

APPLICATION FOR REGISTRATION OF HISTORICAL LANDMARK

Name of Proposed Landmark Forestiere Underground Gardens

Location 5021 West Shaw Avenue

Fresno, California

County Fresno

Name and Address of Landowner upon Whose Property Landmark is Proposed _____

R. Ricardo Forestiere, 5021 W. Shaw Ave, Fresno, Ca.

Name and Address of Applicant Lorraine Faulks-Forestiere Phone No. (209) 439-7344

629 W. Robinwood, Fresno, Ca. Bus. Phone No. (209)

485-3281

Is this landmark of statewide significance as described in the State of Policy? Yes.

Explain (use extra sheet if necessary):

The underground home and gardens of Baldasare Forestiere in the central San Joaquin Valley is the work of a self-taught designer and builder. It is the only structure of its kind in the state, And is also likely to be the last. The liklihood of such a structure being reduplicated is minimal. Modern contemporary life and the frenetic pace of society preclude its reoccurrence in the foreseeable future.

The Forestiere Undergound Gardens, as it is commonly known, is a testamentary tribute to the harmony and compatibility between man and his envirenment. It exemplifies the degree to which such a reconciliation is possible. Its ecological and educational implications are readily evident. The result is a three-demensional harmonious example of man's peaceful co-existance with his environment. Its cultural and exper-imental aspects graphically illustrate such a concept.

Is bibliography complete? (To enable verification of statements and claims made herein.) Yes, as far as possible.

Is permission of property owner for registration attached? Yes.

Is approval of property owner to place a plaque attached? Yes.

Is proof of reasonable protection for requested landmark attached? Yes.

Are photographs, prints, or drawings (two views) attached? Yes.

BRIEF HISTORY AND DESCRIPTION (Corresponding to one or more items under I, II, or III of the Statement of Policy.)

Under the semi-desert land of the central San Joaquin Valley, Baldasare Forestiere began in the early 1900's (1904-1906) to carve and to sculpt a thoroughly unique and fantastic underground retreat. Between his chores as vineyardist and horticulturist after some forty years, he re-created a piece of the old mediterranean world under a terrain baked and scorched by the summer sun. He fashioned it after a "vision stored in his mind" (Fresno Bee 5-3-24). What resulted is a novel, though perhaps unorthodox, art-form.

The some seven acres of grottos, patios, and garden courts, is adorned with citrus trees, grape pergolas and cascading vines and interconnected with passageways and promenades. It is widely recognized for its originality and uniqueness. Visitors from across the country and from overseas attest that there is nothing quite like it. Visiting architects have attempted to identify it as "terratecture"- an ecological earthen structure with architectural and conservational implications, Visiting artists, sculptors and writers have attempted to describe it as "terrasculpture"- a form of walk-in, walk-through, and walk-around sculpture. Although these terms are not explicitly descriptive, they do assist in describing the underground home and its encircling garden-courts and patios. They do help define the merger of these two conceptual art-formations. There is sufficient evidence inter-related and interdisciplinary harmony.

Acting as his own designer, engineer and builder, Baldasare Forestiere used his creative ability with amazing skill and craftsmanship. He designed just right for light and ventilation. To give support to the great mass of earth and to give permanence to his earthen sculptings, he used the acient column, arch and dome. Hardpan, a native sedimentary rock, together with mortar and concrete was used for structural purposes, textural variety and beautification. Being his own architect, he did not require a blueprint (Fresno Bee 3 23-23); but chose instead to follow creative instincts and aesthetic impulses.

The home and gardens of Baldasare Forestiere are physical manifestations of unique thought processes. They are concrete representations of novel conceptual explorations. They are explorations in the use and control of space and form- by a sculptural process of subtraction. Experiments in the use and control of light and ventilation. Explorations in climatic control and the creation of micro-climates. Experimentation with the contrast and harmony of textures and materials. They are all three-dimensional embodiments of a creative and aesthetic sensitivity. A severe and awesome environment was moderated in the process; and rendered sentient, pleasant and fruitful.

In its totality the underground home and gardens is a physical extension of the lifestyle and personality of Baldasare Forestiere. Conceptually and aesthetically it is a biography of a very unique person. It reflects a thoughly independent and individualistic spirit. It is an imprint of a totally sincere and unpretentious life. It represents in a gentle manner a coming to terms with one's environment.

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BIBLIOGRAPHY: CITE THE BOOKS, RECORDS, AND OTHER AUTHORITIES SUSTAINING THESE FACTS.

C. E. Good, Resort Underground, Fresno Bee, Fresno, California, March 23, 1923.

Thornburn, Joseph. Tunnel Artist Builds Cave Resort. Fresno Bee, Fresno, California. May 3, 1924.

Wampler, Jan. Baldasare Forestiere. Architecture Plus. July-Aug. 1974.

Historic Homes Committee. Heritage Fresno. (Amer. Assoc. of University Women) Pioneer Publishing Co. Fresno, California. 1975.

La Presse. Les Jardins Souterrains de Fresno. La Presse. Canada. Avriél 1976.

Readers Digest Treasures of America. Readers Digest Assn., Inc. Pleasantville, New York. September 1975.

Wampler, Jan. All Their Own. Schenkman Publishing Co. Cambridge, Mass. 1977.

Resource Persons:

Jan Wampler. Harvard Graduate School of Design. Associate Professor of Architecture and Planning. Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Boston, Mass.

Galen Cranz, PhD. Associate Professor College of Environmental Design Department of Architecture. University of California, Berkeley. Berkeley, California.

Malcolm Wells. Ecological Architect. Planner and Consultant on underground architecture and construction. Cherry Hill, New Jersey.

Signature Lucine Pratt Jentura
Date October 12, 1977

This form and all related correspondence is to be sent to the California Historical Landmarks Advisory Committee, Post Office Box 2390, Sacramento, California 95811.

An application must be considered solely on its historic or architectural merits and not for commercial gain, political benefits, or other non-historical reasons.

An individual committee member can advise and counsel an applicant, but all applications must be considered by the full committee meeting in regular session.

PHOTOGRAPHS, PRINTS, AND/OR DRAWINGS (Both recent and historic, if available.)

Fotos enclosed are described as numbered below; (Corresponding to photographs so numbered on the reverse side of each):

- Foto #1. Main entry to underground home and gardens of Baldasare Forestiere. Picture taken circa 1920-21 by W. M. Strother. Donated December 1976. Copy of original.
- Foto #1A. Main entrance to underground home and gardens. View is identical to that of Foto #1. Taken c.1970 and as it appears to date.
- Foto #2. Upper view of Auto Tunnel during construction. Driveway is descending underground to the right in the background. Foto taken c.1920-21 by W. M. Strother. Donated December 1976. Copy of original.
- Foto #3. Passageway at base of main entry leading from earlier living quarters and dining area to Central Patio. Foto by W. M. Strother. Donated December 1976. Taken c.1920-21.
- Foto #4. View from Indoor Patio adjoining Central Patio. Looking through French doors into later dining room and living quarters beyond. Foto by W. M. Strother c. 1920-21. Copy.
- Foto #5. Central Patio looking out from the living quarter apartments and interconnected by passageways and promenades. Foto taken c.1970 and is as appears to date.
- Foto #6. Bedroom Court as viewed from the sleeping alcoves, raised and recessed in the bedrooms. Scene looks out over fish pond cross- by foot bridge to terrace and spice garden. Taken c.1969.
- Foto #7. Entrance to Auto Tunnel at base of gradual descending driveway. Background to Foto#2 upon completion some years later. With Forstiere's landscaping full grown. Picture taken c.1972.
- Foto #8. Baldasare Forestiere standing at side of Main Entry to his underground home and gardens. Picture taken circa 1910-15. He later landscaped the entry ramp with triple tiered steps and landings from the surface to the level of the planter in the center background. Donated by niece, Rose Sacco, February 1977. Copy of original photograph.

Lorraine Faulks Forestiere
Fresno, California
October 12, 1977

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AUTHORIZATION FROM PROPERTY OWNER OF PROPOSED LANDMARK SITE TO THE DEPARTMENT OF
PARKS AND RECREATION FOR NUMBER, REGISTRATION, AND ERECTION OF A HISTORICAL LAND-
MARK.

WE, the undersigned owners of record of the property located at 5021 West Shaw Avenue in Fresno, California in the County of Fresno, more specifically described as:

The Northeast Quarter of the Northeast Quarter of the Northeast Quarter in Section 15, Township 13 South, Range 19 East, Mount Diablo Base and Meridian;

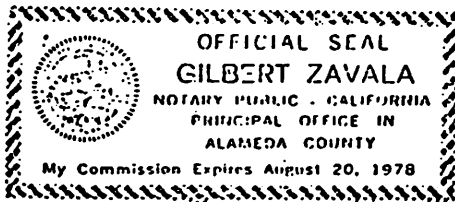
And also commonly known as the FORESTIERE UNDERGROUND GARDENS, do hereby grant to the Department of Parks and Recreation of the State of California the necessary authorization for the assignment of number, registration and erection of an Historical Landmark, as required above.

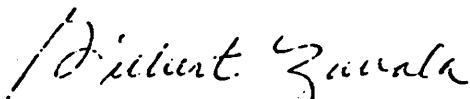
It is also the intent of the undersigned owners of the above property to preserve and maintain the premises primarily as a Memorial Estate; and to perpetuate it as a tribute to the spirit of individualism and vision that distinguished so many of our early forebearers.

Granted in Fresno, California, in the County of Fresno, on this 12 day of October 1977.

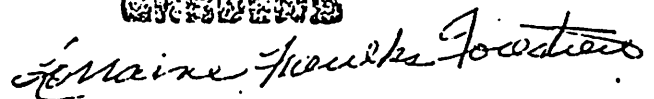

R. Ricardo Forestiere


Joseph C. Forestiere




October 12, 1977





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Forestiére
Underground
Gardens

W. SHAW

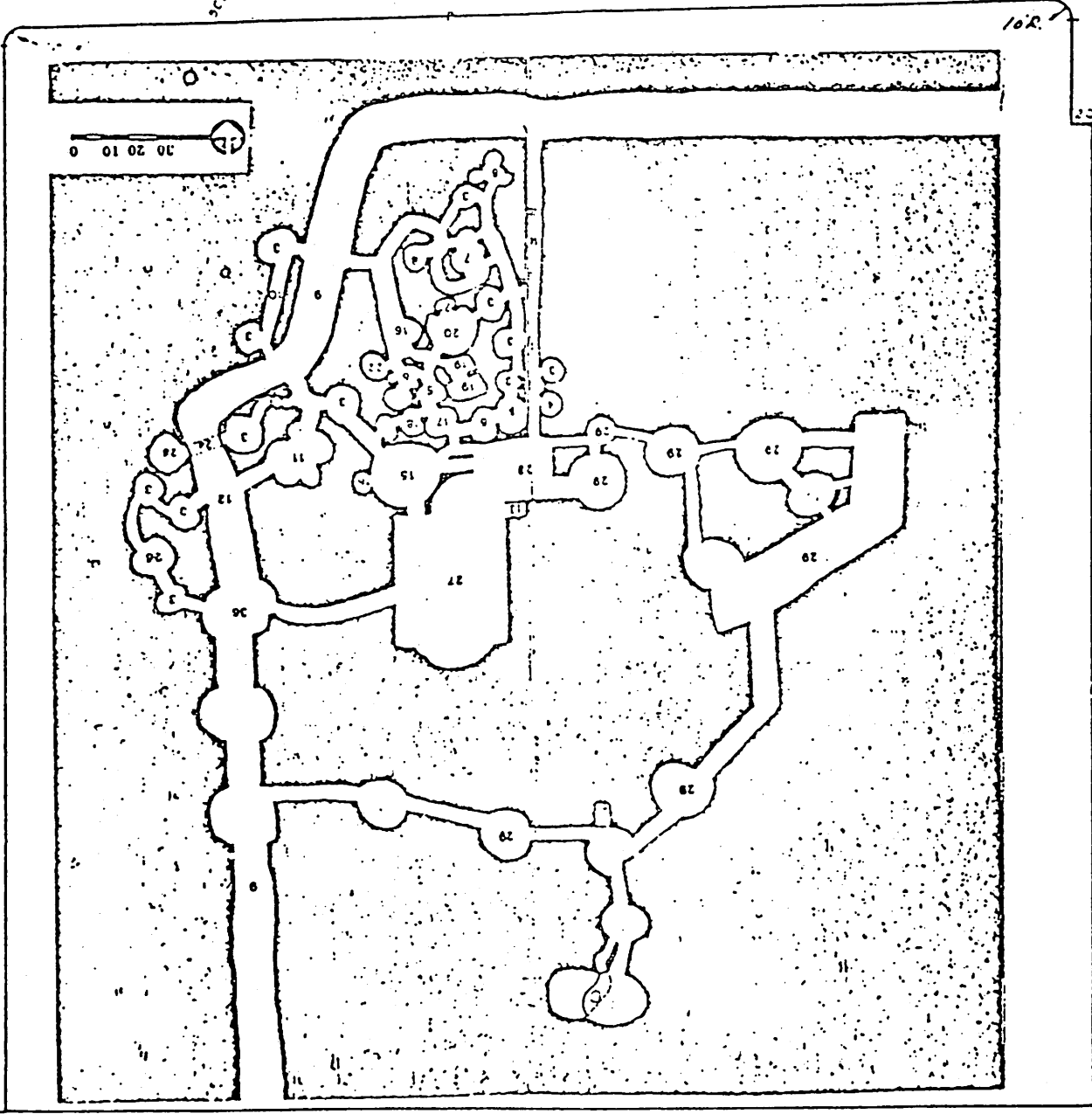
10 11
12 13

AVE.

100'
AVE.

29

1. Entrance
2. Entrance Hall
3. Planter
4. Well
5. Living Room
6. Kitchen
7. Church
8. Chapel
9. Automobile Tun.
10. Pedestrian Tun.
11. Winery
12. Light Well
13. Stairs
14. Walkway
15. Patio
16. Sump Pit
17. Hothouse
18. Indoor Patio
19. Bedroom
20. Bedroom Cour.
21. Bathroom
22. Reading Room
23. Stairs to Lower
24. Tunnel Under
25. Glass Bottom A.
26. Nursery
27. Restaurant (inc.
28. Kitchen
29. Unopened



16

NOTE - Assessor's Block Numbers Shown in Ellipse
Assessor's Parcel Numbers Shown in Square

