



HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

APPLICATION: HL-132

AGENDA ITEM: PH-2

PREPARED BY: Ili Lobaco
Associate Planner

MEETING DATE: July 23, 2014

SUBJECT: Historic Landmark HL-132
240 West Hillcrest Boulevard

APPLICANT: Doug and Karen Poindexter
240 West Hillcrest Boulevard
Monrovia, CA 91016

REQUEST: Historic landmark designation

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION: Categorical Exemption (Class 1)

BACKGROUND: Pursuant to the Historic Preservation Ordinance, the property owners of 240 West Hillcrest Boulevard have filed an application for consideration of historic landmark designation.

DISCUSSION: Based on information submitted by the applicants, the home was built for George W. Dumbell who arrived in Monrovia from Tennessee with this bride, the former Anna Thornton in May of 1887. George found employment as the bookkeeper for the firm of W.N. Monroe and Son, a prominent local real estate firm with family ties to Monrovia's founder. Plans for the house were completed in 1887 for a cost between \$1200 and \$1500. The house was built on the southeast corner of Magnolia and Banana (Hillcrest Boulevard) Avenues. George passed away in January 1892 at the young age of 34.



The house then became the home of Dr. James W. La Force and his wife, the former Mary Jane Black. Dr. Force retired in 1889 and sold the house in 1904. Between 1904 and 1908 the house was moved from its original location to its current location at 240 West Hillcrest Boulevard. At the time of the move, a river rock foundation replaced the high wooden foundation on which the house originally rested and the Victorian porch was replaced with one in the Colonial Revival style with plain, squared balusters, and paired Doric columns and dentils. The bay window to the east of the porch still retains the original Victorian elements.

In 2007, the Commission reviewed the addition of a 172 square foot porch to the rear of the home that was never constructed.

Although the home has an association with William Monroe as it was built for and occupied by George Dumbell, Monroe's bookkeeper. Staff believes that this information does not meet the level of significance to qualify the home under Criteria 1 (identified with persons significant in local history). Additionally, the home's location and appearance has changed since George Dumbell lived in the home.

Criteria and Guidelines

The Historic Preservation Ordinance requires that a property meet at least one of the seven criteria specified in order to be designated a local historic landmark. The Historic Preservation Commission is charged with the duty of determining the applicable designation criteria for landmark status. Based on the information provided by the applicant the following may be considered:

- **Criteria Number 4** – *It embodies one or more distinctive characteristics of style, type, period, design, materials, detail or craftsmanship.*

The property is significant under this criterion as it exemplifies characteristics of a Victorian architecture with Colonial Revival influence. It is in excellent condition and exhibits distinctive architectural details attributed to this style. Although the house has been relocated from its original location with porch modification, the home still retains integrity in its design, material and workmanship.

DPR Form

The property is part of the current draft Historic Resources Survey. A status code of 5S3 has been assigned (appears to be individually eligible for local listing or designation through survey evaluation). If the Historic Preservation Commission determines that the house is eligible for listing for local designation and the City Council concurs, then the code will be changed to 5S1 (individual property that is listed or designated locally).

Additional information about the house is found on the DPR form that has been completed by City Staff; it is attached for the review, Comment and approval of the Commission.

The owners have not applied for a Mills Act Contract.

RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends that the Historic Preservation Commission forward a Nomination Statement to the City Council recommending that the house at 240 West Hillcrest Boulevard be designated as a historic landmark.

If the Commission concurs with this recommendation and determines that the property meets at least one of the seven criteria for historic landmark designation, and the information provided on the DPR is accurate then, following the public hearing, the following motion is appropriate:

Designate the property at 240 West Hillcrest Boulevard as Historic Landmark Number 132 and so recommend to the City Council.

Other Listings
Review Code

Reviewer

Date

Page 1 of 2 *Resource Name or #: HL-132

P1 Other Identifier: 240 West Hillcrest Boulevard

*P2 Location: Not for Publication Unrestricted

a. County: Los Angeles

c. Address: 240 West Hillcrest Boulevard City: Monrovia Zip: 91016

e. Other Locational Data: APN # 8519-012-009

P3a Description: (Describe resource and its major elements. Include design, materials, condition, alterations, size, setting, and boundaries)

A gable-on-hip and front-gabled roof crowns this one-story Victorian era, Queen Anne style dwelling. Wide clapboard siding with corner boards sheathes most exteriors, except for the gable faces which are sheathed in fish scale shingles. Roof elements include shallow boxed eaves, a plain entablature, and a narrow vent in the front gable face. The projecting front-gabled wing features a bay window with carved corner brackets, pendants, and double-hung sash windows. A projecting, wrap-around front entrance porch is located on the northwest corner of the primary (north) elevation. Tapered round Tuscan wood posts atop square piers support the hipped porch roof. Dentil molding embellishes the porch roof and a plain stick railing encloses the porch space. Within the porch area is the glazed front entrance and a double-hung sash window. The original Victorian porch was replaced with the current one of Colonial Revival styling. The single-family residence is of wood frame construction and rests on a raised foundation.

P3b Resource Attributes: (List attributes and codes) HP2. Single family property

*P4 Resources Present: Building Structure Object Site District Element of District Other

P5a Photograph

P5b Description of Photo: Front (north) June 2014



P6 Date Constructed: 1887;
1900

Tax Assessor 1900;

Source: Other: c 1887

P7 Owner and Address:

Doug & Karen Poindexter
240 W Hillcrest Blvd
Monrovia, CA 91016

P8 Recorded by:

City of Monrovia

P9 Date Recorded: July 2014

P10 Survey Type: Individual

P11 Report Citation:

Attachments: NONE Location Map Sketch Map Continuation Sheet Building, Structure, and Object Record
 Archaeological Record District Record Linear Feature Record Milling Station Record Rock Art Record
 Artifact Record Photograph Record Other (List):

Page 2 of 2 *Resource Name or #: HL-132

- B1 **Historic Name:** None
- B2 **Common Name:** None
- B3 **Original Use** Single-Family Residence
- B4 **Present Use** Single-Family Residence
- B5 **Architectural Style** Victorian era, Queen Anne

B6 Construction History (Construction date, alterations, and date of alterations)

1887 – House Constructed
 1907 – House moved to its current location
 1914 – Screen room added to rear

B7 Moved: Yes **Date Moved** 1904-1908 **Original Location** SE corner of Magnolia & Hillcrest

B8 Related Features:
 None

B9a Architect: Unknown **b. Builder:** Unknown

B10 Significance: Theme: Architecture **Area:** Monrovia

Period of Significance: 1900 **Property Type** HP2 - Single Family Property

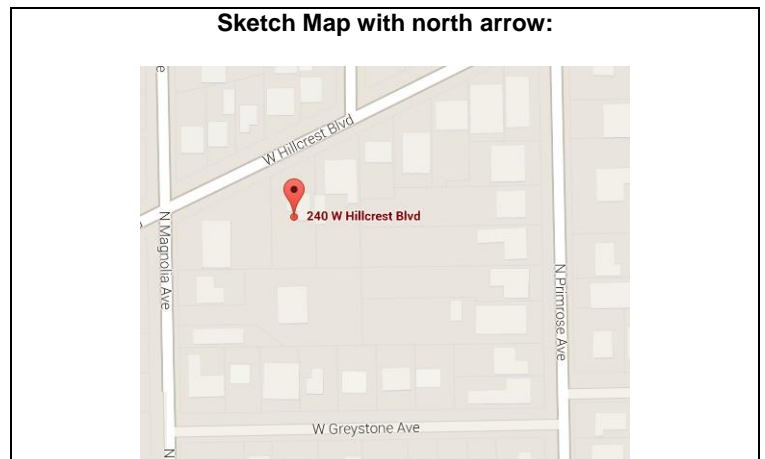
Although the building appears ineligible for the National Register, it does appear eligible for City of Monrovia Landmark designation due to its architectural styling and association with the early residential development of Monrovia.

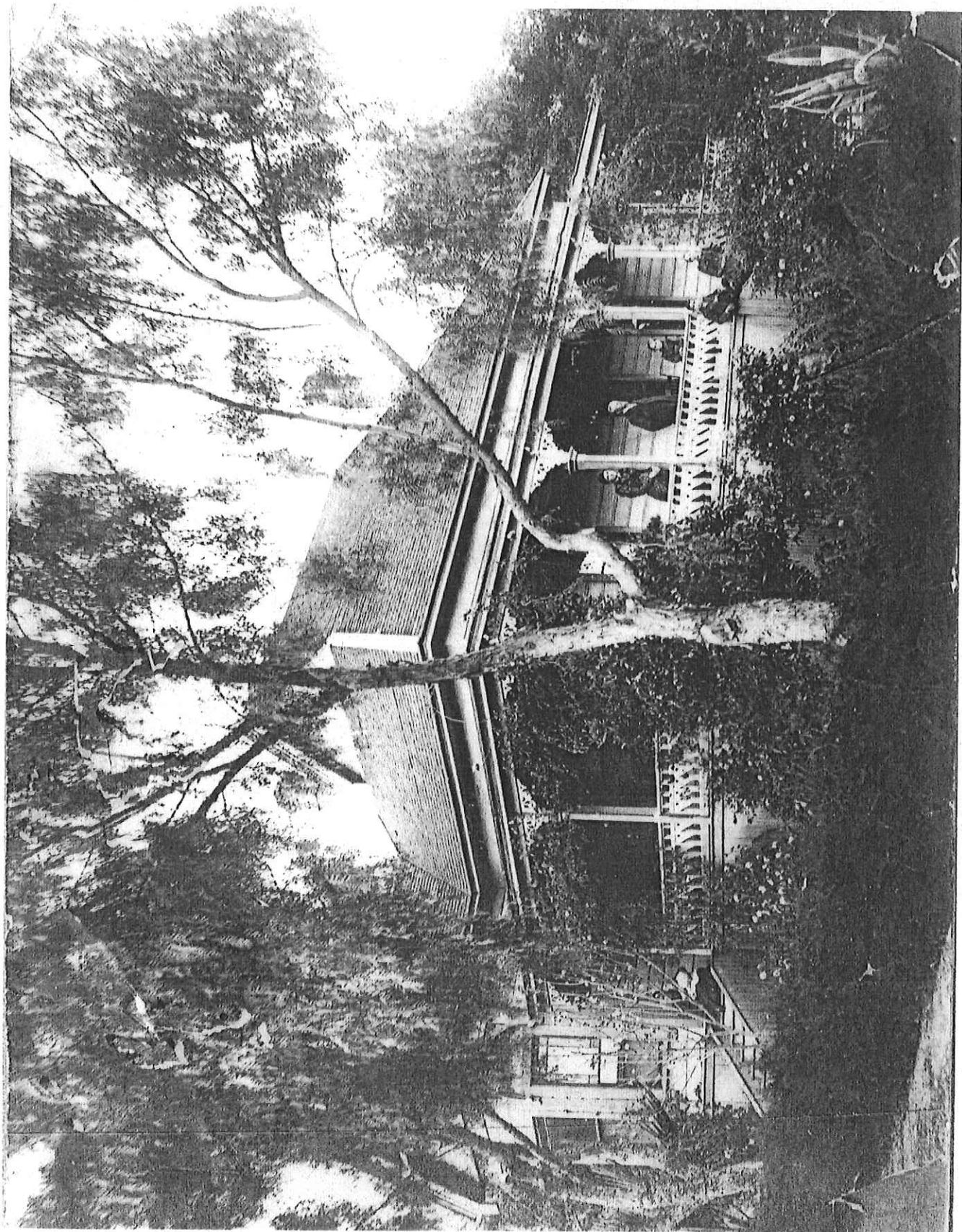
B11 Additional Resource Attributes:

B12 References:
 LA County Assessor; Sanborn Maps; Building Permits; 29th Annual Mother's Day Old Homes Tour Booklet; Monrovia's Heritage, Volume 1, 1980

B13 Remarks

B14 Evaluator/ Date City of Monrovia, July 2014





240 WEST HILLCREST *THE GEORGE W. DUMBELL HOUSE, 1887*



This graceful blend of the Victorian and Colonial Revival aesthetics was built for George W. Dumbell, who arrived in Monrovia from Tennessee with his bride, the former Anna Thornton, in May of 1887. He found employment as the bookkeeper for the firm of W.N. Monroe and Son, a prominent local real estate firm with family ties to Monrovia's founder. An item in the local newspaper of June 4, 1887, announced that Dumbell had plans completed for a cottage to cost between \$1200 and \$1500. For its location, Dumbell purchased Lot 7 in Block G of the Monroe Addition to Monrovia. This was a large lot on the southeast corner of Magnolia and Banana Avenues. (Hillcrest Boulevard was originally named Banana Avenue and was lined with banana trees to advertise the almost frost-free climate of Monrovia.) The Dumbell House is clearly visible in the panoramic photograph of Monrovia taken from the hills above Monrovia in December of 1887.

George and Anna Dumbell's daughter, Mildred, was born in the house on July 25, 1888, and George Dumbell passed away here on January 26, 1892 at the young age of 34. He is buried at Live Oak Cemetery, together with Anna and Mildred. Anna, who was an artist by profession, left Monrovia with Mildred and was living in Los Angeles by 1900.

In the meantime, the house became the residence of Dr. James W. La Force and his wife, the former Mary Jane Black, who had moved to Monrovia from Agency, Iowa. Dr. La Force retired from his medical practice in 1889, and he and his wife came to Monrovia because of an acquaintance with the Monroe family. With Dr. and Mrs. La Force came their unmarried daughter, Jessie, who became a local newspaper editor and business woman.

Dr. and Mrs. La Force sold the house circa 1904 when they purchased a larger house in another part of Monrovia. Between 1904 and 1908 the house was moved to its present location on the eastern portion of Lot 7 in the Monroe Addition. The house was rotated ninety degrees clockwise so that it faced north rather than west. At the time of the move, a river rock foundation replaced the high wooden foundation on which the house originally rested, and the Victorian porch was replaced with one in the Colonial Revival style: plain, squared balusters, paired Doric columns, and dentils. But the bay to the east of the porch still retains the original Victorian elements. Curved panels project at its corners, terminating in dropped pendants. The projecting gable above the bay features a decorative barge board with trim and pattern shingles.

The interior features elegant coved ceilings throughout the home, as well as original brass hardware in all the rooms. The Dumbell house is a favorite among movie, TV and commercial location scouts, who see it as a perfect example of the "All-American" home. The current owners continue to maintain and preserve this unique property.

The Dumbell House Is a Charmer

- By Jim Wigton
- September 25, 2011

When William Monroe and his associates first put lots on the market on May 17, 1886, for the town site that was soon to become Monrovia, they hoped to realize a profit by drawing residents, tourists and land speculators to the area. One such couple to make the journey west was George W. Dumbell and his wife Anna who arrived here from Tennessee in 1887.

They purchased a large lot at the southeast corner of Magnolia and Banana Avenues (Hillcrest Boulevard was originally named Banana Avenue, as it was lined with banana trees to help promote the fact that Monrovia was a frost-free zone, an appealing idea to Easterners who were tired of the cold winters and were contemplating a move to the west.).

The house that was erected on the lot cost between \$1,200 and \$1,500. A glance at the 1887 photograph of Monrovia taken from the hills looking towards the town has the home clearly visible in the foreground.

George Dumbell lived only a short time at this address as he passed away at the age of 34 on July 25, 1888. The next owners were Dr. and Mrs. James La Force, who lived there for 16 years, and they sold the house around 1904. Interestingly, the sale of the house was precipitated by the fact that Dr. La Force had purchased a desk that was too big for the house, so he sold the house, buying a larger home on Foothill Boulevard.

According to the present owners, the Dumbell house (like so many others in Monrovia that were relocated) was moved around the corner in 1907 to its present location on Hillcrest.

If the porch of this Victorian house looks somewhat out of character, that is because it is. Shortly after the house was moved, the porch was replaced with one in the Colonial Revival style. The position of the house was also rotated during the move so that instead of facing west it faced north. In addition to the porch alteration, the interior Victorian moldings were changed to the Colonial Revival style, in keeping with the design of the porch.

The current owners--original members of the Monrovia Historic Preservation Group, which was founded in 1980--purchased the home in 1979, and the interior reflects their sensitivity to maintaining the character of this vintage house. Their desire to preserve the property included installing a gravel driveway to the west side of the house next to the oak tree, a move aimed at protecting the tree roots.

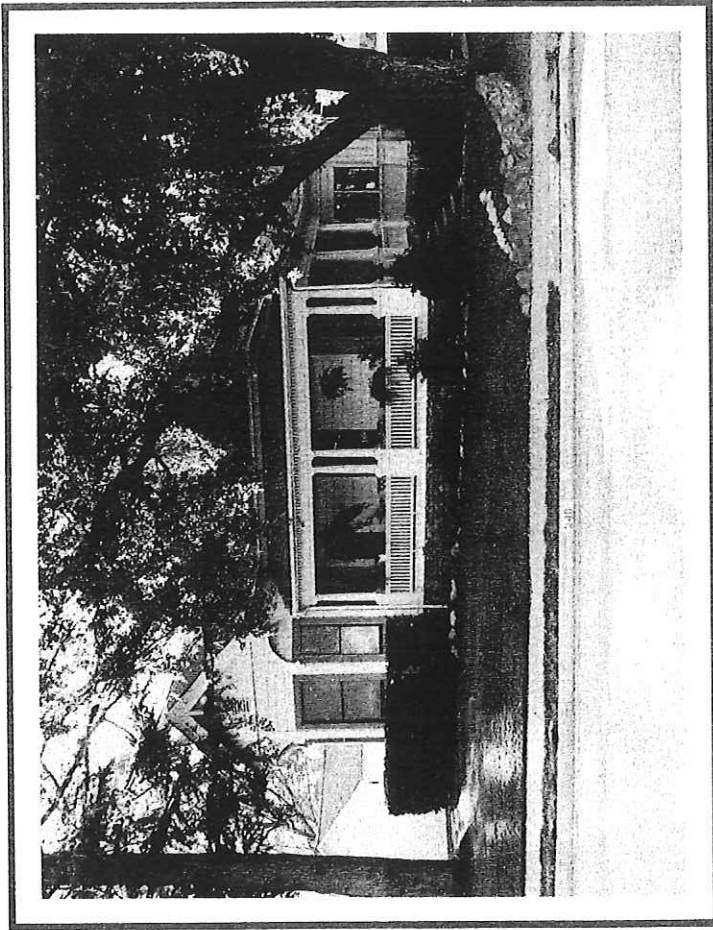
Originally, the home was a two bedroom house and probably did not have a bathroom. The house belonged to the Bacon family from the 1920s until 1945. A granddaughter who lived in the house remembers that at the time there was a closet having only a toilet. That closet was enlarged to a ¾ bathroom in the 1930s. The house now has three bedrooms and two bathrooms, plus an office and a den.

The 1991 Sierra Madre earthquake caused severe wall and ceiling damage to the front part of the house, and the owners decided at that time to replace the lath and plaster walls with drywall. Also during their tenure, they rebuilt a backyard arbor, which had columns matching those on the front porch, leading the owners to surmise that the original arbor was built around the time the front porch was converted to its present day Colonial Revival style. Reinforcement of the foundation was accomplished as insurance against future earthquakes.

The house has been a favorite location for Hollywood productions, with the first filming occurring in 1982. To date there have been 32 separate filming instances on the property.

The Dumbell House has been on the MOHPG Mother's Day Home Tour four times over the years, including the first two years of the tour (1983 and 1984). However, if you are hoping to see the inside of the house soon, you may have to wait, as it was most recently on the 2011 tour.

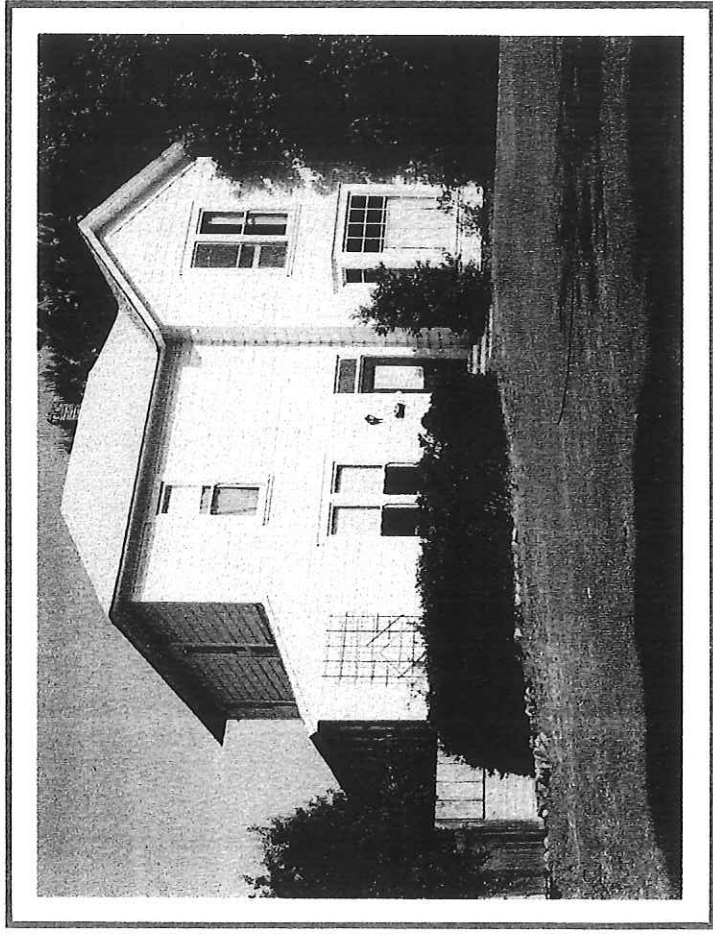
About this column: Columnist Jim Wigton, president of the Monrovia Historic Preservation Group, highlights historic preservation efforts in Monrovia and takes a look back at the city's rich history.



No. 15 240 West Hillcrest Boulevard

In May 1887 George W. Dumbell and his bride arrived in Monrovia from Tennessee and he soon became the bookkeeper for W. N. Monroe & Son, prominent local real estate dealers. At this time the real estate boom was at its height and he soon acquired land at the southeast corner of Magnolia and Hillcrest and laid plans for a cottage there. The house was completed in September. It is clearly shown in Best & Baldwin's panorama of Monrovia taken in December 1887.

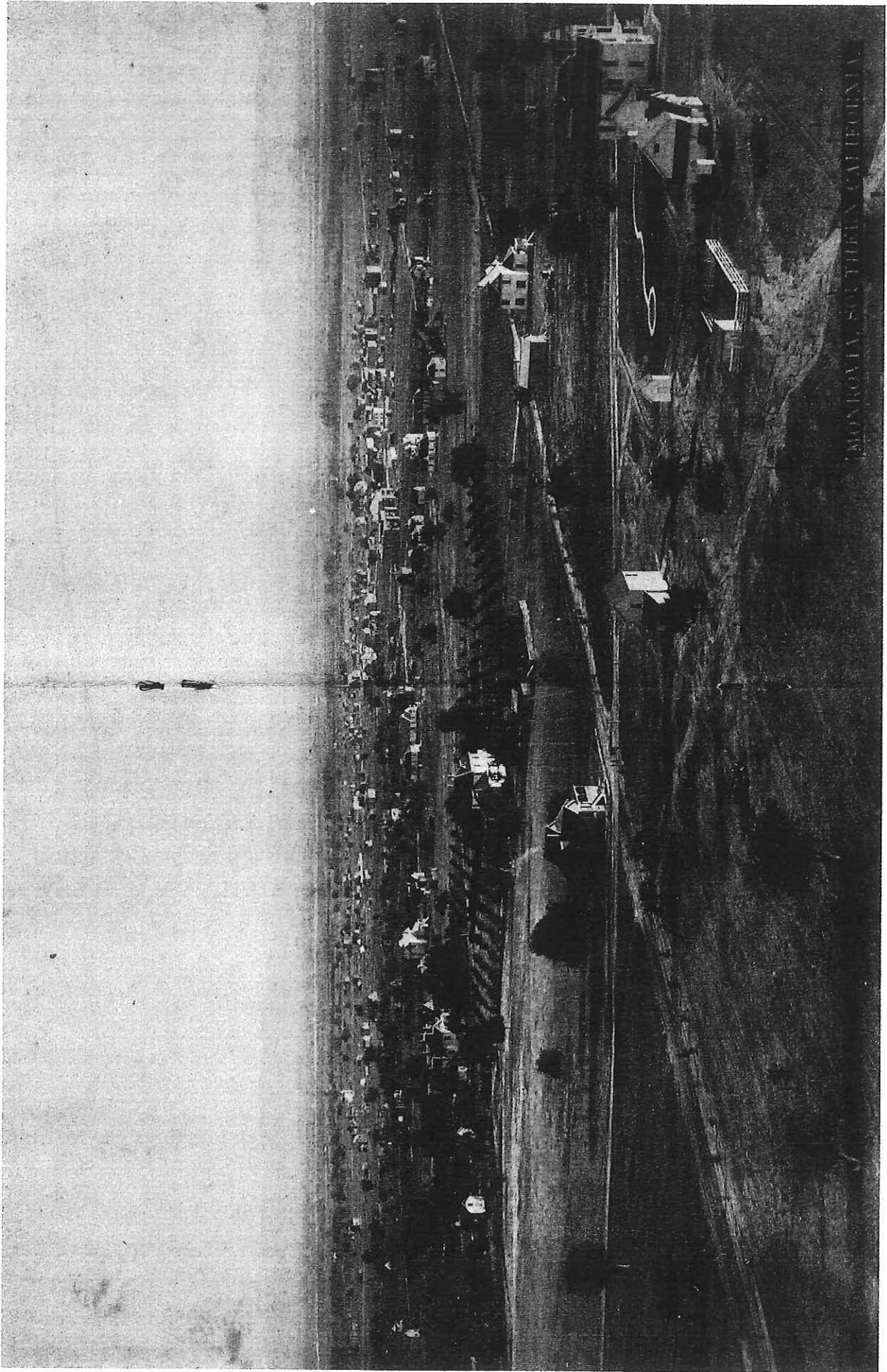
Sometime prior to 1908 the house was moved to its present location and modified with additions. Luckily, it has had good care through the years and it is reasonable to assume it will achieve its 100th year in the not too distant future.



No. 16 227 North Alta Vista Avenue

The Souvenir Edition of the Monrovia Messenger (1897) shows this house as the home of the C. G. Rogers family. Its present rather stark appearance is due to the removal of a "wrap-around" porch on the east and south sides by a subsequent owner.

Mr. Rogers came to Monrovia in December 1895, bought this home and adjoining property and engaged in citrus culture. He was active in community affairs and on April 3, 1897 upon resignation of C. E. Slosson from the Monrovia Board of Trustees, he was appointed to fill the vacancy. He was President of the Board (Mayor) for the 1898-1900 term.



Panorama of the City of Monrovia as it was in December 1887.

This view was taken from the hill at the north end of Alta Vista Avenue. The intersection of Magnolia and Hillcrest is in the left foreground. The house at this intersection is that of No. 15 before it was moved to its present location. At the right is No. 14 in its original location. The three homes of the Monroe brothers are shown (Nos. 20, 21, 22) in the middle distance.

Owners of

240 W. Hillcrest Blvd., Monrovia, California

1887 George W. Dumbell
1892 James W. La Force
1907 Benjamin S. Davies
1909 William P. Davis
1920 Augustus Adams
1921 Alice K. Larson
1923 W. W. Bacon
1925 Elizabeth Bacon
1928 Lide L. Bacon
1945 W. R. Petty (Anna)
1964 Carnine family
1979 Douglas & Karen Poindexter

Only early building permit found: 1914 Gus Adams Screen room Joe Thompson – contractor