

#2



Sherman C. Grable House c. 1910

La Mesa Historical Society
P.O. Box 882
La Mesa, CA 91944

Sherman C. Grable House
circa 1910

4344 Date Avenue
La Mesa, California

October 22, 1985

LA MESA HISTORICAL LANDMARK
NOMINATION FORM

1. Name

historic Sherman Grable House

and/or common same, or Hillcrest

2. Location

street & number 4344 Date Avenue

___ not for publication

city, town La Mesa

___ vicinity of

state California

code 06

county San Diego

code

3. Classification

Category

___ district

☒ building(s)

___ structure

___ site

___ object

Ownership

___ public

☒ private

___ both

Public Acquisition

___ in process

___ being considered

Status

☒ occupied

___ unoccupied

___ work in progress

Accessible

___ yes: restricted

☒ yes: unrestricted

___ no

Present Use

___ agriculture

___ commercial

___ educational

___ entertainment

___ government

___ industrial

___ military

___ museum

___ park

☒ private residence

___ religious

___ scientific

___ transportation

___ other:

4. Owner of Property

name George B. Worthington III and Mary Dell Worthington

street & number 4344 Date Avenue

city, town La Mesa

___ vicinity of

state CA 92041

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Office of the County Recorder of San Diego County

street & number 1600 Pacific Highway

city, town San Diego

state CA 92101

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Historic & Cultural Resources Inventory

title Historic Preservation Element &

has this property been determined eligible? ___ yes ___ no

La Mesa General Plan

date June 1984

___ federal ___ state ___ county ☒ local

depository for survey records Office of the La Mesa City Clerk

city, town La Mesa

state CA 92041

7. Description

Condition

☒ excellent
☐ good
☐ fair

☐ deteriorated
☐ ruins
☐ unexposed

Check one

☐ unaltered
☐ altered

Check one

☐ original site
☐ moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

(See attached file photos.) Original structure built in 1910-1911 as estate house, with several outbuildings including storage shed (still on site) and carriage house (now off site, private residence addressed as 4359 Date Avenue). Pergola covering of side patio built upon completion of estate house or soon after. Matching pergola over front entry walkway no longer existing. "Guest house" adjacent to rear of estate house (4342 Date Avenue) and garage on site built in 1938. Estate house and patio pergola remain today in virtually their original condition, except that the top roof layer is asphalt shingle instead of trimmed wood shingles.

Buildings are of wood frame construction atop fieldstone and concrete cement foundation. Foundation stones reportedly from this site. Exterior walls for ground and second floors are the original two inch thick stucco between wood half timbers in Tudor style. Front end gable exterior wall for attic and (original) roof of trimmed wood shingles. Gable roof is flared out at the eaves; extension of front-end gable wall over the first and second stories below carries the eave line across the front. Broad eave (approximately four feet wide) has enclosed boxed cornices with paired heavy wood timbers supporting eaves and gable overhang all around. Beveled end of eave timbers is matched by beveled beams of patio pergola. Notable is a one-story "box" extension attached at the northeast corner of the main part of the structure which encloses two rooms of the house. The front wall line of this box is extended as a broad covering of the front entry. The box and front entry are flat-roofed. Also notable are the thick one piece beveled glass front and side patio doors and casement windows all around.

This estate residence is of unique local architecture, showing strong similarity to other architecturally notable estate dwellings in this region (in San Diego, the Klauber House and Marston House, both designed by Irving Gill). The style of the Sherman Grable House may be characterized as Tudor with strong Prairie influence.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
☐ prehistoric	☐ archeology-prehistoric	☐ community planning	☐ landscape architecture	☐ religion
☐ 1400–1499	☐ archeology-historic	☐ conservation	☐ law	☐ science
☐ 1500–1599	☐ agriculture	☐ economics	☐ literature	☐ sculpture
☐ 1600–1699	☒ architecture	☐ education	☐ military	☐ social/
☐ 1700–1799	☐ art	☐ engineering	☐ music	☐ humanitarian
☐ 1800–1899	☐ commerce	☒ exploration/settlement	☐ philosophy	☐ theater
☒ 1900–	☐ communications	☐ industry	☒ politics/government	☐ transportation
		☐ invention		☐ other (specify)

Specific dates Estim. 1910–1911 Builder/Architect unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

This estate house was built by and for developer Sherman C. Grable. Grable was instrumental in the initial development of San Diego's then-fashionable Logan Heights area around the turn of the century. In 1906, Grable moved to the unincorporated semi-rural suburb of La Mesa. Together with C. C. Park through the Park-Grable Investment Company, Grable subdivided and developed a substantial portion of what is now central La Mesa, 1906–1913. This development activity was instrumental in the drive to incorporate the City of La Mesa, which was done in 1912. Grable was also involved in this incorporation effort.

Grable's "Hillcrest" estate (orig. 6.76 acres, per map 1235, "Valley View," by Park and Grable, recorded February 1910) was built at the top of a commanding knoll, to the south of and overseeing central La Mesa. At that time the lack of mature trees and intervening structures gave impressive views from, and of, the estate house. Impressive views all around remain today.

The Sherman Grable House is an outstanding and unique local example of architectural design for large estate residences, quite differentiated from the styles devoted to more modest, middle class residences in this area. Of a modified Tudor style with strong influence from the "Prairie" school, this structure shows uncanny similarities to the early estate work by noted architect Irving Gill. The designer and builder of the Grable House cannot be verified, however. This style exemplifies the search of American architecture at that time for new, unique direction away from its European heritage.

(See attached historical information)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Gilbert, Anna M. La Mesa Yesterday and Today. San Diego: Press of the City Printing Company. 1924.

Security Title Insurance Company. Subdivision Handbook. n.d.

La Mesa Scout. Oct. 18, 1946; Aug. 3, 1945.

San Diego Union. May 29, 1943; Feb. 29, 1948.

Southwest Builder and Manufacturer. May 8, 1909.

Interviews: Mary Dell and George B. Worthington III

La Mesa Historical Society files and photographs.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property _____

11. Form Prepared By

Craig Jones, Associate Planner (619) 462-0171
City of La Mesa
8130 Allison Avenue
La Mesa, CA 92041

Karna Webster
Historic Preservation Commission
City of La Mesa

THE SHERMAN GRABLE HOUSE

The Sherman Grable House was constructed around 1910 for Sherman Grable, a La Mesa pioneer, and his wife, Lillian. The home stands at 4344 Date Avenue in La Mesa.

Sherman Grable was born in Aetna, Ohio on November 25, 1864. Little is known of his early life except that he moved to San Diego with his family in 1902. According to his obituary, Grable became the first real estate broker in the Logan Heights area. At the time, Logan Heights was a fashionable section of San Diego known as the "East End."

One story about Sherman Grable states that early in 1906, he decided to find a place to build a home, a site somewhere inland away from the coastal fog and damp. He drove through La Mesa Springs, a tiny community with only seven houses and a population of 22. As the story goes, Grable liked what he saw and tried to buy a small parcel from D. C. Collier, who owned considerable property in the area. But Collier apparently refused to sell less than 100 acres. Grable purchased the acreage from Collier and subdivided it. With his wife Lillian, he chose the southwest corner of Date Avenue and Finley Street as the site for his first La Mesa home. This house no longer exists.

Before long, Sherman Grable formed a partnership with C. C. Park. On June 5, 1906, they filed two subdivision maps: Grable's Addition which included the land south of La Mesa Boulevard and west of Nebo Drive, and Park's Addition which lay south of La Mesa Boulevard and east of Spring Street. The Park-Grable Investment Company purchased more property and soon had hundreds of lots for sale. The company planted date palms along Date Avenue and installed La Mesa's first sewers.

Anxious to sell home sites in La Mesa, Grable gave San Diegans free train tickets and persuaded them to come and see the new subdivisions. He met prospective buyers at the depot in La Mesa and showed the property from a horse and buggy. Then he treated them to a free lunch and a lecture. Before long, a number of lots had been sold and houses were under construction along Date Avenue.

Promotion of La Mesa property by the Park-Grable Investment Company and other real estate brokers was so successful that by 1912, the community had a population of more than 700. Sherman Grable was a leader in the effort that resulted in the incorporation of the City of La Mesa on February 16, 1912.

Around 1910, Sherman and Lillian Grable decided to build a new house at the south end of Date Avenue. This second house, known as the Sherman Grable House today, was christened "Hillcrest" by the Grables. They planted the acreage around this house with eucalyptus trees, shrubs and flowers and entertained hundreds of people in their hilltop home.

Although the name of the architect who designed the Sherman Grable House is unknown, the home resembles in some ways the known work of architects William S. Hebbard and Irving J. Gill. Hebbard and Gill had been partners during the early 1900s, but the partnership had been terminated around 1906, before this house was constructed. Grable certainly knew Gill, for in 1909, Irving Gill had designed a building for the Bank of La Mesa, founded by Sherman Grable and C. C. Park.

Sherman Grable participated in civic, religious, and community activities. He was one of the first directors of the La Mesa-Lemon Grove Irrigation District, a member of the La Mesa Masonic Lodge, and Sunday School superintendent and trustee of the Methodist Church. Mrs. Lillian Grable passed away on April 4, 1935, and Sherman Grable died on Oct. 14, 1946 at the age of 81.

In 1932, the Sherman Grable House was purchased by the Westbrook family. William and Ethel Westbrook came to this area from Pennsylvania around 1924. William Thorn Westbrook was a native of Delaware and had been connected with the Bell Telephone Company for 39 years. His wife, Ethel Gunn Westbrook, operated a "women's furnishings" shop at 8309 La Mesa Boulevard during the 1930s. The Westbrooks had at least three children: a son, Marston, and two daughters, Marguerite and Ann.

Marston Westbrook attended Grossmont High School and was an outstanding athlete. After graduation from the West Point Military Academy in 1943, he accepted a commission in the Army Air Force. In 1945, Capt. Westbrook piloted a B-29 superfortress on bombing missions over Tokyo and other Japanese cities. He received the Distinguished Flying Cross and the Air Medal for meritorious conduct during World War II.

In La Mesa, William Westbrook was an active member of St. Andrew's Episcopal Church and served as church treasurer for 16 years. He passed away in 1948 at the age of 78.

In 1949, Jens and Alberta Hutchens purchased the hilltop home from Mrs. Westbrook. Jens Hutchens was a prominent educator. He had served as a principal in the San Diego City School

system and later became Assistant Superintendent of the San Diego County Education Department. While the Hutchens family lived in this house, Mr. Hutchens served as Superintendent of Schools for the Cajon Valley School District. In 1975, his daughter, Mary Dell, and her husband, George B. Worthington III, purchased the house from her parents.

Today the Sherman Grable House looks much as it did when the Grables lived there. The home has considerable historical and architectural significance for the citizens of La Mesa. Several prominent families lived there, and the residents included a well-known local educator, a World War II hero, and Sherman Grable, who might well be called "the father of La Mesa."

Sources:

Gilbert, Anna M. La Mesa Yesterday and Today.
San Diego: Press of the City Printing Company. 1924

Security Title Insurance Company. Subdivision Handbook.
n.d.

La Mesa Scout. Oct 18, 1946; Aug 3, 1945.

San Diego Union. May 29, 1943; Feb. 29, 1948.

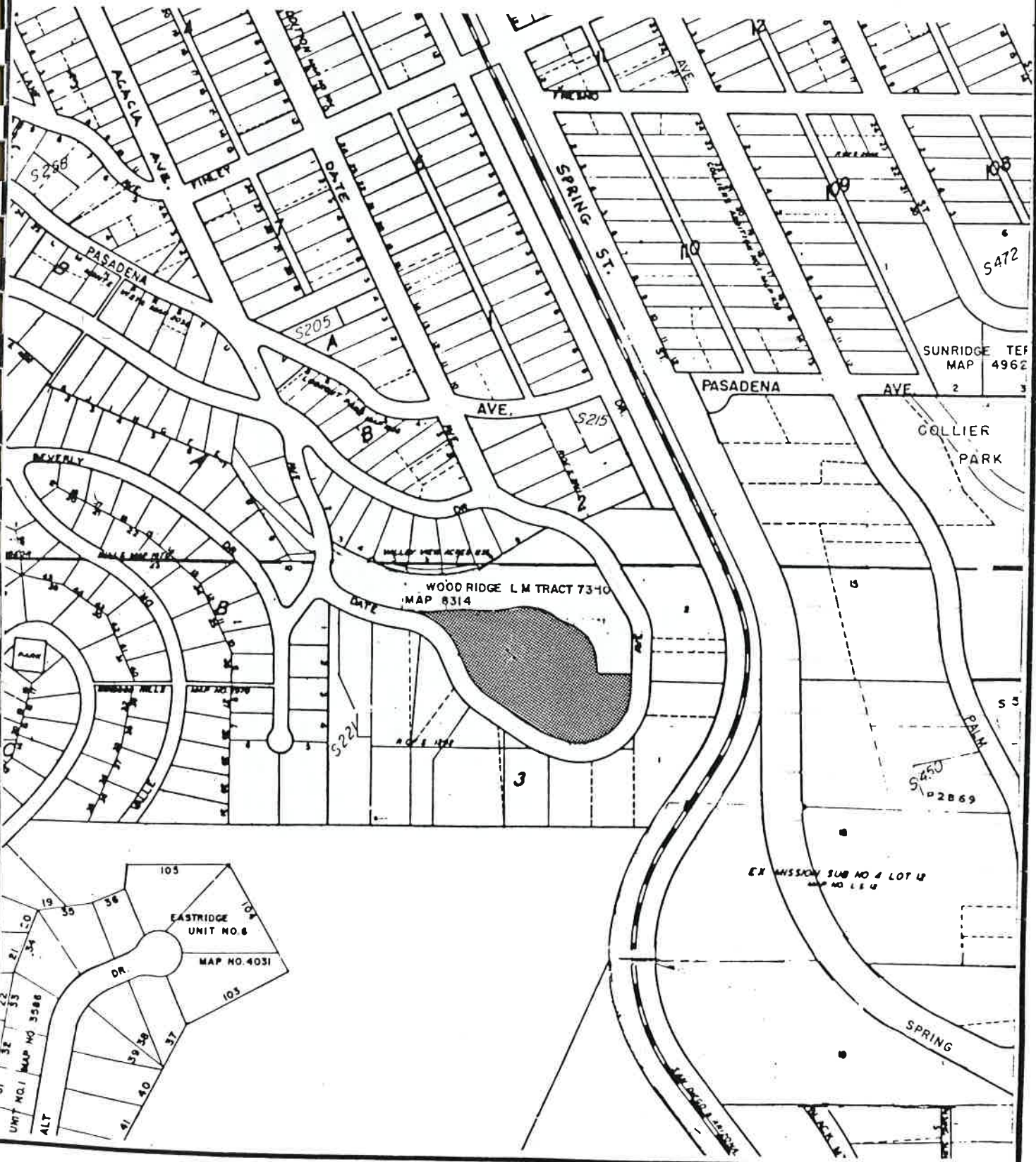
Southwest Builder and Manufacturer. May 8, 1909.

Interviews: Mary Dell and George B Worthington III.

La Mesa Historical Society files and photographs.

VICINITY MAP

LANDMARK DESIGNATION L-85-2





Sherman C. Grable

Services Yesterday For Sherman Grable, Pioneer La Mesan

Services for Sherman C. Grable, pioneer resident of La Mesa, who died October 14, were held yesterday in a San Diego mortuary at 2 p.m. Cremation followed.

Mr. Grable, who was born in Actna, Ohio, November 25, 1884, became the first real estate broker in the Logan Heights area, San Diego after he and his family had moved there in 1902. He became associated with C. C. Parks the following year, and moved to La Mesa into the house just west of H. H. Kirkpatrick's real estate office, where the family lived while having a property made ready for them at the corner of Date and Finley.

In 1911 he moved to the big house on Date, now occupied and owned by the Westbrooks. For many years it was a place of hospitality to the many friends of the family.

Having foresight, Mr. Grable began buying property in and around La Mesa, which at that time consisted of only seven houses and 22 people. During the years, he helped organize the Bank of La Mesa with Mr. Parks. The two men are responsible for the naming of most of the streets.

Mr. Grable was one of the first directors of the La Mesa-Lemon Grove Irrigation district; a member of the local Masonic lodge, and trustee and Sunday school superintendent of the Methodist church.

His wife, Mrs. Lillian Grable, preceded him in death, April 4, 1935.

Surviving are two sons, F. C. Grable and D. R. Grable, both of San Diego; two sisters, Mrs. Daisy D. Walker of San Merino, and Mrs. June Evans of Ft. Collins, Colorado who attended the funeral; three grandchildren and three great grandchildren.

Mr. Grable's sons have been associated with him in the real estate business in San Diego for several years.



HILLCREST

Cres'a Loma is the beautiful country home of W. A. Laidlaw, who came to La Mesa from San Diego, although he had for the most of his business life been a resident of Portland, Oregon. This place was formerly owned by J. A. E. Thoustroupe who was interested in horticulture and brought here all the tropical trees he could secure that he might experiment with them on his ranch.

He grafted choice grape-fruit and tangerines on the lemon trees, but Mr. Laidlaw has changed the trees back, mostly to lemons for commercial purposes, although they have fruit trees of many varieties for their own use. When Mr. Thoustroupe owned this place it was perhaps the most interesting one in La Mesa as a horticultural display, but it could not have been more beautiful than it now is, for Mr. Laidlaw has built the home on the hilltop which is one of the finest types of mission architecture in this section. Well kept orange and lemon trees surround the hillside, and flowers and shrubs surround the home.

Mr. Laidlaw has been active in civic affairs. He was one of the trustees of the city for several years and was president of the La Mesa Country Club while it was being built, and is the president at the present time.

Hillcrest, the present home of S. C. Grable, was developed from a sage covered hill of fifteen years ago to its present state. The winding drives are lined with eucalyptus. The vine-clad house, arbors and beautiful shrubs, trees and flowers of the hilltop make it one of the show places of La Mesa. It contains fourteen acres, from any point of which one may have a beautiful view. This home is noted for its hospitality. Mr. and Mrs. Grable have entertained hundreds here.

This year a miniature Vernal Falls has been constructed near the top of the hill and as the water falls over the rocks and trickles between them, while it may not have the grandeur of the Yosemite Vernal Falls, it is very like it in miniature and has a beauty all its own.

E. A. D. Reynolds who was the manager of a large paper company in the middle west, has shown his ability in other lines. He contracted for and supervised the building of the fine home of Mrs. Mary S. Hodgson on Mt. Nebo. This is one of the most beautiful homes in La Mesa and presents an imposing appearance from any point in the vicinity. Being large, of white stucco, with red tile roof, and located almost at the crest of Mt. Nebo, it can be located before any of the other homes as one enters La Mesa from the west. The sunset, mountain and ocean views from here are unsurpassed. This home was completed in 1914.

THE SHERMAN GRABLE HOUSE



Front View



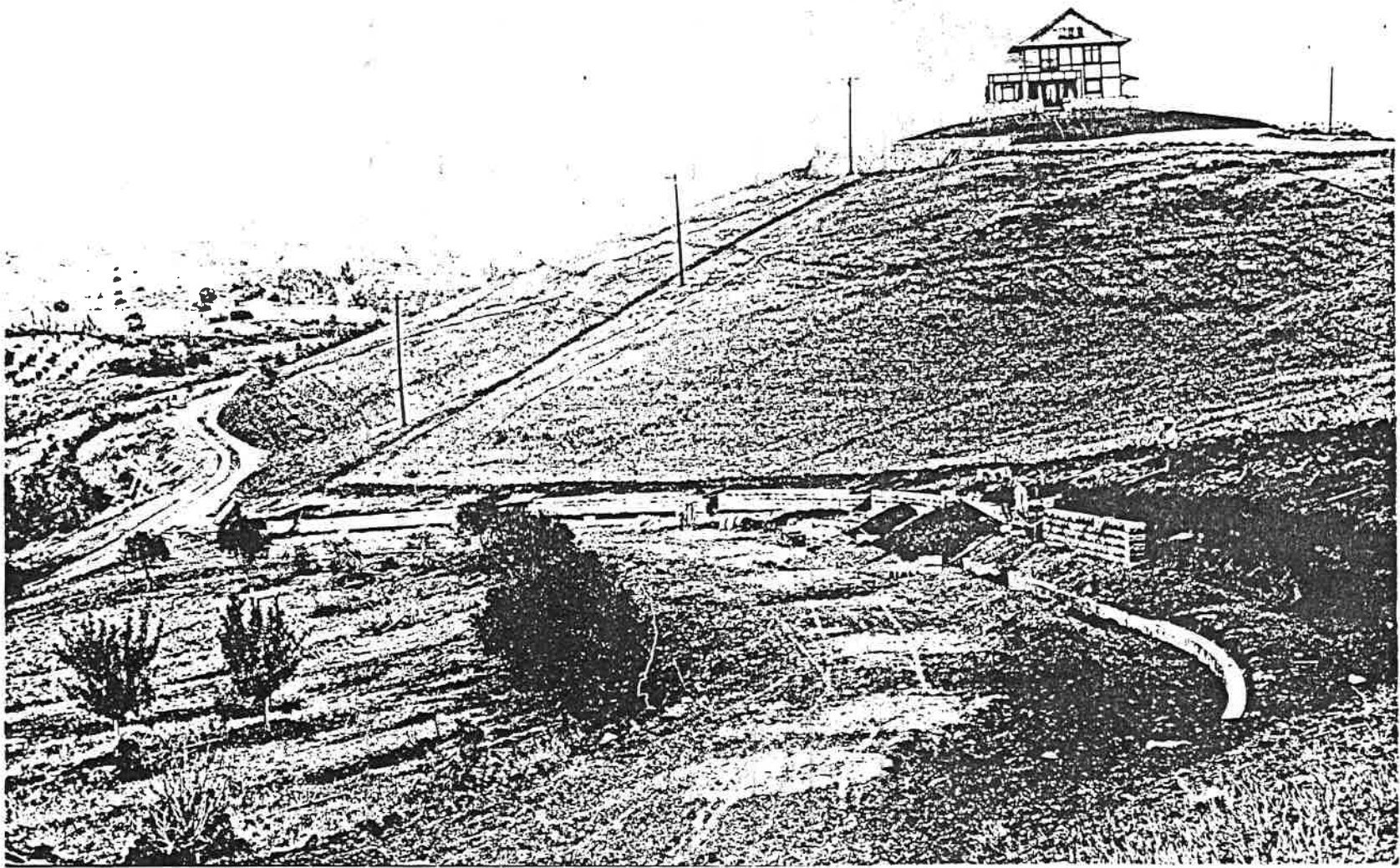
Side View



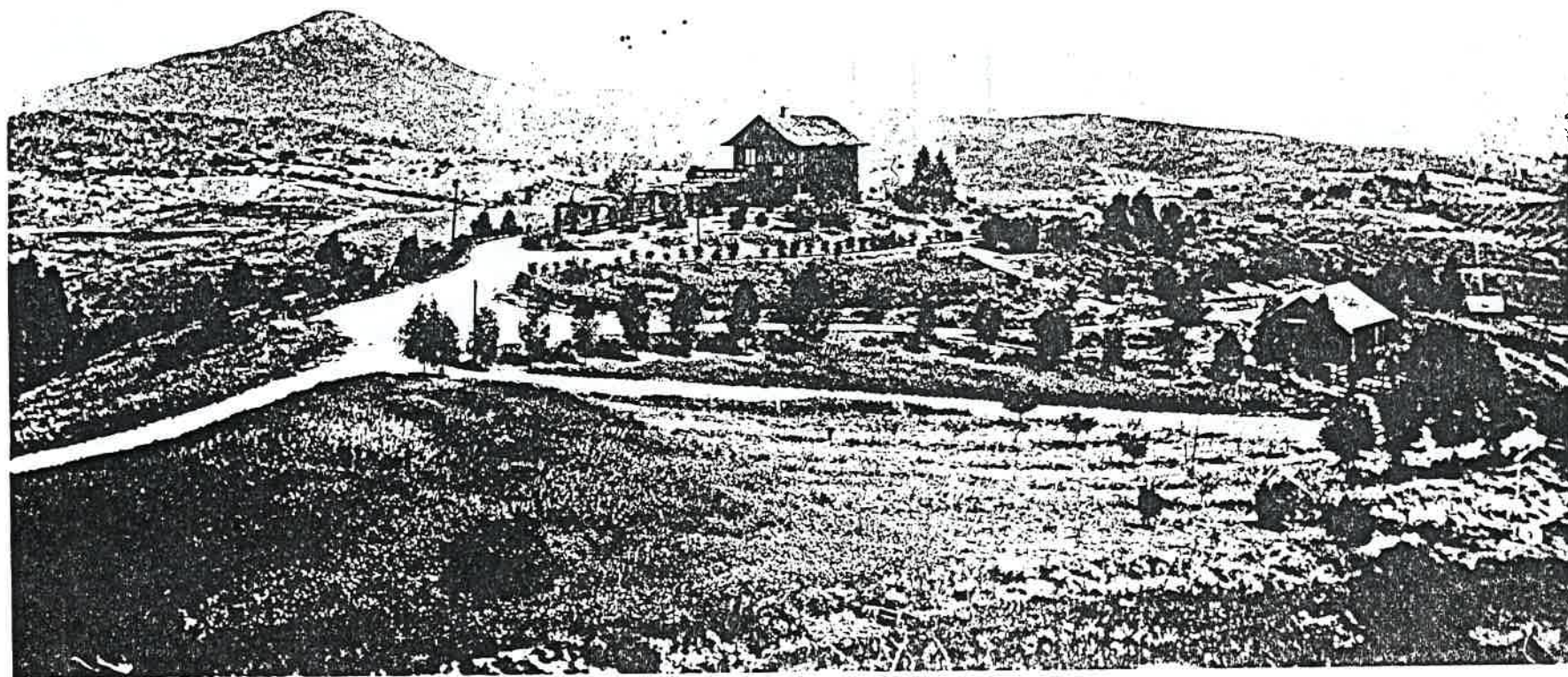
Front view of Sherman Grable House



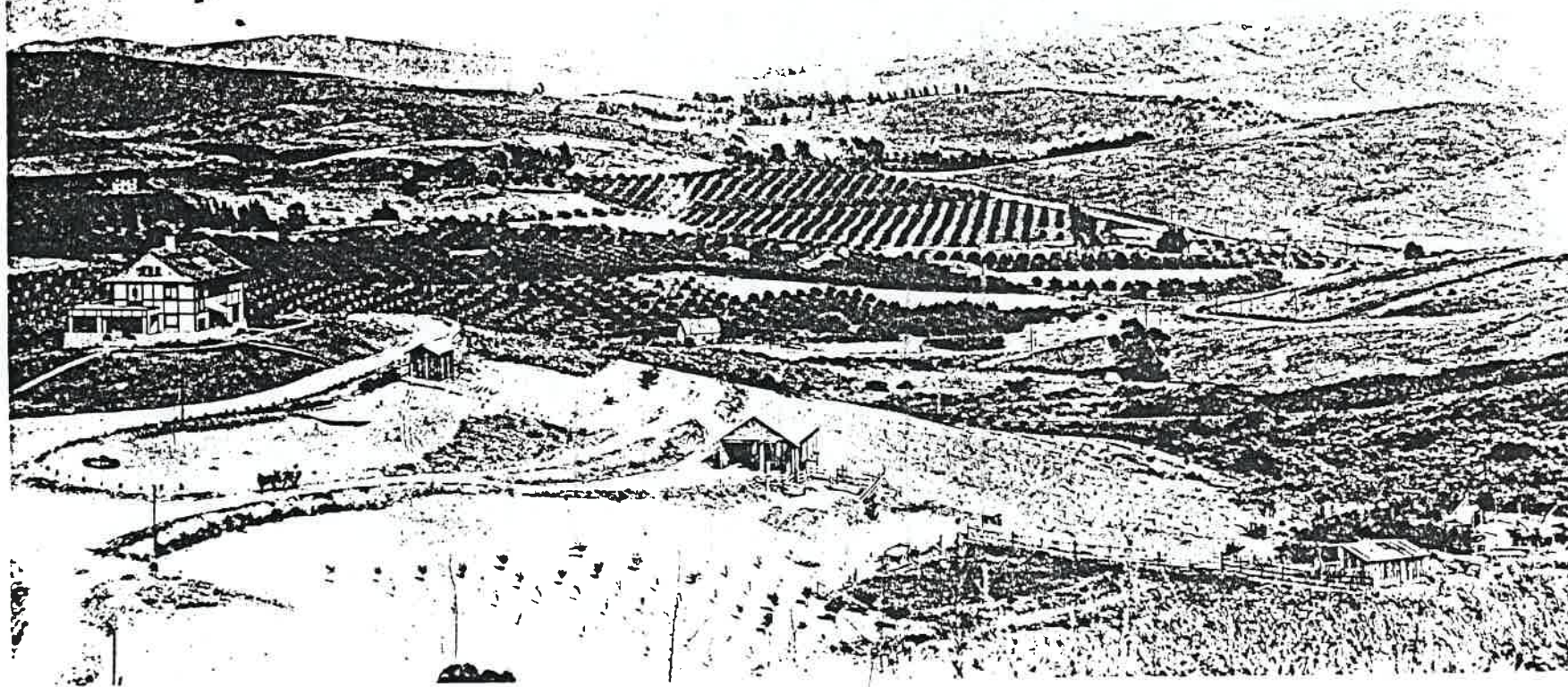
Rear view of Sherman Grable House



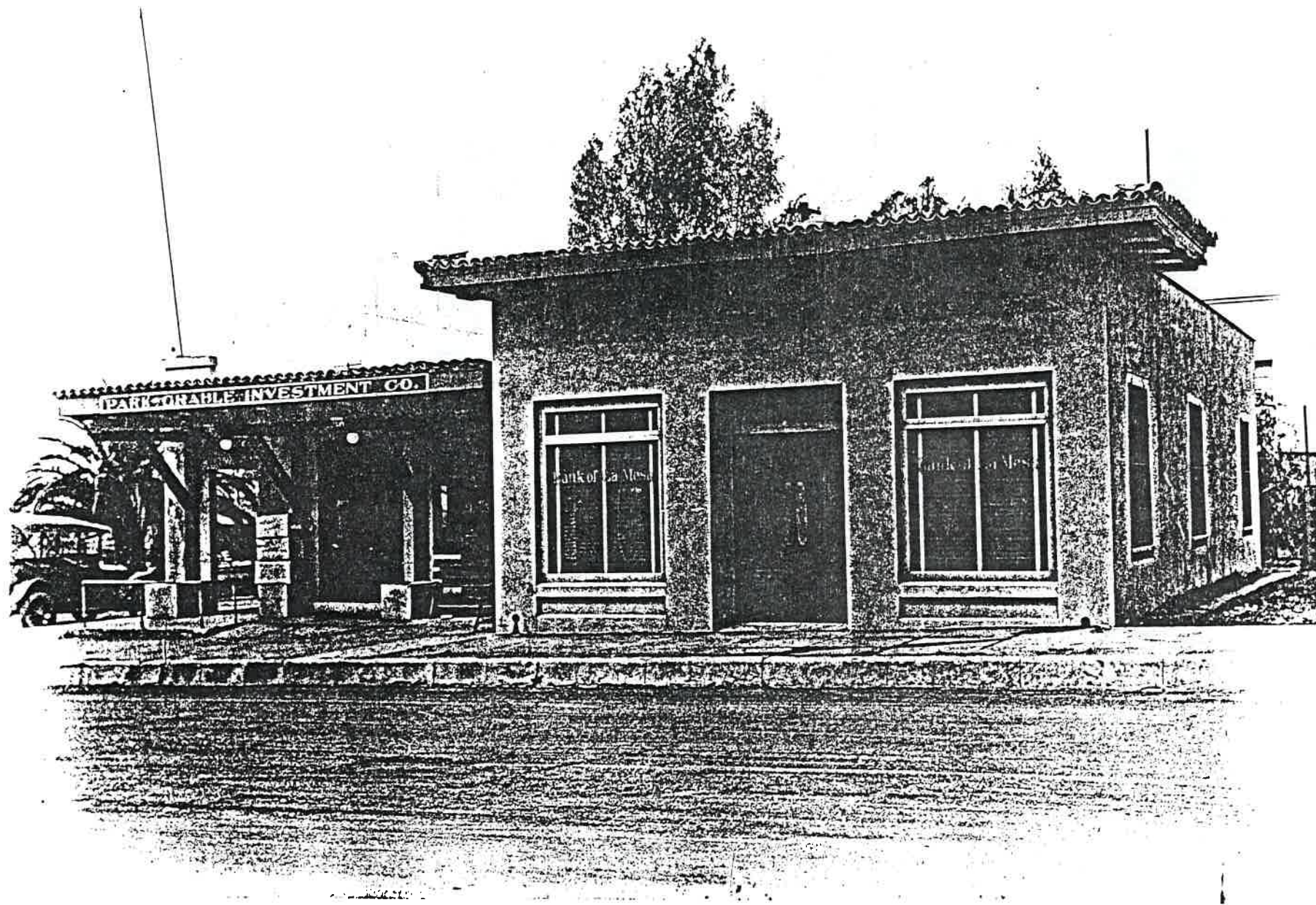
Early view of the Sherman Grable House at the top of the hill.
Workmen in the foreground are constructing rock-face concrete block
walls.



Panoramic view of Sherman Grable estate with carriage house at right.



Early view of Sherman Grable House (left) and Carriage House (center)



Park-Grable Investment Co.

Bank of La Mesa Building

La Mesa Springs

SAN DIEGO'S PASADENA

The ideal (away from the water) suburb.

On the Cuyamaca railway; good train service, cheap fare. Prospect good for the electrification of this line.

The South Park Electric Line has just been granted a franchise to LA MESA SPRINGS.

These improvements when completed will make La Mesa Springs a large place.

The increasing farming interests around La Mesa Springs will make it a large trading center.

The excellent climate, accessibility to San Diego, beautiful land unexcelled views will make La Mesa Springs the most desirable resident section out from San Diego.

If you live in San Diego you need a rest home on Lookout Park, La Mesa Springs, back from the Water, where the drier atmosphere, 850 feet altitude, and tempered sea breezes will benefit you in case of rheumatic or throat troubles.

If you think of building a home, La Mesa offers exceptional advantages only ten miles from San Diego, 35 minutes by rail, three trains daily now; 11c commutation fare, and more frequent communication only a matter of time.

Building lots on easy terms.

Park-Grable Investment Co.

Office: 689 Logan Avenue

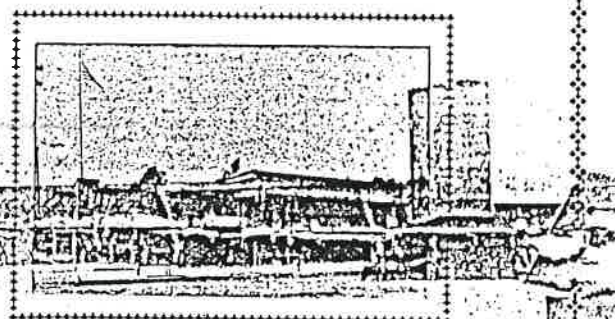
W. L. MAXWELL, Agent
La Mesa Springs, Cal.

San Diego, California

*You'll Want to Live In La Mesa Sometime.
Why Not Secure a Home Site Now?*

We Have Largest Listing of La Mesa Property and We Can Fit Your Needs

*We Believe We Can Furnish From Our
Listing a Home to Suit Your
Wants. Try Us.*



HOMES

75x140, 6 room bungalow, modern-splendid view	\$2800.00
80x140, 5 room bungalow, new, lawn, fruit trees, good view	\$3500.00
50x110, 5 room cottage, modern, close in, on wide street-a bargain	\$2500.00
50x100, 5 room, new, veneered concrete blocks-a bargain	\$2000.00
50 foot frontage on two streets, cosy little bungalow, nicely located	\$1700.00
50x140, 2 story, 7 rooms, modern-fine location; terms	\$2500.00
50x100, 5 rooms, modern	\$2400.00

LOTS

3 lots 50x240, each	\$175.00 each
50x140, 4 blocks from postoffice	\$215.00 cash
50x140, 4 blocks from postoffice	\$200.00 terms
50x140, 3 blocks from postoffice	\$525.00
50x104, 2 blocks from postoffice, on 75 foot street	\$550.00
50x140, sidewalk, curb and sewer	\$350.00
50x135, sidewalk, curb sewer and trees	\$400.00
50x150, corner; sidewalk, curb, sewer; trees; close in	\$600.00

SMALL CHICKEN RANCHES

2 lots, 100 feet frontage on blvd; 4 room new house; 50 chickens, houses and yards; suitable to care for many more-close in	\$1750.00 terms
2 large lots, almost an acre, on fine 75 foot street--well built 6 room house best of soil, a bargain at	\$2500.00
3 acres, no buildings, a nice piece of ground	\$ 750.00
2 1-2 acres no buildings, some deciduous trees	\$ 600.00
Over 1-2 acre, small house	\$ 800.00

*La Mesa has Water System, Sewers, Sidewalks, Graded Streets,
Gas, Electricity, Telephone, Telegraph, Schools and Churches.*

Park-Grable Investment Co.

San Diego Office 1533 D Street

La Mesa, California

May 29, 1943

FOUR S. D. MEN WILL GRADUATE AT WEST POINT

Four men from the San Diego area will be graduated by the West Point Military academy Tuesday. They are members of a class of 814 cadets, largest in the history of the academy. The young officers are being graduated a year ahead of schedule.

They are John E. Abbott, son of Mr. and Mrs. John E. Abbott, of Spring Valley; Edgar J. Fredericks, son of Lt. H. C. Fredericks, U.S.N., San Diego; George T. Campbell, son of Comdr. and Mrs. G. T. Campbell, of Philadelphia, Pa., and Marston T. Westbrook, son of Mr. and Mrs. W. T. Westbrook, of 4344 Date ave., La Mesa.

WON EXAMINATION

Westbrook won his appointment to the military academy through a competitive examination given



while he was a member of the regular army. He was graduated by Grossmont Union High school and attended Ft. Winfield Scott preparatory school and San Diego State college for a year prior to entering West Point.

M. T. Westbrook Westbrook won his numerals in football. He was a member of the cadet choir, and is class officer and treasurer. Westbrook will be commissioned in the army air forces.

Feb. 29, 1948

William T. Westbrook Jr.

LA MESA, Feb. 28 (Special) — William Thorn Westbrook Jr., 78, of 4344 Date Ave., died in a La Mesa hospital Friday. Private services were held today at St. Andrews Episcopal Church, followed by cremation.

He was a native of Delaware and had resided here 24 years. Surviving are his wife, Mrs. Ethel Gunn Westbrook, and the following sons and daughters, Marston T. Westbrook, and two daughters, Mrs. Marguerite M. Dickason and Mrs. Ann Taylor.

La Mesa Scout Aug 3, 1945

Captain Westbrook Bombs Jap Cities

Capt. Marston Westbrook, son of Mr. and Mrs. W. T. Westbrook, 4344 Date, reported after missions of bombed Japanese cities that blazing buildings could be plainly seen from his superfortress. Captain Westbrook's comments were broadcast on news reports.

The captain, pilot of a B-29, was recently promoted to his present rank, after winning the Distinguished Flying Cross and the Air Medal.

The day he was making the raid on Japan, Captain Westbrook was 'celebrating' his young son's first birthday. Mrs. Westbrook and Marston Jr. live in Leandro.