

*DRAFT*

HISTORICAL REPORT  
for  
GARDEN STORE, CALIFORNIA NURSERY



March 27, 2019

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## Garden Store at the California Nursery

Location: 36501 Niles Boulevard Fremont, Alameda County, California

Present Owner/

Occupant: City of Fremont

Present Use: Vacant

Significance:

Established in 1884 by John Rock, the California Nursery was one of the state's leading nurseries. The 20.1-acre site is currently owned by the City of Fremont and now operates as a nursery and historical park. The California Nursery appears to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places and California Register of Historical Resources as a historic district under Criteria A/1, B/2, C/3, and D/4. Also located on the site, the Vallejo Adobe is already individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and several more structures have been evaluated as eligible for the National and California Registers as contributors to the potential historic district. The following evaluation was undertaken in 2001.

Under Criterion A/1, the property is the last remnant of the once-extensive and famous horticultural economy in Washington Township. The nursery also functioned as one of the first experimental farms in the state, creating new varieties of fruits and nuts for the state's burgeoning horticultural industry. In addition, the property is significantly associated with the evolution of the nursery industry on a statewide level. Under Criterion B/2, the California Nursery is closely associated with John Rock and George C. Roeding, considered the leading nurserymen of their generation in California, both of whom contributed significantly to the growth and development of the nursery industry in California. Under Criterion C/3, the property includes noteworthy landscape features, such as the many mature specimens of trees, in addition to historically and architecturally significant buildings, notably the Vallejo Adobe, President's House, and Garden Store. Under Criterion D/4, the property is likely to yield information about the Spanish Colonial period in the region.<sup>1</sup>

The period of significance for the historic district begins in 1884, when John Rock began the nursery at this location.<sup>2</sup> The period of significance ends when the Roeding family sold the property in 1968.<sup>3</sup> This

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<sup>1</sup> Ward Hill, Woodruff Minor, and Michael Corbett, *California Nursery, California Department of Parks and Recreation, Building, Structure and Object Record*, December 2001.

<sup>2</sup> Although the Adobe was constructed prior to 1884, it is already individually listed on the National Register for a different context, beginning with its own c. 1842 date of construction. As a contributor of the California Nursery Historic District, and as an expression of the Nursery context, it would share the same period of significance as the Nursery as a whole, i.e. 1884-1968.

period of significance captures both the period of site acquisition by the Roeding family and expansion, as well as the period of contraction. This allows the current site, which is much smaller than it was at one time, to retain sufficient integrity for eligibility.<sup>4</sup> The Garden Store is a contributor to the historic district.<sup>5</sup>

In February 2012, Michael Corbett, Architectural Historian, evaluated the Garden Store. Corbett concluded that the building appeared individually eligible for the California Register of Historical Resources under Criteria 1 and 3 at the local level of significance:

The Garden Store possesses significance under criterion 1 as the most important symbol of the transition of the California Nursery from a wholesale to a retail operation, and as the principal public face of the retail business in subsequent years. As the largest nursery in the state, and as a wholesale business from its beginning in 1865 until the shift to retail in 1927, this change was a major event in the history of the company. Although the principal transition took place five years earlier, the Garden Store was the first permanent building whose function was to accommodate the new type of business, and it remained the focus of retail interaction with the public during the boom years of the company in the 1950s and beyond.

The Garden Store possesses significance under criterion 3 as an early example of the Modern Ranch Style in California and a rare early example of the style for a non-residential building. As an example of the style, it is associated with an effort to recognize California's Hispanic past and to interpret that past for modern life. Its unpretentious, informal character; its long, low, horizontal form; its unpeeled log columns, beams, and rafters; its board-and-batten siding; its openness to the outside; and its blurring of the lines between indoors and outdoors, combine in a classic representation of the Modern Ranch Style.

[...]

The period of significance under criterion 1 is from 1933 through the end of its most prosperous period (approximately) 1960. The period of significance under criterion 3 is from 1933 when it was first designed and 1946 when the sales room was extended. Overall, the period of significance is 1933 to 1960.

[...]

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<sup>3</sup> The DPR form suggests an end date of 1952, but does not provide an argument supporting that end date. Since the form was completed at the end of 2001, it is likely that the authors selected an end date that was 50 years prior to the date of their evaluation (Hill, Minor and Corbett, December 2001).

<sup>4</sup> Carey & Co., *California Nursery Master Plan Fremont, California, Draft Historic Resources Technical Report*, April 24, 2015, page 5.

<sup>5</sup> Hill, Minor, and Corbett, December 2001, page 5; Michael Corbett, *Garden Store (California Nursery) DPR Form*, February 2012, page 11.

The Garden Store has suffered a diminishment of its integrity, especially in the loss of the rear loggia and in the deterioration of the roof. However, because its character is largely intact both as seen from the outside and as experienced, it retains integrity for the purpose of the CRHR [...].<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Michael Corbett, *Garden Store (California Nursery) DPR Form*, February 2012, page 11.

## PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

### A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1933<sup>7</sup>
2. Architect: Unknown, attributed to Frederick H. Reiemers<sup>8</sup>
3. Original and subsequent owners: John Rock was the owner of the California Nursery from 1884 to 1899 (he established his first nursery in San Jose in 1865 and moved to this larger site in 1884 in partnership with Richard D. Fox); William J. Landers from 1899 to 1917; George C. Roeding Company from 1917 to 1968 (the company became the largest nursery business in California); Lowell Berry Foundation from 1968 to 1972 (during which the Roeding family was allowed to operate the nursery). In 1972, City of Fremont purchased the property and designated it as the California Nursery Historical Park.<sup>9</sup>
4. Builder: Bill Cull<sup>10</sup>
5. Original Plans and Construction: The California Nursery developed over time with addition of buildings as needed.

The operational headquarters of the California Nursery during all phases of ownership consisted of a 10-acre area at the northeast corner of the property, adjoining the rail line and roadway. Residences, offices, barns, greenhouses, lath houses, storage sheds, packing sheds, the old adobe, and areas for potting and fumigating were located here. The Vallejo Adobe, dating from the 1840s, was the only building on the property acquired by John Rock in 1884. The *California Architect & Building News* made note of construction at the California Nursery as early as 1885. By 1888, improvements included a residence, barn, tankhouse, windmill, and several greenhouses. Numerous other structures—barns, tankhouses, workers' cottages, bunkhouse, mess hall, packing sheds—were added as the grounds were developed. [...] The only structure known to survive from this first phase of development under Rock's ownership (1884-1900) is the Vallejo Adobe. The remnant of a tankhouse may also date from this period.

Under the ownership of William J. Landers (1900-1917), new construction included the Office Building, Restroom, and President's House, all dating from about 1907, and the Packing Shed, estimated to date from about 1910. [...]

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<sup>7</sup> Michael Corbett, *Garden Store (California Nursery) DPR Form*, February 2012, page 5.

<sup>8</sup> Michael Corbett, *Garden Store (California Nursery) DPR Form*, February 2012, page 5.

<sup>9</sup> Summarized from Hill, Minor, and Corbett, December 2001.

<sup>10</sup> Michael Corbett, *Garden Store (California Nursery) DPR Form*, February 2012, page 5.

Older structures that survive from the period of ownership of the Roeding family (1917-1968) were all built (or altered) after 1928 under the direction of George C. Roeding Jr. His decision to transform the nursery into a retail operation resulted in several building projects. In 1931, the Vallejo Adobe was reconstructed to serve as a marketing logo and reception cottage for the new business. In 1932 the Garden Store—the first of a chain of retail outlets in Northern and Central California—was erected by the main entrance to the nursery. The rustic Gateway was built around 1938. Around 1940, the Office Building, situated across the entrance road from the Garden Store, was remodeled to harmonize with the "Old Adobe" marketing image.<sup>11</sup>

The original design of the Garden Store was described by Corbett in detail:

The Garden Store itself is a one-story wood structure, with a long narrow, generally rectangular footprint. Running the length of the center of this rectangle is an enclosed core in two parts separated by a breezeway. As it was built, a long open porch or loggia ran the length of both the front and the rear of the building. A shed roof sloping down toward the rear covered both enclosed sections of the building and the breezeway between them and, originally, extended in the same plane over the rear loggia. The front loggia is covered by a sloping roof in the opposite direction, from its high point at the top of the west wall of the core of the structure. A section through the width of the structure as built, shows an asymmetrical gable roof—shorter and steeper on the west side facing the parking area, and longer and less steep on the east side.

This arrangement originally produced an H-plan of covered outdoor spaces—long parallel loggias joined in the center by a breezeway. On either side of the breezeway were enclosed buildings of equal size, a simple space for a sales room on the east and a partitioned interior for two offices and two restrooms on the west. Large windows from the buildings onto front and rear loggias, and broad doorways from interior spaces to the loggias and breezeway provided for ample movement between inside and sheltered outside and created blurred boundaries between indoors and outdoors.

The two enclosed sections of the building were ordinary milled wood structures with board-and-batten exterior walls and exposed studs on the interior. The single space of the sales room was open to the rafters through an exposed truss. The original character of the ceiling of the office and restroom building is unknown, but its interior walls were also unfinished.

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<sup>11</sup> Hill, Minor, and Corbett, December 2001, page 5.

The two loggias were built on a structure of unpeeled logs with an alignment of large round columns at the outer edge of each loggia that supported a top beam of round logs in series. Each loggia roof was supported by smaller round rafters that spanned the space from the outer wall of the building to the log supports at the edge of the loggia. The entire roof over buildings, loggias, and breezeway was originally clad in wood shingles.

The visual character or style of the building is an intentional result of the use of ordinary and familiar materials, a completely exposed structural system, an overall simplicity that is deceptively simple, and a composition that evokes the outbuildings of the California missions - specifically the long, low buildings that framed the courtyards of the missions and functioned as the centers of daily life with sleeping quarters, rooms for cooking and eating, and work rooms. These features, together with the dominance of outdoor spaces and the easy flow between inside and outside, suggest the Modern Ranch Style, a style usually associated with houses and only occasionally with commercial structures.

In keeping with the style, the design of the Garden Store was intentionally modest, almost to the point of invisibility. In early photographs, the most visible features of the structure were its roof and the outer edge of the log structure of the front loggia. The shadow cast by the roof, plants hanging from the log beam of the loggia, and the row of palm trees obscured the buildings and spaces under the loggia. The building receded in prominence while attention was focused on the plants.<sup>12</sup>

6. Alterations and Additions: The Garden store received several additions and alterations over time while keeping the general character of the building.

According to Bruce Roeding, former owner of the California Nursery, as told to Laurie Rogers of the Fremont Recreation Department, the rear loggia was rebuilt in 1948. However, plan drawings of the "existing building" prepared in 1973 show both loggias, still in place (but in need of repair). Already existing at that time was an extension of the sales room to the west beyond the ends of the loggias. The design and materials of the extension match those of the original. Work authorized in 1973 included new hanging light fixtures in both buildings and the breezeway, "repair and replace wall and roof material as necessary, workmanship and materials to match existing," "new adobe color slabs throughout," and "new mudsills." (Triangle Associates 1973)

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<sup>12</sup> Corbett, February 2012, pages 2-3.

Since 1973, the rear loggia has been removed leaving several of the sawed-off stumps of the log columns visible at ground level. The space previously occupied by that portion of the loggia behind the sales room at the east end has been enclosed underneath a new roof of the same size and in the same location as the loggia roof. Walls around this space are formed by a low concrete bulkhead and plate glass windows except at the south end which incorporates a wood door.

The space previously occupied by that portion of the loggia behind the breezeway and the office and restroom building is covered by a porch roof on square posts of the same size in the same location.

[...]

At an unknown date after 1973, the open areas of the slab of the Garden Store of the breezeway and loggias were covered in black tile pavers. Also, three ornamental garden structures were built: a fountain at the center of the breezeway, a small fountain, and a gazebo.<sup>13</sup>

In 1973, the Lanai, a separate and structurally independent structure, was built behind the Garden Store. The redwood structure, open on the sides, functioned as an extension of the loggias into the rear sales yard. The Lanai was in two parts, a 24-foot wide pergola (extant) and a larger octagonal structure (demolished).<sup>14</sup>

## B. Historical Context

In December 2001/June 2002, the California Nursery was recorded and evaluated by Ward Hill, Woodruff Minor, and Michael Corbett. The following text is quoted from the California Nursery DPR form:

For many years the California Nursery was one of the state's leading nurseries. Established in 1884 by John Rock, the nursery originally covered 463.38 acres. Through constant experimentation, including the introduction of new and little-known fruits, Rock made a major contribution to commercial fruit production in California. Under the ownership of the Landers and Roeding families in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the nursery continued to play a leading role in California horticulture, though its grounds were diminished as tracts of land were partitioned off and developed. After the nursery closed in 1972, most of the site was developed; the remnant (20.1 acres) was acquired by the City of Fremont.

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<sup>13</sup> Corbett, February 2012, pages 3-4.

<sup>14</sup> Summarized from Corbett, February 2012, pages 3-4.

### *Site History*

The site of the California Nursery originally formed part of the vast grazing lands of Mission San Jose. Following Mexican independence in the 1820s, the missions were closed and their lands disposed of as private ranchos. Between 1836 and 1846, four ranchos were carved out of former Mission San Jose property in the area that became Washington Township-Rancho Agua Caliente (1836), Rancho Arroyo de la Alameda (1842), Rancho Potrero de Los Cerritos (1844), and Rancho Ex-Mission San Jose Lands (1846). On June 1, 1842, Jose de Jesus Vallejo petitioned Governor Alvarado for Rancho Arroyo de la Alameda, receiving title to the property on August 8, 1842. The rancho spread west from Alameda Creek between the hills and the bay, covering an area of four-square leagues, or 17,705 acres. The Niles District of Fremont (including the subject property) and much of Union City are located within the historic boundaries of the rancho.

Jose de Jesus Vallejo (1797-1882) was born into a distinguished colonial family in Monterey. One of his brothers, Mariano Vallejo, was the general in command of Alta California during the Mexican War. In 1819, J. J. Vallejo married Soleda Sanchez de Ortega, who bore him seven children. He went on to pursue a career of military and civil service. Between 1836 and 1840, Vallejo was the administrator of the old Mission San Jose, overseeing the transition of mission lands to private ownership. In 1837, he also served as the military commander of San Jose. Following statehood, in 1850, Vallejo settled with his family in the town of Mission San Jose, serving as its first postmaster. In 1859, he was considered the richest man in Alameda County, with an estate valued at \$190,000-derived primarily from his rancho property, which included a large gristmill on Alameda Creek. The mill lent its name to the town of Vallejo Mills (renamed Niles after the arrival of the railroad, in 1869). In the relatively few years it remained in operation, Rancho Arroyo de la Alameda was a successful enterprise. Vallejo cultivated wheat and potatoes, among other crops, and his livestock included thousands of horses, cattle, oxen, and pigs. His horses were prized as cavalry mounts; his cattle provided tanned hides for the leather trade.

During the first wave of intensive settlement in the area in the 1850s, J. J. Vallejo managed to retain title to his rancho property. He sold about a third of his land, mostly choice tracts of alluvial farmland around Alvarado, before legal debts forced him to mortgage what remained (around 11,000 acres) to a San Francisco merchant and real estate speculator named Jonas G. Clark. Clark foreclosed on the loan in July 1862, receiving title to the rancho's hill section and adjacent flatlands in February 1863 (this conveyance was "ratified and confirmed" in a second deed issued in March 1866). On November .10, 1884, Clark sold 463.38 acres of this property to a prominent nurseryman named John Rock. The tract of alluvial flatland stretched south from the Central Pacific

Railroad tracks to Alameda Creek, about a half-mile west of the town of Niles. It was on this property that Rock established the California Nursery.

*The California Nursery under John Rock, 1884-1899*

John Rock (1836-1904) immigrated to the United States from Germany in 1852, finding work in New York as a nurseryman. In 1863, after serving in the Union Army, he came to California and settled in Santa Clara County. He established his first nursery in San Jose in 1865, opening a larger nursery near Milpitas in 1879. Rock garnered a statewide reputation selling a wide variety of fruit and ornamental trees. As horticulture spread throughout California in the 1880s, Rock quickly outgrew his property in Santa Clara County. In partnership with nurseryman Richard D. Fox-nephew and heir of Pioneer Santa Clara County horticulturist B. S. Fox-Rock moved his operations to the much larger site near Niles in 1884 (though he always cited 1865 as the founding date of the new nursery).

The California Nursery Company, as the new facility was called, "became a great experimental farm, where all varieties of plants, secured from various countries, were tested and those suited to the climate and soil conditions of California were distributed throughout the state" (Duval). Rock's 1888 catalogue listed 700 types of ornamental plants, 500 varieties of fruit trees, and 273 varieties of roses. At the 1893 Columbian Exposition, the nursery took a first prize for its exhibit of roses; that same year, the nursery donated 600 deciduous trees and shrubs to Golden Gate Park. In 1898, the Washington Press commented on the nursery's "immense variety of trees, plants, shrubs, flowers, etc., that can be grown in the climate of California. There is a greater variety of these under cultivation ... than at any other [nursery] in the United States." They included "all northern deciduous fruits ... as well as those grown in semitropical climates [including] oranges, lemons, limes, figs, etc., and over fifty varieties of olives, imported at great expense from France, Spain, and Italy." The nursery set aside 18 acres for the cultivation of over 400 varieties of roses; 10 acres for experimental purposes, such as growing new varieties of fruit; and 10 acres for ornamental and decorative plants and trees, such as magnolias and palms, "specimens of which can be furnished from one to ten feet in height." The nursery's work force in 1898 consisted of 100 to 220 employees (and 32 horses) during busy season. Most of the employees resided in Niles, Decato, and Centerville; around 12 families lived on the premises.

*Landers, Roeding, and City Ownership, 1899-present*

On August 17, 1899, John Rock sold the California Nursery to William J. Landers, who paid \$51,534 for the 463-acre property. Rock continued to serve as the nursery's manager until shortly before his death in August 1904. Landers then took on William V. Eberly as his manager (when the Western Pacific Railroad laid its tracks through the nursery in 1910, a stop called "Eberly" was established on the grounds). Among the

nursery's large commissions during these years was supplying the palm trees for the "Avenue of Palms" at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco, which opened in 1915 (the California Nursery celebrated its fiftieth anniversary at the fair, based on John Rock's founding date of 1865). In 1917, the Landers consortium sold the nursery to the George C. Roeding Company.

Based in Fresno, the Roeding Company was a prominent nursery business that operated the Fancher Creek Nurseries and Fresno Nursery in that city with sales outlets in Modesto and Sacramento. Fancher Creek Nurseries was founded in 1883 by Frederick Roeding, a German immigrant who came to California during the Gold Rush (Roeding Park in Fresno was developed on a portion of the nursery). Frederick's son, George Christian Roeding Sr. (1868-1928), began working at Fancher Creek Nurseries at the age of 17. In 1905, he organized the Roeding Fig and Olive Company, and in 1916 acquired the Fresno Nursery Company. The George C. Roeding Company, which oversaw these enterprises, became the largest nursery business in the state, supplying millions of fruit trees for farms and ornamentals for landscaping. George Roeding experimented with the development of grapes, figs, olives, persimmons, citrus, nectarines, and walnuts, and he wrote *The Fruit Grower's Guide* (1919), a standard reference book for farmers of the era. He served as a state agricultural commissioner for most major expositions in the United States prior to World War I, and as the first president of the California Association of Nurserymen. Following his death, the Association memorialized him in a book entitled *George Christian Roeding: The Story of California's Leading Nurseryman and Fruit Grower* (1930).

When George C. Roeding Sr. acquired the California Nursery Company in 1917, he adopted this corporate name as an umbrella for his various businesses, and the California Nursery became the headquarters of a regional chain of wholesale nurseries in Northern and Central California specializing in fruit and ornamental trees. His son, George Jr., became manager of the California Nursery in 1926, assuming ownership in 1928 after his father's death. Born in 1901, George C. Roeding Jr. settled in Niles where he and his family became active in community affairs. In the early 1930s, at the outset of the depression, he shifted the emphasis of the nursery to the retail production of bulbs and roses. Retail outlets were opened in Walnut Creek, Menlo Park, and Sacramento. A mail-order service and a landscaping department augmented the business. The nursery supplied all the plant materials for the 1939-40 Golden Gate International Exposition on Treasure Island, and it enjoyed continued prosperity through the 1940s with wartime demand for fruit trees in home orchards and wartime contracts for landscaping military bases, factories, and housing projects. In 1950, the nursery had 50,000 retail customers and 150 employees with an annual payroll of \$250,000. Declining business in the 1950s and 1960s—due in part to competition from nurseries established after the war to meet

the demand for garden supply and landscaping services-ended with bankruptcy proceedings in 1968.

Under the ownership of the Roeding family, the California Nursery lost most of its acreage to development. Around 1900, County Road No. 2735 (present-day Niles Boulevard) was cut through a portion of the property, isolating a narrow triangle of land between the road and the Central/Southern Pacific Railroad tracks. Beginning around 1918, this tract was subdivided for residential and industrial development. In 1923, Kraftile acquired a large parcel at the western end of the tract, adjoined on the east several years later by Adobe Acres, a residential subdivision developed by the Roedings. By 1930, additional subdivision activity on the west had reduced the nursery grounds to about 227 acres. Postwar residential developments such as Hacienda Gardens, and gravel quarrying at the southern edge of the property, further reduced the grounds. By the late 1960s, the California Nursery had lost about 86 percent of its acreage, the original 463 acres having been reduced to 63 acres. (The water-filled quarries now form part of the Alameda Creek Quarries Regional Recreation Area, under the management of the East Bay Regional Park District.)

After the Readings closed the nursery in 1968, ownership passed to the Lowell Berry Foundation. The Roeding family was allowed to operate the nursery until 1972. A citizens' group called Committee to Conserve Adobe and Nursery (CAN) advocated preservation of the site; at the same time, a developer acquired an option to purchase the property. The conflict ended with most of the nursery site approved for development as the Rancho Arroyo subdivision.

The remnant of the nursery-20.1 acres fronting on Niles Boulevard, including the Vallejo Adobe and other buildings-comprises around 4 percent of the original property. It was acquired by the City of Fremont in 1972 and designated as the California Nursery Company Historic Park. The City leases the grounds to the Mission Adobe Nursery (retail) and Naka Nursery (wholesale). The Vallejo Adobe is operated as a rental facility for weddings and other events.<sup>15</sup>

### The Garden Store

In the 1920s, the introduction of retail sales at the California Nursery required new facilities. As advertised in the company catalog, multiple outlets, called "salesyards," were opened throughout California in the following decade. A Landscape Department was also established in 1930 to provide services for homeowners and businesses.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Hill, Minor, and Corbett, December 2001, pages 2-5.

<sup>16</sup> Summarized from Corbett, February 2012, page 7.

These twin needs for the same market resulted in the design and construction of a new facility for both in 1933. The new Garden Store was designed to provide space for retail sales and to promote the services of the Landscape Department to retail customers by the proximity of the two functions. The building was built by Bill Cull (Roeding 2012). The specific location was determined by the extension of First Street (now Niles Boulevard) westward from Niles into the property in August 1931. (*Hayward Daily Review* 11 August 1931, p. 7) The exact date of completion of the Garden Store is unknown, but appears to have been in mid to late 1933 based on an advertisement in October 1933 referring to "our new Garden Store" (*Oakland Tribune* 26 October 1933: 11) and a newspaper article in December 1933: "The California Nursery Company has just opened its large new Garden Store" (*Oakland Tribune* 14 December 1933: 14)

In the first catalog published after completion of the Garden Store, the 1934 Garden Book (copyright 1933), a sketch of the new Garden Store by Robert Ingram appeared on the cover with the statement inside that the building was "new this year," with the dual purpose of " 'everything for the garden,' as well as the headquarters for the Landscape Department." (California Nursery Co. 1934: 1) Undated photographs of the building that appear to have been taken not long after it opened (from the cars parked in front and the styles of clothing on visitors) show an unobtrusive temporary sign on the roof (and no flagpole in front). According to a long-time prominent landscape architect Ernst Wertheim who first visited the California Nursery in 1939, before World War II the Garden Store functioned more as a place to greet customers than as a retail store; after the war it became a more conventional retail sales facility. Beginning in 1934, the Garden Store was a focal point of annual spring shows for daffodils and tulips that were held for many years.<sup>17</sup>

#### Architectural Context

##### *Frederick Holberg Reimers (1889-1961)*

Design of the Garden Store at the California Nursery was attributed to architect Frederick H. Reimers. The following paragraphs were summarized from the information on Reimers found in the Garden Store DPR form.<sup>18</sup>

Frederick Holberg Reimers graduated from University of California in 1915. His father Johannes Reimers was known as a "landscape gardener" and worked for George C. Roeding, Sr. in Fresno in the 1900s. Johannes designed Roeding Park in Fresno, a well-known early example of landscape design in California. After the Roedings purchased the California Nursery Company, Frederick Reimers was hired to design "the garden for the headquarters ... in the Old Adobe Building" about 1923.

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<sup>17</sup> Corbett, February 2012, page 7.

<sup>18</sup> Corbett, February 2012, pages 7-9.

Frederick Reimers worked for architect Bernard Maybeck in 1915-1916, and opened his own office in 1916. On May 26, 1917, he joined the U.S. Army. During World War I, Reimers was a First Lieutenant, serving as an engineer, and afterwards was long associated with the American Society of Military Engineers. He traveled in Europe after the war, and opened his own architectural practice in Oakland in 1921. He designed a varied number of building types and styles including apartment complexes with the imagery of Normandy villages in the 1920s, a Tudor style mansion in Piedmont, California in 1928, and the Mediterranean style Sigma Pi fraternity house (now Phi Gamma Delta) at the University of California, Berkeley in 1928. He was also interested in the architecture of the California Missions and that of early California. The Spanish Colonial Revival style Vallejo Junior High School in Vallejo, California, is his best-known work from this era.

Reimers moved his office from Oakland to San Francisco in 1930. Also, around the time of the Garden Store of 1933, Reimers began designing buildings that reflected the influence of Modernism: the Income Securities Building in Oakland (1931), the Howard Buick Building in Berkeley (1935), and the Friden Calculator Machine Building in Oakland (1937) were all designed in the Moderne style. And, beginning in 1941, he worked as part of a team of architects designing housing for wartime workers in Richmond and Oakland.

#### *Modern Ranch Style*

The Garden Store at the California Nursery is an early example of the Modern Ranch style and a rare non-residential example of the style:

The Modern Ranch Style buildings of the 1930s to the 1950s were characterized by the following features. They were one-story buildings with wings that embraced a patio or outdoor area. They were oriented to the site—they had no front or back and did not necessarily present a formal front to the street. They were oriented to the outdoors—to the patio, garden, and the corridor, a long porch covered by the roof. Their siting takes advantage of views. Outbuildings were connected by roofs and incorporated in the design. Their plans were open with spaces designated for multiple purposes. They were built with natural materials—"adobe, stone, quarry tile, rough-sawn lumber, hand-split shakes and battens." (Sunset 1997: 18). They were undecorated and were attractive and expressive by virtue of their simple use of materials. Finally, they were usually on large sites.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Corbett, February 2012, page 9.

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement

#### 1. Architectural Character:

The building is characterized by "its unpretentious, informal character; its long, low, horizontal form; its unpeeled log columns, beams, and rafters; its board-and-batten siding; its openness to the outside; and its blurring of the lines between indoors and outdoors, combine in a classic representation of the Modern Ranch Style."<sup>20</sup>

- #### 2. Condition of the Fabric:
- The condition of the Garden Store is poor. The unpeeled log columns are termite infested, and some have extensive deterioration near the ground. Rafters and purlins supporting the roof are also generally in poor condition, with rotting ends often splitting away from each other. Wood siding is deteriorated due to termites and water infiltration. Many of the windows are broken and several of the doors are boarded shut.<sup>21</sup>

### B. Description of Exterior

#### 1. Overall:

The Garden Store is composed of two buildings with a breezeway in-between: Building 1 to the north has a larger footprint (app. 60' by 30') whereas Building 2 is much smaller (37' by 20'). The following building description is quoted from the *California Nursery Master Plan, Draft Historic Resources Technical Report* prepared by Carey & Co.:

The one-story wood-frame building has two shed roofed sections linked by a covered breezeway [...]. Walls are clad in board and batten. The building is long and narrow, running in the north-south direction. The building has a deep, covered area on its west (front side). This covered area is formed by corrugated plastic roofing, sloping in the direction opposite the building roof, and supported at its west end by barked logs and beams. Concrete pavers form the floor of this area as well as the central breezeway. The building roof also extends out over the east side of the building. The wood ceiling opens here to create areas of corrugated-plastic-clad skylight; and a wall with large openings forms the eastern boundary of the space, supporting the roof.

The square footage of the larger, northern portion of the building is 1,752 square feet, while the smaller, southern portion encloses 716 square feet. This does not include the roof overhang or breezeway.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Corbett, February 2012, page 11.

<sup>21</sup> Carey & Co., 2015, page 6.

<sup>22</sup> Carey & Co., 2015, page 5.

2. Foundations: The foundation is concrete and likely has reinforcement.
3. Walls: Walls are clad in board and batten.
4. Structural system, framing: The wood frame structure has shed roofs framed with over-spanned 2x rafters at both main sections. Interior posts at north section support distressed roof framing. The building has wood stud wall framing. The building interior has a concrete slab-on-grade floor.<sup>23</sup>
5. Porches (*loggias*) and breezeway: Long open porches run almost the full-length of the building on the front (west) and along the majority of the rear of the building. The porches are covered with shed roofs supported by unpeeled logs on the front and square posts on the rear. The breezeway separating Building 1 and Building 2 is approximately 23' wide and connects both porches.
6. Openings:

Building 1 has two twelve-panel sliding wood barn doors on south opening to the breezeway; both with glazing in the upper nine panels. The building has a mix of wood windows varying in styles and size; the majority of them being large plate glass windows with simple wood trim—most all the windows are currently boarded up. An exposed three-lite window just below the roof line is located on the north elevation.

Building 2 has a twelve-panel sliding wood barn door with glazing in the upper nine panels and a six-panel glazed door opening to the breezeway. Another wood panel door is on the south elevation. In addition to the large plate glass windows, this building also has two smaller wood-sash windows at the southern end.
7. Roof: The Garden Store is capped by a shed roof sloping down toward east, covering both buildings and the breezeway. The front porch is covered by a shed roof sloping down toward the west. The roofing material is a mix of rolled asphalt roofing and corrugated plastic roofing. A corrugated-plastic-clad skylight with gable ends is located to the north and a small square skylight to the south.
8. Trellis: A wood-frame trellis rectangular in plan is located to the east of the Garden Store. Twelve square posts support the wood beams and slats above.

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<sup>23</sup> Carey & Co., *California Nursery, Building Existing Conditions*, October 14, 201, page 3.

C. Description of Interior

1. Floor Plan: Building 1 is rectangular in plan with two rectangular spaces running in the north-south direction. Building 2 has an L-shaped main room to the north, and three smaller rooms (including two restrooms) clustered to the south.
  2. Flooring: A variety of flooring is found throughout the buildings—mostly concrete, vinyl, and vinyl tiles.
  3. Wall and Ceiling Finishes: In Building 1, the walls are a mix of wood shingle cladding, board and batten, peg board, and plywood. Building 2 has similar wall finishes with the addition of faux wood veneer wall panels and lattice grill screens. The ceilings of both buildings are exposed wood sheathing.
  4. Interior Openings: The wall that divides Building 1 was once an exterior wall that became an interior one after the porch was enclosed. Two wood-sash windows, a sliding eight-paneled wood door with glazing in the upper six panels, and a large opening are on this wall. Two windows and the large opening have simple wood trims. Building 2 has two wood slat stall partition doors at the restroom, and an eight-lite wood casement window in the dividing wall at the south end of the main room.
  5. Lighting: The majority of the lighting throughout the interior is utilitarian in nature featuring primarily contemporary fluorescent strip lights.
- D. Site: The Garden Store is located in the approximately 20-acre California Nursery Historical Park. The park is bounded by Niles Boulevard to the north, single family houses to the east and south, and apartment complexes to the west. Nursery Avenue runs north to south partially into the site from Niles Boulevard. The Garden Stores is located at the southeast corner of the Niles Boulevard and Nursery Avenue intersection. The park features multiple buildings and sheds, mature specimens of trees, open grass areas, paths, and an asphalt-paved parking lot.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Architectural Drawings:

No original drawings have been found to date.

B. Early Views:

Two early photographs showing the Garden Store are found in the Draft Phase 1 Master Report. One is a photograph of the main entrance (*Gateway*) with Garden Store in the background behind a

row of palm trees. The other one is taken from the breezeway looking west that shows one of the unpeeled log columns and the roof, dated the 1930s.<sup>24</sup> Additionally, the Garden Store is visible on aerial photographs of the region starting from 1946.<sup>25</sup>

#### C. Bibliography

Carey & Co., *California Nursery, Building Existing Conditions*, October 14, 201, page 3.

Carey & Co. *California Nursery Master Plan Fremont, California, Draft Historic Resources Technical Report*. April 24, 2015.

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#### D. Supplemental Material

- Drawings of floor plans, elevations, and sections prepared by TreanorHL.
- Photographs by David Wakely.
- Photography Log and Drawing Key to accompany the photographs.

### PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was commissioned by the City of Fremont as the City-owned structure is slated for demolition. The documentation was undertaken by Kimberly Butt, AIA and Elizabeth Graux, AIA. Both Ms. Butt and Ms. Graux exceed the Secretary of the Interior's Qualification Standards for professionals in architectural history and architecture as published in the Code of Federal Regulations, 36 CFR Part 61. The project was undertaken from September 2018 to March 2019. All drawings and written sections were completed by Elizabeth Graux and Aysem Kilinc. Ms. Kilinc exceeds the Secretary of the Interior's Qualification Standards for professionals in architectural history as published in the Code of Federal Regulations, 36 CFR Part 61. The photography was undertaken by David Wakely.

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<sup>24</sup> PGAdesign, *City of Fremont California Nursery Historical Park, Draft Phase 1 Master Plan Report*, 2014, pages 9 and 24.

<sup>25</sup> Historic Aerials by NETROnline, <https://www.historicaerials.com/viewer> (accessed December 10, 2018).