

**To:** Ojai Historic Preservation Commission  
**From:** Judy Triem, San Buenaventura Research Associates  
**Date:** 10 June 2015  
**Re:** Application and Supporting Documentation for a Proposed City Landmark District Located on Taormina Lane, Ojai

## 1. Introduction

This report has been submitted as an application for designating the above property as a City of Ojai Landmark District on behalf of the property owners on Taormina Lane, Ojai. The Assessor Parcel Numbers are located in Figure 3 in the Appendix.

### Report and Recommendation of the Historic Preservation Commission

#### Taormina Lane, Ojai

Resolution of the Historic Preservation Commission in accordance to the City of Ojai Municipal Code, Chapter 8, Section 4-8.08.

- (a) Explanation of the significance of the nominated landmark as it relates to the criteria for designation

Discussion: The Taormina Historic District is significant under criteria (a), (b), (e), (f), and (h) as discussed in detail in the evaluation of criteria section of this report.

The landmark nomination includes the 76 parcels with 70 contributing buildings, 2 non-contributing buildings and 4 vacant lots on the property.

## 2. General Description of Nominated Property

The nominated district consists of 21 acres subdivided into 76 parcels containing 71 residences, 1 gazebo and 4 vacant parcels. Most of the residences front onto Taormina Lane, an oval shaped street that is accessed via La Paz Drive and Arundale Road. It is an irregular oval with two short cul-de-sacs off of it. A few of the houses are on flag lots. The district is bounded on the north by the 58 acre Ojai Meadows Preserve; on the west by 90 undeveloped acres owned by the Krishnamurti Foundation of America; and on the south by the headquarters of the Krotona Institute of Theosophy. [Figure 1]

The primarily one story residences are single family except for five duplexes. The houses are built on a sloping hillside. The first of four subdivisions making up the Taormina neighborhood is a five and a half acre section (Tract 1956-1) recorded in 1968, following the acquisition of the property. This included 24 parcels in the southeastern portion of the 21 acre property. In 1969 Tract 1956-2 was recorded with 27 parcels along the southern and western edges of the property. By 1970, 27 homes with



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lawns, shrubs and trees had been built and three quarters of paved roads. In 1971 Tract 1956-3 of five parcels were added at the northeastern corner of the property; and in 1977 the last section of the property along the northern side was developed (Tract 2446). It consisted of 20 residential parcels and a 2.3 acre parcel that was planned to house a community residential care facility. By 1982 sixty-four homes had been built, housing 89 residents from all over the United States and the world, all retired members of the Theosophical Society. The project was conceived by Ruth Wilson, a member of Theosophical Society from St. Louis, in the late 1950s. She became one of the neighborhood's first residents when construction began in 1968.

In order to keep the cost as low as possible, lot and house sizes were kept to a minimum. Six basic house plans ranging in area from 630 to 1200 square feet were offered, included single family, duplex and triplex residences. The original architectural drawings for the first tract of houses were prepared by L. Verne Lacy in a modern scaled-down version of French Norman architecture. Lacy developed six floor plans named after trees and shrubs, including Acacia, Deodar, Oleander, Cypress, Bamboo, Bougainvillea, and Holly. [Figure 2] These basic plans continued to be used by other architects and contractors during the development of the rest of the community. Today only four parcels are vacant.

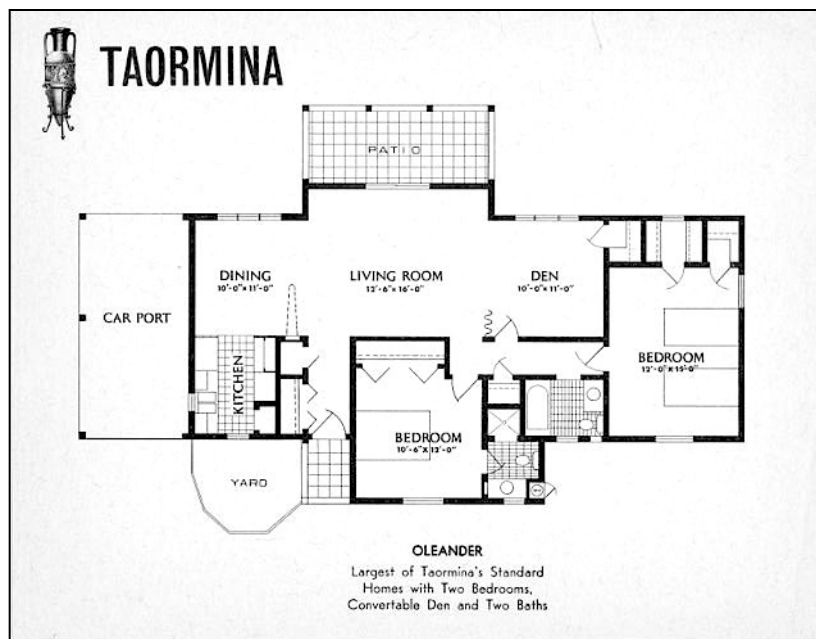


Figure 2. One of six house plans designed for Taormina by architect Verne Lacy

The houses are primarily one story with a rectangular plan. A major characteristic of each house is a roof featuring overhanging hipped gables intersected and covered with wood shakes or composition shingles. Roofs feature a bell-cast pitch with exposed rafters under the eaves. [Historic Photo ] The

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Historic photo. Early view of Taormina taken ca 1970.

houses are covered with stucco siding and windows are aluminum sliders or fixed. Additional details on many of these houses include notched eaves, decorative horizontal wood vents under the eaves and shutters. Recessed carports are supported by wood posts with bracket and exposed rafters.

### Additions/Modifications to Residences

The most significant changes to many of the residences is the conversion of the attached open carports to interior rooms. Some windows have been replaced, but most of the windows are still aluminum sliders or fixed. Many of the owners have replaced their wooden shake roofs with composition shingles because of fire regulations.

### Landscape Elements

The houses were all built into the gently sloping hillside and therefore remain low to the ground surrounded by extensive plantings. Originally, each house featured a gas lantern on a metal post next to the street. Today a few gas lanterns remain with the rest converted to electric or solar. The street has no sidewalks. Homeowner regulations do not allow front fences, and hedges were encouraged as separations of properties rather than fencing.

Original trees planted included over 600 Cyprus and other various varieties of evergreens (Deodar, Canary Island Pine, Aleppo Pine, Pepper Tree, and Bottlebrush), many directly referencing the names of the house plans. Over time residents planted many other varieties and species, but a great many of the original plantings remain.

## **3. History of Nominated Property**

### *General Background of Theosophists in California*

The following history is excerpted and adapted from *Taormina's Historic Past: The Story of a Unique Spiritual Community in Ojai*, written by Helene Vachet.

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There was a groundswell of interest in a retirement community for Theosophists during the 1950s, particularly among vegetarian Theosophists.<sup>1</sup> However, the concept of a Theosophical retirement community goes much further back than that. It was an outgrowth of the vision of Dr. Annie Besant, noted philanthropist, political activist, and president of the Theosophical Society<sup>2</sup>; C.W. Leadbeater, celebrated clairvoyant, author and teacher<sup>3</sup>; and of A.P. Warrington, general secretary and head of the Esoteric Section of the Theosophical Society in America,<sup>4</sup> and close friend of Colonel Olcott, co-founder and president of the T.S. until his death in 1907.<sup>5</sup> This vision led first to locating the Krishnamurti movement in Ojai, the founding of the Besant Hill School and other offshoots of the teachings of Theosophy and Krishnamurti,<sup>6</sup> the relocation of the Krotona Institute from Hollywood to Ojai, and the establishment of the Taormina Community.

Old Krotona, the precursor to the Krotona Institute in Ojai, was first located near the Hollywood sign in the Beachwood Canyon in 1910. It was first known as Crotona Center. The history of this Theosophical colony is described in Joseph Ross's multi volume series about the history of Krotona. A.P. Warrington discovered a ten-acre tract at the southwest corner of Beachwood Canyon, and the Theosophists considered it an ideal location. Not only did it possess a mild climate and spectacular views in every direction, but also its location would allow members to have a year-round growing season for their vegetarian diet, an important consideration for esoteric groups. Ross points out that Beachwood's microclimate supported not only typical fare like tomatoes and beans but exotic tropicals like avocados, bananas and pineapples.<sup>7</sup>

Joseph Ross further explains that plans were quickly drawn up for the new community, which Warrington named Krotona, after the 5th century, B.C. school founded in Southern Italy by Pythagoras. Due to political and personal enmity, the school was destroyed and Pythagoras was killed. The students fled to Taormina on Sicily when another Pythagorean school was established. There is an earlier American precedent for establishing a Pythagorean settlement. Transcendentalists A. Bronson Alcott and Charles Lane established their Pythagorean Community called Consociate Family in 1843 on a farm near Harvard, Massachusetts; this settlement became known as Fruitlands. Their mission was to attract families to join and share in raising crops and improve their spirituality by study and discussions of highest philosophies and religions. Additionally, no animal food or products were to be used. Clothing was to be cotton or linen – even shoes were to be constructed of linen.<sup>8</sup> So through the conduit of Pythagorean ideals, Krotona and later Taormina are linked with the American Transcendental movement.

Ross describes the exodus of Krotona from Hollywood to Ojai in 1924 as due to congestion and the boomtown mentality caused by the movie industry of the 1920s. The 118-acre Krotona property in Ojai, purchased with funds provided by Theosophical leader Annie Besant was originally an almond orchard. The Krotona Institute, relocated to the more idyllic locale of Ojai, continued its mission of promoting esoteric Theosophy and vegetarianism. Thus the establishment of the Krotona Institute paved the way for the founding of the Taormina Retirement Community adjacent to its location in Ojai.

Joy Mills, in her book, *100 Years of Theosophy*, states that the Theosophical Convention of 1958 adopted a formal resolution requesting “The National President and Board of Directors to consider Mrs. Ruth Wilson’s proposal to found a home for retired Theosophists in Ojai, California.” In the mid 1950s, Ruth Wilson was eager to create a retirement community – a place where you could own your own home was an idea dear to her heart. Joy Mills quotes Sidney Cook’s recommendations made in 1959, “...forming a non-profit corporation, under such a title as Theosophical Retirement Savings Association...with a view to saving the necessary fee for retirement occupancy of an apartment when the home is established. The retirement home project is too vitally necessary and has received too much encouragement, even with relatively little publicity, to be abandoned.... Planning of such a project is in harmony with the times and with developing thought of brotherhood and brotherly action.”<sup>9</sup>

It should be noted that the first object of the Theosophical Society is to promote the universal brotherhood of mankind<sup>10</sup> and that Cook saw the relevance of the first object to this project. Also, he was an important figure in the Theosophical hierarchy; and in 1974, was to become the international president of the Theosophical Society. As one can see, the idea of a Theosophical retirement enterprise had support from the highest levels from its inception.

According to Joy Mills (during the interview of August, 2013) in the late 1950’s when Jim Perkins was president of the Theosophical Society in America, he appointed a national committee to look into the retirement community concept. Members of his appointed committee included Will Ross, John Sellon and John Stienstra. Both Will Ross and John Stienstra were members of Besant Lodge of Hollywood, a Theosophical group that was destined to lose most of its membership to the Taormina Theosophical Community. However, it wouldn’t be until 1967 before the Taormina Theosophical Community, Inc. would be firmly established. This act would finally fulfill the dream of Ruth Wilson, its founder and first president.

*Ruth Wilson: Founder of Taormina Retirement Community*

Ruth Wilson (April 1, 1912 – September 10, 1993) was born in St. Louis, Missouri and a graduate of George Washington University in St. Louis. She became a member of the Theosophical Society in St. Louis in 1948, and shortly afterward, she had a dream that she was to build a retirement center for people who have the same or similar ideas based on the three objects of the Theosophical Society with the emphasis of brotherhood and goodwill as the foundation. This dream persistently came to her and she said, “I hope when I am old and need a home to go to, that there will be a place for people who have the same ideas and philosophy of life that I now have.” On November 11, 1957, exactly 100 years after the founding of the Theosophical Society and during a meditation session when she couldn’t concentrate, she recalled St. Teresa’s quote, “ If you can’t meditate, just let the mind clack on and meditate above it.” So that was what she did, said Kay Michael, who interviewed Ruth Wilson and Fred Werth in 1982 for a magazine called *Kaleidoscope*. Ruth Wilson heard the words very clearly, “Do it yourself!”<sup>11</sup>

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“I took that as ‘marching orders.’” Ruth with Fred Werth, her secretary and faithful assistant in the work of managing the community at her side, continued with the story for Kaleidoscope. “I talked with people, some of the leaders of the Society at that time. Jim Perkins and the Bendits, Lawrence and Phoebe (the Bendits were highly respected clairvoyants who eventually retired to Ojai but not Taormina), and they said, ‘Go ahead with your ideas and your plans.’ So I began a thorough investigation of retirement communities, especially in California because this is where I thought it should be, primarily because of the climate.”

Ruth Wilson was looking for something far more important than just a location. She wanted a place where a community of homeowners, of friends with similar interests and aspirations could study and grow spiritually in a peaceful atmosphere, free of the noise and commotion of big city life with its industries and heavy traffic. Kay Michael, Kaleidoscope author and Taormina resident, goes on to explain that an automobile accident in which Ruth was involved in St. Louis became a blessing in disguise, for the money she received in its settlement enabled her to travel to the west coast with a small “nest egg” for the community. A close friend and nurse, Ruth McMyler, accompanied her to California where they studied retirement communities up and down the coast, from Monterey to San Diego. Ruth Wilson made charts and maps and kept statistics in her attempt to make a thorough and business-like search for the best location.

Ruth Wilson was also a vegetarian, but had no plan to limit the population of Taormina to vegetarians. She needed to attract as many Theosophists as possible who would purchase homes, so she could obtain enough income to develop the land fully. However, in the Covenants and Restrictions that were attached to each person’s deed of purchase, a prohibition to barbecuing was inserted and remains to this day, although it is not enforced.<sup>12</sup>

Ruth Wilson was not a business woman according to Joy Mills, but she was the only person with the will and persistence to push her idea through all of the obstacles that blocked the path of such a project — primarily lack of significant seed money and substantial support from anyone to help her with this burden. It wasn’t until the land for Taormina was actually purchased at its current location (she had placed down payments on other parcels) that a substantial number of people reached out to assist her. Meanwhile and afterwards, one of her mainstays was Dr. Frederick Werth who retired to Taormina from Hollywood and lived in #42 Taormina Lane.

Dr. Werth earned his B.A. at the University of Minneapolis in philosophy and history and his M.A. at the University of Idaho in philosophy and psychology. He earned his Ph.D. from the University of California at Berkeley in sociology and pursued further work at San Gabriel College in philosophy and psychology. He was no stranger to Ojai. He regularly taught classes at the Krotona School of Theosophy and The World University where he acted as an advisor, teacher and promoter until his death in 1993. The World University was one of Annie Besant and Juddu Krishnamurti’s dreams. At his passing, he was awarded by The World University emeritus status and was dubbed a Knight by the Ecumenical Ministry of the Unity of All Religions into the Divine Order of Spiritual Nobility.<sup>13</sup>

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The Theosophical Society in America always supported to some degree the Taormina retirement project. However, as already mentioned, Ruth Wilson was no businesswoman. Joy Mills said that she was never able to give the leaders of the Theosophical Society in America a sufficiently organized financial statement to satisfy them. Consequently, they were afraid to trust her judgment and substantially invest in the Taormina project. In spite of this, over two hundred and fifty letters passed between Ruth Wilson and Joy Mills and Joy Mills and other Theosophists regarding this project. The relationship of the Taormina Retirement project to the Theosophical Society is evidenced by the large collection of Taormina documents including the correspondence between Ruth Wilson with Joy Mills and others and their replies collected and stored by archivist Janet Kershner of the Theosophical Society in America.<sup>14</sup>

The Taormina project was actually a part of the Great Plan, which Dr. Besant outlined and foresaw in 1920. Krotona should become an active, vital center of Theosophy, while Taormina would become a miniature colony of the coming civilization, sharing a different way of living for the human race. In any case, Ruth Wilson and Fred Werth strongly believed in this concept.<sup>15</sup>

Finally, the beautiful city of Ojai was settled on as the best possible choice. Not only was it the location of the Krotona Institute of Theosophy, it was also a valley dominated by the famous Topa Topa Peak where early leaders of the society, clairvoyants Geoffrey Hodson<sup>16</sup> and Melanie Van Gelder (mother of Dora Kunz, renowned psychic and associate of Charles W. Leadbeater) had seen the Great Valley ever radiating blessings over the valley and earlier the spiritual potential of this location was seen in the clairvoyant visions of Annie Besant and CW Leadbeater.<sup>17</sup>

### *Search for a Property*

In the meantime, the idea had spread, and future residents of Taormina made many pledges so the actual building could begin. The Theosophical Headquarters in Wheaton, Ill. was helpful in encouraging payment of these pledges. Ruth Wilson wasn't the only person dreaming of a Theosophical retirement community. A small group of members in a separate effort collected a little over \$2,400.00 that they allocated to the place name of Hodson Community, named after the famous Theosophical seer, Geoffrey Hodson. Since nothing ever came of this attempt, the money was used later by the Theosophical Society to build a small house in Taormina for a retiree from Olcott with a long record of service. This first life estate holder was Donald Greenwood who was followed by Margery Parks when he passed away.<sup>18</sup>

Ruth Wilson and Fred Werth recount to Kay Michael that the road to Taormina was a difficult one. Ruth said that many times they came up against a blank wall until at the eleventh-and-a-half hour something would happen to pull them out of it. The best example of going up against blank walls is illustrated by their search for land in Ojai. However, before the search could start, some thought was given to the name of the corporation that would purchase the land. Ruth's first choice in 1965 was Ojai Theosophical Community, but this was turned down by the state of California (see endnote #19).



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Ruth looked at the Avnet property on Creek Road, which was sold to a higher bidder. Next, the Lucking property on Foothill Road seemed perfect for their needs. It went into escrow with the understanding that the 20 neighbors in the area had agreed to the sale. One owner, however, returned from Europe and, after learning of the sale of the land to the Taormina Theosophical Community, Inc. (the name finally approved by the state of California on March 22, 1967) sued both the city and Taormina. Consequently, Taormina lost \$7,000.00 dollars (the amount of Ruth's nest egg). Hitching Post Ranch was another location that Ruth tried to obtain. She thought that it was the most desirable of all, as it was across the highway from Krotona, already established, and only needed some modifications.<sup>19</sup>

Finally in 1967, the corporation bought the land adjacent to Krotona Hill from the Edwin Carty family. Ruth had some reluctance to purchase this acreage in spite of its proximity to Krotona because of its barren hillsides, as she was a lover of trees. However, Ruth could wait no longer. There was pressure from eight or ten Theosophists with down payments on homes, and two had already moved to Ojai and were living in apartments just waiting for their homes to be built. Ruth Wilson's landscaping ideas included so many trees that 600 were planted just around the perimeter of the property. Thanks to her legacy, today Taormina is one of the most wooded areas of Ojai relative to its size.<sup>20</sup>

The community was given the name "Taormina" because that name has been famous since the days when Pythagoras's Grand Theater (known today as The Greek Theater) made the beautiful resort island of Sicily a gathering place for the inhabitants of surrounding countries along the Mediterranean Sea. Crotona was also an occult center in the Southern part of nearby Italy, so it seemed fitting to call the new retirement community "Taormina" because of its closeness to Krotona and so that both names could serve as a tribute to the great philosopher, Pythagoras whose ideas they followed. Additionally, Taormina was the place on Sicily where Annie Besant, C.W. Leadbeater, C. Jinarajadasa, George Arundale, Krishnamurti and his younger brother, Nityananda, spent weeks to undergo intensive spiritual training. This was particularly important to Ruth Wilson as evidenced by her letters to Joy Mills of March 3, 1965 and again in November 13, 1966.<sup>21</sup>

The name Ojai means moon. It comes from the Chumash word "Awhai" and was considered by the Chumash to be a sacred spot, possibly due to the powerful emanations of the Topa Topas. Ruth speculated that Ojai might even have curative powers because of the numerous mineral springs.<sup>22</sup>

Later, Taormina resident Kathryn L. Dahlstrom said, "also there seems to be another condition which I can only describe as a super-sensitivity that seems to be innate in the very air we breathe – if it were a highly refined Ether that allows the mind to reach greater depths of concentration and investigation into the Metaphysical studies which many of us, as students, are greatly interested in."<sup>23</sup>

### *Building the Community*

*The Taormina Town Crier* in 1987 describes Taormina as unique compared to other sub-divisions. "It does not have rows of houses that are all only slight variations of the same plan. The houses follow a theme, but reflect the individuality of the owner."<sup>24</sup> The homes in Taormina were built in the French

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Norman style, the style of the William Lucking Property built by Libbey of Libbey-Owens Glass fame. That was the first property that Ruth Wilson attempted to purchase and was very much admired by her.<sup>25</sup>

The French Norman style of architecture was modernized and scaled down to meet the perceived requirements of retired Theosophists through the skill of Leslie Verne Lacy, a Cornell graduate of 1917 and a prominent architect from the firm of L. Verne Lacy and Thomas Atherton of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. In fact, Lacy liked the Norman style so much that he built his beautiful Ojai home in that manner, 3250 Ojai Avenue, now called Tower Road.<sup>26</sup> Lacy's firm was very involved in the famous Wilkes-Barre project in Pennsylvania and designed many of its commercial buildings.<sup>27</sup>

Other enhancements to the ambiance of the Taormina community included shake shingles (replaced over time with more fireproof roofs), gaslight lanterns (partially replaced with electric and solar lanterns), and rural mailboxes. Ruth Wilson's house (#27) was built as a flagship of the French Norman style adapted to meet the scale of the Taormina Community. However, Ruth's house was built on two lots with high ceilings and many special features not evident in most of the other houses. However, over time, most of the houses have been remodeled and updated so there isn't such a gap, in any between #27 and the other houses anymore except for the acreage.

George M. Wolfe also assisted with the architecture of Taormina. He graduated from the University of Pennsylvania with a Bachelor of Architecture in 1931. He became a partner in the architectural firm of Hoffman, Loeffler & Wolfe of Pittsburg in 1957 and retired to Krotona where he volunteered his services to the Taormina project. Ruth Wilson said that he designed all of Taormina's custom-built homes and modified many others according to the new owners' desires.<sup>28</sup>

On September 16, 1979, Alyce Christensen (#23), Carl Christensen's wife and Alyce's sister, Adele Oglo (#25), rented The Great Hall of Krotona for an all-community meeting of Taormina residents. At this meeting, 23 of the 40 Taormina inhabitants attending pledged \$4,000.00 for the construction of a building to be known as "The Gazebo," to be a community place for gathering and resting. Ultimately a group of twenty residents who called themselves "The Taormina Co-Op Group" worked to bring the plan to fruition, and on June 7, 1980, James Perkins dedicated the Gazebo.<sup>29</sup> Eight years later, it was seen to be an important focus for community activities. In fact, Jim Perkins was inspired to call it "The Beating Heart of This Community." The only problem, at that time, was collecting enough money to manage the upkeep. Some faithfully donated \$15.00 on an annual basis, and volunteers also assisted with the maintenance.

For a long time, The Taormina Theosophical Corporation, Inc. planned to build a community center on the mesa, a 2.38-acre parcel of land in the center of the Taormina community. On July 14, 1978, Ruth Wilson incorporated a second corporation named The Manor House, Inc. to prepare the way for the building of the residential care center for those who were no longer able to maintain a garden or cook their own meals. Until the Manor House could be funded and built, a temporary, mini-manner house was donated to the community by Dorothy Switzer and appropriately called "Switzer House." In addi-

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tion to housing some ailing community members, Switzer house, in its early years, provided meals for those who were not up to the effort of cooking. It also served a community gathering place for cards and games.<sup>30</sup> Today, it serves as the headquarters of Ellene Bunner, the current president of the Taormina Theosophical Corporation. Before her, Ruth Matthews, the previous president, occupied it. Today, elderly residents of Taormina must seek care in the local retirement/nursing homes rather than in a Theosophical Manor House, which was part of the original plan for Taormina and the most obviously unfulfilled piece of Ruth Wilson's dream.

### *Taormina's First Residents*

Prominent Theosophists who settled in Taormina shared Ruth Wilson's dream. Among the first wave of Theosophists was James Perkins, former president of the Theosophical Society in America, International Vice President, and author of the quest books: *Through Death to Rebirth, Experiencing Reincarnation* and *Visual Meditations on the Universe*. He was an artist by profession and illustrated his own books. His theosophical career spanned more than six decades of active service to the society. He was a founding member of the Ohio Theosophical Federation, but he soon found himself working on the national scene, culminating in his election as National President in 1945, serving in that office until 1960, longer than any other president. His administration oversaw the establishment of many new branches and study centers, the formation of The Theosophical Investment Trust, and the development of The Department of Education and Information of the Theosophical Society in America. He wrote the title for Taormina's first brochure: "A Dream Coming True."

Following his tenure as president, he assumed the office of International Vice President under President N. Sri Ram. He traveled extensively in this office and, afterwards, became resident head of the Manor, the Theosophical and esoteric center in Sydney, Australia. He was called back to Adyar (international headquarters of the Theosophical Society) in 1973 upon the death of the president, and was in charge of the international society during the interim before the election of John Coats to that office in 1974. He then returned to Australia until 1977 when he and his wife Katherine settled in the Taormina community in house # 33. His charming wife, Katherine started and established the tradition of having a monthly tea for the Taormina residents. Various other residents continued this practice: Ruth Mathews, Tootie Hogenboom, and Gertrude Laudahn to name a few. The teas were interspersed with "Koffee Klatches", really the same thing; only coffee was substituted for tea.<sup>31</sup>

Carle Christensen was a member of the Theosophical Society for nearly seventy years, and he earnestly applied its principles to every phase of his life. He was a lecturer for the Theosophical Society, president of Besant Lodge and, president of the Young Theosophists. He conducted classes at Far Horizons Theosophical Camp in the High Sierras where he lead week-long classes for children by having them participate in imaginative plays and songs on Theosophical themes. For adults he presented seminars on meditation and Buddhism. His dedication to Theosophical principles is reflected in the name of his business, "Ethical Salesmanship." Carle's lively interests also led him to join an international peace group and to serve as president and board member of the Taormina Theosophical Community.<sup>32</sup>

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In November 2004, Clive and Marian Leeman and Arthur Braverman (#45) started a tradition of regularly conducting peace vigils in front of Libbey Park in an unplanned continuance of Carle's work in Taormina. Some Taormina residents and town people may be seen with them, particularly during a political crisis such as the Iraq war. There were so many marchers during that crisis that they covered the entire front of Libbey Park.

William Laudahn (Bill) moved to Ojai in 1975 when he married Gertrude Mann, already a resident of the Taormina community, living at #91, a duplex looking out on a beautiful meadow, which became La Paz Dr. He met Gertrude on his quest to find a retirement community of like-minded people. When he connected with Gertrude in 1973, he was a member of The Point Loma Theosophical Society of Pasadena.<sup>33</sup> After he retired from his position as secretary to the sheriff of Los Angeles, with whom he worked for twenty-six years, he quickly became an important member of the Theosophical community. He served on the Board of Taormina and was a vital and greatly appreciated supporter of Krotona. He and Gertrude in 1979 built house #117 Taormina Lane and Laudahn Lane, a one-quarter mile footpath from the Taormina community to the Krotona Institute. The Krotona property consists of a main building/library, school, residences and beautiful fountained gardens. This path was very significant because it linked Taormina with Krotona without having to drive two miles or walk along a hazardous dirt path. Bill generously contributed financially to many projects for the welfare of both Taormina and Krotona. He supported The Braille Institute located at the foot of Krotona Hill along with other residents from the Taormina Community, and he edited the Taormina Newsletter. Bill is perhaps best known for his numerous articles on Gnostic and mystical theosophy published in the American Theosophist and other metaphysical magazines.<sup>34</sup>

Annavene Bunn is sister to Ruth Mathews, former president of the Taormina Theosophical Community, Inc. As a young girl reading her mother's books on Theosophy, Annavene decided that she would live in Ojai one day. She had never seen Krotona but was drawn to the idea of a community set aside for spiritual people and spiritual work. In 1979 Annavene and her artist husband, Bill, of Smithsonian fame whose life has been written up in *Life Magazine* and the *Saturday Evening Post*, bought a small vacation home in Taormina. By 1984, they both had retired and bought a larger house in Taormina. Annavene was to become an important figure in the 1990's and beyond as a business adviser to Krotona and a prominent figure in Taormina as well.<sup>35</sup>

Gina Cerminara was probably Taormina's most famous resident. She was a graduate of the University of Wisconsin where she received her BA, MA, and Ph. D. She came from Hollywood where she wrote most of her best selling books: *Many Mansions*, *The World Within*, *Many Lives*, *Many Loves*, *Many Mansions: The Edgar Cayce Story on Reincarnation*, etc. in the small quaint cottage behind Besant Lodge of Hollywood on Beachwood Drive. She became foremost in the fields of parapsychology, spirituality and reincarnation. She died in 1984 in her Ojai Taormina home at age fifty-five before she could finish her last book, *The Stargazer* about the psychic Walden Welch.<sup>36</sup>

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Ruth Wilson retired from the presidency of the Taormina community in 1984. She was followed by James Perkins, Carle Christensen, Ruth Matthews and, currently, Ellene Bunner.

Ruth Mathews was one of the most controversial of the presidents of the Taormina Theosophical Corporation, Inc. She knew Ruth Wilson through the Ozark Theosophical Camp located in Arkansas, an important place to Ruth Mathews throughout her career, and they also knew each other through their Masonic connections. They belonged to the Luxor Lodge of co-masonry, headquartered in Colorado, to which many Theosophists belonged. Actually, Ruth could have heard about Taormina from many sources, Ruth Wilson herself, Theosophical brochures, or from correspondence from members of the Taormina community who wanted her to come and help with the business aspects. She had the reputation for being an excellent businesswoman, a quality perceived to be lacking in Taormina at the time.<sup>37</sup>

Ruth Mathews was truly an enigma! She had been trained as a commercial pilot, and ferried war material to the troops in numerous trips during World War 11. This says a lot for her daring and grasp of technology for one of her generation.<sup>38</sup> Her Theosophical background was also impeccable, as she came from a family of Theosophists. However, she was a person of extremes. Mathews espoused most liberal and humanitarian causes: racial equality, political equality, environmentalism, animal welfare, etc.<sup>39</sup> One aspect of her personality disclosed the mind of a CEO. The other side, revealed a heart so delicate that she would never refuse to help those in need that asked for her assistance. She would often let an impoverished person use one of the corporation's houses either at very low rent or rent-free welfare, etc.

Mathews was delighted to assist Fireshaker (#36), a Ponca Indian artist, healer, and man of prayer from Oklahoma whose art now hangs in museums and in private collections. He donated an 8-foot painting to the Ojai Valley School that took him two years to paint. His art reflected his deep spirituality and illustrated the legends of the Poncas, their history and ceremonies. He was one of the 900 out of the 2,000.00 remaining Ponca Indians who spoke their tribes' language. He also wrote poetry, sometimes for *The Taormina Town Crier*.<sup>40</sup>

When Ruth heard that the Ojai Land Conservancy needed \$250,000 to complete the purchase of the Ojai Meadows, she unhesitatingly sold one of the corporation properties, house number 53, and gave them the proceeds. Her action helped protect Taormina from any threat of development on the north side of the community and helped to create a wildlife preserve within the city of Ojai. Later, in 2007, she again generously donated \$2,000.00 to the Taormina Tree Fund which collected money to plant trees along Maricopa Highway and along Nordhoff High School's fence line and trail to soften the transition from open space to chain link fencing, bleachers, storage containers, etc.<sup>41</sup>

Mathews also graciously welcomed a Tibetan family that had made their way in a dangerous trek from Tibet via India to Taormina. She was generous in her support of their nonprofit TibetanAid Foundation whose mission is to fund sustainable health care clinics and support educational opportunities in the rural areas of Tibet.<sup>42</sup>

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### *Change in Taormina's Governance*

During Ruth Mathew's presidency of the Taormina Theosophical Community Inc. (TTCI) in the 1970s, major changes to the governance of Taormina occurred. The first change involved expanding the scope of the second corporation, the Taormina Theosophical Manor House, Inc. which had the same president and Board members as the original TTCI. These two corporations owned and still own numerous houses in Taormina, a number of undeveloped lots, the Mesa, and Taormina Lane and Arundale Road.

Originally, to own property and/or reside in the Taormina Community, one had to be a member of the Theosophical Society and at least 55 years of age, as stipulated in the Corporation's CC&Rs. The situation changed with the Silver lawsuit of 1983. An action was filed by the TTCI against two individuals, Robert Silver and his mother. Having inherited a house in Taormina and living in it, Robert Silver and his mother found themselves being sued because they were not members of the Theosophical Society. This defining suit opened the doors to an examination of the 1977 Covenants, Conditions & Restrictions (CC&Rs) by the courts. Section II of the CC&Rs (Ownership Restrictions) were declared to be Null and Void by the California Appellate Court with the result that ownership of Taormina property being restricted to Theosophists was completely struck down, and the TTCI's Right of First Refusal by the Taormina corporation to re-purchase a Taormina houses was cancelled. The courts further stated that Taormina Corporation was committing religious discrimination because Theosophy was being practiced as if it were a religion.<sup>43</sup>

From that time on, anyone could purchase property in Taormina. As new people and young families began to reside in the community, children could be found playing in the lane, and the community became more diverse. Nevertheless, truth seekers<sup>44</sup> with a spiritual, philosophical, philanthropic, artistic or environmental bent seemed to be the ones most attracted to the area. Another way of looking at the composition of this community is self-selection – the magnetic attraction to a compatible milieu. Talent, beliefs, skills, etc. draw as a magnet through the morphic fields.

### *Significance of Taormina Community*

Moving away from the mundane, metaphysically and philosophically, Taormina is a matrix linked by six degrees of separation to many of the great spiritual, intellectual, aesthetic, philanthropic, and political movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and has manifested a continuing connection to these movements and their idealistic leaders and crusades through the interests of its residents to this day. The Taormina Community is unique as it was formed as the only self-sustaining Theosophical community in the United States (linked to the Adyar Theosophical Society) and continues to reflect many of the precepts of its founding philosophy.

Our Taormina community's location is very unique. Its entrance is through La Paz, a public road, which becomes Taormina Lane, a private road. In a way, this makes Taormina almost a secret place within the City of Ojai. We have been surprised over and over again to find that because of its small size and

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tucked away next to Krotona, many people who have lived in Ojai for years had no idea where the Taormina Community is located. They only know of La Paz.

Once you pass through this somewhat hidden entrance, you find an area with definite historic borders. The Krotona Institute borders Taormina Lane on the South. There is so much history associated with Krotona and its association to the Theosophical Society that one of our residents, Joseph Ross, already noted, has written six volumes about it.

Gertrude and Bill Laudahn, as mentioned earlier, had "Laudahn Lane" constructed to link Taormina with Krotona, and, it is fitting, that Krotona has built a "Sanctuary of Connections" on each side of Laudahn Lane. This garden is dedicated to the great religions of the world, and through the Lane, Taormina is connected to them and to Theosophy via Krotona.

To the southwest, Taormina borders the famous Oak Grove, the area where Krishnamurti, internationally renowned as one of the great teachers and philosophers of our times, used to speak. In fact, the house of the founder of the Taormina Community, Ruth Wilson, #27, placed a gate in the bordering fence to open her land to the Oak Grove to give easy access to attend these famous Oak Grove speeches. Also, her house used to have urns in special holders in front to remind the neighbors of Taormina on Sicily from which the community's name is derived. As #27 is now a rental property, its owner, Terrel Ann Riley, Ruth Mathew's daughter, keeps them at her house. <sup>45</sup>

Taormina on Sicily had other claims to fame besides the Pythagorean connection and Krishnamurti's spiritual seclusion. One reason was the visits of important tourists. Johann Wolfgang Goethe, who sojourned there from 1786-1788, dedicated exalting pages to the city in his book entitled *Italian Journey*. Other important guests included Oscar Wilde, Richard Wagner, Tsar Nicholas 1 of Russia and Nietzsche, who wrote his *Also Sprach Zarathustra* in Sicily's Taormina. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the town became a colony of artists, writers and intellectuals; very much like the present Taormina in Ojai. D.H. Lawrence, one of the most famous of these expatriates, stayed there at the Fontana Vecchia and wrote a number of short stories, novels and poems. Later, Truman Capote wrote *Fontana Vecchia*. Consequently, Taormina in Ojai has connections to great literary and intellectual movements as well. <sup>46</sup>

To the West, Taormina is completely bordered by the Oak Grove, and the views are spectacular. One can cut across these oak trees and journey to Oak Grove School or take the easier way through the Meadow Preserve, on the Community's northern border. Juddu Krishnamurti founded the Oak Grove School in 1927. Krishnamurti believed that education should prepare individuals to understand and face human problems without prejudice and fear. Through Krishnamurti, Taormina is connected with his friends: Iris Murdoch, feminist and writer, Indira Gandhi, politician, and David Bohm, George Sudashan, and Rupert Sheldrake, all scientists. <sup>47</sup>

Krishnamurti was also associated with the Besant Hill School founded by Annie Besant. She was a prominent British socialist, Theosophist, women's rights activist, writer, orator and supporter of Irish and Indian home-rule. Through Annie Besant, we are connected with two other luminaries associated

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with the school: Dr. Guido Gerrando, a retired philosophy professor from Vassar who believed in the Socratic method of teaching and the famed English novelist and social critic Aldous Huxley who was also associated with Old Krotona in Hollywood.<sup>48</sup>

To the North, The Ojai Meadow Preserve, owned by the Ojai Valley Land Conservancy, borders Taormina; and across the preserve, is St. Thomas Aquinas Church – thus, three spiritual paths encompass the community: Theosophy, the philosophy of Krishnamuriti and Catholicism.

To exit Taormina Lane, one may go through Arundale Road. When Taormina was first being developed, La Paz was a meadow, and Arundale Road was the original and only entrance and exit to the community.<sup>49</sup> This part of Taormina is named after George Arundale, international president of the Theosophical Society and the husband of Rukmini Devi, considered to be the most important revivalist of the Indian classical dance. As the story goes, she met the Russian ballerina, Anna Pavlova on a cruise and was inspired to revive traditional Indian dance forms, which had fallen into disrepute. She also worked for the re-establishment of traditional Indian arts and crafts and is further known as an activist for animal rights and welfare. As a speaker and philanthropist, she traveled all over the world and forged a particular friendship with the educator Maria Montessori and the Irish poet, playwright, student of Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, and political activist -- James Cousins.<sup>50</sup>

George Arundale was educated in both England and Germany and became professor of History at the Central Hindu College, Benares. He assisted Annie Besant with her political activity. Under Theosophical auspices, a National University was established in Madras, of which Rabindranath Tagore, the first non-European to win the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1913, became the Chancellor. Mr. Arundale became Principal of the Training College for Teachers. He stimulated education and was outstanding for the manner in which he inspired teachers and gave them the conception of teaching as a sacred profession. Later, he became Minister of Education in India, and The National University bestowed upon him the degree of Doctor of Literature. So through Rukmini and George Arundale, Ojai's Taormina Community is linked to the arts, education, and animal welfare, the politics of India and the Irish Theosophical and literary movements. We are also linked to India through the political activities of Annie Besant who supported their struggle for independence.<sup>51</sup>

Walking around Taormina, one enjoys the feeling of being in a small village. All but four houses have French Norman style peaks on their roofs as designed by L. Verne Lacy, and the colors of the houses are muted earth tones. However, some residents have added a splash of color to the mix, by exercising individuality in trim and roof colors. The village style street lamps and rural mailboxes also add to the ambiance.

There are many lovely gardens. Taormina has nearly as many trees as the Arbolada, relative to our size, just one street with two cul-de-sacs. Natural plant and flower hedges replace fences on the front and side of many properties. Only in the back are there fences to keep in adventuresome dogs and children.



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The oval shape of the road, which seems to encourage walking, unifies Taormina as a community. One can observe people with strollers and people with dogs, walkers with canes and walking sticks, and those needing special assistance on electric scooters. As many residents are fond of walking, this is also a way to keep in touch with each other and to obtain the latest news. Also, walkers come from all over the City of Ojai, to enjoy the ambience and the views along with Taormina Community residents.

Taormina Lane is filled with friendly people. The TAPers, (Taormina Activity Planners), invite all Taormina residents by Newsletter, *Taps Tips*, website postings, and reminders inserted into mailboxes to community programs organized by and for the residents of Taormina. These programs are the continuation of the traditional monthly teas and “Koffee Klatches” that this community was known for in the early years. Now, holiday parties, potlucks, travel shows, ice cream socials, and other programs highlight the talents of the international group that continues to makes Taormina home.<sup>52</sup>

Understanding the history of Taormina unlocks the hidden history of Ojai as the influence of Theosophists and Krishnamurti in Ojai has been remarkably diffusive and has extended beyond the borders of Taormina and Krotona. Within The Ojai Valley there remain visible artifacts of these endeavors: The Beatrice Woods Center for the Arts, Besant Hill School, Oak Grove School, The Krishnamurti Foundation of America, the former Krotona Braille Institute (located below Krotona Hill), Meditation Mount, The Monica Ros School, The Ojai Foundation, The Ojai Retreat, The Ojai Taj Mahal, Our Lady & All Angels Liberal Catholic Church, The Montessori School, The Ojai Retreat, The Ranch House, The World University, and the latest offshoot, Bookends in Meiners Oaks.<sup>53 54 55 56</sup>

Taormina today, 45 years after its founding by Ruth Wilson, remains largely unchanged. The population is no longer only retirees and Theosophists but reflects to a greater extent the general valley population. There are more cars and more people, but the “look” and the “ambiance” of Ruth Wilson’s original vision remain. The community is a living legacy of the Theosophical movement and related intellectual and philosophical endeavors and their significance in our valley.

Catherine Dees, the niece of a long time Taormina resident, Virginia Moyer, perhaps one of our wisest ladies, has described the community’s situation in a most enlightening way.

“It is all so very interesting....! There is never a choice made that doesn’t then shift everything else and require further choices. The idea of community has been struggled over by high-minded people for centuries. First, the intention needs to be as clear as possible. And there has to be room for the evolution of ‘unintended’ permutations. One thing I know for sure is that you can’t plan for every future situation. The framers of the constitution were that way, leaving room for the evolution of people’s consciousness and future needs.”

#### 4. Listing Criteria and Procedure

Chapter 8, Sec.4-8.07 of the City of Ojai Municipal Code sets forth the following criteria for consideration for the nomination of City Landmarks:

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The Historic Preservation Commission shall, upon such investigation as it deems necessary, make a determination as to whether a nominated property, structures, or area meets one or more of the following criteria:

- (a) Its character, interest, or value as part of the development, heritage, or cultural characterization of the community;
- (b) Its identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the development of the community;
- (c) Its embodiment of distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style valuable for the study of a period, type, method of construction, or use of indigenous materials;
- (d) Its identification as the work of a master builder, designer, architect, or landscape architect whose individual work has influenced the development of the community;
- (e) Its embodiment of elements of design, detailing, materials, or craftsmanship that render it architecturally significant;
- (f) Its embodiment of design elements that make it structurally or architecturally innovative;
- (g) Its unique location or singular physical characteristics that make it an established or familiar visual feature;
- (h) Its suitability for preservation or restoration. Any structure, property, or area that meets one or more of the above criteria shall also have sufficient integrity of location, design, materials, and workmanship to make it worthy of preservation or restoration;
- (i) It shall have historic, aesthetic, or special character or interest for the general public and not be limited in interest to a special group or person;
- (j) Its designation shall not require the expenditure by the City of any amount of money not commensurate with the value of the object to be preserved; and
- (k) Its designations shall not infringe upon the rights of a private owner thereof to make any and all reasonable uses thereof which are not in conflict with the purposes of this chapter.

### *Eligibility Under the Criteria of Significance*

This property appears to be eligible for designation as an Ojai City Landmark district under criteria (a), (b), (e), (f), (h), (i), (j) and (k).

Under Criterion (a), Taormina represents a significant aspect of the religious and spiritual development of Ojai as it took place from the 1920s through the 1960s. Taormina was the only Theosophical colony in the country built for retirees when it was incorporated in 1967. Ojai was chosen by Ruth Wilson as the natural location of the community because it had been the home of the Krotona Institute of Theosophy since 1924. This developmental theme was identified in the *Historic Context Statement City of Ojai as "Religion and Spirituality" (1917-1945)*, and described in part:

Because of its isolation, natural beauty and favorable climate, the Ojai Valley has attracted many non-mainstream religious and spiritual groups. In 1924 Albert P. Warrington, head of the Krotona Institute of Theosophy in Hollywood, moved his followers from the growing Hollywood community to the peaceful environment of the Ojai Valley. He had founded the Institute in Hollywood in 1912

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with the guidance and direction of prominent early Theosophist Annie Besant. He built the new Institute on a 115 acre hillside location at the western edge of the Ojai Valley. Between 1924 and 1928 an auditorium, library and eleven residences designed in the Spanish Revival style were built on the heavily landscaped grounds with a pond and breathtaking views of the Valley. Los Angeles architect Robert Stacey-Judd designed the library and auditorium building. Additional housing has been added to the site over time.

A promotional pamphlet from the 1930s proclaimed the Ojai Valley as one of the world's four great centers of Theosophy and introduced Krishnamurti as an international teacher, author and philosopher. He appeared for many years at Starland, the annual encampment under the oak trees in Meiners Oaks. ... Both Krishnamurti and the Theosophists drew many people to the Ojai Valley, some of whom settled there. (San Buenaventura Research Associates, 2009: 16-17)

Under Criterion (b), Taormina is significant for its association with Ruth Wilson, its founder. In 1948 she became a member of the Theosophical Society in St. Louis and shortly afterward, she had a vision that she was to build a retirement center for people with similar ideas based on the three objects of the Theosophical Society, with an emphasis on brotherhood and goodwill as the foundation. She spent seven years fulfilling this vision and contacting Theosophists who wanted to join the community, and to locating and purchasing a site on which to establish the first and only self-sustaining retirement Theosophical community in the United States.

Under Criterion (c), the neighborhood embodies characteristics of the modern scaled-down version of French Norman architecture.

Under Criterion (d), The French Norman style of architecture was modernized and scaled-down to meet the perceived requirements of retired Theosophists through the skill of Leslie Verne Lacy, a Cornell graduate of 1917 and a prominent architect from the firm of L. Verne Lacy and Thomas Atherton of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Lacy is not considered to be a master architect, and his work in Taormina did not appear to extend beyond the Taormina community and his own residence outside the community.

Under Criterion (e), all of the houses embody certain key features created in the original plans laid out by architect L. Vern Lacy. A major characteristic of each house is a roof featuring overhanging hipped gables intersected and covered with wood shakes or composition shingles. Roofs feature a bell-cast slope. The houses are covered with stucco siding and windows are aluminum sliders or fixed. Additional details on many of these houses include notched eaves, decorative horizontal wood vents under the eaves and shutters. Recessed carports are supported by wood posts with bracket and exposed rafters.

Under Criterion (f), the above architectural features adapted from earlier styles were not structurally or architecturally innovative.

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Under Criterion (g), Taormina is significant for its unique location as a district of residences arranged around an oval shaped road and designed in a similar style located on a sloping hillside surrounded by lush plantings which together contribute to it being an established visual feature of Ojai.

Under Criterion (h), the majority of residences have retained a majority of their integrity of location, design, materials and workmanship. Additions made to the residences were done using compatible design, materials and workmanship.

Under Criterion (i), the property has historic and architectural interest for the general public, as outlined above.

Under Criterion (j), the property is privately owned and approval of the designation will not require the expenditure of any City funds.

Under Criterion (k), the property's designation will not infringe upon the rights of a private owner if the majority of owners are in favor of the application and will abide by all rules found in Municipal Code, Chapter 8. As of this writing, two-thirds owners were in favor of the designation.

### *Recommended Plaque Wording*

The Taormina community originated in 1967 as a retirement center for members of the Theosophical Society and as an adjunct community to the Krotona Institute of Theosophy. It was envisioned by its founder Ruth Wilson as a Normandy village in which seniors could live and interact in the "spirit" of Theosophy. Members of the Theosophical Society have played major roles in the development of the Ojai Valley. The look of the community today continues to reflect the original vision of its developer.

Chapter 8, Sec.4-8.08 of the City of Ojai Municipal Code provides the following procedure for the nomination of an historic landmark:

The Historic Preservation Commission shall, within ninety (90) days from receipt of a completed nomination in proper form, hold a public hearing and adopt, by resolution, a recommendation that the nominated landmark or historic district does or does not meet the criteria for designation in Section 4-8.07 of this chapter. The resolution shall be accompanied by a report to the City Council containing the following information:

- (a) Explanation of the significance or lack of significance of the nominated landmark or historic district as it relates to the criteria of designation above.

Discussion: The Taormina District is significant under criteria (a), (b), (e), (f), and (h) as discussed in detail in the evaluation of criteria, above. In summary, the Taormina District is significant for its formation as the only self-sustaining Theosophical retirement community in the United States, and continues to embody many of the precepts of its founding philosophy.

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- (b) Explanation of the integrity or lack of integrity of the nominated landmark or historic district.

Discussion: The residences have maintained the majority of their integrity of location, design, materials and workmanship, as stated above under the landmarks criteria. The setting and landscape features have also been retained and contribute greatly to the district as a whole.

- (c) In the case of a nominated landmark found to meet the criteria for designation.

Discussion: Not applicable.

- (d) In the case of a nominated historic district found to meet the criteria for designation.

1. The significant exterior architectural features of the nominated landmark district that should be protected:

Discussion: A major characteristic of each house is a roof featuring overhanging hipped gables intersecting and covered with wood shakes or composition shingles. Roofs feature a bell cast slope with exposed rafters under the eaves. The houses are covered with stucco siding and windows are aluminum sliders or fixed. Additional features on many of these houses include notched eaves, decorative horizontal wood vents under the eaves and shutters. Recessed carports are supported by wood posts with bracket and exposed rafters.

2. The types of construction or alteration, other than those requiring a building or demolition permit that should be reviewed for appropriateness pursuant to the provisions of Section 4-8.16.

Discussion: Proposed changes to the properties that might not require permits but should be reviewed would be changes to window and door openings, alterations of exterior surfaces and additions.

- (e) Proposed design guidelines for applying the criteria for review of work permits to the nominated landmark or historic district.

Discussion: The *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation* should be the utilized as the standards of evaluating the appropriateness of any proposed change to the buildings.

- (f) The relationship of the nominated landmark or historic district to the ongoing effort of the Historic Preservation Commission to identify and nominate all potential areas and structures that meet the criteria for designation.

Discussion: In 2011 the Historic Preservation Commission asked members of the Taormina community if they would like to become a landmark district.

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- (g) Recommendations as to appropriate permitted uses, special uses, height and area regulations, minimum dwelling size, floor area, sign relations and parking regulations necessary or appropriate to the preservation of the nominated landmark or historic district.

Discussion: The nominated properties are located in a residential district and will comply with the appropriate permitted uses and codes for the area.

- (h) A map showing the location of the nominated and the boundaries of the nominated historic district. The recommendations and report of the Historic Preservation Commission shall be sent to the City Council and affected property owners within (7) seven days following the vote on the resolution and shall be available to the public in the offices of the City Clerk.

Discussion: A map of the nominated landmark district is included in the report's Appendix. [Figure 3]

- (i) Interim prohibition: From the time the Historic Preservation Commission adopts its recommendation until the time the Council either declares the landmark, or determines not to declare the landmark, the time period involved not to exceed ninety (90) days, the property owner shall be prohibited from defacing, demolishing, adding to, altering, or removing the landmark.

Discussion: The owners are in favor of the nomination and will abide by all the rules as required by the City of Ojai located in Municipal Code, Chapter 8.

- (j) Notice and appeal: If the property owner objects to the designation of his property as a landmark, such objection shall be filed with the Council not later than thirty (30) days following the date of the Historic Preservation Commission makes its recommendation.

Discussion: The property owners are in favor of the nomination and will abide by all the rules as required by the City of Ojai located in Municipal Code, Chapter 8.

## 5. Sources

San Buenaventura Research Associates. *Historic Context, City of Ojai*. Santa Paula, 2009.

U.S. Census Records, 1940, Ruth Wilson.

Vachet, Helene. *Taormina's Historic Past: The Story of a Unique Spiritual Community in Ojai.*, 2015.

Ventura County Grant Deeds, Book 718, page 169 located at Ventura County Recorder's Office.

### *Maps*

Ventura County Assessor Map Page 017-0-343

Tract Map 2446, MR Bk. 72, p. 64; Tract Map 1956-1, MR Bk. 49, pg. 19; Tract Map 1956-2, MR Bk. 53, Pg. 19; Tract Map 1956-3, MR Bk. 56, pg. 61.

### *Photographs*

Historic photos, collection of Taormina Community Archives.

Present day photos of residences taken in 2014-2015 by Jon Lambert and Trina Grantham, members of Taormina community.

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<sup>1</sup> Conversation with Joy Mills on July 30, 2013. Marqui Bury, Trina Grantham and Helene Vachet were present and took notes. See: Taormina Archives (STA) for signed permission from Joy Mills.

<sup>2</sup> Annie Besant was renowned for many reasons. She was a prominent British socialist, Theosophist, women's rights activist, writer and orator, and supporter of Irish and Indian self-rule. In 1890, she met Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (HPB), and her life changed forever. Her interest in Theosophy became the dominant force in her life. She became a prominent lecturer for the Theosophical Society. However, her interests were still widespread.

She helped establish the Central Hindu College in 1898, she established the first overseas Lodge of the international Order of Co-Freemasonry, Le Droit Humain in England, and established lodges in many parts of the British Empire. In 1907, she became international president of the Theosophical Society whose headquarters were in Adyar, Madras India (now Chennai). She also became involved in the politics of India, joining the Indian National Congress. When World War 1 broke out, she helped launch the Home Rule League to campaign for democracy in India and dominion status within the Empire. After the war, she continued to work for Indian independence and the Theosophical Society until her death in 1933.

Nethercot, Arthur H. *The First Five Lives of Annie Besant*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1960 and *The Last Four Lives of Annie Besant*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1963.

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<sup>3</sup> Charles Webster Leadbeater was originally a priest of the Church of England whose interest in spiritualism caused him to end his affiliation with Anglicanism in favor of the Theosophical Society. His reason for changing his spiritual direction was due to his admiration for Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, one of the Society's founders. He met HPB when she came to London, and she accepted him as a pupil, and he became a vegetarian.

Around this time he received a number of the Mahatma Letters (letters from the Masters of Wisdom, an aspect of the esoteric tradition associated with the TS and other occult movements), which influenced him to go to India. According to his account, he received visits and training from some of the "Masters" that were the inspiration behind the formation of the Theosophical Society. The original Mahatma Letters are on display at the British Museum.

In 1885, Leadbeater traveled with Henry Steel Olcott to Burma and Ceylon (now Sri Lanka). In Ceylon they founded the English Buddhist Academy, with Leadbeater staying to serve as its first headmaster.

He became the tutor of A.P. Sinnett's son, and along with him, George Arundale and Jinarajadasa were tutored for higher education. Both Arundale and Jinarajadasa were sent to Cambridge University as the result of Leadbeater's efforts and eventually became International Presidents of the Theosophical society. Please note that A.P. Sinnett was one of the first Europeans to receive letters from the Master of Wisdom, which were published as *The Mahatma Letters to A.P. Sinnett* in 1926. The original letters have been on display in the British Museum since 1939.

He became an associate of Annie Besant and reputedly made occult investigations into the cosmos with her.

In 1909, Leadbeater "discovered" fourteen-year-old Jiddu Krishnamurti at Adyar and proclaimed that Krishnamurti was to be the vehicle for the next World Teacher. Even though Krishnamurti later disassociated himself from the Theosophical Society and the role of world teacher, he became one of the world's most influential speakers on philosophical and religious subjects. Choosing Krishnamurti for the role of World Teacher showed, at very least, great foresight on Leadbeater's part.

Leadbeater moved to Sydney in 1915 and through his acquaintance with J.I. Wedgwood, became a bishop in the Liberal Catholic Church and a Co-Mason. Public interest in Theosophy was greatly increased as a result of Leadbeater's residence in Australia and New Zealand.

In a suburb of Sydney, Leadbeater became a director of a community of Theosophists at The Manor. There he accepted women students as well, and his pupils included such luminaries as Dora van Gelder, Delores Krieger, and Mary Lutyens. Also during his stay in Australia, Leadbeater became the Presiding Bishop of the Liberal Catholic Church and co-wrote its Liturgy Book. Tillett, Gregory. *The Elder Brother: A Biography of Charles Webster Leadbeater*. London: Routledge & Kegan, Paul, 1982.

<sup>4</sup> "General Secretary" was the old title for President of the Theosophical Society. Ross, Joseph. *Krotona of Old Hollywood*. Montecito, CA: El Montecito Press. First Edition, 1989.

<sup>5</sup> Colonel Olcott was distinguished for many reasons. Besides being the co-founder of the Theosophical Society, he was an American military officer, journalist and lawyer. He also was the first well-known American of European ancestry to make a formal conversion to Buddhism. He did far more than that. He helped bring about a cultural revival in Sri Lanka and was called by them, "one of the heroes in the struggle of our independence and a pioneer of the present religious, national and cultural revival. Because of his efforts to create a renaissance in the study of Buddhism, he is considered a Buddhist modernist, as he interpreted Buddhism anew through Western sensibilities. Murphet, Howard. *Hammer on the Mountain: The Life of Henry Steel Olcott (1832-1907)*. Wheaton, Ill.: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1972.



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<sup>6</sup> Krishnamurti was groomed to be the World Teacher by C.W. Leadbeater and Annie Besant of the Theosophical Society. Later, he rejected this mantle and the organization behind it, and started his own movement. His subject matter included the nature of the mind, meditation, philosophic and scientific inquiry, human relationships and bringing about radical change in society.

He has been credited with indirectly establishing the intellectual and social climate of the Ojai Valley. From his earliest days in Ojai, he attracted people from all over the world who traveled here to interview him and attend his talks in the Oak Grove in Meiners Oaks. Among these luminaries were Aldous Huxley, Dr. David Bohm, Jackson Pollack, Christopher Isherwood, and Ann Morrow Lindbergh. His aura also attracted Hollywood stars such as Charlie Chaplin, Elsa Lanchester, Greta Garbo and Charles Laughton. In 1969, Krishnamurti and a group of trustees formed the Krishnamurti Foundation of America. Today there are also foundations in England, Latin America, Canada and India to preserve, protect and disseminate Krishnamurti's teachings.

Lutyens, Lady Emily. *Candles In The Sun*. New York: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1957.

——— *Krishnamurti: His Life And Death*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990.

——— *Krishnamurti: The Years of Awakening*. New York: Farrar, Straus And Giroux, 1975.

——— *Krishnamurti: The Years Of Fulfillment*. New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1983.

Ross, Joseph E. *Krishnamurti: The Taormina Seclusion – 1912. 2000*.

Sloss, Radha Rajagopal. *Lives in the Shadow with J Krishnamurti*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing Ltd., 1991.

**See endnote #61** for a complete list and description of offshoots of the Theosophical and Krishnamurti movements.

<sup>7</sup> Ross, Joseph. *Krotona of Old Hollywood*. Montecito, CA: El Montecito Press. First Edition, 1989, 119-120. Also STA for on-line article, "Under the Hollywood Sign."

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., xiii. Reference regarding another American Pythagorean settlement. It should also be noted that many vegetarians prefer to omit all products derived from killing animals from their attire, particular members of the esoteric school of Theosophy, Krotona.

<sup>9</sup> Mills, Joy. *100 Years of Theosophy*. Wheaton, IL: 1987. The Theosophical Publishing House, 148-49.

<sup>10</sup> The Theosophical society has three objects: (1) To form a nucleus of the universal brotherhood of humanity without distinction of race, creed, sex, cast or color. (2) To encourage the study of comparative religion, philosophy and science, and (3) To investigate the unexplained laws of nature and the powers latent in man. A framed picture of the three objects may be seen at the Krotona School and are often published in *The Quest Magazine*, the official organ of the Theosophical Society in America.

<sup>11</sup> Obituaries: "Ruth Wilson." *The American Theosophists*. Volume 81/Number 6, November/December, 1993, and Mitchell, Kay. "Theosophists find A Home in Ojai Valley," *Kaleidoscope Magazine*. Reprinted Wednesday July 21, 1982 in the Ojai Valley News. STA. It should be noted that *Kaleidoscope Magazine* was originally called *The Krotona Kaleidoscope* and was an organ of The Krotona Institute of Theosophy. It was a weekly experimental publication of, by and for Krotona School students and Krotona residents. The purpose of *Kaleidoscope* was two-fold: 1) to provide an instrument whereby we keep in touch with one another regarding events and happenings at Krotona and possibly the country; and 2) to provide a forum for expression of ideas about study, work, nature, relationships, world events, almost any subject from the theosophical viewpoint. Many of the issues of *The Krotonian* came from issues of *Kaleidoscope*. *The Krotonian*. Fall 1994. STA for further information.

<sup>12</sup> STA for a print out of the "Covenants and Restrictions for the Taormina Theosophical Community, Inc," (1977). and for a copy of an on-line article mentioning this restriction and other interesting matters, "Enclave Evolves as Jewel of Ojai."

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- <sup>13</sup> Obituaries: "Frederick H. Werth, Ph.D." *The American Theosophist*, Volume 81/Number 4, July/August, 1993, 6. The World University was founded in 1974 in Ojai.  
STA.
- <sup>14</sup> This figure, 250 letters stored in a dropbox, a virtual on-line collection, was determined by a count by our research team. STA for chart and further documents showing the support of The Theosophical Society in America.
- <sup>15</sup> The "Great Plan" was a term used by Annie Besant and her followers referring to the plan of evolution laid out to her and Leadbeater by the Masters, and particularly in reference to the sixth root race to be nurtured in the Ojai Valley, the cradle of the future. The "Great Plan" is mentioned in the *Taormina News*. Volume 1/Number 1. Published by the Taormina Theosophical Community, Inc.: 1969. (STA). This term is also cited in many books, for example in Sloss, Radha Rajagopal. *Lives in the Shadow with Krishnamurti*. (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Ltd. 1991), 89. Also, Aldous Huxley's use of this term may have sprung from his connections with Krotona of old Hollywood.
- <sup>16</sup> Geoffrey Hodson was an occultist, Theosophist, mystic, Liberal Catholic priest, philosopher, esotericist and psychic. His occult experiences began when he was about five or six years old. In dream experiences, he seemed to be connected with the Kundalini, also known as the Serpent Fire.
- He served with distinction in the British Army as an officer during WW1. After the war, he married Jane Carter. Shortly afterwards, he met Mrs. Mary De La Middleton who assisted in his development of clairvoyance. At this point in his career, Geoffrey Hodson and his wife toured Lancashire on a motorcycle and sidecar taking notes on the various types of fairies and nature spirits there. This was the beginning of his work with the angelic kingdom of which he wrote many books throughout his life, the most famous one being, *The Kingdom of the Gods*. The illustrations from his book formed the subject of the stained glass windows of Besant Lodge of Hollywood designed by Helene Vachet. STA for pictures of these windows.
- Hodson served as president of Blavatsky Lodge in Perth, Australia. Next, he traveled to New Zealand, and he became the founder of the New Zealand Vegetarian Society. He was also elected President of the Council of Combined Animal Welfare Organizations.
- He was the author of over fifty books on psychic powers, Theosophy, Spiritualism, mysticism, fairies, angels, meditation, clairvoyance, and health and disease.
- He served as the Director of Studies of the School of Wisdom at the International Headquarters of the Theosophical Society in India for four sessions. He also served as guest lecturer at the Krotona School of Theosophy in Ojai. He gave his last lecture at age 96 and eight months later he died in Auckland, on January 23, 1983. This was extracted from <http://tos.theosophy.org.nz/about-geoffrey-hodson/geoffreyhodson/>. Accessed October 3, 2013. Hodson, Geoffrey. *The Kingdom Of The Gods*. Adyar: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1970.
- <sup>17</sup> Michael, Kay. "Theosophists Find a Home in Ojai Valley." *Kaleidoscope*. Reprinted in the *Ojai Valley News*, Wednesday, July 21, 1982. (STA). Joseph Ross believes that this statement about the clairvoyant visions regarding the Ojai Valley may be attributed to the wrong source by Ruth Wilson, and probably stems from the vision of Marie Russak, a powerful clairvoyant and dear friend of Annie Besant, and other luminaries of the T.S., tutor to Krishnamurti and Nityananda for their studies in English, and comforter to Colonel Olcott at his deathbed. Ross, *Krotona of Old Hollywood*, 58. Joseph Ross stated this opinion regarding Marie Russak's observations during a conversation with Helene Vachet on September 17, 2013. STA.
- <sup>18</sup> Dropbox letter from Dora Kuntz to James Perkins regarding Donald Greenwood. May 1, 1985 and dropbox letter to Joy Mills from Ruth Wilson mentioning the \$2,500.00 from the Hodson Theosophical Community Fund, p.2 of 8. Also STA for additional letter regarding this episode.

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- <sup>19</sup> STA for dropbox letter from Ruth Wilson to Joy Mills, March 2, 1965 regarding the Hitching Post property and newspaper articles about legal issues with the Lucking Property. Also, Taormina Lane Community Association document shows recording date of the Taormina Theosophical Community, Inc. as March 22, 1967.
- <sup>20</sup> Dropbox copy of green-covered Taormina Brochure. June, 1967, 9 of 24 regarding the planting of 600 trees. STA.
- <sup>21</sup> Dropbox letters to Joy Mills from Ruth Wilson of March 3, 1965 and November 13, 1966 regarding the intensive spiritual training of Krishnamurti and others in Sicily. STA. Also see Ross, Joseph. *Krishnamurti: The Taormina Seclusion – 1912*. USA, 2000.
- <sup>22</sup> Ruth Wilson makes a reference to the curative powers of mineral springs. She mistakenly thought that Ojai meant “Nest.” in dropbox letter to Joy Mills November 13, 1966.p.7. Julie Tumamait, Chumash Elder, corrects the mistaken interpretation of “Nest” to “Moon” in the Ojai Valley Visitors Guide flyer, date not given. STA for flyer and dropbox letter.
- <sup>23</sup> Dropbox copy of *Taormina News*. Volume 1/ Number 1, p. 4, December, 1969. (STA).
- <sup>24</sup> *The Taormina Town Crier* of 1989 makes this description. However, the houses did have definite plans as evidenced by the brochures. However, George Wolfe individualized them to a great degree as stated in *Kaleidoscope*, 1982, p.2. STA for a copy of *Kaleidoscope* and house plans and brochures.
- <sup>25</sup> Dropbox letter to Joy Mills from Ruth Wilson. September 7, 1966, p. 3. regarding Libbey-Owens French Norman architectural style and dropbox letter to Joy Mills from Ruth Wilson, February 24, 1967 with added attachments. STA.
- <sup>26</sup> Pictures of L. Verne Lacy’s house can be seen in our archival collection. Trina Grantham was able to locate Ken Beisal, Lacy’s grandson, who confirmed the location of the Lacy house. STA for photography of L. Verne Lacy’s house and to see the 1971-72 Ojai Valley Directory which features Lacy’s house on its cover.
- <sup>27</sup> Ibid. *Kaleidoscope*, 1982. Info about L. Verne Lacy, and dropbox letter to Joy Mills from Ruth Wilson, November 13, 1966. Also, on line info about L. Verne Lacy:  
[http://en.phorio.com/l\\_vern\\_lacy\\_and\\_thomas\\_atherton,\\_wilkes-barre,\\_united\\_states](http://en.phorio.com/l_vern_lacy_and_thomas_atherton,_wilkes-barre,_united_states) accessed July 8, 2013. L. Vern Lacy built a home/office on the east end of Ojai, 3250 E. Ojai Ave. STA.
- <sup>28</sup> [http://www.philadellphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar\\_display.cfm/23537](http://www.philadellphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar_display.cfm/23537) Accessed August 28, 2013 regarding George M. Wolfe. Also, STA for Annual report of the Taormina Theosophical Community, Inc. Sept., 1972 regarding George Wolfe drawing plans for the Manor, etc.
- <sup>29</sup> Gazebo timeline:  
Aug. 31st, 1979, the ideas came to light at a pot-luck dinner.  
Sept. 16, 1979 the twenty people who attended the potluck dinner rented the Great Hall at Krotona and \$4000.00 was pledged.  
Oct. 20, 1979, the Taormina Board authorized use of the Maintenance Lot, #20 for the purpose of community meetings.  
June 7, 1980, Jim Perkins dedicated the Gazebo.  
Also, Maryon Valentine drew the first sketch of the gazebo, and Elaine Needham and Emma Achenback landscaped it initially. STA for further info.
- <sup>30</sup> Dropbox copy of *The American Theosophist*, March, 1988, in article titled “Taormina Retirement Community” says that Onuse is reserved for a few people who are ambulatory but who do not wish to be burdened with preparing their own meals and Annual Report of the Taormina Theosophical Community, Inc., Sept., 1972 mentions George Wolfe drawing plans for the Manor. STA.

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- <sup>31</sup> Mills, Joy. Obit. "James S. Perkins." *The American Theosophist*, Volume 79/Number 2, March/April 1991, 6, and Koffee Klatches, according to *The Taormina Town Crier*. May 1989, 2., were festive occasions. Cakes, breads, candies, cookies, jams and spreads were on the table waiting to be selected. There was also coffee and regular and herb tea. STA.
- <sup>32</sup> Moyer, Virginia. Transitions. " Carl Christensen." *American Theosophists*. Volume 84/Number 7, August 19, 1996 and e-mails from his son, David, to Helene Vachet. STA.
- <sup>33</sup> There are three principal schisms from the original Theosophical Society in America with headquarters in Wheaton, Ill. and international headquarters in Chennai, India. They are The Point Loma Theosophical Society founded by Katherine Tingley, The United Lodge of Theosophists founded by Robert Crosbie and The Arcane School founded by Alice Bailey. This is pointed out by Helene Vachet, a third generation Theosophist.
- <sup>34</sup> Obituary of Bill Laudahn in the American Theosophist, and reminiscences of his niece, Helene, and incomplete notes of Ruth Wilson regarding the Taormina Community written from her home in Ferguson Missouri. STA for images of The Krotona Institute at the end of the footpath and more information about the Krotona Institute.
- <sup>35</sup> Nicholson, Shirley. "Annavene Bunn" *The Krotonian*. Fall, 2012, 6., "Bill Bunn and the Smithsonian." *The Taormina Town Crier*, May 1998, and reminiscences of Helene Vachet, her neighbor. STA.
- <sup>36</sup> Reminiscences of Helene Vachet, a friend of Gina Cerminara, who belonged to Besant Lodge of Hollywood and lived on Beachwood Dr. where it was located, and STA for a copy of an interview with Walden Walch that has a lovely color photo of Dr. Cerminara.
- <sup>37</sup> Telephone conversation with Joseph Ross in September 2013 regarding co-masonry and Ruth Wilson and Ruth Mathews. It should also be noted that a later schism separated the lodge into two factions.
- <sup>38</sup> Requiem Mass speech given by Sheri Petrowski, niece to Ruth Mathews, in August 2013, and reminiscences of John and Helene Vachet.
- <sup>39</sup> Obituary of Ruth Mathews in the "Life Changes" section of Quest: *Journal of the Theosophical Society in America*. Fall, 2013, p. 128 and from reminiscences of Ruth Mathews by Marqui Bury and Helene Vachet.
- <sup>40</sup> Fireshaker lived in house number 38. This art and spirituality are described in the *Los Angeles Times* article online. <http://articles.latimes.com/1996-05-16/entertainment/ca-4946-1-dancing-circle-drumming> Accessed 11-14-13 and from reminiscences of Marqui Bury and John and Helene Vachet. and STA for a copy of *The Taormina Town Crier*. May 1989. p.1. and for the *Los Angeles Times* article and poetry.
- <sup>41</sup> STA for "Open Spaces," *The Ojai Valley Land Conservancy News Bulletin*, Summer 2007 and an article in the *Ventura County Star*, Friday, October 8, 1999.
- <sup>42</sup> The Tibetan Aid Foundation brings Western-style drugs along with traditional Chinese medicine to the ChaZhu Valley in rural Tibet primarily through the health clinic built by the foundation but also with the help of mobile health care workers.
- <sup>43</sup> Silver lawsuit on line.  
<http://homeownersassociationmanagementla.com/Taormina-Theosophical-Community,-Inc.->. Accessed July 20, 2013.  
Court of Appeal of the State of California, Second Appellate District - Division Three  
2nd Civil No. 64262 – Ct. No 69763. Filed: March 17, 1983 - TTCI v. Silver & Silver
- <sup>44</sup> It should be noted that the motto of The Theosophical Society is, "There is no religion higher than truth," but Theosophy is not a religion.

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- <sup>45</sup> Observations of Taormina neighbors regarding the Taormina Urns. STA for pictures of the Urns on Ruth Wilson's stationary and advertisements.
- <sup>46</sup> [http://www.italyguides.it/us/sicily\\_italy/taormina/taormina.htm](http://www.italyguides.it/us/sicily_italy/taormina/taormina.htm). Accessed April 2013. Information about celebrities who visited Taormina in Sicily.
- <sup>47</sup> There are numerous books on Krishnamurti, but to access his connections to famous people quickly, these websites give an excellent summary: [http://www.arielspeaks.com/Philosophy/Jiddu\\_Krishnamurti\\_Biography.html](http://www.arielspeaks.com/Philosophy/Jiddu_Krishnamurti_Biography.html) Accessed September 3, 2014, and The Ojai Krishnamurti Film Festival of 2009 is still posted on-line and gives his connections to famous people: <http://www.kfa.org/dialogue-details.php?id+34> Accessed September 3, 2013.
- <sup>48</sup> [http://www.happyvalleyfdn.org/besant\\_hill\\_school.html](http://www.happyvalleyfdn.org/besant_hill_school.html). Accessed August 30, 2013. Gives a brief history of both the foundation and of Besant Hill School.
- <sup>49</sup> It was necessary to purchase a few feet of easement from Krotona to widen the very narrow Arundale Road to make it a viable entrance and exit. There was a precedent for this request for land because Krotona has sold the Carty family a narrow easement earlier, which became Arundale Road. (add more drop box material.)
- <sup>50</sup> Excellent summary of Arundale connections.  
<http://www.ts-adyar.org/content/george-sydney-arundale-1878-1945>. Accessed October 3, 2013.
- <sup>51</sup> [http://theosophy.ph/encyclo/index.php?title+Arundale,\\_](http://theosophy.ph/encyclo/index.php?title+Arundale,_) Accessed May 13, 2013. This article gives an excellent summary of George Arundale's educational work in India, but doesn't deal with the Montessori connection. For info on the Montessori connection: <http://www.theosophical.org/publications/quest-magazine/1409> Accessed May 13, 2013.
- <sup>52</sup> STA for community programs, flyers, etc.

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<sup>53</sup> The organizations and edifices currently found in the Ojai Valley as well as open spaces dedicated to community use that were direct offshoots of the Theosophical and Krishnamurti movements in the valley are:

**The Beatrice Wood Center For The Arts** is an outgrowth of Annie Besant's original vision, a place where the arts and education are paramount. She envisioned that it would be a center for people who would usher in a new world. The Center is closely affiliated to the Besant Hill School located on land purchased by Annie Besant. The Beatrice Wood Center provides a regular exhibition schedule where there are artist workshops and performances. The center also acts as a continuum joining the artists who shaped Besant Hill School, formerly the Happy Valley School, and the artists who are working today. The Center also serves as a bridge between the International Art World and the local community. Beatrice Wood is both the heart and inspiration for the Center. This has been extracted from <http://www.beatricewood.com/about.html> accessed September 16, 2013.

**Besant Hill School** was the dream and vision of Annie Besant, Guido Fernando, Aldous Huxley, Juddu Krishnamurti, and Rosalind Rajagopal. Annie Besant purchased the 500 acres of land in 1927. It was opened in the fall of 1946 as the Happy Valley School with Dr. Fernando serving as its first Head of School. In 2006 it was renamed as Besant Hill School in her honor. This has been extracted from <http://www.besanthill.org/about/history/founders/>. Accessed October 3, 2013.

**Oak Grove School** opened with three students and two teachers in Arya Vihara, the rambling ranch house on McAndrew Drive that had been Krishnamurti's home since the 1920s. In 1977, the school moved to its current location in Meiners Oaks, and Krishnamurti invited Mark Lee, the former principal of the Rishi Valley Junior School in south India, to come with his wife, Asha and their daughters. Lee would be the founding director of the new school and develop it on 175 acres of land. Extracted from <http://ojaihistory.com/krishnamurti-and-the>. Accessed September 18, 2013. Currently, the Lees live on Taormina Lane in Ojai; and, although Mark is retired from active work at Oak Grove School and working with the KFA, The Krishnamurti Foundation of America, he is active in writing books about Krishnamurti. The school is still operated by the KFA. It is a progressive, private, vegetarian k-12 co-educational boarding school. The curriculum is inspired by the original intent and statement of philosophy left by J. Krishnamurti, the school's founder. Its mission "is to assist students in developing those qualities of mind, heart, and body that will enable them to function with excellence, care and responsibility in the modern world." They try to accomplish their goals by providing and well-rounded and challenging academic experience with a rich extracurricular program, creating a climate of inquiry that is safe, friendly and non-competitive; by encouraging close relationships between students and teachers as well as close contact between the home and school; by supporting an approach to learning that emphasizes depth over coverage; and encouraging students to use their bodies and hearts in addition to their mind in the learning process. This has been extracted from <http://www.oakgroveschool.com/>. Moody, David Edmund. *The Unconditioned Mind: J. Krishnamurti and the Oak Grove School*. Wheaton: quest Books, 2011.

**The Krotona Braille Institute** was founded in 1910 in Boston as the Theosophical Book Association for the Blind. In 1917, it moved to Krotona of old Hollywood as became the Krotona Braille Institute. The institute moved to Ojai in 1917 and consisted of a Braille publishing house and the Baker Memorial Library, which loaned Braille books throughout the world. In addition to being supported by the Krotona Community, volunteers came from the Taormina Community and Ojai at large. Eventually some conflict arose over the choice of books to be printed. Since the property was on Krotona's land, their leadership felt that the Krotona Board should have the final approval over what was to be published. Eventually, the Institute was disbanded. This has been extracted from <http://ojaihistory.com/postcard-krotona-braille-institute/> accessed September 17, 2013. This information is also derived from the reminiscences of Marcia Doty and Helene Vachet.

<sup>54</sup> **The Liberal Catholic Church** was an outgrowth of the vision of C. W. Leadbeater and J. I. Wedgwood. See end-note # 3 regarding the life and works of C. W. Leadbeater.

Meditation Mount was the creative idea of Florence Garrigue who was a student of Alice A. Bailey, the founder of the Arcane School, an institution for esoteric studies. Alice Bailey, earlier, had been a member of the Theosophical Society in America and had served as secretary at the esoteric center known as Krotona in Hollywood. After studying at the Arcane School for ten years, Florence and a small group started the School for Esoteric Studies in New York, which is still active. Next, she became a member of a small informal group of individuals from several countries who met in England to foster meditation to benefit the world. Their method was to use small booklets written on various aspects of spiritual topics and to send them to individuals in a span of every two months. This was the concept that she used upon her return to the US where she founded the US branch of Meditation Groups, Inc. Roberto Assagioli, an Italian psychologist, wrote most of the booklets. It was his mission to bring meditation and spirituality into the realm of psychology and human development. By 1971, Florence had completed another project, the creation of Meditation Mount with buildings designed by architect Zelma Wilson in Tibetan style. Here the main focus was spiritual programs to enhance the awakening of the human soul in all aspects of social endeavor, and daily and monthly Full Moon meditations are one of the most important aspects of their activities. This has been extracted from <http://meditationmount.org/about-the-mount/history/> accessed September 17, 2013.

**The Monica Ros School** was named after Monica Ros, its founder. She married Ricardo Ros, a Theosophist from Havana, Cuba, in 1927. At this time, they were both members of the Theosophical Society and students of the teachings of Krishnamurti. They decided to settle in Ojai after a trip to Madras, India to attend a Theosophical convention. It happened in this way. They decided to go to Ojai before their return to Sydney. Their main interest in that visit was to hear Krishnamurti who spoke regularly in Ojai as his home was there. In 1928, Krishnamurti had his first camp in Ojai, which they also attended. In 1929, the Ros family finally moved to Ojai. For a while, they even lived at Krotona, and Monica would play the violin at lodge meetings. When Krishnamurti broke with the Theosophical Society, they moved away from Krotona and resigned from the Theosophical Society. It is obvious, however, that her connections with both Theosophy and Krishnamurti influenced her educational outlook and the philosophy behind the Monica Ros School. Extracted from [www.monicaros.org/about/about-monica-ros-the-person/in-her-own-words/](http://www.monicaros.org/about/about-monica-ros-the-person/in-her-own-words/) Accessed October 3, 2013 and from reminiscences of Joseph Ross when living at Krotona.

**The Montessori School** has a historic connection with the Theosophical Society through the close friendship of Maria Montessori with Annie Besant. As the story goes, Montessori went to hear Annie Besant speak in London in 1907 after Montessori had established her first Children's House. Annie Besant praised Montessori's work in education, and a strong friendship was developed. The Theosophical Society recognizes many parallels between the lives of Montessori and Besant: "both broke through barriers against women; both were interested in modern exact science and mysticism; and both were charismatic speakers who lectured throughout the world. But perhaps the most important parallel was their common vision of the evolution and the oneness of life." Extracted from <http://www.theosophical.org/publications/1409> accessed September 17, 2013. The Montessori School of Ojai utilizes the teaching methods developed by Maria Montessori in their infant care, preschool, kindergarten, elementary and middle school programs.

**The Ojai Foundation** exists on a 40-acre parcel that was part of 450 acres purchased in 1927 by Dr. Annie Besant. The purpose of this acquisition was "to provide for an eclectic community devoted to artistic, agricultural, and educational projects that would encourage a rich cross-cultural environment in a spiritual climate." The other purpose of the Foundation was to oversee the Happy Valley School, founded in 1946. This has been extracted from <http://www.ojaifoundation.org/about-us/our-history> accessed September 17, 2013.

<sup>55</sup> **The Ojai Retreat** has programs reflecting the philosophy of its founder and executive director, Ulrich Brugger. He is a student of Krishnamurti, although his programs for spiritual and cultural refreshment are more inclusive and try to engage current cutting-edge thinkers, artists and leaders. The Retreat also hosts films, yoga workshops, lectures and book signings in keeping with its philosophy. Extracted from a you tube discussion with Ulrich Brugger by Reza ganjaviwww.rezam...<http://youtube.com/watch?v=eRjatm7zit4> Accessed October 3, 2013.

**John Roine as it is also known, designed The Ojai Taj Mahal or The Pleiades** with the assistance of Rhoda Martin who named it "The Pleiades" because she saw the stars overhead bathing the dome room with light. A priest of Ojai's Liberal Catholic Church, Edward Martin, created this edifice in 1930. It was always associated with Krishnamurti who was said to have sat in his car by the house watching the full moon rise. Ross, Joseph. Krotona, Theosophy & Krishnamurti: Archival Documents of the Theosophical Society's Esoteric Center, Krotona, in Ojai, California. 1927-1931. Vol. V. (First Edition, 2011), 301.

**The Ranch House** was founded by Alan Hooker who helped with the menus and cooking for the Oak Grove School and Krishnamurti personally. Visionary chef Alan Hooker created innovative dishes that he seasoned with herbs and greens such as sorrel and arugula long before they became trendy. Hooker was also an avid plant collector, and he established an herb garden that continues today to supply the restaurant's needs. The Ranch House restaurant opened in 1950 and attracted a wide following to sample its fresh, original dishes. Alan Hooker did the cooking; his wife, Helen, ran the dinning room; and Beatrice Wood, a close friend, painted the chairs for the infant dining place. This was extracted from [http://articles.latimes.com/1996-10-10/food/fo-52230\\_1\\_ranch-house](http://articles.latimes.com/1996-10-10/food/fo-52230_1_ranch-house). Accessed September 18, 2013. The Ranch House is also connected to Theosophy, as the Krotona Institute originally owned the land where it was built. Conversation with Joseph Ross on November 10, 2013.

**The World University.** Benito F. Reyes, a well-known Filipino academic, founded the World University in 1975. As a teenager, Benito Reyes was selected by Theosophical leaders as someone who would become an important world leader. This was similar to the earlier discovery of Krishnamurti. A childless Theosophical couple from Ojai, John and Nell Regan spiritually adopted Reyes. They were told by one of the Theosophical Masters to go to the Philippines, and they would find a child to educate. Actually Benito was not a child. He was sixteen at that time. The Regans financed his higher education, as schooling in the Philippines was costly, although he always won substantial scholarships. They also introduced him to Annie Besant and Krishnamurti who became his life-long friends.

Reyes was a professor at the Far Eastern University for 21 years. In 1951-52, he taught at Boston University as a Fulbright-Smith-Mundt professor, and in 1965, he was a Fulbright-Hays philosophy professor at the State University of New York. His book, *Scientific Evidence of the Existence of the Soul* was the result of a literary contest funded by James Kidd, a wealthy prospector who was willing to bequeath his entire estate to anyone who could prove there was a visual spirit; a spirit which we could see. His scholar in residence Fulbright appointment was granted after his book's publication.

Reyes lectured at Harvard, Brown and other universities in America and around the world. He published numerous books on philosophy and psychology and even poetry. He was a member of the international Association of University Presidents that co-sponsored the World Peace University of Costa Rica. He was also associated with the Institute de la vie of France, International Institute of Environment in England and in the Institute of Religious Psychology of Japan to just name a few of his distinguished positions. For the complete list, see the documents provided by The World University or visit their campus.



## Taormina Historic District City Landmark Application

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<sup>56</sup> On the 15th anniversary of the World University, Denise Hamilton, LA Times Staff Writer, interviewed Dr. Reyes. He told her that his spiritual leader in the Philippines chose Ojai for the location of the World University because it was destined to become “the new Athens of the New Age.” This statement was made in reference to the Greek city where philosophy and wisdom flourished more than 2,500 years ago. (STA for the copy of this article and other information about Dr. Reyes.)

As a teenager, he married his childhood sweetheart, Dominga Lopez, and they had seven children. He was president of the Theosophical society in the Philippines for over twenty years along with his other endeavors. This was extracted from documents provided by Nora Reyes, Benito Reyes’s daughter, at the World University in Ojai on October 7, 2013. and from a phone conversation with Thor Alcyone Reyes, Benito’s son, on October 23, 2013. STA for papers from The World University.

**Bookends** is a unique bookstore of finely selected books from rare spiritual tomes, antiquarian delights, perfect condition hardcovers to delightful children’s books. It is located in a beautifully renovated church in Meiners Oaks. The owners, Marcia Doty and Celeste Mastesevac, are former residents of the Krotona Institute and have a long association with Theosophy and Krishnamurti, which influences their book selection and the overall ambiance. Extracted from <http://bookendsbookstore.com/about/>. Accessed September 18, 2013, and from “Woman of the Ojai Valley.” A special magazine published by The Ojai Valley News in 2013, p. 23, and from observations of Marqui Bury and Helene Vachet. STA for the special magazine, “Women of Ojai”).



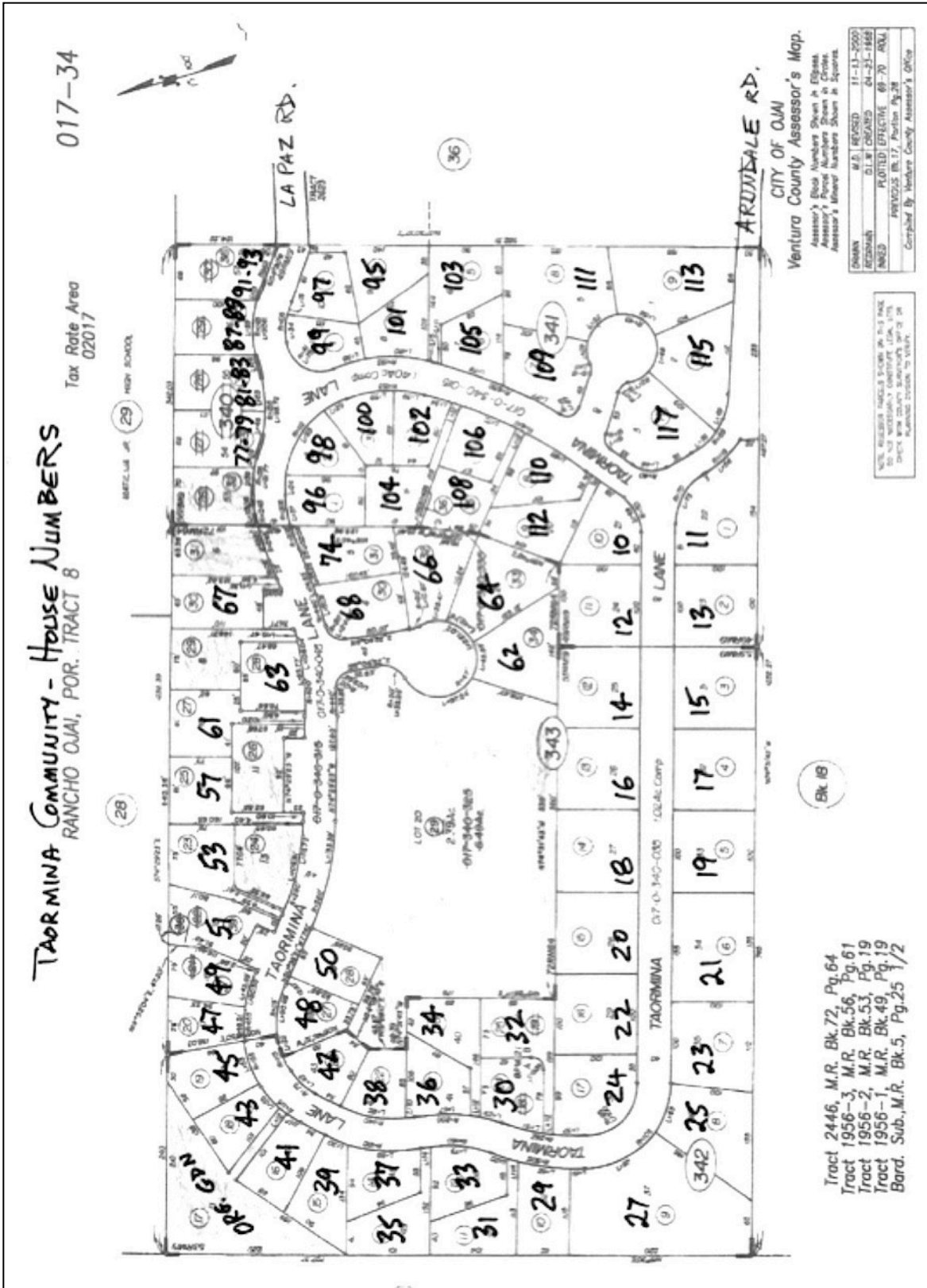


Figure 3. Assessor Parcel Map for Taormina Historic District

| No.   | Built | Architect             | Contractor        | APN           | Original Owner            | Notes                            |
|-------|-------|-----------------------|-------------------|---------------|---------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 10    | 1969  | Verne Lacy            | Henry Davis       | 017-0-343-105 | John M. Dahlstrom         |                                  |
| 11    | 1969  | Verne Lacy            | Henry Davis       | 017-0-342-015 | Hazel & Lou Gruber        |                                  |
| 12    | 1969  | Verne Lacy            | Seabon Cox        | 017-0-343-115 | Annamaria & Alfred Graham |                                  |
| 13    | 1971  | Lacy +Wolfe           |                   | 017-0-342-025 | Harry Latham              |                                  |
| 14    | 1970  | Hoffman+Loeffler      | S. Cox            | 017-0-343-055 | Wallace Carrithers        |                                  |
| 15    |       | unknown               | S. Cox            | 017-0-342-035 | Dorothy Switzer           |                                  |
| 16    | 1969  | unknown               | S. Cox            | 017-0-343-135 |                           |                                  |
| 17    | 1993  | Carlos Carrillo       | Tim Droney        | 017-0-342-045 | Dorothy Switzer           |                                  |
| 18    | 1979  | Jon Dieges            | S. Cox            | 017-0-343-145 | Slavko + Barbara Ojack    |                                  |
| 19    | 1993  | Carlos Carrillo       | Tim Droney        | 017-0-342-055 | Lauden                    |                                  |
| 20    | 1974  | Verne Lacy            | S. Cox            | 017-0-343-155 |                           |                                  |
| 21    | 1985  | Carlos Torres         | S. Cox            | 017-0-342-065 | James + Helene Hill       |                                  |
| 22    | 1974  | Lacy+Wolfe            | Robert Martin     | 017-0-343-165 | Bernice Small             |                                  |
| 23    | 1973  | unknown               | S. Cox            | 017-0-342-075 | Carl Christianson         |                                  |
| 24    | 1971  | unknown               | S. Cox            | 017-0-343-175 | Evelyn Neu                |                                  |
| 25    | 1975  | unknown               | S. Cox            | 017-0-342-085 | Carl Christianson         |                                  |
| 27    | 1969  | George Wolfe          | Don Williams      | 017-0-342-095 | Ruth Wilson               |                                  |
| 29    | 1972  | Verne Lacy            | S. Cox            | 017-0-342-105 | Tootie Hogenboom          |                                  |
| 30    | 1973  | Helman Biddison       |                   | 017-0-343-205 | Erna Achenbach            |                                  |
| 31    | 1972  | Verne Lacy            | S. Cox            | 017-0-342-115 |                           |                                  |
| 32    | 1970  | unknown               |                   | 017-0-343-325 | V. Jackson                |                                  |
| 33    | 1974  | Lacy, Atherson, Davis | S. Cox            | 017-0-342-125 | James Perkins             |                                  |
| 34    | 1969  | unknown               |                   | 017-0-343-205 | Ted Valentine             |                                  |
| 35    | 1973  | Verne Lacy            | S. Cox            | 017-0-342-135 | Bonnie Cary               | model shown as "Acacia"          |
| 36    | 1970  | Verne Lacy            | S. Cox            | 017-0-343-215 |                           |                                  |
| 37    | 1975  | Lacy, Atherton, Davis | S. Cox            | 017-0-342-145 | Emma Clayton              |                                  |
| 38    | 1972  | Verne Lacy            | S. Cox            | 017-0-343-225 |                           | design: "Bamboo Modified" duplex |
| 39    | 1971  | George Wolfe          | S. Cox            | 017-0-342-155 | Elaine Needham            |                                  |
| 41    | 1973  | unknown               | S. Cox            | 017-0-342-165 |                           |                                  |
| 42    | 1973  | unknown               | S. Cox            | 017-0-343-235 | TTCI                      |                                  |
| 43    | 1975  | unknown               | S. Cox            | 017-0-342-185 | Ellen Morchel             |                                  |
| 45    | 1974  | unknown               | S. Cox            | 017-0-342-195 | Oliver Green              |                                  |
| 47    | 2008  | unknown               |                   | 017-0-342-205 | TTCI/Susan Williamson     | modular - non-contributor        |
| 48    | 1979  | Alexander Reed        | Berry+Demaria     | 017-0-343-275 | Doris Jones               |                                  |
| 49    | 1978  | unknown               | Berry+Demaria     | 017-0-342-215 |                           |                                  |
| 50    | 1979  | Don Cook              | S. Cox            | 017-0-343-285 |                           |                                  |
| 51    | 1979  | Hausssler             | S. Cox            | 017-0-342-225 | Herre+Marie Van Der-Veen  |                                  |
| 53    | 1981  | unknown               | S. Cox            | 017-0-342-235 |                           |                                  |
| 57    | 1987  | unknown               | Tim Droney        | 017-0-342-255 | Parfitt                   |                                  |
| 61    | 1979  | unknown               |                   | 017-0-342-275 | Slavco+Barbara Ojack      | non-contributor                  |
| 62    | 1978  | unknown               | Berry+Demaria     | 017-0-343-345 | Zipora Schreiber          |                                  |
| 63    | 1983  | unknown               | S. Cox            | 017-0-342-285 |                           |                                  |
| 64    | 1978  | unknown               | Bob Berry         | 017-0-343-335 |                           |                                  |
| 66    | 1981  | unknown               | Carlos Torres     | 017-0-343-325 |                           |                                  |
| 67    | 1978  | unknown               | Berry+Demaria     | 017-0-342-305 | Ann Packard               |                                  |
| 68    | 1978  | George Wolfe          | Berry+Demaria     | 017-0-343-305 | Walter Biri               |                                  |
| 74    |       | unknown               |                   | 017-0-343-315 |                           |                                  |
| 77-79 | 1971  | Verne Lacy            | S. Cox            | 017-0-342-335 | TTCI                      | duplex                           |
| 81-83 | 1972  | Verne Lacy            | John W. Rentchler | 017-0-342-345 | TTCI                      | duplex                           |
| 87-89 | 1972  | Verne Lacy            | John W. Rentchler | 017-0-342-355 | Ruth Wilson               | duplex                           |
| 91-93 | 1972  | Verne Lacy            | S. Cox            | 017-0-342-365 | TTCI                      | duplex                           |
| 95    | 1968  | Verne Lacy            | Andre Marin       | 017-0-341-035 |                           |                                  |
| 96    | 1968  | Verne Lacy            | Andre Marin       | 017-0-343-015 |                           |                                  |
| 97    |       | unknown               |                   | 017-0-341-025 |                           |                                  |
| 98    | 1969  | Verne Lacy            | Andre Marin       | 017-0-343-025 |                           |                                  |
| 99    | 1968  | Verne Lacy            | Marin             | 017-0-341-015 | Elmer Bryan               |                                  |
| 100   | 1968  | Verne Lacy            | Marin             | 017-0-343-035 | Esther Natterland         |                                  |
| 101   | 1968  | Verne Lacy            | Marin             | 017-0-341-045 |                           |                                  |
| 102   | 1968  | Verne Lacy            | Marin             | 017-0-343-045 |                           |                                  |
| 103   | 1968  | Verne Lacy            | Marin             | 017-0-341-055 | Ann Packard               |                                  |

| No. | Built | Architect          | Contractor        | APN           | Original Owner  | Notes                   |
|-----|-------|--------------------|-------------------|---------------|-----------------|-------------------------|
| 104 | 1980  | Verne Lacy         | Marin             | 017-0-343-055 |                 |                         |
| 105 | 1968  | Verne Lacy         | Marin             | 017-0-341-065 |                 |                         |
| 106 | 1968  | Verne Lacy         | Marin             | 017-0-343-075 | William Conrad  |                         |
| 108 | 1969  | unknown            | S. Cox            | 017-0-343-355 |                 |                         |
| 109 | 1968  | Verne Lacy         | Davis             | 017-0-341-075 |                 |                         |
| 110 | 1968  | Verne Lacy         | Davis             | 017-0-343-085 |                 |                         |
| 111 | 1969  | Cook/ Zelma Wilson | Bushman           | 017-0-341-085 | Henry Rybarczyk |                         |
| 112 | 1970  | unknown            | S. Cox            | 017-0-343-095 |                 |                         |
| 113 | 1968  | Verne Lacy         | Marin             | 017-0-341-095 |                 |                         |
| 115 | 1976  | unknown            | John W. Rentchler | 017-0-341-105 | Marjorie Keller |                         |
| 117 | 1976  | unknown            | S. Cox            | 017-0-341-115 | William Laudahn |                         |
|     | 1980  |                    |                   | 017-0-342-325 |                 | Maintenance area+Gazebo |
|     |       |                    |                   | 017-0-342-175 |                 | Organic garden          |
|     |       |                    |                   | 017-0-342-245 |                 | vacant lot              |
|     |       |                    |                   | 017-0-342-265 |                 | vacant lot              |
|     |       |                    |                   | 017-0-342-315 |                 | vacant lot              |
|     |       |                    |                   | 017-0-343-295 |                 | "the mesa"              |
|     |       |                    |                   | 017-0-342-295 |                 | vacant lot              |

