

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

PH 0693 251

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RECEIVED DEC 1 1978

DATE ENTERED FEB 28 1979

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** *Far Niente Winery*

HISTORIC Benson Wine Cellar SEP 19 1978

AND/OR COMMON Far Niente Winery (preferred name)

**2 LOCATION** *S of Oakville at*

STREET & NUMBER 1577 Oakville Grade

CITY, TOWN Oakville  VICINITY OF -- NOT FOR PUBLICATION

STATE California CODE 06 CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT Second District

COUNTY NAPA CODE 055

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER: current restoration

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME *Hartford S. Rapp, Jr.*

*Douglas Landry Trust, c/o Ralph L. Kokjer, Jr., Trustees*

STREET & NUMBER 155 Montgomery Street

CITY, TOWN San Francisco VICINITY OF STATE CALIFORNIA

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Napa County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER 821 Coombs Street

CITY, TOWN Napa STATE CALIFORNIA

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE Napa County Historic Resources Inventory

DATE Site inventory: 7-25-1978  FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS Napa County Conservation-Development & Planning Dept.

CITY, TOWN Napa STATE CALIFORNIA

# 7 DESCRIPTION

## CONDITION

EXCELLENT  
 GOOD  
 FAIR

DETERIORATED  
 RUINS  
 UNEXPOSED

## CHECK ONE

UNALTERED  
 ALTERED

## CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE  
 MOVED DATE \_\_\_\_\_

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

Far Niente Winery, a prominent landmark in the central Napa Valley visible from the main north-south thoroughfare, Highway 29, is a three level winery of native fieldstone situated on a knoll in the western foothills of the Napa Valley just south of the Oakville Grade. The knoll, surrounded by vineyards, appears much as it did in the 1880s. The Winery, set into the terraced hillside, is surrounded by native California oaks and laurel. Cork Oak trees, planted in the 1880s on the knoll, were introduced by John Benson, winery owner and horticulturalist, from seeds collected on his European travels.

Local builders, J. Delucchi in stone and Mixon & Son in carpentry, constructed the gravity flow winery to the specifications of Hamden W. McIntyre, engineer and architect. A central three story core is flanked by two 2-story wings giving a total length of 100' by 50' in width; a plan followed in subsequent wineries designed by McIntyre. Native fieldstone is used, possibly quarried in the hills above the winery site. A gable roof of corrugated iron rests on a subroof of wood. The third level of the central core, appearing as a dormer, also carries a gable roof. Symmetrically placed windows are rectangular with cut stone sills and lintels. Segmental arched doorways and building corners have cut stone quoins. Doorways are placed on each level of the central core. Over the years interior window frames and doors have been removed. Original timber structural supports remain as does the flooring which has the traditional troughs for water and wine run-off. Narrow redwood panelling of the third level ceiling is rare and is in deteriorating condition.

The stone walls remain in excellent condition and structural testing is underway to determine the extent of repair or reinforcement necessary. Interior panelling which has deteriorated due to water damage will have to be replaced. In 1953 a frame cupola at the center of the roof ridgeline was seriously damaged during a storm and removed. Restoration plans include replacement of the cupola based on excellent photographs of it.

Far Niente Winery remains today essentially unaltered in its basic design details other than by deterioration. Its setting reflects the original environment of the 1880s with the terraces, hillside, and winery roads intact.

# 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/HUMANITARIAN	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input 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 3/1885- 7/1886

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Hamden W. McIntyre

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Far Niente Winery, designed for John Benson in 1885, is believed to be the earliest of the stone three-level gravity flow wineries designed by Hamden W. McIntyre, acknowledged as the finest winery architect of 19th century California in accounts of the period<sup>(1)</sup>. It stands as a prototype for more than a dozen later winery designs which McIntyre would execute throughout California. Far Niente Winery remains one of the largest and least altered of the McIntyre designed wineries in Napa County which include: Ewer Winery (1885), Eschol Winery (1886), Hedgeside Winery (1886), Inglenook Winery (1887). McIntyre was also consulted in the design of the Bourn & Wise Greystone Cellars (1889), now pending National Register recognition. His winery designs would be used for wineries in Santa Rosa, Pleasanton, Livermore, Santa Clara county and Southern California.

Until the mid-1880s, winery construction was undertaken in the vernacular style of local craftsmen-builders with the majority of winery construction in wood. Only a few wineries were built of native stone or employed tunnels to take advantage of the natural insulation of stone. However, in the 1880s, California, and Napa County in particular, experienced a viticultural boom and the concern about wine spoilage due to poorly designed winery facilities grew in proportion to the boom. Hamden McIntyre, trained as a mechanical and civil engineer in Vermont, became Superintendent of Gustave Niebaum's Inglenook vineyard estate in Napa County (Rutherford) in 1881. He would design his first winery c. 1884 for Senator Leland Stanford in Tehama County (the Vina Winery, of brick and wood, destroyed by fire in the 1890s) and his first stone winery, Far Niente Winery, for John Benson, in 1885. McIntyre's innovations centering upon better building insulation and gravity flow were acclaimed and quickly adopted.<sup>(2)</sup>

John Benson, a wealthy San Francisco financier involved in real estate and mining, purchased the winery site in 1871, establishing his first vineyards there. A horticulturalist, Benson, on his travels to Europe, picked up the carob bean and cork oak seed and planted them on his ranch; the cork oaks are still seen adjacent to the Winery. There are only a few in the County. By 1882, John Benson's vineyards were among the major vineyards of the County. It is logical he would turn to Hamden McIntyre for the design of his wine cellar in 1885.

(See Continuation sheet No. 1-2)

**9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES** (FOR FOOTNOTES see continuation page)

A Memorial and Biographical History of Northern California (1891), p.744-45.  
Heintz, William F. The Far Niente Winery, Oakville, California and Its Founder, John Benson (1978, unpub. ms.), 56 pgs.  
St. Helena Star: 11-20-1885; 12-11-1885; 5-14-1886; 11-12-1886; 2-12-1886  
Napa Register: 3-27-1885; 5-21-1886  
Directory of Grape Growers, Wine Makers and Distillers (1891)

**10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 5,000 sq. ft. (.115 ac) *One acre (J.F.T. 2/27/79)*

QUADRANGLE NAME Rutherford, CA. QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24000

UTM REFERENCES

A	<u>19</u>	<u>552200</u>	<u>4253020</u>	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			
E				F			
G				H			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION From the intersection of Hwy. 29 and Oakville Grade, Oakville CA., Far Niente Winery is: .9 miles west on Oakville Grade, thence .5 miles south on Acacia Drive; and .65 miles south on Hwy. 29, thence .6 miles west on Acacia Drive.

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

**11 FORM PREPARED BY** (Send COPY of all communications to : Sharon L. Lieff, Far Niente Winery, P.O. Box 394, Oakville, Ca. 94562)

NAME / TITLE Judith A. Munns, Coordinator, Napa County Historic Resources Survey

ORGANIZATION Napa Landmarks, Inc. DATE August 21, 1978

STREET & NUMBER 1834 First Street (P.O. Box 702) TELEPHONE (707) 255-1836

CITY OR TOWN Napa STATE California 94558

**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 Knay Mellor

TITLE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE 12-4-78

**FOR NPS USE ONLY**

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

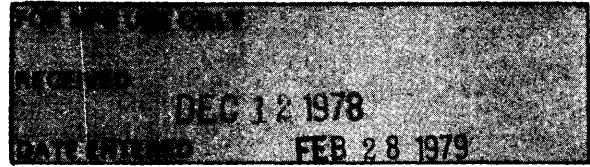
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER [Signature] DATE 2-28-79

ATTEST: [Signature] DATE 2/27/79

CLERK OF REGISTRATION [Signature]

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 1

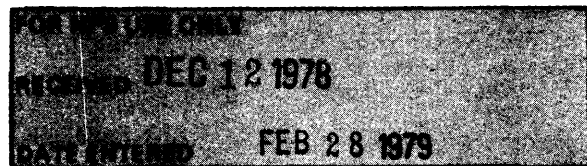
Local contractors, J. Delucchi in stone, and Mixon & Son in carpentry, took over construction of the Benson Wine Cellar, Far Niente, from the original San Francisco contractors in the early stages of construction. Far Niente attests to the skill and craftsmanship in stone of the local builders. Built into the hillside, the winery takes advantage of the natural insulation of the hill. The gravity flow winery, evident in Napa County since the early 1870s, was refined by McIntyre in the Far Niente Winery to include a three story central core with flanking two story wings. Roads in the terraced hillside, which are still visible, allowed wagons to carry the grapes to the top level for crushing. Gravity flow moved the liquid to the second level for fermenting and to the first level for aging and storage. The corrugated iron roof has a subroof of tongue and groove redwood to prevent heating of the winery by the metal roof and to curtail condensation, an innovation of McIntyre's.

After John Benson's death in 1910, Far Niente remained within the family in the hands of his heirs until 1917 when it was sold to David Perry Doak. In the 1920s the Winery ceased operation due to Prohibition. In a pattern known throughout Napa County at the time, the vineyards were pulled out for prunes. The land in front of the winery was used for grazing and then, in 1927, a small airport was built with three runways. It closed in the early 1930s. In 1944, the winery and surrounding land was acquired by Martin Stelling and the vineyards were replanted. Plans to reactivate the winery ended with Martin Stelling's sudden death in 1950. His heir, the present owner, currently plans to restore Far Niente Winery as a working winery once again.

Historical documentation researched by : William F. Heintz, Consultant in Wine and Viticulture History, P.O. Box 91, Glen Ellen, California 95442, (707)996-9501.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8

PAGE 2

FOOTNOTES:

(1) St. Helena Star, 5-14-1886:

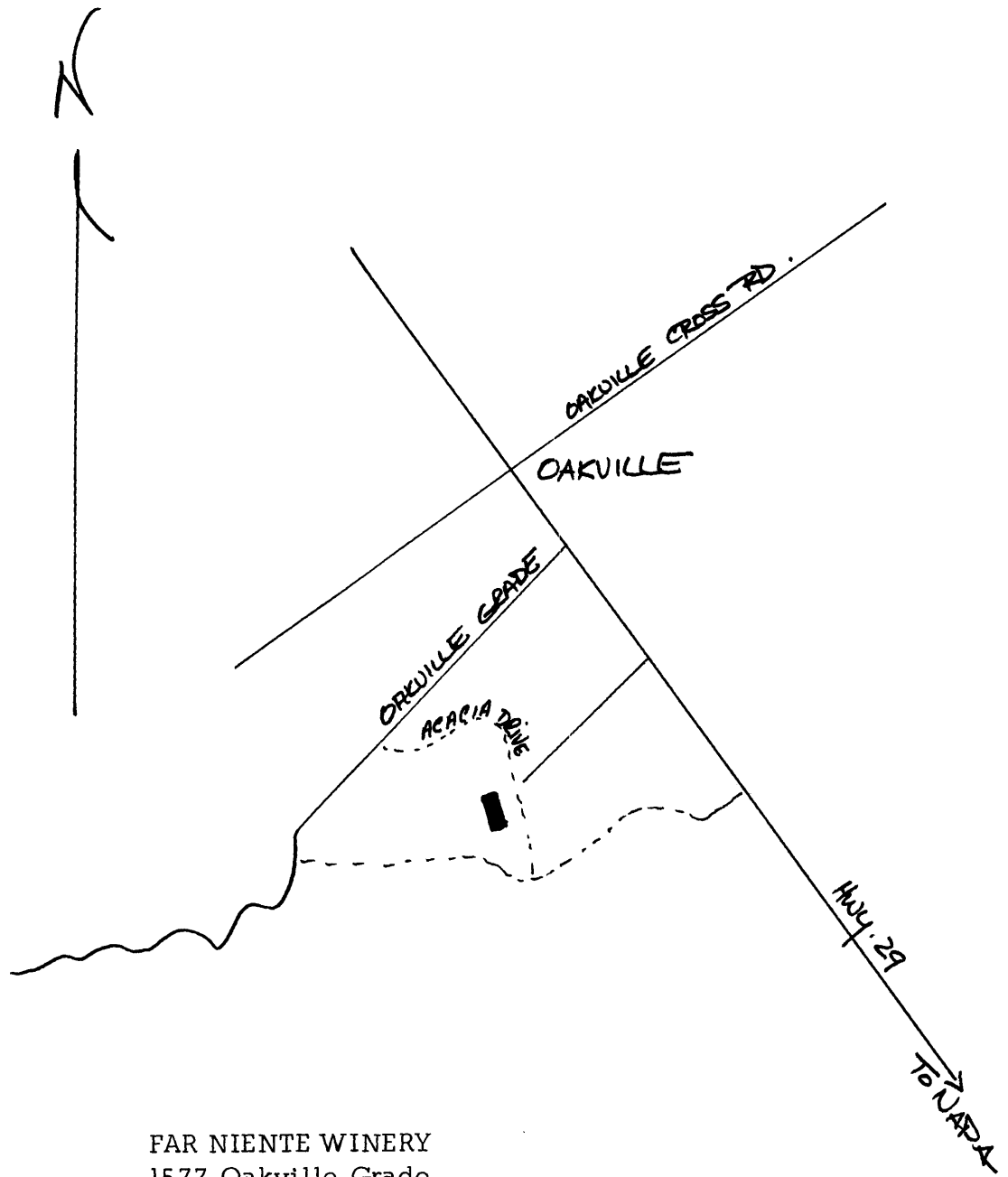
"H.W. McIntyre has demands from all over the State for his ideas and plans for wine cellars. He is considered to be the best authority on the construction of wine cellars."

Memorial and Biographical History of Northern California (1891), p.744:

"... and many of the leading wineries of the State have also been constructed from his designs in whole or in part, or from his plans and drawings in full. Among them may be mentioned the Inglenook Winery at Rutherford, Bourne & Wise's at St. Helena, M.M. Estee's at Napa, Mrs. Collins' at Mountain View, John Burson's [sic] at Oakville, Goodman & Co's. at Oak Knoll, near Napa City, C.P. Adamson's and Ewer & Atkinson's at Rutherford, Leland Stanford's at Menlo Park and the late John A. Paxton's at Santa Rosa."

(2) St. Helena Star, 2-12-1886:

" John Benson of Oakville, will also erect a stone cellar at his 'Far Niente' ranch. Mr. H.W. McIntyre is the architect and the plan contains many valuable improvements for the handling of the vintage, original to Mr. McIntyre."



FAR NIENTE WINERY  
1577 Oakville Grade  
Oakville, CA

■ Far Niente Winery

DEC 12 1978

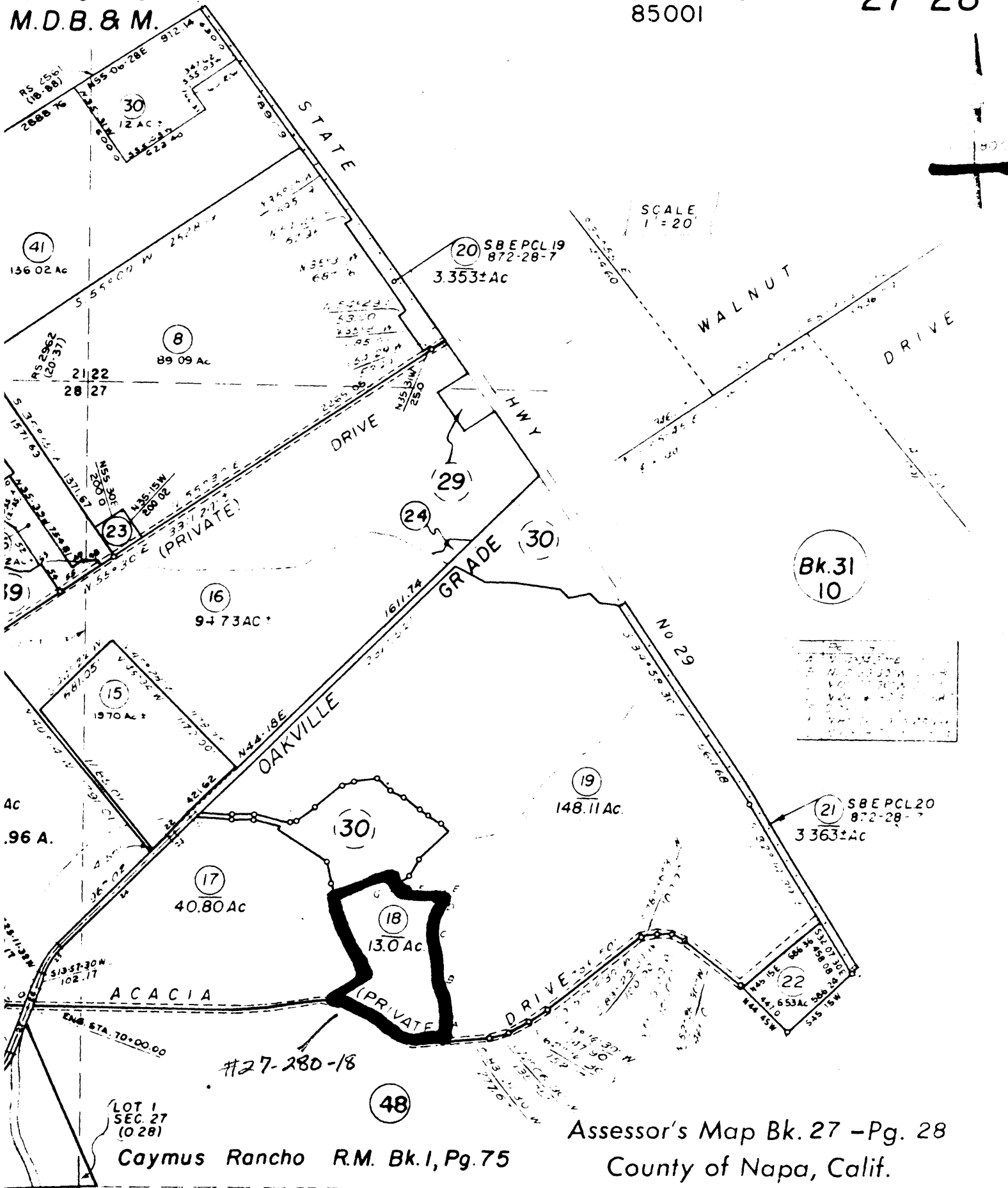
FEB 28 1979

ANCHO  
M.D.B. & M.

Far Niente Winery

Tax Area Code  
85001

27-28



Caymus Rancho R.M. Bk. 1, Pg. 75

Assessor's Map Bk. 27 -Pg. 28  
County of Napa, Calif.

1955-01-62

NOTE—Assessor's Block Numbers Shown in Ellipses.

36