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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC VILLA MIRA MONTE

AND/OR COMMON

(MORGAN HILL) HOME

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

17860 Monterey Road

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Morgan Hill

VICINITY OF San Jose

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

13

STATE

California 95037

CODE

06

COUNTY

Santa Clara

CODE

085

3 CLASSIFICATION

Table with 4 columns: CATEGORY, OWNERSHIP, STATUS, PRESENT USE. Includes checkboxes for building type, ownership, status, and use.

4 OWNERS OF PROPERTY

NAME

Paul and Adelaide Walgren

STREET & NUMBER

17860 Monterey Road

CITY, TOWN

Morgan Hill

VICINITY OF San Jose

STATE

California 95037

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Office of the County Recorder, County of Santa Clara

STREET & NUMBER

70 West Hedding Street, Second Floor, East Wing

CITY, TOWN

San Jose

STATE

California 95110

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Santa Clara County Heritage Resource Inventory

DATE

October, 1975

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS

Santa Clara County Historical Heritage Commission

CITY, TOWN

70 West Hedding St., 6th Floor, East Wing; San Jose, California 95110

STATE

## 7 DESCRIPTION

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EXCELLENT

DETERIORATED

UNALTERED

ORIGINAL SITE

GOOD

RUINS

ALTERED

MOVED

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

FAIR

UNEXPOSED

### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Morgan Hill Home (Villa Mira Monte) is a one-story white frame house built in a variant of the Victorian stick style by Diana and Morgan Hill. Constructed in 1886, it is located on a prime parcel of land between Monterey Road (El Camino Real) along the southwest boundary in front of the house, and the Southern Pacific Railroad tracks along the northeast boundary in back of the house.

The house was carefully situated on one of the smaller 8,927-acre ranchos inherited from Diana's father Daniel Murphy to take advantage of an inspiring view of "Murphy's Peak" (now known as "El Toro"). Since 1846 this famous conical landmark with a huge cross on top had served to guide travellers and early American immigrants to her grandfather Martin Murphy's adobe "mustard hut" on a lower north slope of the mountain. The Morgan Hill Home is one-and-one-third mile northeast of the 1,423-foot summit of Murphy's Peak.

The redwood lumber for this "Old Homestead," as it later came to be known, was hauled by William Fay from Watsonville over the primitive Watsonville Road (now known as the Redwood Retreat Road). 6x8" redwood girders in the basement are supported by 6x6" redwood posts and the floor joists are 2x10" on 16" centers. Machine-sawed redwood boards in the attic are 1x14" and the tongue-and-groove floor boards are 1x6". The beveled siding boards on the outside of the house are 9" wide and the vertical corner trim boards are 1x6". The soffitt of the porch is constructed of 2" boards.

The house has a small dirt basement with two of the original cast-iron basement grills in front, each measuring 17-3/4" x 12". There is a full-sized unfinished attic with five small rooms tucked under the eaves around a large central room. There are wide verandahs around three sides of the house.

Flanking the front driveway are the two original rock-garden hills and wide beds of rare and lovely iris. The "Carmel Slag" stone pillars which now stand at the entrance to the drive were installed by the present owners. Originally, a picket fence enclosed the yard which contained fine varieties of grapes brought from France, and on a high post near the gate a sign bore the name "Villa Mira Monte."

The double front doors of Villa Mira Monte open into a large central room, extending from the front of the house to the back. Originally, this space encompassed two rooms, a parlor in front and a dining room in the back of the house, separated by a central chimney with double fireplaces back-to-back which was removed in the 1930's. The three-bedroom house was described by Carrie Stevens Walter in 1887 as "a neat yet spacious cottage" having six rooms, plus a bathroom, a walk-in pantry, a conservatory, and the servants' quarters in the attic. The rooms have twelve-foot ceilings.

On the right-hand southeast side of the house, adjacent to the main room, are a front bedroom with an original marble washstand in one corner, a pass-through bathroom with an original marble-topped lavatory, a back bedroom with a fireplace on the outside wall and an entrance from the verandah, and in the back east corner of the house a room originally laid out as a conservatory.

On the left-hand northwest side of the house, adjacent to the main room, are another front bedroom, then the kitchen and a walk-in pantry with an entrance from the verandah, and in the north corner of the house a back porch which is now glassed-in.

Using the accompanying ten photographs as visual aids, let us take a good look at this unique "country cottage" built by Diana and Morgan Hill.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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CONTINUATION SHEET-Description

ITEM NUMBER-7

PAGE-2

Photo #1 was taken in 1912-13 of the Morgan Hill Home from due west. One of the two tall rock-garden hills which still flank the driveway is visible on the right of the picture. The venerable oak trees shading the yard also remain. Shown clearly are the two front gables, each with a vertical window of colored glass panes centered in a flamboyant pattern of English Curvilinear half-timber work, a motif that will be repeated on all four sides of the house. Above the gables, two of the three dormer windows are visible, each with its vertical panes of colored glass set off by a horizontal diamond pane in the center. Also shown are the decorative bargeboards outlining the gables, the handsome finials which graced the gables and dormers, the two wide "sashes" of pale round shingles which trimmed the roof, the cymatiums surmounting the dormer ridgepoles and the decorative railing on top of the house. Most of these trim items are long gone and the handsome roof, which was leaking badly when the Walgrens bought the house in the late 1930's, had to be torn off and replaced by common cedar shingles during World War II. The chimney in back of the decorative railing, part of the double fireplaces which originally divided the front parlor from the back dining room, was torn down when the house was remodeled into a funeral parlor during the early 1930's. The original front steps of wood have been replaced by cement steps, and the flanking staircasing has been remodeled. The verandahs are almost hidden by the luxuriant wisteria, since removed except for a remnant on the northwest side of the entrance.

Photographs #2-#5 and #7-#10 were all taken in May, 1977.

Moving clockwise around the house, Photo #2 is taken from due north. The gable on this side of the house repeats the theme of a vertical window of colored glass panes centered in the flamboyant pattern of English Curvilinear half-timber trim. Below this gable is located the kitchen and a walk-in pantry with an entrance from the verandah on the right. The original kitchen chimney, built to serve the original wood-burning stove, still stands as does the original metal vent with its fanciful trim. The back porch is in the corner of the house closest to the camera: there are small rectangles of colored glass running around the top of the room under the eaves which were installed by Adelaide Walgren when the room was glassed-in. Originally, the back porch was screened-in. The original wooden balusters still support, in an uncertain way, the handrails on either side of the back steps. The back door has been damaged by a would-be sneak thief. The cellar door is visible to the right of the back steps. A close inspection of this back side of the house will indicate that, where the second window from the left is now located, there was once another back door, opening into the original conservatory and symmetrically balancing the entrance to the back porch.

Photo #3 is a close-up of the gable shown in Photo #2, taken to illustrate some of the remarkable architectural details of the Morgan Hill Home. Note the decorative barge-boards of the gable with their finely cut ogee terminals at the bottom ends, the cut-outs at the top of the gable, the sun-burst at the lower corner of the dormer, and the fine moldings used to trim all eaves as visible at the lower right. The gable end

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	JAN 24 1978
DATE ENTERED	MAY 25 1978

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 3

has been built of horizontal tongue-and-groove boards, embellished with the flamboyant curvilinear half-timber trim.

Photo #4 is taken from due east. The gable centrally located at the back of the house is distinguished by an elegant lancet window, set with panes of colored glass above a square bas-relief panel of acanthus leaves, all centered in the repeated flamboyant pattern of half-timber trim. This lancet window may have been re-created in fond memory of a similar lancet window featured on the front of the town house built by Diana's parents, Daniel and Maria Fisher Murphy, in San Jose prior to 1870. There, at 325 South First Street, next to Murphy's Stockyards on San Carlos Street between First and Market, the Murphy family lived until Dan Murphy's death in October, 1882, and there the young Missourian named Hiram Morgan Hill came to woo Miss Diana. The room below this gable was originally the dining room. The room in the corner nearest the camera is the original conservatory, still enhanced by the original trim of small rectangles of colored glass under the eaves. Notice how the trim under the eaves of the verandah repeats this motif, although without the panes of colored glass. The back of the house is the only side without a high dormer window.

Photo # 5 shows the southeast side of the house behind a garden of blue larkspur punctuated with hollyhocks. The gable on this side of the house has two small plain windows on either side of the brick chimney, which was rebuilt after the 1906 earthquake shook it down. The room below this gable is the back bedroom with a fireplace and an entrance from the verandah on the left. The dormer window has a missing colored pane. Clearly shown in this picture are the ornamental brackets supporting the trim under the eaves and the handsomely arcaded railing around the verandahs.

Photo #6, taken in the early spring of 1976, shows the front of the Morgan Hill Home from the southwest. The top of the round arch above the front steps is hidden by the "Antiques" sign, but the bas-relief acanthus leaves ornamenting the spandrels are visible. Notice the original milled scallop shingles in the gable ends. Notice, also, how the chimney has been carefully rebuilt to lean outward. What looks like a finial on the dormer ridgepole is actually a weathervane decorated by a rooster. There is a handsome carriage light on the post at the left that was not there when the 1912-13 picture was taken. Behind the carriage light, a wisteria trunk has lifted the porch railing and roof out of place.

When it was originally built in 1886, Villa Mira Monte contained 10-foot tall gilt mirrors, elaborate crystal chandeliers in the parlor and dining rooms, lovely landscape tiles imported from Minton's ceramic works in England which decorated both sides of the double fireplace, and entrance panes of Tiffany-type jeweled and leaded stained glass.

Photo #7 shows the Tiffany-type panes in the double front doors, each featuring a jeweled blue daisy set in a ruby medallion centered between designs of leaves and Gothic arches above and below. The horizontal Tiffany-type pane installed as a transom light over the entrance features two jeweled white daisies in a ruby medallion with the leaves and Gothic arches extending out to each side.

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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED JAN 24 1978

DATE ENTERED MAY 25 1978

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 4

The top half of each tall front window on either side of the double doors contains the original colored glass panes with squares of lavender, purple, chartreuse, and yellow set in a border around a large center pane of amber glass.

Photo #8 shows one of the two matching M-H monograms, with the hand-carved letters carefully entwined, embellishing the entrance. Each monogram is centered on the outside of one of the front doors below the Tiffany-type stained glass pane and is set in a hand-carved roundel enameled in Oriental Red, flanked by the familiar bas-relief acanthus leaves. The original paneled double screen-doors are still installed on the outside of these elegantly crafted front doors. Their brass handles are crafted in a unique "belt-buckle" design worthy of mention.

One of the most fascinating structural details of Villa Mira Monte is the unique set of hand-wrought brass door-knobs gracing the front entrance and the marvellously detailed key-plate and matching bolt-plate shown in Photo #9. Obviously "keyed" to an Oriental motif, from the pagoda roof above the door-knob and the personage with the folded fan guarding the key-hole, to the open fan dangling at the bottom of the plate, this set of hardware is a masterpiece.

Each hand-wrought brass door-knob, one of which is shown in Photo #10, contains the bas-relief bust of a Japanese maiden, kimono-clad, with an ornate coiffure and the parasol over her shoulder fanning out to take the form of the door-knob. The composition is utterly charming and beautifully integrated.

For whatever it's worth, my personal opinion is that most likely this handcast brass hardware was inspired by Gilbert and Sullivan's operetta, "The Mikado," which opened to wild acclamation at The Savoy Theatre in London on March 14, 1885.

Perhaps the hardware was imported from England or purchased abroad by Diana and Morgan Hill on one of their trips to Europe. On September 1, 1883, the San Jose paper quotes a dispatch from the San Francisco Chronicle: "Morgan Hill and his bride, formerly Miss Diana H. Murphy of San Jose, left for Paris yesterday on their wedding trip." It is also known that on December 19, 1891, Diana Murphy Hill was in Paris, France, signing legal documents before the Vice Consul General of the United States of America, and that Morgan Hill joined her there before April 28, 1892. Of course, more research is needed to document the movements of the peripatetic Hills and, especially, to establish the dates for their sojourns in California.

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PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
__PREHISTORIC	__ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	__COMMUNITY PLANNING	__LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	__RELIGION
__1400-1499	__ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	__CONSERVATION	__LAW	__SCIENCE
__1500-1599	__AGRICULTURE	__ECONOMICS	__LITERATURE	__SCULPTURE
__1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	__EDUCATION	__MILITARY	__SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
__1700-1799	__ART	__ENGINEERING	__MUSIC	__THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	__COMMERCE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	__PHILOSOPHY	__TRANSPORTATION
__1900-	__COMMUNICATIONS	__INDUSTRY	__POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY) Community Identity.
		__INVENTION		

Built in 1886, as determined from the San Jose City Directory published in January, 1887. BUILDER/ARCHITECT-Unknown at this time. Built by Diana Murphy and Hiram Morgan Hill.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

This house is significant because the lives of its builders, Diana Murphy and Morgan Hill, touched the lives of a multitude of persons who played leading parts in the great westward drive which opened a new land and gave impetus to a new civilization. The house is also significant because it embodies in a very charming way the style and flavor of the period just prior to the Gay Nineties. As a "honeymoon" cottage, a "country home" built when some romance was still to come, it is a structure well integrated in location, design, setting, materials, craftsmanship and feeling. Neat yet spacious; simple yet elegant: like many first efforts, one of the best of its kind.

The house is singularly significant because there are not very many towns christened with the full handle of their namesake; and in those towns so christened, not very many houses built by said namesake are still standing.

Was Morgan Hill a hero of some kind? No, he was quite an ordinary sort of man whose greatest claims to fame were his good luck in fortune-hunting (heiress Diana Murphy was his fortune), and his good luck in bearing an especially euphonious family name that made it easy to call a new railroad stop after him. The new railroad stop was right in back of his new country home.

Nevertheless, an American epic might be written just telling the stories of Diana Murphy and Morgan Hill and the people associated with their family during the last hundred years before the family died out. People like:

Grandfather Martin Murphy, Sr., an Irish immigrant who brought his twenty-member, solidly loyal family with him to California in 1844 by way of a 20-year hardscrabble sojourn in eastern Canada where they couldn't even afford to pay their church tithes. A landless peasant who ended up owning Spanish land grants in Santa Clara Valley almost as wide as the whole County of Wexford in Ireland whence he fled in search of economic, political and religious freedom, and enough to eat.

Jesuit Father Pierre Jean de Smet, the legendary missionary-explorer whose journeys to the Flathead Nation in the far northwest enabled him to hear stories from the Hudson's Bay trappers concerning the Catholic missions in Alta California.

Father Hoeckens, disciple of Father de Smet, who passed on to Martin Murphy in Irish Grove, Missouri, the stories he'd heard from Father de Smet of a golden land, a Catholic land, of milk and honey and cattle more numerous than the stars in the sky.

Old Caleb Greenwood, that extraordinary mountain man who, at the age of 80, guided the Stevens-Murphy-Townsend party, the prototype of all the emigrant wagon trains to come, from Council Bluffs on the Missouri River in Iowa, to

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(continued on Continuation Sheet)

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1.38 Acres.

UTM REFERENCES

A 110 619360 4110990  
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B [ ] [ ] [ ]  
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

See continuation sheet.

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
California (only)		Santa Clara (only)	
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Mary Lou LeVan, Morgan Hill Historical Society

November 20, 1977

ORGANIZATION

DATE

2210 East Main Avenue

408/779-2051

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

Morgan Hill

California 95037

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

# 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

*Knoum Ellen*

TITLE State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE 1/17/78

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I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

*Robert B. Rethig*

DATE 5/25/78

ATTEST

*William LeVan*

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE May 25, 1978

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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CONTINUATION SHEET - Significance

ITEM NUMBER-8

PAGE-2

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Sutter's Fort in California. The force was with them, for between the crusty, solitary wagon-boss Stevens, the head-of-his-clan Martin Murphy, and medical Dr. Townsend, this was the first party to haul their wagons over and through the Sierras. True enough, it was partly due to their good fortune in meeting the Indian Truckee, who guided them up the river they named for him, along the route later chosen by the civil engineer

Theodore D. Judah as the best possible pass across the mountains for the trans-continental railroad finished in 1869, only 25 years after the mountains were conquered by Martin Murphy and clan. Of Martin's nine children,

Daniel Murphy, age 18 in 1844, was the youngest. Legend has it that he was the first white man to see Lake Tahoe. Daniel would become Diana's father. As an adult, he rode back along the California Emigrant Trail broken by his father's wagon train to claim many square miles of the best acres for cattle ranches. Along the North Fork of the Humboldt River in Nevada, these ranches included the Devil's Gate Ranch, the Mary's River Ranch, and the Rancho Grande. Murphy was often heard to boast that he could drive cattle from Mexico to Idaho and camp each night on Murphy ground. His boast was probably true, for he was admittedly one of the largest land owners in the United States during the seventies and eighties, owning land in Mexico, Texas, Nevada, California, Arizona, Idaho, and New Mexico. He claimed to own 23,000 acres in California, 60,000 acres in Nevada, and 4,000,000 acres in Mexico. He proudly called his daughter Diana the "Duchess of Durango." Daniel had ridden across the plains on his large white horse "Silverheels" in company with

Moses Schallenberger, age 17, the adopted son of Dr. Townsend, who agreed to stay with Townsend's stranded wagon in the snows beside what came to be known as Donner Lake. There Moses built the cabin that the Breens and Eddys and Graves and Keseberg fought over two years later when the Donner-Reed party met their doom. Moses survived all alone and was brought out the next spring. Meanwhile, the Stevens-Murphy-Townsend party emerged from the Sierras just in time to join

Captain John Sutter's Army of the Sacramento, now 220 strong with their help, which Sutter, wooed by both sides in the latest intramural Mexican fracas, enlisted on the side of

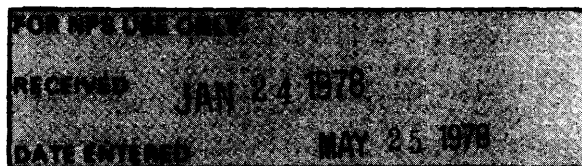
Governor Micheltorena in the Bear Flag Rebellion. Soon, ex-Governor Micheltorena was replaced by

Governor Pio Pico, who not only pardoned the captured Sutter, but confirmed the many square miles of land grants he had made to the Americans and Europeans who had joined his army. Everyone ended up happy, including Micheltorena who was tired of provincial life in California and wanted to get back to the bright lights of Mexico City. Meanwhile,



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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



CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 3

William Rae, factor of Hudson's Bay Company in Yerba Buena, earned for himself the dubious distinction of becoming California's first suicide. His contemporaries agreed it was due to a combination of business difficulties and getting caught with his mistress. Because of this matter, the Hudson's Bay Company decided to shut up shop in Yerba Buena. When, two years later, the British lost California and the West Coast to the Americans, they could console themselves by blaming the loss on a woman. Speaking of women, Diana Murphy's mother Maria Fisher Murphy, born in 1836 in Baja California, was written up in Edwin Bryant's journal in 1847 as being very mature for her age and "very beautiful." Bryant also noted that "the Pueblo valley about fifteen miles south of the southern shore of the Bay of San Francisco...if properly cultivated, would alone produce breadstuffs enough to supply millions of population." Maria, heiress to the Rancho Refugio de la Laguna Seca between the present towns of Coyote and Morgan Hill, would marry Daniel Murphy at the age of 14. Three years after his death in 1882 when she was 49, she would marry her secretary, Peter Columbet, age 29. Columbet's father, Clemente, had traveled to California with the Stevens-Murphy-Townsend party. Maria was the daughter of Grandfather William George Fisher, a Yankee sea-captain, born in Bristol, England, master of the ship Eureka out of Boston, which brought timber from Maine to trade for hides and tallow in Capo San Lucas. There he married Grandmother Liberata Cesena Fisher, daughter of Spanish pioneers in Baja California, who survived three gringo husbands and bearing their eight children to live to the age of 87 in San Jose. As a young bride, while moving into her new home on Rancho Laguna Seca, Captain John C. Fremont and his scout Kit Carson camped by her cooking fire for almost a week in February, 1846. This was just a month before Fremont raised the American Flag on top of Hawk's Peak in the Gavilan Mountains above San JuanBautista.

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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	JAN 24 1978
DATE ENTERED	MAY 25 1978

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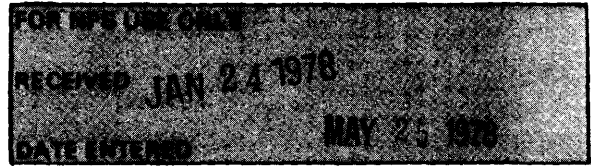
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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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



CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 9 PAGE 3

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

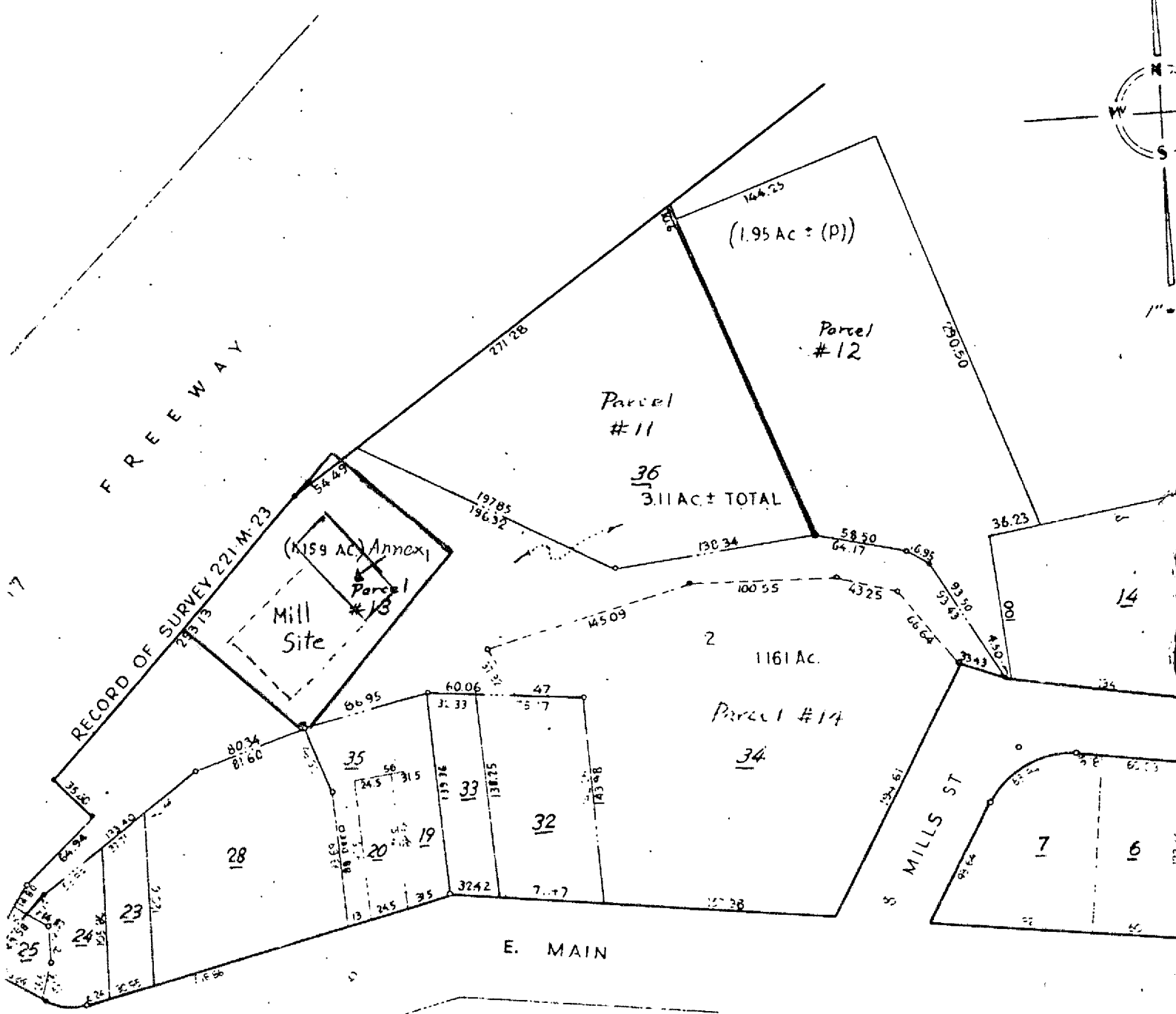
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RECEIVED	JAN 24 1978
DATE ENTERED	MAY 25 1978

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 10 PAGE 2

Being a portion of Lot 19 of the Old Homestead Tract of the original 8,927-acre Mexican Land Grant known as Rancho Ojo de Agua de la Coche (Hog Wallow Spring Ranch), and more particularly described as follows:

BEGINNING at the Westernmost common corner between Parcels 1 and 2 (as shown on the accompanying Parcel Map recorded May 25, 1977), thence northwest for 211.25 feet along Monterey Road as the southwestern boundary of Parcel 1; thence northeast for 290 feet along the northwestern boundary of Parcel 1; thence southeast for 211.25 feet parallel to the southwestern boundary (Monterey Road) of Parcel 1; thence southwest for 290 feet along the common boundary line (extended as necessary) between Parcels 1 and 2 to the point of beginning.

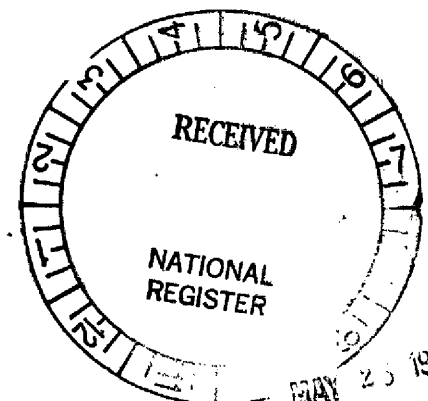


Assessor's Office of record as no title made in confirmation & located in the land in accordance with...

COLLEGE AVE

(29)

PAGEANT WAY



County of Santa Clara  
Assessors Book # 529 of Maps, Pg. 28