

**1288 SOUTH OAKLAND
AVENUE**

PASADENA



A History

THE OWNERS

In 1913, Harry Charles House, a retired real estate and lumber company executive, purchased Lots 20 through 22 of Tract 360 in the City of Pasadena for a reported \$45,000. The parcel of approximately 4.6 acres was at that time occupied by oak trees and orange groves. Mr. House commissioned the well-known Los Angeles architectural firm of Hunt & Burns to design a large home in the Italian Renaissance Revival style to be sited on the northerly end of the acreage. He would share the house with his wife Carrie Bruce House. Claris J. Nordquist was selected to be the builder. The property was given the address 1284 South Oakland Avenue. (It did not become 1288 South Oakland until around 1989.)

Harry Charles House was born in Houston, Texas on December 19, 1858. He was the son of the founder of the House Lumber Company which owned forests and sawmills throughout the United States. After graduation from public schools, Mr. House entered the family firm in 1883. Following his father's death, he began a new career in real estate and investment. He served as a director of Houston's Bank of Commerce. Mr. and Mrs. House retired to Pasadena just before their Oakland Avenue house was built. They also maintained a summer home in Laguna Beach. The fact that Mr. House was a cousin of Colonel Edward Mandell House, a close advisor and White House chief of staff to President Woodrow Wilson, has led to undocumented speculation that the President visited the Oakland Avenue property at least once. The House residence was said to have been designed with the White House in mind.

Mr. House was known as an active member of local clubs and as a "quiet philanthropist," particularly to Pasadena's Huntington Hospital. He was a member of the Valley Hunt Club, the Midwick Country Club, the Masons, and the Church of Christ, Scientist. He is said to have quietly financed the college education of many local young men. Charles House died on December 11, 1940 at the age of 81.

Mrs. House was born Carrie Bruce in Lone Pine, Texas on January 15, 1870. She was remembered for the elegant dinner parties and receptions she hosted at her Oakland Avenue residence. She died at home on February 3, 1958 at the age of 88. Biographical material about Mr. and Mrs. House is attached on pages 28 through 31.

After the death of Mrs. House in 1958, title was transferred to her daughter Mrs. Minnie B. R. Davis, the widow of Robertson Davis.

The house remained vacant for about two years before it was purchased from Mrs. Davis' estate, in November 1971, by Mario Milano, who was associated with International Films. Mr. Milano was a former child actor who had later made a fortune in the real estate field. He caused a neighborhood controversy by renting out the old House estate to

movie companies for location filming. Articles detailing the trouble are attached on pages 34 and 35.

Title passed to Dovie Beams de Villagran, probably the property's most notorious and written-about owner, in April 1979. She shared the house with her husband Sergio de Villagran, a builder and developer. When she was known as Dovie Beams, the owner, a former B-movie actress from Nashville (born 1932), carried on a tempestuous two-year love affair during the late 1960s with Philippine president Ferdinand Marcos. She is said to have become a very wealthy woman as a result. Like her predecessor owner, Mrs. de Villagran was the object of neighborhood complaints when she rented out the property to film-makers. The lavish, and some would say ostentatious, Italian statuary, waterfalls, gazebos, and other decorations worth over \$3 million she added to the house and grounds were also derided by several neighbors.

Ms. De Villagran declared bankruptcy in 1986, after accumulating debts totaling \$22 million despite her ownership of 215 properties and 16 automobiles. She was evicted from her Oakland Avenue home in March 1987, and she and her husband were sent to prison in January 1988 to serve an eight-year term on 42 counts of defrauding thirteen banks of \$18 million. Copies of a number of newspaper articles on the colorful life of Dovie Beams De Villagran can be found on pages 36 through 45.

United California Savings took possession of the property in April 1987. Title passed to the Nansay Corporation USA, an investment firm located in Santa Monica, the following December. Nansay was said to have paid \$3.9 million for it—the most expensive house ever sold in the San Gabriel Valley up to that time. Nansay's owner was Eric Yokeno, a Japanese investor. His nephew, Ken Yokeno, soon undertook a massive restoration job on the house.

In the middle of the project, on the afternoon of September 1, 1988, a rampaging fire gutted the house, destroying the second floor and severely damaging the first. Damage was assessed at over \$3 million. The cause was later attributed to a pipe-welding job that had ignited materials in the walls, but was not noticed until hours later. A number of articles and photographs of the fire and its aftermath are attached on pages 46 through 62.

In 1990, the Yokeno family decided to raze the ruins and build a new house on the parcel, which still encompassed 4.6 acres. They hired Warner & Gray, a Santa Monica-based architectural firm, to design the new house in the Neoclassical style. NRG Enterprises of Los Angeles was the builder. The house was to be used by Nansay executives.

Lil Hong Kong, Ltd., became the owner in June 1994. In May 1996, title passed to Hai Li Liu. Guang Ren and then Hung Pen Chang became the owners in August 1997.

Since the mid-1990s, the property has once again been used extensively as a location for the filming of feature films, television shows, and music videos. Commercials for such advertisers as Bud Light and McDonalds have also been shot there.

THE ARCHITECTS IN 1913

Hunt & Burns was a well-respected design partnership between Sumner P. Hunt and Silas R. Burns. Hunt was a well-known civic leader and successful Southern California architect for nearly fifty years. He was born May 8, 1865 in Brooklyn, the son of Stephen P. and Harriet Conkling Hunt. Hunt had his initial education in public and private schools in the Brooklyn area, but began receiving his architectural training as early as 1879 in the office of Clarence B. Cutler of Troy, New York. He later worked for the Cutler office as a draftsman. Upon his arrival in Los Angeles in 1889, Hunt immediately embarked on his career, working for a few years in the office of Caulkin & Haas, an early local architectural firm. He married Mary Hancock Chapman Hunt in 1892. In 1895, he started his own practice in association with Theodore Eisen and A. W. Eager. When Eisen retired from the partnership in 1899, Hunt and Eager maintained the firm until 1908. In that year, they added Silas R. Burns as a partner.

During this early period, Hunt's firm was responsible for the design of many fine residences in the once-posh West Adams district. They also developed plans for many early schools, including David Starr Jordan High School, Louis Pasteur Junior High School, and Virgil Avenue Junior High School. In 1910, Eager left the firm, and Hunt and Burns continued in partnership until 1930 when Burns retired. During all this period, up until his death, Hunt maintained an office in the Homer Laughlin Building, Room 701, in downtown Los Angeles.

Hunt was a member of the Allied Architects Association, which designed the downtown Hall of Justice and the Los Angeles County General Hospital. He also served as an original member of the Los Angeles City Planning Commission and on the Municipal Art Commission. He was a fellow of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) and president of its Southern California chapter. Hunt held other memberships in the California Club, Los Angeles Country Club, Sunset Club, and the Seismological Society of Southern California. Hunt was a strong proponent for the restoration of the California missions, and was one of the founders of the California Landmarks Club in 1894 with Charles Lummis and fellow architect Arthur B. Benton.

Sumner Hunt maintained a home at 2647 Severance Street in Los Angeles. He died there on November 19, 1938 at the age of 73. He was survived by a daughter.

Hunt's partner Silas Reese Burns was a native of Morgantown, West Virginia, born on April 8, 1855. He attended private schools in Virginia and public schools in Ohio. After

graduating from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Burns established an architectural firm with Luther Peters in 1881 in Dayton, Ohio. Peters & Burns became known over the next 26 years for its designs of military homes, schools and colleges, and other public institutions (including the Dayton Public Library) throughout Ohio and Indiana. Burns' first trip to Los Angeles in 1887 was to serve as supervisor of construction of the National Soldiers' Home in Sawtelle (now known as Westwood). He moved permanently to Southern California in 1907 and soon after received his certificate from the State Board of Architecture. He made his home in Alhambra, later moving to San Gabriel. Burns was a fellow of the AIA and was a member of the Engineers and Architects Association of Southern California, the Union League Club, the San Gabriel Valley Country Club, and the National Citizens' League. Silas Burns died on August 10, 1940 at the age of 85. He was survived by his widow Louise Devereaux Burns and a son and daughter.

Additional biographical materials on Hunt & Burns are attached on pages 24 through 27.

THE ARCHITECTS IN 1990

Warner & Gray, at that time headquartered in Santa Monica, was a partnership between Jack Warner and Paul Gray established around 1972. Both Warner and Gray belonged to the A.I.A. They became well-known for their residential, commercial, and museum buildings. The firm later moved to Santa Barbara, where Gray was elected to the County Board of Architectural Review, a position he held for five years.

Many of the well over thirty homes Warner & Gray designed in such upscale communities as Malibu, Montecito, and Ojai were characterized as "minimalist Palladian." Their museum work was especially well-received. Among projects of this type were the Park Wing addition to the Santa Barbara Museum of Art and the Virginia Steele Scott Pavilion at the Huntington Library in San Marino.

In 1999, Paul Gray, a graduate of the U.S.C. School of Architecture, left the firm to establish Gray & Gray, Architects. He now specializes in modern abstract interpretations of California's Spanish and Mission Revival architectural heritage. Jack Warner has continued the Warner & Gray firm in Santa Barbara, but with different partners.

THE ARCHITECTURAL STYLE

This house is a prime example of the full-height entry porch subtype of the Neoclassical, or Classical Revival, style. In this style, the facade is typically dominated by a porch with a roof supported by classical columns with Ionic or Corinthian capitals. The remainder of

the facade usually has symmetrically balanced windows and a center door. The porch often has a classical pediment and gabled roof above.

Neoclassical was a dominant style for domestic buildings throughout the country from about 1895 until mid-century. Never quite as abundant as its closely related Colonial Revival contemporary, with which it is often confused, it had two principal waves of popularity. The first, from about 1900 to 1920, emphasized hipped roofs and elaborate, correct columns. During the 1920s, the style was overshadowed by other period revival fashions, such as Spanish and English. The later phase of Neoclassical popularity, from about 1925 to the 1950s, emphasized side-gabled roofs and simple, slender columns. There has been another, more recent interest in the style as mid-century ranch-style tract houses begin to be replaced with much larger edifices that lend themselves to more classical modes.

The earliest interest in classical models dates from the World's Columbian Exposition held in Chicago in 1893. The exposition's planners mandated a classical theme, and many of the best-known architects of the day designed dramatic colonnaded buildings arranged around a central court. The exposition was widely photographed, reported, and attended; soon these Neoclassical models became the latest fashion throughout the country.

The central buildings of the exposition were of monumental scale and inspired countless public and commercial buildings in the following decades. The designs of smaller pavilions at the exposition representing each state of the Union were more nearly domestic in scale and in them can be seen the precedents for most Neoclassical houses. Those of Ohio, Utah, and South Dakota, for example, all had semi-circular, full-height entry porches. Nebraska and Kentucky were represented by more traditional full-height porches with triangular pediments. The Connecticut pavilion had a dual-level entry porch. All of these drew heavily on the country's previous interest in the Early Classical Revival and Greek Revival styles that are so epitomized in the White House. The Virginia pavilion was a copy of Mount Vernon, whose full-facade porch, among the first in the country, had been added in 1784 to an earlier Georgian house. The presence of this replica at the fair, and the original Mount Vernon's wide familiarity as the nation's premier museum house, contributed to the incorrect impression that such porches were somehow colonial. Thus did Georgian, Adam, Early Classical Revival, and Greek Revival traditions, which originally spanned a century and a half of the nation's history, become fused into the eclectic Neoclassical style.

(Note: Much of the previous historical discussion was derived from *A Field Guide to American Houses*, listed in the Sources section.)

THE HOUSE AND PROPERTY IN THE PUBLIC RECORD

Building permit #2986A was issued by the City of Pasadena on December 15, 1913, for a two-story, sixteen-room tile veneer residence and garage. The cost was estimated at \$37,000—a tremendous amount of money in 1913 when the average house could be built for about \$3,000. A copy of this permit is not available since, in those days, permits were entered into a ledger and not issued as separate documents.

A 120-foot pergola was added to the property in November 1930 costing \$500. In March 1982, 891 linear feet of wrought-iron fencing was constructed, including three sliding gates. The cost was estimated at \$30,000. Construction of a new detached two-car garage and storage room was permitted in March 1984, to cost \$18,000. A gazebo, seven-foot retaining wall, and a pond were to be built in October and November 1985. A new sewer line was installed at the back of the property in January 1986.

A number of remodeling and alteration permits were issued in 1988, including installation of a new HVAC system, remodeling of the kitchen, and new plumbing and electrical systems. Subsequent to the disastrous fire, a demolition and sewer-capping permit was issued in August 1989.

Permit #134897 was issued in April 1990 for the construction of a new two-story-and-basement 20,900-square-foot single-family dwelling on the property. Its cost was estimated at \$1,564,000.

In March 1991, a permit was issued to install an eight-foot-square spa in the basement. In March 1998, an addition of 9,701 square feet to the main house, coupled with demolition of 811 square feet (involving a ballroom and family room), was permitted. Included in this permit were a remodeling of the rest of the house and the construction of a new gate house and the demolition of existing garages. The total cost was estimated at \$1 million. In October 1998, a 40-by-58-foot basketball court was to be constructed, along with a paved patio of the same dimensions. A 4-foot high block wall was to be built on top of an existing 2-foot wall along the front of the property in November 1998.

In August 1999, a permit was issued to convert an existing maintenance building into a garage and living room, convert an existing kitchen into a master bathroom, and reconfigure a bedroom area. This was to cost \$20,000. The existing residence was to be re-plumbed in November 1999.

A three-ton HVAC system and duct work were to be replaced in the main and guest houses and a fire sprinkler system installed in the guest house in April 2000. Various exterior section of the main house and guard-house were to be veneered with pre-cast stone and wrought-iron gates were to be installed in August 2001.

In June 2003, an application was made to consolidate the three lots of the estate into one parcel.

The Pasadena City Assessor first visited the property on January 11, probably in the year 1915, and recorded a single two-story residence and garage. The house had a deep concrete foundation, walls of hollow-tile veneer, a flat roof covered in composition material and gravel, and ornamental trim of plaster, stone, ironwork, and wood. Heat was provided by five fireplaces and a gas furnace. There were 21 plumbing fixtures and "good"-quality electrical fixtures. Interior finishes were described as "plain," "ornamental," and "special." Four bookcases were built-in. Over-all construction quality was rated "good"—the highest category available on the Assessor's form. In fact, the Assessor noted that "this house demands personal inspection."

The Assessor estimated the square footage at 10,714. On the first floor were an entry hall with two-foot wainscoting, an oak staircase and a beamed oak ceiling; a living room with two-foot mahogany wainscoting and a marble fireplace; a dining room with four-foot mahogany wainscoting, incorporating a della robia pattern, and a tiled fireplace; a den with five-foot oak wainscoting and an oak frieze; a sun-room with a cement floor; two toilet rooms; and a three-room kitchen complex that included a pantry and a breakfast room with a mosaic floor. The second floor contained three living rooms, six bedrooms (three of which had tiled fireplaces), four tiled bathrooms, and one sleeping porch. The house had a total of ten hardwood floors. There was also a 3,727-square-foot cement basement that averaged 7 feet deep. It contained three storage rooms. The house also had an Art Nouveau stained-glass skylight and a central vacuuming system. There was a total of 27,880 square feet of cement on the property, made up of drives, walks, and eight roofed terraces.

The two-story garage, measuring approximately 23 by 44 feet, stood at the rear of the property and had a concrete foundation, plaster walls, a flat composition-covered roof, and ornamental plaster and wood trim. It had ten plumbing fixtures. Construction quality was "good." The garage itself contained a toilet room and a laundry area. The attached living quarters contained two bedrooms, one bathroom, and four hardwood floors. Copies of the records of the old City Assessor's office, which closed in 1974, are attached on pages 20 through 23.

The Los Angeles County Assessor currently estimates the square footage of the house at 31,415.

THE WORLD AND COMMUNITY IN 1913

There were ominous signs of an impending world war in 1913. Germany began enlarging its army in June of that year, King George I of Greece and the President of Mexico were

both assassinated, war broke out in the Balkans, and there was bloodshed in Londonderry, Northern Ireland.

In the United States, President Woodrow Wilson was inaugurated in a year considered by historians to be the last of the "golden age" of pre-World War I America. Prosperity and peace for all still seemed attainable. Tariffs were reduced in 1913, and the Federal Reserve Act reconstructed the national banking and currency system. The 16th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution authorized Congress to levy income taxes. Also in 1913, Niels Bohr developed his model of atomic structure and Johannes Geiger invented the radiation measurement tool known as the Geiger counter. Both Albert Camus and Richard Nixon were born in 1913, and legendary financier J. P. Morgan died. The first crossword puzzle was published in the *New York World*, the Woolworth Building in New York was designed, and The Armory Show—the first landmark major American 20th century international art exhibition—was held.

In 1913, Congress approved construction of the Hetch Hetchy Dam in California—to this day, one of the largest and most argued-about public works projects in the state. Another important and controversial project was completed in 1913—the Los Angeles Aqueduct which brought water from the Owens Valley. Built at a cost of \$23 million, it was the largest municipally operated water system in the country. Hiram W. Johnson was in the middle of his first term as the state's reformist governor (he would later be elected to four successive terms as U. S. Senator). On a negative note, 1913 saw the passage of the Alien Land Law which prohibited aliens ineligible for citizenship (mostly Japanese) from acquiring land or leasing it in the state. California's population at this time was just over 2.5 million.

Pasadena continued to be recognized as a premier winter resort in 1913. It was a popular destination for many wealthy people from the East and Midwest who stayed in the resort hotels in the area and later decided to make Pasadena their year-round home. The City adopted the Commission form of government in 1913. Also in that year, the Colorado Street Bridge was dedicated and the Santa Catalina Branch Library opened. Scripps Home, still a venerable institution in Altadena, was established in 1913, as was Pasadena's Cauldron Club, the Tuesday Musicales, Pasadena High School, and the Citizens' Ice Company. Roy Knabenshue thrilled a crowd by flying his dirigible over the Raymond Hotel. The 1913 Rose Parade featured both a king and queen. San Marino received its charter that year, becoming an independent city.

Literary works making their debut in 1913 included the first installment of *Remembrance of Things Past* by Marcel Proust, *Sons and Lovers* by D. H. Lawrence, and Willa Cather's *O Pioneers!* George Bernard Shaw's play *Androcles and the Lion* opened in London and the Victor Herbert operetta *Sweethearts* premiered on Broadway. Also in 1913, *The Rite of Spring* by Igor Stravinsky scandalized Parisian ballet audiences while Americans were singing a new popular tune called *When You and I Were Young Maggie*.

NOTES

The *Pasadena Star* newspaper announced the impending construction of the House residence on February 26, 1914. It was described as a "handsome" home of Italian Renaissance design on a "magnificent" site that was covered in oak trees and fruit trees. The new house would measure 125 by 50 feet. A copy of this article is attached on page 13.

The *Los Angeles Times* also published an article on the new residence on October 4, 1914, calling it "one of the most attractive residences ...in Southern California. It occupies the crest of a slightly elevation and commands a magnificent view of the valley around it." One of the unique features of the house was a 25-foot-square terrace, with a stone balustrade, built under a "giant" live-oak tree. This article can be found on page 12.

Also attached on pages 14 through 19 are photographs of the exterior of the original house (one including a floor-plan) from various architectural magazines and from the collection of the Pasadena Museum of History.

The House residence was the site of the 1971 Showcase of Interior Design sponsored by the Los Angeles Philharmonic Juniors. A copy of part of the program can be found on pages 32 and 33.

Also attached on pages 64 and 65 are several images of the current house under construction, as found in the files of the City's Planning & Permitting Department.

Sources:

City of Pasadena, Planning Department (Design & Historic Preservation Section)
 Pasadena Public Library
 Pasadena Museum of History (Research Library and Archives)

Gebhard, David and Robert Winter. *Los Angeles: An Architectural Guide*.
 Salt Lake City, Gibbs-Smith, 1994.

McAlester, Virginia and Lee. *A Field Guide to American Houses*.
 New York, Knopf, 1984.

Pasadena Community Book, 1943.

Who's Who In the Pacific Southwest: 1913.

Who Was Who In America: 1897-1942.

City Directories: 1913-

Architect & Engineer: December 1930; December 1938

Architectural Digest: Vol. 3, No. 2

Architectural Record: October 1917

Builder and Contractor: December 5, 1907

Los Angeles Times: March 29, 1914; October 4, 1914; November 20, 1938;
 August 11, 1940; December 12, 1940; January 17, 1973; September 13,
 1981; May 31, 1987

Parade Magazine: February 2, 1986

Pasadena Star: February 26, 1914

Pasadena Star-News: December 12, 1940; February 5, 1958; January 12, 1972;
 February 6, 1986; January 11, September 2, 3, and 9, 1988; September 14,
 1989; November 20, 1995

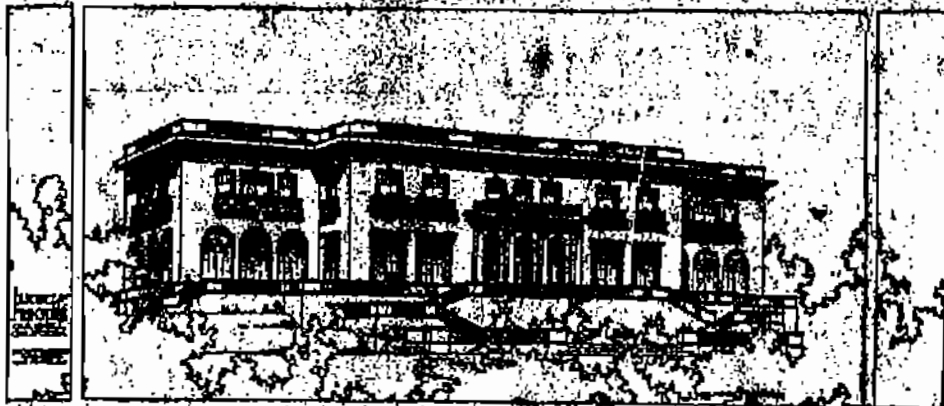
Southwest Builder & Contractor: November 21, 1930; November 25, 1938

Western Architect: October 1912

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 September 2006

HENRY C. HOUSE RESIDENCE IN ITALIAN RENAISSANCE STYLE TO BE NOTABLE NEW ORNAMENT OF OAK KNOLL SECTION



RESIDENCE OF HENRY C. HOUSE

Being Built on Magnificent Site at Cost of \$40,000 by Prominent Texas Couple of President Wilson's Confidential Advisers.

BUILDING FINE OAK KNOLL HOME

Henry C. House of Houston, Texas, Breaks Ground for Residence.

SITE ALREADY IS
REAL GARDEN SPOT

Prominent Southern Lumberman New Addition to Winter Colony.

Ground has been broken for another palatial Oak Knoll residence now under construction in one of the most beautiful homelands in Pasadena, comprising about six acres fronting on Oakland avenue just south of Allen-dale road.

This tract is a veritable Southern California garden. It contains about three acres of full-bearing Washington navel oranges in addition to a young orchard containing peaches, apples, pears, walnuts, plums, prunes, avocados, kumquats, figs, Japanese persimmons, grapes, and berries. It also has one of the finest oak groves in the city, the central figure of which is a superb specimen of breok having a spread of about 104 feet. There are also beautiful specimens of many of the characteristic Southern California ornamental and shade trees.

The accompanying sketch shows the residence which is being built on the home portion of the tract. The owner of the property is Henry C. House of Houston, Tex. Mr. House purchased the property through the agency of J. W. Wright & Co. of Pasadena several months ago, and immediately placed the designing of his residence in the hands of Hunt & Burns, well known architects of Los Angeles. Work is progressing rapidly and it is expected that the home will be completed for occupancy next season.

Mr. and Mrs. House will be notable additions to Pasadena's winter residents. Mrs. House and her daughter are counted among the most charming and beautiful women of the Lone Star state, and they were the recipients of much social attention during their visit here last autumn. They have many friends on the Pacific coast and in this immediate vicinity. Mr. House is a member of the famous

House family of Texas. His father established a general lumber business in Houston under the name of H. House, and it remained without change in one location for sixty-four years. His son took up the management of the business in 1883 and has been its head since that time. Their dealings have been in pine and cypress exclusively. They have owned vast forests of timber and have operated sawmills thereon, their activities extending from Maine to Florida and from Washington to Texas. Mr. House is a director of the National Bank of Commerce in Houston. His cousin, Colonel Edward M. House, is known as "the president's silent partner" and is the most influential person in the Wilson administration aside from the president himself. It was Colonel House who made it possible for Mr. Bryan and Mr. Wilson to join forces and for the Nebraskan to hold the portfolio of state in the Wilson cabinet.

The residence which Mr. House is building on his Oak Knoll site is estimated to cost in the neighborhood of \$40,000. It will follow the Italian renaissance style and will have a frontage of 175 feet by a general depth of 50 feet. Broad terraces will lead to a formal garden on the south. Both house and garden will be surrounded by orange trees, while at the west end of the grounds, to be terraced, is a magnificent liveoak with a spread of eighty feet.

Under this great oak will be a living porch twenty-five feet square, with fine mountain and valley views. To

the east of the main hall will be the dining room, breakfast room, parlor, and the serving wing, while to the west will be the living room and den. Above the carriage porch will be a billiard room. The second floor will contain five bedrooms, each with dressing room and bath, a sitting room, sewing room, and a large sleeping porch. The main part of the first story will be finished in mahogany and other hardwoods, the second story being in white enamel.

The exterior will be plastered. The terraces will be of reinforced concrete, and the balustrades of stone. The garage, laundry, and servants' quarters will be at the rear of the grounds, being screened from general view by a heavy growth of trees and shrubbery.

Pasadena Star
February 26, 1914

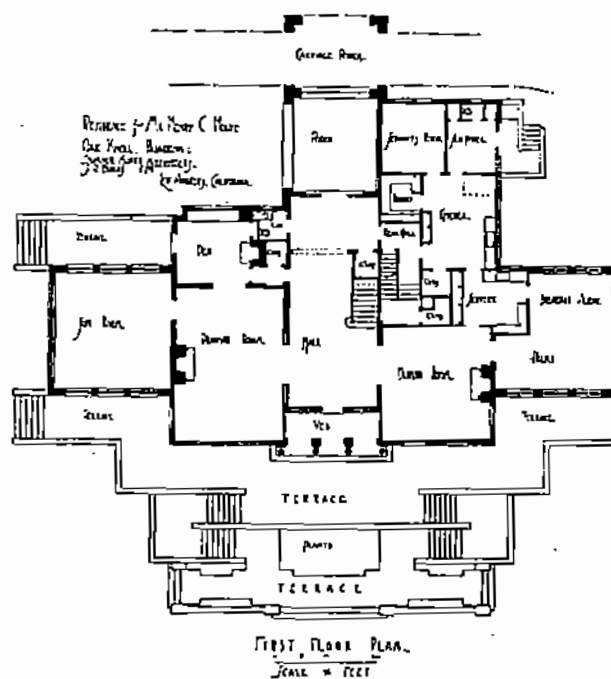
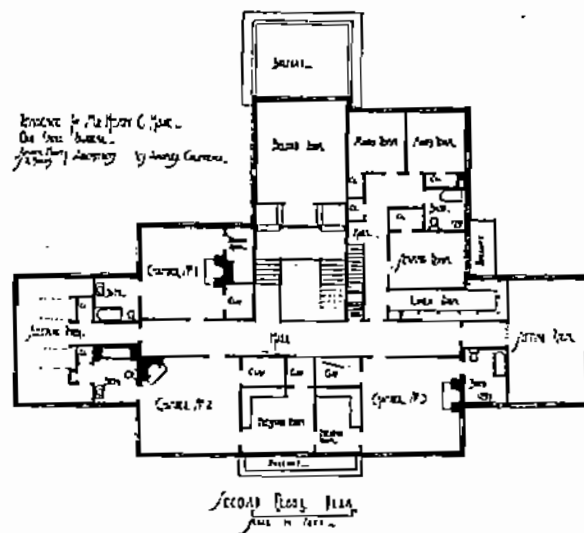


FIG. 80.—FIRST AND SECOND FLOOR PLANS—HOUSE OF
HENRY C. HOUSE, PASADENA, CAL.
Sumner Hunt and S. R. Burns, Architects.

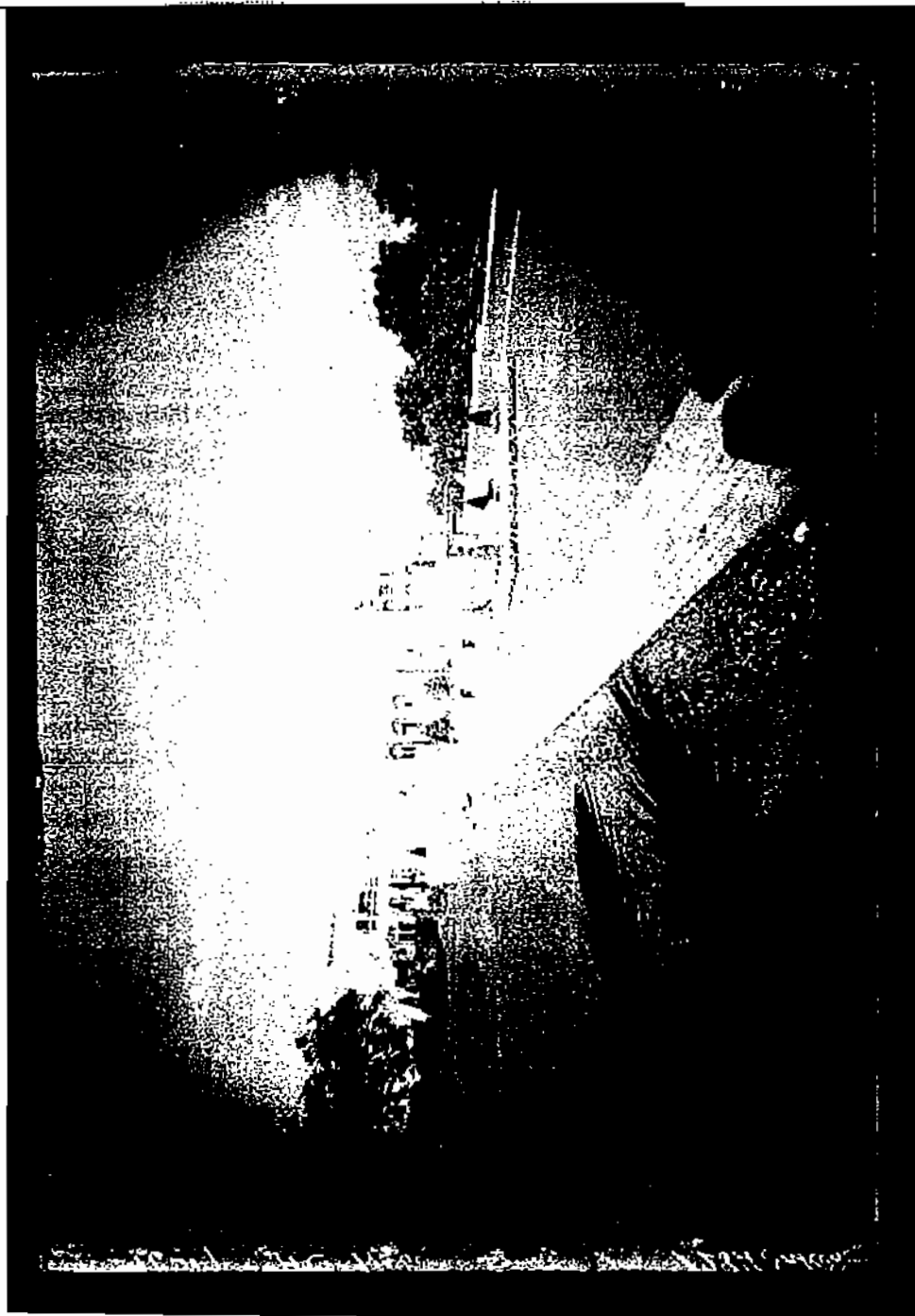
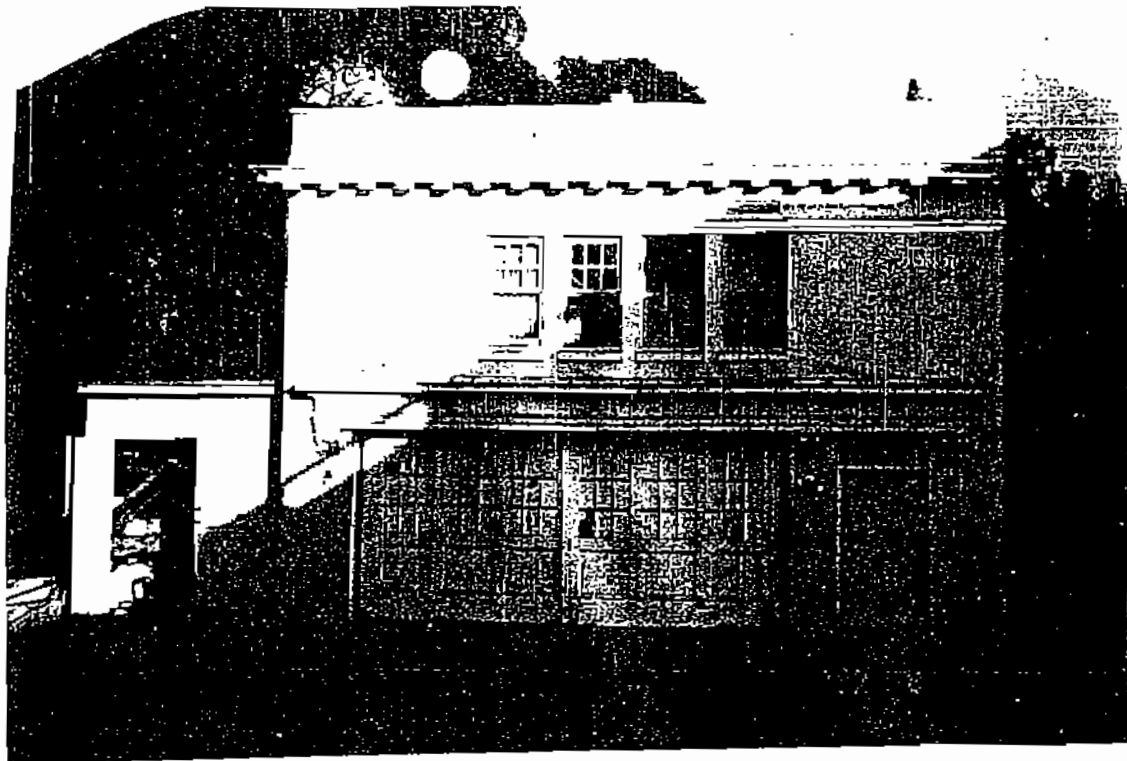


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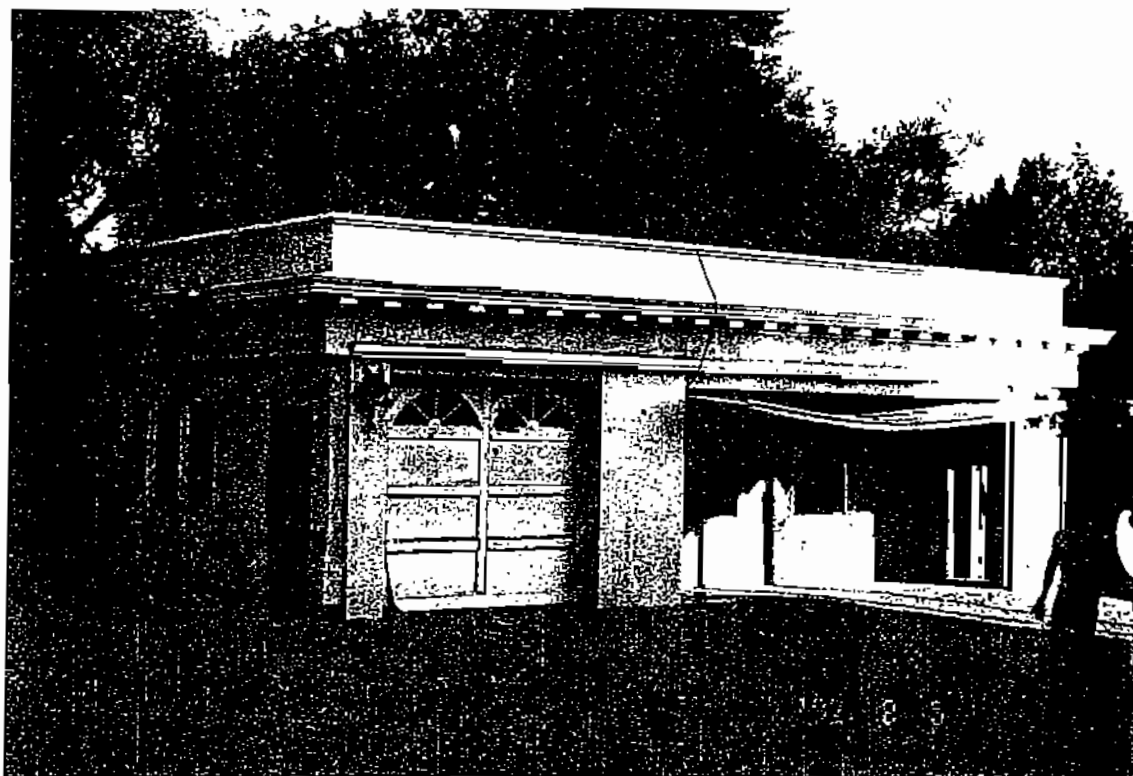
Address 1284 South Oakland Avenue

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Original garages

FROM CITY FILES



BUILDING DESCRIPTION
 THE JOINT BUREAU OF APPRAISAL - LOS ANGELES, CALIF. 1929

No. 1929
 Tract 360
 Lot No. 20-21-22 Block No. 18

Examined by [Signature] Date 1/11/30

CLASS	EXTERIOR	HEATING	TRIMMINGS
Single	Bay Windows	Fire place	Cobblestone
Double	1 story 2 story	Wood Coal Oil	Brick Plaster
California	Number	and Gas	Stone Wall
Bungalow	Wall Covering	Steam	Plaster
Residence	Plaster Lath	Stove	Ornamental
Flat	Shingles	PLUMBING	INSIDE FINISH
Apartment	Shingles	No. of fixtures	Plaster
Out Building	Shingles	Good Medium	Ornamental
Garage	Shingles	Cheap	Stock
Shed	Shingles	Good Medium	Special
Storage	Shingles	Cheap	BUILT IN FEATURES
Church	Shingles	Good Medium	Built in
School	Shingles	Cheap	Patent
Shop	Shingles	Cheap	Refrigerator
Storage	Shingles	Cheap	Bookcase
Foundation	Shingles	LIGHTING	Patent
Stone	Shingles	Gas Electric	Ornamental
Concrete	Shingles	Good Medium	CONDITION
Brick	Shingles	Cheap	Good
Wood	Shingles	Cheap	Medium
Occupancy	Shingles	Cheap	Roof
Office	Shingles	Cheap	
Residence	Shingles	Cheap	
Basement	Shingles	Cheap	
Living Room	Shingles	Cheap	
Bath	Shingles	Cheap	
Kitchen	Shingles	Cheap	
Storage	Shingles	Cheap	
Stove	Shingles	Cheap	
Hardwood Floor	Shingles	Cheap	
Hardwood Pan.	Shingles	Cheap	
Cement Floor	Shingles	Cheap	
Unfinished	Shingles	Cheap	

Remarks: [Handwritten notes]

OWNER: [Handwritten name]

REPORT DATED: 1-20-30

19299

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BUILDING DESCRIPTION FORM NO. 1
THE JOINT BUREAU OF FIRE INSURANCE INVESTIGATION, LOS ANGELES, CALIF. & COUNTY

No. 1284 Tract 560 Resub. of Alhambra

Tract 560 Resub. of Alhambra

Lot No. 20-21-22 Block No. 18

Examined by [Signature] Date 1/11

CLASS	EXTERIOR	HEATING	TRIMMINGS
Single	Bay Windows	Fire place	Cobblestone
Double	1st & 2nd 3rd	Wood, Oil	Brick, Plaster
California	Number	and Gas	Stone, Wood
Bungalow	Wall Covering	Steam	Plain
Residence	Plaster, Mosaic	Stove	Ornamental
Flats	Wood Lath		
Apartment	Shakes, Rustic		
Office Building	Siding, Board		
Garage	and Batten		
Shed	Corrugation		
Silhouette			
Church			
School			
Shopping Arcade			
Store			
Foundation			
Stone			
Concrete			
Brick			
Wood			

CONSTRUCTION	HEATING	TRIMMINGS
Good	Gas, Electric	Good
Medium	Good	Medium
Cheap	Cheap	Cheap

OCCUPATION	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Owner Resided Vacant												
Rent Paid \$ Per Mo.												
Basement												
Living Room												
Bed Room												
Bath												
Kitchen												
Storage												
Store												
Hardwood floor												
Hardwood												
Cement floor												
Unfinished												

OWNER [Signature]

REPORT DATED 1/11 ASSESSED VALUE \$ 1000

27880 sq. ft. cement
covered walks, terraces, etc.
(all unroofed)
Also 1000 sq. ft.
brick walks
Also retaining wall
on South side of property
Average 3' high

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75																									

HUNT, Sumner P. Architect. Res. Los Angeles; office 315 S. Broadway, Los Angeles, Cal. Born in Brooklyn, N. Y., May 8, 1865; son of Stephen P. and Harriet Conkling Hunt. Married to Mary Hancock Chapman in 1892. Educated in public and private schools. At an early age began the study of his profession in the office of Clarence B. Cutler, Troy, N. Y., where he remained studying and working for ten years. Moved to Los Angeles, Cal., in 1889. Employed by Calkins & Haas, 1889-92; formed partnership with Theodore A. Eisen in 1895, and operated under firm name of Hunt & Eisen until 1899; in partnership with A. W. Eager, 1895-1908; firm was known as Hunt, Eager & Burns, 1903-10; firm name now Hunt & Burns. Notable buildings designed by firm: L. A. Country Club house; Annandale Country Club house; Ebell Club house; Casa de Rosas (private school building); buildings of Los Angeles playgrounds. Member local chapter American Institute of Architects; Engineers and Architects Association of So. Cal.; L. A. Country, California, Craggs Country, and Sunset clubs.

Who's Who in the Pacific Southwest
(1913); p. 188



Architect Sumner P. Hunt of Los Angeles Passes Away After Brief Illness

Sumner P. Hunt, well known Los Angeles architect and civic leader, died at his home, 2647 Severance Street, November 19, after two day's illness. A cerebral hemorrhage was the cause of death. He was 73 years of age. Funeral services were held Tuesday afternoon at St. John's Episcopal church and the body was cremated at Rosedale cemetery. A daughter, Miss Louise Hunt, is the surviving member of the family.

Coming to Los Angeles in 1889, Mr. Hunt embarked in a professional career in which he achieved notable success. His first important work was the Bradbury Building at Third and Broadway, which was designed as a monument to the owner and which is today one of the most interesting of the many downtown office buildings by reason of its central covered light court encircled by open corridors connecting the offices.

In 1908 Mr. Hunt formed a partnership with Architect Silas R. Burns which was terminated only a few years ago by the retirement of the latter. During all this period and up to the time of his death Mr. Hunt maintained offices in the Homer Laughlin Building.

Designing of many important buildings in Los Angeles is credited to Mr. Hunt individually or to his firm. Among them are the Los Angeles Country Club, Ebell Club, Friday Morning Club, Automobile Club of Southern California, Southwest Museum and a number of schools including David Starr Jordan High School, Louis Pasteur Junior High School and the Virgil Avenue Junior High School. His work also included some of the early fine residences in the West Adams district.

Mr. Hunt was a member of the Allied Architects Association which designed the Hall of Justice and the Los Angeles county general hospital building. He served as member of the Los Angeles city planning commission; also the Municipal Art Commission.

Mr. Hunt was a member of the American Institute of Architects and past president of Southern California Chapter. He was also a member of the California Club, Los Angeles Country Club, the Sunset Club, Seismological Society of Southern California and other associations.

SUMNER P. HUNT, ARCHITECT

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**Architect & Engineer
December 1938; p. 57**

**Southwest Builder and Contractor
November 25, 1938; p. 16**

HUNT, EAGER & BURNS.

The firm of Hunt & Eager, architects, has been materially strengthened by the addition of a new member in the person of Mr. S. R. Burns, a former resident of Dayton, Ohio.

Mr. Burns has visited this section periodically during the past twenty years, in fact, at the time the first buildings were being constructed at the Soldiers' Home, in this county, he was the supervising architect of the work; as also of several other branches of the National Soldiers Home. For twenty-five years he has practiced his profession in the East, where his firm gained a reputation for heavy construction work. For a number of years they were architects of various State institutions, schools and colleges, and many of these buildings were erected from their plans.

Mr. Burns has come to Los Angeles to stay, and we feel confident that he will be a valuable addition to the firm. He has been granted a certificate by the State Board of Architecture, and will hereafter be one of the firm of Hunt, Eager & Burns.

Builder and Contractor
December 5, 1907; p. 1

BURNS, Silas Reese. Architect.

Res. Alhambra; office Laughlin Bldg., Los Angeles, Cal. Born in Morgantown, Va., April 8, 1855; son of Silas and Susan (Coombs) Burns. Married to Louise Devereaux in 1891. Attended private schools in Va.; public schools in Ohio and Va.; Mass. Inst. of Technology, Boston. Member firm of Peters & Burns, Dayton, O., 1881-1907; has specialized in institutional and educational buildings; moved to Los Angeles in 1907 and became member firm of Hunt & Eager. Fellow Amer. Inst. Archts., 1882 to date. Member of Engrs. & Archts. Assn. of So. Cal.; Union League Club; San Gabriel Valley Country Club; National Citizens' League.

Who's Who in the Pacific Southwest
(1913); p. 69

Noted Los Angeles Architect Dies at San Gabriel Home

Silas Reese Burns, for 33 years a resident of Southern California and for more than 25 years partner in the architectural firm of Hunt & Burns, of Los Angeles, died at his home, 400 E. Hermosa Drive, San Gabriel, August 10. Funeral services were held last Monday at the Church of Our Saviour in San Gabriel and interment was made in San Gabriel Cemetery. He is survived by the widow, Mrs. Louise D. Burns, a son, Bruce Burns of Santa Monica, and a daughter, Mrs. George Adair Fleming of Denver, Colorado.

Mrs. Burns was born in Morgantown, West Virginia 85 years ago. His early reputation was made as a designer of military homes including those at Marion, Indiana, Dayton, Ohio, and at West Los Angeles. He formerly lived at Dayton.

Associated with the late Sumner Hunt he was also architect for many important structures in Los Angeles and vicinity, including the southwest Museum, Children's Hospital, administration building of Scripps College at Pomona, Los Angeles and Wilshire Country Clubs, Automobile Club of Southern California and a number of Los Angeles school buildings.

Southwest Builder and Contractor
August 16, 1940; p. 18

Noted Architect Taken by Death

Silas Burns Resident of Southland 33 Years

Silas Burns, 85, nationally known architect of military homes and public buildings, died yesterday at his home, 400 E. Hermosa Drive, San Gabriel. Born in Morgantown, W. Va., Burns had lived in Southern California 33 years, the last 20 in San Gabriel. He was known throughout the country as a designer and builder of military homes, having planned and constructed those of Marion, Ind., Dayton, O., and West Los Angeles.

Los Angeles Times
August 11, 1940; pt. I, p. 6

HENRY C. HOUSE

Pasadena has attracted a considerable number of outstanding men of wealth and culture from other parts of the country. Prominent among such persons was the late Henry C. House who came here from Texas in 1914, and built one of the finest homes in the Oak Knoll district. During the years of his residence in Pasadena, Mr. House was well known in club life and he carried on numerous philanthropies here in a quiet manner.

Mr. House was born in Houston, Texas, on December 19, 1858. He was the son of Henry and Mary (West) House. His father, a native of England, came to America as a young man, and was a pioneer in Texas. A man of exemplary character, the elder Mr. House was a very highly regarded man in his community, and became one of the most important factors in the lumber industry in Texas.

Henry C. House was educated in Texas, and as a young man entered his father's business, which was known as the House Lumber Co. He continued until his father passed away, and he then withdrew from the lumber industry, confining his activities from then on to real estate and private investments.

In addition to developing a magnificent estate in Pasadena, Mr. House also had a very beautiful home in Laguna Beach, where he enjoyed spending the summer months. His social affiliations in Pasadena included the Valley Hunt Club, and the Midwick Country Club. He maintained a life long interest in Masonry, and had the distinction of being the oldest living past master of his blue lodge in Houston. He belonged to the Scottish Rite Bodies, and was also a Shriner.

Perhaps the greatest pleasure which Mr. House derived from life, particularly during his latter years, was in helping boys through college, and it was a great satisfaction to him to know that all of those who received his assistance turned out well. Mr. House was always ready and willing to help worthy individuals, and was an exceedingly generous person. A man of friendly and sympathetic nature, he was beloved by all who knew him. A very potent influence in Mr. House's life was his interest in the Christian Science Church, whose teachings he ardently endeavored to follow in his everyday living.

Henry C. House married Mrs. Carrie Bruce Robertson, also of Texas. She survives him with one daughter, Mrs. Robertson-Davis. In connection with the family history it is interesting to note, that Mr. House was a cousin of the late Col. Edward M. House, the close advisor of President Woodrow Wilson.

Mr. House passed away on December 11, 1940.

Pasadena Community Book (1943)
p. 213

continued...



First Sergeant M.D. Davis

H.C. House

Rites Tomorrow



HENRY CHARLES HOUSE

Christian Science services will be held at 3 p. m. tomorrow at his home, 1284 S. Oakland Avenue, for Henry Charles House, retired lumberman who passed away there yesterday. Judge Frank C. Collier will officiate. Friends are invited to the funeral. Burial interment will be private.

Mr. House was born in Houston, Tex., and retired in 1914, when he came to Pasadena. He was a member of the Valley Hunt Club and other Southern California organizations here.

He died after a brief illness. Surviving him are his wife, Mrs. Carrie B. House, and a daughter, Mrs. Minnie R. Davis of Pasadena.

Pasadena Star-News
December 12, 1940; p. 27

House, Lumberman Dies in Pasadena

Herman C. House, 62, retired lumberman and cousin of the late Col. E. M. House, wartime adviser to President Wilson, died yesterday at his home, 1284 S. Oakland Ave., Pasadena, following an attack of influenza.

House came here from Houston, Tex., in 1914 after retiring from the lumber business there. He leaves his widow, Mrs. Carrie House, and a daughter, Mrs. Minnie Davis.

Funeral services are being arranged by Turner & Stevens Mortuary.

Los Angeles Times
December 12, 1940; p. A2

ROUSE—Mrs. Carrie Bruce
House passed away Feb-
ruary 3, 1958 at her home 1284
South Oakland Avenue. A na-
tive of Lona Pine, Texas, she
had been a resident of Pas-
adena 44 years. She is sur-
vived by her daughter, Mrs.
Minnie R. Davis of Pasadena
and a sister, Mrs. Helen Bruce
Parroll of Seattle, Washing-
ton. Private services were
held. Entombment, Forest
Lawn Mausoleum, Turner and
Stevens Co., Directors. (5-5)

Pasadena Star-News
February 5, 1958; p. 36



The 1971 Showcase of Interior Design

1284 South Oakland Avenue, Pasadena

presented by the

Pasadena Junior Philharmonic Committee

in cooperation with

Pasadena Area Chapter

American Institute of Interior Designers

April 25 through May 16
 Daily Tuesday through Sunday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
 except Wednesday and Friday. 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.
 Closed Mondays
 Donation \$2.50 Tickets available at the door
 Philharmonic Fund of the Southern California Symphony-
 Hologated Band Association

THE HOUSE AND ITS HISTORY

The proud offering of the Pasadena Junior Philharmonic Committee for the Seventh Annual Showcase of Interior Design is one of the finest examples of the early 20th Century mansions in Pasadena. This magnificent residence contains 10,741 square feet and is situated on five acres of beautifully manicured grounds.

In 1913, Henry Charles House of Houston, Texas, commissioned Los Angeles architect, Sumner P. Hunt to construct this winter home. Mr. Hunt's credits include the original Annandale Country Club, the Los Angeles County Club, the Raymond Hotel, and the first unit of Children's Hospital.

The original elegance of the home has been preserved in the beautiful mahogany wainscoting in the living and dining rooms, the oak stairway and beamed ceiling of the grand entry hall, and the frieze in the Gentleman's Retreat. Marble and tile fireplaces are featured in several rooms. Other interesting details of construction include the Art Nouveau skylight, and a modern-day convenience, central vacuuming.

The home has remained in the same family for its 58 years. It is through the courtesy of the estate of the late Minnie B. R. Davis, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. House, that the Committee has obtained the home for the 1971 Showcase of Interior Design. The house and its grounds are being offered for sale.

From Showcase program, 1971



PASADENA JUNIOR PHILHARMONIC COMMITTEE

SHOWCASE OF INTERIOR DESIGN - 1971

One of the finest examples of an early 20th century Pasadena mansion, set on approximately seven acres of beautifully maintained grounds, is the proud offering of the Pasadena Junior Philharmonic Committee for its seventh annual SHOWCASE OF INTERIOR DESIGN. Through the Committee's efforts over the past six years nearly \$125,000 has been made available to the Philharmonic Fund of the Southern California Symphony - Hollywood Bowl Association. Funds of this nature are used toward the musical enrichment of the youth of Los Angeles County. In touring the SHOWCASE homes, approximately 85,000 people have contributed to this endeavor!

Each year the Committee leases one of the interesting old homes for which Pasadena is noted. During the five months of the lease, a team of leading A.I.D. designers completely redecorate and refurnish the house. Each designer has full creative freedom to present, in the area assigned to him, his latest ideas and techniques using the most appropriate furnishings and materials. In January the house is opened to the public for 2 days, at no charge, for a "before" tour. The subsequent months are busy for everyone connected with the project as the residence is transformed into a SHOWCASE featuring the ultimate in design.

In mid-April a gala invitational premiere heralds the opening of the SHOWCASE. A feature of this year's black tie event will be the modeling of designer gowns and period jewelry from I. Magnin and B.D. Howes and Son.

The 1971 SHOWCASE is situated majestically in the Oak Knoll area surrounding the Huntington Hotel, a favorite winter retreat of prominent eastern families after the turn of the century. Sumner P. Hunt, of Los Angeles, was the architect commissioned in 1913 by Henry C. House, a retired lumberman from Texas. Among Mr. Hunt's credits in the Los Angeles area are the Southwest Museum, the Wilshire-Ebell Club, the first unit of Childrens Hospital, and the Academic Hall at Scripps College.

The era of opulence is preserved through the extensive use of imported mahogany, oak, marble, and tile illumined by a unique stained glass skylight.

The success of the SHOWCASE, over the years, has been assured by the extensive coverage provided by the communications media, both local and national, and by the continued interest and support of the business community. We, of the Committee, are most grateful for this continuing confidence in the SHOWCASE OF INTERIOR DESIGN.

Where can mysterious Mario meet one of those pretty girls?

One of Pasadena's little mysteries centers on a 30-room mansion at 1284 S. Oakland Ave.

It once was the home of wealthy Minnie Davis, the niece of Col. Edward House, adviser and confidant of Woodrow Wilson.

Last April the place was the Showcase of Interior Design house, lavishly decorated by a group of interior decorators. Admission was charged with proceeds going toward the work of the Los Angeles Philharmonic Juniors.

Recently the property — the mansion, a guest house and some five acres of land — was purchased for Mario Milano, a personable young man of perhaps 29 who moved in.

He disturbed neighbors, who wrote in protest to the city manager, John Phillips, because he leased the property to a Warner Bros. television movie producer, who promptly began filming an episode for "Eyes of Charles Sand," a mystery thriller.

At first, neighbors were just puzzled as they saw swarms of workmen move in, spraying the dry lawn green, planting shrubs, stringing wires, unloading furniture and paintings, placing flood lights here and there and hanging a black tarpaulin over the front of the house to exclude the sunlight.

Vans were parked in the driveway and people came and went by the busload. Neighborhood children investigated and were fascinated when they found that a motion picture was being made right there.

But the parents took a different view. They were disturbed. They objected to the whole scene.

Not that they could hear the sounds of movie making inside the house — a girl screaming as she darts from an upstairs bedroom and runs wildly down the hall, the shout of a man who charges after her, holding his right arm where there is a slash in his coat.

They had seen and heard enough. They began to compose letters.

Meanwhile, Mario loved it all.

"I was a child actor for Warner Bros.," he said. "I began when I was 6. Lately, I have been making films in Europe. Now I want to make some more here."

He said he had been making money in real estate during the last few years — deals such as the purchase of the mansion at a court auction.

Dreamily, he sat on a wicker sofa in the conservatory of the old mansion — it was built in 1913 — while the sights and sounds of a movie company on location flared and faded.

"I would like to marry a pretty Pasadena girl and live the rest of my life in this house," he said.

"I would like to have her help me decorate it a room at a time in all sorts of styles — ancient Greek, Egyptian, Renaissance, like the castle of King Arthur and right on down to the most modern things.

"It would take us 30 years, doing a room a year, and it would keep us so busy we wouldn't have time to quarrel and get a divorce."

Pasadena Star-News
January 12, 1972

CHAMPAGNE WELCOME GOES FLAT

Neighbors Petition to Curtail Movies at Pasadena Mansion

BY BERT MANN

Times Staff Writer

PASADENA — Mario Milano, 29, moved into the big Italian - Renaissance mansion at 1284 S. Oakland Ave. a year ago and in neighborly fashion invited people on the street over for champagne.

Since then the laughter over the champagne bubbles has subsided and apparently so has some of the neighborliness.

A group of 28 residents on Oakland Ave. and adjoining streets petitioned the Board of City Directors on Tuesday asking it to curtail the use of Milano's property as a location for movies.

Ordinance Violation

Such activity, the petitioners claim, "is not consistent with a residential area and violates the city's zoning ordinance."

Grant L. Changstrom, 1275 S. Oakland Ave., one of the spokesmen for the petitioners, made it clear that some movie making would be acceptable but not the 20 times a year

that the city permits under its ordinance.

Specifically the petitioners objected that frequent use of Milano's estate by movie producers brought moving vans, trucks, helicopters, portable latrines, commissary trucks and the attendant traffic congestion.

Mansion Advertisement

Mrs. Rosemary Sadler, 550 Woodland Road, produced the current issue of Holiday Homes International magazine with a full-page color advertisement touting the mansion as "the ultimate in gracious living" and a place where first-run movies are made. The advertisement also offered part of the estate for sale at \$295,000.

However, Milano, an occasional actor and full-time land investor, said the advertisement had been placed in the magazine by his agent, and at the same time he disclaimed knowledge of a classified advertisement in a local newspaper offering to store or sell furniture

"from my \$1 million mansion."

Milano said he did advertise his property in the Hollywood Reporter as a set for movies.

"I invited the neighbors over for champagne when I moved in," Milano said, "but now it seems there is a vendetta directed at me."

Milano produced his own list of 19 supporters in the neighborhood and won additional backing from Duncan Langton, owner of another mansion at 1365 S. Oakland Ave. that also has been used for movies.

"I also feel this is a vendetta against me and Mr. Milano," Langton said, noting that he would never allow his home to be used for any movie that would be detrimental to Pasadena.

Filmmaking at Issue

Mansion Owner, Pasadena Clash

By BERT MANN, Times Staff Writer

PASADENA—The owner of a \$6.5-million historic mansion is locked in a battle with the city over the shooting of films on her property.

A public hearing on the issue, which involves new regulations for moviemaking in residential areas, is scheduled at 5:30 p.m. Wednesday before the Planning Commission.

The scenario for the hearing itself resembles a movie plot. It focuses on Dovie Beams de Villagran, a former actress who lives in a 30-room French baroque mansion built in 1913 for Col. Henry C. House, top adviser and confidant of President Woodrow Wilson. The mansion was used by Wilson during visits to the West Coast.

It is situated on five acres at 1284 S. Oakland Ave. and also fronts on 1300 S. Oakland Ave. and 525 Woodland Road. De Villagran lives in the mansion with her husband, Sergio, a builder and developer.

The property, bought by De Villagran in 1975, has been used for filming for at least the last decade.

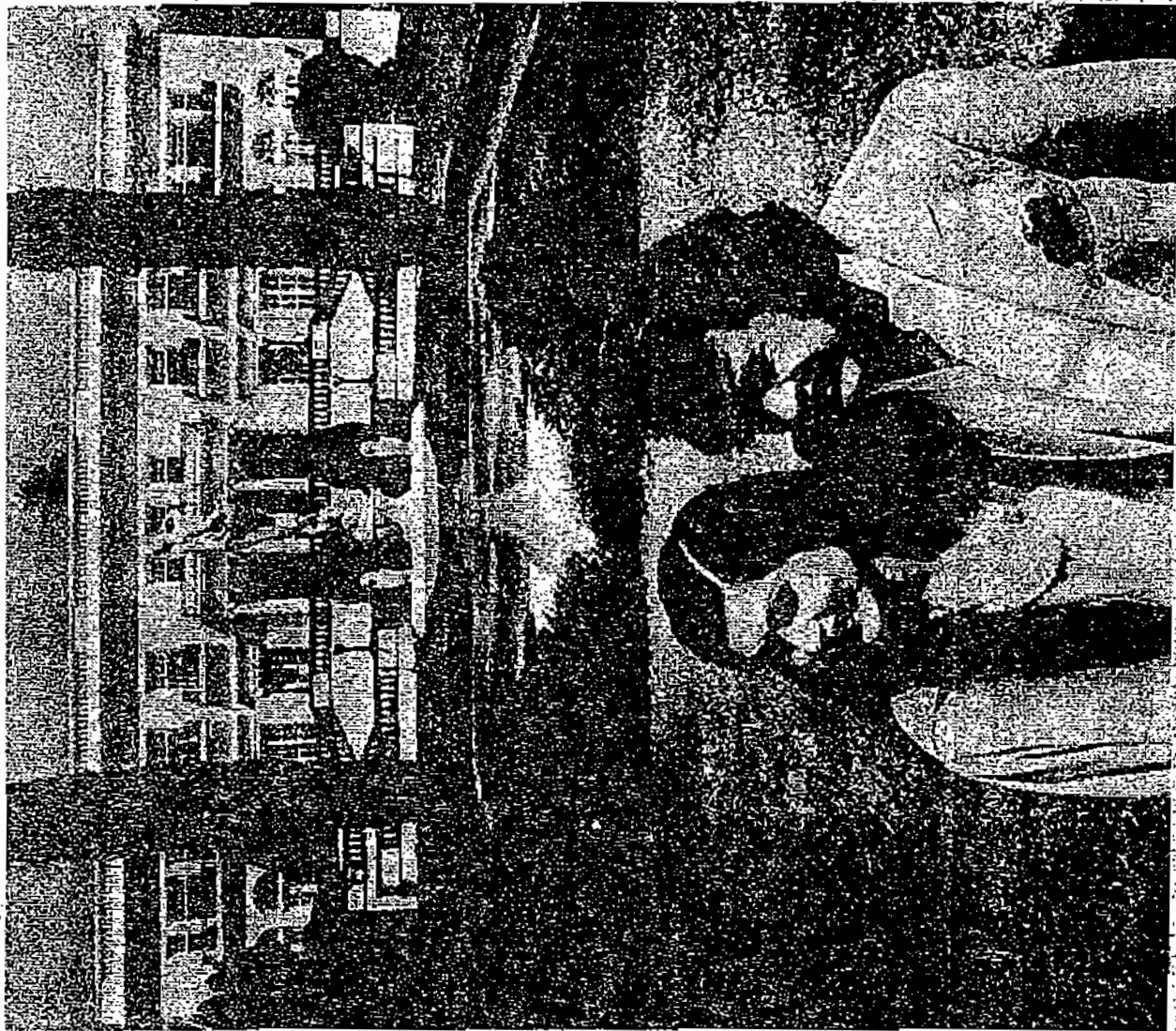
The city, however, recently revised its policies on filming, based in part on allegations that filming in residential areas was creating parking problems, that bright lights were being used in the late evening, and that the film units were arriving too early and leaving too late.

Some of the criticisms were leveled specifically at the De Villagran property, where filming allegedly has continued until 2 and 4 a.m.

De Villagran brands this and other criticisms as "totally false," and charged they are being spread by "one or two disgruntled neighbors."

De Villagran said the restrictions imposed by the city also are discouraging moviemakers from coming to Pasadena.

The city used to allow four days of filming in a quarter (three months) at any one residential site but changed this to six days a quarter with the proviso that after 22 days of filming in any calendar year, a property owner



JOEL P. LUCAVERB, Los Angeles Times

Dovie Beams and Sergio de Villagran in front of the Pasadena mansion where films are shot.

Los Angeles Times
September 13, 1981

continued...

would have to request a temporary use permit for filming more than 12 days.

De Villagran said the new rules give the impression that filming will be allowed 24 days a year instead of 16, but "when you have to get a temporary use permit for 12 days, you are really only being entitled to 12."

De Villagran said she applied last April for a temporary use permit for filming on each of the three lots that make up her property instead of only at the 1284 S. Oakland Ave. address.

"My request is based on the old rules that allowed four days of filming in each quarter," De Villagran said.

De Villagran said she charges movie companies \$3,000 a day for filming on her property and acknowledged that if she were granted her request, filming could be permitted a total of 48 times a year.

This, she said, could bring in a maximum of \$144,000 annually.

But De Villagran said it is not her intention to operate her home as a commercial venture.

She said her prime interest is maintaining "a historically significant building."



JOEL P. LUGA/VERE / Los Angeles Times

Former actress Doyie Beams de Villagran talks about the dispute with Pasadena over filmmaking permits.

Because of volume of mail received, Parade regrets it cannot answer queries.

By Lloyd Shearer © 1986

When Marcos Was Lovey With Dovie



Dovie Beams (l), a former Hollywood actress, maintains she secretly taped Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos (shown with wife, Imelda) during what Beams says was a two-year affair

Freddie Marcos is a cinch to win the Philippine presidential election scheduled for February 7." That's the considered judgment of Dovie Beams, a former Hollywood actress who was involved with President Marcos in a tempestuous two-year (1968-70) love affair during some of which she concealed a tape recorder beneath their bed.

"Freddie is a shrewd, wily, intelligent, experienced in-fighter," Beams explains, "who exercises considerable influence over the Philippine judiciary, the Philippine army and the Philippine electoral process. I think I know him well, and I can tell you that, in my opinion, there's no way Freddie will ever voluntarily relinquish the presidency.

"Let's face it," she continues. "Ferdinand Marcos is 68. He's been president of the Philippines since 1965. That's 20, 21 years—long years of power and privilege in which he and Imelda [his wife] have positioned into the government and the economy an army

of grateful friends and relatives. Whom do you think all those people and associates will vote for?"

A loquacious, attractive, size 6-ish brunette with wavy, waist-reaching hair, Dovie Beams—originally from Nashville—met Marcos in 1968 when Universal Studios sent her to Manila to discuss starring in a film for some Philippine exhibitors. At a cocktail party in her honor, Marcos was introduced to the actress as "Freddie," and for several hours she had no idea of his true identity. She remembers his calling her "Big Eyes" and professing that he had fallen in love with her at first sight. She says she had no notion then whether he was "acting like a sophomore or a romantic Filipino." He did, however, admit modestly that he was president of the Philippines and subsequently paid Beams \$10,000 to star in a film, *Maharlika*, based on his heroic exploits as a guerrilla fighter in World War II. Also in the film were the actors Farley Granger, Broderick Crawford and Paul Burke.

Dovie Beams says she lived in Manila

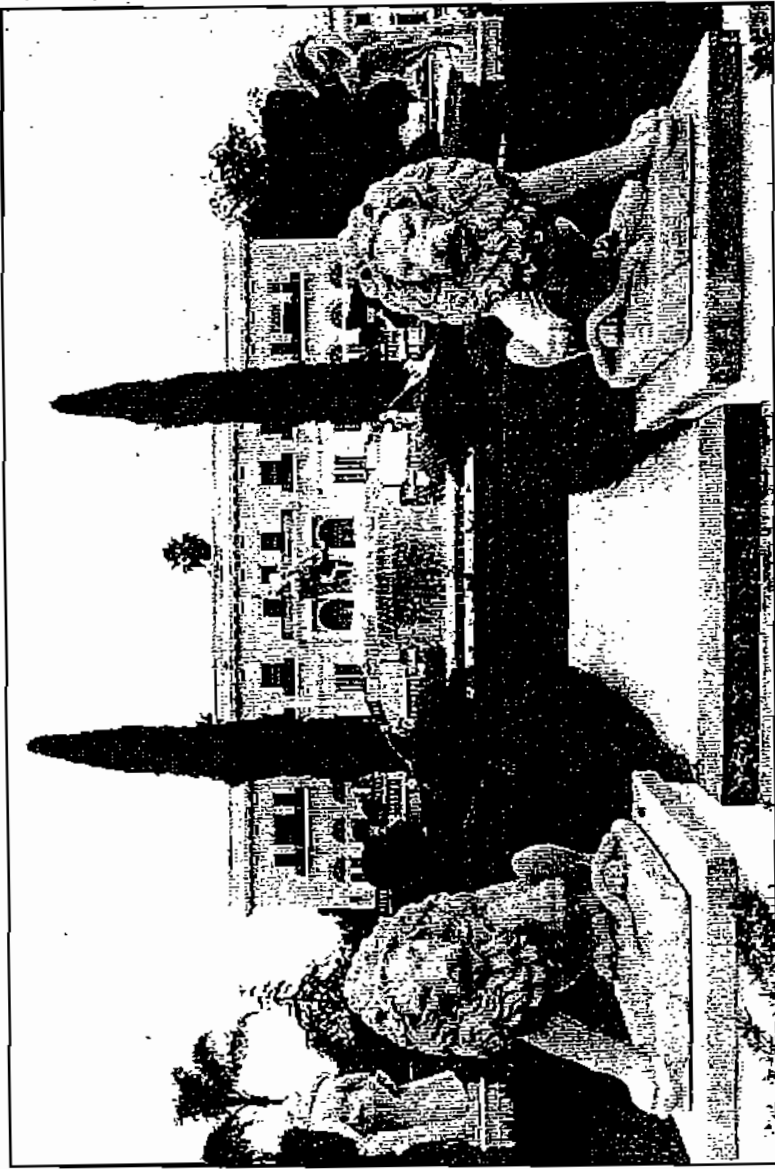
with President Marcos for two years. There, she was protected by his cousin, Col. Fabian Ver (now a general), who corroborated much of the fiction that Marcos spun about his First Lady. "Freddie told me back then," Beams maintains, "that he and Imelda had engaged in no intimate relations for two years; that she was rapidly becoming richer than he was, although nothing was ever put in their names; and that, given time, he would find some way of getting rid of her and marrying me."

Beams learned shortly that Marcos also was committed to other women, particularly to one named Carmen, by whom he reportedly had at least three offspring. Doubting his truthfulness, she thereupon began secretly to tape-record him "when he came to visit me in the house on Princeton Street" in Manila. Beams collected tapes, she says, revealing vital political and financial information concerning the U.S. and the Philippines as well as Marcos' personal opinions on a variety of individuals and subjects. She has had these tapes transcribed, she maintains, and they form a large portion of a 1500-page unpublished manuscript titled "Dovie Beams by Me."

For years after her return to Beverly Hills in 1970, Dovie Beams lived in fear of assassination by Philippine "hit men" determined to silence her. She no longer does. Through Marcos' emissaries from Manila, she says, she receives messages from time to time that the Philippine president still loves her. She has been visited, she adds, by many Philippine politicians, among them Salvador Laurel, running mate of Corazon Aquino, who heads the opposition slate against Marcos.

Having dropped acting in favor of real estate, Beams now lives in a 30-room mansion on a five-acre estate in Pasadena, Calif., which she rents out to film and TV producers. She asserts that she and her current husband, whose identity she prefers not to disclose, are the owners of some 215 properties in addition to 16 automobiles.

Asked how she regards Marcos 16 years after their breakup, Dovie Beams says with gusto, "I don't like his politics." Then, with tenderness, she adds, "But I will love him to the day I die."



LOU MACK / Los Angeles Times

The Dovie Beams De Villagran mansion in Pasadena, recently sold for \$3.5 million.

'A Steal and a Half' at \$3.5 Million

Actress Sells Pasadena Estate

By ASHLEY DUNN, Times Staff Writer

In a neighborhood where homes on a mere half-acre lot can easily go for \$750,000, there is a hint of exaggerated grandeur at the 4½-acre Pasadena estate on South Oakland Avenue that belonged to Dovie Beams De Villagran.

The lawn in the backyard is so large that children used to play full-field soccer on it; dozens of statues of bare-chested nymphs cover the estate; a pond complete with a small waterfall is affectionately referred to by neighbors as "the lake."

De Villagran, a former B-movie actress and self-described mistress of deposed Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos, declared bankruptcy in February, 1986, after falling more than \$22 million in arrears to creditors.

Once-Enormous Holdings

The estate is one of the last and most beautiful of De Villagran's once-enormous land holdings in Pasadena, Beverly Hills, Los Angeles, Alhambra and the San Fernando Valley.

The house was put on the market early this month and, after two weeks, was sold to an unidentified Los Angeles doctor, who is expected to move in in July.

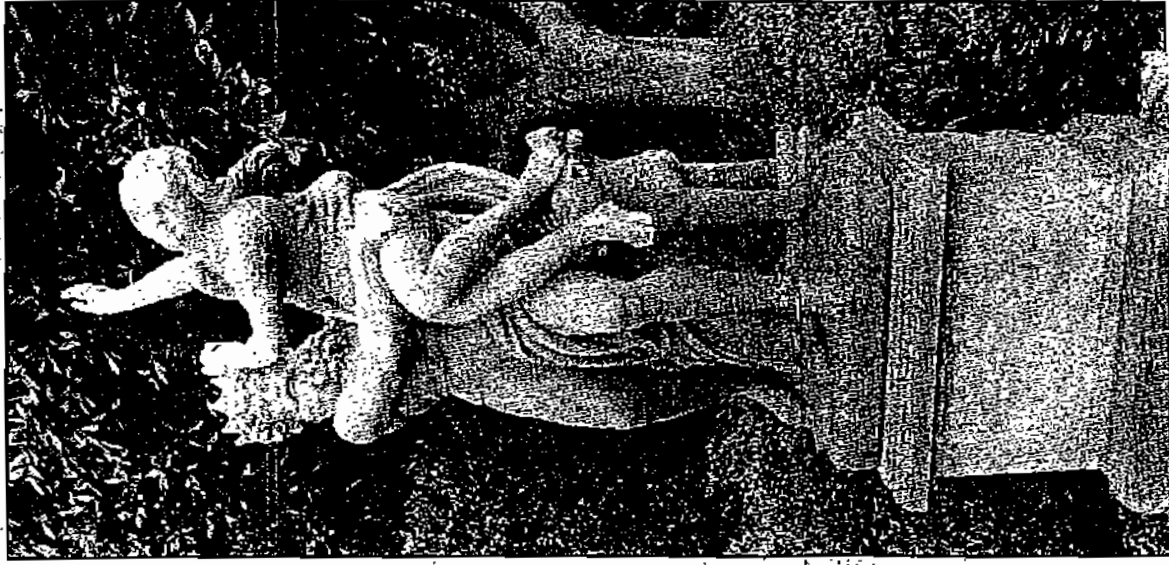
"He just loved this house," said Steve Levine, president of Asher Dann & Associates Inc., a Beverly Hills real estate firm, who was the agent for the estate. "They're absolutely buying it to live in it for the rest of their lives."

Levine would not disclose the selling price, but said it was close to the original \$3.5-million asking price.

"It's a steal and a half," he said.

Levine said he expects no problems in completing the sale of the three individual lots that make up the estate.

At one time, De Villagran, who could not be reached for comment, owned about 20 homes in Beverly Hills.



One of many statues on the grounds.

Los Angeles Times
May 31, 1987

continued...

After she declared bankruptcy, De Villagran continued to live in the Pasadena mansion but was locked out of her home in March on the orders of a federal bankruptcy judge after she tried to remove some property, said her former attorney, Michael Cisneros.

Left With Suitcase, Clothes

Local newspaper photographs showed De Villagran after she had been escorted outside the wrought-iron gates of the estate and past the east-stone lions that guard each entrance, standing with a suitcase and bundle of clothes.

Neighbors, who often stopped to chat with the friendly Southern belle, say they have not seen her since.

Cisneros, who stopped representing De Villagran recently because of what he called a "lack of communications and cooperation," said she still owes various creditors \$5 million to \$6 million. As far as he knows, she has no current source of income and no remaining homes, and he is uncertain where she now lives.

Representatives of Philippine President Corason Aquino claimed last year that De Villagran's wealth came from Marcos himself—a claim De Villagran has steadfastly denied. She has said she amassed her fortune through real estate investments and a car business she owned called

International Auto Brokers.

De Villagran, who was born in 1932 in Nashville, Tenn., has said she met Marcos in 1968 when she went to the Philippines to film a movie. According to her own accounts, she became his lover and stayed there for two years. In an interview with the Philippine American News in 1984, she said she fled the Philippines in 1970, allegedly one step ahead of assassins dispatched by an angry First Lady Imelda Marcos.

Little has been published about how De Villagran acquired her real estate holdings or what she did until she married her present husband, Sergio, in 1979.

The alleged affair between De Villagran and Marcos has often been the focus of irreverent attention.

Philippine journalist Hermie Rotea wrote a book entitled "Marcos' Lovey Dovey," in which the author described a two-year affair, including accounts of lovemaking sessions with Marcos that De Villagran had tape-recorded.

A column in a 1985 edition of the magazine Vanity Fair described how De Villagran played tapes of her romantic interludes with Marcos for reporters when she left the Philippines. According to Vanity Fair, Marcos retaliated by having a government-run magazine publish nude photos he had taken of her.

De Villagran's former estate is a mixture of elegance and eccentricity.

Quiet, romantic nooks of trees and shrubs are bounded by the statues of naked nymphs and gods. Two gazebos, capped with wildly colored stained-glass domes, dominate the park-like grounds.

Levine likes to describe the surroundings as "overwhelming."

'Done Very Nicely'

But most neighbors who have watched the property evolve over the years lean more to the words "flamboyant" or "ostentatious."

"Well, it's grossly overdone in one sense," said Sterling Johnson, who lives across the street. "But it is done very nicely."

From the back patio, the lawn stretches out like a golf course fairway, surrounded by about 30 statues, a few fountains, a paved

walkway lined with stone gnomes, and oak, eucalyptus, cypress and palm trees.

"The view gives the impression that it goes on forever," Levine said. "It's like you own all of Pasadena."

The De Villagrans owned the estate for about 10 years, and neighbors said they greatly improved the property, which had fallen into disrepair over the years.

Debts to Be Settled

When completed, the sale of De Villagran's estate will settle more than \$6 million in debts secured by the property, owed primarily to the United California Savings Bank and an unidentified Canadian bank, Levine said.

"Everyone is taking a bath except me," Levine said, explaining that the banks will recover only a portion of the money owed them. Levine said he expects to make a commission of 5% to 6% on the sale price.

Most neighbors say that living near the estate, located in the Oak Knoll neighborhood, has been like living next to a park.

"The first time they turned on the fountain, we thought a water main had broken," said Sterling Johnson's wife, Joan.

Leslie Reeves, 18, who said De Villagran used to allow neighborhood children to play soccer on her lawn, said: "We always think it's raining here because of the fountains."

The hundreds of trees on the property are lit up at night by concealed lamps, creating what Reeves called a "very pretty" effect, although she added that it could also be "very spooky."

An Olympic-size swimming pool, lined in marble tiles, is next to the house, and a half-finished tennis court is at one end of the long lawn.

The white stucco house, built in 1913 for lumberman Henry House, has 20 rooms, two libraries and five fireplaces.

Sue Mossman, program director of Pasadena Heritage, a preservation group, said the 10,500-square-foot mansion was designed by Los Angeles architect Sumner Hunt and built at a cost of \$60,000.

Western White House

House's cousin, Col. Edward House, was a close adviser to President Woodrow Wilson, and the mansion has sometimes been called Wilson's Western White House, Mossman said.

Despite its size, one prospective buyer said the house is probably the least attractive part of the estate.

Some rooms, including a small library on the main floor with original wood-paneled walls, have been sumptuously restored. But others, such as the billiard room with its 14-foot-high ceiling covered with a painting of pop stars, clash with the turn-of-the-century

decor of the rest of the house.

"One person's eyesore is another's beauty," Levine said.

The property also includes four servants' rooms and a garage with chauffeurs' quarters that is as big as a small house.

Levine said that after a 20% down payment, the mortgage, insurance and maintenance will cost about \$28,000 a month, including about \$4,000 a month for water, electricity and the three full-time gardeners who maintain the grounds.

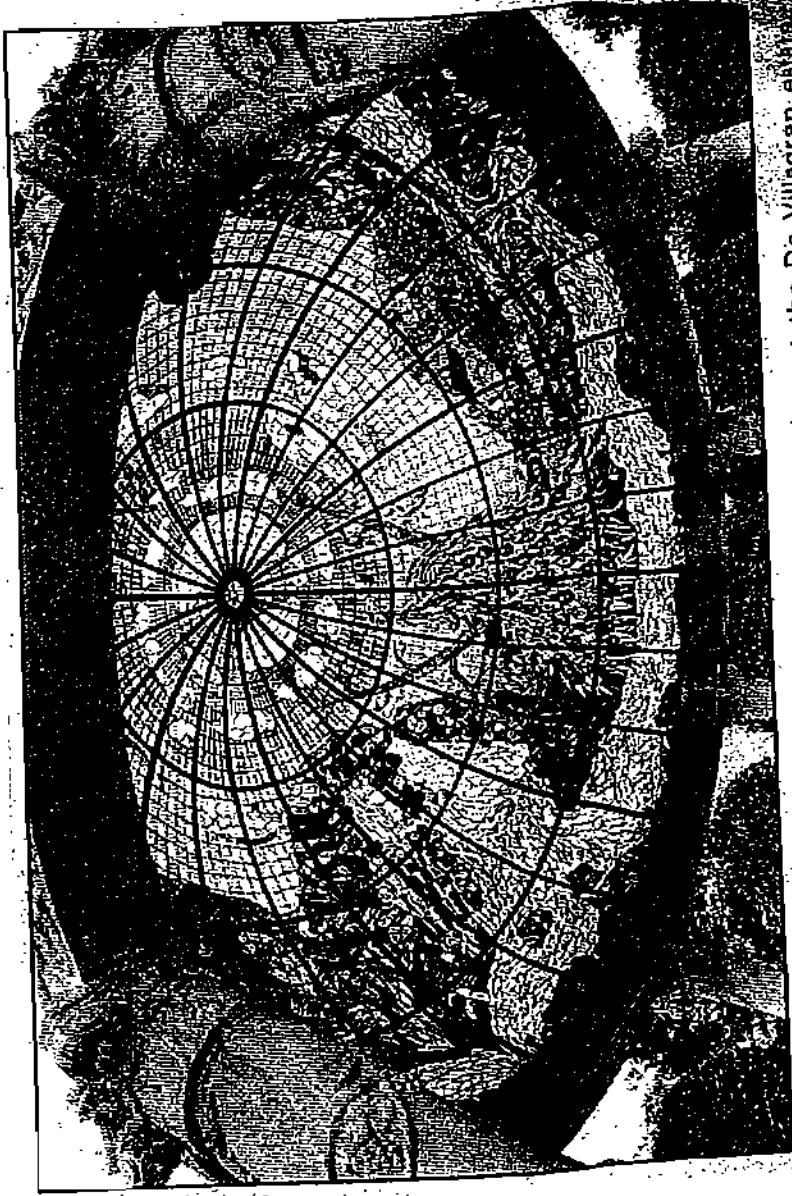
Levine said that this may sound like a lot, but that anyone who makes about \$800,000 a year would qualify for a loan for the estate.

He added that there is apparently no shortage of people in that salary range, and that he showed the house to about 15 qualified buyers.

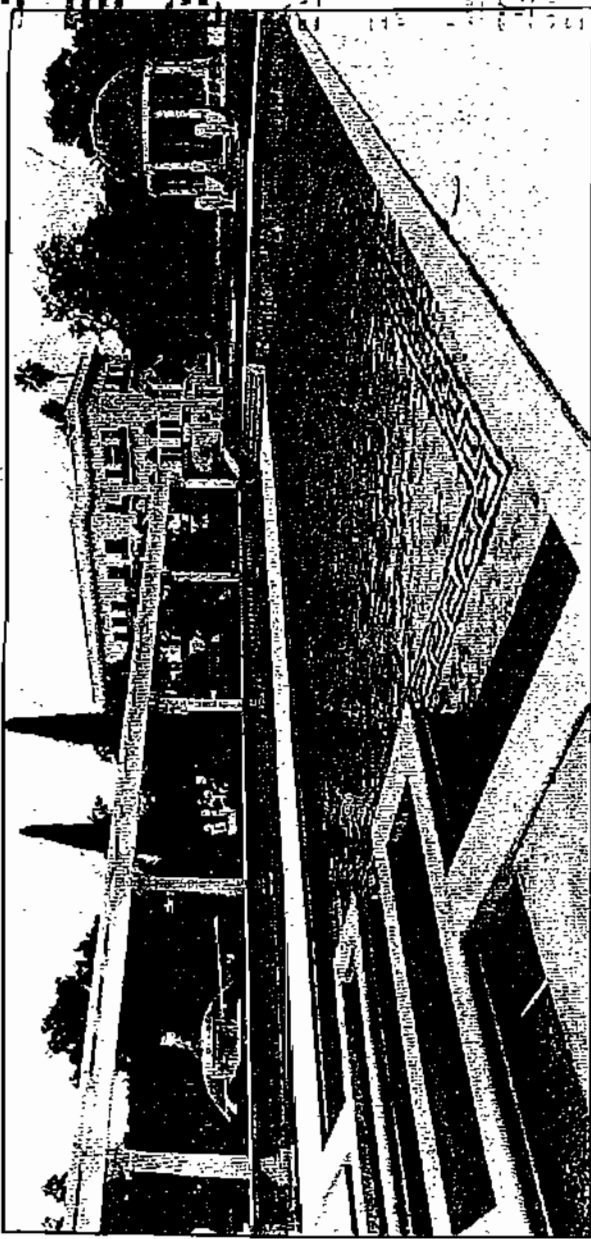
"It's amazing," he said. "I don't know where they all come from."

Levine said the house was on the market for only two weeks before an offer was made.

"It was easy to sell because it was priced right," he said. "I enjoyed the hell out of this. It was a real thrill."



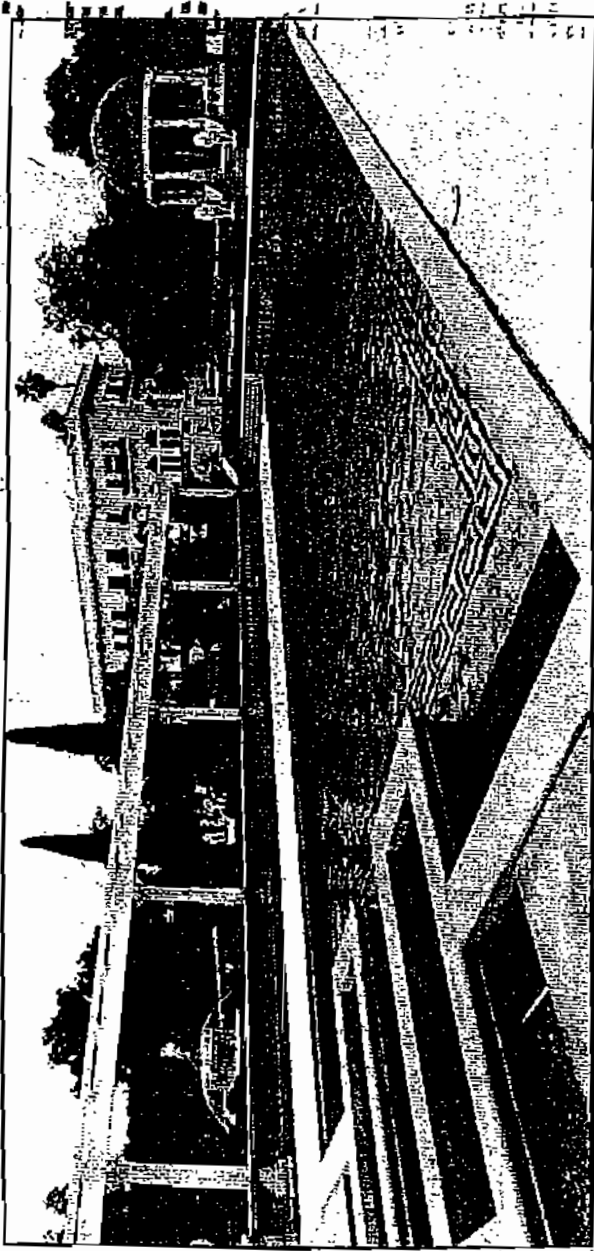
Stained-glass dome surmounts one of the two gazebos at the De Villagran estate.



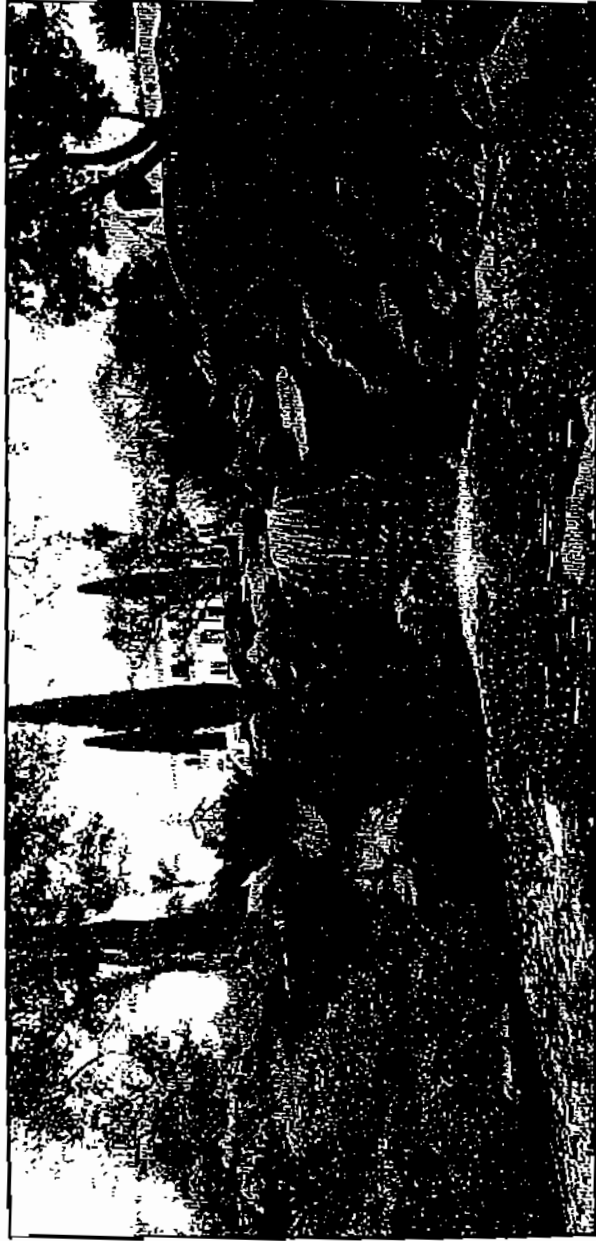
LOU MACK / Los Angeles Times
Olympic-size swimming pool is just one of the amenities of the 4.5-acre De Villagran estate.



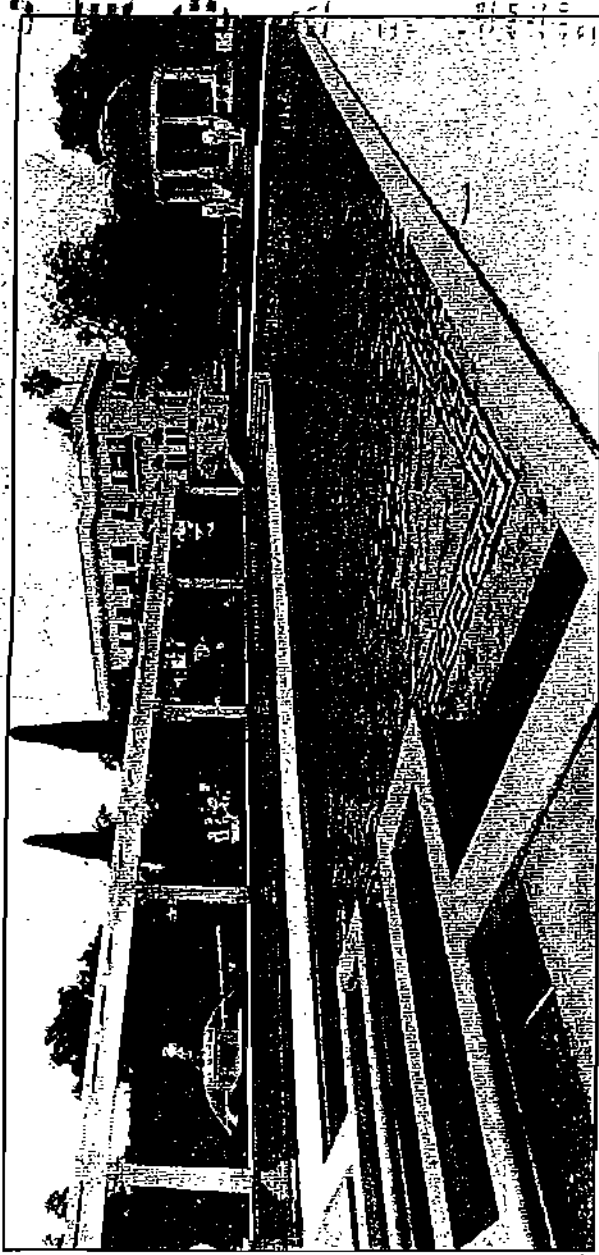
Pond with waterfall in the backyard of the mansion is referred to by neighbors as "the lake."



LOU MACK / Los Angeles Times
Olympic-size swimming pool is just one of the amenities of the 4.5-acre De Villagran estate.



Pond with waterfall in the backyard of the mansion is referred to by neighbors as "the lake."



100 MACK / Los Angeles Times
Olympic-size swimming pool is just one of the amenities of the 4.5-acre De Villagran estate



Accessed to by neighbors as the lake

Money was no object, and with that in mind . . .

Villagrans built a dream at creditors' expense

By KATHY BRAIDHILL
Staff Writer

There won't be any stained glass gazebos where Dovie Beams de Villagran is going.

Her cell at the federal prison will have no antiques, no fountains, no Italian statues, no exotic trees.

De Villagran, the former mistress of deposed Philippine President Ferdinand E. Marcos who squandered millions of dollars on luxury add-ons to her Pasadena mansion, begins serving

her 8-year prison term this week.

De Villagran, 55, and her husband, Sergio Villagran, 51, convicted of defrauding 13 banks of \$18 million, are leaving behind the millionaire's mansion they once owned on seven rolling acres in Pasadena, equipped with a \$500,000 marble pool, an elaborate network of fountains, a koi-stocked lake and a small fortune in flowers and rare trees.

The collapse in bankruptcy of de Villagran's real estate empire of 27 properties in turn wrought financial hard-

ship on many self-employed contractors who labored for months to shape the grounds of the palatial Pasadena estate into a luxurious fantasyland.

The 13 banks were the biggest losers, including Bank of America, whose losses exceeded \$1 million.

But the small contractors who catered to the couple's extravagant — and sometimes quirky — tastes were stuck with unpaid bills, forcing some to borrow to stay solvent.

"I had to refinance my house," said Bill Davis of Davis Construction Co.,

saddled with a \$12,000 debt for detailed patio woodwork and a Douglas fir grape arbor stretching several hundred feet from the pool.

"It was very difficult," he said. "I'm still paying it off."

Phil Melito of Sunrise Corp. bought thousands of dollars worth of plants — passing along his 20 percent discount from the nursery — then was not paid for his work.

Stuck with a \$32,000 bill, Melito talked the nursery into absorbing \$10,000, then got a loan for the rest.

"It really put me in a bind," he said.

Melito and Davis, like many other business people, received partial payment for their work up to the time the couple declared bankruptcy Feb. 26, 1986.

Bankruptcy trustee James Stang said the creditors will receive between five and seven cents on the dollar, according to a plan he will submit to a bankruptcy judge for approval.

Pasadena Star-News
January 11, 1988; p. A-3

continued...

Stang said the couple owes more than 60 creditors \$23 million, including 17 charged-to-the-limit bank credit card accounts, gas and phone bills and credit cards for stores such as Saks Fifth Avenue and Sears.

The couple's mansion was filled with antiques, rare art and jewelry, but the most conspicuous consumption appeared on the grounds, where contractors estimated \$3 million was lavished on landscaping and plant material alone.

With as many as 50 laborers working on the grounds at a time — as well as three full-time gardeners — Sergio Villagran held weekly meetings to coordinate the complex project.

Although most of the contractors dealt exclusively with Sergio Villagran, both Sergio and Dovie watched the elaborate project closely, spending money feverishly on the finest materials and demanding satisfaction of every whim.

"They didn't hold back on any type of landscaping. Everything was first-class," said Nick Sampogna, who worked on the Villagran grounds for months.

For example, all of the plants — azaleas, camellias and shrubbery — had to touch each other, leaving little if no dirt visible.

Sampogna said. At one point, Sergio Villagran, apparently unsure how to dress up gutters and downspouts, was skeptical of a \$5,000 job by Alhambra Sheet Metal, according to manager Dave Lattery.

"Sergio tried to put more into it than it was," Slattery said. "He said, 'We're not paying you enough,' like we didn't charge enough. It's fun to find people like that."

Sampogna and his workers planted thousands of azaleas, which soon bloomed in a colorful burst of red, white, pink and purple blossoms.

De Villagran immediately ordered Sampogna to remove all azaleas with white blossoms because white reminded her of death, Sampogna recalled.

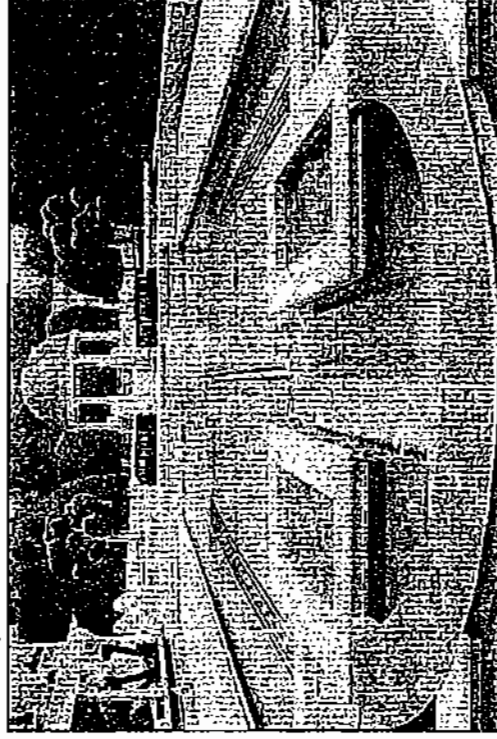
The flowers were removed and replaced at a cost of several thousand dollars, Sampogna said.

"A lot of times Sergio or Dovie would do that," Sampogna said. "They'd say, 'I don't like it,' and we'd take it out. The whole thing was not like a normal job."

After sections of green grass had been painstakingly placed on the enormous lawn, de Villagran decided that she wanted a rose garden in the middle.

"So we had to dig out an area and put in a rose garden," Sampogna said.

The Villagrans' money-is-no-object philosophy was employed



VISIONS OF GLORY

At the height of their wealth, Sergio Villagran and Dovie Beams de Villagran lavished hundreds of thousands of dollars on their palatial Pasadena estate. Above, the pool patterned after the one at William Randolph Hearst's mountaintop castle; right, a statue of Neptune, below, a handmade pond with huge rocks imported from Sacramento.

Star-News file photos



grandiosely in the \$500,000 swimming pool of impurified Mexican green and white marble, adorned with a Grecian inlay design.

Taking a year to build by hand, it was designed after the pool at Hearst Castle, said Fred Haug, owner of Cleopatra Pools, who built it.

"It was a great job," Haug said. "How many people do you know can build a half-million-

dollar pool?"

In search of the ultimate in lawn decor, Sergio Villagran flew to Italy and brought back the finest statues and fountains.

He also bought stone columns on which to build the two gazebos, estimated to cost \$30,000 apiece, said Haug, who became friends with the couple. He said he did about \$1 million worth of work for them and is not unhappy that \$7,800 remains unpaid.

Each of the stained-glass domes topping the gazebos was designed and handmade on the property by two men from Mexico, said Haug, who watched the work in progress.

The gazebo floors were hand-cut, inlaid marble.

One thing the couple insisted on was a natural look to the landscaping.

To achieve that, they bought eight to ten full-grown trees at \$5,000 to \$8,000 each — coral, Italian cypress, a strain of ficus and fruit-bearing guava.

Plant material to cover the enormous grounds was trucked in on semi-tractor trailers.

A dozen oak trees already on the property were uprooted and replanted — at a cost of \$10,000 to \$12,000 each — to highlight the landscaping, according to Jim Miller of Miller Tree Service.

Moss-covered boulders weighing three to four tons each were brought in from Sacramento and hoisted by a 35-ton crane to the 6,000-square-foot, manmade lake and 10-foot waterfall.

The mossy boulders were selected specifically because the Villagrans didn't want to wait four or five years for moss to grow.

The natural look also extended to lighting, which was strung in the trees to simulate moonlight, said Miller, who installed some of the lights.

The bankruptcy caught many by surprise, including the George L. Throop Co. of Pasadena, which was left with \$13,000 in unpaid hardware and building supply costs.

"We're trying to forget it," said George Throop III.

Other creditors had a tougher time coping with the losses.

"I hope they hang that woman," said Irene Villalobos, co-owner of Villa Construction, which installed specialty masonry and concrete work, including an elaborate driveway.

"She almost put us under."

said Villalobos, whose firm is owed \$27,000 by the Villagrans. "She left us high and dry. I just want my money. It's the first time someone never paid us, and we've been in business 25 years."

"This lady never went with the norm. Everything she wanted was special."

Beyond the pool, the gazebos, the lake, the waterfall, the fountains and the exotic trees, Dovie Beams de Villagran and Sergio Villagran were far from finishing their home improvement project.

"They never got to finish the big pavilion at the end of the pool," Haug said. "That was supposed to have stone columns with a bar, a fireplace and seats all around."

THE WORKERS AND THE BOSS



Employees who worked around Dovie Beams de Villagran, pictured at left, described her as eccentric, moody and ill-tempered.

"She was sort of hard to work with," said Nick Sampogna, who was involved in landscaping the couple's property.

"She'd give everyone hell. We tried to keep workers away from her."

Errol Simonitsch, vice president of Tool Crib, said after one look at de Villagran, he knew who was boss.

"She'd yell at everybody and wear the heck out of them," Simonitsch said. "I thought, this is definitely the person in charge."

No one knew exactly why the couple spent millions on the house, but Sampogna recalls one conversation with Sergio Villagran.

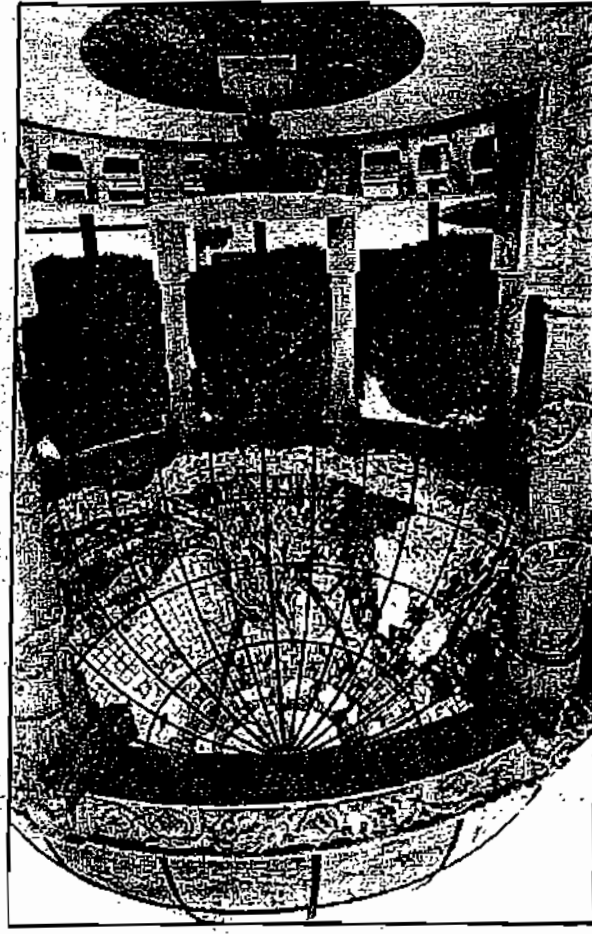
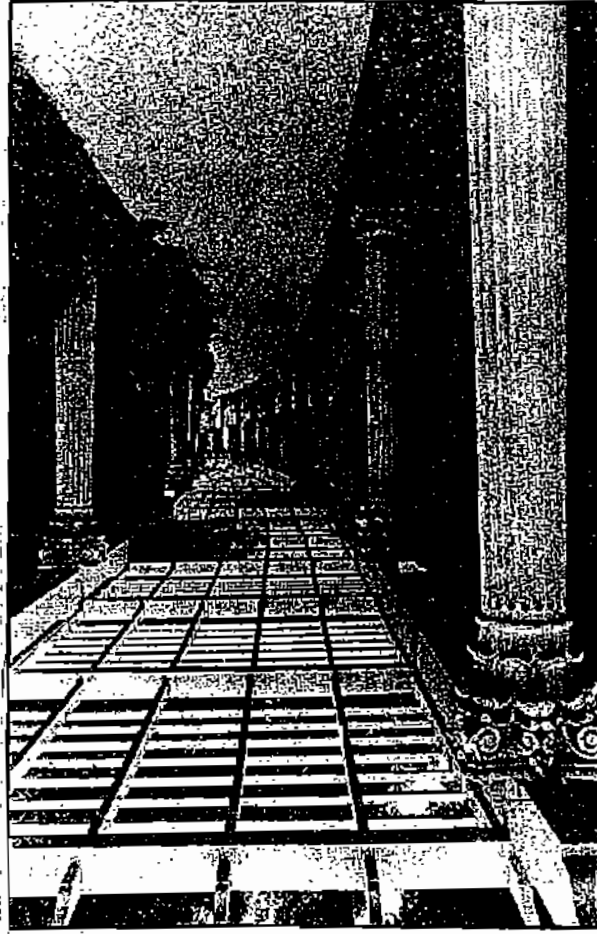
"Sergio said he was going to have the best-looking house around," Sampogna said. "The only thing I can honestly believe was he was out for show."

Another employee, who worked 10 months for de Villagran, recalled when Sergio Villagran called a staff meeting after members of a television crew filming at the house had speculated whether Sergio was the man behind Sergio Valente jeans.

"He said, 'Don't tell them any differently, just let them think I'm the guy behind the jeans empire,'" said Dana Melvin.

"When he left, we all laughed," she added. "It was silly."

— KATHY BRAIDHILL



Fire destroys former de Villagran estate



Ex-Marcos lover's dream palace gutted in blaze

By JOHN FLECK
Staff Writer

PASADENA — While Dove Beams de Villagran sat in a Kentucky federal prison Thursday, the ornate Pasadena mansion she dreamed of as her own personal "Tara" was gutted by a vicious fire that left four smoke-streaked walls and a pile of rubble.

Thirty Pasadena firefighters fought a losing battle against the inferno, hot enough to light a palm tree 30 feet away. It destroyed the mansion made famous by the former B-movie actress-turned lover to Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos-turned bankrupt federal penitentiary inmate.

The fire, as dramatic as the Southern belle's vision of the plantation she tried to create, raced through the second floor of the 75-year-old mansion before firefighters had a chance to stop it.

By the time the blaze was controlled, most of the second floor had disappeared, and the first floor was a charred, water-soaked ruin.

"It just went up like that," said Fire Commander Don Hughes with a snap of his fingers. Officials are not sure of the cause, but they don't suspect arson, said Battalion Chief Milford Fonza.

Pasadena Star-News
September 2, 1988; p. A-1

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Raleigh Souther / Star-News



Walt Mancini / Star-News

A charred balcony crumbles away from the burning structure as flames consume the mansion's upper floor

Yokeno's Nansay Corporation USA bought the house for \$3.2 million last September after de Villagran and her husband, Sergio, went bankrupt and headed for prison on charges of bank fraud.

The fire was reported at 4:23 p.m. by a neighbor, and firefighters from Pasadena's Station 31 on Marengo Avenue knew it would be trouble before they even got there.

Said Wolfgang Schmidt, 45, who was painting a house next door: "I turned around and all of a sudden I saw the black smoke. Everything was engulfed in black smoke."

Schmidt and 21-year-old Nick Ibarra, who was working with him, climbed the home's back fence and raced past de Villagran's stained-glass gazebo, afraid someone might still be inside the house. But by the time they got there, the pall of smoke had burst into a ball of flame.

"From the time we saw the smoke till the time we came running over was maybe 45 seconds," Ibarra said. "It was in flames."

Firefighters tried to work their way inside and up the stairs to fight the blaze from within. But they were driven back by the intense heat, left with nothing to do but pour water in from the outside in a vain attempt to save the historic home.

The fire was a bizarre spectacle in the usually tranquil neighborhood of stately homes and gardens. As two huge ladder trucks poured water into the second story from above, a fountain some 50 feet away gurgled its water in gentle arcs around a statue of two dancing nymphs.

The imported statuary, the gazebos, the marble pool and the lush landscaping were, said the broker who finally sold the house in 1987, de Villagran's "labor of love and money."

There were rumors in 1986, fueled by Ferdinand Marcos' hasty departure from Manila, that de Villagran's wealth was somehow connected to her affair in the 1960s with the Philippine leader.

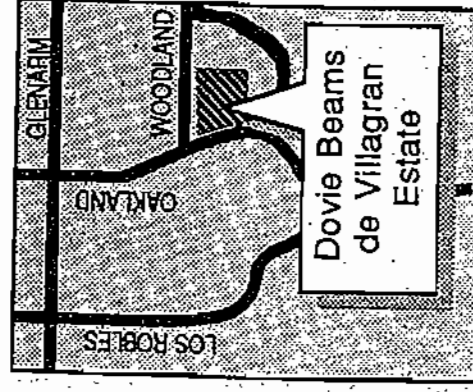
But the rumors of money funneling never bore out. The millions ran out as the gardens were being completed, and the house was left stripped and vacant by the time de Villagran's bankruptcy left her on the street last year.

"The garden was beautiful, but the house was just bare bones," said real estate broker Ada Jones, who toured the mansion when it was put on the market.

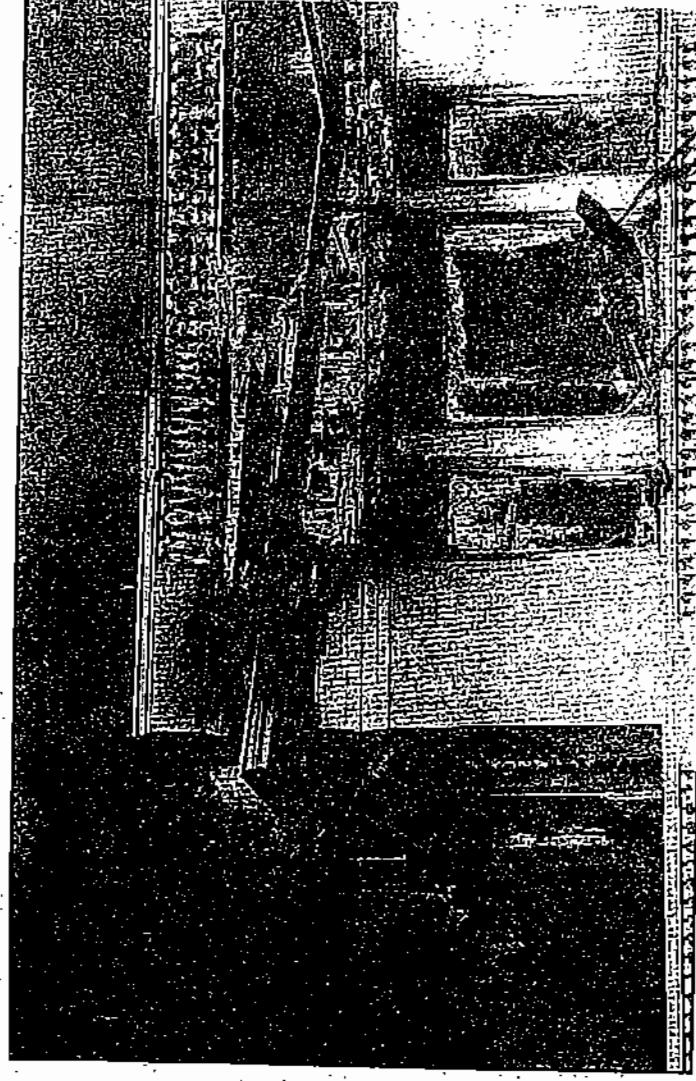
De Villagran and her husband, Sergio, both ended up in federal prison for \$18 million worth of bank fraud committed in assembling an ephemeral real estate empire.

Staff writers Jennifer Rowland and Jim Timmermann contributed to this story.

Above, firefighters battle the flames from all sides, but, the Pasadena mansion's upper level was still engulfed, right



Graphic by Patrick Olsen / Star-News

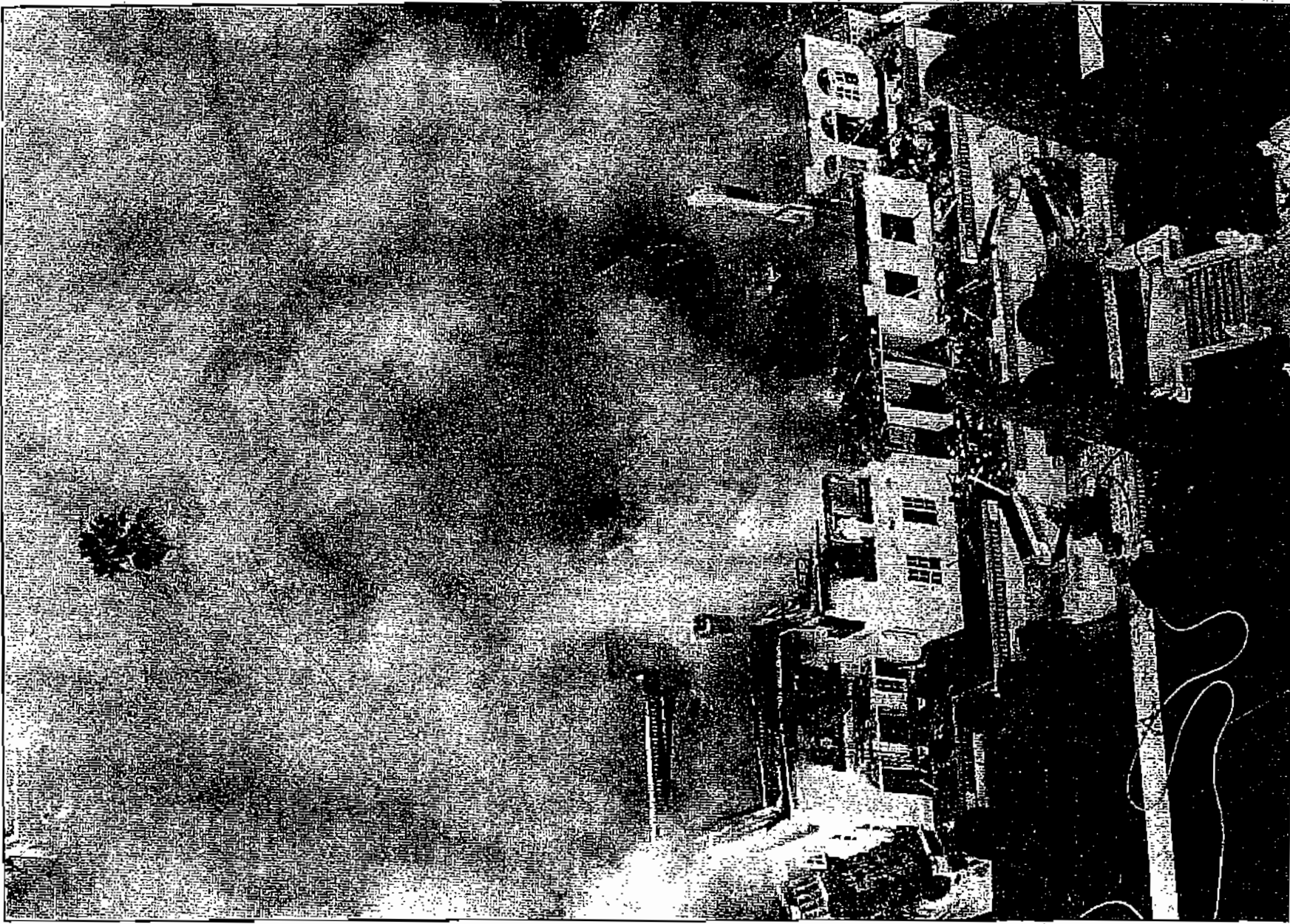


Walt Mancini / Star-News

Firefighter Mike Brilla was injured when he got his foot stuck in a ladder. He was reported in good condition Thursday evening at Huntington Memorial Hospital. Another firefighter, Randy Foust, suffered a minor back injury.

The South Oakland Avenue home, perched on a dramatically landscaped five-acre estate, was vacant except for several workmen when the fire broke out. It was being renovated for Ken Yokeno, the uncle of the owner, Japanese investor Eric Yokeno, according to John Maloney, the project's architect.

Firefighters said the exposed woodwork and torn out walls helped the fire to spread faster and made it harder to fight.



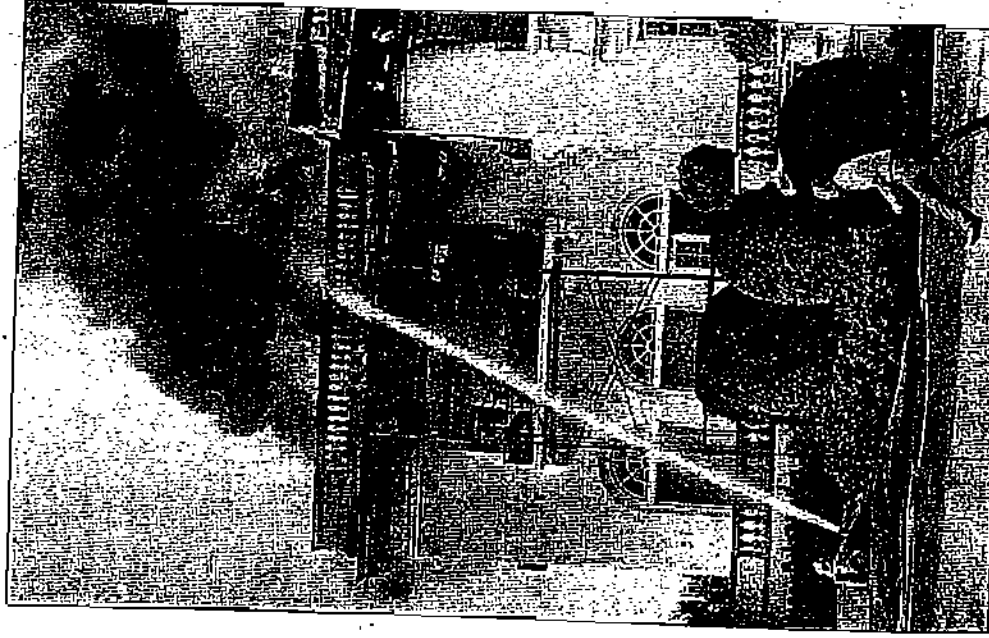
Pasadena landmark razed—Fire swept through the 30-room, 10,000-square-foot mansion once owned by Dovie Beams de Villagran, who claimed she had been the

mistress of deposed Philippines President Ferdinand E. Marcos. Damage was estimated at \$3 million to the home at 1284 S. Oakland Ave. Fire officials said it was being renovated.

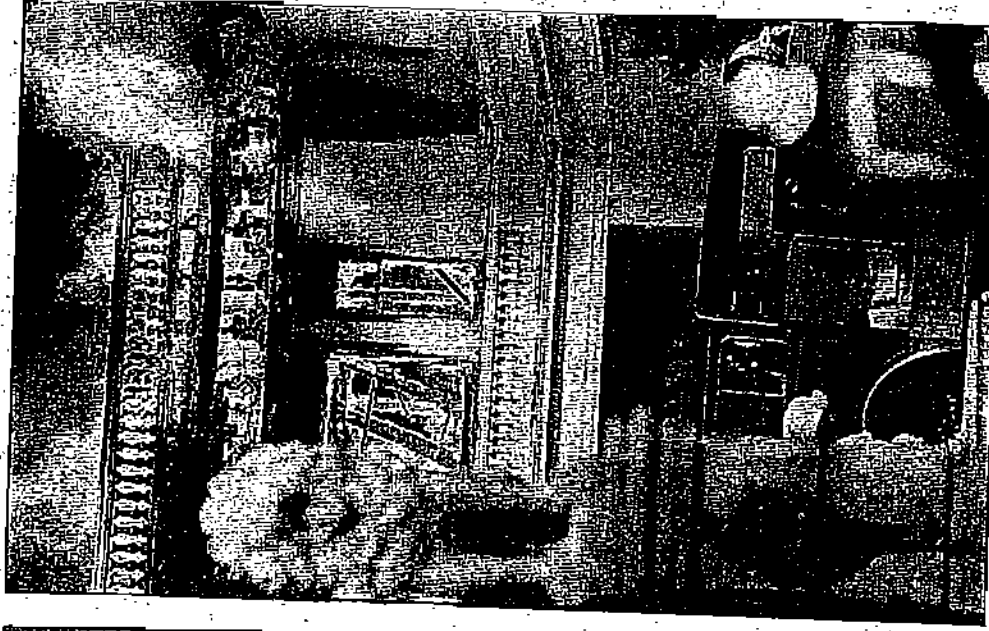
MIKE MEADOWS / Los Angeles Times

Los Angeles Times
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EUGENE TANNER / Los Angeles Times



EUGENE TANNER / Los Angeles Times

Intense flames, heat hindered fire crew

By JOHN FLECK
Staff Writer

PASADENA — "Real hot."

Pasadena Fire Captain Byron Puett stood on the lawn of Dovie Beams de Villagran's former house early Thursday evening, trying to describe the inferno firefighters found when they arrived.

He paused for a moment, swallowing a small box of cranberry-grape juice in one long slug.

Behind him, two of his colleagues continued to pour water on the cooling rubble.

"There was way too much fire," Puett recalled. "It was taking over."

Puett and four of his staff from Station

The second goal was to stop the fire by knocking it down from within. But when the crew got inside, Puett quickly realized it was already too late.

"The fire was too intense," he said. "Our lines weren't doing much of anything."

The Station 31 crew quickly called for help, and a third alarm was sounded at 4:43 p.m.

As firefighters drove to the scene, they already knew they were in trouble.

31 on Marengo Avenue got the first call Thursday afternoon. When they arrived, smoke was pouring out of the building and flames already were breaking through the roof.

They strapped on face masks and air tanks, grabbed three hoses and charged up the stairs.

The house was empty, taking care of the firefighters' first goal: to save lives.

"It was a header (a head of thick, black smoke)," said one of Station 31's firefighters, as he manned the pumper truck parked in the driveway.

And when the roof started caving in, Puett and his men beat a hasty retreat.

How hot was it?

"When we came back out, that palm tree," he said quietly, pointing to a tree across the driveway and about 30 feet from the flaming house, "was starting to smoke."



Scott Weisling / for the Star-N

Firefighter Mike Brilla injured his foot on a ladder

Pasadena Star-News

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Ashes echo ruins of Dovie's life

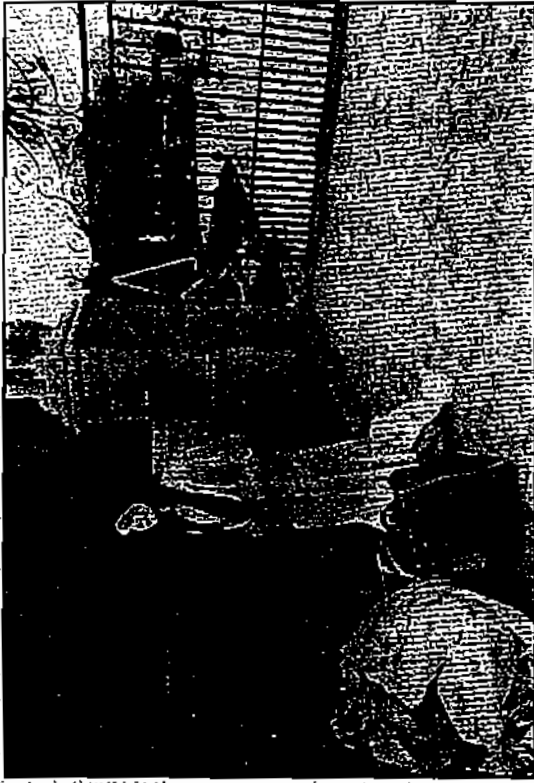
By KATHY BRAIDHILL
Staff Writer

Once upon a time, an extravagant, exotic Southern belle lived lavishly in her mansion.

Dovie Beams de Villagran, whose life went up in smoke after her conviction on federal bank fraud charges, eventually was forced to trade her \$3.2 million Pasadena mansion for a 12-foot federal prison cell.

And now her former six-bedroom, six-bathroom spread has been turned to toast after a flash fire Thursday.

The colorful former B-movie actress from Nashville appeared in "Wild Wheels," "Marharika" and other forgettable flicks. She met then-Philippine President Ferdinand E. Marcos when filming a movie in his country during the 1960s and later claimed the infamous leader was her lover. The story was widely circulated in the Philippines, including the tale of how she was driven from the country by hit men hired by the presi-



Star-News file photo

Dovie Beams de Villagran being evicted in March 1987

dent's wife, Imelda.

The would-be star moved into the Pasadena mansion in 1976. But 11 years later came her conviction on federal charges of defrauding banks out of \$18 million in loans. She is now serving an eight-year prison term.

Her husband, Sergio Villag-

ran, pleaded guilty to the charges and is serving a five-year sentence.

De Villagran's connection to Marcos created national publicity in 1986. On the day Marcos fled the Philippines, the de Villagran and her husband declared bankruptcy, fueling rumors that Marcos

had somehow funneled Philippine funds through his former paramour.

An exotic beauty who maintained her waist-length locks as a 56-year-old, de Villagran maintained in an interview one year ago that she never took a dime from Marcos.

In fact, testimony and records at her trial showed that the couple used a sham auto export company — and the fancy grounds of the mansion — to convince more than a dozen banks to loan them millions of dollars.

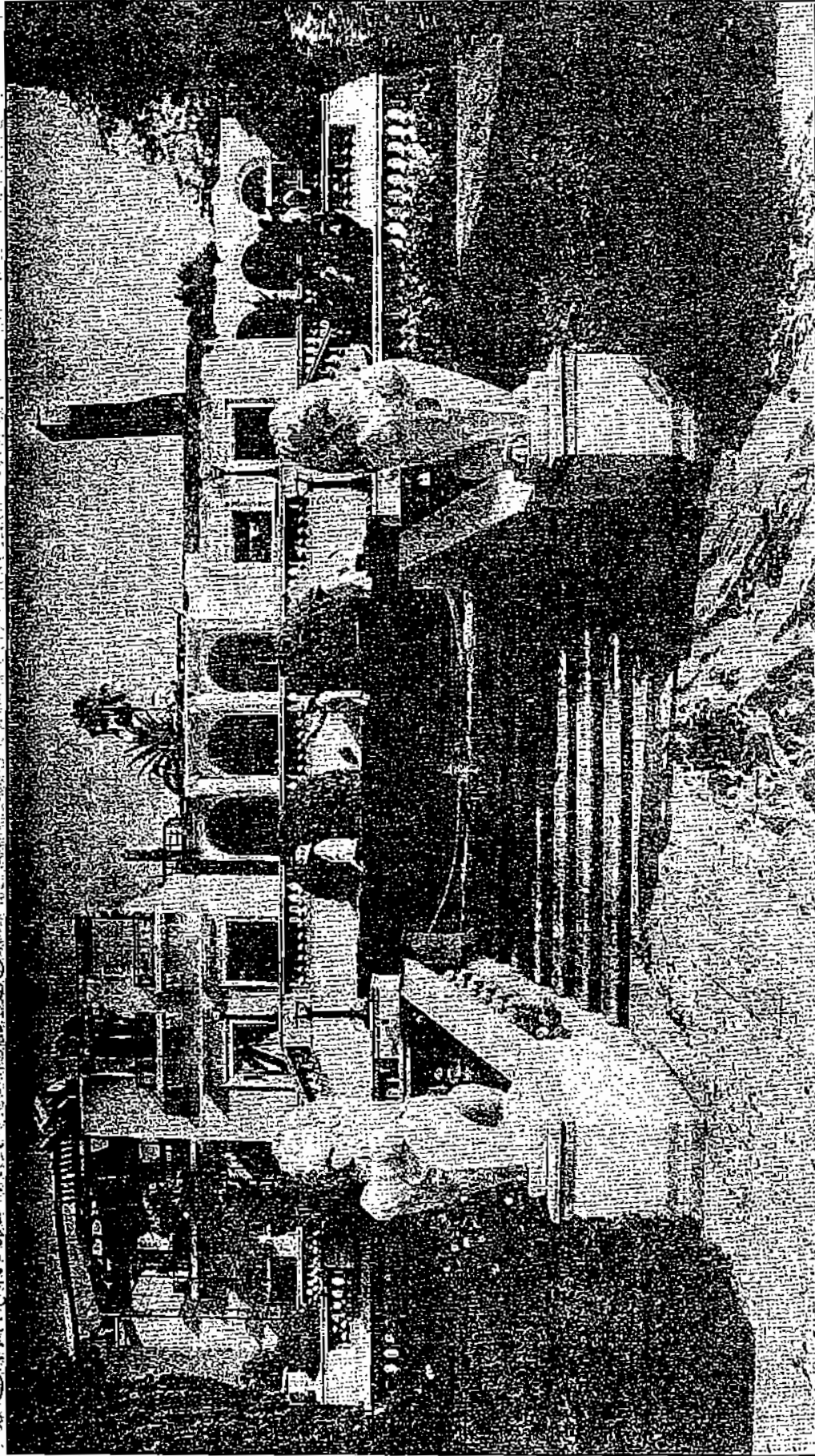
Much of the money was spent on elaborate fountains, landscaping, statues, rare art, luxury cars, a \$500,000 marble pool modeled after the famous one at Hearst Castle, exotic trees and plants, authentic moss-covered boulders for a man-made lake and koi for a separate pond.

To suit her whims, tree surgeons moved huge oaks from one location to another on the property and carved rose gardens where she once had wanted a lawn.

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BEAUTY AND THE BLAZE

PASADENA STAR-NEWS A-1 SEP 3 1988



Wall Mancini / Star-News

Firefighters survey fire damage to the former estate of Dovie Beams de Villagrans Friday, while two ornate lions stand guard

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De Villagran mourns loss of estate — again

By KATHY BRAIDHILL
Staff Writer

Locked up in Lexington, Ky., Dovie Beams de Villagran was mortified that the palatial Pasadena estate she once hoped would be a museum was left a charred crust in a fast, furious fire.

"I don't have to tell you how much I loved it," she said Friday, speaking from the warden's office at the federal prison where she is

serving an eight-year sentence.

"I tell you, I am so shocked and so heartbroken. I feel like I've lost it for the second time. And I believe it was my servants who were still living in the rest of the house."

Arson has been ruled out as the cause of Thursday's evening blaze that leveled the \$3.2 million mansion, said Milford Fonza of the Pasadena Fire Department.

"It's pure speculation at this point, but it's kind of pointing

toward workmen who were there earlier," Fonza said. "It looks like it was accidental," but not an electrical fire.

The investigation is expected to be wrapped up by Tuesday or Wednesday.

The former B-movie actress, 56, was evicted from the five-acre mansion in 1987, a year after declaring bankruptcy on the same day that deposed Philippine President Ferdinand E. Marcos

fled his country.

The simultaneous actions raised eyebrows on all sides of the Pacific because it was widely believed in the Philippines that De Villagran was Marcos' lover during the late 1960s and early 1970s.

The two met when De Villagran was filming a movie there.

As the story goes, De Villagran



herself left the country one step ahead of hitmen allegedly hired by Marcos' wife, Imelda.

She moved into the 1913 mansion in 1976 and eventually poured at least \$3 million — including fraudulent loan money — into exotic landscaping, artwork, Italian statues and a \$500,000 marble pool.

"It was there for everyone else," De Villagran said Friday. "It was historical, and I always thought that one day it would be a museum, so this is especially hard for me to hear."

She was convicted in 1987 of bank and bankruptcy fraud.

Her husband pled guilty to the charges. He is serving a five-year sentence in Northern California and they correspond, she said.

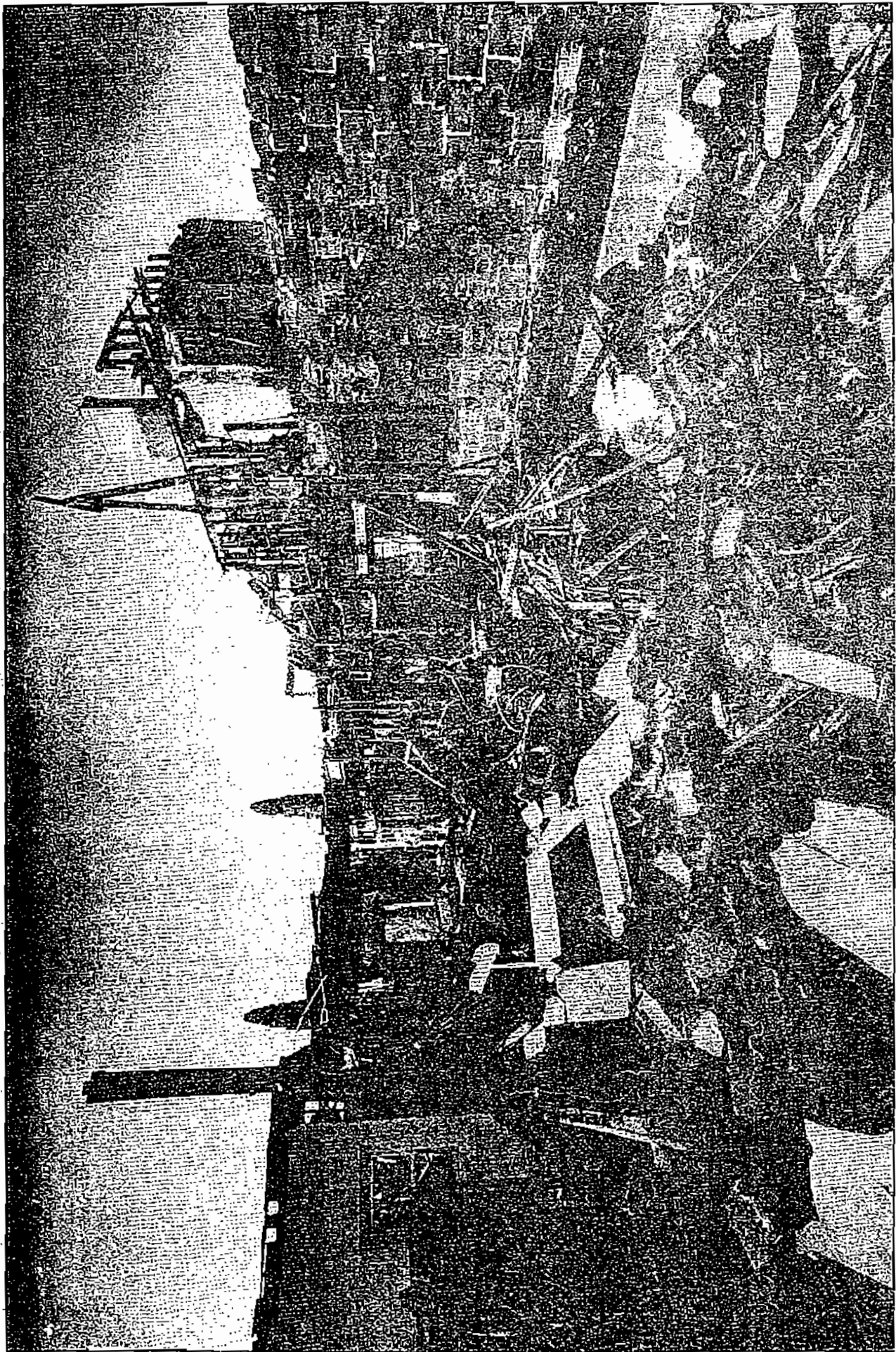
De Villagran is now in charge of accounts receivable in the business office of the prison on a 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. shift.

De Villagran was curious about how the mansion fire broke out, where it started and whether the cause of the blaze was of natural causes.

"That's so unbelievable," she said. "It's as if my heart is just breaking open."

De Villagran abruptly broke off the phone conversation.

"Sorry, I have to go back to the count," she said, referring to the 8 p.m. daily count of prisoners.

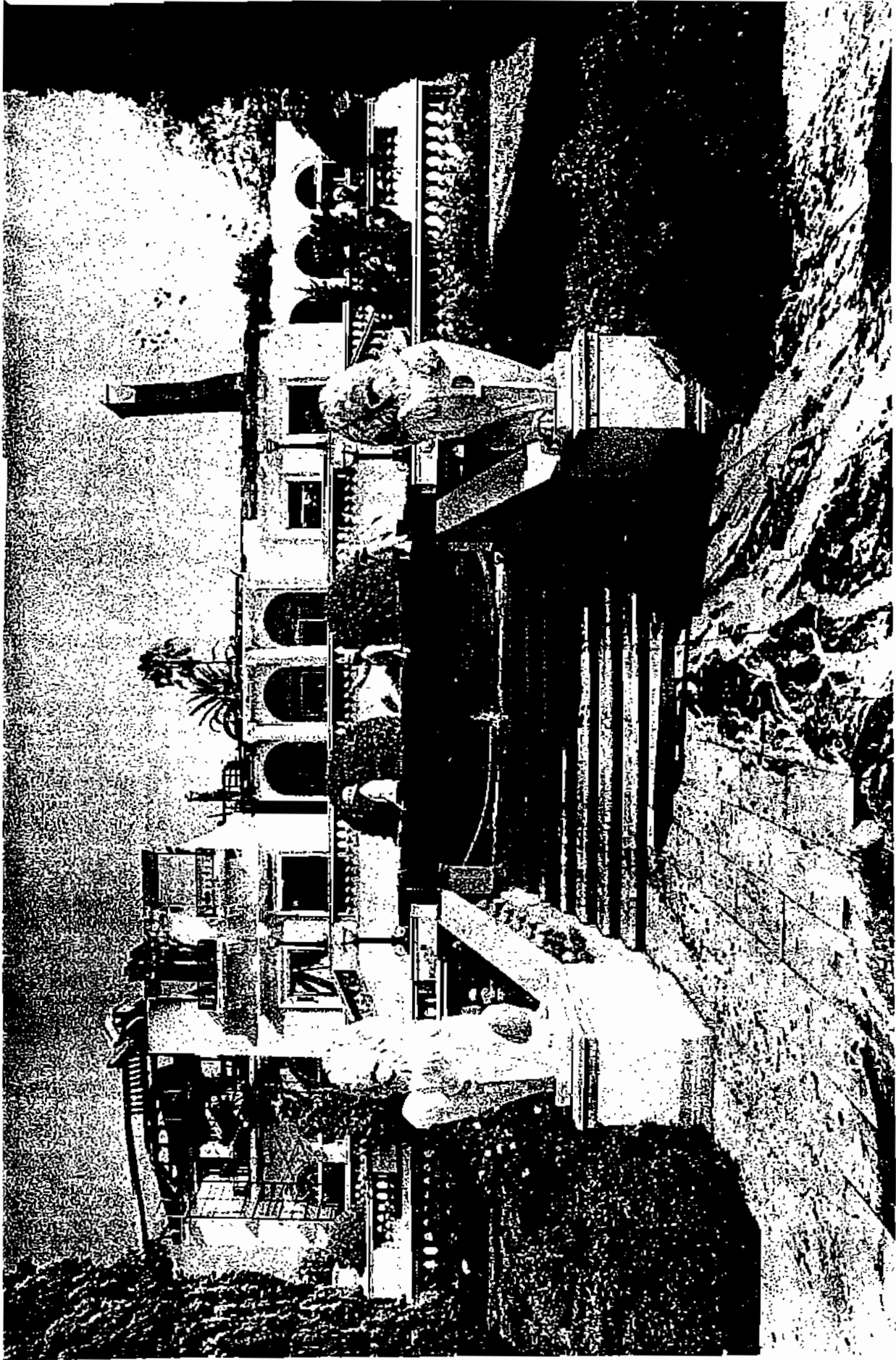


Photos by Walt Mancini / Star-News

Aftermath of Thursday's fire at the former estate of Dovie Beams de Villagran, who is serving an eight-year prison sentence



FROM CITY FILES



From: Pasadena Star-News photo archives
PASADENA MUSEUM OF HISTORY

Gutted mansion to be rebuilt, owner says

STAR NEWS A-1 - 9-9-88

De Villagran's ex-estate to be
'much better,' developer says

By MICHAEL J. YBARRA
Staff Writer

PASADENA — A plumber's torch ignited a fire that smoldered for three hours before erupting into the blaze that blackened the white walls of Dovie Beams de Villagran's former estate and caused an estimated \$3.5 million in damage, fire officials said Thursday.

Workers had been soldering pipes on the second floor last week and touched off a small fire that went unnoticed until after they left, when a caretaker spotted smoke, fire investigator Bob Eisele said.

Thinking it was dust from the construction, the unidentified man delayed calling the fire department for 15 minutes.

The fire was a common accident, Eisele said, which resulted in uncommon destruction.

"I probably would have overlooked it," he said of the smoke.

The cost to build a similar house would be \$4 million to \$6 million, Eisele said.

Thursday, an insurance investigator from Underwriter's Adjusters, of Spokane, Wash., toured the ash-filled remains, still smelling of soot, and agreed on the cause of the fire, Eisele said.

The property had full fire insurance coverage and its charred, roofless shell will be razed and rebuilt as soon as the site can be cleared, said Eric Yokeno, president of Nansay Corp. USA, which owns the 4.6-acre lot.

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Yokeno at first refused to say if the Santa Monica investment company had any plans for the site. But later he said he was leaning toward rebuilding, and added that construction would start as soon as possible.

The house was being renovated for Yokeno's uncle, Ken Yokeno, chairman of Nansay.

"If a house is built there, it will be much better," Yokeno said.

Purchased by Nansay for \$3.2

million dollars in bankruptcy proceedings a year ago, and surrounded by lush gardens and filled with costly statuary, the estate was the most expensive house ever sold in the San Gabriel Valley at the time.

Starting when she brought the house in 1976, de Villagran, a former B-movie actress who claimed to have been the lover of deposed Philippine President Ferdinand E. Marcos, kept landscape designers jumping for 11 years as she continually remodeled the estate.

However, her dreams were dashed when she was sentenced to federal prison for bilking 13 financial institutions out of more than \$18 million.

As De Villagran's sat in prison, her former house was devastated September 1. With its insides stripped away for renovation, the house was "at the point most susceptible to fire," Eisele said.

Thirty firefighters battled unsuccessfully to save the six-bedroom, six-bathroom mansion, designed by Los Angeles

architect Sumner Hunt.

The house was history by the time firefighters arrived.

"By then it was too late," Eisele said.

For now, the house's owners have plans that even de Villagran might envy.

Extensive landscaping, halted after \$3 million worth of work when de Villagran's life began to crumble, will be completed, Yokeno said.

"We are leaning toward building another landmark," he said. "Only better."



Photos by Walt Mancini / Star-News

Bulldozers knock down the remains of South Oakland Avenue estate that burned a year ago

Ruins of historic mansion razed

By JOHN FLECK
Staff Writer

PASADENA — Demolition began Wednesday on the remains of the South Oakland Avenue mansion formerly owned by Dovie Beams de Villagran, nearly a year after the stately home burned in a spectacular fire.

Nansay Corp. USA, the Japanese-owned firm that bought the 4.6-acre estate, received formal approval from the city's Cultural Heritage Commission on Aug. 7 to demolish the gutted structure and received on Aug. 9 a city building permit required for a construction project on



De Villagrans' additions to 1913 estate included statuary, gazebos

Pasadena Star-News
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the site.

The home went up in flames Sept. 1, 1988. The blaze sent smoke billowing over southern Pasadena and San Marino and sent two firefighters to the hospital with minor injuries.

The home, designed in 1913 by noted Pasadena architect

Sumner Hunt for Texas lumberman Henry House, was owned from 1976 to 1987 by de Villagran, self-professed former paragon to deposed Philippine dictator Ferdinand Marcos.

De Villagran and her husband, Sergio, lavished millions on the property, importing statuary and building ornate gazebos in the gardens surrounding

the home before losing it in bankruptcy proceedings in 1987.

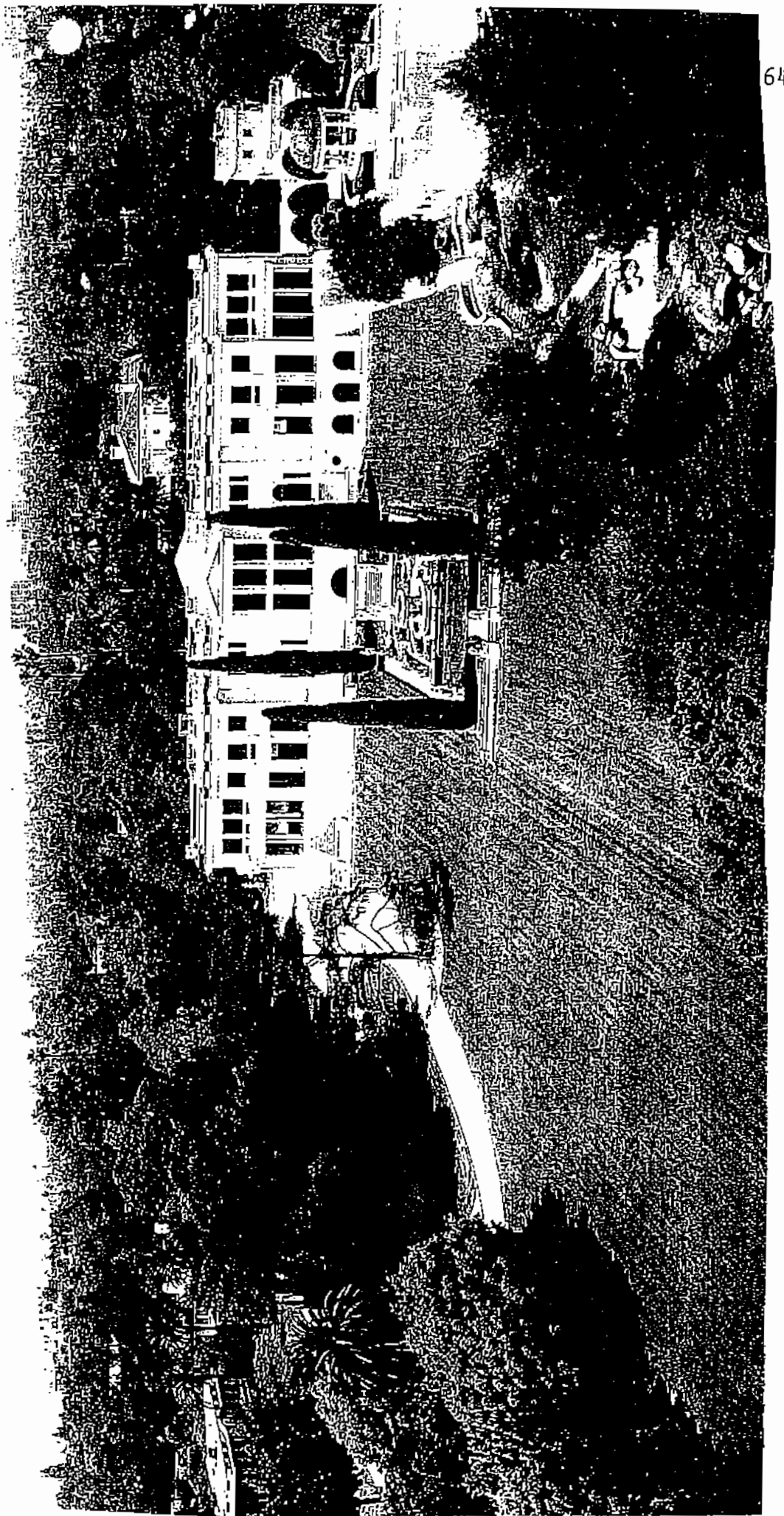
Both the de Villagrans were convicted in 1987 of tax fraud. Dovie Beams de Villagran now is serving an eight-year sentence in the Federal Correctional Institution in Alderson, W. Va. Sergio de Villagran also is serv-

ing a prison term.

Nansay bought the property in December 1987 for \$3.9 million, according to public records.

City officials said Nansay executives plan to build a new house on the site for use by company executives. Nansay officials could not be reached for comment on their plans.

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