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. Nam | le | | | |
|---|---|---|---|--|
| historic RAN | CHO LOS ALAMITOS | | | RECEIVED |
| and/or common | 3.xby Ranc | h | | FEB 0 9 1981; |
| 2. Loca | ation ⁽⁾ | | 2 | ОНР |
| street & number | 6400 BIXBY HI | LL ROAD | | not for publication |
| city, town LON | IG BEACH | vicinity of | congressional district | 34 |
| state CALIFO | RNIA c | ode county | LOS ANGELES | code |
| 3. Clas | sification | | | |
| Category district _X_ building(s) structure site object | OwnershipX public private both Public Acquisition in process being considered | Status _X_ occupied unoccupied work in progress Accessible _X_ yes: restricted yes: unrestricted no | Present Use agriculture commercial educational entertainment government industrial military | _X_ museum park private residence religious scientific transportation other: |
| 4. Own | er of Prop | erty | | |
| name CITY | OF LONG BEACH | | | |
| street & number | 333 WEST OCEAN | BOULEVARD | | |
| city, town LON | G BEACH | vicinity of | state | CALIFORNIA |
| | ation of Le | gal Descripti | | |
| courthouse regi | stry of deeds etc. 1.00 | ANGELES COUNTY CLERI | VIS DEELCE | |
| street & number | | | (3 OFFICE | |
| | | ILL SIKEET | | CALTEORNIA |
| city, town LOS 6. Rep i | | n in Existing | | CALIFORNIA |
| o. nepi | resentation | IIII EXISTING | Jurveys | |
| title HABS-Ind | ex No: CAL 19-LON | G B 1 has this pr | operty been determined e | legible? yes _X_ n |
| date | | | federal sta | ite county loca |
| depository for su | urvey records LIBRA | RY OF CONGRESS | | |
| city, town | SHINGTON D.C. | | state | |

7. Description

| • |
|---|
| • |

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Situated on top of Bixby Hill, Rancho Los Alamitos is a 7.387 acre complex which includes a ranch house (in situ), 7 outbuildings (l in situ, 6 moved), extensive gardens, and a tennis court.

The ranch house is constructed in a "U" shaped plan which has evolved in a series of additions over approximately 175 years. At the base of the "U" is the original, early 18th century adobe structure, sheathed in stucco. It consists of four single rooms flanking an off center hall and was built upon foundations presumed to be field stones laid in adobe mortar. An arcaded, screened porch consisting of eight bays constructed upon a brick foundation extends beyond the length of the east elevation of the adobe construction. The ceiling of the porch is beaded tongue and groove and the floor consists of wood planks. In 1925 a gabled second story, stucco over frame construction, with two gabled and shingled dormers on the east elevation, was added. A four bay open porch with a simple stick railing on the west elevation of the second story addition imparts a flavor of the Monterey style to the entire composition.

Numerous additions to the original adobe were made. The north wing of seven rooms was the first addition to be constructed on a brick foundation, probably c. 1850. This service wing, sheathed in rough board and batten, and regularly pierced by tall, narrow windows and doors, contains interior partitions of both 1 inch boards and studs covered with painted plaster board. In the years between 1878 and 1887 the adobe was extended to the south with a wood addition. The music room with fireplace was added to the north wall of the adobe in 1887-1925 and stuccoed on the exterior. Two sets of tall windows open up to a concrete patio that was constructed in 1920. Three bedrooms of wood frame construction became the south wing (1887-1925). The south and north wall of the wing were stuccoed. In 1925 a concrete wall was constructed at the western end of the south wing which enclosed a 'Secret Garden'.

All the roofs are gabled and shingled. All the walls are plastered and papered. The ceilings in the first story are of l inch tongue and groove beaded wood and painted. The ceilings in the second story are plastered. All floors are oak. The trim in the bedrooms is painted and all other rooms are stained and varnished.

Wooden cupboards dating from c. 1880 are found in the dining room and in the main bedroom of the adobe. Wood paneled archways mark the doorways in the adobe. Skylights provide illumination to the library, the bedroom in the adobe and the kitchen. Behind the kitchen is a screened-in porch which leads to another wood frame structure that once functioned as storage, laundry and furnace rooms.

The grounds surrounding the ranch house include a South Garden consisting of flowers and a lawn. Across from this is a Gazebo, including the 'Olive Tree Sitting Area' that leads to the 'Rose Garden', all of these built and planted in the 'P920's. From this area one proceeds through the 'Oleander Walk', 'Geranium Walk', 'Cypress Tree Steps' and 'Herb Garden' (1922-32). The 'Friendly Garden' (1930's) is adjacent to a tennis court (1921). Behind this is the Jacaranda Walk (1930's) with the kitchen midden exposed on the walkway. This leads to the Cactus Garden and Native Garden planted in the mid 1920's (across the driveway from the northeast corner of the ranch house). The walkway leads to the Old Garden adjacent to the northern elevation of the house which includes a pepper tree surrounded by a wooden pagoda and a Spanish Fountain (1921).

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR HCRS USE ONLY

RECEIVED JUN 4 1981

DATE ENTERED. JUL - 7 1981

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7

PAGE 2

The nominated property includes seven other buildings associated with Bixby Ranch operations. The Foreman's House, constructed in 1910 and situated on its original location, is a one-story gabled board and batten strucutre.

Six other utilitarian structures, constructed between 1910 and 1948, were originally clustered in an area just west of the nominated property, on private land not deeded to the City of Long Beach. These structures, closely associated with the operations of the Rancho Los Alamitos, were moved to their present location when reisdential development on private land threatened their destruction. These six structures include: the Feed Shed, constructed 1910, a gabled roof, long open woodframe barn; the Chuckwagon, constructed 1910, an elevated flat roof wooden structure on wheels; the Blacksmith Shop, constructed 1923, a one-story wooden structure with tin roof; the Horse Barn, constructed 1938, a one- and one-half story enclosed barn with gabled roof and open porch; the Milking Barn, constructed 1945, a one and one-half story wooden barn with catslide roof; and the Stud Barn, constructed 1948, a two-story wood shingle barn with partially enclosed porch. While relocated, these structures retain their integrity of setting, workmanship, materials, design, feeling and association, and contribute to the character of this nomination. (Allerth Allerth Allerth)

Modern intrusions are present within the nominated property. These include a small one-story frame restroom building and a 64-car parking lot. While intrusive, these additions are necessary parts of the city's recreation and interpretive program for the Rancho Los Alamitos. These intrusions do not detract significantly from the integrity of this 7.387 acre property.

8. Significance

| 1500-1599 1600-1699 1700-1799 X 1800-1899 _X 1900- | Areas of Significance—C X archeology-prehistoric archeology-historicX agricultureX architecture art commerce communications See Sequence of | community planning conservation X economics education engineering x exploration/settlement | X landscape architectur law literature military music philosophy politics/government | re religion science sculpture social/ humanitarian theater transportation other (specify) |
|--|--|--|--|---|
| | Construction | Builder/Architect NO | KNOWN | |

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Rancho Los Alamitos is one of the few remaining sites that represents the growth of Southern California from its primitive beginnings to its primary ranking as the largest agriculture and livestock producer in the United States. According to W. W. Robinson,

This small area has at least two claims to fame. It is the site of an important Indian Village, perhaps the most important in Southern California. Also, it is part of a former twenty-eight-thousand-acre Mexican rancho - the so-called 'Los Nietos Grant.' Thus it symbolizes California's rancho days (Robinson 1966:21).

The ranch house of Rancho Los Alamitos has grown from a four room adobe to an eighteen room structure. The importance of the building is not only its early nineteenth century adobe construction (some of it still visible; most gunited in 1933), but the c. 1850's Stearn's wing and the 1880's wooden additions. The house as it exists today is an outstanding example of the way in which a family lived on a ranch and transformed an existing Mexican construction into an Eastern form of building translated to the California lifestyle.

The Gabrielino village of Pubuna (also referred to as Puvunga: Site LAn -306) is said to have been on the site of Rancho Los Alamitos, although there is no evidence as to when it was first occupied, the extent of the site or its relation to other archaeological remains in the area. (Dixon 1972) Pubuna Indians do have baptismal records from 1785 until 1805 at which time the village was probably abandoned. On the site is evidence of kitchen midden tossed by these Indian inhabitants. The village was the legendary birthplace of the Indian prophet Chinigchinich. More archaeological investigation needs to be done on the site.

Rancho Los Alamitos was carved from the largest Spanish land grant by the King of Spain. In 1784 it was deeded to Manual Perez Nieto, a corporal in the Spanish army who deeded it to his children upon his death in 1804.

According to W. W. Robinson, Nieto built an adobe home which "could have been in the year 1806, for Jose Antonio Carrillo recalled visiting it in 1806" (Robinson 1966:27). Other testimony from the Stearns Land Commission hearings refer to 3 or 4 houses on the site and it is difficult to detemine if the adobe portion of the rancho was one of them. When Jose Figueroa (Mexican Governor) purchased the rancho in 1834, he had additional houses constructed (Land Commission Case 404:16). Therefore, one cannot determine if the adobe structure that exists today dates from the Nieto or Figueroa period.

Abel Stearns purchased Rancho Los Alamitos in 1842. It was Stearns who "personified both the Southern California of the Mexican period and the Southern California of the American period" (Cleland 1975:184). This transition is evidenced in the architecture of the ranch house with the construction of the south wing of wood frame construction placed upon a brick foundation and positioned at a right angle to the original adobe

| | Cleland, Robert | Glass. The | Cattle on a The | ousand Hills. San Marino: |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|--|---|
| | The Huntin | gton Library, | | |
| | (See Continuation | | g we was to | |
| <u>10.</u> | Geographic | al Data | Part with the are | And the wife shakes |
| | of nominated property gle_name | | | Quadrangle scale /: 24000 |
| A / / / Zone | 397660 3 | 7 3 7 8 10 10 1 | B Zone | Easting Northing |
| C E G | | | D | |
| Verbal t | | dary correspo | nds to that in | dicated on the attached Plot Plan. |
| | (See Continuation | | | |
| state | states and counties for | code | | |
| State | | code | county | code |
| state | | code | county | code |
| name/title organizat | nancy o. sanqui | | | date February 5, 1981 |
| street & n | number 911 Studeba | ker Road | | telephone (213) 596-3365 |
| city or to | wn Long Beach | | ; | state CA 90815 |
| 12. | State Histo | ric Pres | ervation | Officer Certification |
| The evalu | ated significance of this p | roperty within the | state is: | |
| | national | | local | |
| 665), i he according | reby nominate this proper | y for inclusion in lures set forth by | the National Registe | toric Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89– er and certify that it has been evaluated vation and Recreation Service. |
| title | | | | date 5/20/81 |
| l he | RS use only probably that this prop | any is included in | the Mational Region Entered 1 Vations1 | Table / / |
| Reeper Attest: | of the National Register | | | dente de la companya |

9. Major Bibliographical References

FOR HCRS USE ONLY RECEIVED JUN 4 1981 DATE ENTERED.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

CONTINUATION SHEET SIGNIFICANCE

ITEM NUMBER 8

PAGE 2

construction. Stearns, like the later owners of Rancho Los Alamitos, came from the east, became a large landowner and helped to change the economic life of Southern California. He was a trader who settled in Los Angeles and became one of its wealthiest citizens, as well as serving as first alcalde and President of Los Angeles under Mexican rule. Stearns increased the cattle raising operation on the Rancho. Ranchos in California were "the controlling factor in much of the state's settlement and agriculture development for nearly half a century" (Cleland 1975:4). Stearns' main residence was in Los Angeles, but none of the structures he built, or was involved with, exist today, except Rancho Los Alamitos.

Stearns mortgaged Rancho Los Alamitos to Michael Reese in 1861, who eventually purchased it in a sheriff's sale five years later. Reese was a Bavarian who after living in various eastern and midwestern cities settled in San Francisco in 1850. He became one of San Francisco's leading landowners by seizing on the chance of purchasing land and houses vacated by the exodus to the North in search of gold. By 1878, when Reese died on a trip to his homeland, his estate, including the Long Beach Rancho, was worth \$6,427,591.00 (Cuttler 1963:140). Reese never lived on the ranch, but leased it for stock grazing.

In 1878, John Bixby leased the ranch and thus began the Bixby's 90 year occupation of Rancho Los Alamitos. The Bixby family would become one of the largest landholders in the Los Angeles area by the early 20th century. Lewellyn, Amasa and Jotham Bixby left Maine in the early 1850's for California, as many Maine residents from that state had done during this early period of western migration. Llewellyn returned east and drove approximately 2000 sheep from Illinois to San Gabriel with his cousins, Dr. Thomas and Benjamin Flint. Jotham became involved in mining and farming in the Mother Lode area, then joined Llewellyn, the Flints and W.W. Hollister in raising sheep in Monterey County.

John William Bixby traveled from his native state of Maine to California to supervise the sheep raising operation on his cousin Jotham Bixby's Rancho Los Cerritos. During the Civil War, cotton was replaced by wool, hence the profitability and importance of sheep raising to the economics of the newly created state. The Bixbys, along with Dr. Thomas and Benjamin Flint were considered to be among the important pioneers in this industry.

In 1881, the Rancho was purchased by John W. Bixby, Jotham Bixby Co. and I.W. Hellman who each assumed approximately one third of the 26,395 acre rancho. John managed the rancho which contained cattle, sheep, dairy cows and horses, the later of which was of special interest to him. To make the adobe more liveable for his wife, the former Susan Patterson Hathaway, and their young child Fred, many improvements were made during John's lifetime on the Ranch (1878-1887).

Upon John's death in 1887, the rancho was divided into three parcels, with John's widow and two children receiving the middle section which included the ranch house, barns and corrals (8,300 acres). Hence Rancho Los Alamitos began to shrink in size.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR HCRS USE ONLY

RECEIVED JUN 4 1981

DATE ENTERED JUL - 7 1981

CONTINUATION SHEET SIGNIFICANCE ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 3

By 1906 when Susan Bixby died, the ranch included only 3,700 acres (now owned by the son Fred Bixby), the remaining acerage having been deeded to his sister Susanne Bixby Byrant.

The Rancho soon became the headquarters for the Fred H. Bixby Ranch Company and his acquistion of land. Like Stearns and Reese before him, Fred became one of the largest landowners in Southern California, as well as owning ranches in Nevada and Arizona. The ranchs activities included farming hay, grain, barley, sugar beets, bran and alfalfa and breeding Shorthorn and Hereford cattle and draught horses. In 1915 Rancho Los Alamitos was described as being:

one of the most beautiful in this section, the buildings being located on the heights overlooking the mountains, valley and sea, an ideal spot for a home, the land extending six miles along the coast and being in itself a small principality. The old adobe house that was built over 100 years ago with walls from three and a half to four feet in thickness, has been improved and modernized and yet retains the appearance and necessarily its historical interest that clings to the days when the Spanish dons reigned supreme. The other buildings of the ranch are large and in keeping with the progressive spirit of the owner. (A History of California and an Extended History of Los Angeles and Environs 1915:540).

The gardens of Rancho Los Alamitos grew out of the inspiration of Florence Bixby. By the time she occupied the ranch house in 1906, there was only a eucalyptus tree, pepper tree and two Moreton Fig trees on the front lawn, the later of which date from c. 1890. During the 1920's and early 1930's, the fields around the ranch house were transformed into formalized gardens under Florence's direction. Four of Southern California's most important landscape architects designed various areas of the gardens:

- 1. Rose Garden Florence Yoch, a member of "the pioneer firm of women landscape architects in the West" (California Southland, Nov. 1920, p.10)
- 2. <u>Herb Garden</u> Charles Gibbs Adams, important landscape designer for West Los Angeles and Pasadena in the 1920's and 1930's.
- 3. <u>Cactus Garden</u> William Hertirich who designed the Huntington Botanical Gardens which included the Desert Plant Collection "considered the finest outdoor planting of it's kind" (Padilla 1961:194).
- 4. <u>Native Garden</u> Ed Howard, member of the famed horticultural family who had a special interest in Southwestern plant life.

In 1940, 84.2 acres of Rancho Los Alamitos were condemned by the Navy for a hospital and nine years later c. 300 acres were condemned for Long Beach State College. Fred Bixby died in 1952 and the rancho days on the hill were over. All the ranch lands, except 7.5 acres, were sold for development.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

| FOR HCRS USE C | NLY |
|----------------|-------------|
| RECEIVED 1914 | |
| DATE ENTERED. | JUL -7 1981 |

CONTINUATION SHEET SIGNIFICANCE ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 4

In 1968, Rancho Los Alamitos was granted to the City of Long Beach by a majority of the surviving trustees of the Bixby Home Property Trust. According to the Historical Site Agreement, the site was considered a unique example of "the historical evidence of the growth and change in the California way of life in the Los Alamitos Bay area" and was meant to be a living historical site (Historical Site Agreement 1968: 2).

Five of the eight structures on the site have been moved (see attached plan). This was necessary due to the sale of the surrounding land for single family dwellings. If the structures had not been moved to the site, they would have been destroyed. Since they are contributing components to the understanding of the ranch structures (few of which still exist in Southern California) and were moved only short distances, I do not believe their move should affect their National Register status. The most important structure on the site is the ranch house which is in its original location.

There is no other site locally, in the state or country which exhibits the evolution of a Mexican structure to an Anglican dwelling of a working ranch accompanied by formalized gardens.

FOR HCRS USE ONLY RECEIVED JUN 4 1981 DATE ENTERED JUL - 7 1981

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

CONTINUATION SHEET BIBLIOGRAPHY ITEM NUMBER 9 PAGE 2

- Cowan, Robert D. Ranchos of California. A History of Spanish Concessions 1775-1822 and Mexican Grants 1822-1846. Fresno: Academy Library Guild, 1956.
- Cuttler, Charles H. "Michael Reese. Parsimonious Patron of the University of California." <u>California Historical Society Quarterly</u>, Vol.XLII, No. 2 (June 1963), 127-144.
- Dixon, Keith A. "Reviving Puvunga." <u>The Masterkey</u>, Vol. 46, No. 3 (July Sept. 1972), 1-4.
- Gebhard, David and Robert Winter. <u>A Guide to Architecture in Los Angeles and Southern California.</u> Santa Barbara: Peregrine Smith, Inc.
- Grenier, Judson A, Ed. <u>A Guide to Historic Places in Los Angeles County.</u>
 Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Publ. Co., 1978.
- A History of California and an Extended History of Los Angeles and Environs, Vol. III. Los Angeles: Historic Record Co., 1915.
- Hotchkis, Katherine Bixby. "Rancho Los Alamitos". Unpublished manuscript, 1964.
- . "Background Information for Gardens at Rancho Los Alamitos." Unpublished manuscript, 1970.
- Lockett, William. "Puvunga of Rancho Los Alamitos." <u>Historical Society of Long</u> Beach Journal (1966). 16-21.
- Padilla, Victoria. <u>Southern California Gardens.</u> Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1961.
- Proceedings before the United States Board of Land Commissioners. Case 404. Able Stearns Claiment vs. U.S. Defendant for the Place Named 'Alamitos', Nov. 21, 1852 (Photostats, Huntington Library).
- Robinson, W.W. "Los Alamitos: The Indian and Rancho Phases." <u>California Historical Society</u>, Vol. XLV, No. 1 (March 1966), 21-30.
- Ranchos Become Cities. Pasadena: San Pasquel Press, 1939.
- Smith, Sarah Bixby. Adobe Days. Fresno: Valley Publishers, 1974.
- Stearns, Abel. Manuscripts, Huntington Library.
- Wright, Doris Marion. A Yankee in Mexican California. Abel Stearns, 1798-1848. Santa Barbara: Wallace Hebberd, 1977.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR HCRS USE ONLY

RECEIVED JUN : 1987

DATE ENTERED.

JUL - 7 - 1981

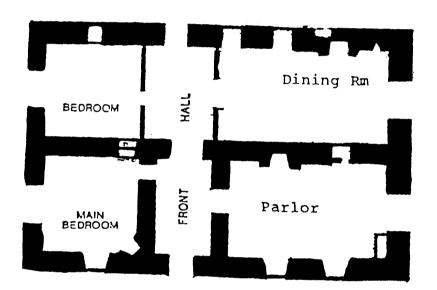
CONTINUATION SHEET VERBAL BOUNDARIES ITEM NUMBER 10 PAGE 2

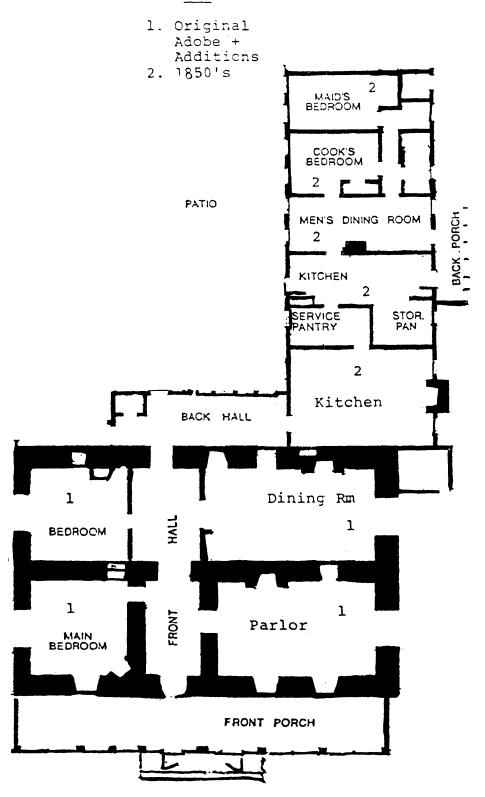
Beginning at the southeast corner of Lot 50 of Tract No. 21067, as per map recorded in Book 737 pages 76 to 84 inclusive of maps, records of said county; thence along the boundary line of said Tract No. 21067, the following courses and distances: North 0° 27' 31" West 130.00 feet, North 89° 32' 29" East 214.67 feet, South 84° 03' 18" East 300.00 feet, South 5° 56' 42" West 69.00 feet, South 43° 30' 45" East 141.00 feet, South 27° 00' 45" East 40.00 feet, South 3° 10' 45" East 209.00 feet, South 84° 03' 18" East 126.00 feet, South 5° 56' 42" West 60.00 feet, North 84° 03' 18" West 122.00 feet South 86° 39' 15" West 250.00 feet, South 56° 49' 15" West 127.00 feet, North 33° 10' 45" West, 129.00 feet, South 86° 39' 15" West 126.80 feet, South 56° 49' 15" West 28.00 feet, North 33° 10' 45" West 280.00 feet and North 35° 46' 18" East 171.50 feet to the point of the beginning.

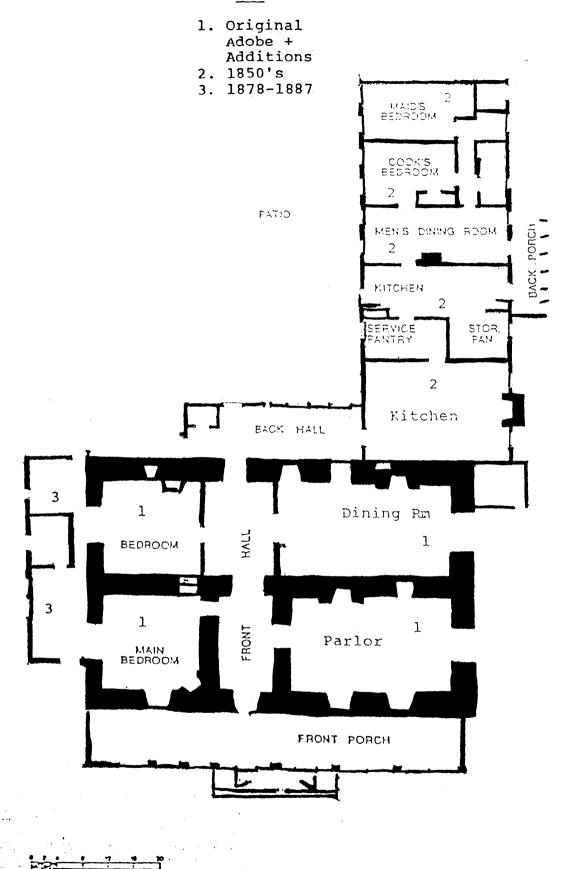
Beginning at the intersection of the center line of Bixby Hill Road, 60 feet wide, with the Northerly prolongation of the Westerly line of said Lot 101, as said intersection is shown on said map; thence along said center line, south 840 03' 18" East 22.00 feet; thence parallel with said prolongation and said Westerly line, South 50 56' 42" West, 69.00 feet; thence South 36° 56' 55" East 125.10 feet to an angle point in the Southwesterly line of said Lot 100, said angle point being the Southeasterly terminus of that certain course in said Southwesterly line, shown on said map as having a length of 16.39 feet; thence along said Southwesterly line to and along the Southwesterly line of said Lot 101, North 43° 30' 45" West 141.00 feet to the Southwest corner of said Lot 101; thence along the Westerly line of said Lot 101 and its prolongation, North 5° 56' 42" East, 69.00 feet to the point of beginning.

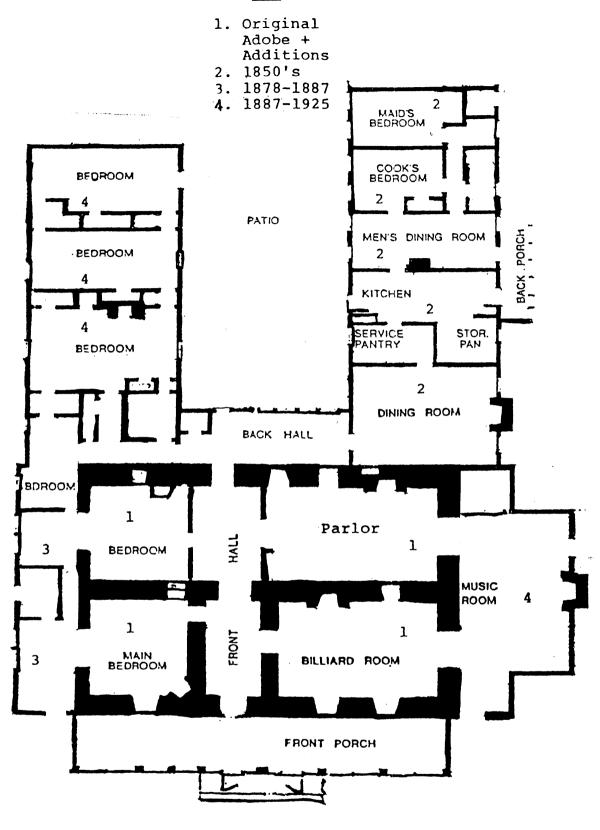
PATIO

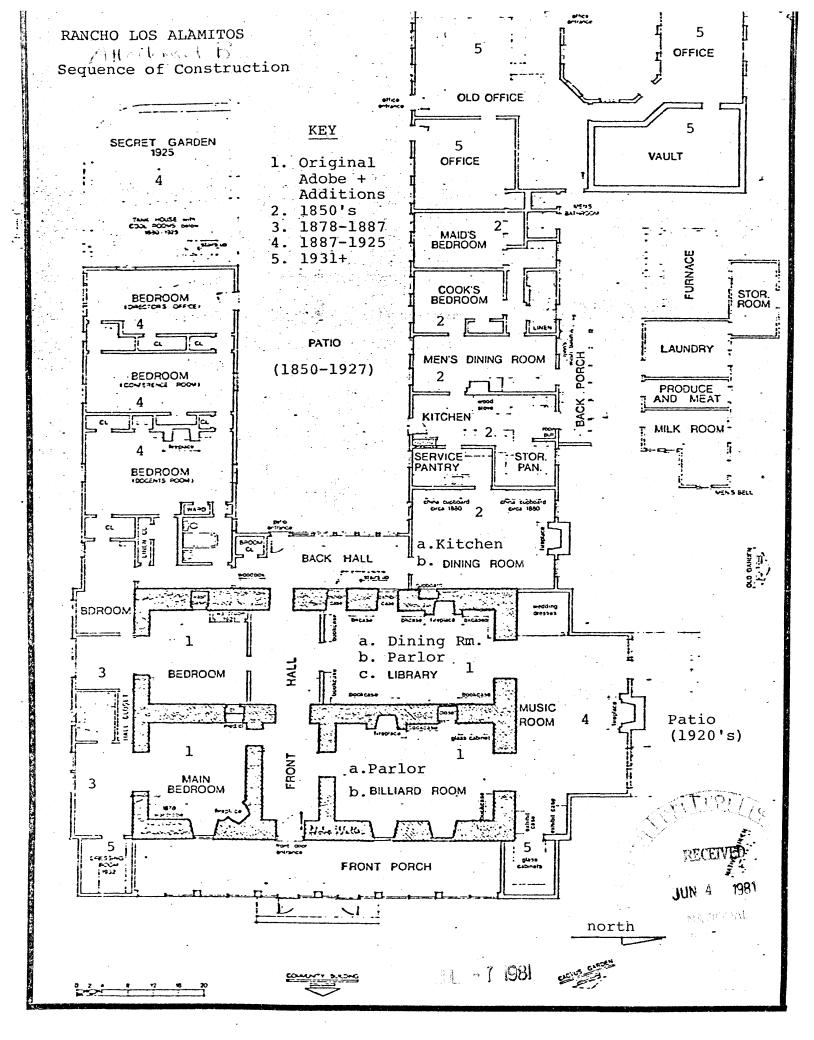
7.2





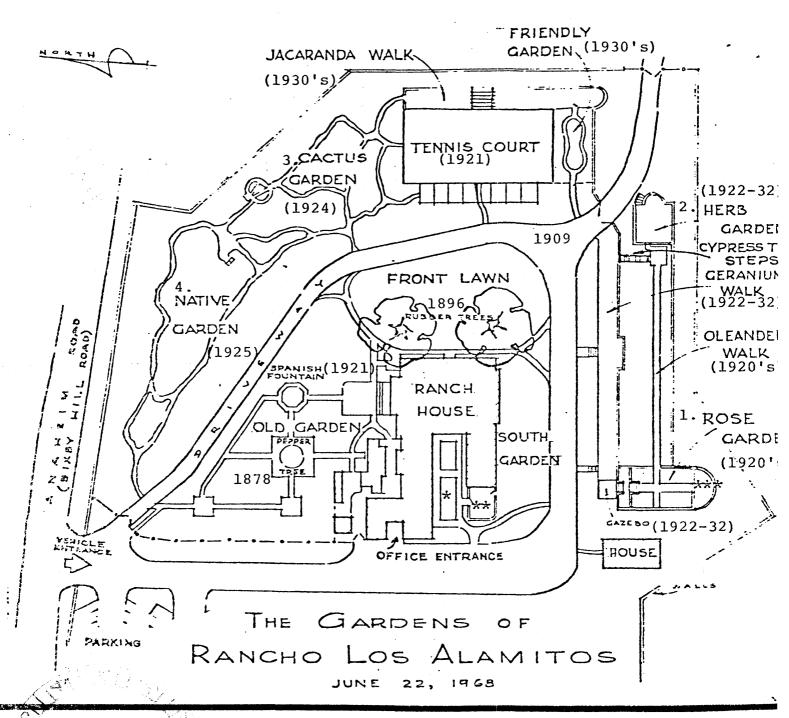






RANCHO LOS ALAMITOS

Attachment D



RECEIVED Gardens designed by Florence Bakby with the assistance of:

* Back Patio (1927)

** Secret Garden (1925)
*** Olive Tree Sitting Area

(1920's)

REGIST 2: Charles Adams (Pasadena)
3. William Hertrich, Huntington Library Gardens

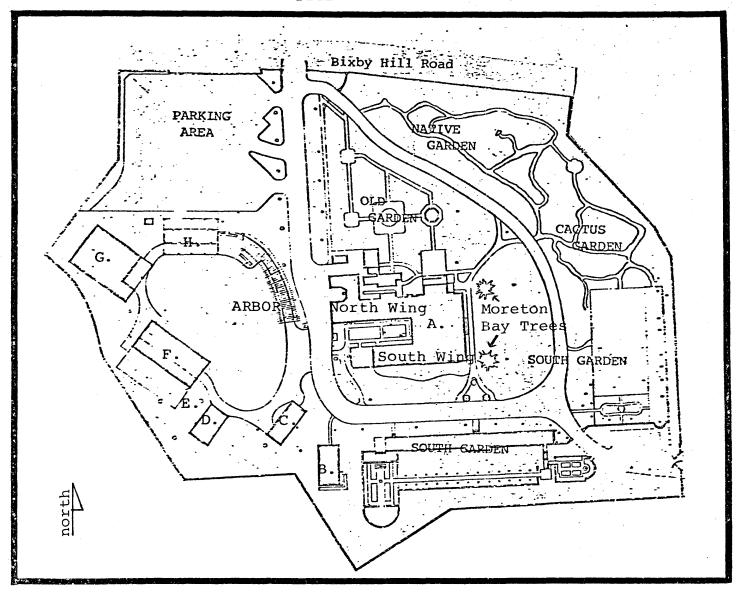
4. Ed Howard (Paul Howard, Landscape Architecture)

Allen L. Chickering (Piedmont)

1-7

RANCHO LOS ALAMITOS

SITE PLAN



STRUCTURES:

- Bixby Residence and Office Α.
- Foreman's House В.
- C.
- Milking Barn Blacksmith's Shop D.
- E. Chuckwagon
- F. Feed Barn
- G. Stallion Barn
- н. Horse Barn

RECEIVED

JUN 4 1981

NATIONAL RECUSTER

