

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places Registration Form**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

**1. Name of Property**

Historic name: Hugh Edgar Johnson House

Other names/site number: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

**2. Location**

Street & number: 444 W. Brookdale Place

City or town: Fullerton State: CA County: Orange

Not For Publication:  Vicinity:

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this \_\_\_ nomination \_\_\_ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

\_\_\_ national                      statewide                      local

Applicable National Register Criteria: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_A              \_\_\_B              \_\_\_C              \_\_\_D

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#### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

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Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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#### 5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

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**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>3</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	sites
<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	structures
<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	objects
<u>3</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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**6. Function or Use**

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC: Single dwelling

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC: Single dwelling

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> & 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY REVIVALS: Spanish Colonial Revival

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Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Stucco; clay tile; wood; concrete

Foundation: concrete

Walls: stucco

Roof: clay tile

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a summary paragraph that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

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### Summary Paragraph

The Hugh Edgar Johnson House is a one-story plus half basement, wood-frame, Spanish Colonial Revival dwelling that has some Mayan Revival influences. Constructed and designed by local notable builder Evan J. Herbert in 1928, it is situated about a mile northwest of downtown Fullerton, California, in a homogeneous neighborhood that still reflects its 1920s development. Facing north, the house sits on a 94.65- by 140-foot parcel at one end of the two-block Brookdale Heights Preservation District. Situated on a corner lot with an elevated pad, and designed with eye-catching and distinctive massing of forms and features, the house stands out within a neighborhood of many outstanding historic residences. The house, detached three-car garage, and a small, single-room guesthouse at the rear of the property are contributing resources. The north, south, and east sides of the dwelling are very intact; the west side's arch-lined porch was enclosed. Several minor changes have been made to the interior, but those have not substantially altered the original appearance. The residence retains a high degree of historic integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

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## Narrative Description

### Location and Setting

The Hugh Edgar Johnson House is located on the southeast corner of Brookdale Place and Richman Avenue, about a mile northwest of downtown Fullerton, California. It is situated at one end of Brookdale Heights – the 300 and 400 blocks of West Brookdale Place – protected with a Preservation Zone in October 1998. Originally promoted as an area of superior housing and attractive views, Brookdale Heights was a focal point of residential construction in Fullerton from 1926 to 1930. By 1931, over seventy percent of the lots in the two-block tract were purchased and homes constructed, but the area was never fully developed until the 1950s. Most of the homes are period revival dwellings (e.g., Tudor Revival, Spanish Colonial Revival, Storybook, etc.).

Once known as Hospitality Lane, Brookdale Heights features hillside lots, beautiful Jacaranda trees, distinctive street lamps, and multi-level homes. The neighborhood is one of the most homogeneous in Fullerton, with plantings, lighting, sidewalks, and houses combining to produce a feeling distinctly that of the 1920s. Today the original ambience is still intact, with remodeling and new construction having been discrete and well adapted to the setting. The Hugh Edgar Johnson House is a designated Fullerton Local Landmark, as are a number of other nearby homes: the Hirigoyen House (400 W. Brookdale Place), the Model Home of 1927 (701 N. Richman Avenue), and the Abbott House (705 N. Richman Avenue).

### Exterior

Situated on a 94.65- by 140-foot lot, the house is a one-story with a half basement (2,874-square feet in area) wood-framed building sheathed in stucco. The smooth stucco walls are painted white, with the trim green and dark orange to match exterior terracotta features. Primarily Spanish Colonial Revival in style, with Mayan Revival touches, the home was designed with an unusual massing of forms and features unlike any other residence of its vintage. A low-pitched, red-tiled gable roof with no eaves accentuates the simple, block-like structural form of the dwelling. Delineated by concrete sidewalks, the house sits on a corner lot with an elevated pad. A large setback from the two public streets combined with tropical-themed landscaping contributes to the property's unusual appearance.

The Spanish Colonial Revival style is apparent in the low-pitched clay tile roof, smooth stucco walls, terracotta air vent tubes, and decorative iron work on window grilles, gates, lights, and front door speakeasy. There are a few exterior Mayan Revival elements seen on wood posts, window dividers on the front facade, and columns at the front entrance.

The main entrance to the two-bedroom, 2½-bathroom home, which faces north, is via a five-foot wide patterned concrete walkway scored to look like jagged stones, with four steps leading to a small patio and wood-paneled front door painted green, white, and tan. Three dramatic floor-to-ceiling multi-paned windows (20 lights each) face the semi-defined entry area. Positioned on both sides of the oversized front door, lit by a hanging wrought iron light, are two concrete half columns topped by curved scrolled-shaped capitals. The ceiling above the doorway slants upward, adding to the feeling that one is entering a temple.

Deeply recessed casement windows are found on all sides of the residence. Carved wooden columns within some of the window openings provide unusual detailing. Three sets of double casement windows on the north (front) elevation are separated by hand-tooled decorative wooden dividers. The west elevation features three arched windows (8 lights each) with 16-inch molding surrounds, added in the

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1950s. The south side contains two double casement windows; two single-pane casement windows, which service the bathrooms; and one large picture window with two bands of three-light windows on each side. The east side contains one single light casement window decorated with a wrought iron grille; five double casement windows; one glass block window; and a large picture window off the patio with decorative wood posts. With the exception of the west elevation casement windows, all of the windows and trim are original. Some of the windows are shaded by custom-designed fixed cloth awnings.

The east side features a small patio enclosed by a 32-inch-high concrete wall. The patio is shaded by a wood-slat roof supported by four wooden posts with capitals embellished with ziggurat or stepped-patterned wood. The patio is accessed by a single door from the laundry room, a single door from the reading room, and French doors off the dining room.

The rear portion of the property is surrounded by a brick fence, with access to the back portion of the home provided by two wrought iron gates on the east and west sides of the property. A matching wrought iron gate on the south side leads to an alley that runs along the rear of the property. A concrete driveway on the east side of the property leads to a contributing detached three-car garage with metal garage doors, painted the same green color as the house trim, topped by transoms. When the home was built, single-car garages dominated Fullerton, and a three-car garage was unusual. A separate attached work room runs along the west side of the garage. Most likely originally used by Mildred Johnson, an avid horticulturist, as a garden workroom, the long, narrow room now contains the original kitchen cabinets moved from the house in the 1960s.

Positioned to the west of the garage, at the rear of the property, is a small contributing guesthouse (500-square-feet in area) constructed in the 1950s. Essentially one large room, the building was originally used as entertaining space separate from the main dwelling. Spanish-styled, the painted brick guesthouse is covered by a red-tile roof. Facing north, the guesthouse is entered through two sets of screened wood-framed glass French doors, which are sandwiched between two floor-to-ceiling ten light windows. A matching set of French doors with sidelights on the west side lead to a small wooden deck. The guesthouse interior features a brick fireplace, a kitchenette on the east wall, and a concrete floor covered with square black and white vinyl tiles.

The rear of the property is hardscape primarily composed of 12-inch terracotta tiles; the front and west sides are covered with a grass lawn and semi-tropical-themed landscaping. A variety of mature palm trees (e.g., Sago, Queen Palm, Pigmy Date) are positioned on each side of the property, along with Bird of Paradise, variegated Mock Orange, Fortnight Lily, and Indian Hawthorne plantings.

## **Interior**

Entrance through the front door leads directly into a small entry hall which has two closets on the right, one for coats, the other a former telephone room, now used for storage. The solid mahogany doors are embellished with a row of bullseye rosettes (three on each door). The ceiling is lined with roped-shaped stucco. A wood-framed glass door (8 lights) leads directly into a sunroom covered with 12-inch square terracotta floor tiles. Light is provided by three arched windows on the west side, three Spanish-styled wrought iron wall scones, and a wrought iron ceiling light that hangs from the wood-beam ceiling. The long, narrow sunroom, which runs the length of the house, features a wet bar and storage cabinet added in the mid-2000s. Countertop matte tiles were designed in muted green, blue, brown, and tan colors to match the colors on the Aztec-styled fireplace in the living room. A mahogany door with glass and wrought-iron detailing at the rear of the room leads to the backyard and guesthouse. The door features a

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glass insert that opens to provide air into the sunroom. The door's original sidelights were replaced with glass blocks in the 1950s.

Two sets of wood-frame glass French doors lead from the sunroom to a large living room, the focal point of the home. Two dramatic large wrought iron chandeliers drop from the barrel-shaped ceiling. The south wall is dominated by a built-in bookcase; the east wall features a striking 7- by 14-foot wood-burning fireplace surrounded by Aztec-themed tiles created by California Clay Products (Calco). Assembled like a jigsaw puzzle, the top of the fireplace surround features Xiuhtecuhtli, the Aztec god of fire and heat, followed by glyph tiles positioned on both sides of the fireplace box. The hearth is covered with teal, green, brown, and tan matte finished tiles in various geometric shapes. Created by noted tileist Rufus B. Keeler, the design is based upon Aztec tiles found in ancient Mexican ruins. The fireplace surround is an enlarged and customized version of Mantel No. 151 from the 1925 manufacturing catalog [Figure 1].<sup>1</sup>

The living room – the central and most public room in the house – leads out to other public and private spaces. Double glass French doors on the north side lead to the formal dining room, which in turn, leads to the kitchen and laundry room. An arched doorway on the east side leads to a small library/office with two built-in bookcases on either side of the entryway and then to a reading room and a bathroom. The reading room was originally used as a private dressing and wardrobe room by Mildred Johnson. A narrow hallway on the south side leads to two bedrooms and two bathrooms which run along the back side of the home, with a door on the left of the hallway leading down to a 10- by 12-foot half basement which contains two furnaces and other mechanical equipment.

The formal rectangular-shaped dining room off the living room features the original wrought iron chandelier hanging from a cork ceiling covered with a stenciled leaf pattern. World War II blackout drapes hang from wrought iron curtain rods. Directly off the dining room is a rectangular-shaped kitchen which has a small eat-in area on the northwest corner. The kitchen has been modernized with green granite countertops and an island, but the cabinets were designed to match the original ones moved to the workroom adjacent to the garage. Off the kitchen is a small laundry room with a concrete floor, which has an exterior door to the patio on the east side of the house.

The first bathroom off the hallway, painted a pale blue grey color, contains the original tub, pedestal sink, medicine chest, and dressing table with mirror. The walls are covered with original four-inch square grey ceramic tiles with pink trim. Similar in style, the second bathroom, painted white, includes the original four-inch square mint green tiles; the pedestal sink and toilet are later additions. There is a half bathroom or powder room having access from the laundry room.

The smooth stucco walls in the public areas are painted white, with color reserved for the private areas. The master bedroom is painted a pale green; the second bedroom is blue; and the library/office is pale orange. The floors are covered with original oak wood flooring, with the exception of the tiled-floor bathrooms, the concrete-floored laundry room, and the terracotta-floored sunroom. Doors and trim in the public area near the front entrance are built of mahogany, but Douglas fir was used in the rear portions of the home. The large number of windows provide a light and airy feel to the interior, with a number of floor-to-ceiling windows looking out over the neighborhood. With the exception of a few lights, all of the chandeliers, sconces, and ceiling lights are original, as is door hardware, plasterwork, window and baseboard trim, and other finishes. Overall, the home is in excellent condition.

<sup>1</sup> Calco Tile Manufacturing Corporation (South Gate, CA: Calco, 1925?), 14. Catalog reproduction; on file, Local History Room, Fullerton Public Library.

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### **Additions/Changes and Integrity**

From 1928 to 1952, both the exterior and interior of the house remained intact. After the death of Clinton H. Withers in 1953, owner Nella Winters invited her daughter and son-in-law, Virginia (1918-2003) and Ralph H. Hughes (1911-1968), to move in with her so she could keep the home. The two women did not get along well, and after an argument about the kitchen, Hughes enclosed the porch on the west side and turned it into a second kitchen. From 1953 to 1957, he also constructed the small building (guesthouse) at the rear of the property as entertaining space for himself and his wife; built a brick wall that surrounds the rear of the property; added a small addition at the rear of the house for a dressing area in the master bedroom with closets on either sides of the double casement window; replaced the glass-paned sidelights on the sunroom's door; added a glass block window on the east side of the residence; and replaced the garage wooden barn doors with the current upward-lifting metal doors.<sup>2</sup>

In the 1960s, Dorothy and Edward Premo made changes to the residence to accommodate their four children. Hugh Edgar Johnson's office, accessible through French doors off the living room, was turned into a bedroom. A wall of bookcases was installed over the French doors, and the hallway was reconfigured to provide access to the bedroom. Edward Premo used the half basement as his personal office, adding shelves to the walls; the kitchen was remodeled with the original 1928 cabinets removed to the work room off the garage; and a washer and dryer were added to the second kitchen in the sunroom.<sup>3</sup>

In 2002, the current owners removed remnants of the kitchen and washer and dryer from the sunroom, adding in a wet bar and cabinets. The kitchen was remodeled with period appropriate cabinets, with modern appliances replacing the avocado green ones installed in the 1960s. Although the current owners were able to restore the counter and wall bathroom tiles, the floor tiles were unsalvageable and replaced by similarly-styled ceramic tiles.

Changes to the exterior and interior have not significantly altered the original appearance of the residence, which retains a high degree of historic integrity. The dwelling still expresses its initial 1920s historic neighborhood setting. It retains most of its original design, materials, and workmanship, including interior and exterior features, such as window casings, trimwork, doors, floors, plasterwork, lighting, fireplace, and other decorative architectural detailing. The retention of almost all of the features of its original design and materials allows the dwelling to convey its historic and continuing use as a private residence and to retain integrity of association.

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<sup>2</sup> Tiki Premo Clayton to Maureen Burton and Albert Gagnon, February 2, 2019. Copy of letter on file, Local History Room, Fullerton Public Library.

<sup>3</sup> Tiki Premo Clayton to Maureen Burton, March 5, 2019. Copy of letter on file, Local History Room, Fullerton Public Library.



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### 8. Statement of Significance

#### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

#### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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Areas of Significance  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Period of Significance

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Dates

1928  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Johnson, Hugh Edgar  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Cultural Affiliation

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Architect/Builder

Herbert, Evan J.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The house at 444 West Brookdale Place in Fullerton, California is significant under National Register of Historic Places Criterion C at the local level of significance for its Spanish Colonial Revival and Mayan Revival influenced architecture. The combination of Spanish and Mayan architectural elements is unique to Fullerton, and the dwelling is the only one with Mayan and Aztec decorative elements on the exterior and interior. The dramatic temple-like entryway, decorative windows, and ziggurat porch posts are unique to Fullerton. The interior features a rare California Clay Products Company (Calco) Aztec-styled fireplace surround, the only one identified in Fullerton. The dwelling is an unusual and outstanding example of the work of notable local building designer and contractor Evan J. Herbert, who constructed two buildings previously listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

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Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least one paragraph for each area of significance.)

### **Historical Background**

In the early 1920s, Harry Gantz (1888-1949), a former World War I aviator, began carving out land from the southern section of his 140-acre El Dorado Ranch, a land-holding that ranged between Harbor Boulevard (formerly Spadra Road) and Richman Avenue, to develop the Malvern-Jacaranda Subdivision. Encompassing Malvern Avenue, Jacaranda Place, and the 100 and 200 blocks of Brookdale Place, the 18-block area (260 lots) – now a designated Preservation District – consists of predominantly modest Craftsman bungalows and period revival dwellings constructed for middle-class homebuyers. While few of the houses in this district are exceptional architecturally, nearly all are attractive and have been maintained.

In 1924, Gantz made the decision to develop an additional subdivision called Brookdale Heights that encompassed the 300 and 400 blocks of West Brookdale Place. Gantz's second wife, Lois Weber (1879-1939), an important and prolific film director, provided part of the development's financing. Gantz took over the advertising and selling of the lots; Weber oversaw the street design and construction of the first homes [Figure 2]. Corner lots sold for \$3,000, with interior lots going between \$1,800 and \$2,400, with the cost of an average house ranging between \$8,000 and \$10,000, a comparatively expensive price at the time. Unlike Gantz's first middle-class development, Brookdale Heights was intended for "refined people" with advertisements noting that the lovely neighborhood was "Beautifully Located – Carefully Planned – Rigidly Restricted."<sup>4</sup>

Adding to her growing real estate empire, Weber, the most important female film director in American history, quickly introduced herself to the influential women in Fullerton,<sup>5</sup> using her widespread celebrity to promote and sell homes in the tract.<sup>6</sup> Film magazines and local newspapers wrote of the visits of Weber's famous movie friends to El Dorado Ranch, and the couple's association with Brookdale Heights

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<sup>4</sup> "Brookdale Heights [Advertisement]," Fullerton Daily News Tribune, May 23, 1927.

<sup>5</sup> "Lois Weber Honored by Local Ebell Club," Fullerton Daily News Tribune, February 18, 1927.

<sup>6</sup> "Miss Weber's Success Helps Fullerton to Be Successful," Fullerton Daily News Tribune, April 16, 1927.

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added to the development's luster and prominence.<sup>7</sup> Well-to-do Fullerton residents – doctors, attorneys, politicians, bankers – quickly began to purchase in the subdivision.

On May 31, 1927, Hugh Edgar and Mildred Johnson purchased three lots facing Richman Avenue (Deed 52/228) in Brookdale Heights (Tract 686) from Harry Gantz. On February 20, 1928, the couple signed a contract to have notable local builder Evan J. Herbert design and construct a \$15,000 home on the newly purchased land.<sup>8</sup> The Johnsons, who had lived at the same location on West Commonwealth Avenue since moving to Fullerton in 1893, appeared to be planning their final dream home with the expectation that Hugh Edgar Johnson would retire in 1929. Newspaper society articles indicate that the couple had settled into their newly constructed home by September 1928.<sup>9</sup> Mildred Johnson died of a stroke in the home on October 22, 1931, and her husband continued to live in the dwelling until his death in 1935.

On November 12, 1932, Johnson married his former mistress, Jessie Elvira Smith Engstrom, in Ventura County. Prior to the marriage, Johnson purchased a \$25,000 Beverly Hills mansion (722 North Roxbury Drive) for her, and signed an affidavit noting that he was the father of her daughter, known as Beverly Smith or Beverly Engstrom, born in 1920. Johnson died on May 16, 1935, leaving a will that denied the legality of his marriage to Mrs. Engstrom (she obtained a mail order Mexican divorce from her previous husband) and the parentage of her daughter, claiming that the affidavit was signed under threat and duress.<sup>10</sup> Despite scurrilous attacks, the “illegal” or “reputed” Mrs. Johnson hired Isidore B. Dockweiler (1867-1947), one of the shrewdest and most powerful lawyers in Los Angeles (Dockweiler State Beach is named for him), to break the will.<sup>11</sup> The well-publicized case would go through the courts from May 1935 to June 1937, and Mrs. Johnson was eventually declared the legal wife of Hugh Edgar Johnson, and Beverly his daughter.<sup>12</sup> The second Mrs. Johnson gained ownership of the home on Brookdale Place, valued at \$10,000, along with the Fullerton Daily News Tribune building, and the Johnsons' first home on West Commonwealth Avenue. The second Mrs. Johnson had signed a contract with Dockweiler agreeing to pay him forty percent of what she obtained from the Johnson estate. When she did not pay the agreed amount, Dockweiler sued her, and obtained the Brookdale Place dwelling, along with the other two Fullerton properties, in 1939.<sup>13</sup>

On April 8, 1939, Dockweiler sold the home to Chilton H. Withers (1890-1953), co-owner of Withers Bros. Ltd., an independent Fullerton fruit packing and shipping company, and his wife, Zella D. Withers (1893-1958). After Zella Withers death in 1958, her daughter and son-in-law, Virginia and Robert Hughes, purchased a new home in north Buena Park from Acron Investments, trading in 444 West Brookdale Place on their new house. Acron Investments went broke before the new Buena Park tract was completed and sold the Brookdale Place home at the greatly reduced price of \$26,500 to Dorothy L. and Kenneth W. Premo in 1959. An employee of the Rain Bird Consumer Products Manufacturing Corporation, Kenneth Premo invented an impact driver sprinkler (Patent No. 4632312) that advanced

<sup>7</sup> Grace Kingsley, “So Lois Weber Entertains!: Stella Visits the Ranch of Miss Weber,” Los Angeles Times, March 20, 1927; “Famous Movie Stars Gantz Ranch Guests,” Santa Ana Daily Evening Register, August 24, 1927, etc.

<sup>8</sup> “Many Permits are Granted in Fullerton,” Santa Ana Daily Evening Register, February 20, 1928. In the 1930 Census, the home was valued at \$25,000.

<sup>9</sup> “Fullerton,” Santa Ana Register, September 3, 1928.

<sup>10</sup> “Child’s Paternity Denied by Will of Ex-Publisher,” Los Angeles Times, May 18, 1935.

<sup>11</sup> “Edgar Johnson’s Will Is Contested by Woman Who Was Termed ‘Illegal’ Wife,” Santa Ana Register, June 5, 1935.

<sup>12</sup> “Once-Repudiated Widow to Get \$68,000 from Estate of Late Edgar H. Johnson,” Santa Ana Register, June 26, 1937. On July 2, 1942, Beverly Smith filed a correction to her birth record with the California Dept. of Public Health, naming Hugh Edgar Johnson as her father.

<sup>13</sup> “Mrs. Johnson Fights \$40,000 Estate Claim,” Santa Ana Register, December 29, 1938.

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Orton Englehart's original 1933 sprinkler that had revolutionized irrigation and the food production industry. Premo used the half basement of the home as his office. In 1986, the Premos retired to Camp Nelson, California, and the home was purchased by Robert and Susan Sanders, an insurance salesman and real estate agent respectively, for \$237,500, who, in turn, sold it to the current owners in 1999 for \$500,000. Good stewards of the home, the current owners have retained and restored the residence's historic elements over the past twenty years.

### **Newspaper Publisher/Editor Hugh Edgar Johnson (1868-1935)**

A colorful character in a colorful period of journalism, Hugh Edgar Johnson was the personification of an early American country newspaper editor and proprietor. After starting three Orange County newspapers, Johnson was enticed to move his Tribune to Fullerton in 1893, by the promise of 300 paid-in-advance subscribers. Johnson established the Fullerton Tribune when the town was little more than a hard-packed plot of bare earth, and under his hand for nearly 40 years the newspaper flourished in parallel with the growth and prosperity of the city. In the early days of the newspaper, Johnson was the Tribune – gathering, writing, editing, and placing the news in various positions in the pages of the newspaper, and writing all the editorial opinions. In an era known for fiery journalism, his hard-hitting reporting, vitriolic editorials, and caustic wit were legendary throughout Southern California. One of the few Democratic editors in Orange County, Johnson and his newspaper would provide the still-fledgling townsite with a cohesive identity while playing a major role in shaping the attitudes of his readers and the town. The Tribune remains the only day-to-day chronicle of early Fullerton, and Johnson remains the most significant and longest-serving editor and newspaper owner in the city's history.

Born on February 28, 1868, in Ashville, North Carolina, Hugh Edgar Johnson was the oldest of nine children born to Merriman Haskew Johnson (1836-1906) and Laura Ann Sitton (1846-1925). **[Figure 3]** A farmer and carpenter, Merriman Johnson served as a Second Lieutenant of the North Carolina 16th Infantry Regiment during the Civil War, and was one of about 800 Union and Confederate veterans who migrated to Orange County after the war.<sup>14</sup> The family settled in Santa Ana in 1886, when Hugh Edgar Johnson was eighteen years old. On August 21, 1889, Johnson, then 21, married Mildred (Millie) R. Ward, age 20, one of ten children born to John and Roxana Ward of Tustin.<sup>15</sup> A 39-year resident of Fullerton, Mildred Johnson (1869-1931) worked alongside her husband for decades as he established early Orange County newspapers, often setting type and reporting on women's issues **[Figures 4-5]**.<sup>16</sup> The couple had no children.

After three failed newspaper attempts in Orange County, Johnson was approached by town founder Edward Russell Amerige (1857-1915) and rancher/businessman Alexander McDermont (1844-1921) about starting a newspaper in Fullerton. At first Johnson "could not see much in it" but agreed to visit Fullerton.<sup>17</sup> After making the trip, Johnson accepted the proposition, but requested a guarantee of 300 paid-in-advance subscribers (at \$1.50 per annum) to begin with, and "twenty enterprising citizens"

<sup>14</sup> Gordon Bricken, *Pioneers in Blue and Gray: Civil War Veterans in Orange County* (Santa Ana: Bricken Press, 2009), 94.

<sup>15</sup> A native of Arkansas, John Ward later resided and married in Texas. He and his wife Roxana had a daughter in Texas before moving to California in the late 1860s. Mildred Ward was born near San Bernardino. By 1880, the Wards settled in Tustin, living a few households from the community's namesake founder, Columbus Tustin, on what is now the corner of Newport Boulevard and Walnut Avenue. Photographs of the Ward ranch will be found on Calisphere (<http://calisphere.org>).

<sup>16</sup> "Mrs. Edgar Johnson Dies Following Stroke," *Fullerton Daily News Tribune*, October 22, 1931.

<sup>17</sup> "Many Changes in 20 Years; Brief History of This Thriving Young City." *Fullerton Tribune*, December 1, 1909.

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stepped forward with the requested amount in cash.<sup>18</sup> He moved with his wife to Fullerton on July 12, 1893, renting rooms in the McDermont Block on South Spadra Road (now Harbor Boulevard)<sup>19</sup> before starting construction of a “little cottage” at 218 West Commonwealth Avenue (razed, 1940s) in November.<sup>20</sup> The couple would live in the Victorian-styled West Commonwealth Avenue home until 1928.

When Johnson started the Fullerton Tribune in April 1893, the town had no paved roads, no gas or electricity, no bank, and one streetlight – an oil light, at the northeast corner of Harbor Boulevard and Commonwealth Avenue – where the city’s business building, the Chadbourne, was located. He rented a corner room in the Chadborne Building, sharing the building with a dentist, a physician, a grocery store, and the town post office [Figure 6]. Operating out of the Chadbourne Building, the ambitious 25-year-old would don his trademark bowler hat and travel by horse and buggy, bicycle, and horseback over the roads of North Orange County to gather news and advertising. He then helped his compositors set stories, one letter at a time, running a hand-operated press.

The Fullerton Tribune would have two rival newspapers – the short-lived Fullerton Journal (April 7-May 1898) and the Fullerton News (1902-1926) – but remained the town’s leading newspaper. In the early 1900s, Johnson enlarged his newspaper, expanded its coverage, and briefly renamed it the Orange County Tribune. By 1908, the Tribune had “double the circulation of any of the top ten weekly papers in Orange County.”<sup>21</sup> In 1911, Johnson constructed his last Tribune building at 107 South Harbor Boulevard. The small brick building provided Johnson with the electricity needed for his new all-electric printing equipment.<sup>22</sup> In 1914, he added a daily edition at \$4.00 per year, becoming the first weekly in Southern California to convert to a daily.<sup>23</sup> In February 1926, he bought out his primary rival, the Fullerton News, and combined the papers to form the Fullerton Daily News Tribune. The Tribune is remarkable for having only three owners in its first 80 years. After 38 years in the editorial chair, Johnson sold the Tribune in 1929. It survived for another 55 years under various owners until the daily was finally shut down at the end of 1984 – the last to go of Orange County’s 19th century newspapers.<sup>24</sup>

### Criterion C: Architecture

In the 1920s and 1930s, the Spanish Colonial Revival style was popular in Fullerton, especially for public buildings, but the use of Mayan Revival architectural elements was rare. The Hugh Edgar Johnson House is the only Spanish Colonial Revival building in the city that has Mayan and Aztec decorative features on the exterior and interior. The home’s dramatic temple-like entryway, decorative windows columns, ziggurat porch posts, and interior fireplace surround are unique to Fullerton. As historian Marjorie Ingle notes, however, the pre-Columbian influences were not strict interpretations but more “playful pilfering

<sup>18</sup> Edgar Johnson, “Since April 1<sup>st</sup>, 1893,” Fullerton Tribune, April 3, 1897.

<sup>19</sup> “Fullerton,” Los Angeles Times, July 16, 1893.

<sup>20</sup> “Fullerton,” Los Angeles Times, November 23, 1893.

<sup>21</sup> Edgar Johnson, Letter to Mergenthaler Linotype Company, September 4, 1908. On file, Local History Room, Fullerton Public Library.

<sup>22</sup> Over the decades, the brick building would go through a number of modifications. In 1944, guitar legend Leo Fender leased the building, renamed it Fender’s Radio Service, and electrified his first guitars in the manufacturing area of the building. The building is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

<sup>23</sup> “Ed Johnson Has a Birthday,” Fullerton Daily News Tribune, February 25, 1935.

<sup>24</sup> Until it was purchased by Scripps-Howard in 1973, it remained Orange County’s longest running independent newspaper. In January 1985, it was reborn as a free-distribution weekly known as the Fullerton News-Tribune and later became a weekly insert in the Orange County Register.

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of the architectural and decorative elements of the Mayan and Aztec ruins” into a contemporary environment.<sup>25</sup> The house’s unique and unusual Spanish and Mayan Revival elements combined with a low-slung profile, block-like structural form, and prominent location make the property a landmark within the Brookdale Heights district, a neighborhood of many outstanding residences.

Precisely how the Johnsons came up with the style for the home is not really clear. The couple had previously lived in the same Victorian-styled home for 35 years and most likely wanted a modern home that stood out in the neighborhood without being too extreme. The only indication of their proclivity toward exotic architecture was their choice of a final resting place. Rather than select the traditional Loma Vista Memorial Park in Fullerton, where most Fullerton residents were buried, the couple purchased vaults in Angeles Abbey Memorial Park, an exotic and exuberant mish-mash of Byzantine, Indian, Spanish, and Moorish architecture located in Compton. As a reporter, Hugh Edgar Johnson did visit the 1915 Panama-California International Exposition in San Diego where the Mayan Revival style continued to be spread and popularized, particularly in the California State Building, which had a Spanish Colonial Revival exterior and Mayan interior.<sup>26</sup> The couple would have been aware of the numerous Mayan travelogues written by tourists, archaeologists, and architects, and although Mayan Revival architecture was short-lived, the Johnsons would also have been able to look at such well-known Southern California landmarks as the Aztec Hotel (1924) in Monrovia and the Mayan Theatre (1927) in Los Angeles for indigenous design inspiration.

### **California Clay Products Company (Calco), 1923-1932**

The living room features a rare Aztec-figured fireplace made by California Clay Products, the only one identified in Fullerton. While California Clay Products produced square- and rectangular-shaped tile, it was noted for irregularly-shaped tiles that fitted together like a jigsaw puzzle, apparent in the fireplace’s design. Other companies produced Mayan tiles, such as Claycraft Potteries and the Batchelder-Wilson Company, but Rufus Keeler, the innovative ceramic designer for California Clay Products, carefully researched his designs, noting in his catalog that the designs were from “authentic sources” found in the ruins of Palenque and Mitla, Mexico.<sup>27</sup>

The California Clay Products Company, more commonly known as Calco, was one of the most creative tile makers in the nation. The company produced deeply molded rectangular tiles of cranes, peacocks, trees, mountain scenes, and California missions that were either glazed in one color or several, as well as medallions or decorative Mooresque or Spanish-style tiles glazed in multi-colors. The tile maker produced fireplace and door surrounds, wainscoting, step risers, wall inserts, framed wall hangings, and wall sconces using designs borrowed from many cultures: Mayan, Saracen, Moorish, Persian, Indian, Egyptian, Chinese, and Tunisian.

The founder of the tile and pottery company was Rufus Bradley Keeler (1885-1934), considered by historians to be the “tile genius” of the 1920s [Figure 7].<sup>28</sup> Born in Bellingham, Washington, in 1885, Keeler, at the age of twenty, worked for the Carnegie Brick and Pottery Company in Tesla, California, east of Livermore, where the factory produced bricks and architectural terracotta. He studied ceramic

<sup>25</sup> Marjorie Ingle, *Mayan Revival Style: Art Deco Mayan Fantasy* (Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith Books, 1984), 1.

<sup>26</sup> “California Building,” *Fullerton News Tribune*, November 8, 1915.

<sup>27</sup> Calco Tile Manufacturing Corporation (South Gate, CA: Calco, 1925?), 26-28. Catalog reproduction; on file, Local History Room, Fullerton Public Library.

<sup>28</sup> Jeffrey Simpson, “California Art Tiles: The Enduring Appeal of the Golden State’s Legacy of Color and Design,” *Architectural Digest* June 2005, 126.

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engineering at the University of Illinois, and then in November 1906, began working for Gladding, McBean in Lincoln, California, where he developed glazes for the company's clay bodies. He left Gladding, McBean in September 1916, to work for California China Products in National City, near San Diego.<sup>29</sup>

He formed his own company, Southern California Clay Products, in Vernon, producing chemical stoneware, architectural terracotta, and tiles.<sup>30</sup> In 1923, he incorporated as California Clay Products, with Calco as a trademark, and built a new 1.5-acre factory in South Gate, producing a wide variety of colorful tiles.<sup>31</sup> The facility was designed to produce a multitude of clay products, but from the start the emphasis was on utilitarian and decorative tiles with a variety of accessories to match. Keeler, known as RB, functioned as plant manager and head ceramist and was involved in every facet of production. He "especially liked creating new glazes, rich and brilliant colors, in stark contrast to the muted, somber tones of tile makers like Ernest Batchelder."<sup>32</sup> The motto at Calco was "Everlasting Tile" and Keeler strove to make his tiles as strong as possible. The company was very successful, establishing a vast collection of boldly colorful and complexly patterned designs.

In 1925, Keeler was given an offer by May Knight Rindge (1864-1941), the last owner of the entire Rancho Malibu, to establish and manage a new tile factory in Malibu. He sold his interest in California Clay Products to Victor Kramer Enterprises in 1926, and the company continued until 1932, when tile sales plummeted after the 1929 market crash. Calco went out of business, and at some point the pottery burned to the ground. Keeler took some of the Calco designs to Malibu Potteries (in some cases the Malibu and Calco tiles are indistinguishable) where he built a tile factory on the ocean side of what is now Pacific Coast Highway in 1926. At its peak, 125 employees worked in the factory, producing up to 30,000 squares of tile a month, sold mainly to contractors, architects, and designers. The tile graced countless homes and buildings, including Los Angeles City Hall and the Mayan Theatre. Built by Rhoda Rindge Adamson, the Adamson House and Malibu Lagoon Museum (1929), a National Historic Site, is a showcase for tile produced by Malibu Potteries. Keeler died of heart failure in 1934, at the age of 49, as a result of cyanide inhalation. He had been working on a new glaze formula at the time.

### **Building Designer/Contractor Evan Jones Herbert (1884-1965)**

The job of adapting elements from pre-Columbian architecture into a modern structure fell to prolific building designer and contractor Evan Jones Herbert, a Yorba Linda pioneer rancher and notable building contractor for more than 55 years. Unlike other local builders, such as Oliver S. Compton and Ernest S. Gregory, who only built in one or two architectural styles, Herbert had developed a reputation of providing his clients with the homes they wanted, no matter the style, size, or lot location. Prior to designing and building the Johnson House, he had worked in a variety of revival styles from foreign countries. The most formally educated of Fullerton's builders, Herbert had at his disposal a number of books on Mayan architecture, most notably architect George Oakley Totten's heavily illustrated *Maya Architecture* (1926), a compendium of Mesoamerican architectural elements.<sup>33</sup> He abstained, however,

<sup>29</sup> Norman Karlson, *The Encyclopedia of Art Tiles, Region 6, Southern California* (Atglen, PA: Schiffer, 2005), 93.

<sup>30</sup> "Vernon Becoming Unique Clay Products Center," *Southwest Builder and Contractor*, November 30, 1917, 9.

<sup>31</sup> "Clay Plant Expands: Concern at Southgate Contemplates Increasing Capacity to Ten Times Its Present Size," *Los Angeles Times*, September 30, 1923.

<sup>32</sup> Joseph A. Taylor, ed., *California Tile: The Golden Era 1910-1940, Acme to Handcraft* (Atglen, PA: Schiffer, 2003), 95.

<sup>33</sup> George Oakley Totten, *Maya Architecture* (Washington, D.C.: Maya Press, 1926). On file, California State University, Fullerton Library.



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from the very stylized and ornate detailing associated with Mayan Revival architecture in favor of a more restrained look that incorporated only a few pre-Columbian elements. This is the only building where Herbert combined Spanish Colonial Revival architecture with exotic Mesoamerican detailing.

Herbert was born in Columbus, Ohio, on February 14, 1884 to Welsh immigrants. After the death of his parents, Edward (1830-1890) and Mary Titly (1847-1897), Herbert lived with his sister Mary E. Owen in Columbus, Ohio. He graduated from Central High School in Columbus on June 20, 1902, with an emphasis in business,<sup>34</sup> and graduated with an engineering degree from Ohio State University in 1907 (he was a member of the Beta Theta Pi fraternity).<sup>35</sup> He began working around the Columbus area as a building contractor. In 1910, at the age of 25, Herbert migrated to Los Angeles, renting rooms in the former Bunker Hill area of the city while working on small building jobs. While living in Los Angeles, he met Eleanor Jenkins (1890-1941), the daughter of a Welsh hardware and furniture dealer, Llewlyn Jenkins, from Oak Hill, Ohio. The couple married in Long Beach on November 11, 1911, and had two sons, both born in Yorba Linda: Paul Wayne (1913-1968) and Joe Allen (1915-1943), who was killed in the crash of a training plane during World War II.<sup>36</sup> During World War I, Herbert, who was then 35, worked in a San Pedro shipyard for the Los Angeles Dry Dock and Shipping Company.

In 1907, Fullerton merchant Jacob Stern (Stern & Goodman) purchased through his real estate agent, Maurice Ray, a large section of rancho land from the Bernardo Yorba family. Stern used the acreage, which later made up the central core of the city of Yorba Linda, for barley fields and sheep grazing. In 1908, Stern sold the land to the Janss Investment Company of Los Angeles, which proceeded to subdivide the acreage (the Yorba Linda Tract) and sell it for agriculture and manufacturing. The Janss Company sold agricultural plots for \$150 an acre and "choice" ranches for \$250 an acre and up.<sup>37</sup> In 1911, Evan J. Herbert purchased ten acres in the center of the Yorba Linda Tract that he would own for the rest of his life. The Janss Investment Company advertised the Yorba Linda Tract as ideal for walnuts, but Herbert, like his neighbors, planted lemon and orange trees. He later planted Fuerte (hardy) avocados, first brought to the United States from Mexico by Herbert's neighbor, John T. Whedon, in 1912.<sup>38</sup> Herbert became a founding member of the Yorba Linda Citrus Association (1912-1965) and served on the board of directors and as president in the 1920s of the Yorba Linda Water Company.<sup>39</sup>

After building his own home, Herbert began constructing dwellings and doing other carpentry work throughout the area.<sup>40</sup> Herbert's first big project would be the Quakers' Friends Church (4845 School Street), Yorba Linda's first meetinghouse.<sup>41</sup> In 1912, there were less than fifty residents in the tract, and the Craftsman-styled church was constructed by local ranchers, who hauled the materials, dug trenches for the foundation, mixed concrete, and framed and finished the building. Herbert, who provided some

<sup>34</sup> Annual Report of the Board of Education of the City of Columbus for the School Year Ending August 31, 1902 (Columbus: Westbote Publishing Company, 1902), 170.

<sup>35</sup> Catalogue of Beta Theta Phi in the Sixty-Seventh Year of the Fraternity, 7<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: n.p., 1907), 434, 797.

<sup>36</sup> "Lieut. Joe Allen Herbert, of Fullerton, Killed in Crash of Training Plane," Fullerton Daily News Tribune, May 4, 1943.

<sup>37</sup> "Yorba Linda Orange Land: The Best Proposition in California Today [Advertisement]," Orange County Tribune, May 25, 1910.

<sup>38</sup> George Kellogg, Yearbook of the California Avocado Society 1970-71 (San Juan Capistrano: The Society, 1972), 47-48.

<sup>39</sup> "Yorba Linda Water Company," in Moody's Manual of Railroads and Corporate Securities 1922, vol. 2 (New York: Poor's Publishing Company, 1922), 699.

<sup>40</sup> "Hoyt Corbit Interviewed by Milan Pavlovich on May 15, 1970," in Richard Nixon: Early Years in Yorba Linda (Fullerton: California State University, Fullerton Oral History Program, 1977), 12. Oral History 838.

<sup>41</sup> "Rites Held for Pioneer Yorba Linda Builder, Evan J. Herbert," Yorba Linda Star, February 10, 1965.

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design assistance and supervised construction, worked alongside his neighbors.<sup>42</sup> Now the First Baptist Church, the building has changed very little. The main differences are louvers added to the bell tower and an extension and closure of the front porch.<sup>43</sup> Herbert's most significant residence in Yorba Linda remains the Mediterranean Revival home and medical office for Dr. Cochran and his wife, still a private residence (4802 Olinda Street, 1926).<sup>44</sup> Dr. Richard Cochran was one of Yorba Linda's first doctors, and his wife Ellen was Richard Nixon's second grade teacher. In 1929, working with Los Angeles architect Clarence E. Noerenberg, Herbert built the \$115,000 Yorba Linda Citrus Association Packing House, now a commercial center called Packing House Square (18200 Yorba Linda Blvd.).<sup>45</sup> Noerenberg devised (Patent No. 1,713,188) a prefabricated framing system using only steel parts that provided rigidity to earthquakes and resistance to rot and termites, which can still be seen in the interior of the building.

From 1920 to 1960, Yorba Linda went through few changes, with its population only growing from 350 to 1,198. Finding little contracting work, Herbert moved briefly to Placentia, then Fullerton, where he constructed a new residence for his family at 309 West Malvern Avenue. In the 1910s and 1920s, Fullerton had a serious housing shortage, and although a newcomer to the city, Herbert soon found a building niche in residential housing, joining such well-known builders as Ernest S. Gregory, Herbert D. Coon, and Arthur M. Thompson. Herbert's business slogan was "Dependability is my watch word", and he quickly developed a solid reputation around town, noted for his ability to complete projects on time within a set budget.<sup>46</sup>

Throughout the 1920s, Herbert constructed dozens of homes throughout the city. He worked with local developers, but also constructed "spec" homes that quickly sold to middle-class buyers, while also custom building a number of residences for wealthy clientele. He initially built Craftsman bungalows but later adopted other styles, including English Cottage, Minimal Traditional, and Spanish Colonial Revival. Working with local developer Robert E. Corcoran, Herbert constructed a number of homes in Golden Hill, a three-phase hill subdivision in the northwest part of town (e.g., 604, 628, 629, 633 North Golden Avenue).<sup>47</sup> He constructed "spec" homes, particularly on West Malvern Avenue (e.g., 225, 229, 230, 239 West Malvern Avenue), and in other locations throughout Fullerton (e.g., 140 West Elm Avenue, 423 East Amerige Avenue). In addition to the Hugh Edgar Johnson House, Herbert's two other best-known custom homes are the Mediterranean Revival residence for Robert E. Corcoran (600 West Union Avenue, 1926), complete with tennis court and croquet grounds, and the Walter Muckenthaler estate (1201 West Malvern Avenue, 1924). Now the Muckenthaler Cultural Center, the 18-room Mediterranean Revival villa, designed by local architect Frank K. Benchley, was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1980.<sup>48</sup> Herbert's most notable commercial project in the 1920s was the Spanish Colonial Revival Santa Fe Depot (120 E. Santa Fe Avenue, 1929), designed by railway staff architect Herbert L. Gilman, and listed on the National Register in 1992.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>42</sup> "E. J. Herbert, an Efficient and Reliable Contractor and Builder," *Yorba Linda Star*, July 30, 1926.

<sup>43</sup> Cindy Tino-Sandoval, *Images of America: Yorba Linda* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Press, 2005), 37.

<sup>44</sup> Diane Marsh, *A Walking Tour of Historic Yorba Linda* (Yorba Linda: Historical Society, 2001), 11. On file, Yorba Linda Public Library.

<sup>45</sup> "E. J. Herbert to Build New Lemon Packing House under Cost Plus Agreement," *Yorba Linda Star*, September 20, 1929.

<sup>46</sup> "Orange County Folks Have What It Takes to be Home Owners," *Santa Ana Register*, May 18, 1940.

<sup>47</sup> "Golden Hills Homes Valued at Millions," *Fullerton Daily News Tribune*, January 25, 1930.

<sup>48</sup> *Images of America: Muckenthaler Cultural Center* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Press, 2011), 63.

<sup>49</sup> "Fullerton Man Gets Contract for New Santa Fe Depot," *Fullerton Daily News Tribune*, August 22, 1929.

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When the 1929 Depression started, Herbert found it difficult to find housing projects, and he survived by constructing garages, home offices, and additions. Business picked up in the 1940s, and he built a handful of new dwellings (e.g., 624 North Drake Avenue, 637 North Wesley Drive, 300 West Whiting Avenue). His most impressive post-World War II dwelling is a 1945 rambling ranch house at 1701 Skyline Drive for Thomas K. Gowan, Fullerton mayor from 1938 to 1939. After the war, he moved from homes to the construction of new businesses, including a Van de Kamp's Bakery (209 North Harbor Blvd., razed) in 1948, and the McCormick Mortuary Chapel (137 East Chapman Avenue, razed) in 1951. He specialized in what he called the "modernization" of older business buildings in the downtown area, such as the Fullerton Building and Loan Association headquarters (113 West Amerige Avenue), the Alpha Beta Food Market (315 North Harbor Boulevard),<sup>50</sup> and the McMahan Furniture Store (225 North Harbor Boulevard). On occasion, he would turn a former residence into a business, such as the Donald Jones Company offices at 435 West Commonwealth Avenue in 1953, resulting in an odd mish-mash of architectural styles.<sup>51</sup> Herbert did not retire until the age of 76.

When Evan and Eleanor Herbert moved to Yorba Linda, they became close friends with Francis and Hannah Nixon, parents of President Richard M. Nixon. Like the Herberts, the Nixons had purchased agricultural land in the Yorba Linda Tract, and the families would visit each other on weekends, with Paul and Joe Herbert playing with the Nixon boys. Herbert hired Francis Nixon as carpenter for a number of projects. When Richard Nixon was three, he was thrown off a horse-drawn carriage while riding with his mother, and a wagon wheel drove over his head, severely lacerating both his head and neck. Evan Herbert, who owned one of the few cars in Yorba Linda, drove Nixon and his mother to an Anaheim hospital emergency room, saving his life.<sup>52</sup>

After the Herberts moved to Fullerton and the Nixons to Whittier, the two families remained close. Evan Herbert served as a pallbearer at Francis Nixon's funeral in 1956.<sup>53</sup> In 1958, when Richard Nixon was Vice-President, Herbert and two other Yorba Linda pioneers, Mildred Hoyt and William H. Barton, formed a committee to preserve the Nixon homestead as it was the birthplace of Richard Nixon. The mail order kit home, then owned by the Yorba Linda Unified School District, was designated a Yorba Linda historic property in 1959.<sup>54</sup> That same year, committee members organized the first Nixon for President Club ("Neighbors for Nixon") in the nation, with Herbert serving as second vice-president. On September 16, 1959, Herbert and other club members erected the first billboard in the nation advertising Nixon as the next President of the United States **[Figure 8]**.<sup>55</sup> The Nixon booster club would inspire dozens of other clubs to form in California.

In 1941, Evan Herbert's first wife Eleanor was killed in a traffic accident, and in 1957, he entered into a second marriage with Ada G. Thompson, a registered nurse **[Figure 9]**.<sup>56</sup> He was a founding member of

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<sup>50</sup> "Remodeled Alpha Beta Reopens; Enlarging and Re-Equipping of Market Completed at a Total Cost of \$75,000," Fullerton News Tribune, March 20, 1947.

<sup>51</sup> "Family Continues Insurance and Realty Office," Fullerton News Tribune, March 20, 1953.

<sup>52</sup> "Hoyt Corbit Interviewed by Milan Pavlovich on May 15, 1970," in Richard Nixon: Early Years in Yorba Linda (Fullerton: California State University, Fullerton Oral History Program, 1977), 12. Oral History 838.

<sup>53</sup> Shrine of Memories: In Memory of Francis Anthony Nixon, September 7, 1956 [Memorial Book]. On file, Family Collection, Nixon Library and Museum, Yorba Linda, California.

<sup>54</sup> Dedication of the Birthplace of Richard Milhouse Nixon, January 9 1959 at Noon on the Grounds of the Yorba Linda Elementary School [Program]. On file, Family Collection, Nixon Library and Museum, Yorba Linda, California.

<sup>55</sup> "First Nixon Billboard in the Nation Goes Up," La Habra Star, September 16, 1959.

<sup>56</sup> "E. J. Herbert and Ada G. Thompson Wed in Nevada," Fullerton News Tribune, January 12, 1957.

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Senior Citizens of Fullerton<sup>57</sup> and played a pivotal role in the construction of the first senior center in the city.<sup>58</sup> He passed away at the age of 80 in the Fullerton Community Hospital on February 2, 1965.<sup>59</sup> He is buried in Forest Lawn Memorial Park in Glendale.

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<sup>57</sup> "Senior Citizens' Group Being Formed in City," Fullerton News Tribune, July 29, 1958.

<sup>58</sup> "Senior Citizens to Dedicate Building," Fullerton News Tribune, July 29, 1960.

<sup>59</sup> "Evan J. Herbert, Area Pioneer Builder, Dies," Fullerton News Tribune, February 3, 1965.

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Los Angeles Times, January 1888-December 1956

Yorba Linda Star, July 7, 1922-February 2, 1965

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, Yorba Linda, CA;  
Orange County Archives, Santa Ana, CA; California State University,  
Fullerton Library; Local History Room, Fullerton Public Library; Yorba  
Linda Public Library

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): \_\_\_\_\_

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**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of Property .304 acres (13,251 sq. ft.)

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (decimal degrees)

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 33.876100

Longitude: -117.932778

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UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or  NAD 1983

- |          |           |           |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

**Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)**

The boundary is the limits of the legal lot at the southeast corner of Brookdale Place and Richman Avenue in the city of Fullerton. To the north is the street right-of-way of W. Brookdale Place; to the west is the street right-of-way of the N. Richman Avenue; to the south is the 20-foot wide public alley; and the east is private property, a lot with a single-family residence.

Assessor Parcel Number: 032-123-01, Orange County maps

**Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)**

The boundary is the limits of the property where the Hugh Edgar Johnson House stands.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title: Debora Richey

organization: Fullerton Heritage

street & number: 1233 Luanne Avenue

city or town: Fullerton state: CA zip code: 92831

e-mail: drichey@fullerton.edu

telephone: (714) 525-6411

date: June 2019; rev. December 2019

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### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- Maps: A USGS map or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- Additional items: (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

### Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

### Photo Log

Name of Property: Hugh Edgar Johnson House

City or Vicinity: Fullerton

County: Orange

State: CA

Photographer: Bob Linnell, Fullerton Heritage

Date Photographed: May-June, 2019

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Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 1 of 45: North elevation of Hugh Edgar Johnson House, camera facing south
- 2 of 45: West elevation of Hugh Edgar Johnson House, camera facing east
- 3 of 45: Partial east elevation of Hugh Edgar Johnson House, camera facing southwest
- 4 of 45: Partial east elevation of Hugh Edgar Johnson House, camera facing west
- 5 of 45: Partial east elevation of Hugh Edgar Johnson House, camera facing northwest
- 6 of 45: Partial south elevation of Hugh Edgar Johnson House, camera facing north
- 7 of 45: North elevation of detached 3-car garage, camera facing south
- 8 of 45: North elevation of detached 3-car garage, camera facing southeast
- 9 of 45: Wrought-iron gate on back side of house, camera facing west
- 10 of 45: Windows with Mayan-inspired details on north side of house, camera facing southeast
- 11 of 45: Close-up of a window with Mayan-inspired details on north side of house, camera facing south
- 12 of 45: Main entry to house with Mayan-inspired details, camera facing south
- 13 of 45: Close-up of Mayan-inspired detailing around entry, camera facing south
- 14 of 45: Window with Mayan-inspired detailing in patio area, camera facing southwest
- 15 of 45: Column of patio structure with Mayan-inspired detailing, camera facing northwest
- 16 of 45: Fireplace surround with Aztec-themed detailing in living room, camera facing east
- 17 of 45: Speakeasy in original entry door, camera facing south
- 18 of 45: Original entry door hardware and door bell, camera facing southwest
- 19 of 45: Ceiling detail with original light situated inside entry, camera facing south
- 20 of 45: Original mahogany door situated in hallway inside entry, camera facing west
- 21 of 45: Original push-button system for furnace in hallway inside entry, camera facing south
- 22 of 45: Sunroom on west side of house, camera facing south
- 23 of 45: Living room, camera facing south

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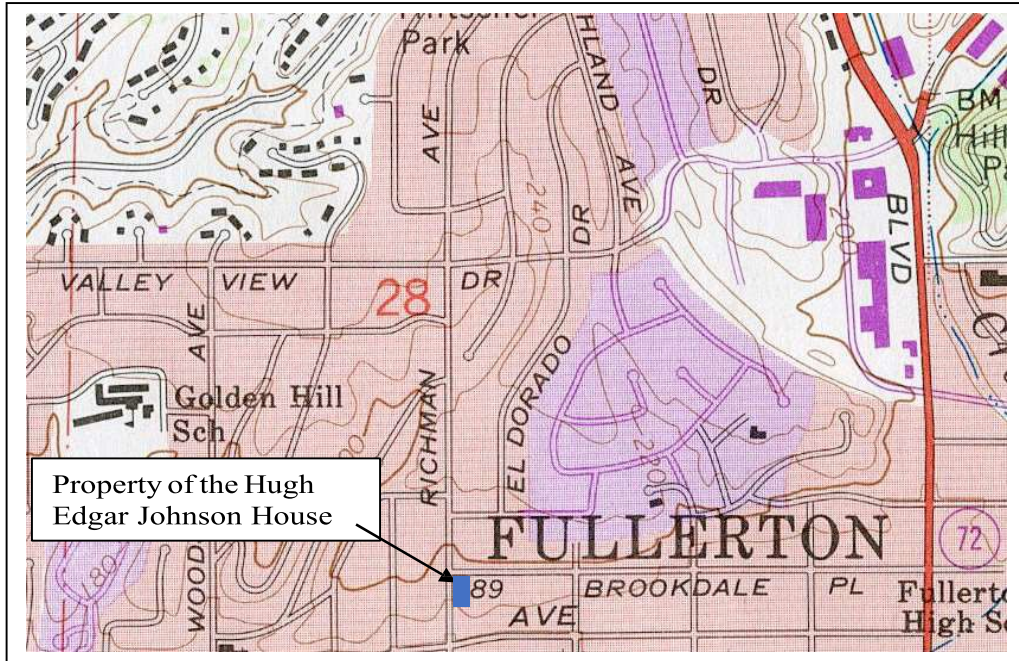
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- 24 of 45: Original wrought-iron chandelier in living room, camera facing south
- 25 of 45: Living room, camera facing north
- 26 of 45: Original cork ceiling and light in formal dining room, camera facing northeast
- 27 of 45: Kitchen, camera facing east
- 28 of 45: Dining area within kitchen, camera facing west
- 29 of 45: Original ceiling light in small library/office, camera facing northwest
- 30 of 45: Reading room next to outside patio area, camera facing northeast
- 31 of 45: Bathroom, camera facing northeast
- 32 of 45: Master bedroom, camera facing south
- 33 of 45: Dressing area off master bedroom, camera facing south
- 34 of 45: Master bathroom with original wall tiles, camera facing southeast
- 35 of 45: Master bathroom with original wood cabinets, camera facing northwest
- 36 of 45: Original sconce – one of several in various locations – in hallway, camera facing south
- 37 of 45: Original hardware of interior glass door
- 38 of 45: Original peacock hinge on cabinetry
- 39 of 45: Original hinge with doorways
- 40 of 45: View of property showing mature landscaping including many palms, camera facing south
- 41 of 45: Landscaping along north side of house, camera facing east
- 42 of 45: Landscaping along north side of house, camera facing west
- 43 of 45: Landscaping along west side of house, camera facing southeast
- 44 of 45: North side of guesthouse at rear of property, camera facing southeast
- 45 of 45: West side of guesthouse at rear of property, camera facing southeast

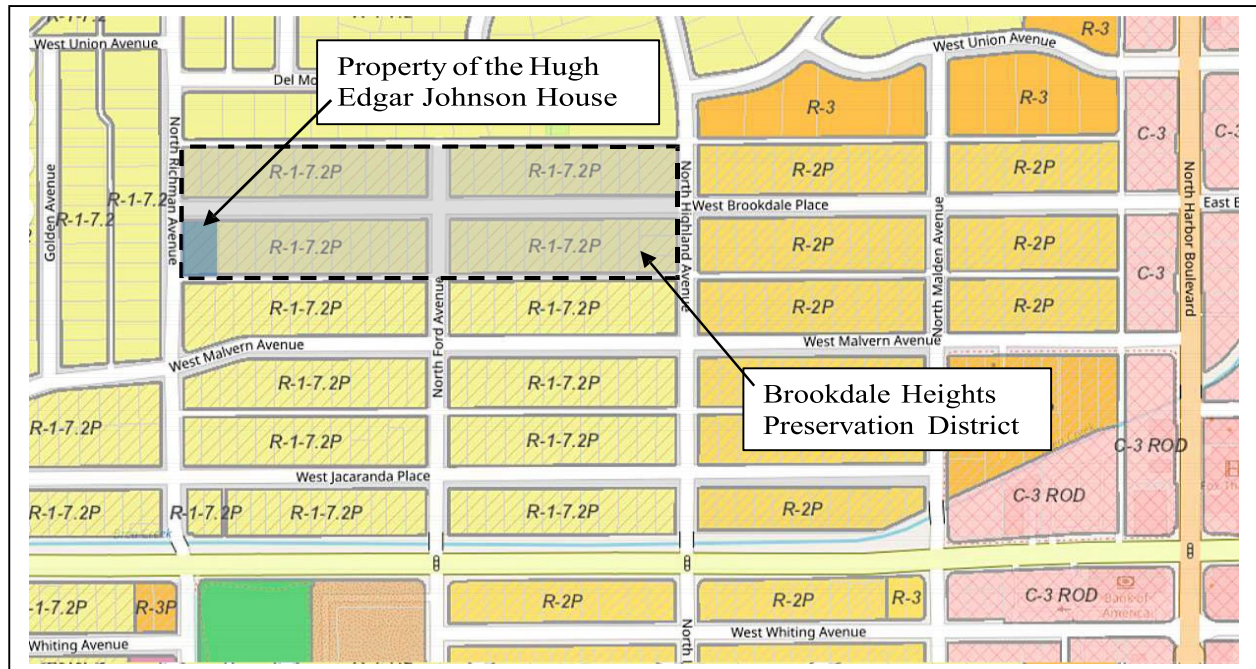
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**Location Map 1: U.S.G.S. La Habra Quadrangle Map, revised 1981**



**Location Map 2: Fullerton Street Map, 2018; Fullerton Planning Department**

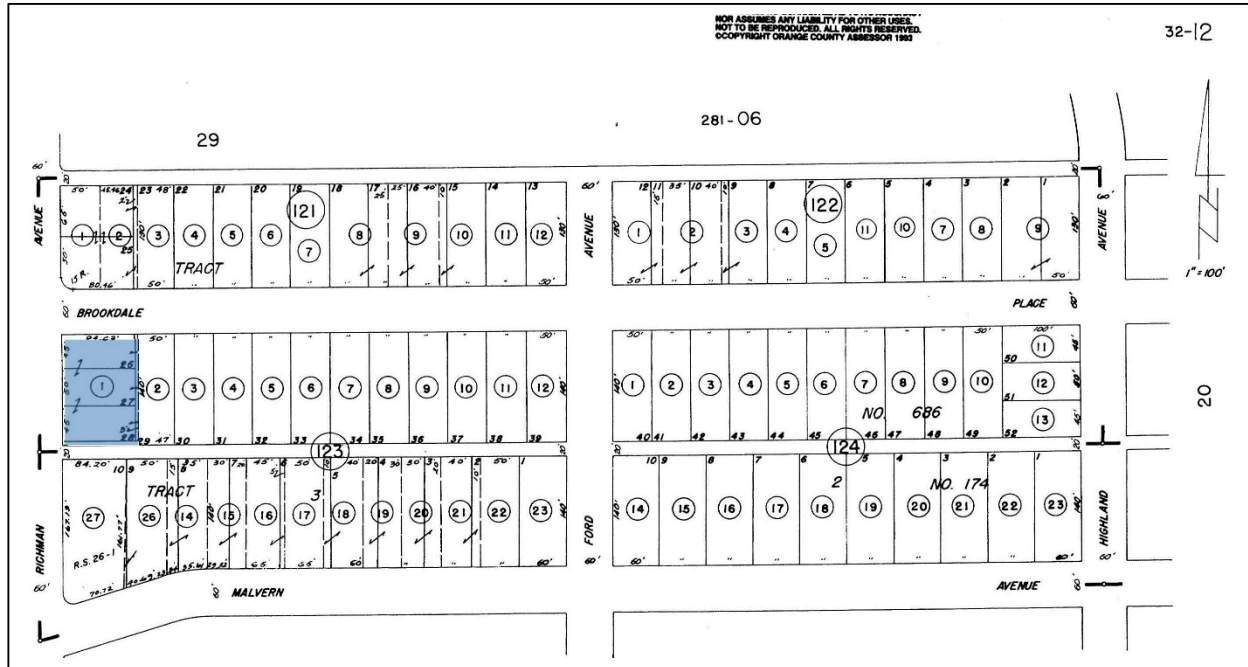




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**Location Map 3: Assessor Parcel Map showing parcel of Hugh Edgar Johnson House in blue**



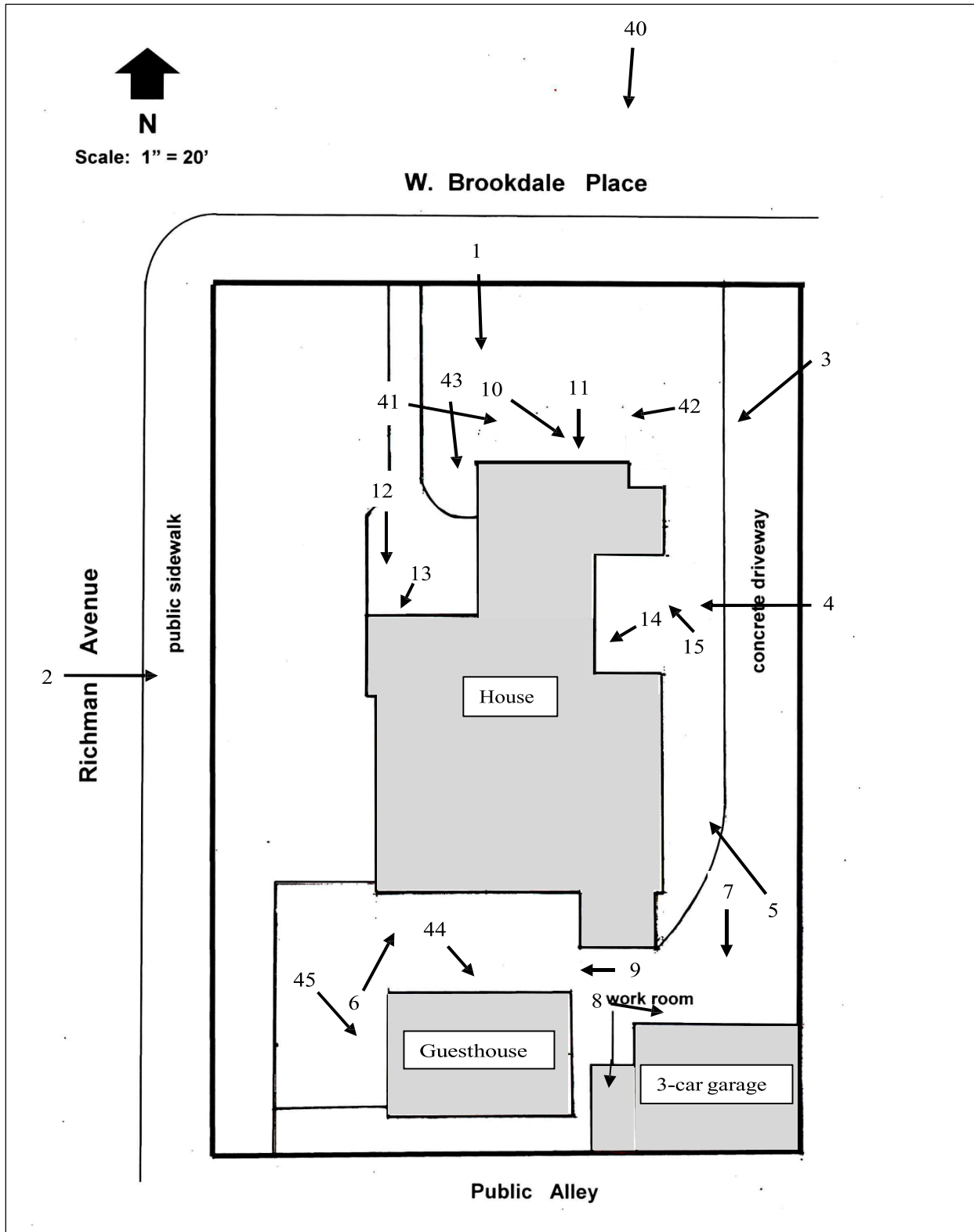
**Location Map 4: Annotated Aerial Photo of property of the Hugh Edgar Johnson House; property delineated with red lines**  
Source: Google Maps, 2019, annotated by Bob Linnell



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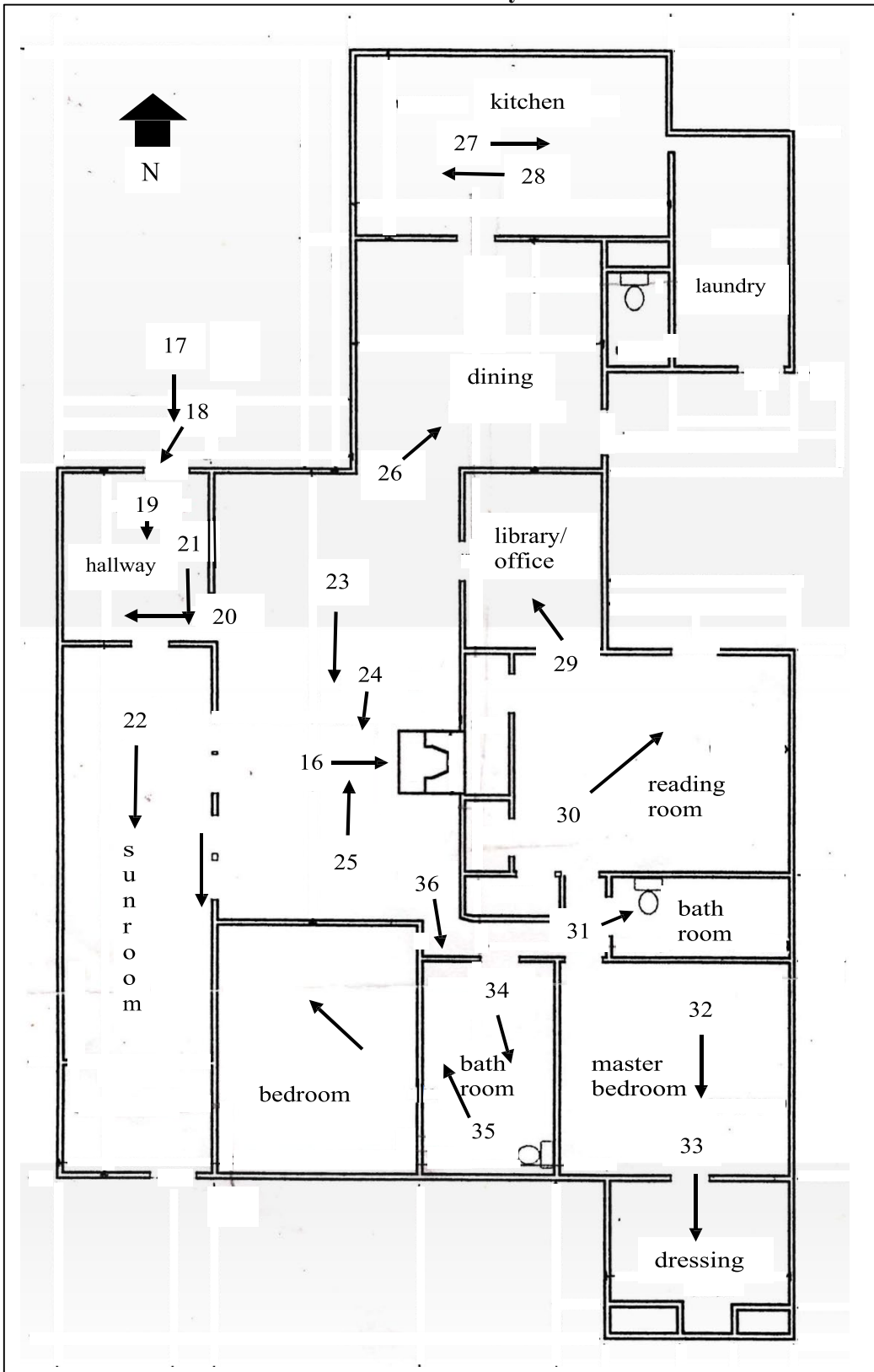
**Sketch Map (Plot Plan of Property) and Photo Key**



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**Schematic Floor Plan of House with Photo Key**

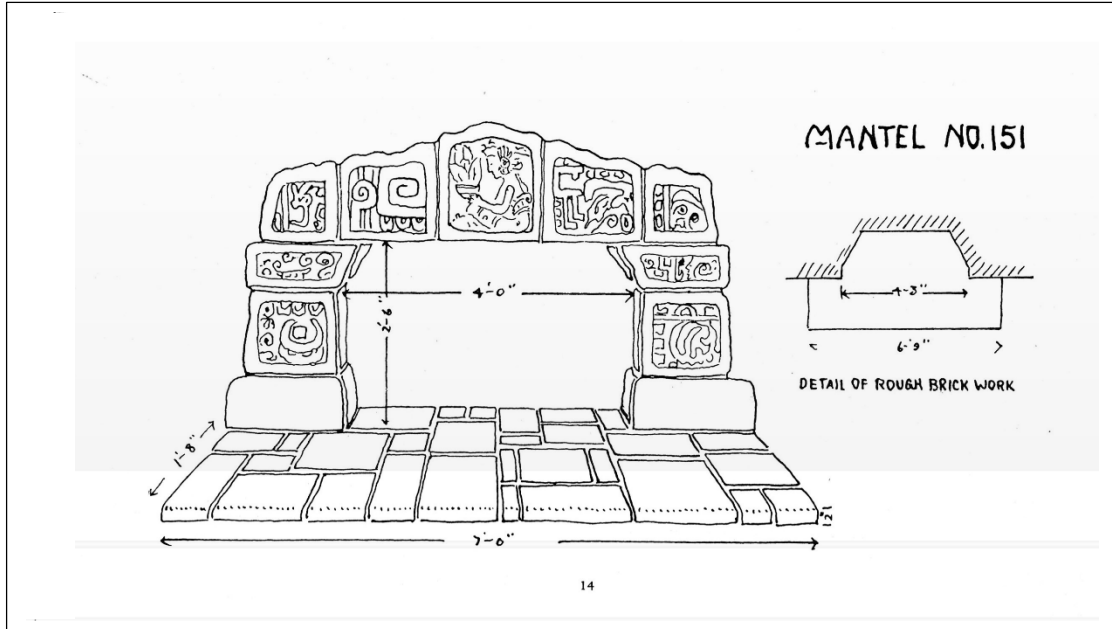


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**Figure 1: "Mantel No. 151"**

**Source: Calco Tile Manufacturing Corporation Catalog. South Gate, CA: Calco, 1925**



**Figure 2: Harry Gantz and Lois Weber, El Dorado Ranch, Fullerton, 1927**

**Source: Los Angeles Times, March 20, 1927**





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**Figure 3: Hugh Edgar Johnson,  
1931 Source: Local History Room,  
Fullerton Public Library**



**Figure 4: Mildred Johnson  
Source: Fullerton Tribune,  
Special Edition, May 1896, p. 9**



**Figure 5: Hugh Edgar Johnson (left) and Mildred  
Johnson (to right of her husband, black bow on hat), 1902  
Source: Local History Room, Fullerton Public Library**

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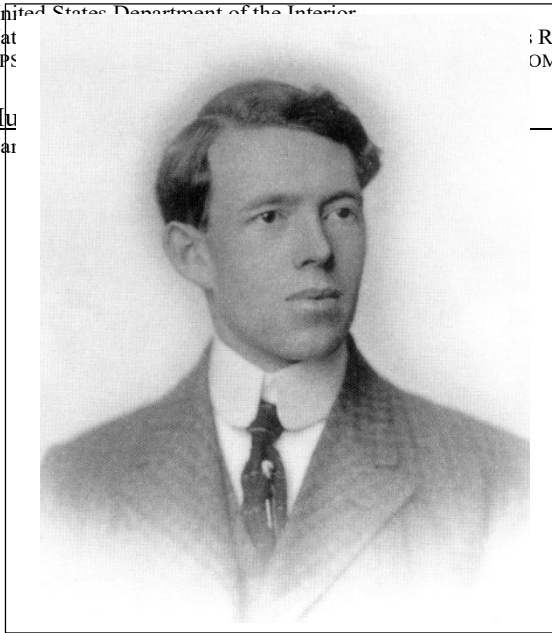
**Figure 6: Hugh Edgar Johnson, Mildred Johnson, and Flora Starbuck (left to right), steps of the Chadborne Building, April 1893**  
Source: Local History Room, Fullerton Public Library



**Figure 7: Rufus B. Keeler, ca. 1910**  
Source: Joseph A. Taylor, ed.  
California Tile, the Golden Era, 1910-1940: Acme to Handcraft. Atglen, PA: Schiffer Publishing, 2003, p. 96

**Figure 8: Nixon sign**  
Source: Fullerton News Tribune, September 16, 1959, p. 16





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**Figure 9: Evan J. Herbert (center) and wife Ada. Richard M. Nixon House, Yorba Linda, CA., 1957  
Source: Local History Room, Fullerton Public Library**



**Figure 10: 1978 Fullerton Historic Survey photo; oldest known  
Source: Local History Room, Fullerton Public Library**



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Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.