

FRESNO COUNTY LANDMARKS COMMISSION  
NOMINATION FORM  
HISTORIC RESOURCES INVENTORY

Ser. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
HABS \_\_\_\_\_ HAER \_\_\_\_\_ NR \_\_\_\_\_ SHL \_\_\_\_\_ Loc \_\_\_\_\_  
UTM: A \_\_\_\_\_ B \_\_\_\_\_  
C \_\_\_\_\_ D \_\_\_\_\_

IDENTIFICATION

1. Common name: FIG GARDEN WOMAN'S CLUB
2. Historic name: FIG GARDEN WOMAN'S CLUB
3. Street or rural address: 4550 NORTH VAN NESS BLVD.  
City FRESNO Zip 93704 County FRESNO
4. Parcel number: 426-071-18
5. Present Owner: FIG GARDEN WOMAN'S CLUB, INC. Address: 4550 N. VAN NESS BLVD  
City FRESNO Zip 93704 Ownership is: Public \_\_\_\_\_ Private \_\_\_\_\_ Membership \_\_\_\_\_
6. Present Use: FOR MEMBERS ONLY Original use: SAME  
Business meetings, fund raising activities, luncheons, teas, programs.

DESCRIPTION

- 7a. Architectural style: COLONIAL STYLE - FRONT ENTRANCE
- 7b. Briefly describe the present physical description of the site or structure and describe any major alterations from its original condition:

The Fig Garden Woman's Club is a one story building with a colonial type entrance located in beautiful Fig Garden residential area. It has been newly painted and is well kept.

W. J. Jennings was the contractor who built the clubhouse in 1926 on one-half acre of land given by J. C. Forkner. This piece of land was designated as Lot 159 according to the map of Forkner-Giffen Subdivision No. 1 and recorded in the County Recorder's Office September 16, 1918. A grant deed for Lot 159 was given by Mr. Forkner to the F.G.W.C. December 13, 1957.

1942 - New hardwood floors laid.

1948-49 - A new kitchen built and clubhouse renovated.

1952-53 - F.G.W.C. purchased Lot 160 to be used for parking.

1979 - A new addition was built and known as Garden Room.

The clubhouse has a foyer, men and women's rest rooms, large meeting room (recently carpeted) with stage, a coffee room, up-dated kitchen with dishwasher, etc. Patio built around a large Karob tree planted in 1926.



8. Construction date:  
Estimated 1926 Factual 1926
9. Architect Ernest Kump
10. Builder W. J. Jennings  
in 1926
11. Approx. property size (in feet)  
Frontage 2 lots Depth \_\_\_\_\_  
or approx. acreage 1 acre
12. Date(s) of enclosed photograph(s)  
1984

13. Condition: Excellent  Good  Fair  Deteriorated  No longer in existence
14. Alterations: See No. 19
15. Surroundings: (Check more than one if necessary) Open land  Scattered buildings  Densely built-up   
Residential  Industrial  Commercial  Other:
16. Threats to site: None known  Private development  Zoning  Vandalism   
Public Works project  Other:
17. Is the structure: On its original site?  Yes  Moved?  Unknown?
18. Related features: Landscaped in front and side patio. Old eucalyptus & karob trees.

#### SIGNIFICANCE

19. Briefly state historical and/or architectural importance (include dates, events, and persons associated with the site.)

March 1921 - Organized  
 May 1921 - Federated  
 1936 - General Federation  
 April 29, 1948 - Incorporated  
 1926 - Clubhouse built by W. J. Jennings, contractor  
 1928 - Club asked people on Van Ness Blvd to light 10 trees &  
 Mrs. Clarice Roberts was the first chairman for the beginning of  
 Christmas Tree Lane  
 1942-43 - Clubhouse opened as a temporary U.S.O. for Camp Pinedale. Also  
 used as a chapel  
 1948-49 - New kitchen built. Clubhouse renovated, telephone installed  
 1952-53 - F.G.W.C. purchased Lot 160 south of clubhouse for parking area  
 1953-54 - Parking lot paved  
 1957 - December 13 J. C. Forkner gave the deed of Lot 159 (1/2 acre) to clubhouse  
 1979 - New addition built known as the "Garden Room"

20. Main theme of the historic resource: (If more than one is checked, number in order of importance.)  
 Architecture  Arts & Leisure  2  
 Economic/Industrial  Exploration/Settlement   
 Government  Military   
 Religion  Social/Education  1

21. Sources (List books, documents, surveys, personal interviews and their dates). 3-8-86  
 Clarice Roberts member since 1923  
 Research in club minutes 1921 to date  
 Interview with Helen Wacaser, Martina Sharp,  
 Dorothy DeRemer & Helen Bellando

22. Date form prepared March 11, 1986  
 By (name) Louise E. Britten  
 Organization Member F.G.W.C.  
 Address: 1493 W Browning  
 City Fresno Zip 93711  
 Phone: 439-6148

23. Signature of Owner F.G.W.C., Inc.  
Margaret E. [Signature] President

Locational sketch map (draw and label site and surrounding streets, roads, and prominent landmarks):



March 1921 a group of 13 women met in the home of Mrs. J. C. Crosson to organize. The next meeting was held at the Bullard Elementary school and Mrs. C. C. Coleman was elected first president. Purpose of the organization shall be "self improvement and social and civic betterment of our community, state and nation". Our motto is "Home and Community".

All events where money is collected shall be used for normal expenses of club, building fund and charities.

Members worked to raise clubhouse funds.

Mrs. Nelson Ryan was elected president in 1925 and plans for a clubhouse began. J. C. Forkner and Carl Lindsay each donated \$500 and other smaller amounts were subscribed. Materials were donated by members. Members devised many projects to raise money and also loaned their money. Debt for building was paid in 1935-36 by members, and the money loaned was paid back to members in 1936.

Membership is limited to 250.

Non-members are not allowed to use clubhouse or hold meetings.

Clarice Roberts became a member in 1923 and is still active in the club as honorary board member.

Dorothy DeKemer, daughter of the first president is also an active member.

Mrs. J. C. Forkner is an honorary member.

Fig Garden Woman's Club celebrates 65 years March 1986.



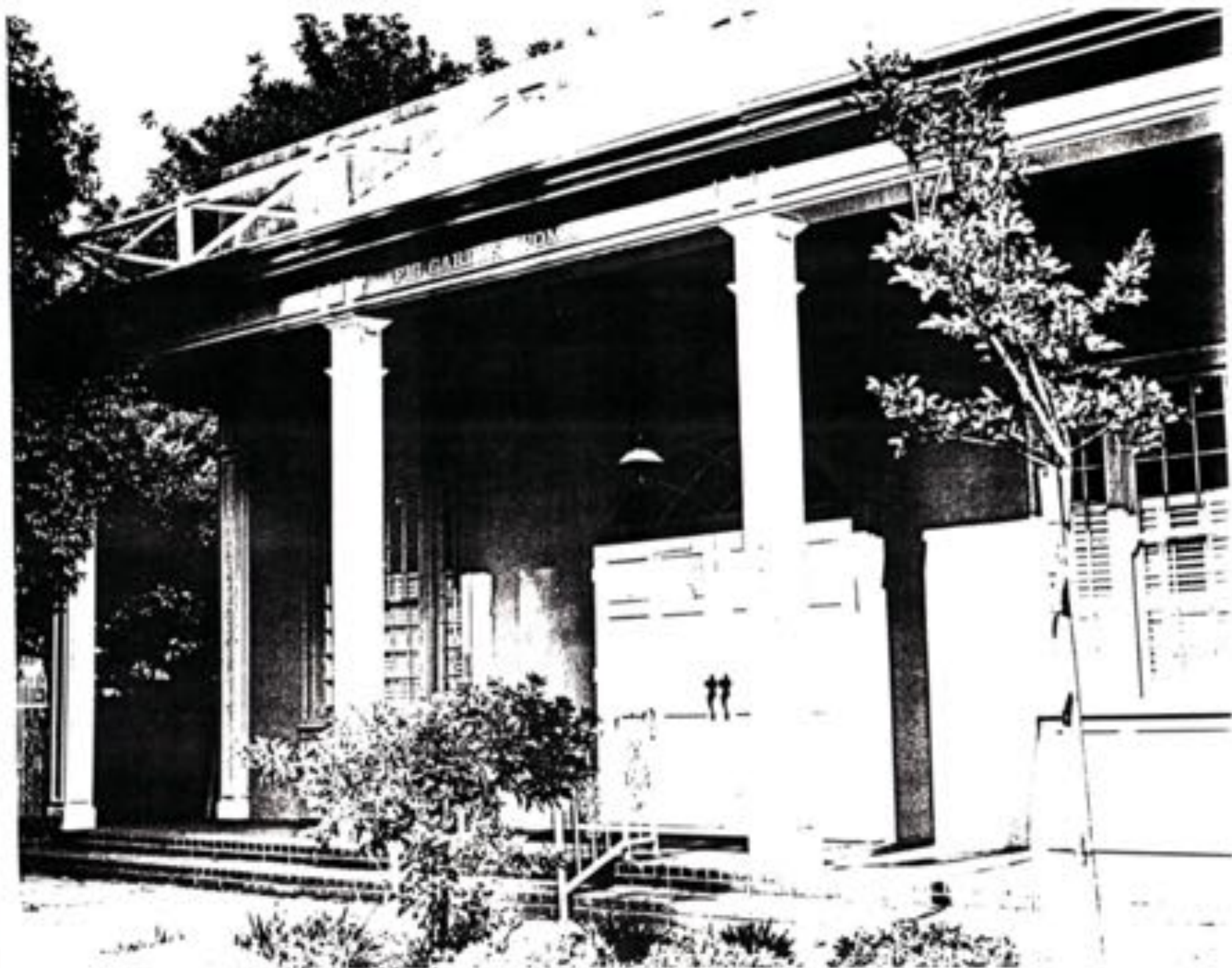


FIG GARDEN ROOMS CLUB

Universal  
1914



*Copy also sent to  
Carolina Hogg for  
Comment  
JKK/Jan*

Date: March 13, 1986  
To:  Co. Planning  City Planning  Co. Resources & Development  
 Co. Community Development  Co. Public Works  *City of Fresno Planning*  
From: John K. Kallenberg, Secretary - Historical Landmarks & Records Commission  
Subject: Application for Placement on County List of Historic Places  
Site: FIG GARDEN WOMAN'S CLUB

The attached application has been made to the Historical Landmarks & Records Commission for addition to the County List of Historic Places. Please comment on the application and return the comments to my office by APRIL 4, 1986.

No comment.

No factors affecting historic status, but the following needs action:

Factors affecting historic status are listed here:

*The club has long been a landmark in the Fig Garden Neighborhood plan area, as a focus of civic endeavors. Largely as the result of the example set by the Club a provision was added to the Zoning Ordinance to allow "civic and Social Clubs of 250 or less members in most Single Family Residential Districts, by approved Conditional Use Permit."*

Signature *JKK*

Please return to:  
John K. Kallenberg, Secretary  
Historical Landmarks & Records Commission  
2420 Mariposa Street  
Fresno, CA 93721  
Stop #47

ph: 488-3185

*Copy also sent to  
Jerry Brown for  
Comment - JKL*

Date: March 13, 1986  
To:  Co. Planning /  City Planning /  Co. Resources & Development  
 Co. Community Development /  Co. Public Works /  \_\_\_\_\_  
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Factors affecting historic status are listed here:

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Katie Bearden  
Signature *Development Services*

Please return to:  
John K. Kallenberg, Secretary  
Historical Landmarks & Records Commission  
2420 Mariposa Street  
Fresno, CA 93721  
Stop #47

ph: 488-3185



# JOHN EDWARD POWELL

May 9, 1986

Ms. Louise E. Britten  
Fig Garden Woman's Club  
4550 North Van Ness Boulevard  
Fresno, CA 93704

Dear Ms. Britten:

As a member of the Fresno County Historical Landmarks & Records Advisory Commission, I have received a copy of your application nominating the historic Fig Garden Woman's Club for Landmark status.

For the past nine years, I have as an architectural historian documented nearly a hundred of the more prominent residential structures in the Old Fig Garden area, as a part of my research for a book I am writing on Central San Joaquin Valley Architecture: 1885-1947. Your clubhouse is among those sites I have indexed.

Enclosed are two clippings from my files which you may wish to add to your nomination package. They are:

Anonymous, "Club House Plan Favored: Residents of Figarden Raise \$3,400.00", THE FRESNO MORNING REPUBLICAN (Volume LXVII, No. 92), April 2, 1925, p. 7. [Ernest J. Kump, Architect]

Anonymous, "Women's Club of Fig Garden in New Home: Spanish Type Building Completed at Cost of \$10,000.00" THE FRESNO MORNING REPUBLICAN (Volume LXIX, No. 49), February 18, 1926, p. 9.

It is of singular importance that Ernest J. Kump, Sr. is identified as the architect. This fact greatly strengthens your claim for the historical status of the building, since Mr. Kump was one of the most talented classically-trained architects to practice in the valley, and the father of Ernest Kump, Jr., who designed Fresno's internationally acclaimed City Hall. Much of the senior Kump's work has been destroyed, making a surviving building such as yours all the more important.

I hope this information will be of use to you. Please accept my appreciation for your effort to preserve our architectural heritage.

Very truly yours,

  
John Edward Powell

JEP:bg

Enclosure

cc: Ms. Linda Goff



224 East Cambridge Avenue  
Fresno, California  
93704

## Proposed Figarden Woman's Clubhouse

Architect's drawing of the proposed clubhouse for the Figarden Woman's clubhouse, for which plans were made at a mass meeting of interested citizens of the district last night. Over \$3,000 has been raised and a goal of \$5,000 has been set before work is actually started.



## CLUB HOUSE PLANS

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Raise \$

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by the Ernest J  
W. F. Jennings  
adviser for the c

## Woman's Clubhouse

for the Figarden Woman's clubhouse, interested citizens of the district last \$5,000 has been set before work is



# CLUB HOUSE PLAN FAVORED

## Residents Of Figarden Raise \$3,400

FIGARDEN, April 1.—Plans for the erection of a clubhouse for the use of the Figarden Woman's club were unanimously endorsed at a mass meeting of property owners and others interested in the project at the Bullard school near here tonight. The meeting was attended by about 75 persons and was called by Mrs. Carl Lindsay, president of the Woman's Club.

After an informal discussion concerning the need of such a clubhouse and the plans for building it subscription lists were opened and it was announced that \$3,400 had been pledged towards the erection of the building. It was decided to continue the campaign, and when the \$5,000 mark is reached to present the matter to the Figarden Woman's club for the necessary action towards proceeding with the building.

Plans for the building were prepared by the Ernest J. Kump company and W. F. Jennings acted as contractor adviser for the club.





## WOMAN'S CLUB OF FIG GARDEN IN NEW HOME

Spanish Type Building  
Completed At Cost  
Of \$10,000

Informally opening the new club home, a \$10,000 Spanish type stone clubhouse, on Van Ness avenue between Getzberg and Infanzonita, the home economics department of the Fig Garden Woman's club met there yesterday afternoon. Members donated linen for the kitchen at a shower following an afternoon spent in sewing for the Nutritional home.

Formal dedication of the building, according to Mrs. S. M. Egan, president, will take place the first week in March, when Mrs. W. B. Cairns, president of the district, and various county officers are expected to be present. The building at present, although not entirely completed, has reached the stage where the club can meet there.

Started, while Mrs. Carl Lindsey was president, on a tract 21 by 121 feet donated by J. C. Parkson, the building has been built from money raised by the club at parties and entertainments, through donations of people of the community, and of various business houses of the city, who realized the need of a community building.

Fronting on Van Ness avenue, the building is 49 by 21 feet and contains a large reception room opening into an auditorium, which is equipped with a stage and dressing room at the opposite end. A fireplace of glazed brick occupies one end of the reception room and double dressing rooms the other. A basement for a furnace is located beneath the stage.

The plans call for a dining room, 20 by 24 feet, to be added later, and it is also planned to construct a brick wall, six feet high with an iron gate in front around the garden. French doors open from the reception room into the garage on the side, and folding French doors separate the reception room from the auditorium, making it possible to throw the two rooms into one.

Although the grounds were originally landscaped, it is planned to add to the shrubbery later.

Mrs. Fred Hansen is chairman of the building committee composed of Mrs. W. F. Whiting, Mrs. J. K. Wicks, Mrs. W. M. Brown, Mrs. Glenn Black and Miss R. J. Grayson. Advisory members were O. O. Reed, Carl Lindsey, and Fred Gregory.

The next meeting of the club will be held at the home of Mrs. W. M. Brown and will be a home decoration day, in charge of Mrs. W. F. Jennings.

June 24, 1986



# Agenda Item

DATE: June 24, 1986  
 TO: Board of Supervisors  
 FROM: Historical Landmarks & Records Advisory Commission *J*  
 SUBJECT: Historic Designation

### RECOMMENDATION:

1. That your Board place the Hume Lake Dam, located in the Sequoia National Forest, on the County's List of Historic Places as site #155.
2. That your Board place the Fig Garden Woman's Club Clubhouse on the County's List of Historic Places as site #156.

### DISCUSSION:

The Historical Landmarks & Records Advisory Commission has reviewed and approved both of the applications for placement on the County list. The Hume Lake Dam is owned by the United States Forest Service, which supports this nomination, and is located in the Sequoia National Forest, Hume Lake District. The dam was built in 1908 and was completed in 114 working days. When the dam was built it was the world's first reinforced concrete multiple arch dam built on bedrock foundations. This method of construction minimized the need for expensive concrete and special reinforcing, and represents an important historical economic development.

Nominated by the Fig Garden Woman's Club, the clubhouse is a one story building with a colonial type entrance located in the Fig Garden residential area. It was designed by architect Ernest Kump, and it was built in 1926 by W. J. Jennings on a one-half acre lot donated by J. C. Forkner.

### OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

The Fresno County offices of Public Works & Development Services, City of Fresno Planning Department, and the Sequoia National Forest were consulted and none responded with negative concerns.

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE REVIEW \_\_\_\_\_ *Stephen R. Hogg* \_\_\_\_\_ Page 1 of 1  
 BOARD ACTION: DATE 6/24/86 APPROVED AS RECOMMENDED XX OTHER \_\_\_\_\_



UNANIMOUS XX ANDREEN \_\_\_\_\_ CONRAD \_\_\_\_\_ KOLIGIAN \_\_\_\_\_ LEVY \_\_\_\_\_ RAMACHER \_\_\_\_\_

FRESNO COUNTY HISTORICAL LANDMARK

List to  
11/25/86  
7/25/86  
12/25/86  
1/1/86  
1/1/86  
1/1/86

Fig Garden Woman's Club

Designated in recognition of its place as a  
Historical Landmark in Fresno County  
by action of the Board of Supervisors

November 25, 1986

Date

PEARL KOLIGIAN  
Chairman, the Board of Supervisors  
Chairman, Historical Landmarks and Records Commission

# VINTAGE FRESNO

*Pictorial Recollections of a  
Western City*

By EDWIN M. EATON



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PRESS • FRESNO, CALIFORNIA • 1965



## Forkner's Fig Gardens



J. C. Forkner, founder of Fresno's Fig Gardens.

AS MORE AND MORE NEW RESIDENTIAL TRACTS ARE subdivided on Fresno's northern borders, the fig tree population in the area is steadily decreasing. The noted twelve thousand acres of figs planted by one man are losing many of their trees and gaining houses.

In the early days much of the land north of Fresno between the city and the San Joaquin River was generally considered to be almost worthless for agricultural purposes. It was rolling hogwallow land underlain with hardpan varying in depth from three or four feet to outcroppings on the very surface. In most places the depth of the soil above the hardpan layer was not enough to support fruit trees or vines, and the hogwallows made irrigation almost impossible. Dry farming with grain was about the only agricultural use that was attempted. The scarcity and uncertainty of rain made such farming very precarious. One matured crop of grain out of three or four planted was considered a fair average.

In 1910 a tall young man from Kansas, experienced in colonization in Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas and Southern California, came from Los Angeles to look over the possibilities in the San Joaquin Valley. Finding six thousand acres north of Fresno under one ownership, he was favorably impressed with it in spite of its hardpan and hogwallows. Fresno, he perceived, was clearly destined to be the Valley's leading city. Small orchards or vineyards nearby could support thousands of rural families who would have the advantages which a growing metropolis affords. And so it came to pass that J. C. Forkner, the Kansan from Los Angeles, obtained from the Bullard Company a one-year option to purchase six thousand acres of the dubious land which most of the "natives" called "outlaw land."

*Fordson tractors level the land for figs.*

(Level)



During the year that his option ran, Forkner was a busy man, making soil tests for quality and depth of soil. By drilling through the hardpan in various portions of the Bullard lands, he discovered that it varied in thickness from a few inches to several feet. Beneath the hardpan he found great depths of rich sandy soil. Above it the soil was heavy clay capable of producing almost any crop, provided the soil was deep enough and could be irrigated. To be economically irrigated the hogwallow land must be levelled. If that was feasible, there still remained the problem of the shallow soil above the hardpan. To solve that problem Forkner hit upon the idea of blasting a hole through the hardpan so that tree roots could go through to the deep soil beneath. Such a hole also provided drainage for the irrigation water. For grapevines, which are usually planted ten or twelve feet apart, the cost of blasting for each vine would be prohibitive; but for trees planted thirty feet apart, the cost might be justifiable.

In the course of his studies, Forkner found in other parts of the world that fig trees did well in similar soil and were capable of surviving under unfavourable conditions. From many angles he began to favor figs for his optioned land.

Not long before, Professor Edward J. Wickson of the University of California had published a book on horticulture, which included a chapter on figs. Forkner went to Berkeley and called on Professor Wickson. In the course of their conversation, when the professor learned that his visitor had come from Fresno, he suggested that he return at once and look up either George C. Roeding or Henry Markarian, from whom Wickson had obtained most of his information for the fig chapter.

Forkner returned to Fresno and called on Henry Markarian, whose home on Blackstone Avenue was surrounded by 160 acres of figs bounded by Shields, Blackstone, Dakota and Fresno Avenues. This is the land bought in 1953 by the State of California for a new campus for Fresno State College. Later it was decided that this site was not large enough, so it was resold. In 1951 the fig trees were torn out, the land was subdivided as Manchester Park and more than 375 homes were built and occupied. Manchester Center, with its great variety of stores, now occupies the southwest corner of the former Markarian fig orchard.

Getting back to figs and the year 1910, J. C. Forkner was so impressed with Henry Markarian's background of figs both here and in his native land, that he put him on his payroll as consultant on a monthly retainer basis. Together

the two men toured the coast states, visiting almost every spot where figs were known to be grown.

Oddly enough, many Fresno vineyards had borders of fig trees which grew luxuriantly but rarely matured a marketable crop. The late M. F. Tarpey, parts of whose land have been subdivided as Tarpey Village, had such fig borders which produced abundant crops that soured and dropped from the trees before ripening. Tarpey said Forkner would be out of his mind to consider planting large acreages of figs. Markarian claimed that the souring of the figs was caused by irrigating the vineyard at about the time the figs were ripening. The water penetrated the ten or twelve feet of sandy soil but was stopped by the underlying clay or hardpan. This water on the roots prevented proper ripening of the figs. Forkner's solution to this problem was to blast through the hardpan to prevent the water from standing and to allow the roots to reach the deeper soil below the shallow hardpan.

In due time Forkner exercised his option on the Bullard six thousand acres and began the herculean task of preparing the land for figs. Tractors were then in their early stage of development. No huge land-levelling machines such as we see today were available in 1912. Forkner started with six-horse teams and Fresno scrapers to drag down the hog-wallows and level the land for irrigation. Later he bought a hundred Fordson tractors and had small scrapers made for attachment to the tractors. Henry Ford made a special trip to Fresno to see this unique use of his tractors. After the levelling was finished the hardpan was drilled and blasted every thirty feet. Finally the fig trees were planted.

*Henry Ford drove a "Tin Lizzy" coupe from Los Angeles to inspect Forkner's tractor operations.*

[Level]





[Lewell]

*Young Forkner fig trees are given a drink.*

In the meantime, while these preparations were going on, the officers and directors of the Fresno County Chamber of Commerce were growing uneasy. Could they with clear consciences stand idly by and permit this scatterbrained promoter from Los Angeles to sell worthless hardpan land to our unsuspecting public? They passed a resolution condemning the project and warned Forkner against marketing the land.

Forkner's answer to the Chamber of Commerce was a full page advertisement in a Fresno newspaper, offering a reward of \$1,000 to any man, woman or child who could prove that a single acre of Bullard Lands was free from hardpan. Instead of trying to conceal the presence of hardpan, as the Chamber assumed he would do, Forkner made a virtue of it. He claimed that after the hardpan was blasted for each tree, the roots had access to almost limitless soil beneath the hardpan. To call attention to the hardpan, he built walls of it, as well as waiting stations for the electric car line which he succeeded in having extended to the San Joaquin River through his fig orchards.

Over a period of several years Forkner planted and sold over 12,000 acres of figs mostly in parcels of 10 to 40 acres. The acreage nearest Fresno was subdivided into residential acre and half-acre lots with fig trees on the rear portions. Through the years and until the present time many fine homes have been and are being built in the Fig Gardens, recognized as one of Fresno's finest residential areas.

Through the center of his fig orchards Forkner laid out and planned an eight-mile boulevard (known as Van Ness Boulevard) one hundred twenty-five feet in width, bordered by eucalyptus, oleanders and cedrus deodaras. At each Christmas season a two-mile portion of Van Ness Boulevard becomes "Christmas Tree Lane" and attracts visitors from all parts of the nation. The bordering evergreen deodars are strung with thousands of colored electric lights. In addition each home facing the boulevard presents some appropriate Christmas theme or is bedecked with lights.

Even if Fresno expands so as to embrace all of the Forkner Fig Gardens, the ornamental trees on Van Ness Boulevard will stand as a monument to J. C. Forkner, whose vision and courage made fruitful the thousands of acres which many of us thought were worthless.

*An early view of Van Ness Boulevard.*

[Level]



Ernest J. Kump, Sr.  
(American, 1888-1939)

Residence for Rev. Geo. Seubert, 1917  
Pencil and ink on tracing paper

Loaned by the Ernest Kump Collection, Hoover  
Institution Archives

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Ernest J. Kump, Sr. was born in Brooklyn on March 29, 1888. He began his training in the building trades in San Jose. No official records survive documenting his college education. However, his son Peter has written that Kump studied architecture and engineering at Santa Clara University, probably about the same time Alberto Porta, the noted Italian architect, was teaching there.

Kump moved to Bakersfield in 1910. There he completed his apprenticeship working for the architectural firms of Jefferson and Griffith and Bemus and Clark. He received his license to practice architecture in 1912 and moved his office to Fresno in 1915, specializing in school architecture.

The September 1916 issue of *The Architect and Engineer of California* printed a lavish review of Kump's work, noting that he had designed thirty-three schools in four years. Among them were Caruthers Union High School, Wasco Union High School, Croal Union High School, Gustine Union High, and Alta Grammar School.

Most of Kump's schools no longer stand, but a few of his early residential designs remain in Fresno, including the Hoover Residence on L Street and the Maracci Residence on Van Ness Avenue. His most handsome residence from this early period is this 1917 stone bungalow in Reedley for the Reverend George Seubert.

During the 1920s and early 1930s, Kump continued to be a major school architect in the Valley. In 1925 he associated with Allied Architects to design the Fresno County Hall of Records. As a classically trained architect, Kump struggled to adapt to such modernist trends in architecture. In 1926, working with Henry Villalon, he produced Hart's Cafeteria, a bold Streamlined Moderne design. It was one of his last and finest works.

Ernest J. Kump, Sr. died in Fresno on November 12, 1939.

Provided as a professional courtesy to Val Comegys on January 26, 1993.

\* John Edward Powell, 1990, from the exhibit *Out of Architectural Exile*, Department of Special Collections, Henry Madden Library, California State University, Fresno.

Mail to 1566 West Browning Avenue, Fresno, CA 93711

**FIG GARDEN WOMAN'S CLUB  
1992-93  
CONTRIBUTIONS**

Chaffee Zoological Gardens of Fresno  
Channel 18  
Craycroft Center  
Evangel Home  
Fresno Art Museum  
Fresno County Library, Fig Garden Branch  
Fresno Historical Society  
Fresno Metropolitan Museum  
Fresno Rescue Mission  
Margaret Mason Center of Y.W.C.A.  
Meux Home Museum  
Nancy Hinds Hospice  
Poverello House  
Salvation Army  
Sanctuary for Teen-Agers  
Sierra Opera Company  
S.P.C.A. Animal Shelter  
Toy Chest  
Valley Public Radio

**COMMUNITY MEMBERSHIPS**

Fig Garden Home Owners Association  
Fresno City and County Historical Society

7

**THE FIG GARDEN WOMAN'S CLUB**

4550 N. VAN NESS BOULEVARD

Organized March, 1921  
Federated May, 1921  
General Federation, 1936  
Incorporated, April 29, 1948

**OBJECTS:**

The Social, Civic and Economic  
Welfare of Our City

**SLOGAN:**

Home and Community

**CLUB COLORS:**

Green and White



Telephone 226-9594  
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 5012  
Fresno, California 93755

1

CLUBHOUSE OF FIG GARDEN WOMAN'S CLUB

Fresno County

California Point of Historical Interest

prepared by

Valerie D. Comegys

Fig Garden Woman's Club

1566 West Browning Avenue

Fresno, California 93711.

209 439 4039

Feb. 28, 1994.

STATE SENATE DISTRICT:	14th District
NAME OF SENATOR	Ken Maddy
STATE ASSEMBLY DISTRICT:	29th District
NAME OF STATE ASSEMBLY MEMBER:	Bill Jones



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Newspaper Articles

"Clubhouse Plan Favored," FRESNO MORNING REPUBLICAN, April 2, 1925 (Vol. LXVII, No. 92), p. 7.

Ernest Kump, Sr. Architect  
Fig Garden Woman's Club House

"Woman's Club of Fig Garden in New Home." FRESNO MORNING REPUBLICAN, February 18, 1925 (Vol. LXIX, No. 9), p. 9

Photograph  
Spanish type stucco architecture

### Books, Articles and Pamphlets.

AAUW Heritage Fresno. Homes and People, Pioneer Publishing Co., Fresno, Ca. 1975.

AAUW Heritage Fresno, Women and Their Contributions, Pioneer Publishing Co., 1987.

Boutelle, Sara Holmes. Julia Morgan, Architect, Abbeville Press Publishers, New York, 1988.

Clough, Charles, Fresno County in the 20th Century. From 1900 to the 1980's, Vol. 2, Panorama West Books, Fresno, Ca. 1986.

Eaton, Edwin M. Vintage Press, The Huntington Press, Fresno, Ca. 1965.

J. C. Forkner Turned Fresno's 'Hog Wallows' Into Garden of Eden, Fresno Past and Present, September 1977. Vol. 19, No. 3.

Fig Garden Woman's Club, Community Improvement Program Project 1986-88. Unpublished.

# FRESNO - PAST & PRESENT

SEPTEMBER 1977

VOL. 18 NO. 3

The Newsletter Of The Fresno City And County Historical Society

## J.C. Forkner Turned Fresno's 'Hog Wallows' Into 'Garden Of Eden'

"When J. C. Forkner was a boy in a small town in Kansas back in the covered wagon days, there was a quarter section of government land a few miles out that was a great local joke.

"This humped-up epitome of rocks and desolation was known as Nigger Hill, and it was a great game with the village seags to send all the foot-and-travel-weary overlanders out to stake that claim and make a home for themselves.

"Invariably, back those travelers would come, cursing and reviling the local funny men who sent them there, until one day a stocky German and his family happened into town. This man had treamed it out from way back East, faring very badly all the way. Finally one of his horses died, and he had hitched up the family cow. It was thus, discouraged and unwilling to travel farther, that he come to town.

"In response to his inquiry for government land, they sent him out to Nigger Hill, then waited gleefully to laugh at him when he come back. Only, he didn't come back.

"That German knew that that quarter section of horrible-looking rocky hills was a wonderful piece of orchard land. He promptly set out the first orchard in that part of the world, became a prosperous and respected member of the community, and some years later sold out his five government land for twice what the people who had paid \$50 and \$60 an acre, all around him could get.

"That taught young Forkner not to jump to conclusions, and not to take anybody's word for anything if he was interested in proving the contrary himself."

—"The Best Fruit Farmer I Know"  
undated article by George Martin

by Schlyer Rehart

When in 1910 Jesse Clayton Forkner set out to transform the "hog wallow badlands" five miles northwest of Fresno into profitable fig gardens cultivated by families of colonists, he remembered the lesson of the German settler and Nigger Hill.

It was a story he undoubtedly told many times, especially to those who doubted the practicality of his daring venture. It so well underscored his basic philosophy about land and people and putting them together.

Skepticism, however, did run high in the town of Fresno when word got out that Forkner intended to develop a large



J.C. Forkner

section of the wild, outlaw land between Fresno's northern limits and the bluffs overlooking the San Joaquin River. Townfolk knew very well that the whole area was underlain with adobe-like "hardpan" upon which rested just a thin mantle of topsoil two or three feet thick at the most. In some places the impervious hardpan had been laid bare by erosion. In these places it showed through like dull red brown scars in the fields.

In the winter the land was flooded and water stagnated in the low areas. In summer the ground dried bone hard and was good only for grazing a few goats and sheep, or marginally good at best for limited dry farming. If one crop of grain matured out of three planted, according to oldtimers, that was about as much as could be hoped for.

The hogwallows, of course, made effective irrigation impossible and the shallow soil over the hardpan was insufficient in most places even for growing small trees or vines.

So, of course, Forkner had to be a fraud. Some Fresnoans had started keeping an eye on the "Los Angeles real estate speculator" soon after he arrived in town. When he obtained from E. E. Bullard, the major landowner of the northwestern lands, a one year option to buy 6,000 acres, they watched him very closely, indeed.

For more than a year Forkner continued to hike over his leased lands making calculations, often in the company of mysterious strangers who came and went without explanation.

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Suspicion only increased when Forkner started telling local people that in spite of the hardpan and uneven land, he was sure the area had great potential. And the suspicion erupted into outrage in town when the tall, nearly dressed upstart announced that he not only intended to grow figs on his land, but threw in the opinion that the hogwallows were the best if not the only area outside of the Mediterranean and Adriatic shores where figs could be grown commercially.

When the officers and directors of the Fresno Chamber of Commerce got wind of this, they were as much alarmed as amused by such ridiculous talk. When he announced the organization of a company to plant fig trees on the land and to colonize it with hundreds of families, however, the now outraged Chamber leaders decided they must react publicly.

A resolution was drawn up and printed in the local newspapers calling attention to the "utter worthlessness" of the land north of Fresno. The Chamber directors also promised to prosecute the land promoter in court on criminal charges "if he so much as defrauded a single colonist of a nickel" with his proposed land scheme.

Forkner, who by this time already had begun blasting holes through the hardpan and planting trees, responded with a full page advertisement in the Fresno Morning Republic that he would give \$1,000 to any man, woman or child who could prove that a single acre of the Ballard Lands was free from hardpan. Rather than down play the hardpan problem, Forkner turned it into an asset! He observed that once it was blasted, one hole for each tree, excellent soil was to be found for considerable depth. He later ran ads showing that the hardpan existed usually less than one to two feet in thickness, and pointed out it was very easy for tree roots to grow through the blasted hole down into the rich, well drained soil underneath.

Forkner also used the hardpan fragments torn up by blasting and land leveling to build property line walls and waiting stations for the electric street car line which he later succeeded in having run through his lands from town to the river.

So the Forkner enterprise turned out to be the story of the German settler all over again, only this time on a much larger and more profitable scale. How he did it, and how he became one of Fresno's most respected and influential citizens is a remarkable story.

The complete story, however, must begin some 37 years earlier in Cherokee County, Kansas. It was there that "J.C." Forkner was born, the youngest son of Kentucky Mountaineer stock on a small farm. His family, however, was prosperous enough in 1889 to be able to send J.C. first to divinity school at Drake University, and later to the University of Kansas to become a member of its first law class.

As Forkner explained it to George E. Popovich, a writer for the Fresno Bee in 1957, he had been converted as a youth by what he called an old fashioned "hell and damnation evangelist." Because of this experience he first decided to become a preacher. A short stint in divinity school, however, convinced him gospel preaching was not for him. He then decided law might be a sounder calling, and, after all, both his father and an older brother were lawyers.

So Forkner set out to become a lawyer, and after he was graduated from law school in 1893, he went into law practice.

The 1890's were not good years for lawyers, or hardly anyone else either. Drought and depression had brought swirling dust and poverty to Kansas. Grasshoppers wiped out crops that survived the hot, dry winds. The hard times generated human misery and, inevitably, social unrest. The Knights of Labor and the Farmers Alliance, the CIO and the Communists thrived as did little else.

Forkner vividly recalled the times in a 1924 speech to the State Real Estate Board in Fresno:

"I started in business in 1893 in Kansas, the year of the hard times of the Middle West, when 60 percent of all the farms in the State of Kansas were foreclosed. It was the year that Kansas sent Sockless Jerry Simpson to Congress—his only recommendation was that he had no socks. It was the year that Mary Ellen Lease was telling the farmers to raise less corn and raise more hell, and I'll tell you that thousands of farmers took her advice. But it proved to be erroneous in the end."

Forkner certainly disregarded her advice. He found neither the overcrowded field of law, nor politics to his liking. So he eschewed both for a venture in lead and zinc mining.

He went broke, unfortunately, when the lead vein gave out, but not before he gained much experience and insight. The one thing he learned most, however, was that dealing in real estate was his real calling. Forkner later loved to tell people that it had been his early combined training in the ministry and in law that contributed to his "gift of gab" which proved to be a tremendous asset in his later career in real estate promotion.

Forkner's first adventure in real estate came as the depression of the 1890's neared an end. As the country began to come out of the economic disaster, new settlers came into Kansas and, along with the dispossessed victims of the hard times, sought to buy into farming. Young Forkner obtained a job with banking interests which had accumulated hundreds of farms and now wanted to find new people for these foreclosed properties.

"However, I soon realized I would never get rich working for commissions," Forkner told Popovich, "so I began to buy and sell farm lands, making as much as \$5,000 a year in the days when a beef bank cashier got only \$1,200 a year and the average income was but \$60 a month."

Within a few years, however, Forkner found himself out of good farms to sell, or buy, and he refused to promote land which he knew would not support settlers.

By 1906 Forkner was again looking around for new lands in which to deal. And it was about this time that he heard about major land booms in California and Texas. Southern California, particularly, was described to him, he recalled later, as a land blessed with wonderful climate and laborious opportunities.

Forkner, however, debated with himself long and hard whether to move to nearby Texas, or travel to California. A Texan, he told Popovich, finally made the decision for him. The Southerner told him how much he hated "Northerners" and J.C. decided then and there he did not want to fight the Civil War all over again.

Within 30 days of arriving in Los Angeles, Forkner made an \$8,000 profit on a Tulare Lake area land deal and soon was earning as much as \$50,000 a year selling land. Citrus crops were the big thing in Southern California, and even bigger was selling city lots to the hordes of newcomers. Forkner, however, found promoting orange groves a very crowded field, and hustling subdivided lots was not much better.

Forkner preferred to deal with raw, undeveloped farmland where real pioneering and colonizing could be done. And it was in the San Joaquin Valley, at this time an unbelievably rich agricultural treasure land but with less than 150,000 population, that he found his home.

His first successful venture in this long valley had been in the Tulare Lake area, where he had bought and sold rich virgin lands to support profitable wheat farms. Leaving Los Angeles this time he moved farther north. Water was the key ingredient needed to make these inland valley land agriculturally profitable. So he became a pioneer developer of pumping plants and canals. His life during this period centered on irrigation works and the establishment of

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Fordson tractors till and level hogwallow.

Photo courtesy of Mrs. J.C. Forkner

colonies. One of his earliest colonies was a 7,000 acre project near Caruthers.

Forkner also became an expert in growing trees and in orchard cultivation. He especially loved the Australian Eucalyptus and had them planted on the avenues leading to colony farms and communities, as well as in the towns along streets and on school grounds.

In an undated article published as a pamphlet, "What Is One Man Worth to a Community", Kate O'Hare observed that many of these trees remain today in the central valley communities Forkner helped plan and develop as "...living monuments to 'J.C.' that will be green and loved by generations yet unborn, when marble shafts and bronze plaques have crumbled to dust."

So it was that in 1920 Forkner was attracted to the small but growing town of Fresno. He looked the place over carefully and concluded that someday it would be the valley's largest city. The coming of the railroad less than 40 years earlier had led to the establishment of the "Fresno Station" in a place where, until the tracks were put down and the first station building put up, only a dusty, desert plain had existed.

By 1910, however, Fresno had not only become an important rail center, but a major service point strategically located in the center of a rapidly expanding agricultural district.

Forkner found the wild, outlaw lands north of Fresno especially intriguing. These desolate areas had frustrated every effort to make them productive and they threatened to seriously impede the growth of the community. The Bullard Company, which owned a major portion of this land, was

anxious to sell it off after nearly 20 years of unsuccessful efforts to tame it.

When Frank Bullard had bought the land in 1891 he had entertained high hopes of developing it as a part of a combined lumbering and irrigation project. Bullard, who headed the Fresno Flume and Irrigation Company, had anticipated being able to bring water onto the land by means of a flume which also would carry water from the timber land in the nearby Sierra Nevada Mountains. The head of the flume would be at a place on Stevenson Creek, where now exists Shaver Lake. The scheme collapsed, however, for a number of reasons including disputes over water rights and the fact the hog wallow lands needed much more than water. By the time Forkner arrived, the Bullards were more than ready to sell out.

Remembering the old German settler and the Nigger lands, Forkner asked himself, why not here, too.

Throughout the year he hiked over the Bullard and adjacent lands, sometimes accompanied by strangers and mysterious equipment. Some people in town, who made it their business to know what was going on, watched the "man from L.A." closely. It was not long before rumors were circulated that he must be cooking up some colossal swindle to lob off the "worthless hog wallows and red lands out north of town" on glibble out-of-town speculators and settlers. In reality, of course, he had been solving the riddle of what could be done to make this vast area productive and a profitable asset to Fresno rather than a barren barrier.

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smuggled out samples of the tiny wasp to introduce in California fig orchards.

Forkner also gave much credit to Henry Markarian whose 160 fig orchard in 1910 had just begun to producing a respectable crop of Smyrna. He was so impressed with Markarian's success with Smyrna, in fact, that he hired him as a fulltime consultant.

Markarian had convinced Forkner that figs, especially the superior Smyrna, would do well on the Bullard lands. Since the trees ideally should be planted at least 30 feet apart, they calculated that blasting holes for the root systems was economically feasible. Markarian also had found the trees required no pesticides or fertilizer once planted, and needed only one heavy watering by irrigation during the winter months to guarantee enough soil moisture to see the hardy trees through the long, dry summer.

Best of all, however, unlike any other commercial fruit grown in the United States, the figs would not ever meet much competition since, outside of Smyrna itself, which was limited to about 24,000 acres of planting on small orchard plots, Smyrna figs were not grown anywhere else in the world.

Roeding also had learned from his travels in Turkey that even the Smyrna valley was not nearly as good a fig growing land as was the Fresno area. Winters in the Smyrna Valley were harsher than Fresno's, for one thing, and the summers for the Turkish figs were not always so consistently hot for so long.

This latter condition was extremely important since it was an absolute necessity for the white figs to enjoy hot, dry weather throughout September so that they could fully ripen and dry on the trees, then fall to the ground where they could be picked up and taken to packing houses for cleaning and processing.

In a determined effort to develop the best producing acres of Smyrna type figs in the world, and establish the most efficient processing plant in the world, the two men traveled throughout the fig producing areas of the southern and western coastal states to learn everything they could.

Probably the most challenging task Forkner and Markarian faced, however, when they bought the Bullard lands and began operation was the enormous work of leveling the crusty, rolling terrain.

No large land leveling machines existed in 1910 to do the job. There was, however, the Fresno scraper developed by James Porteous, a Fresno blacksmith. This heavy iron implement, which by 1910 was being manufactured by Porteous' company on a large scale for sale all over the world, was pulled by six horse teams to level out hills and fill in low areas. Forkner soon found the scrapers inadequate. To the original 6,000 Bullard acres he had added another 6,000 acres purchased from various owners in an area about four and a half miles wide and eight miles long. The acreage, altogether, today would be bounded roughly by Blackstone, Chateau Fresno, Alluvial and Ashlan Avenues running in a kind of "L" shape over much of northwest Fresno. Leveling all of this was just too much for even a hundred horse-drawn scrapers.

Once again Forkner started looking around for a better way to do the job. And a man by the name of Henry Ford supplied the means. Ford has just put on the market a motorized tractor.

Forkner bought 48 of the first Fordson tractors to come off Ford's assembly lines and attached small scrapers and disc tillers to them. These he used to move the land.

The new equipment worked so well Forkner ordered more machines and soon had more than 80 tractors chugging over the land, reshaping it so that water could reach every part of it from a network of canals developed as the work progressed.

Ford himself was so impressed by the large scale use of his tractors that the pioneer developer of the first mass-produced motor vehicles personally visited Forkner. He

arrived in Fresno in a "Tin Lizzie" Model T coupe which he drove up from Los Angeles to see what was going on.

What he saw was the first use of tractors in a large scale land leveling operation, and the development of the largest fig orchard in the world.

As the leveling progressed rapidly, Forkner's workmen during the next three years, used 660,000 pounds of dynamite to blast holes for 600,000 fig trees and 60,000 ornamental and shade trees. The ornamentals—magnolias, cedars, deodars, oleanders and other smaller shrubs—were used to line the more than eight mile length of Van Ness Boulevard leading out of town through the fig orchards to the San Joaquin River.

Many of these trees remain today along the 125 foot wide boulevard, and may also be found in other parts of the huge tract. A two mile section of Van Ness is the heart of "old fig garden" lined with deodars every year becomes "Christmas Tree Lane". The tall evergreens are garland with electric lights of many colors and the large homes along the drive between Dakota and Shaw avenues are decorated with lights and front yard displays.

But all of this was far in the future in the first years of the project, years which contained many challenges for the men who would dare tame the hogwallow.

In addition to the hassle with the Fresno Chamber of Commerce, Forkner had a dispute with A. B. Tarpey, a Fresno vintner, over water rights then owned by an English land company. Tarpey's real quarrel with Forkner, however, was over the question of whether the Forkner scheme could work. Tarpey was not easily convinced, and it took a lot more than a bold advertisement in the newspapers.

As Forkner explained it to Popovich:

"...he said anyone who tried to sell the hogwallow, hardpan land was a crook. When we got the water rights settled and I showed Tarpey we could grow fig trees and other crops, we became good friends.

"And right here I want to make a point that has been my creed in the real estate business. I always have felt that there is no such thing as poor land; that God in His wisdom intended all the earth for some good purpose, no matter how poor the quality of the soil might appear to the casual observer."

By 1920, Forkner and Markarian, aided by converts like Tarpey, had transformed the once barren hogwallow into what one writer of the period described as a 12,000-acre "Garden of Eden." And Martin noted:

"There are now three thriving little towns in this 12,000 acres, most of which have been sold in average lots of 16 acres. There will soon be completed the quota of 500 families and 12,000 souls Forkner started out to settle on money-making little fig farms. The gardens have a high school of their own, and both the Santa Fe and Southern Pacific railroads have stations there."

Martin went on to describe the other schools in the area including Fresno State Teachers College, which had been founded in 1911 "right on the edge of the gardens."

The tract by 1924 had 25 miles of irrigation canals and 135 miles of laterals, 42 miles of roads and boulevards, a first-class water right and ample water supplies.

Forkner estimated it cost more than \$600 an acre, or at least \$8 million to bring the 12,000 acres into production. It would be hard to calculate the worth of the land today with inflation pushing up the area's land values at least two or more per cent per month. Many of the original orchards have disappeared now, replaced by subdivisions and shopping centers. But remaining groves continue to produce well on trees planted before 1915. These orchard lands now sell for more than \$15,000 to \$20,000 an acre thanks to the expanding subdivisions. The one time hogwallow lands are now considered Fresno's most desirable homesites!

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In 1924, however, the acreage was entirely rural with nearly everyone involved in Forkner's fig operations living in the vast tract. About 80 per cent of all figs grown in California, by this time, were produced and processed in Fresno. The Calimyrna figs completely dominated market, and Forkner was publically discussing the possibility of building a \$100,000 concrete bridge across the river "from Fresno Beach to the Madera County side...to be a continuation of Van Ness Boulevard...." The bridge, according to an article from *The Fresno Morning Republican*, would connect Forkner's Fresno Fig Gardens with a proposed 50,000 acre tract in Madera County. This new Madera tract would include "diversified crops" including more figs to meet a rapidly expanding world market.

To water the Madera lands, Forkner revealed plans for a dam "high enough to back the water 15 miles back to Friant providing splendid boating, fishing and bathing in one of California's greatest lakes."

"Water for irrigation (would be) lifted 80 feet from the water level by means of wells and pumps...."

The article also reported "A preliminary survey of this has already been made by I. Telfman, engineer, and proclaimed entirely feasible."

These were years when anything seemed possible, and Forkner dreamed big. And he certainly had good reason to do so.

In 1916, when Markarian's fig orchard alone produced nearly all the "Calimyrnas" (a name created by Roeding who combined Smyrna with the "S" dropped and "Cali" taken from California added) grown in the state, and Forkner's vast acreage of young fig trees was still being planted, Calimyrna production was about 1,000 tons as against nearly 6,000 tons for Adriatic varieties.

Less than 10 years later, the scene was very different. Production was nearly 60,000 tons of fresh figs annually, most of which were Calimyrnas. At an average fair price of \$160 per ton, the return was more than \$9 million annually.

A post World War I boom was well underway in the 1920's. The land which Forkner had purchased for about \$50 in 1910 was now worth more than \$1,000 an acre. The little town of Figarden, located in the heart of the fig gardens at Bullard Avenue where it intersects with Brawley Avenue and the Santa Fe Railroad tracks, boasted a population of permanent residents and was the site of Forkner's offices and packing plant. He set up a Figarden Chamber of Commerce in 1924.

Forkner's fig gardens became his life after 1910. But he did take time in 1912 to marry a young girl named Lewella Swift, the daughter of the late Lewis Swift, a prominent lumberman who had logged and developed the Shaver Lake area, and Ella Swift.

The newly wed Forkners lived in Mrs. Swift's home at 1661 M Street, where the new Hope Manor high rise is now located, while work continued on the northwest tract. Forkner also started construction of a new home on the northwest corner of Van Ness Boulevard and Bullard Avenue.

In November of 1913 the Forkner's moved into their large 10 room Swiss chalet styled home. By the time they did so the family included a baby daughter, Mary. The new home was called Northfield because it was located in the north field of the 12,000 acre tract. It cost more than \$7,000 to construct, and remained the family residence for the next eight years. Built with large porches on the first floor and sleeping porches on the second, it provided airy, open spaces under its roof for visitors who came to look over the lands for sale. It also had a large kitchen and dining area to provide meals for the guests.

Forkner especially was proud that he had "all the advantages of city and the country" at the same time. In a newspaper article published soon after the home was completed, Forkner recorded that he had a street car line

within two blocks of his door (it ran out from town on what is now Forkner Avenue to the river), electric lights, gas that he manufactured himself at 20 cents a thousand cubic feet, a telephone, and his own water plant with from 20 to 70 feet of pressure. He also boasted that the home was only 20 minutes by either street car or auto from the Rowell Building in downtown Fresno.

The Forkners lived in this country-city house until 1921 surrounded by fifteen acres of apricots, olives, figs and citrus trees. In that year the Forkner family moved to a larger home newly built at Swift and Van Ness Boulevard in what was then called the Forkner-Giffen tract. This new development of one acre residential sites, which sold for from \$1,050 to \$1,350 per lot depending on location, is now what Fresnoans call "old fig garden." The move from Northfield came after the family had grown to include, in addition to Mary, three boys—John, Robert and James. The old home, despite its size, had only three upstairs bedrooms and was needed more and more to entertain prospective buyers of fig garden farms.

For the next 12 years the Forkner ranch foreman and his wife occupied Northfield, and entertained the visiting clients. Mrs. Forkner remembered one occasion when forty-six persons crowded into the house for the night, all sent to Northfield by Forkner's agents in San Francisco and Los Angeles.

"I had a superintendent whose wife was a good cook" Forkner told Popovich. "There is nothing like a homey atmosphere and well cooked meals to create a receptive mood for a prospective customer."

Those were the good years.

In 1924, it is reported in the *Republican*, the Forkner company employed 200 men to work on the fig gardens throughout the year. A company headquarters was located on each 600 to 1,000 acres and 85 tractors were employed to cultivate the gardens.

The company also had its own packing plant and marketing organization. The Calimyrna variety, of course, was the most successful crop and constituted some 70 per cent of all plantings. White Adriatic, Black Mission and Kadota figs, however, also were grown. The golden colored Kadotas were found to be especially profitable as a pickled or canned product. Forkner and his wife developed a special "light syrup" packing method on the kitchen stove for the Kadotas.

Forkner, who not only had plans for expanding operations in 1924 into Madera County, also predicted it would be at least 25 years before he would be able to produce enough freshly packed figs to meet the demands of the world market. Those years were very good ones, indeed, and Forkner's predictions and plans would undoubtedly have become reality, except for one thing — the great depression. By the end of the decade the dream was rudely shattered. Figs, after all, were a luxury crop and demand dried up quickly when the money markets collapsed in 1929. The best dried fruit plummeted from more than \$150 a ton to less than \$50 a ton.

In the early 1930s the bottom also fell out of the real estate market, and the demand for homesites ceased to exist! By 1934, the situation was so bad that what remained of Forkner's Fig Garden holdings were confiscated by the county and state governments because he could not pay the taxes owed on them. The price of lots, that a decade earlier had gone for more than \$1,200 an acre, dropped as low as \$150 an acre.

Realizing that his fig gardens would die without irrigation and cultivation, Forkner in 1940 talked the state franchise tax commissioner into leasing him the properties. He, in turn, was able to sublease the land to individuals who would agree to care for the trees.

In this way, Forkner slowly was able to make a comeback as the depression ended at the outbreak of war in 1941.

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Henry Ford talks over with J. C. Forkner the use of Fordson tractors in Fig Garden development.

"Fig prices were as low as \$40 a ton during the depression but they began a slight upturn in 1941 and have been good right through the years. Forkner told Popovich, "with the result I was able to get enough money to redeem much of my holdings."

A government imposed 10 year tax moratorium on all lands during the depression years also helped men like Forkner. But Forkner was proud of the fact he eventually redeemed all of his debts:

*"I paid every dollar of taxes, including accumulated interest, and never asked for nor received any reductions."*

Forkner in the 1930s, in any case, was no more ready to give up than he had been 30 years earlier. On one occasion, he recalled, a Los Angeles resident who owned 372 acres of excellent Fig Garden land had the tax collector's office put up the land at a tax sale for only \$24 an acre.

Forkner only happened to learn of the tax sale in a legal notice in the Fresno Bee. Under the law, Forkner noted, the land could not be sold if the unpaid taxes were paid up by the original owner. He explained:

*"I prevailed upon my brother, the late W. T. Forkner of Selma, to lend me enough money to pay of the tax delinquency and saved the land."*

In the years after the depression, during and after World War II, Forkner continued to reclaim his Fig Garden holdings, buying and selling these land which he had developed, sometimes several times. In one instance, he recalled in 1957, he paid \$11,500 for three acres he had sold 20 years earlier for \$2,700.

At the time of his death, in August of 1969, at Northfield, Forkner and members of his family own 3 more than 1,500 acres in the Fig Garden area valued conservatively at several million dollars. But this is incidental to the true measure of his worth to the community.

While his streetcar line to the river had succumbed to the great depression and the popularity of the personal auto in the 1930's, and his dreams of a bridge across the river into vast new developments in Madera County, failed to materialize the enormous success of his Fig Garden developments in Fresno remain as his greatest contribution. The depression was only a temporary setback, in the long run. One only need travel through Fresno's prosperous northwest acres today to realize that. It is sad, of course, unless you are a subdivider, to witness the passing of the rural scene and the fig gardens. More than 40,000 people

today live in homes built on the land which once was Forkner's "Eden of figs" and colony of small farms.

We have hardly touched on many of Forkner's community achievements in this article about the man from Kansas who tamed Fresno's "badlands." He was, for example, the key figure in creating the community of Highway City for industrial and agricultural laborers during the great depression.

In 1921-22 he served as chairman of the State Water Resources Investigation Commission which made the surveys and mapped out what is now known as Friant Dam.

Forkner also was noted for his civic service and strong belief in Fresno's future. The local press, between 1910 until well into the 1950's, is filled with accounts of speeches he gave boosting Fresno, its products and people. Many of his former colleagues still living today would agree that without his help and encouragement during the depression years, they would have had much harder times riding out those hard years.

For if there was one thing about J. C. Forkner that few would dispute, it was that he never would acknowledge defeat. He conquered the hog wallows, he won over the doubters, and he survived the long depression stronger than ever.

In 1961, the Fig Garden Women's Club, led that year by Mrs. Russell Kempton, whose husband had been among the first to buy into the Forkner Fig Gardens, summed up its gratitude to the man who had made it all possible by dedicating a small park at the corner of Palm and Shaw Avenues to "J. C. Forkner - Pioneer Developer of The Fig Gardens." Forkner, who many years earlier had donated the land upon which the Fig Garden Women's Club is now located, acknowledged the tribute by telegram from Montana where he and his wife were then visiting. His children, however, and some of their children, were on hand during the ceremony to hear leading citizens of Fresno extol the virtues of the man who had done so much to make his community a better place in which to live and do business.

Perhaps, however, the publisher of Pacific Fruit News, Roy Hitchcock, said it best in his 1969 tribute to Forkner when he wrote:

*"We believe that all of California owes a debt of gratitude to J.C. Forkner. His vision of progress for California and the central San Joaquin Valley has proven rewarding to all."*

Kump and Franklin, constructed by the Franklin and Kump Construction Company. Postwar housing has seen the area filled for the most part with traditional California Ranch-type homes of a very high calibre, many built of adobe.

The landscaping of the area is also unique, and, with the architectural styling and age of the homes, forms a serene, elegant residential area of unusual charm and dignity. Horace Cotton, San Francisco landscape architect who was published during his career, developed the overall Fig Garden landscaping, insuring the arboretum quality of the area.

(Exhibit 4) Some of the most significant gardens were designed by Thomas Church of San Francisco, considered to be the dean of modern landscaping architecture as a profession. (Exhibit 5) "Tommy" Church was a catalyst for others to be involved in quality landscaping and is known as the landscape architect for the U.C. Santa Cruz campus as well as the gardens of the Sunset Magazine complex.

Through the development of a computer data base of the area, based on information gained through the use of the questionnaire designed jointly by John Powell, resident architectural historian, and the CIP committee, and adhering to A.I.A. (American Institute of Architects) guidelines, including such information as the age of the homes, their architectural styles, landscape architecture, and other uniquely interesting information regarding the properties, and with the expertise and dedicated association of John Powell as well as the high interest and financial assistance of the Fig Garden Home Owners Association, the Fig Garden Woman's Club hopes to nurture and stimulate the recognition of this area for its possible inclusion as a designated historical district on the National Register of Historical Places, Department of Interior.



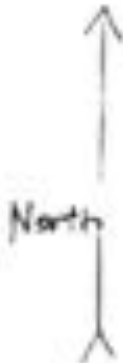


Fig Garden  
Woman's  
Clubhouse  
4550 U. Van Ness  
Fresno 93704

GEOMORPHICAL DIVISIONS OF THE  
STATE TO BE USED AS A GUIDE  
IN APPLYING THE CRITERIA FOR  
CALIFORNIA REGISTERED HISTORICAL  
LANDMARKS. ADOPTED MAY 2, 1961.



### LANDFORMS OF CALIFORNIA and NEVADA

Revised edition

From W.W. Alford, *Physiographic Provinces of North America*. First G. G. Barton, Map  
by Edwin Raisz.

Scale 1:500,000

SUBDIVIDED LAND IN POR. SEC. 16, T.13S., R. 20E., M.D.B. & M.

(Blk. 425)

For more information on this subdivision, please call the number on page 1 of this document or visit the website at www.fresnoassessor.com

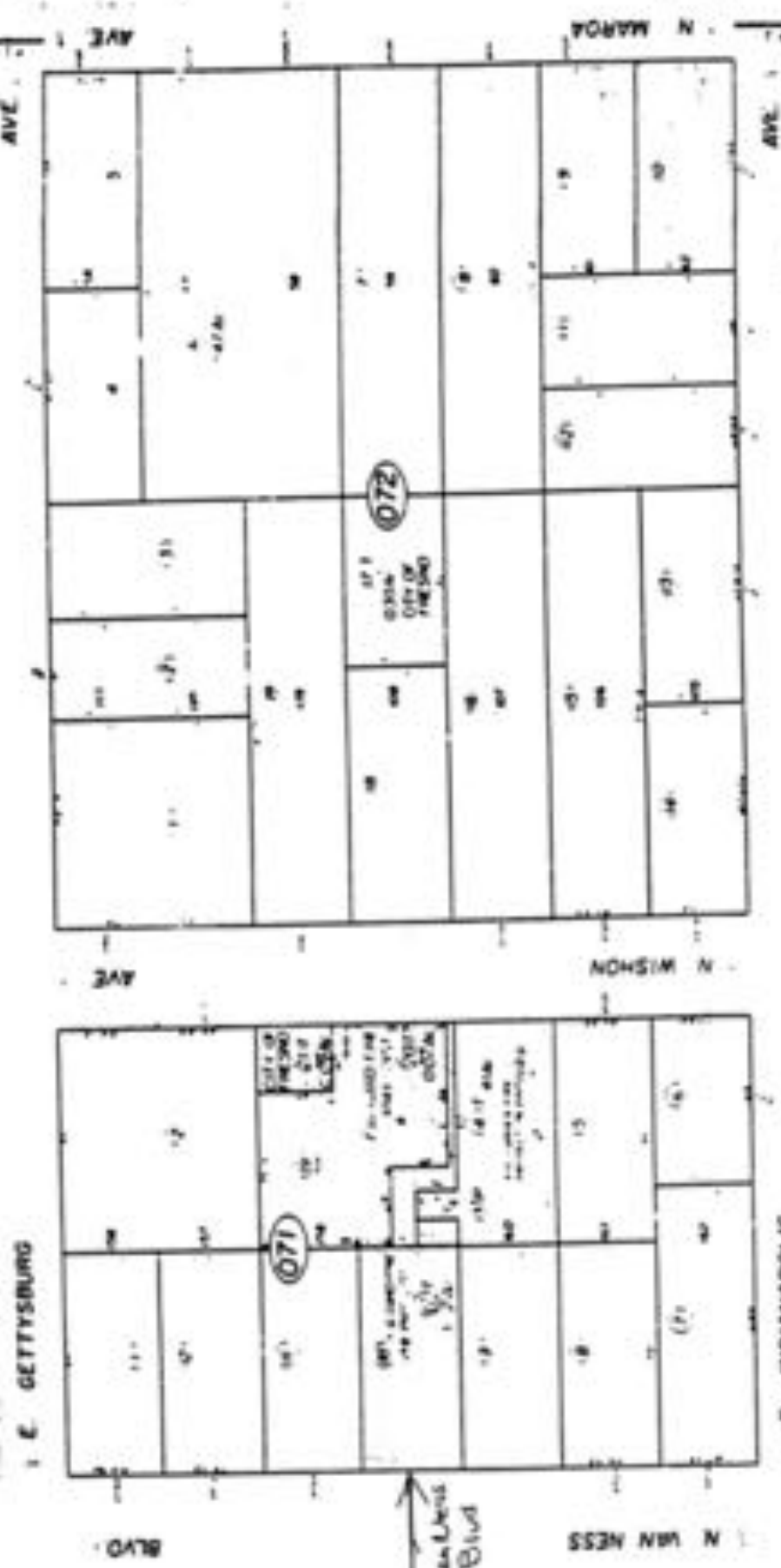
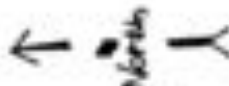


Fig Garden Woman's Club  
 4550 N. Van Ness Blvd  
 Fresno, CA 93704

Former Giffen Fig Gardens Subdivision No. 1 Plat Blk. 8, Pg. 59

Assessor's Map Blk. 426 - Pg. 07

County of Fresno, Calif

1. All Assessor's Map Numbers shown on this map are subject to change without notice.

## Outline Map of California

*Directions:* This map is provided for your convenience in showing where the proposed Point of Historical Interest is, in relation to the state. Please mark the appropriate place on the map, and return it with your application.



### C. Description and Appearance

The clubhouse of the Fig Garden Woman's Club of Fresno, a registered Fresno County Landmark, is located on beautiful tree-lined Van Ness Boulevard, the main north-south street of the Forkner-Giffen Fig Gardens Tract #1, a three-mile square suburban residential area limited to spacious single family homes. In 1918-1919 the area was divided into one acre home-sites and streets were lined with eucalyptus, oleanders and cedrus deodars. No stores, shopping centers or other commercial sites mar its rural atmosphere and charm. There are no sidewalks and curbs. (See enclosed advertising flyer.)

Set well back from the street, a parking lot for convenience on the south side and surrounded by trees and shrubs, the building combining usefulness and dignity blends well with the attractive neighboring homes. The original Spanish-type facade (See enclosed photograph) was modified in 1956 when the porch was extended across the front of the building and four taller columns in the Neo-Classical style were added to replace the two original columns. Matching pilasters were then added, one on each side of the long porch. (See enclosed photograph.) The Eclectic style of the building is revealed in the "stripped classicism" of Paul Cret (1876-1945) and others popular for institutional architecture in the 'Thirties' and earlier, i.e. the columns are reduced to square pillars.

Well planned for club activities, the forty foot by eighty-five foot building has a spacious foyer with a corner fireplace, which is separated from the social hall by French doors.. At the far end of the hall is an elevated stage with proscenium arch and curtains. The building has men's and women's rest rooms, a coffee preparation room and an up-dated kitchen. The large kitchen was added in 1949 and the "garden room" in 1987. The patio surrounds a large carob tree which was planted on the north side of the building in 1926.

The additions do not alter the appearance of the building as the kitchen was constructed at the rear of the building on the north side. The garden room was added on the north side also, adjoining the kitchen with French doors opening onto the patio. The huge carob tree in the patio area, the six-foot high brick wall across the front of the lot on the north which extends from the building and has the same set-back and the tall trees in front obscure these additions to the rectangular shape of the clubhouse.

D. Historical and Architectural Significance.

The Fig Garden Woman's clubhouse stands as a visual symbol of an era, the early decades of the Twentieth Century when women throughout the country established clubs to provide centers for recreational, educational and civic activities. The building is also associated with two prominent citizens of Fresno, J. C. Forkner, a prominent land developer, who donated the land where it was built and also contributed money for the building, and Ernest Kump, Sr. a classically trained architect who designed the structure, which was built in 1926

The clubhouse at 4550 North Van Ness Boulevard is located in a suburban area of Greater Fresno which has a unique architectural value. A variety of architectural styles of homes, many of which were built in the 1920's and 30's, include Colonial Revival, California Ranch, Mediterranean and Norman French as well as Craftsman-type bungalows and several of the International modern style.

John Powell, an architectural historian, states, "I strongly believe from my years of research that Fig Garden holds many of the most significant works of residential architecture to be found in this area."

The landscaping of the area is also unique and together with the architectural style and the age of the homes, forms a serene, elegant residential area of unusual charm and dignity. Horace Cotton, a San Francisco landscape artist, developed the overall Fig Garden landscaping. Some of the most significant gardens were designed by Thomas Church, considered to be the dean of modern landscape architecture. He is perhaps best known as the landscape architect of the Santa Cruz Campus of the University of California, as well as the gardens of the "Sunset Magazine Complex" in Menlo Park.

Ernest Kump, Sr. one of the two prominent men associated with the building, designed dozens of schools as well as hospitals and private homes in the southern part of the San Joaquin Valley. He is best known for design of the Fresno County Hall of Records in 1935 at Courthouse Park in Fresno. This clubhouse was the only one of its kind in Fresno at the time it was built and one of few in the southern part of the Valley.

J.C. Forkner, a civic-minded local land developer donated Lot #159 the half acre site at 4550 N. Van Ness Boulevard for the clubhouse and also donated funds for the building. Mr. Forkner subdivided, irrigated and sold 12,000 acres of supposedly worthless "hog wallow" land after he had successfully planted it to Smyrna figs, thus creating the largest fig

"garden"(orchard) in the world. With Wylie Giffen he developed the Fig Garden Tracts, more commonly known as Old Fig Garden, a residential area where the clubhouse and the privately owned fire station are the only non-residential buildings in the area. In 1969 Roy Hitchcock, publisher of Pacific Fruit News, paid tribute to Forkner when he wrote: "We believe that all of California owes a debt of gratitude to J.C. Forkner. His vision of progress for California and the central San Joaquin Valley has proven rewarding to all."

Fig Garden Woman's Club was founded in 1921 by thirteen young women who lived in an agricultural area northwest of Fresno. Early on they set lofty goals of serving "Home and Community" through "Social, Civic and Economic Betterment of the Community." The membership now stands at 231 and is limited to 250 members. Presently, members raise funds which are contributed to nineteen civic, educational and charitable organizations and provide scholarships to college-level students. (See enclosed list of organizations which received contributions in 1992-1993.)

The clubhouse was funded by donations of individuals in the community, by various businesses, and by fund-raising entertainment; and finally at one time the members packed figs for the produce market. During World War II the clubhouse opened its doors for vespers and U.S.O. parties for the men stationed at Camp Pinedale. Club members also sponsored a hospital ward at Hammer Field. The Fig Garden Woman's Club promoted Fresno's famous Christmas Tree Lane back in the early "Thirties" and today hundreds drive along Van Ness Boulevard in the Holiday Season and enjoy the beautifully lighted trees and decorations.

The clubhouse was planned well for club activities and serves admirably now as it did sixty-eight years ago. The annual budget for maintenance is \$2,000. and for gardening \$1,260.

Members are deeply involved in preserving and maintaining this beautiful building which was the only one of its kind in Fresno County when first built and one of few in the southern San Joaquin Valley.

March 4, 1994

State Historical Resources Commission  
Department of Parks & Recreation  
P.O. Box 942896  
Sacramento, CA 94296-0001

Dear Sir:

Enclosed please find a copy of the application for State Point of Historical Interest for the Fig Garden Woman's Club clubhouse. The application has been prepared by the Fig Garden Woman's Club and submitted to the Fresno County Historic Landmarks & Records Advisory Commission for comment and for action by the Fresno County Board of Supervisors. Because of your deadlines, the application does not have a signature. The Board of Supervisors will take action on this application at its March 8, 1994 meeting, and the Commission will review it as well on March 10, 1994. The meeting schedules of both of these groups did not permit the application to be signed before submittal to your office. We expect no problem with approval, and an executed title page will be forwarded to you by March 14.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me at (209) 488-3185 or (209) 488-1971 (fax).

Sincerely,



John K. Kallenberg, Secretary  
Historic Landmarks & Records Advisory Commission

JKK/em  
Enclosure

**ALLEN LEW  
& WILLIAM  
PATNALIDE  
INCORPORATED  
ARCHITECTS**

1050 S Street  
Fresno, California 93721  
209 486-8150

**Transmittal**

To: LINDA GOFF

Date: 5.9.86

Attention:

Via:  Mail  Hand  UPS  Greyhound

Project: FIG WOMAN'S CLUB

Subject:

Enclosed:      Sheets      Sets of      Sheets each

Remarks:

Please Find:

- Shop Drawings
- Submittals
- Specifications
- Prints
- Tracings
- Memorandum
- Addenda
- Copy of Letter

For your:

- Checking
- Approval
- Information
- File
- Distribution
- Return
- Use
- Payment

As:

- Requested
- Promised
- No exceptions taken
- Make corrections noted
- Rejected

From: *William Patnalide*





Supportive  
DocumentsCopy for General  
Distribution  
(Agenda Item)Addition to Board Packet  
(Maps and Reports  
attach 12 Copies)Do Not distribute  
(Agreements &  
Resolutions, etc.)1. AGENDA MEMO2. POINT OF INTEREST FORM

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

6. \_\_\_\_\_

**SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS TO CLERK** Rush Processing! Contact Elida Mendoza Phone 488-3185 for pick up Special Directions (Additional space on reverse):CHAIRMAN TO SIGN POINT OF INTEREST  
FORM. DO NOT MAIL. LIBRARY WILL  
PICK UP.

(PLEASE PROVIDE LEGAL NOTICING REQUIREMENTS ON REVERSE)

March 8, 1994

State Historical Resources Commission  
Department of Parks & Recreation  
P.O. Box 942896  
Sacramento, CA 94296-0001

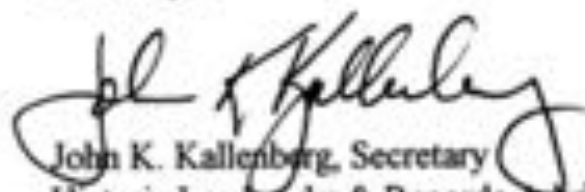
Dear Sir:

Re: Fig Garden Woman's Club

Enclosed please find the original Point of Historical Interest form with the signature of the Chairman of Board of Supervisors. Please add this form to the original application materials mailed to you on March 4, 1994.

If you have questions, please call me at (209) 488-3185 or (209) 488-1971 (fax).

Sincerely,



John K. Kallenberg, Secretary  
Historic Landmarks & Records Advisory Commission

JKK/em  
Enclosure



Reg. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_  
By \_\_\_\_\_

# POINT OF HISTORICAL INTEREST

COUNTY Fresno NAME Fig Garden Woman's Club  
COMPLETE ADDRESS 4550 N. Van Ness Boulevard, Fresno, Ca. 93704

Historical Significance (summary paragraph only):

The clubhouse of the Fig Garden Woman's Club of Fresno, a designated Fresno County Historical Landmark, deserves to be recognized as a California Point of Historical Interest. Erected in 1926, it is one of the few remaining buildings designed by Ernest Kump, Sr. (1888-1939), a prominent local architect who designed dozens of schools in the southern part of the San Joaquin Valley.

The building, a visible reminder of the public-spirited women's club movement of the 1920's when across the nation many clubhouses were being built, was the only structure of its kind in Fresno County when it was built and one of the few in the Valley. This stately building, well-designed for its purpose, serves the organization well today as it did when originally constructed.

This structure also provides material evidence of the civic-mindedness of James Clayton Forkner who donated the land on which it sits and contributed money toward the building. Forkner was the developer of 12,000 acres of fig orchards northwest of Fresno, the largest fig orchard in the world, and also of the Forkner-Giffen Tract #1, the unique residential area where the building is located.

Assessor's Parcel Number: 426-071-18

**THIS POINT OF HISTORICAL INTEREST IS NOT A CALIFORNIA REGISTERED HISTORICAL LANDMARK**

RECOMMENDED:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
SIGNATURE OF CHIEF ELECTED GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL

OR

RECOMMENDED:  
  
SIGNATURE OF CHAIRPERSON, COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

\_\_\_\_\_  
NAME OF MUNICIPAL AGENCY

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: MAR 08 1994

RECOMMENDED:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
SIGNATURE OF CHAIRPERSON, STATE HISTORICAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

AND

APPROVED:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
SIGNATURE OF DIRECTOR, CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

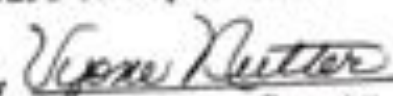
Date: \_\_\_\_\_

PLEASE USE TYPEWRITER. OBTAIN APPROPRIATE SIGNATURES. TRANSMIT AN ORIGINAL TO:

STATE HISTORICAL RESOURCES COMMISSION  
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION  
POST OFFICE BOX 942896  
SACRAMENTO, CA 94296-0001

ATTEST:

SHARI GREENWOOD, Clerk  
Board of Supervisors

By  Deputy

DATE: March 8, 1994

TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: Randy McFarland, Chairman *Randy McFarland*  
Historic Landmarks & Records Advisory Commission

SUBJECT: Recommend the Clubhouse of the Fig Garden Woman's Club as a Point of California Historic Interest

RECOMMENDED ACTION

That your Board recommend to the California Historical Resources Commission that the clubhouse of the Fig Garden Woman's Club be listed as a Point of Historic Interest for the State of California.

DISCUSSION

The Fig Garden Woman's Club of Fresno has prepared an application for submittal to the State of California to designate its clubhouse at 4550 N. Van Ness Blvd. as a Point of Historical Interest. The clubhouse has been designated as a Fresno County Historic Landmark. The building was erected in 1926 and is one of the few remaining buildings designed by Ernest Kump, Sr., a prominent local architect who designed dozens of schools in the southern part of the San Joaquin Valley. The building is a visible reminder of the Woman's Club spirit of the 1920's, when across the nation many clubhouses were being built. The structure also provides the material evidence of the civic-mindedness of James Clayton Forkner who donated

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE REVIEW *Cecilia A. Pardo* Page 1 of 2  
BOARD ACTION: DATE MAR 08 1994 APPROVED AS RECOMMENDED  OTHER



UNANIMOUS  CONRAD  KOLIGIAN  LEVY  OKEN  VAGIM

DATE: March 8, 1994  
Page 2

the land on which it sits and contributed money toward its construction. Mr. Forkner was the developer of 12,000 acres of fig orchards northwest of Fresno, the largest fig orchard in the world, and also of the Forkner-Giffen Tract #1, the unique residential area where the building is located.

The Fresno County Historic Landmarks & Records Advisory Commission is aware of the application, but has not yet reviewed the full application. This item is coming to your Board in advance of the March 10, 1994, meeting due to deadlines of the State of California Historic Resources Commission. For this item to appear on the May meeting of that Commission, the filing must occur sixty days in advance. The Historic Landmarks & Records Advisory Commission will receive a report on the status of this application at its March 10th meeting. Members of the Commission were most interested in seeing this item placed on the state list at the time it was last discussed in November 1993.

RM/JKK/em

## STATE HISTORICAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION

P.O. BOX 942896

SACRAMENTO 94296-0001

(916) 653-6624

FAX (916) 653-9624



June 24, 1994

Mrs. Valerie D. Comegys  
Fig Garden Woman's Club  
1566 West Browning Avenue  
Fresno, CA 93711

Dear Mrs. Comegys:

The State Historical Resources Commission, meeting in regular session on May 19, 1994, in Sacramento, recommended your application for the registration of the following California Point of Historical Interest:

PRE-013 FIG GARDEN WOMAN'S CLUB

In order to obtain an enamel directional sign for your newly designated Point, you should contact the district office of the Department of Transportation (Caltrans) in which you are located. This directional sign is provided free of charge.

Thank you for your continued interest in California's cultural resources.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Sandra J. Elder".

Sandra J. Elder  
Assistant Executive Secretary

March 31, 1994.

Addendum to the February 28, 1994 application for Point of Historical Interest for Fig Garden Woman's Club, Fresno.

The Fig Garden Woman's Club, founded in 1921 by thirteen young women who lived in an agricultural area northwest of Fresno, chose as their objective: service to "Home and Community" by contributing to the "Social, Civic and Economic Welfare of our City."

By 1926 the members had achieved their goal of building a club house on the land donated by Mr. J.C. Forkner, a public spirited land developer and promoter of the Fig Garden area. By 1936 the building was debt-free. Also in 1936 the club had become a member of the General Federation of Women's Clubs.

#### CIVIC, SOCIAL AND CHARITABLE CONTRIBUTIONS

##### Christmas Tree Lane.

One of the major accomplishments of club members was promoting "Christmas Tree Lane," a beautiful event where for two weeks each holiday season thousands of people view an avenue of two miles of brilliantly lighted deodars and front yard displays. Mrs. W. H. Winning, one of the founding members, had been decorating a deodarus cedar in front of her home on Van Ness Boulevard in the 1920's for several years in memory of a young son who had drowned. In 1928 club members asked residents along the boulevard each to light one tree. That Christmas there were ten lighted trees, and the idea caught on.

The actual Christmas Tree Lane came into existence in 1931. Mrs. H.D. Bartlett, a founding member who served as president from 1930 to 1932 persuaded the County Board of Supervisors to sponsor the project. That year thirty-one trees were lighted. Many of the original Forkner trees remain today along the 125 foot wide boulevard. The Chamber of Commerce took over the project in 1950. In 1957-1958 the club distributed 10,000 copies of a leaflet telling the story of Christmas Tree Lane.

##### American Red Cross.

In 1940 the club house was used to store Red Cross supplies. (Also see below.)

##### Helping our country at war.

During World War II the club opened its doors for Vesper services three nights a week and on Sundays for service men. Since Camp



Pinedale had no recreational facilities, the club sponsored a program and enlisted community support to open a temporary U.S.O. and opened for dancing two nights a week until a recreation room was built at the base.

The club sponsored a hospital ward at Hammer Field.

At this time the club aided in furnishing a room for the YWCA and completed a room for service women at the Youth Center.

When the local Veteran's Administration Hospital was finished in March 1950, club members volunteered to staff the main office of the Red Cross situated in this building.

During the 1960's donations were made to the American Red Cross for packages for our service men serving in Vietnam.

Members currently provide programs at the Veteran's Hospital.

#### J.C. Forkner Memorial Park.

The club in cooperation with the County landscaped the triangular area at Van Ness Boulevard, and Shaw and Palm Avenues for a small park. Named for "J. C. Forkner -- Pioneer Developer of the Fig Gardens," it was dedicated on May 11, 1962.

Mr. Forkner acknowledged the tribute by telegram from Montana where he and Mrs. Forkner were visiting. His children and some of their children were on hand during the ceremony to hear leading citizens of Fresno extol the virtues of the man who had done so much to make his community a better place to live in and do business.

#### Donations in the 60's and 70's.

\$1,000. to the new Convention Center.  
\$1,500. to the Coronary Care Unit of Community Hospital.  
\$1,500. to the new St. Agnes Hospital.  
\$ 550. to the Fig Garden Library.

#### Other Activities.

In 1975 the club became a sustaining member of the Fresno County Historical Society, and membership has been continuous since then.

In 1980 the club recommended that a public school be named for J.C. Forkner--which was accomplished when an elementary school in northwest Fresno was named for him.

Currently the Fig Garden Woman's Club contributes to twenty cultural and charitable organizations and grants several

scholarships to college-level students.

Submitted by,

Valerie D. Comegys  
1566 W. Browning Avenue  
Fresno, California 93711.

126  
HLK & Son  
file

33



# Agenda Item

DATE: August 22, 1995

TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: Richard D. Welton, Director *[Signature]*  
Public Works & Development Services Department

SUBJECT: HISTORICAL MARKER SIGN FOR FIG GARDEN WOMAN'S CLUB

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Adopt resolution authorizing a historical marker sign at the southeast corner of Palm and Shaw Avenues for the Fig Garden Woman's Club.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no net County cost. The Fig Garden Woman's Club will pay for the cost of the sign and its installation.

DISCUSSION:

The Fig Garden Woman's located at 4550 Van Ness Boulevard has been designated a Point of Historical Interest by the California Office of Historic Preservation, Department of Parks and Recreation.

The Fig Garden Woman's Club has requested permission to place a Historical Marker Sign at Forkner Park, located at the southeast corner of Palm and Shaw Avenues. The California Department of Transportation Sign Specifications and Guidelines for use of the "Point of Historical Interest" (G15) marker indicate installation shall be authorized by the local authorities.

The Public Works & Development Services Department does not have a program for installation of historical markers. All costs for the marker sign and its installation must be borne by the Fig Garden Woman's Club.

88-11  
g:\unlabeled\traffic\marker.apl

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE REVIEW Jul 26 - 8/1/95 Page 1 of 1

BOARD ACTION: DATE \_\_\_\_\_ APPROVED AS RECOMMENDED \_\_\_\_\_ OTHER \_\_\_\_\_

UNANIMOUS \_\_\_\_\_ KOLIGIAN \_\_\_\_\_ LEVY \_\_\_\_\_ OKEN \_\_\_\_\_ PERCH \_\_\_\_\_ VAGIM \_\_\_\_\_

33

May 18, 1995

File: Special Signs  
Status: Permanent

Richard D. Welton  
Director

Valerie Comegys  
1566 W. Browning  
Fresno, CA 93711

Dear Ms. Comegys:

SUBJECT: HISTORICAL MARKER SIGN FOR FIG GARDEN WOMEN'S CLUB

Enclosed for your information are copies of California Department of Transportation (CalTrans) sign specifications and guidelines for use for the "Point of Historical Interest" (G15) sign.

The guidelines for use indicate that the sign may be placed when requested by local authorities, which in this case is the Board of Supervisors. The Board must request or approve the installation before we will issue an encroachment permit. Please contact your Board representative, Supervisor Sharon Levy, to discuss how this could be accomplished.

If you obtain Board approval, your organization may apply to Fred Hickman of this office for an encroachment permit to place the sign at Forkner Park at the southeast corner of Palm and Shaw. He can be reached at (209)453-5107.

Although Forkner Park is owned by the County, it is maintained by the owners of the property at 777 W. Shaw Avenue. The current owner is Ronald Sawl, at 1476 W. Shaw Avenue, Fresno, CA 93711. As a courtesy, he should be consulted regarding your plans to place a sign there.

The function of the Maintenance & Operations Division is to provide traffic control signs; the County does not have a program to install historical markers. Therefore, the County is not able to provide either the sign or its installation; all costs must be borne by your organization.

After reviewing the signing guidelines, I would like to suggest that Forkner Park may not be the best location to place the sign to provide direction to travelers. Historical Interest signs should be placed to give drivers on major routes advance notice of where to turn. You may consider asking the City of Fresno for permission to place signs on Shaw Avenue both east and west of Palm Avenue, and on Palm between Shaw and Van Ness for south bound traffic, rather than at the Park. If you wish to pursue this alternative, County involvement is not required. Any signs placed in the City right-of-way will require City of Fresno approval. Enclosed is a map identifying the City/County boundary in this area and suggested sign locations.

Here  
yibs

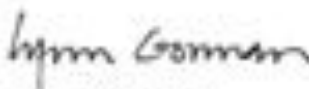
Valerie Conegys  
May 18, 1995  
Page Two

As the G15 sign is a standardized California Department of Transportation sign, you may be able to obtain it through local sign or construction equipment companies specializing in traffic signs. When ordering the signs, be sure to specify the direction of the arrow.

If you have any further questions, please call me at (209) 453-5140.

Very truly yours,

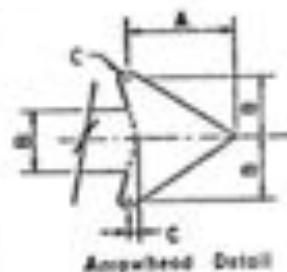
Robert Shonkwiler, Division Engineer  
Maintenance & Operations Division

  
Lynn Gorman  
Senior Engineer

RS:LG:ee  
g:\rbs\at\traffic\gorman\hietmark.ltr

c: Supervisor Sharon Levy, District 2  
Fred Hickman, Permit Engineer

Enclosure



ALL DIMENSIONS ARE IN INCHES

G15 SUFFIX	SIZE	BORDER WIDTH	MARGIN WIDTH	LETTER SIZE, SERIES & STROKE WIDTH					COR RAD
				LINE 1	LINE 2	LINE 3	LINE 4	LINE 5	
-1	15x9	1/4	-	1D-.18	F34C-.28	1D-.18			2
-2	36x20	1/2	-	2 1/2 D-.41	4C-.64	2 1/2 D-.41			4 1/2

G15 SUFFIX	SIZE	DIMENSIONS											
		A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
-1	15x9	1	.7	1/8	1 1/4	6	-	4.3	9 1/2	3/4	3/4	1 1/4	1-3/8
-2	36x20	2 1/4	1.7	3/16	1 1/4	-	8 1/2	10 1/4	24	1-3/8	1 1/4	3 1/4	3 1/4

BROWN BACKGROUND WITH Buff BORDER & SYMBOL Not ReflectORIZED.

3/8" Dia. Holes

M  
-  
16

## POLICY

G14



BROWN ON CREAM

## ADVANCE HISTORICAL LANDMARK SIGN

The ADVANCE HISTORICAL LANDMARK sign (G14) should be used in advance of a registered historical landmark monument or plaque within or adjacent to the right of way.

The sign should be placed 500 feet to 1,500 feet in advance of the landmark or monument on the right, depending on the approach speed of traffic.

See HISTORICAL LANDMARK signs (G13-1, G13-2) for additional information.

G15



## POINT OF HISTORICAL INTEREST SIGN

The POINT OF HISTORICAL INTEREST sign (G15) may be used to direct the public to a historical point of interest that has been registered with the Office of Historic Preservation, Department of Parks and Recreation.

The sign may be used on the right on city streets or conventional rural highways. The sign shall not be used on freeways.

The sign is placed when requested by local authorities.

G16



WHITE ON GREEN

## MOUNTAIN PASS ELEVATION SIGN

The MOUNTAIN PASS ELEVATION sign (G16) may be used at the summit to inform the public of a mountain pass name and elevation.

The sign should be placed facing traffic in each direction on the right. The following letter sizes shall be used:

- 8" U.C. and 6" L.C. letters — 6" caps  
On freeways and expressways.
- 4" Series D letters  
On all other highways.

G17



WHITE ON GREEN

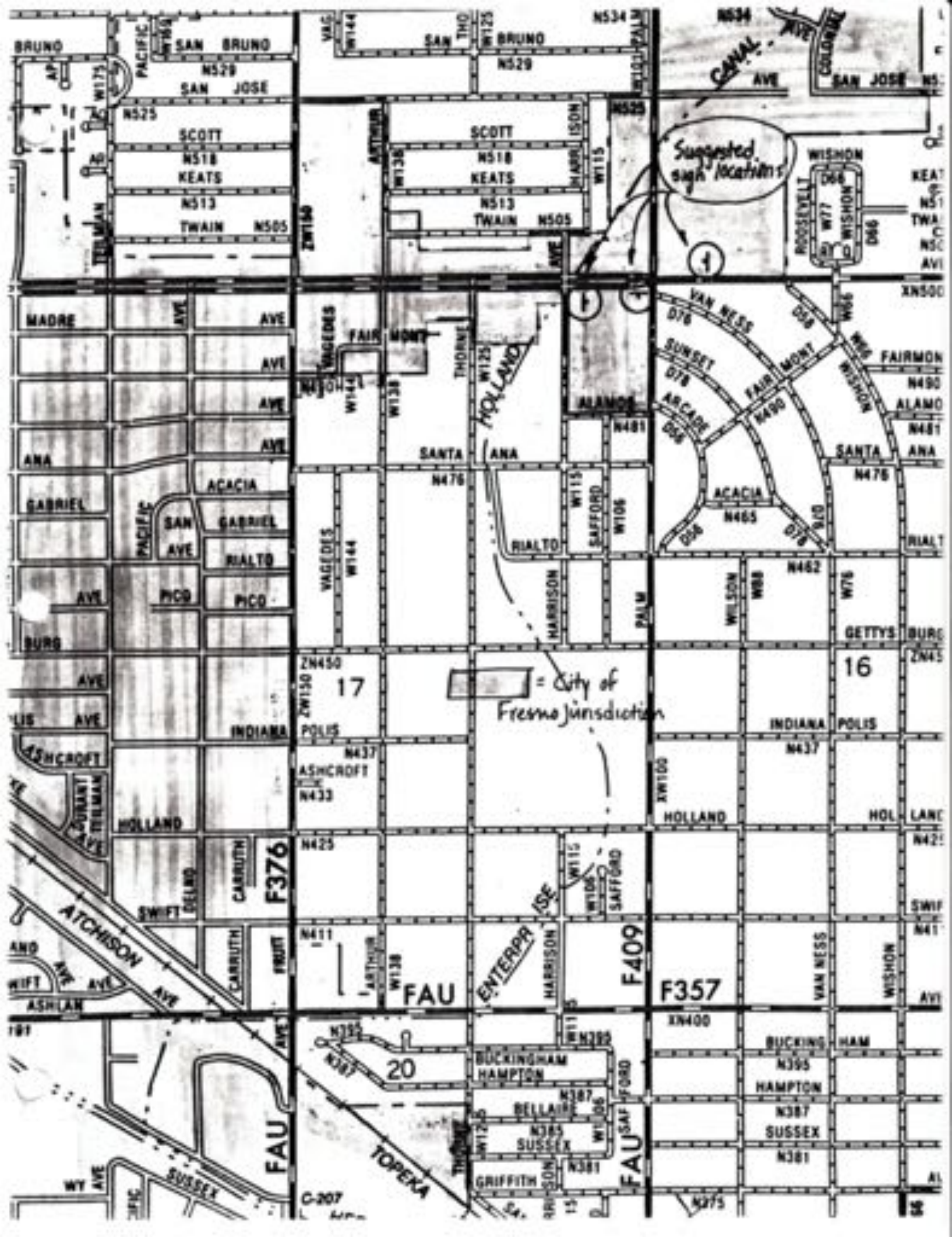
## ELEVATION SIGN

The ELEVATION \_\_\_\_ FT sign (G17) may be used to inform motorists of changes in elevation. Feet will be shown in multiples of 1,000 above sea level, and multiples of 100 feet for elevations below sea level.

The sign should be placed facing traffic in each direction on the right.

The following letter sizes shall be used:

- 6" capital — 8" capital  
On freeways and expressways.
- 4" capital — 5" capital  
On all other highways.



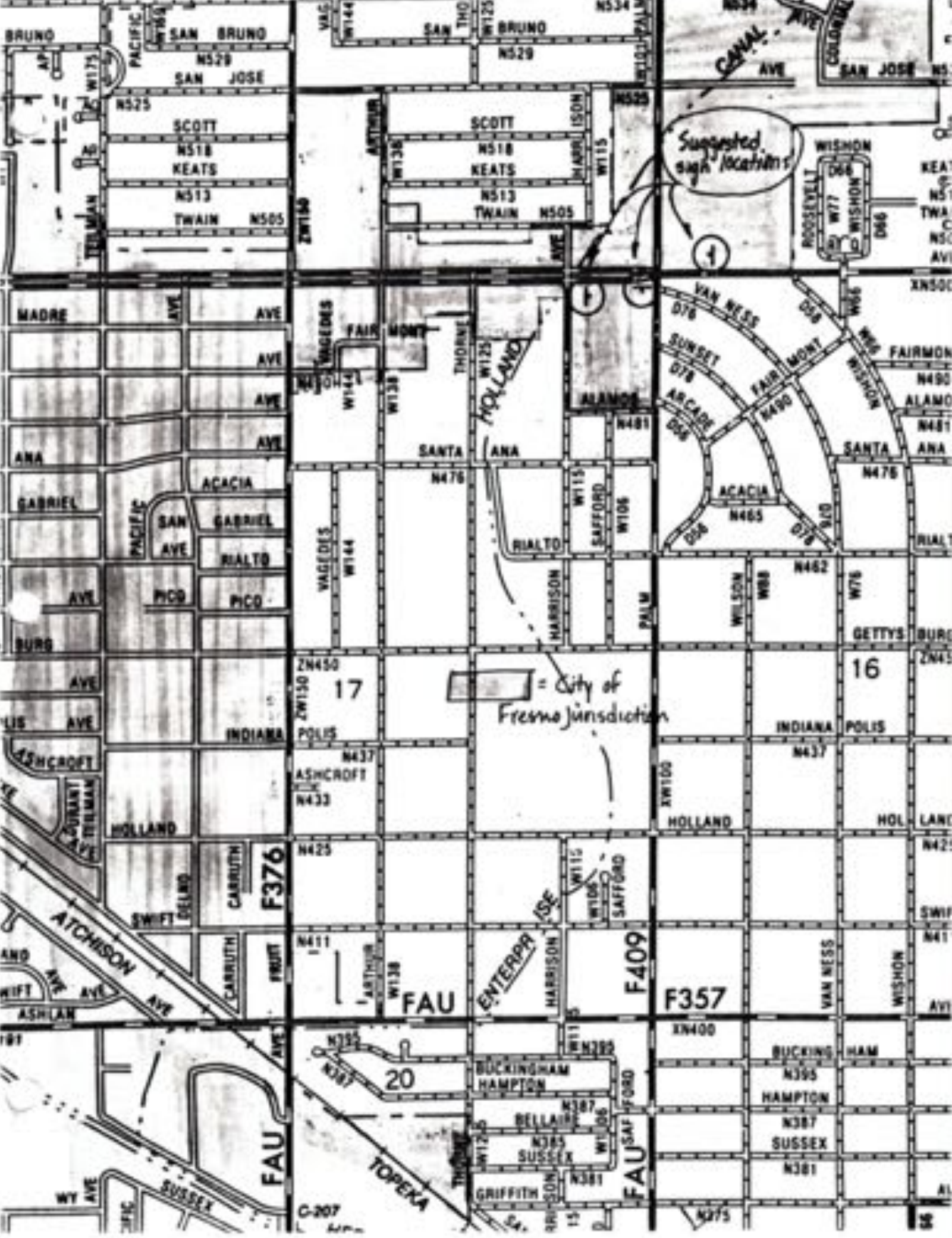
Suggested sign location

City of Fresno jurisdiction

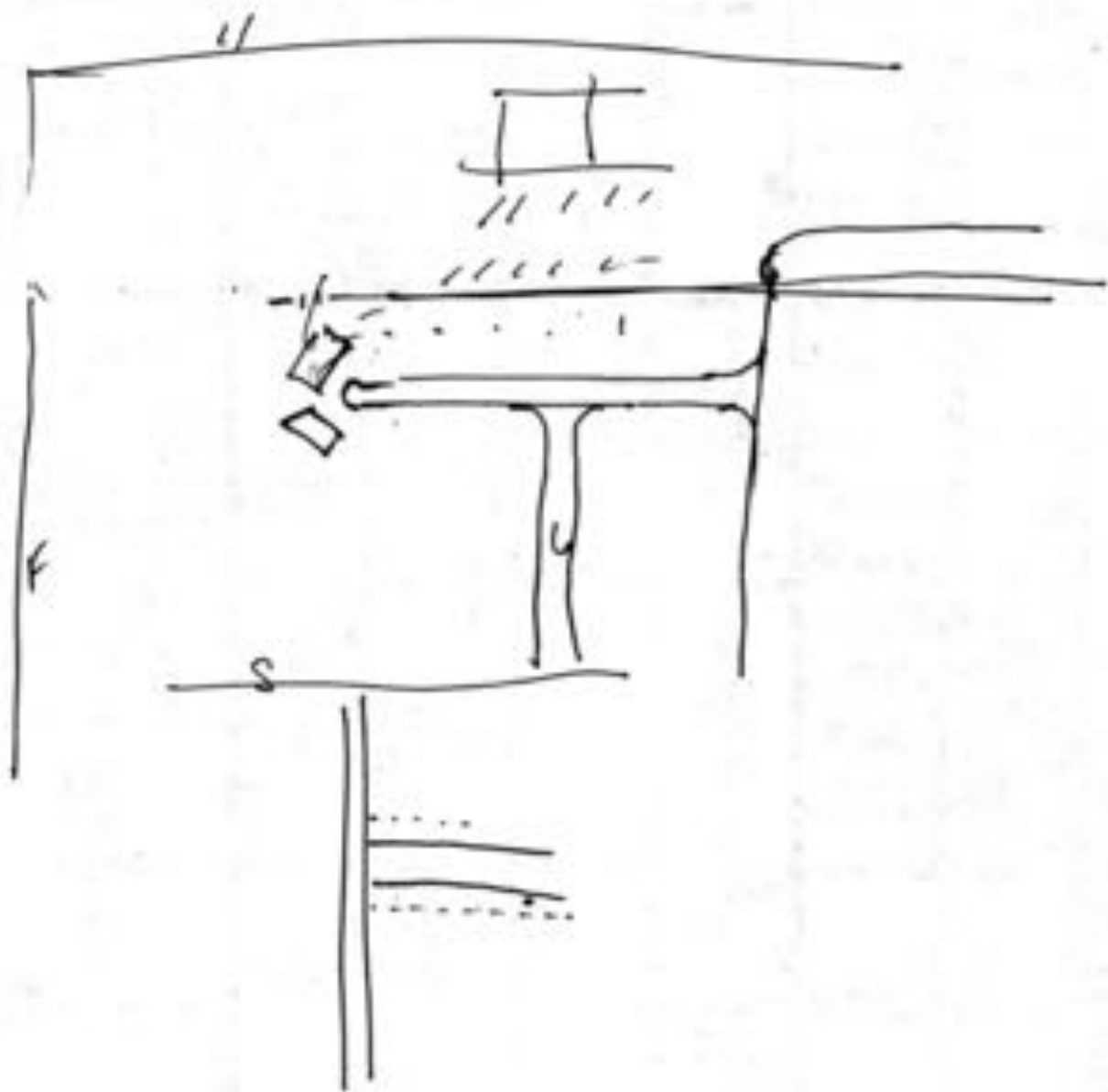
17

16

20







Reg. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_  
By \_\_\_\_\_

# POINT OF HISTORICAL INTEREST

COUNTY Fresno NAME Fig Garden Woman's Club  
COMPLETE ADDRESS 4550 N. Van Ness Boulevard, Fresno, Ca. 93704

Historical Significance (summary paragraph only):

The clubhouse of the Fig Garden Woman's Club of Fresno, a designated Fresno County Historical Landmark, deserves to be recognized as a California Point of Historical Interest. Erected in 1926, it is one of the few remaining buildings designed by Ernest Kump, Sr. (1888-1939), a prominent local architect who designed dozens of schools in the southern part of the San Joaquin Valley.

The building, a visible reminder of the public-spirited women's club movement of the 1920's when across the nation many clubhouses were being built, was the only structure of its kind in Fresno County when it was built and one of the few in the Valley. This stately building, well-designed for its purpose, serves the organization well today as it did when originally constructed.

This structure also provides material evidence of the civic-mindedness of James Clayton Forkner who donated the land on which it sits and contributed money toward the building. Forkner was the developer of 12,000 acres of fig orchards northwest of Fresno, the largest fig orchard in the world, and also of the Forkner-Giffen Tract #1, the unique residential area where the building is located.

Assessor's Parcel Number: 426-071-18

**THIS POINT OF HISTORICAL INTEREST IS NOT A CALIFORNIA REGISTERED HISTORICAL LANDMARK**

COMMENDED:

RECOMMENDED:

OR

\_\_\_\_\_  
SIGNATURE OF CHIEF ELECTED GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL

\_\_\_\_\_  
SIGNATURE OF CHAIRPERSON, COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

\_\_\_\_\_  
NAME OF MUNICIPAL AGENCY

Date:

Date:

RECOMMENDED:

APPROVED:

AND

\_\_\_\_\_  
SIGNATURE OF CHAIRPERSON, STATE HISTORICAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

\_\_\_\_\_  
SIGNATURE OF DIRECTOR, CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION

Date:

Date:

PLEASE USE TYPEWRITER. OBTAIN APPROPRIATE SIGNATURES. TRANSMIT AN ORIGINAL TO:

STATE HISTORICAL RESOURCES COMMISSION  
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION  
POST OFFICE BOX 942896  
SACRAMENTO, CA 94296-0001