of England planted several hundred *Camellia sinensis* shrubs which provided fresh English tea for Fair visitors; and ornamental gardens, both formal and informal, abounded.

During the initial planning stages of the exposition, Robinson led the charge to have the region's horticultural potential put on exhibition equal to that of any other showcase of ideas. Robinson felt strongly that San Diego was in a better position to affect a Panamanian subtropical horticultural theme than was San Francisco. He felt to best display the range of adapted exotic species was to erect an horticultural conservatory, or in his favorite term, a lath house. He began editorializing and continued to press his idea for a substantial 'lath house' structure. In *California Garden Magazine*, 1911, he wrote;

*"I deem it timely to take the readers of California Garden a little further into my confidence. I have indeed suggested that such a botanical garden be a feature of the proposed exposition, but I should grieve indeed to find the former dependent upon the latter. San Francisco and various other places seem to have a finger in the exposition pie, or at any rate they act as consulting chefs. The botanical garden I advocate is easily for San Diego, if San Diego alone says the word."*

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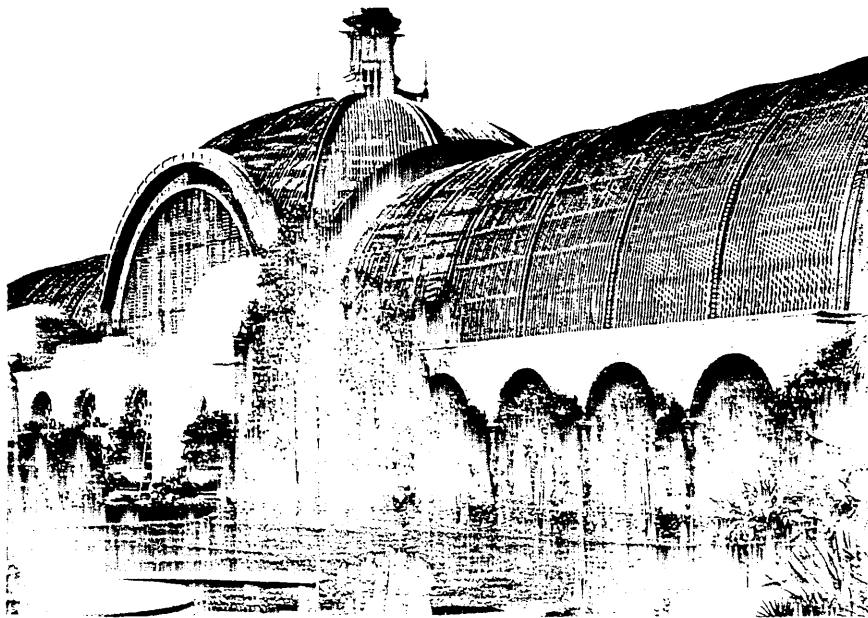
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Exposition officials became convinced and inspired by 'Robinson's Exposition Dream'. Winfield Hogoboom, the Exposition's publicity director explained, "*The matter of funds naturally is the most serious side of the whole thing; but plans were prepared for the lath house just as if the funds already were provided*". Concepts were explored by master Spanish colonial revivalist architect, Bertram G. Goodhue, lead architect for the Exposition, and project architect Carleton Winslow, Sr. Natural redwood lath was the main ingredient for the structure supported by arched structural steel. The open barrel design with a domed center element, was gently grounded in Spanish stucco architecture compatible with the rest of the composition of El Prado buildings. Robinson's Lathhouse, the Botanical Building, became the centerpiece of a larger botanical complex consisting of a glasshouse, Japanese gardens, and reflecting pools; Laguna and Lagunita de las Flores that mirrored the entire vision.



*The Botanical Building or "Lath House" in 1915.*

The extensive horticultural planning provided the setting for what was later referred to as the 'Garden Fair'. In his book, *The San Diego Garden Fair*, Eugen Neuhaus wrote rhapsodically, "*Only three years ago the paradise in which we find the Exposition embedded was nothing but a large tract of land devoid of anything that might be called vegetation...today we have the surprising spectacle of the pinnacles of a romantic city of Spain rising amidst luxuriant verdure...The San Diego Exposition will not have been a mere celebration, it will be considered a milestone in the civilization of the West.*"

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From Robinson's vision came what we still have in Balboa Park today—the beautiful Botanical Building—a contributing structure to the National Historic Landmark District. It was heralded as the largest open-lath botanical building of its type in the world at the time. It was realized from Robinson's efforts and his voice in California Garden Magazine. A bronze plaque to memorialize Alfred D Robinson is at the Balboa Park Botanical Building's entry.

Later in a plaintive and reflective letter from the exposition's lead architect, Bertram G. Goodhue to city fathers dated May 31<sup>st</sup> 1922, the architect wrote, "One thing you can be certain of; in this way and in this way only, the City of San Diego would have the finest public gardens in America." Unfortunately the argument promoting more gardens was a guise. Goodhue was fiercely lobbying for demolition of all the exposition's temporary buildings, and for the retention of his permanent ensemble; the California Tower, Quadrangle and Rotunda. The letter illustrates, however, how important horticulture had become as a civic asset.

**Statement of Significance-Criterion C**

The residence is also significant under **Criterion C**; as the property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction. The architecture is an excellent example of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century Italian Renaissance style. *Rosecroft* also represents the work of a master architect, Emmor Brooke Weaver, and is one of the many notable buildings in his body of work.

***Emmor Brooke Weaver, Architect (1876-1968)***

Emmor Brooke Weaver was born in West Liberty, Iowa in 1876, the only son among six children. He studied 'Chicago Style' architecture at the University of Illinois in the 1890's but remained unlicensed his entire career. He was quoted later in life as saying, "I'm an artist and an architect—artists, painters and sculptors don't have licenses." He came to San Diego in 1903 on the advice of his doctor, a common story in the history of early 20<sup>th</sup> century San Diego.

His first position was in the architectural firm of Wm S. Hebbard and Irving J. Gill. During his time there he contributed to the design and construction of the George W. Marston house, San Diego's premier visionary and philanthropist, completed in 1905. Weaver left their employ and began his independent design services specializing in redwood craftsman bungalows for a rising middle class. Weaver joined in projects with other significant architects, ie; the City Administration Building with Wm. Templeton Johnson, Richard Requa, Frank Mead and Sam Hamill. He had a brief partnership with structural architect, John T. Vawter, in which they created an architectural icon in the back country, the Amy Strong Residence, or as known locally as the Ramona Castle—an organic rock sculpture with strong Craftsman influences.

While he is best remembered for his rustic Japanese influenced single-wall California redwood or Oregon pine board-and-batten and split cedar shingle-clad bungalows, Weaver's full volume of work reflected a broad palette of architectural styles. He created an equal amount of transitional Italian Renaissance, Spanish Eclectic, and Prairie as he did Craftsman inspired bungalows. Weaver was experimental, individual and would not be bound to one style or

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design. Some of the basic tenets of Weaver's designs were; the use of wood, stone, excellent master of space, a light and airy appearance, attractive landscape, superb quality and a natural warmth. He endeavored toward elegant, artistic, polished, simple, timeless, functional, comfortable and livable styles and features.

Another attribute of Weaver's design approach was his direct relationships he had with the people who commissioned him—he designed the houses to suit their personalities. *Rosecroft* was a combined expression of the artistry Emmor Brooke Weaver assisted by draftsman and designer Kenneth Kellogg, and the needs and preferences of Marion and Alfred D. Robinson. The Robinson family lore claims that A.D. and Marion, decided on the Italian Renaissance architectural style inspired by an Italian villa they had visited on their travels in the early part of their marriage. *Rosecroft* is also said to be influenced by chewing gum magnate William Wrigley's 1906 Italian Renaissance residence in Pasadena, CA, now used as the headquarters for the Pasadena Tournament of the Roses. Regardless of its inspiration the residence was a magnificent expression of the time and style. The residence was reported on a August 1912 San Diego Union article as costing \$30,000, a generous sum of money for that time.

It was a common site to see Weaver on site in a gray suit and hat directing the work of his craftsmen. He insisted that they use gloves before they touched the woodwork or the carefully prepared surfaces of the interior walls. *Rosecroft* represents Weaver's inclination for using redwood in the interiors and with elaborate detail. A redwood finish topped red birch floors covered with oriental rugs. The fireplace and mantels were created from tile. The home featured a billiard room (Robinson and friend Lyman Gage were avid players), a den and a vaulted living room ceiling. There was a staircase leading from the center foyer to the second floor, but was removed during the Khoury era.

Ever the modest and retiring gracious man, Weaver attracted clients through references and his good works. Although he catered to a wide assortment of customers, the wealthy, artistic, and socially prominent comprised most of his clientele. History remembers him as one of the most important Craftsman architects in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Weaver officially retired in 1945 as a 'Distinguished Craftsman Architect', and lived out his days in San Diego until his death in 1968, a bachelor, at the age of 92.

***Italian Renaissance Architecture***

Just blocks to the north, pre-dating *Rosecroft* is the 1906 Warner Villa Tract named for acclaimed author, Charles Dudley Warner (subdivision streets; Charles St., Dudley St., and Warner St.). Warner, a contemporary of Mark Twain, wrote prolifically about his travels. In 1891, a visitor to San Diego, he authored '*Our Italy*', which included a romanticized observation comparing the economic natural environment of Point Loma to that of coastal Italy. He wrote;

*"...the Pacific Ocean, sparkling in the sun as blue as the waters at Amalfi....to the right, Point Loma stretches its sharp and rocky promontory into the ocean, purple in the sun....the islands of Coronado, huge bulks of beautiful red sandstone, uninhabited and barren, becalmed there in the changing blue of sky and sea, like enormous mastless galleons, like degraded icebergs, like Capri and Ischia"*.

San Diego's 1915 Panama-California Exposition is credited with launching a wide array of Spanish Colonial Revival styles. Prior to that transforming event, architectural styles in San



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Diego were predominantly; Mission Revival, Victorian, Craftsman and European & Mediterranean Revival styles. *Rosecroft* was unique for advancing a compatible regional Italian Renaissance style. Typical features of the style are; low-pitched hipped roof of ceramic tiles; upper-story windows smaller and less elaborate than windows below; full-length first story windows; entrance are usually recessed and accented by small classical columns; façade commonly symmetrical. Primarily a style for architect-designed estate type residences prior to WWI and less common than Craftsman, Tudor or Colonial Revival styles.

### *Notable Owners of Rosecroft --Post Robinson Era (See Local Designation Report)*

Norman C. Roberts, Stock Broker, Founder of MailBoxes, Etc. (1959-1976)

- Ronald Reagan announced his candidacy for Governor of California from *Rosecroft*

Tawfiq Khoury, CEO, Pacific Scene Builders, Wine Collector (1976-1999)

- Entertained international, national and local notables, ranging from Presidents to royalty, religious heads, Broadway and Hollywood stars, as well as wine producers and connoisseurs.

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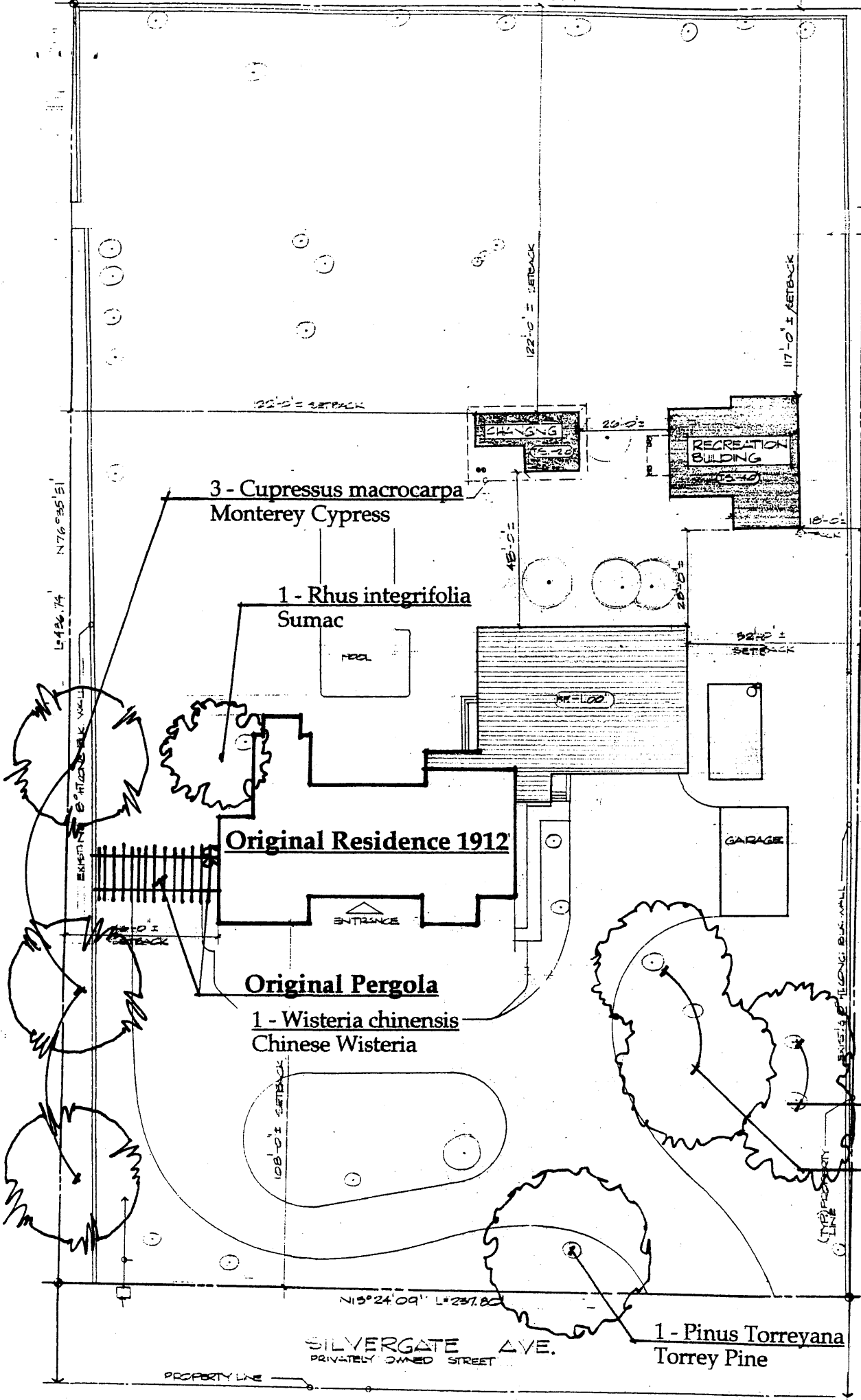
**National Register of Historic Places****Continuation Sheet**Section number 10 Page 17Rosecroft San Diego County, CA**Robinson Ownership History/Boundary Description and Justification**

The subject property was originally a 10 acre lot purchased by Marion James and Alfred D. Robinson in April of 1903. The home was built in 1912 and the garden and grounds were developed over time reaching their most peak period of significance in the mid 1920's, although, Marion Robinson died in 1918. Alfred D. remarried in 1922, to Annie C., his children's governess. They had a long productive marriage, producing five children. Robinson died in 1942 and Annie subsequently sold the property in 1944. The 10 acres staid in tact until 1947 when it was subdivided. The gardens became a separate parcel and the residence retained 2.4 acres through current ownership.

The nomination request is for the front half of Lot #143 of San Diego County Pueblo Lands, APN #532-170-01, as a part of the original holdings of Marion and Alfred D. Robinson, inclusive of the original residence, pergola and the horticulturally relevant historic trees as noted in Site Map.

N13°21'42"E L= 237.49

Rosecroft  
San Diego Co.  
Calif.



Site Map-Robinson Era  
Extant Trees from the Period of Significance



Rosecroft, San Diego Co., CA





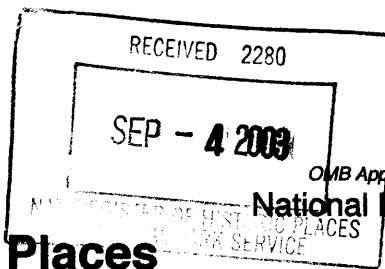
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Additional Documentation-Photographs



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All photographs taken by architectural photographer, Jim Brady in September of 2002. The negatives are in the possession of the photographer as well (619) 296-5304.

1. East façade, shows original primary façade with later patio addition.
2. Entry portico, two pair of Tuscan columns, balcony w/ balusters above, Palladian style arched wood door.
3. West façade, (rear) shows original upper floor and floor additions.
4. Original Pergola once connecting Rosecroft to the Begonia gardens to the south.
5. Original Pergola with original Wisteria looking east.
6. Front of house with mature Monterey Cypress trees, delineators between the residence and the gardens (note Pergola).
7. South side of residence, mature Sumac.
8. Northeast side of property, mature Flaming Eucalypt.
9. East side of property at entry, mature Torrey Pine.
10. Northeast side of property two mature Chinese evergreen Elms.