

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

For NPS use only

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received **MAR 7 1986**

date entered **MAR 29 1986**

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

**1. Name**

historic Casa de Parley Johnson

and/or common Casa de Parley Johnson

**2. Location**

street & number 7749 Florence Avenue N/A not for publication

city, town Downey N/A vicinity of

state California code 06 county Los Angeles code 037

**3. Classification**

| Category  | Ownership                                   | Status  | Present Use   |
|---|---|---|---|
| <input 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 type="checkbox"/> commercial                   |
| <input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted | <input type="checkbox"/> government                   |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> being considered   | <input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted          | <input type="checkbox"/> industrial                   |
|   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A     | <input type="checkbox"/> no                         | <input type="checkbox"/> military                     |
|   |   |   | <input type="checkbox"/> museum                       |
|   |   |   | <input type="checkbox"/> park                         |
|   |   |   | <input checked="" 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 Mrs. Parley Johnson (Geline Gates Johnson)

street & number 7749 Florence Ave.

city, town Downey N/A vicinity of state CA 90241

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Los Angeles County Hall of Records

street & number 511 W. Temple Street

city, town Los Angeles state CA 90012

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title State Historic Properties Inventory has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date July 20, 1977  federal  state  county  local

(Survey entry #535, Los Angeles County)

depository for survey records State Office of Historic Preservation

P. O. Box 2390

city, town Sacramento state CA 95811

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## 7. Description

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|   |                                       |   |   |
|---|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| <b>Condition</b>                              |                                       | <b>Check one</b>                              | <b>Check one</b>                                  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent | <input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site |
| <input type="checkbox"/> good                 | <input type="checkbox"/> ruins        | <input type="checkbox"/> altered              | <input type="checkbox"/> moved                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> fair                 | <input type="checkbox"/> unexposed    |   | date <u>N/A</u>                                   |

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

Casa de Parley Johnson is a two-story Spanish Colonial Revival residence of the "Monterey" genre, designed in a modified L-shaped configuration which takes full advantage of exterior courtyards, patios, and gardens surrounding the structure. The basic elements of its design, characteristic of the Monterey/Spanish Colonial Revival style, include a white stucco exterior with walls, recessed windows with wrought iron detail, contrasting shutters, a wooden balcony extending the length of the north facade, slightly pitched gable roofs covered with red tile, French doors, and colorful glazed ceramic tile. The lushly landscaped property, replete with gardens, fountains, and a formal lawn, is surrounded by thick whitewashed walls, lending the residence privacy and a certain formality in a busy urban setting and enabling it to retain its original estate-like quality. Interiors have wood beam ceilings, tile floors, wrought iron circular main stair, ceramic tile decorations, and fireplaces. The structure is unaltered, retaining all of the characteristic features of its style and time.

Access to the property is gained via a driveway at the western boundary of the site. The long drive culminates in the motor court at the northwest corner of the property. The main residence and servants wing form an "L" to the south and east of the motor court. The four-car garage and chauffeur's quarters (approximately 1,220 square feet) are in a one-story building recessed behind a covered walkway capped by a red tile roof. The north facade of the two-story residence has deeply recessed window and door openings. A narrow brick "patio" stretches the length of the structure. Windows are two-over-two double-hung sash; some are set behind wrought iron grilles. The massive wooden door is recessed in a squared arch. The main feature of the second story is the balcony with its plain wooden railing which extends almost the entire length of the building. Access to the balcony is through French doors accented with full-length wooden shutters. The motor court is shaded by several mature eucalyptus trees. The south elevation is a modified U-shape, oriented around the walled garden area. On the west side is the living room, with its covered tile patio serving as an extension of the main space; to the east is the breakfast room. The main wing forms the north boundary of the garden. In this area is an open brick patio which gives way to a broad expanse of lawn bordered by flowers and shrubs. There is an auxiliary patio area with a fountain at the south end of the garden. The major design elements are again featured on the south elevation: an abbreviated version of the second-story balcony, similar door and window treatments, the pergola-like covered patio, and the extensive use of red tile, brick, and wrought iron. Fountains, pools, and ceramic planters and pots play a major part in the landscape design.

The interior of the residence is virtually intact. The main floor features a tiled two-story entrance hall whose main element is the L-shaped wood and wrought iron stairway. Colorful tile inserts decorate the risers. The north wing includes a study, office alcove, and spacious (24 x 36 feet) living room with a massive beamed ceiling. The windows in this room have tiled window seats below them. The floors of all main floor rooms are red clay tile, each laid in a different pattern. The south end of the first floor contains the dining room, kitchen, breakfast room, and service area. There are three wood-burning fireplaces on this level. Rooms are connected with arched openings. The upstairs is arranged to include a master suite with two baths, gentlemen's and ladies' dressing areas, and a fireplace; two other bedrooms, each with its own bath; and a sitting alcove. Bedrooms have hardwood floors; fixtures and tile is commensurate with the period of construction.

# 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> education              | <input type="checkbox"/> military               | <input type="checkbox"/> social/<br>humanitarian |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799        | <input type="checkbox"/> art                     | <input type="checkbox"/> engineering            | <input type="checkbox"/> music                  | <input type="checkbox"/> theater                 |
| <input 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 type="checkbox"/> industry               | <input type="checkbox"/> politics/government    | <input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)         |
|   |  | <input type="checkbox"/> invention              |   |  |

**Specific dates** 1926-27 **Builder/Architect** Roland A. Coate

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Casa de Parley Johnson is an excellent, unaltered example of the Monterey subtype of the Spanish Colonial Revival style by a Southern California architect noted for his work in residential designs. It represents the lifestyle of wealthy citrus growers in the 1920s, when the citrus industry was a vital part of the Southern California economy. The home and its gardens continue to portray the indoor/outdoor juxtaposition of space that was an integral part of the Southern California tradition.

Casa de Parley Johnson, a 6,000-square-foot residence situated on a lushly landscaped estate surrounded by whitewashed walls, was designed in the Monterey style by noted Southern California architect Roland Coate for a prominent citrus rancher, Parley Johnson. As such, it typifies the lifestyle of the area in the 1920s and 30s and is evocative of Downey's rural beginnings. Coate is acknowledged to be a major proponent of the Monterey style in Southern California, believing that its blend of Colonial and native California forms particularly lent itself to a formal, yet relaxed country lifestyle. Mr. Johnson was the ideal client, who allowed Coate to articulate his theories. Coate's articles on the "Early California House" provided examples to the revival architects of succeeding decades. The plan of such a residence, integrating patios and courts with balconies and galleries (and thereby to interiors), was critical to achieving the kind of ambience Coate sought. He saw it as the extension of Southern California's Spanish heritage, with a touch of Yankee ingenuity (and, at times, formality) added. It was well-suited to the climate but not a simple adobe ranch house. The rancher of the Twenties was a businessman, and, as such, required space for management as well as entertaining. Featured in a 1931 Architect and Engineer article devoted to California country homes, Casa de Parley Johnson was touted as an excellent example of a style of architecture and a plan designed to provide for a variety of needs. While the original context of many of Coate's commissions have been lost, the Johnson residence retains its architectural integrity and much of its original landscape design. Originally surrounded by the Johnson orange groves, the space within the walls remains intact, providing a unique sense of time and place.

Alexander Parley Johnson, born in Riverside, California, in 1890, was the son of a Chicagoan who had extensive citrus holdings in Riverside, concentrating on the development of the Valencia strain. The senior Johnson also developed real estate in Los Angeles, and speculated in oil drilling. Parley, who attended college in Los Angeles and was one of the founders of the Southern California Automobile Club, became interested in ranching after World War I. A friend, James Tweedy, had a ranch in the Downey area, and Johnson followed suit, working closely with local packers, Ball and Tweedy, to market his crop. In 1925, he married Geline Gates Richardson, and shortly thereafter hired Coate to build an appropriate residence. Johnson closely supervised the construction, which took several years to complete, taking a personal interest in the craftsman whose handiwork shaped the edifice. Mr. Johnson died in the late 1940s, after which the extensive citrus groves were gradually sold off for commercial and residential use. Casa de Parley Johnson remains as an excellent example of the well-to-do rancher's lifestyle in the Southern California of the 1920s, a product of a skilled and knowledgeable architect and an astute client.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Architectural Digest, 7:4:1930  
Architect and Engineer, 5/32, pp. 28-29, 32-33  
Architect and Engineer, 4/35, p. 50  
California Arts and Architecture, 3/29, pp. 20-30

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 1.54 acres

Quadrangle name South Gate

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

### UTM References

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**Verbal boundary description and justification** Tract 10672, commencing at the most westerly corner of Lot 22, Tract 16416, then south 58° 51' 40" east 170', then southwesterly 394' to northerly line of Florence Avenue, then westerly thereon 170', then north 31° 08' 30" east to beginning point. Boundaries are drawn on lot lines encompassing the historic property.

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

| state | N/A | code | county | N/A | code |
|-------|-----|------|--------|-----|------|
|-------|-----|------|--------|-----|------|

| state | code | county | code |
|-------|------|--------|------|
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## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Christy Johnson McAvoy, Preservation Consultant

organization Johnson Research Associates

date September 1985

street & number 3103 Lindo Street

telephone (213) 851-8854

city or town Los Angeles

state CA 90068

## 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 National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title State Historic Preservation Officer

Kathryn Squatterri date 12/23/85

For NPS use only

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

Entered in the National Register on 3/20/86

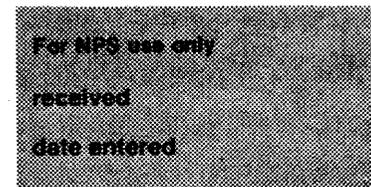
James M. McPherson  
Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

Chief of Registration

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 1

The architect of the Casa de Parley Johnson, Roland Coate, was born in Indiana in 1898. He was educated at Cornell University. From 1922-25, he was associated with noted architects Reginald Johnson and Gordon Kaufmann. He is credited with the design of the first Monterey Colonial residence, the Bixby residence in Pasadena. Mr. Coate's commissions are found throughout the well-to-do Southern California communities of Beverly Hills, Pasadena, San Marino, Bel Air, and South Pasadena. He designed residences for Frank Capra, John McCone, the O'Melveny and Selznick families. Institutional and commercial commissions include All Saints Episcopal Church (Beverly Hills, 1925), Good Samaritan Hospital (Los Angeles), and the Pasadena Town Club (Pasadena, 1931). In addition to being a strong proponent of the Monterey style, Mr. Coate also designed a number of Georgian, Federal, Regency, and Spanish Colonial Revival residences.

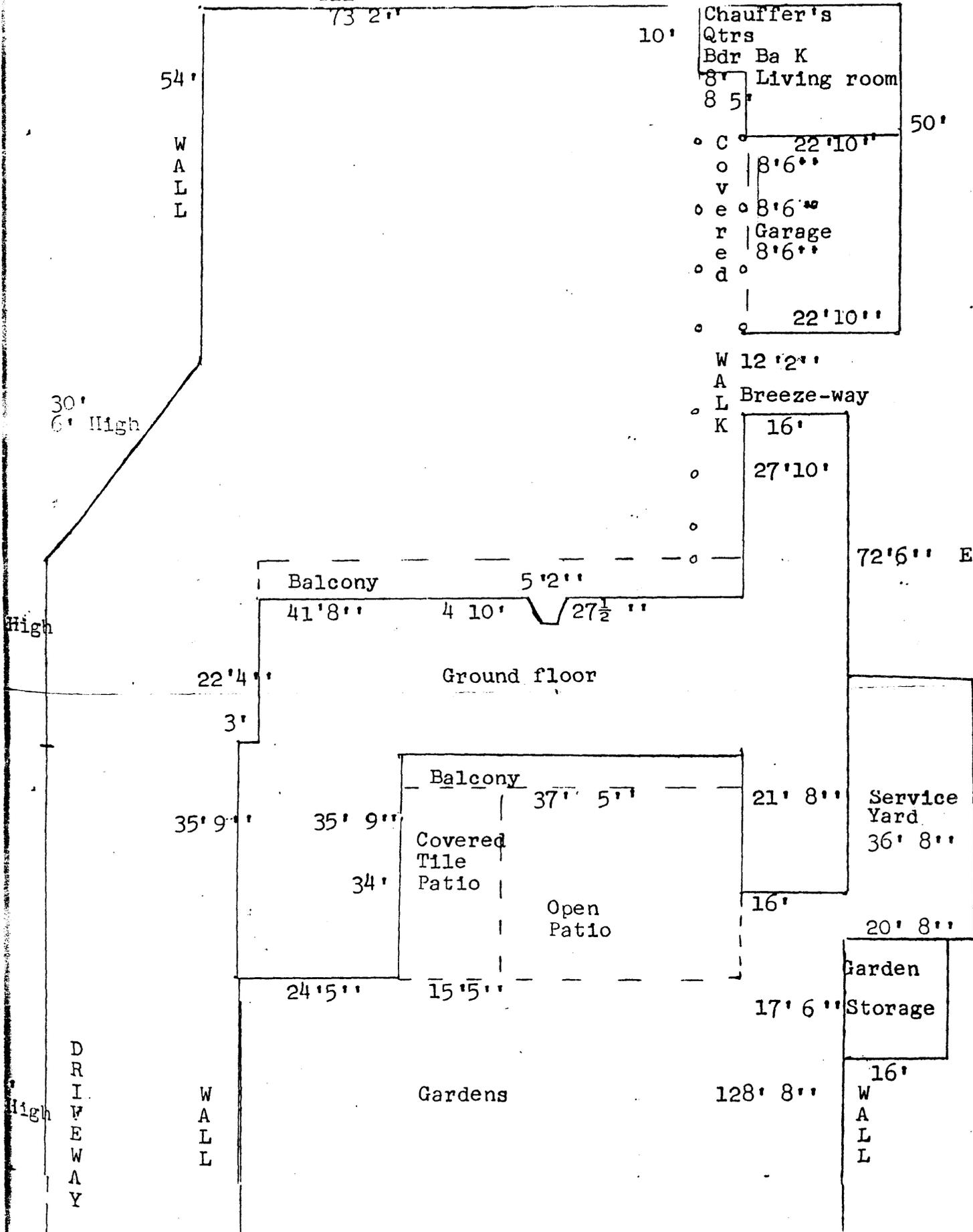
Local context: Originally subdivided in 1865 by John G. Downey, a governor of California, the city of Downey was not developed as a residential community until the mid-1940s. For almost one hundred years, the area remained agricultural, divided primarily into large citrus ranches. Casa de Parley Johnson is a product of this citrus growing period in the community's development and one of its most prominent remaining residences. The remaining 1-1/2 acre estate was the centerpiece of a once-larger citrus ranch which has been lost to suburbanization in one of Los Angeles' largest bedroom communities. Viewed in the midst of endless tracts of postwar residential development, the Casa de Parley Johnson is remarkable for the very fact that it has survived to the present. This 1926-27 complex is the work of an acknowledged master of the Spanish Colonial Revival, Roland Coate. Coate was a prominent Southern California architect of the 1920s and 30s who was known for the high quality of his work; his designs were frequently published in architectural publications of the period. The Casa de Parley Johnson is a handsome example of its type and period, and is especially notable in the context of the local community, which retains almost no links with its historic past.

G-3359H

Casa de Parley Johnson  
 7749 Florence Ave  
 Downey, California.

N

Wall Rear 6' High



Casa de Parley Johnson  
 7749 Florence Ave,  
 Downey, Ca.

N

Ground Floor

Rear

16'

Maid's Bdr  
 Ma Bdr  
 Ma Ba

74.25'

Study Pdr Room S t a i r s Entry Dining Room P a n t r y Service Porch Kitchen

72'5"

W

60'

Alcove

Living Room

P a t i o 34'

52'

22'

P a n t r y Bkft Rm

16'

24'

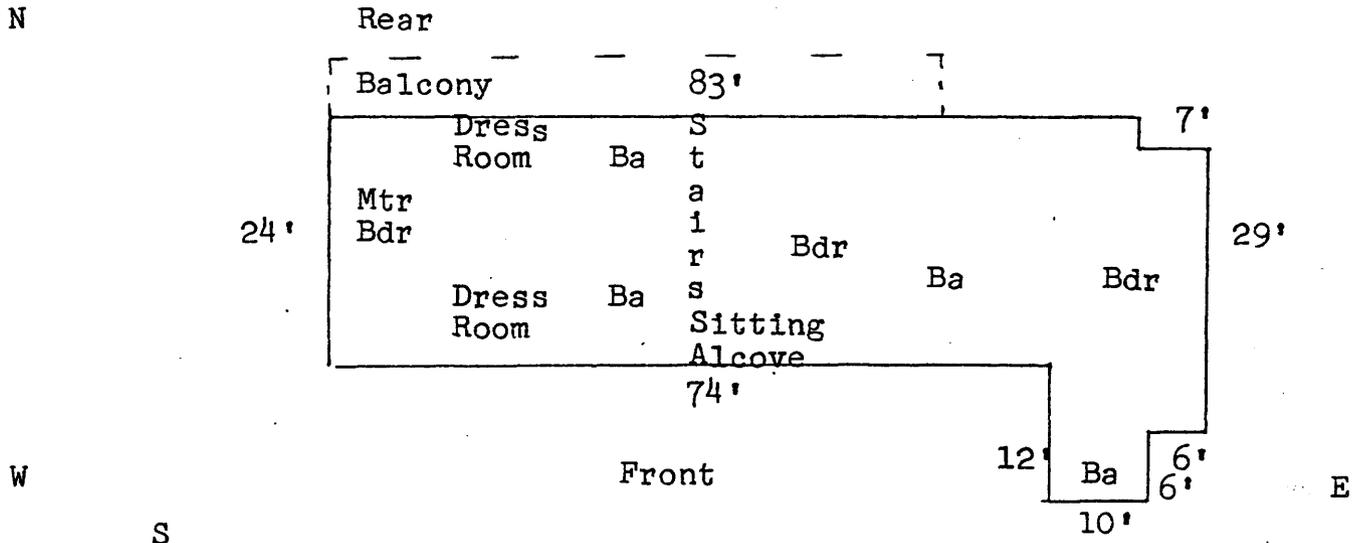
Front

E

S

Casa de Parley Johnson  
 7749 Florence Ave, Downey, Ca.

2nd Floor



Ground floor 3,838 sf. more or less.  
 2nd floor 2,205 sf. more or less.  
 Total 6,133 sq. footage.  
 Garage and Chauffer's quarters 1,220 sf. more or less.  
 Basement 69'x21'2''equals 1,459 sf. more or less.

6360 | 18

SCALE 1" = 60'

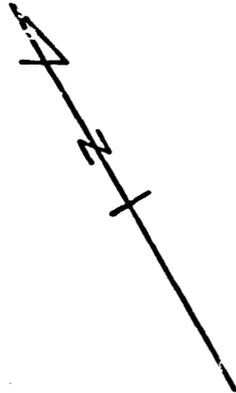
Casa de Parlow Johnson  
7749 Florence Avenue  
Downey, Los Angeles County, California

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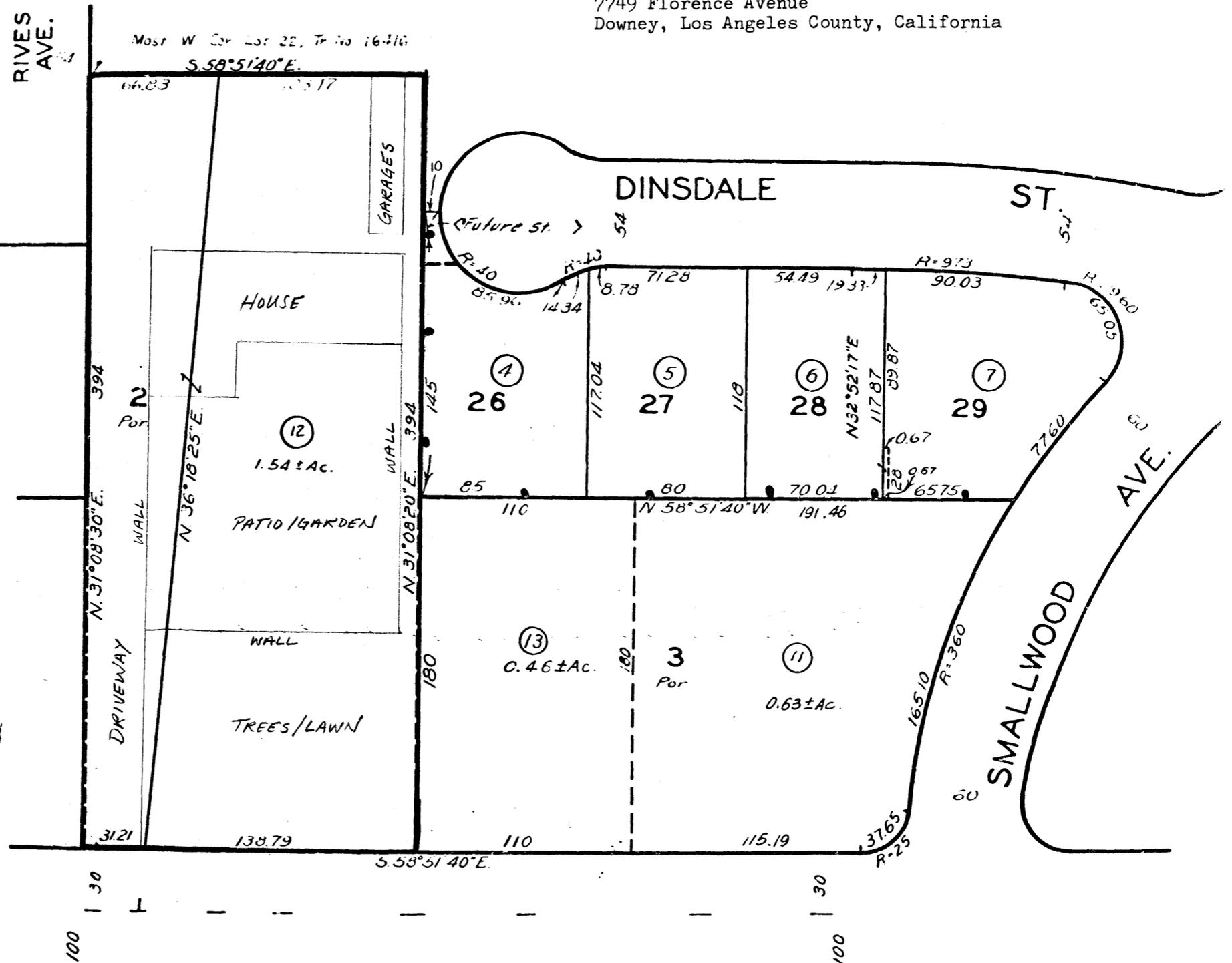


TRACT NO. 16930

M.B. 397-49-50

TRACT NO. 10672

M.B. 163-40



FLORENCE

AVE



TILED FLOOR LIVING ROOM IN THE PARLEY JOHNSON HOME,  
DOWNEY, CALIFORNIA  
ROLAND E. COATE, ARCHITECT

Casa de Parley Johnson  
7749 Florence Avenue  
Downey, Los Angeles County, California