

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

DATA SHEET PH 0290823

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED AUG 20 1975

DATE ENTERED OCT 10 1975

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

1 NAME

HISTORIC

~~Home of~~ Robinson Jeffers

AND/OR COMMON

Tor House

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

26304 Ocean View Avenue

__ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Carmel

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

California 93921

__ VICINITY OF

CODE

06

12th - Burt L. Talcott

COUNTY

Monterey

CODE

053

3 CLASSIFICATION**CATEGORY**

DISTRICT
 BUILDING(S)
 STRUCTURE
 SITE
 OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

PUBLIC
 PRIVATE
 BOTH
PUBLIC ACQUISITION
 IN PROCESS
 BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

OCCUPIED
 UNOCCUPIED
 WORK IN PROGRESS
ACCESSIBLE
 YES: RESTRICTED
 YES: UNRESTRICTED
 NO

PRESENT USE

AGRICULTURE
 COMMERCIAL
 EDUCATIONAL
 ENTERTAINMENT
 GOVERNMENT
 INDUSTRIAL
 MILITARY
 MUSEUM
 PARK
 PRIVATE RESIDENCE
 RELIGIOUS
 SCIENTIFIC
 TRANSPORTATION
 OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Mr. & Mrs. Donnan Jeffers

STREET & NUMBER

26304 Ocean View Avenue

CITY, TOWN

Carmel, California 93921

STATE

California

__ VICINITY OF

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Monterey County Court House

STREET & NUMBER

240 Church Street

CITY, TOWN

Salinas

STATE

California

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Guide to Architecture in San Francisco and Northern California

DATE

1973

__ FEDERAL __ STATE __ COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

David Gebhard, director, University Art Galleries

CITY, TOWN

Santa Barbara

STATE

California

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<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 DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The property consists of a plot of land, approximately a half acre in extent, situated on Carmel Point, a short distance to the south-west of the town of Carmel and about one hundred and twenty-five miles south of San Francisco, California. The property is on a low knoll just above the waters of Carmel Bay. A county road passes between the property and the sea-line below it, but otherwise both access and view to the beach are entirely unobstructed. The buildings occupying the land are almost entirely of the native granite rock, most of it obtained from the beaches below, with much of the masonry work done by Robinson Jeffers with his own hands. They were built during a considerable length of time, between 1919 and 1962. A brief description of the house is as follows: west wing: sitting room, library, dining room, front kitchen/breakfast room, three bedrooms and bathroom. East wing: sitting room, office, three bedrooms, bathroom and two garages. Connecting wing: entrance hall, play room, laundry room, back kitchen and cloak room with toilet, basin and shower. In addition, there are a number of storerooms and outbuildings.

Separate from the house, but connected with it by the stone walls of the courtyard, is a tower, almost forty feet in height, massively constructed of granite boulders, many of them of great weight and size, the result of the unaided work of Robinson Jeffers. The ground floor contains two small rooms, the interior wall composed of the same granite boulders as the exterior. The second floor has one small room, once the "retreat" or study of Una (Mrs. Robinson) Jeffers, with Gothic windows and an oriel window with beautiful views of the ocean, and it is very finely panelled in mahogany. It is also beautifully furnished with small antiques, including a melodeon, day bed, chairs, etc., and valuable pictures, mirrors and mementoes of various kinds. It remains almost exactly as it was during the life of Una Jeffers, who died in 1950. The whole complex of buildings at Tor House contains eleven fireplaces.

Embedded in the walls of Tor House are hundreds of small stones, bits of ceramic, etc., from famous or historical places throughout the world. In addition to hundreds of fragments from the British Isles, a short list would include: the carved stone head of an apsara, or dancing girl, from the Angkor Vat complex of temples in Cambodia; a Babylonian tile with cuneiform inscription dating from about 2100 B. C.; a fragment of wall paintings from the ruins of Pompeii; some tesserae from the Baths of Caracalla in Rome; a fragment of ancient carving in marble from the Greek island of Delos; a number of teracotta heads. A carved stone head and part of a sacrificial obsideon dagger from pre-Columbian sites in Mexico and Central America, stones from the Great Wall of China in Manchuria, from the Great Pyramid of Cheops in Egypt, from Hradcany Castle in Prague, Czechoslovakia, etc., etc. In the rose garden is a small statue from ancient Rome depicting a boy riding on a dolphin. This statue was brought from Rome by the famous painter, John Singer Sargent, and sat for many years in the garden of his home at 31 Tite Street in London. Upon his death it passed to his pupil and friend, Julie Heynemann, and she, in return left it to Robinson Jeffers and his wife.

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 type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input checked="" 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 checked="" 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

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

ROBINSON JEFFERS

Robinson Jeffers (January 10, 1887 - January 20, 1962), American poet, was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, the son of Dr. William Hamilton Jeffers and Annie Robinson (Tuttle) Jeffers. He was educated by tutors and at private schools in Switzerland and Germany, at the University of Pittsburgh, and at Occidental College, Los Angeles, where he received his B.A. in 1905. He then did graduate work in English and three years medical work at the University of Southern California, and studied "desultorily" at the University of Zurich. He had besides done a years work in forestry at the University of Washington. All this was a futile effort to find an occupation of interest to him; as a matter of fact it was only poetry that concerned him deeply, and in those years he had no money to contemplate a purely literary life. He was an athlete in college, a mile runner and champion swimmer, and he had retained his athletic ability. In later years he received honorary doctorates from Occidental and the University of Southern California, and he was an honorary Phi Beta Kappa. In 1937 he received the Book Club award for distinguished work.

In 1913, Jeffers married Una Call Kuster. They had twin sons. In 1914, when he was about to set out for England in the hope of finding it easier to live by writing there, an uncle died and left him a legacy sufficient to enable him to lead the life he desired. It was then that he went to Carmel, California, and the scene of so many of his poems, built with his own hands the stone house and its accompanying stone tower in which he worked, where for forty-three years he led almost a hermit existence.

Not entirely so, however; he traveled often in the West, and in 1929 and 1937 made extended trips to the British Isles; the myths of his inaccessibility are largely myths alone. He had good friends but they were few, and he did not want new ones; least of all did he want the easy publicity and sociability which came from dealing with strangers. He was a slow worker, and preferred for the most part to be alone with his work and his family, leaving Mrs. Jeffers as his "buffer" with the outside world. In his own words, his amusements were, "stone masonry, tree planting, swimming, pipe smoking, drives and walks in the Coast Range, reverent admiration of hawks, herons and pelicans; discarded amusements, long-distance running, wrestling, alcoholism, canoeing; idiosyncrasies, almost a perfect inability to write a letter or kill an animal, love of monotony and wet weather". Six feet tall, powerfully built, bronzed by the sun, with searching blue-grey eyes, he looked like an Indian and has aptly been called "tomahawk-faced".

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Kunitz and Haycraft¹

Twentieth Century Authors. New York, H. W. Wilson Co.,
1959. pages 722-723.

Fleishchmann, Wolfgang Bernard

Encyclopedia of World Literature. New York, Frederick Ungar
Publishing Co., 1969, pages 177-178.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1/2 acre

UTM REFERENCES

A	1, 0	5, 9, 5, 4, 6, 0	4, 0, 4, 4, 4, 1, 0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
N/A		N/A	
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Robert W. Reese State Park Historian II

ORGANIZATION

California State Park System, District 4

DATE

April 14, 1975

STREET & NUMBER

2211 Garden Road

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

Monterey

STATE

California 93940

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.

SIGNATURE

TITLE Herbert Modes State Historic Preservation Officer DATE 7/24/75

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DATE

10/10/75

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE

10/9/75

ATTEST:

Ronald D. Greenberg
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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It is from the world in which he lived, and which in his philosophy was a place of stern, lonely beauty marred by the infestation of doomed and perverted animals called human beings, that he has drawn the long measures of his cadenced poetry, which is nearer to the Greeks than to Whitman, and at its best has the rhythm of the sea. As Delmore Schwartz said, the background of Jeffers' poems was "the World picture of nineteenth century science, the World War, and Jeffers' portion of the Pacific Coast". Frajam Taylor noted the constant antithesis of his two chief symbols -- the hawk, the wild undirected spirit of man, and the stone, the rooted and immemorial earth. To Jeffers, civilization was toppling to its doom, man himself was a dying race, and the world would be all the better for it. It is a viewpoint which makes for bare, unrelieved tragedy; and though at its heights it produces supreme poetry, it hesitates always on the very verge of hysteria and absurdity. "Civilization is a transient sickness". "Humanity is needless". That is a creed for a hawk, not for a man.

"His attitude," said Hildegarde Flanner in a penetrating study, "is supremely negative, his protest has been set down in tragic and distorted sexual images ... All his themes are of vehemences, intensely and frequently frustrated passion, perversion, bitter introspection, ... symbols ... of civilization turning in upon itself, ... a kind of willing insanity ... his powers of realism and tempo are miraculous, (but they are) used on people whose pathology is so absolute that their problems can be only the problems of the mad".

Jeffers was a unique phenomenon in American and indeed in world literature. Sometimes he was grandiose rather than grand, sometimes his unremitting monotony of doom grows wearying, but of his fierce and original genius there can be no doubt.

Jeffers' contribution to American poetry has been considerable. It is very likely that his simpler, more direct, lyrical and descriptive poems will outlast his elaborate philosophic-dramatic poems. His philosophy may have less endurance than those gifts which enabled him to create parables of human blindness and suffering, "to see, as if for the first and last time, the austerities of a Pacific or Irish coast line." In June of 1955 his Medea, with Judith Anderson, was presented in Paris as part of the American National Theatre and Academy.

Principal Works: Flagons and Apples, 1912; Californians, 1916; Roan Stallion, Tamar and Other Poems, 1925; The Women at Point Sur, 1927; Cawdor and Other Poems, 1928; Dear Judas and Other Poems, 1929; Descent

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to the Dead, 1931; Thurso's Landing and Other Poems, 1932; Give Your Hearts to the Hawks, 1933; Solstice, 1935; Such Counsels You Gave to Me, 1937; Selected Poetry, 1939; Two Consolidations, 1940; Be Angry at the Sun, 1941; Medea, 1946; The Double Axe, 1948; Hungerfield, 1954.

It should be emphasized that Tor House is much more closely connected to the work and career of Robinson Jeffers, recognized as one of the great American poets of his time, than the "literary shrines" which have been set up to commemorate many other writers. Tor House was his home for forty-three years, and he died there. He wrote, with the exception of a very few short poems, his entire output of mature work in this house. He also, unaided and with his own hands, did a large proportion of the masonry of which the house is built. That which is not his own work was done under his supervision, or in consequence of his planning, much of it by his son, the present owner.