



City of Palo Alto City Manager's Report

TO: HONORABLE CITY COUNCIL

FROM: CITY MANAGER **DEPARTMENT:** PLANNING AND
COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT

DATE: OCTOBER 23, 2000 **CMR:**384:00

SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR CITY COUNCIL TO APPROVE THE
DESIGNATION OF A SILVER MAPLE LOCATED AT 1872
EDGEWOOD DRIVE AS HERITAGE TREE NO. 5 AND AN
AMERICAN ELM AT 4226 PONCE DRIVE AS HERITAGE TREE
NO. 6. (see page 2)

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that Council approve the designation of two trees for heritage status: a Silver Maple located at 1872 Edgewood Drive as Heritage Tree No. 5 (see Attachment A); and an American Elm located in the center of the San Alma Homeowners Association housing complex, at 4226 Ponce Drive, as Heritage Tree No. 6 (see Attachment B).

BACKGROUND

Chapter 8.10.090 of the Palo Alto Municipal Code, entitled "Designation of Heritage Trees," provides for persons to nominate a tree on their property as a heritage tree. After City Council approval of such designation, the tree will be included in a listing maintained by the Planning and Community Environment Department. This listing includes information such as specific location, overall size and canopy spread. Once designated, a heritage tree will be subject to the provisions of the Tree Preservation and Management Regulations, unless removed from the list by subsequent action of the City Council. These regulations include guidelines and restrictions regarding pruning, removal and development that impact the tree.

DISCUSSION


Heritage Tree No. 5.

Mr. Donald Starner and Ms. Mary Starner, owners of the property at 1872 Edgewood Drive, filed an application for heritage tree status for the Silver Maple located in the back yard of their property. The tree is an outstanding example of its kind and perhaps the oldest and biggest Silver Maple in the City. It provides aesthetic quality and shade to the surrounding area.

The Silver Maple meets the standards for heritage tree designation set forth in Chapter 8.10.090 and the Heritage Tree Checklist, which was developed by staff (see Attachment C). Written request, consent and photographs have been received from the Starners. In addition, a written analysis of the tree's specific location, size, dimensions and qualities was conducted by arborist Kenneth D. Meyer, of Mayne Tree Expert Company, Inc. (The letter of request/consent and arborist report are included as Attachment A). According to the arborist report, the appraised valuation of the tree contributes \$16,900 to the value of this property.

Staff recommends that this tree be designated as Heritage Tree No. 5, based upon the finding that it is unique and of importance to the property owner and community because it meets criteria 1, 3 and 4 of the following criteria set forth in the Tree Preservation Ordinance:

- (1) It satisfies PAMC Section 8.10.090 requirements;
- (2) It is an outstanding specimen of a desirable species;
- (3) It is one of the largest and oldest trees in Palo Alto; and
- (4) It possesses distinctive form, size, age, location and/or historical significance.

 Heritage Tree No. 6.

The San Alma Homeowners Association, owner of the complex of homes at 4226 Ponce Drive, filed an application for heritage tree status for the American Elm located at the center of this complex. The tree has historical significance in that it is a significant tree located on the site where Don Secundo Robles, once the owner of all of the land that is now Palo Alto, built his adobe home in 1840. The tree is an outstanding example of its kind. It is 60 feet tall and is a landmark for the housing complex and the surrounding community.

The American Elm meets the standards for heritage tree designation set forth in Chapter 8.10.090 and the Heritage Tree Checklist. Written request, consent and photographs have been received from the San Alma Homeowners Association, along with a written analysis of the tree's specific location, size, dimensions and qualities by arborist John H. McClenahan, of S. P. McClenahan Co., Inc. (The request/consent letter and arborist report are included as Attachment B). According to the arborist report, the appraised valuation of the tree contributes \$10,900 to the value of this property.

Staff recommends that this tree be designated as Heritage Tree No. 6, based upon the finding that it is unique and of importance to the property owner and community because it meets criteria 1, 3 and 4 set forth in the Tree Protection Ordinance:

- (1) It satisfies PAMC Section 8.10.090 requirements;
- (2) It is an outstanding specimen of a desirable species;

- (3) It is one of the largest or oldest trees in Palo Alto and;
- (4) It possesses distinctive form, size, age, location and/or historical significance

RESOURCE IMPACT

There is no resource impact expected as a result of these designations.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The recommended action would continue to promote the process of heritage tree designation and is consistent with existing City policies and urban forest goals and objectives.

TIMELINE

After designation as a heritage tree by Council, the heritage tree will be recognized as such immediately.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW


The designation of heritage trees is exempt from provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act, Section 15061 (b)(3) because it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the designation will have a significant effect on the environment.

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment A: Donald and Mary Starner's Request, Photographs, and Arborist Report
- Attachment B: The San Alma Homeowners Association's Request, Photographs, and Arborist Report
- Attachment C: Tree Preservation and Management Regulations, Ordinance #4568 and Heritage Tree Checklist


PREPARED BY: Dave Dockter, Managing Arborist, Planning Division

DEPARTMENT HEAD REVIEW:



G. EDWARD GAWF
Director of Planning and Community Environment

CITY MANAGER APPROVAL:



AUDREY SEYMOUR
Assistant to the City Manager

**San Alma Homeowners Association
4256 Ponce Drive
Palo Alto, CA 94306**

24 August 2000

City Council
City of Palo Alto
P.O. Box 10250
Palo Alto, CA 94303

We are writing to request that the American elm (*Ulmus americana*) located in the center of our complex of homes be granted heritage tree status and protection as outlined in CPA Municipal Code 8.10.090.

San Alma Homeowners Association is located at the corner of Alma Street and San Antonio Road on the site where Don Secundo Robles built his adobe home sometime before 1840. Robles was the owner of all the land that is now Palo Alto. When San Alma was first established in 1974, the builders made certain that this large tree (then over 40 feet tall) would not only be protected, but would be the centerpiece of our group of 26 townhouses and eight condominium units.

The tree is now 60 feet tall and has been regularly cared for by professional arborists. Since the tree is in the common area of the Association property, we can assure you that the tree will continue to receive the very best care.

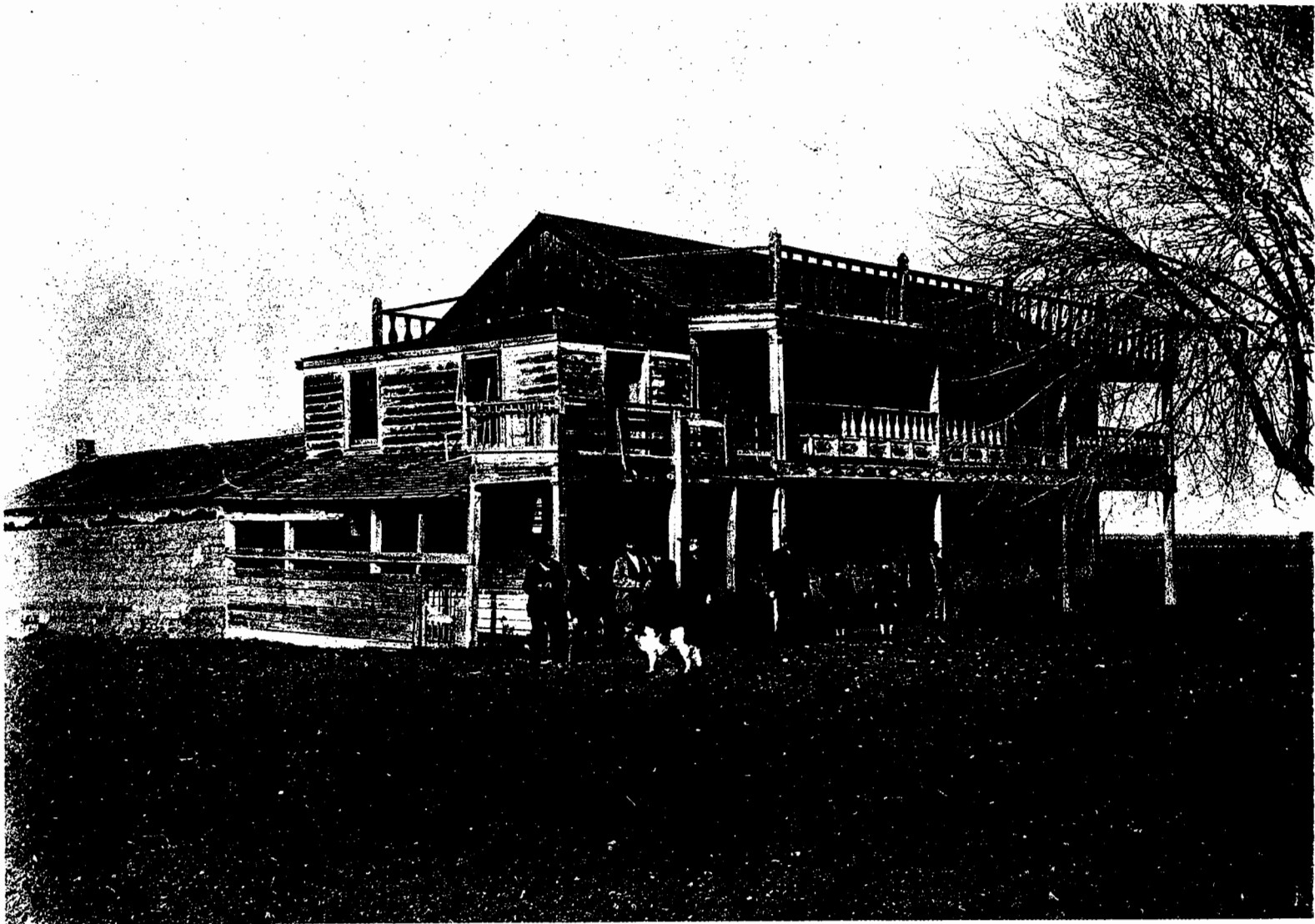
A map of our association layout of homes showing the location of the tree and photographs of the tree are enclosed. As you can see the tree is easily visible from the street and from a number of different angles. We would certainly agree to have the tree location listed on any maps so that others may enjoy it.

Thank you for considering this request.

Sincerely,



Sharon Berman
Vice President
San Alma Homeowners Association



Sometime before 1840, Don Secundo Robles built this adobe home on the corner of what is now Alma and San Antonio Road. This is the area now occupied by our homes at Villas de San Alma.

We thought all of our residents would enjoy reading about this area and how it was developed. The following pages are excerpted from the *History of Palo Alto: The Early Years* by Pamela Gullard and Nancy Lund which was published in 1989 and is available in the Palo Alto Library.

The Board of Directors
San Alma Homeowners Association

CHAPTER FOUR

The Robles Family— Rancho Rincon de San Francisquito

When it became fashionable to own land instead of merely live on it, the area that was to become Palo Alto was divided among only three families: The Robles, the Buernas and the Sotos. These families presided over three large ranchos named for the stream that forms the border between San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties, San Francisquito Creek. Thus the rancho names were confusingly similar: Rancho San Francisquito, Rancho Rincon de San Francisquito and Rancho Rinconada del Arroyo de San Francisquito.

In addition to these three, a small portion of Juana Briones' holdings, La Purisima Concepcion, was located along the Palo Alto-Los Altos Hills border. Another, El Corte de Madera, spilled slightly over the boundaries of San Mateo County into today's Palo Alto hills.

These were the vast ranchos of the Mexican era, the days of the dons. Although it is typical to say Spanish land grants, Mexico actually owned California after 1821; all of Palo Alto's grants came after that date.

It is almost impossible to imagine today how large they were. San Francisquito encompassed the main part of today's Stanford campus, Rinconada del Arroyo de San Francisquito extended from the Menlo Park border of Palo Alto to the Midtown region, and Rincon de San Francisquito, the largest, occupied all of today's south Palo Alto, from the bay to the foothills. Vast indeed!

Initially these ranchos were gifts from the government of Mexico to people who had performed special favors, who had friends in high places and/or who were willing to settle the Alta California wilderness to help hold the land for Mexico against possibly aggressive foreign governments.

The owners of the land that became Palo Alto obtained their property in the 1840s, the decade after the closing of the missions and before the gold rush. They rode their beautiful horses, herded their cattle,

traded hides to Yankee ships in exchange for manufactured goods, and little knew that the era of their beautiful ranchos was to be short-lived, thanks to the little yellow nuggets that brought foreigners into California by the tens of thousands.

Only glimmers of the stories of the ranchos remain, and much of the record that does exist is unclear. Many of the early rancheros couldn't read or write, and they considered careful record-keeping of land ownership unimportant. After all, in those days acquiring land was almost as easy as stopping your horse out on a California plain and declaring to the sky that all you surveyed was yours. The land was covered with oaks, the nearby hills were still inhabited by grizzly bears, and California was a lonely outpost of Mexico.

The Robles Family

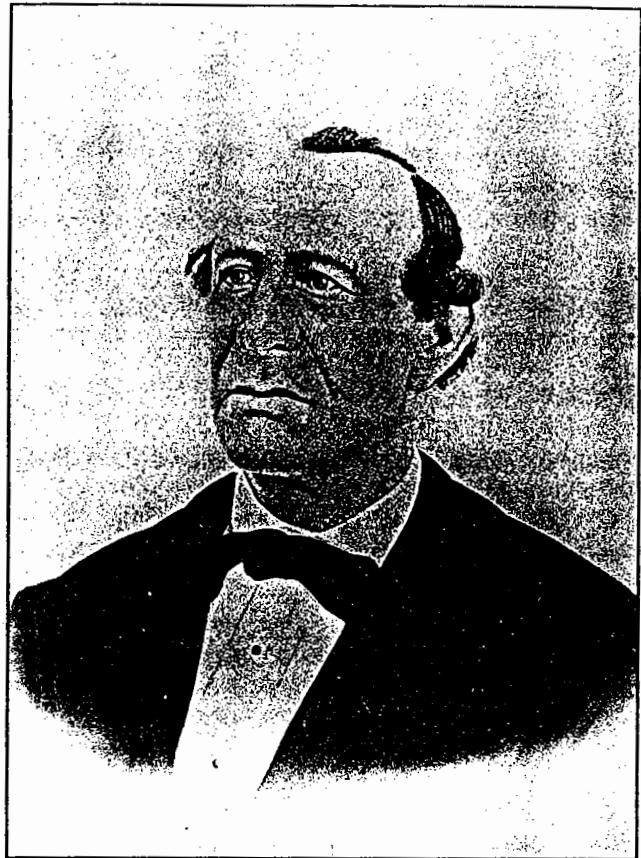
Secundino Robles, owner of the rancho that occupied all of today's south Palo Alto, must have been a nearly perfect specimen of what history and legend report the dons of old California to have been. He was tall, well over 6'3", and a handsome, blue-eyed native Californian, born in Santa Cruz in 1811. In an era when excellent horsemanship was the main delight in life, he was said to be the finest rider in the Santa Clara Valley. Early settlers reported seeing him pick up a row of silver dollars placed six feet apart on the ground while riding at a full gallop.

One can conjure up an image of him, arising at dawn, dressing in a satin jacket and velvet breeches, pulling on knee high buckskin boots, arraying his fine horse with silver studded tack and galloping for miles toward the foothills on his own land.

The story of Don Secundino and Rancho Rincon de San Francisquito can begin with cinnabar, quicksilver, the same substance that the Indians prized for decoration and that the miners would later use in gold processing. As young men, boys really, in the 1820s, Secundino Robles and his brother



Maria Antonia Garcia Robles



Secundino Robles

the Californio women to come to the mission to collect their dead.

One of those notified was Maria Antonia Robles, Secundino's wife. Barely over five feet tall, about 26 years old, she harnessed the oxen and yoked them to the rough cart called a *carreta* for the drive to the mission, fervently hoping her husband was still alive. But she did not flinch. She had proved her courage earlier by not losing faith when several of her children died, and once, in refusing to give up blankets to an American intruder. Reports say this tiny woman struck the intruder and pushed him out of her house. Fortunately her bravery wasn't to be tested again this day. Secundino was alive and well.

On January 3, the two sides sat down to talk, which was the rancheros' original goal. The treaty was simple: the hostages would be released, the Californios would surrender their arms and return home, the Californios would not be molested by the American military, and horses and other supplies wouldn't be taken from the ranchos without receipts.

Treaty ceremonies took place on January 7, 1847. Upon the promise that there would be no more raids, the rancheros laid down their arms. One of Palo Alto's enduring legends is that Secundino Robles broke his sword in half before he surrendered it. However, in

her book on the Battle of Santa Clara, local historian Dorothy Regnery, a meticulous researcher, says that no Californio made any dramatic gesture at the ceremonies. Perhaps it says something of the character of the man that this legend exists.

Nine months later, in September 1847, Secundino Robles and his brother Teodoro bought Rancho Rincon de San Francisquito from Jose Pena. The purchase price for a large part of present day Palo Alto was around \$3500 and was financed through that cave of cinnabar.

A few years earlier, the Robles brothers had taken Andres Castellero, a Mexican mining expert, to their cave. He immediately recognized the cinnabar and its value, filed a claim with the Mexican government and organized a company to work the mine. Secundino and Teodoro received a one-sixth interest in that company. The Robles brothers used this share to purchase the rancho.

Local historians disagree as to whether the Robles brothers sold the one-sixth interest and then bought the rancho or whether they traded the mine shares for it. Since Jose Pena doesn't seem to appear in the considerable litigation over New Almaden Mine ownership, the former seems most likely.

Theirs is not the only real estate transaction in the

connecting stairway. All evidence indicates that for many years the second story was a dancing floor open to the stars. Eventually the upstairs was enclosed and divided into three rooms. On each floor, doors opened to verandas which extended the full length of the house on two sides.

Here, during the 1850s, the Robles family extended their famous Spanish hospitality to everyone around. There were almost monthly feasts, fandangos, and barbecues. Guests would feast and dance from Sunday morning through Saturday night. The men would be up at dawn to ride Don Secundino's fine horses, inspect herds, hunt grizzlies and show their skill at galloping over the fields, not bothering to slow down for gopher holes, ditches, fences or gulches. The women would sew and talk. At night everyone would dance.

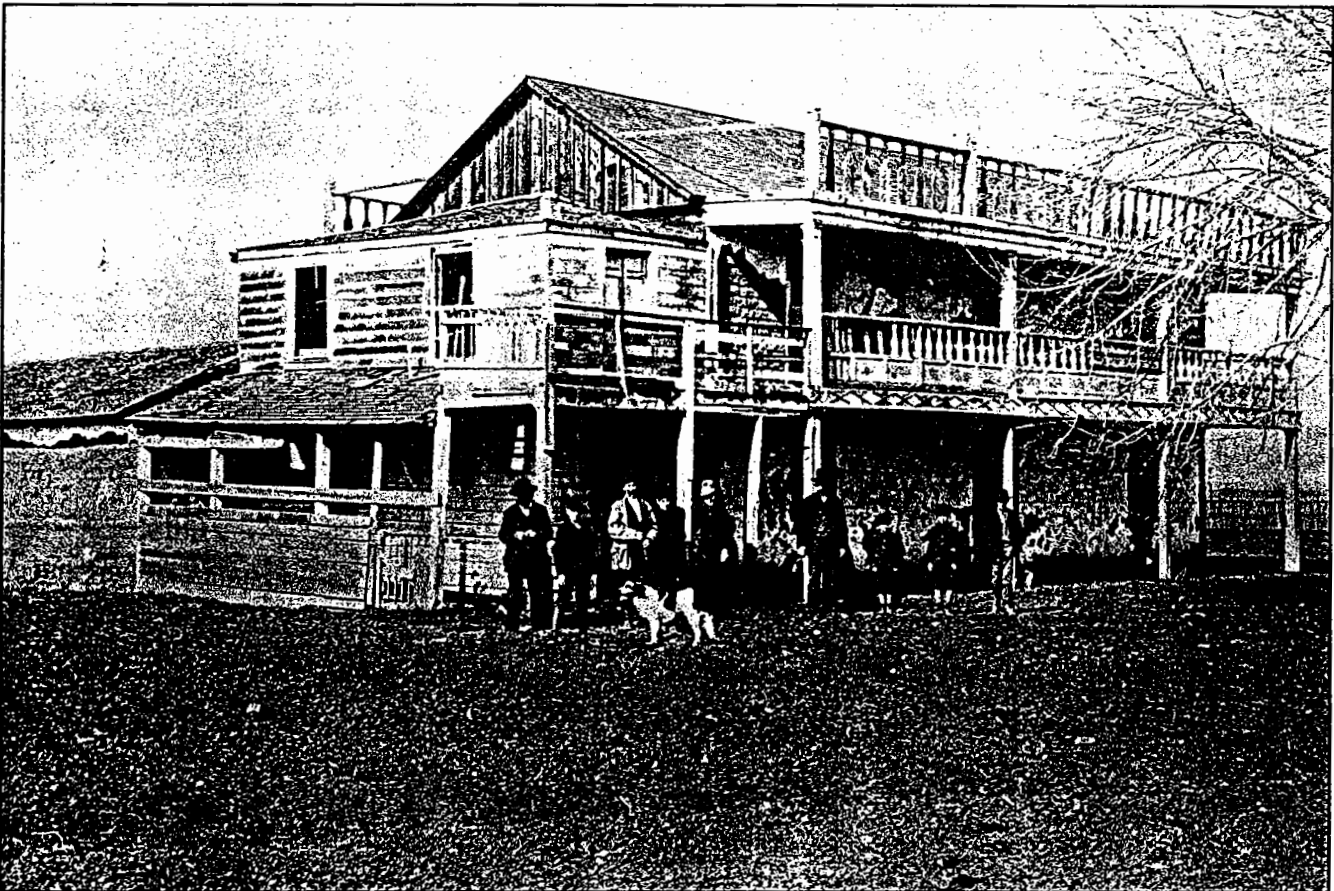
The Robles adobe became a stage stop on the route between San Francisco and San Jose. Don Secundino was renowned for his generous and friendly offering of liquid refreshments. He staged bear and bull fights in his arena which drew large crowds. Hunters enjoyed stopping to rendezvous with others before and after the hunt; bear, mountain lion, deer, quail,

ducks and geese still thrived in profusion nearby.

Although the Robles hospitality was legend, Don Secundino and Dona Maria Antonia are best remembered for the size of their family. History records that they produced an astonishing 29 children in the decades between 1830 and 1860. Less well known is that only eight lived to adulthood. Ten died before they were named. Juan I and Jose lived for eight days, Juan II for twenty, Jesus Maria, Gertrudis and Ascencion lived only to see their first birthdays. Maria Leonidas was two when she died, Lourdes was three, Rosario six and Maria Angela eight. The record of another who died in childhood is lost.

Of the eight who survived, six were girls. Five of them had the first name of Maria. Jesusita and Guadalupe married Espinosa brothers, whose family owned the property in Monterey where the Hotel Del Monte was later built. They carried on family tradition, bearing 24 and 19 children.

Jesusita is said to have been a beauty, the belle of fandangos and bull fights. According to a report by historian Cora Older, who interviewed Jesusita, then an old lady, in 1918, Jesusita once rode in a bull fight at Mission Dolores with 5000 people in



The Robles adobe, where many of the Robles children were born. At left is a separate kitchen. The upper gallery was once a dance floor open to the sky. The adobe walls collapsed in the 1906 earthquake, and the building was then demolished. Courtesy Palo Alto Historical Association



*Guadalupe Robles de Espinosa (1840-1922), born in an adobe, mother of 19 children; the cares and joys of 80 years show on her face in this superb photograph. She lived to see the age of the automobile.
Courtesy Palo Alto Historical Association*

J. S. Mockbee offered this explanation in 1881: "It was their open handed generosity and abiding trust in all mankind that caused them to lose their vast holdings little by little. Eastern men took advantage of their hospitality and generosity." American and Californio ways of looking at land values were different.

The infamous circus story is a good example. By all accounts, Secundino was a happy man who loved life, laughter and good times. When the circus came to town, of course he wanted to take his family. Being short of cash, as the story goes, he borrowed \$75 from a "Yankee" and pledged land as security. The reports do not say why it was such an expensive outing. Still short of cash when the repayment was due, Secundino deeded 50 acres of his rancho to the nameless Yankee. By 1876 the sprawling Rancho Santa Rita had shrunk from 8400 acres to 300 acres.

Gradually Secundino began to slow down. He gave up his beloved trips to San Francisco to see the sights. He was not seen so often riding along the roads of the peninsula astride a handsome horse. He loved to sit in the shade of his grape arbor and have a grandchild read the newspaper to him or visit with friends passing by. His land and therefore his access to money was largely gone, but he could still offer the modest hospitality of a glass of wine. It has been said that he had more friends than any other man in California. He died, a ward of the county, on January 10, 1890, a year after Palo Alto's first streets were laid out.

Maria Antonia survived him for several years, continuing the famous Robles hospitality by serving wine, milk and thin, sweet tortillas to bicyclists along El Camino. Mary S. Barnes interviewed her in 1894 for an article in *Sequoia*, a Stanford University publication.



JAMES M. McCLENAHAN
DAVID F. MOORE
JOHN H. McCLENAHAN

S.P. McCLENAHAN CO., INC.

GARY F. ARMSTRONG
GENE K. PEGLOW
MIGUEL A. BERUMEN

ARBORICULTURISTS
SINCE 1911

CONTRACTORS LIC. #651341

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August 4, 2000

San Alma Homeowners Association

Attention: **Mrs. Victoria Bosch**
4226 Ponce
Palo Alto, California 94306

Assignment

As requested, I visually inspected the American elm (*Ulmus americana*) to determine species, size, condition, location and appraised value.

Methodology

In determining Tree Condition several factors have been considered which include:

Rate of growth over several seasons;
Structural decays or weaknesses;
Presence of disease or insects; and
Life expectancy.

The following guide for interpretation of Tree Condition as related to Life Expectancy is submitted for your information.

0 - 5 Years = Poor
5 - 10 Years = Poor to Fair
10 - 15 Years = Fair
15 - 20 Years = Fair to Good
20 + Years = Good

In determining the monetary value, the adjusted trunk formula method of appraisal has been adopted for trees more than 30.0" inches in diameter.

The adjusted trunk formula method determines the basic value and then adjusting that value depending on the trees condition and location ratings. Basic value is the cost of replacement and the increase in value due to the larger size of the tree being appraised compared to the size of the replacement tree.

San Alma Homeowners Association

Attention: **Mrs. Victoria Bosch**

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Please be advised that the Council of Tree and Landscape Appraisers representing The American Association of Nurserymen, American Society of Consulting Arborists, Landscape Contractors of America, International Society of Arboriculture and National Arborist Association who have approved and adopted this method of plant valuation authored this method of plant appraisal.

In determining **species** rating, factors considered include:

- climate and soil adaptability
- growth characteristics
- resistance to insects and disease
- maintenance requirements
- aesthetic values

In determining **condition** rating, factors considered include:

- rate of growth over several seasons
- structural decays or weaknesses
- presence of insects or disease
- life expectancy

In determining **location** rating, factors considered include:

- site
- functional and aesthetic contribution
- placement

San Alma Homeowners Association

Attention: Mrs. Victoria Bosch

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Tree Description/Observation

American elm (*Ulmus americana*)

Diameter standard height: 39.5"

Height: 60' **Spread:** 60'

Condition: Fair

Location: In planter area between roads

Observation:

Foliage, size and color are typical of the species. I observed minor damage from chewing insects. I did not see any evidence of large dead limbs or presence of disease.

Many of the scaffold limbs exhibit numerous old pruning wounds with varied degrees of callus closure. Some wounds exhibit complete wound closure, while most wounds indicate partial closure. A few of the wounds are oozing sap. The main crotch contains two pockets of deterioration approximately one-foot deep. These two cavities have decayed sixty percent of the heartwood. The root crown is maintained at natural grade and is in direct contact with overhead spray irrigation.

Discussion

Foliage, size and color indicate normal tree vitality. The leaves indicate that nutrient and moisture uptake is adequate to sustain tree vigor. Damage to leaves from elm leaf beetle (*Galerucella xanthomeloea*) is minimal and insignificant to tree health. The healthy looking foliage shows no symptoms of Dutch elm disease (*Ceratocystis ulmi*).

Our records indicate a fungicide treatment (micro injection with Alamo) occurred on August 12, 1998. It is advisable to continue with a Dutch elm disease prevention program. Dutch elm disease is a devastating disease throughout the United States that often kills mature Elm trees very quickly.

The wounds with varied degrees of callus closure indicate the tree's natural process, called compartmentalization of decay in trees (codit). The callus roll formation created by this process is a tree's natural response to "seal" decay caused from wounding. Once the wounds achieve complete closure, the decay will be compartmentalized.

Some of the wounds are oozing sap. *This is known as slime flux or wetwood and is very common in Elm trees. It comes from a bacteria fermenting in the heartwood, which builds pressure and forces the fermented sap (slime flux) out of wounds, cracks or crotches. Slime flux rarely causes serious harm to trees.**

San Alma Homeowners Association

Attention: Mrs. Victoria Bosch

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Discussion continued

An aerial inspection of the two pockets of deterioration indicates a sixty percent loss of heartwood. This degree of decay does weaken tree structure, however, does not create an immediate hazard. Decay of the main crotch should be monitored on an annual basis.

The root crown area receives spray from overhead irrigation. This can cause deterioration of bark and increase susceptibility to wood rotting pathogens.

Conclusion

The foliage and rate of growth do indicate good tree vigor. However, abnormalities such as the slim flux, decay in main crotch, and wounds not completely "sealed" influenced my condition rating to fair. The condition rating is meant to be used as a guide and not necessarily an indication of tree mortality. Adoption of tree preservation recommendations often increases life expectancy. This tree is susceptible to Dutch elm disease, as are all mature American elms.

Recommendation

- Monitor cavities at main crotch annually to determine rate of decay.
- Continue a pruning program to reduce leverage weight every three to five years.
- Continue fungicide applications to aid in Dutch elm disease prevention.
- Maintain a spray program to control elm leaf beetle.
- Modify spray irrigation to prevent contact within six feet of the root crown.

Appraisal

<i>Basic Value</i>		\$ 20,089.00
<i>Species Classification</i>	60%	
<i>Condition Rating</i>	65%	13,058.00
<i>Location Rating</i>	83.3%	10,877.00

Site 85% Contribution 85% Placement 80%

Appraised Value \$10,900.00

San Alma Homeowners Association

Attention: **Mrs. Victoria Bosch**

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We thank you for this opportunity to be of service in your tree preservation concerns.

Should you have any questions, or if we may be of further assistance, kindly contact our office at any time.

Very truly yours,

S. P. McCLENAHAN CO., INC.


By: **John H. McClenahan, Vice President**
member, American Society of Consulting Arborists
Certified Arborist WC – ISA #1476

JHMc:pm

cc: Mr. James Burch