

29th DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA

WASHINGTON OFFICE:
325 HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
CAPITOL 4-3121, EXT. 5911

COMMITTEES:
EDUCATION AND LABOR
SELECT COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D. C.

ED LYBECK
FIELD REPRESENTATIVE

LOS ANGELES OFFICE:
5308 WEST ADAMS BOULEVARD
WEBSTER 4-0144

627

May 24, 1963

The Honorable Stewart L. Udall
Secretary
Department of the Interior
Washington 25, D. C.

Dear Stew:

Your attention is respectfully called to the attached article, regarding the Doheny Estate, Greystone Mansion in Beverly Hills, California.

~~I would like very much to discuss this with you, and wonder if I may come over to see you. Will you let me know?~~

Many thanks, and warmest personal regards to you, as always.

Very truly,

J. Roosevelt
JAMES ROOSEVELT

JR:gc
Enclosure

U.S. DEPT. OF INTERIOR
RECEIVED
MAY 20 9 46 AM '63
IMMEDIATE OFFICE
OF THE SECRETARY

BEVERLY HILLS TIMES

Vol. 5—No. 14

10 Cents

8350 Wilshire, Beverly Hills — OL. 2-3131

44

Friday, May 17, 1963

\$1.5 MILLION?

U.S. May Save Doheny Estate



END OF AN ERA OR REPRIEVE?—Famed Greystone mansion, nestled against hillside, stands in the heart of subdivided territory. This last portion of the Doheny estate has stood vacant since 1957. To the north lies the 450-acre Trousdale Development, formerly the lion's share of the property. Present owners want to sell thirty-year-old mansion as is to civic groups. Subdividers covet its 19 virgin acres.

Roosevelt to Seek Funds For National Monument

The old Doheny estate may remain as a landmark in Southern California history, or it may be carved by the subdividers' knife. It all depends on how successful Congressman James Roosevelt is in convincing federal officials to lay out \$1.5 million for acquiring the estate as a national monument.

Roosevelt told city councilmen Tuesday Greystone was "an example of an era that ought to be preserved."

In the past five years, the estate's owners have been making attempts to get a civic-minded group to buy the property and save it from subdivision. So far, no one has been able to amass such sum.

BUT ROOSEVELT has promised to seek the support of Interior Secretary Udall to try and get federal appropriation for the acquisition. "A million and a half dollars is not too far out of line," he remarked when told what price Greystone's owners have put on the estate if it changes hands as is.

The issue was brought to the Congressman's attention by Gen. Leroy Watson at the council's informal session. Watson solicited advice and help on ways and means of retaining Greystone, as a Beverly Hills landmark.

PICTURES PAGE 3

See page 3 for more photos of Doheny Estate's "gilded glory" and special story on what Greystone was and is.

West could follow suit," he added.

Francis Zeiler, representative of Greystone's major owner, Col. Henry Crown, told the BH Times: "I have no knowledge of the price." He explained he has no authority to sell the property. The \$1.5 million was quoted at one time, but since then, property has appreciated and subdividers offer more than that, "so it's hard to say what the final price will be."

Zeiler added he had encouraged Crown to offer the city "palatable" conditions, but BH has been unable so far to find "a vehicle for acquiring the estate."

CONVERSION OF Greystone

REPRODUCED AT THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

\$1.5 MILLION?

U.S. May Save Doheny Estate



END OF AN ERA OR REPRIEVE?—Famed Greystone mansion, nestled against hillside, stands in the heart of subdivided territory. This last portion of the Doheny estate has stood vacant since 1957. To the north lies the 450-acre Trousdale Development, formerly the lion's share of the property. Present owners want to sell thirty-year-old mansion as is to civic groups. Subdividers covet its 19 virgin acres.

Roosevelt to Seek Funds For National Monument

The old Doheny estate may remain as a landmark in Southern California history, or it may be carved by the subdividers' knife. It all depends on how successful Congressman James Roosevelt is in convincing federal officials to lay out \$1.5 million for acquiring the estate as a national monument.

Roosevelt told city councilmen Tuesday Greystone was "an example of an era that ought to be preserved."

In the past five years, the estate's owners have been making attempts to get a civic-minded group to buy the property and save it from subdivision. So far, no one has been able to amass such sum.

BUT ROOSEVELT has promised to seek the support of Interior Secretary Udall to try and get federal appropriation for the acquisition. "A million and a half dollars is not too far out of line," he remarked when told what price Greystone's owners have put on the estate if it changes hands as is.

The issue was brought to the Congressman's attention by Gen. Leroy Watson at the council's informal session. Watson solicited advice and help on ways and means of retaining Greystone, as a Beverly Hills landmark.

"It could be Beverly Hills' Dumbarton Oaks," Councilman Leonard Horwin commented.

Roosevelt recalled similar historic landmarks in the East are being preserved as national monuments by the federal government.

"I DON'T THINK there is anything on the West Coast that compares with the Vanderbilt mansion which was acquired by the Department of Interior as a national monument," Roosevelt noted. "The

PICTURES PAGE 3

See page 3 for more photos of Doheny Estate's "gilded glory" and special story on what Greystone was and is.

West could follow suit," he added.

Francis Zeiler, representative of Greystone's major owner, Col. Henry Crown, told the BH Times: "I have no knowledge of the price." He explained he has no authority to sell the property. The \$1.5 million was quoted at one time, but since then, property has appreciated and subdividers offer more than that, "so it's hard to say what the final price will be."

Zeiler added he had encouraged Crown to offer the city "palatable" conditions, but BH has been unable so far to find "a vehicle for acquiring the estate."

CONVERSION OF Greystone into a cultural facility, a museum or a conference house for scientific national and international meetings "would make it the pride of Beverly Hills," Zeiler noted.

Roosevelt hoped there would be "no objection if the Federal Government owned it and then made an agreement with the city."

One official's reaction expressed to this paper: "Fine, but isn't this an invasion of 'home rule' of which Beverly Hills is so jealous?"

Sincerely yours,

(sgd) Stewart

Secretary of the Interior

Hon. James Roosevelt
House of Representatives
Washington 25, D. C.

THIS IS N

Beverly Hills' Gilded Lingers On at Greystone

By AHUVA BEN-AMRAM

Behind the iron-grilled doors guarding the famed Doheny estate, Greystone's clocks stand still. The plush rugs in the mansion are prey to moths. A musty odor hangs in the long dark halls. Dust lies thick on its marble floors. Here and there trails of foot-steps reveal the marble's sheen and mark the paths trespassers took through the big house.

The estate was, for over a quarter century, a home where five Doheny children grew, swimming in its pool, boating in its artificial lakes, playing under its rushing waterfalls. If not an anachronism then—when several families in Beverly Hills had tens of acres per capita—it is so now. Rising real estate costs, scarcity of land in Beverly Hills, and taxes have heralded the end of an era for such mansions. In 1928, when a dollar was a dollar, it cost \$11 million to build the whole thing. The last quoted price for the 19-acre estate is \$1.5 million.

NOW THE SILENCE of Greystone is disturbed by bulldozers levelling off hills and the sound of hammers working at new homes nearby. Recently, another portion of the estate was chunked off for some quarter-million dollars to make way for more up-to-date quarter-acre homes.

"I leave the doors unlocked; otherwise kids would smash the windows out," caretaker Bill Wesson says. "I'm fighting kids all the time." He points to the brass chandelier in the chapel-like drawing room, its cords eviscerated by vandals.

"They get in and just wreck everything," he points to the projection room in the east wing theater. Trespassers could not get into the projection room, "so they walked off with the key and I can't get in," Wesson says.

IN THE BASEMENT bowling alley, pins have been torn off. Wesson says he has a hard time keeping the place neat after trespassers have been through it. Last week, he chased off a dozen youngsters who left a string of whisky bottles and beer cans behind.

When the original owner, Mrs. Lucy Doheny (now Mrs. Leigh Battson) sold the estate to Col. Henry Crown six years ago, Wesson and another gardener were left to ward off weeds, kept the lawns green, the mansion clean, and care for the Redwoods, eucalypti, pines, yews and ferns. In the



HATHAWAY-TYPE COTTAGE — Doheny, transplanted from Ad grounds.



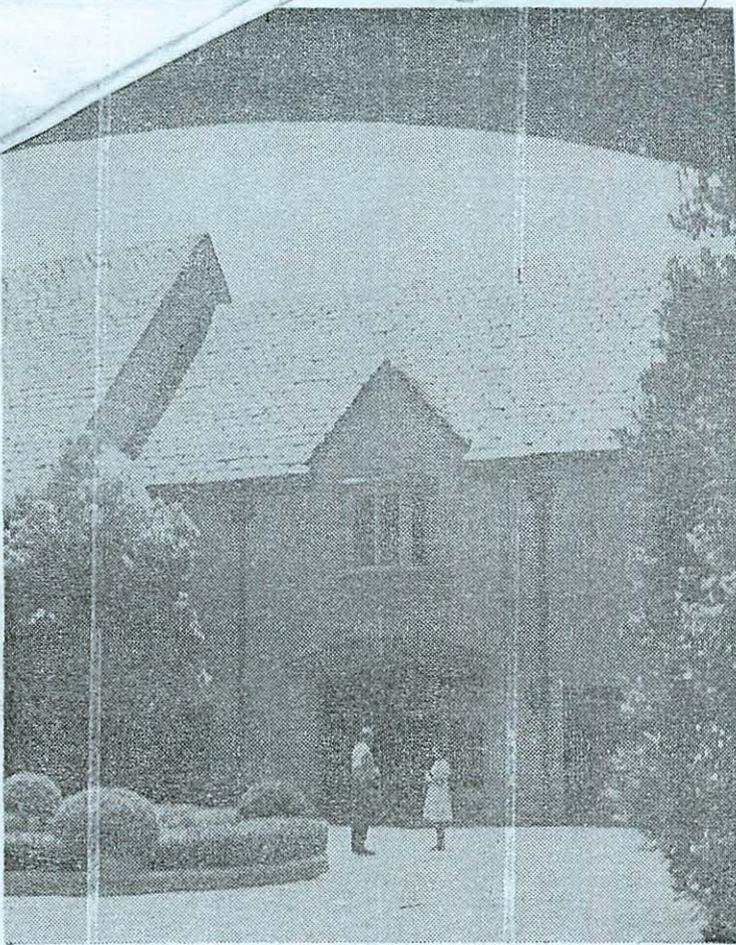
VERSAILLES SPLENDOR—Formal oil pool at Southern California's

mansion's heyday 14 gardeners played that role.

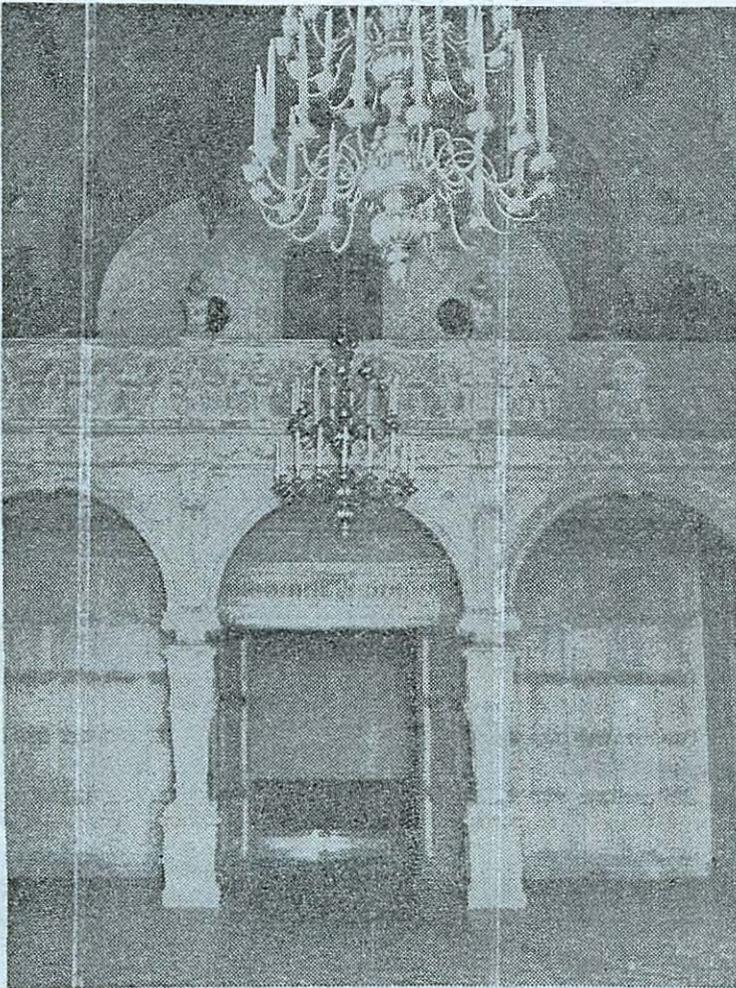
"The Redwoods are dying out," the caretaker says, recalling that after 30 diseased trees have been removed last year only 20 are left. Wesson adds, "It's going to pot. Apart from the kids, nobody comes here." Recently, several Beverly Hills citizens came up to look around, offering to raise the money, but the cash register has not rung yet.

GREYSTONE HAS other hidden charms. When they dug a walk—one of the many torturous walks covered with Arizona grey stone from which the estates derives its name—they struck oil. "They didn't want it, so they never drilled for it, just covered it up," Wesson reminisces. He points to garden walls, stained by oil seeping through.

The 60-room mansion is replete with banquet rooms, chandeliers, fireplaces, huge guest rooms, two kitchens and servants quarters. It stands



MANSION COURTYARD—Doors are left unlocked, otherwise trespassers smash windows. There are no tours at Greystone.



GILDED GRANDEUR—Chapel-like drawing room, with laced oak panels and beam ceiling. Brass chandelier wires were snipped off by vandals.

Beverly Hills' Gilded Age Lingers On at Greystone

By AHUVA BEN-AMRAM

Behind the iron-grilled doors guarding the famed Doheny estate, Greystone's clocks stand still. The plush rugs in the mansion are prey to moths. A musty odor hangs in the long dark halls. Dust lies thick on its marble floors. Here and there trails of foot-steps reveal the marble's sheen and mark the paths trespassers took through the big house.

The estate was, for over a quarter century, a home where five Doheny children grew, swimming in its pool, boating in its artificial lakes, playing under its rushing waterfalls. If not an anachronism then—when several families in Beverly Hills had tens of acres per capita—it is so now. Rising real estate costs, scarcity of land in Beverly Hills, and taxes have heralded the end of an era for such mansions. In 1928, when a dollar was a dollar, it cost \$11 million to build the whole thing. The last quoted price for the 19-acre estate is \$1.5 million.

NOW THE SILENCE of Greystone is disturbed by bulldozers levelling off hills and the sound of hammers working at new homes nearby. Recently, another portion of the estate was chunked off for some quarter-million dollars to make way for more up-to-date quarter-acre homes.

"I leave the doors unlocked; otherwise kids would smash the windows out," caretaker Bill Wesson says. "I'm fighting kids all the time." He points to the brass chandelier in the chapel-like drawing room, its cords eviscerated by vandals.

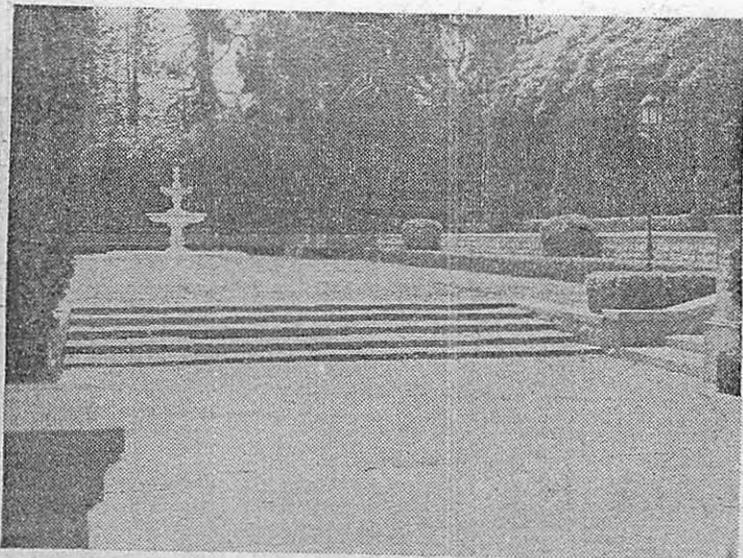
"They get in and just wreck everything," he points to the projection room in the east wing theater. Trespassers could not get into the projection room, "so they walked off with the key and I can't get in," Wesson says.

IN THE BASEMENT bowling alley, pins have been torn off. Wesson says he has a hard time keeping the place neat after trespassers have been through it. Last week, he chased off a dozen youngsters who left a string of whisky bottles and beer cans behind.

When the original owner, Mrs. Lucy Doheny (now Mrs. Leigh Battson) sold the estate to Col. Henry Crown six years ago, Wesson and another gardener were left to ward off weeds, kept the lawns green, the mansion clean, and care for the Redwoods, eucalypti, pines, yews and ferns. In the



HATHAWAY-TYPE COTTAGE — Birthplace of Mrs. Lucy Doheny, transplanted from Adams Street to Greystone grounds.



VERSAILLES SPLENDOR—Formal garden floats atop untapped oil pool at Southern California's version of Hearst's Castle.

mansion's heyday 14 gardeners played that role.

"The Redwoods are dying out," the caretaker says, recalling that after 30 diseased trees have been removed last year only 20 are left. Wesson adds, "It's going to rot. Apart from the kids, nobody comes here." Recently, several Beverly Hills citizens came up to look around, offering to raise the money, but the cash register has not rung yet.

GREYSTONE HAS other hidden charms. When they dug a walk—one of the many tortuous walks covered with Arizona grey stone from which the estates derives its name—they struck oil. "They didn't want it, so they never drilled for it, just covered it up," Wesson reminisces. He points to garden walls, stained by oil seeping through.

The 60-room mansion is replete with banquet rooms, chandeliers, fireplaces, huge guest rooms, two kitchens and servants quarters. It stands

aloof on the hill overlooking Los Angeles' tall buildings shrouded in low smog.

Hundreds of gold fish still swim in a lily-covered pond, but its 20-car garage is empty, its stable vacant. So are its tennis and badminton courts, its "Cypress Lane" (lined with Eugenias). Its two artificial lakes are drained, as is its swimming pool. Its wine cellar stands empty.

The welcome mats still reflect the imprint of original owners "LMB" (Lucy M. Battson—formerly Doheny) and "ELD Jr." (Edward L. Doheny, Jr.)

"They liked to keep things as they were, for sentimental reasons," the caretaker recalls. The old home where Mrs. Lucy Smith-Doheny was born was relocated from Adams street up to the hill.

"I'd like to see this place saved, for a Beverly Hills museum, perhaps," Wesson adds. "They can make a beautiful place here for the city. You'd just have to have it."

ked, otherwise
s at Greystone.

n, with laced
r wires were

TO SECRETARY
JUN 11 1963
FOR SIGNATURE
ADVANCE COPY

L58

PARKS

Thompson 6/11

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE OFFICE COPY

JUN 18 1963

Secretary's Reading File
NPS Office Copy
LNP Comeback Copy
Resource Planning
cc: IN(2) w/c of incoming
Legislative Counsel w/c of incoming
Congressional Liaison w/c of incoming
Regional Director, Western w/c of incoming
BHTompson:vm 6/10/63

Dear Jim:

Thank you for your letter of May 24 enclosing an article regarding the Doheny Estate, Greystone Mansion, in Beverly Hills, California, and suggesting that we discuss the possibility of finding some suitable means of preserving the mansion. I shall be happy to discuss it with you at any mutually convenient time.

You will no doubt be interested in knowing that I have asked our National Park historians and architects to look into the matter. Regrettably, they are unable to find a basis for considering the mansion as a possible national historic site. From the historical point of view, the Doheny family was, of course, prominent in the oil production field, but the family accomplishments in this field would not be considered as meeting the criteria under which historic persons and places are evaluated for possible inclusion in the National Park System.

From the architectural point of view, the mansion might be considered to be of interest to the State of California, as the William Randolph Hearst Estate, at San Simeon, is being preserved by the State. San Simeon was built about the same time as the Doheny Mansion.

While I should like to be more encouraging in this matter, I feel sure that you would want to have the benefit of these research conclusions before giving further consideration to this matter.

With kindest regards,

JAMES ROOSEVELT

Sincerely yours,

(sgd) Stewart

Secretary of the Interior

Enclosure

Hon. James Roosevelt
House of Representatives
Washington 25, D. C.

THIS IS NOT A PRS