

Memorandum

To: William Crouch, City of Beverly Hills

Date: 10/03/2012

From: Jan Ostashay, Principal OAC

Re: LANDMARK ASSESSMENT CONFIRMATION REVIEW: Virginia Robinson Estate/ Virginia Robinson Garden, 1008 Elden Way, Beverly Hills, CA

Overview

At the request of the City of Beverly Hills Community Development Department, Planning Division, Ostashay & Associates Consulting has conducted an assessment review to confirm local landmark eligibility for the property located at 1008 Elden Way. This property, referred to as the Virginia Robinson Estate or the Virginia Robinson Garden, is currently listed on the National Register of Historic Places (see Attachment A).

The City's Historic Preservation Ordinance (Title 10, Chapter 3, Article 32; Beverly Hills Municipal Code 10-3-32) states that a property may be designated as a Landmark if it satisfies the following three criteria:

A. The Property meets at least two of the following criteria:

1. Is identified with important events in the main currents of national, state, or local history, or directly exemplifies or manifests significant contributions to the broad social, political, cultural, economic, recreational, or architectural history of the Nation, State, City, or community;
2. Is directly associated with the lives of Significant Persons important to national, state, City or local history;
3. Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a style, type, period, or method of construction;
4. Represents a notable work of a person included on the City's List of Master Architects or possesses high artistic or aesthetic value;
5. Has yielded or has the potential to yield, information important in the prehistory or history of the Nation, State, City, or community;
6. Is listed or has been formally determined eligible by the National Park Service for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, or is listed or has been determined eligible by the State Historical Resources Commission for listing on the California Register of Historical Resources.

B. The property retains integrity from its Period of Significance.

The proposed landmark retains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, and association. Integrity shall be judged with reference to the particular criteria specified in subsection 10-3-3212 (A) of this section. A proposed Landmark's deferred maintenance, dilapidated condition, or illegal alterations shall not, on their own, be construed to equate to a loss of Integrity.

C. The Property Has Historic Value.

The proposed Landmark is of significant architectural value to the community, beyond its simple market value, and its designation as a Landmark is reasonable, appropriate, and necessary to promote, protect, and further the goals and purpose of this Article.

As part of the landmark assessment confirmation review, a brief context of information regarding the property has been provided followed by the application and evaluation of local significance for local designation consideration.

Background Information

VIRGINIA ROBINSON ESTATE/VIRGINIA ROBINSON GARDEN

Address: 1008 Elden Way

APN: 4348-007-900

National Register Info: 78000679; Listed: 1978

Significance: Architectural History, Architecture

Period of Significance: 1911, 1924

Architect: Nathaneal Dryden

Historically significant as the first house in what was to become a highly touted social enclave, it reflects, both architecturally and socially, the very early origins of Beverly Hills. Harry and Virginia Robinson, famous for their popular department store called Robinson's, had the main house built in 1911. The architect, Nathaneal Dryden, was Mrs. Robinson's father. The one-story property incorporates the principles of the Beaux Arts with Florentine Renaissance design. In purely architectural terms, the highlight of the Robinson residence is the added (1924) playhouse/pool pavilion. Outstanding features include the reflecting swimming pool with tiled wainscoting; the Tuscan columns and arches with sgraffiti decoration; and the surrounding gardens.

The Robinson residence is located on six (originally twenty) hillside acres that were carefully landscaped to integrate house, playhouse, and garden. Horticulture was a lifelong avocation of Mrs. Robinson, she and her husband planted extensively and supervised the creation of a series of patio gardens on the terraced hillsides. A lush palm grove, with some unusually large specimens, dominates the landscape architecture embracing the northeast portion of the main house. A wide, grassy mall connecting the main house to the playhouse pavilion delineates the palm area and is itself lined with stately Italian cypress. Completing the plantings are sixty-year old Eucalyptus trees, a hillside garden of flowers, shrubs, and fruit trees on the western third of the property, and a formal rose garden. Throughout the planted acreage, interlocking footpaths and brick stairways provide access to the remotest sections of the garden, while paved, fountained patios offer frequent resting points. Besides being listed on the National Register, the property is also a California Point of Historical Interest.

Local Significance Findings

Pursuant to the City of Beverly Hills Historic Preservation Ordinance (Title 10, Chapter 3, Article 32; BHMC 10-3-32), this property meets the necessary requirements for local landmark designation. The Robinson Estate and Garden is eligible under “significance” criterion A.1, as it was the first grand estate with gardens built in Beverly Hills and, therefore, manifests tangible features and contributions to the very early residential development and architectural history of the City. The property also meets “significant” criteria A.3, in that it incorporates architectural features and landscape elements that embody and reflect distinctive design characteristics of a particular period of time and style. In addition, this property satisfies “significance” criteria A.6, since it has been formally listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The property also retains sufficient historical integrity from its period of significance (1911, 1924), and clearly has exceptional significant architectural value to the community.



Figure 1, Source: KSM Architecture

ATTACHMENT A
National Register Form

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED JUN 6 1978
DATE ENTERED NOV 15 1978

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 VIRGINIA ROBINSON ESTATE
AND/OR COMMON VIRGINIA ROBINSON GARDEN

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER 1008 ELDEN WAY
CITY, TOWN BEVERLY HILLS VICINITY OF 23
STATE CALIFORNIA CODE 06 COUNTY LOS ANGELES CODE 037

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<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 Botanic Garden

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
STREET & NUMBER 383 HALL OF ADMINISTRATION, 500 WEST TEMPLE STREET
CITY, TOWN LOS ANGELES VICINITY OF CALIFORNIA STATE 90012

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. LOS ANGELES COUNTY RECORDER
STREET & NUMBER 227 NORTH BROADWAY
CITY, TOWN LOS ANGELES STATE CALIFORNIA 90012

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE POINT OF HISTORICAL INTEREST
DATE Pending FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS State of California-Office of Historic Preservation
CITY, TOWN P.O. Box 2390, Sacramento, California 95811 STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" 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

Virginia Robinson Estate

The one-story Robinson house (1911) is of simplified Beaux Arts design, with a balustraded parapet and a central porch that is supported by paired columns and topped by urns. In the back facade are wood frame French doors and casement windows with one broad, flattened bay window. The interiors are simple with no moldings on upper walls or ceilings and simple baseboards at bottoms of walls. Decorative interest is provided by marble fireplaces and crystal chandeliers throughout. The rooms open off a central hall, though in a modified L-Shape rather than with neoclassical symmetry; the master bedroom is reached via a gallery which overlooks the back lawn.

Only two changes have been made in the house design, both under the direction of Mrs. Robinson -- to bring in more light, two windows in the library (front facade) were enlarged; to enhance party-making, a marble terrace was added to the rear of the house, outside the gallery.

Servants quarters are located in a separate building to one side of the main house, behind the kitchen. The building is Beaux Arts design of Florentine Renaissance derivation; at ground level, it is pierced by a driveway arch with a quoined surround. On the second story is a loggia supported by pillars with simple capitals and terminated at either end by an enclosed pavillion.

Located one hundred yards to the rear of the main house is a playhouse pavillion, completed in 1924. The pavillion is a blend of Palladian and eighteenth century French influences. Tuscan columns are set in front of a screen of windows and fanlights, effecting a set of linked, overlapping Palladian windows. The mullions of the windows create lattice-like patterns which are emphasized in the interior where mock arched window frames with mullions are placed in front of mirrors.

A parapet wall of urns on plinths plus long planter boxes create a broken silhouette over the central bay of the pavillion. A shallow molding is employed as a cornice, with a dentil course beneath. There are three arches on the pavillion, set slightly forward, and in the spandrels are scrafitto-like decorations of Renaissance angels blowing trumpets.

The rear elevation of the playhouse is two stories high, the front only one story, effecting the appearance of a miniature theater stage. At the first floor level is an outsized balcony with a balustrade at the center, rounded parapet walls at the side, and enormous volutes beneath. Scrafitto panels of cherubs are found in the tympanum of the arches over a triple set of French doors.

The rooms of the playhouse are disposed symmetrically around a central hall. The windowed entry hall doors face onto a reflecting, Olympic sized swimming pool and slide open to create a gazebo effect. The pool is bordered by paths on either side with steps leading to the terrace platform on which the pavillion sits; the raised platform creates one end of the pool and is finished in a mosaic tile wainscotting pattern. Behind the entry hall is a billiard room panelled in natural wood with a dentil course and projecting entablature below the ceiling. The ceiling is coffered with the ribs molded in standard classical motifs of acanthus, egg and dart, and scroll patterns. An upstairs card room is also beautifully panelled with murals of a Pompeiian grotesque theme.

There have been no structural alterations in the playhouse pavillion.

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 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 type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input checked="" 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 1908-1911

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Nathaneal Dryden

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Virginia Robinson Estate

Begun in 1908 and completed in 1911, the Beaux Arts home of Mr. and Mrs. Harry Winchester Robinson was the first residence in Beverly Hills. The architect, Nathaneal Dryden, was Mrs. Robinson's father. "In 1911, when we built the house, Beverly Hills consisted of barley fields and one small real estate office about a mile from the house," said Virginia Robinson. "My deed reads, 'the first residence in Beverly Hills.'" Though not outstanding in individual design, the Robinson house is representative of the Beaux Arts phase of architecture in Southern California. More importantly, as the first house in what was to become a highly touted social enclave, it reflects, both architecturally and socially, the historic origins of Beverly Hills.

In purely architectural terms, the highlight of the Robinson residence is the added (1924) playhouse pavillion. It and the grounds connecting it to the main house are based in conception on such late Renaissance/early Baroque buildings as the Cortile di Belvedere and the Villa Giulia, in which garden and building are integrated through terracing, steps, landscaping, and water. Outstanding detail includes the reflecting swimming pool with tiled wainscotting forming the terrace platform wall; sliding, windowed doors that open onto the pool to create a gazebo-like effect; the Tuscan columns and arches with scraffito decoration; and the split elevation of the two stories which effects an image of a miniature theater stage.

The Robinson residence is located on six (originally twenty) hillside acres which were carefully landscaped to integrate house, playhouse, and garden. Horticulture was a lifelong avocation of Mrs. Robinson. In 1911, "there was only one elderberry bush on the property," she noted; over the years, she and her husband planted extensively and supervised the creation of a series of patio gardens on the terraced hillsides. A lush palm grove, with some unusually large specimens, dominates the landscape architecture embracing the northeast portion of the main house. A wide, grassy mall connecting the main house to the playhouse pavillion delineates the palm area and is itself lined with stately Italian cypress. Completing the plantings are sixty-year old Eucalyptus trees, a hillside garden of flowers, shrubs, and fruit trees on the western third of the property, and a formal rose garden. Throughout the planted acreage, interlocking footpaths and brick stairways provide access to the remotest sections of the garden, while paved, fountained patios offer frequent resting points.

(CONTINUED)

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

1. Los Angeles Examiner, "California Living," Week of June 9, 1974.
2. Los Angeles Herald and Express, August 7, 1961, p. C-6.
3. Los Angeles Times, December 11, 1977, Part XII, p. 1.
4. Wagner, Walter. Beverly Hills: Inside the Golden Ghetto. New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1976.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 6.21

UTM REFERENCES

A	1 1	3 6, 9	2 9 0 3 5 1	3 7, 7, 2	4 5 0 3 9 7	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING				ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C						D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The Virginia Robinson property is located at the northerly terminus of Elden Way, is bounded on the west by Cove Way and bounded on the north and east by the rear of parcels of land which front along Carolyn Way.

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Sandra L. Snider, Assistant Curator

ORGANIZATION

Los Angeles State and County Arboretum

STREET & NUMBER

301 North Baldwin Avenue

CITY OR TOWN

Arcadia

DATE

March 20, 1978

TELEPHONE

(213) 446-8251

STATE

California 91006

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

Knox M. Ellison

TITLE State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE 5/22/78

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

Charles A. Hanson

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE

11-15-78

ATTEST:

Marelda Shep

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

11-13-78

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

Virginia Robinson Residence
CONTINUATION SHEET

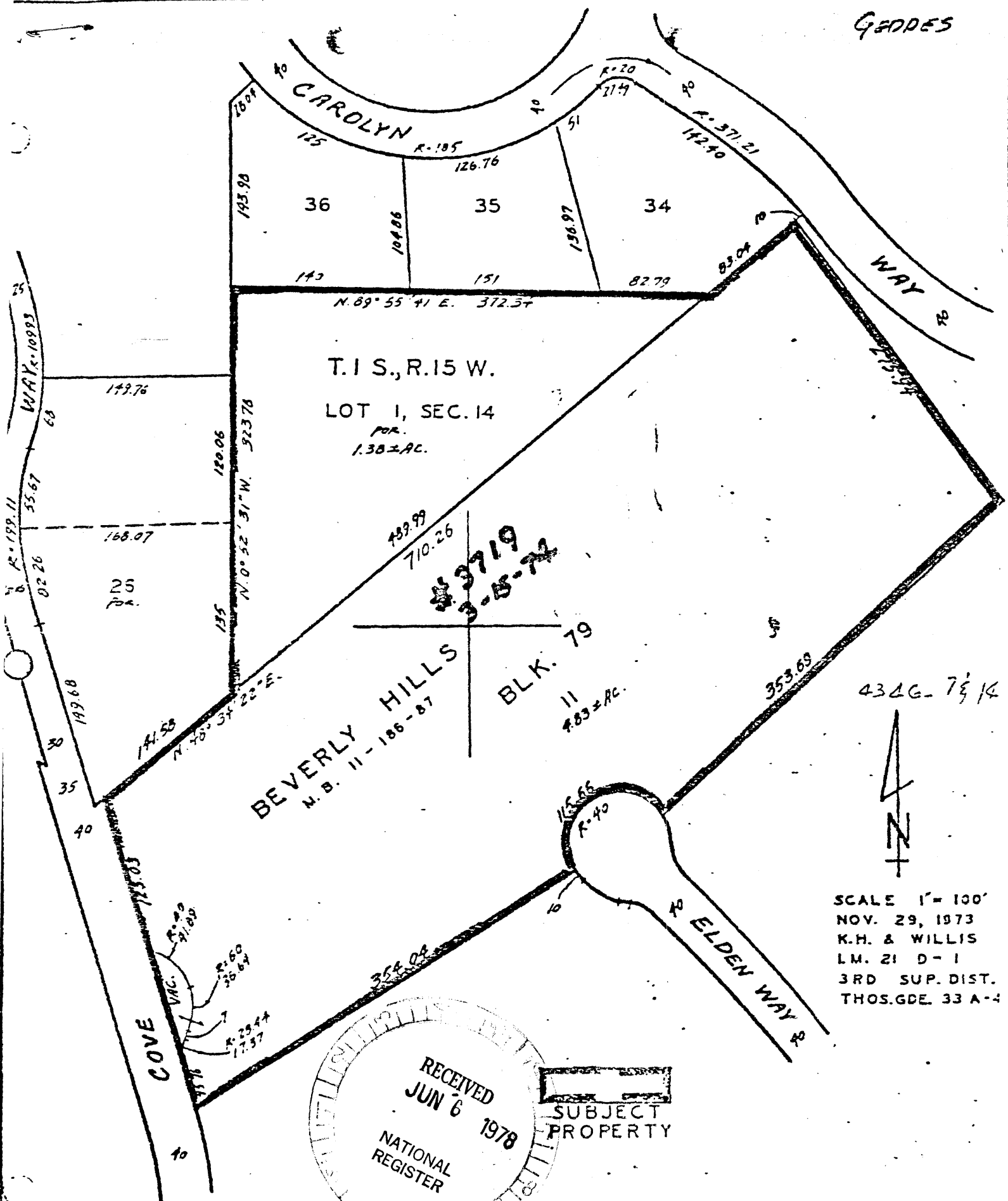
ITEM NUMBER 8

PAGE 2

Harry Robinson, son of the J.W. Robinson department store founder, died in 1932. His wife of thirty years, Virginia, "because I had to do it," took over the store and served on the Board till 1962. She continued to live and entertain in the Beverly Hills home, assisted by a retinue of male servants. "I always kept a larger staff than most people," she reminisced, "...I always used to have at least four butlers." Since its construction and till the death of its mistress in August, 1977 (a few weeks before her one hundredth birthday), the Robinson residence was the focus of an active social scene. Virginia Robinson donated generously to favorite charities, particularly the Hollywood Bowl, and benefit parties and luncheons shared the spotlight continuously with purely social affairs. Mrs. Robinson was well known as a hostess who gave glittering parties. "I guess everybody in Beverly Hills has been here," she said. When the city of Beverly Hills celebrated its fiftieth anniversary in 1964, Virginia Robinson was honored as a pioneer resident. She was referred to by the local press as the "First Lady of Beverly Hills," and she deservedly earned a fifty-year reputation as one of the Southland's leading hostesses.

With her death, the city lost a dynamic representative of a bygone social era. The Robinson residence remains, however, unaltered, and in its historic integrity reflects a perfectly preserved symbol of the Beverly Hills of yesteryear.

GRAPES



4326-7 1/4

SCALE 1" = 100'
 NOV. 29, 1973
 K.H. & WILLIS
 L.M. 21 D-1
 3RD SUP. DIST.
 THOS. GDE. 33 A-4

RECEIVED
 JUN 6 1978
 NATIONAL REGISTER
 SUBJECT PROPERTY

PROPOSED ACQUISITION OF PROPERTY FROM VIRGINIA D. ROBINSON
 1008 ELDEN WAY — BEVERLY HILLS, CALIF.
 COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES / DEPARTMENT OF REAL ESTATE MANAGEMENT