

**State of California The Resources Agency  
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION  
PRIMARY RECORD**

Primary #  
HRI #  
Trinomial  
**NRHP Status Code**

Review Code      Other Listings      Date  
                         Reviewer

Page 1 of 5      \*Resource Name or #: (Assigned by recorder) 237 1st Street

P1. Other Identifier: Katherine Esau House

\*P2. Location:  Not for Publication       Unrestricted

- \*a. County Yolo and (P2c, P2e, and P2b or P2d. Attach a Location Map as necessary.)
- \*b. USGS 7.5' Quad Davis, CA Date 2018 T   ; R   ;    of    of Sec   ;    B.M.
- c. Address 237 1st Street City Davis, CA Zip 95616
- d. UTM: (Give more than one for large and/or linear resources) Zone   ,    mE/    mN
- e. Other Locational Data: APN 070 067 08

\*P3a. Description: (Describe resource and its major elements. Include design, materials, condition, alterations, size, setting, and boundaries)  
237 1st Street is a one-and-a-half-story, Minimal Traditional style residence with a detached one-story, wood-frame garage, located on the north side of 1st Street, between B Street (east) and University Avenue (west). The house is set back roughly 30 feet from the north side of 1st Street on a rectangular lot. The residence has a rectangular plan with a gabled projecting bay at the west half of the facade, which contains the main entrance. The building is set on a concrete foundation, and is capped by cross-gabled roof covered with asphalt shingles. A wide dormer projects from the side-gabled roof at the north (rear) side. The exterior is covered with asbestos siding and features modest wood trim along eave ends. Fenestration primarily consists of vinyl-sash, one-over-one windows with flat wood surrounds. Additional windows include a wood-sash, half-circle, divided-lite gable window at the facade and a divided-lite porthole window to the immediate east of the main entrance (facing east) (P5a.). The detached automobile garage is located toward the northeast corner of the site, and is square in plan with a gabled roof and wood, vertical plank doors. The garage has similar modest wood trim to that of the residence. The site features a front yard with grass and a central concrete pathway, on axis with the main entrance. A driveway placed on axis with the detached garage occupies the easternmost portion of the site. Additional yard space is located to the north (rear) of the residence.

\*P3b. Resource Attributes: HP2. Single family property, HP4. Ancillary building.

\*P4. Resources Present:

X Building  Structure  Object  Site   
District  Element of District  Other  
(Isolates, etc.)

\*P5b. Description of Photo:

237 1st Street viewed from 1st Street, looking north.

March 14, 2019.

\*P6. Date Constructed/Age and

Source: 1938. Davis HRMC.

Historic  Prehistoric  Both

\*P7. Owner and Address:

DDD DTP

P.O. Box 75000, Davis, CA 95617

\*P8. Recorded by:

Garavaglia Architecture, Inc.  
582 Market Street, Suite 1800  
San Francisco, CA 94104

\*P9. Date Recorded:

March 14, 2019

\*P10. Survey Type:

Intensive survey for California Register, National Register, and Local eligibility.

**P5a. Photograph or Drawing**



\*P11. Report Citation: N/A

\*Attachments:  NONE  Location 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): \_\_\_\_\_

# BUILDING, STRUCTURE, AND OBJECT RECORD

\*Resource Name or # (Assigned by recorder) 237 1st Street \*NRHP Status Code 5S3

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B1. Historic Name: 237 1st Street  
B2. Common Name: 237 1st Street  
B3. Original Use: Single-family residence B4. Present Use: Single-family residence

\*B5. Architectural Style: Minimal Traditional

\*B6. Construction History: This residence was built for UC Davis professor, Katherine Esau in 1938 and was first recorded on the 1945 Sanborn map of Davis. The 1945 Sanborn recorded the dwelling as one-story, with a similar rectangular footprint to the existing, featuring a projecting west bay at the facade. The map also noted asbestos/cement siding on the residence. A detached, one-story, wood-frame auto garage was recorded at the rear of the site, indicating the existing garage was constructed contemporaneously to the residence. Double-hung windows have been replaced with vinyl-sash at an unknown date. No additional major alterations are apparent.<sup>1</sup>

(See Continuation Sheet)

\*B7. Moved?  No  Yes  Unknown Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Original Location: \_\_\_\_\_

\*B8. Related Features: N/A

B9a. Architect: Unknown b. Builder: Unknown

\*B10. Significance: Theme Residential Architecture Area Davis  
Period of Significance N/A Property Type Residential Applicable Criteria B

The subject property was constructed ca. 1938 as a single-family residence on within the southernmost block of the University Avenue/Rice Lane neighborhood, which is located immediately east of the UC Davis campus. The building was constructed in the later years of the Great Depression and was first occupied by the family of UC Davis employee and noted botanist Katherine Esau. The immediate vicinity of the subject property does not appear to have been subdivided and developed with many residential properties prior to the 1930s when subdivision occurred lot-by-lot, reflecting the general patterns of residential development in Davis. The University Avenue/Rice Lane neighborhood, which the property is located in, however, did experience earlier development as a result of the opening of the University Farm in 1908, which led to the construction of housing for staff and boarding houses and fraternal houses for students earlier in the twentieth century.<sup>2</sup> Within the broader Downtown Conservation District, which spans the area of the original town plan, neighborhoods of mixed character developed with "a few scattered Victorians, and larger concentrations of Craftsman Bungalows, Period Revivals, and Minimalist Traditional houses existing next to one another..." as the City's 2003 Historic Conservation District survey notes.<sup>3</sup> This pattern is evident in the blocks to the immediate north and northwest of the subject property. (See Continuation Sheet)

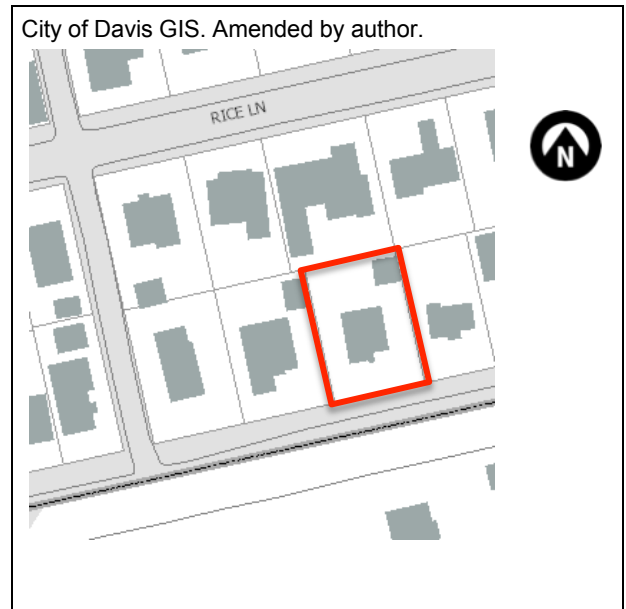
\*B11. Additional Resource Attributes: HP2. Single family property, HP4. Ancillary Building (Detached garage)

\*B12. References: Building Permit Records, City of Davis Planning Department. Kara Brunzell, Brunzell Historical, *Davis, California: Citywide Survey and Historic Context Update*, 2015. Central Davis Historic Conservation District, Historical Resources Survey, August 2003. Architectural Resources Group, *City of Davis Cultural Resources Inventory and Context Statement*, (Davis, CA: City of Davis Parks and Community Services Department, September 30, 1996). Historic Environment Consultants, *Cultural Resources Inventory: Final Report*, (Davis, CA: June 1980). Proquest Digital Sanborn Maps, online. John Lofland and Phyllis Haig, Images of America: *Davis, California: 1910s-1940s*, (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2000). John Lofland, *Images of Modern America: Davis Transformation*, (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2016). U.S. Census and City Directory data researched at Ancestry.com. UC Davis Special Collections, City of Davis property ownership maps 1928-1940.  
B13. Remarks:

\*B14. Evaluator: Garavaglia Architecture, Inc.

\*Date of Evaluation: August 12, 2019

(This space reserved for official comments.)



<sup>1</sup> Permits for the subject property, on file at the Davis Planning Department-Building Division, were provided to Garavaglia Architecture for review in April 2019. Date of construction confirmed in E.S. McBride, "Little Black Book," on file at Hattie Webber Museum, Davis, CA.

<sup>2</sup> Central Davis Historic Conservation District, Historical Resources Survey, August 2003, 12. Accessed online May 13, 2019.

<sup>3</sup> Central Davis Historic Conservation District, Historical Resources Survey, August 2003, 12. Accessed online May 13, 2019.

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### \*B10. Significance (Continued):

By the mid-1950s, the block containing the subject property and blocks immediate north and northwest in the neighborhood filled out with residential properties, based on review of available Sanborn maps.

#### Minimal Traditional Style

Minimal Traditional style residences were constructed in the United States between ca. 1935 and 1950. Such residences typically designed with small, rectangular footprints, and gabled roofs with low or intermediate pitches, with a one-story height. In rare instances, roofs featured dormer windows. Fenestration was typically accomplished with multi-pane or one-over-one double-hung windows. Exteriors were minimally ornamented.<sup>4</sup> The subject building is representative of a side-gabled sub type of the style, sometimes referred to as a “Cape Cod”, as it resembles early house forms found in New England. Virginia McAlester notes, “Although many examples were symmetrical, in keeping with the original folk form, there was much experimentation with asymmetrical variations, including varied window placement and small porches or carports; some had an extra half-story finished under the roof.”<sup>5</sup> McAlester additionally describes, “Minimal Traditional style homes often had a paneled front door (sometimes with a multi-pane window in the upper half), perhaps accompanied by shutters or a chimney. Occasionally, Minimal Traditionals [sic] have other bits of stylistic detailing added—such as elements of Tudor or Colonial Revival.”<sup>6</sup>

The subject building embodies the typical gabled massing and minimal ornamentation of the style. Variations of the style are embodied through the paneled entrance door, L-shaped plan, and asymmetrical facades.

#### Katherine Esau, Owner/Occupant, 1938—ca. 1963

The residence at 237 1st Street was built ca. 1938. By 1940, the property was owned and occupied by Dr. Katherine Esau (1898-1997), Professor of Agriculture at UC Davis, and Esau’s parents, John (1860-?) and Margareta (1872-?). Louise Wheeler (1894-1979), a librarian at UC Davis, was listed as a lodger. Available Davis permit records for the property indicate the property was acquired by Nancy J. Beland in 1952, however, records do not indicate a seller at that time. Beland retained ownership of the property through 1998. Additional permit records indicate the dwelling was utilized as a rental property ca. 1977. Permits filed between 1999 and 2015 related to plumbing, mechanical, and electrical work list Daniel K. Dowling as owner of the property.

Katherine Esau was born in Jekaterinoslaw, Russia (now Dnepropetrovsk, Ukraine) in 1898.<sup>7</sup> As a talented botany student, Esau studied at the Golitsin Women’s Agricultural College in Moscow, prior to relocating to Germany with her family in 1917 during the Bolshevik Revolution. In Germany, Esau studied at the Berlin Landwirtschaftliche Hochschule (Agricultural College of Berlin), and participated in studies with geneticist Erwin Baur.<sup>8</sup> Following her graduation, Esau and her parents immigrated to the United States in 1922, and settled in Reedley, CA. Esau soon gained employment with the Spreckels Sugar Company near Salinas, California, as a botanist tasked with developing a sugar beet resistant to the curly top virus. Through her work with Spreckels, in which a successful hybridization program was developed, Esau was recruited to the University of California at Davis in 1927, where her work for Spreckels continued. During this period Esau was registered as a graduate student at UC Berkeley, as UC Davis did not register graduate students contemporaneously. Esau and her family resided in Berkeley, California according to the 1930 Census, but Esau’s research was conducted at Davis, according to available biographical sources.

In 1931, Esau received her Ph. D in botany and began working as an instructor of botany and as a junior botanist in the Experimentation Station of the College of Agriculture at UC Davis.<sup>10</sup> Esau successively taught Plant Anatomy, Systematic Botany, Morphology of Crop Plants, and Microtechnique, serving six years in each professorial rank until attaining full professorship in 1949. During this two-decade period, Esau’s research was based in a utilitarian campus building designed to serve as a garage, rather than a purpose-built laboratory. As described by Debra Cleveland in “Remembering Katherine Esau, Pioneer in Plant Biology”:

<sup>4</sup> Virginia Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013), 587-589.

<sup>5</sup> McAlester, 587

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 588.

<sup>7</sup> California, State Court Naturalization Records for Katherine Esau, accessed at Ancestry.com.

<sup>8</sup> “Dr. Katherine Esau,” FindAGrave memorial website. Accessed March 18, 2019. <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/33831749>.

<sup>9</sup> Karen Freeman, “Katherine Esau is Dead at 99; A World Authority on Botany,” *New York Times*, June 18, 1997.

<sup>10</sup> U.S. Federal Census data for 1940, accessed at Ancestry.com; and, “Dr. Katherine Esau,” FindAGrave memorial website. Accessed March 18, 2019. <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/33831749>.

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In the late 1940s, in a house that still stands at 237 First Street, Esau began to write a manuscript that became the 735-page, classic textbook *Plant Anatomy*. Ray Evert, a former graduate student of Esau's and now chair of the botany department at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, recalls the book's influence on him when it was first published in 1954: "Dr. Esau's *Plant Anatomy* took a dynamic, developmental approach designed to enhance one's understanding of plant structure. The book *Plant Anatomy* brought to life what previously had seemed to me to be a rather dull subject. I was not the only one so affected. *Plant Anatomy* had an enormous impact worldwide, literally bringing about a revivification of the discipline."<sup>11</sup>

In 1953, Esau authored *Plant Anatomy*, published by John Wiley & Sons, with an update in 1965.<sup>12</sup> *The Anatomy of Seed Plants* followed in 1960, with an update in 1977. *Plant Anatomy* "was the leading text on plant structure in the nation and was widely adopted abroad," according to Evert.<sup>13</sup> In 1957, Esau was named to the National Academy of Sciences, becoming the sixth woman to achieve such recognition.

In 1960, Esau's work shifted into UC Davis' Robbins Hall, where she began to pursue work with microscopy. In 1963, Esau left UC Davis to begin collaborative work with Dr. Vernon Cheadle at UC Santa Barbara. In 1989, she was awarded the National Medal of Science by President George Bush, who decreed:

For her distinguished service to the American community of plant biologists, and for the excellence of her pioneering research, both basic and applied, on plant structure and development, which has spanned more than six decades; for her superlative performance as an educator, in the classroom and through her books; for the encouragement and inspiration she has given to a legion of young, aspiring plant biologists; and for providing a special role model for women in science.<sup>14</sup>

### Evaluation:

The following section provides evaluation of the subject property for eligibility for individual listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), California Register of Historical Resources (CRHR), and the Davis Register of Historical Resources (local register), which contains buildings identified as Landmarks and Merit resources. The CRHR bases its criteria on that of the NRHP, and the local register criteria are based on those of the NRHP/CRHR. Therefore, evaluation under all three registers is undertaken simultaneously.

### Criterion A/1 (Events)

The subject building does not appear to be individually eligible under Criterion A/1 for listing in the NRHP/CRHR or local register. Built in ca. 1938, the subject property was constructed beyond the early years of residential development following the opening of the University Farm in 1908, and was one of many residences constructed in Davis during interwar years. The building does not appear to be among the individually important properties within the context of the University Avenue/Rice Lane neighborhood's historic development. The subject building is not known to have been the location of a historic event of singular importance.

### Criterion B/2 (Persons)

The subject building appears to be eligible as a Davis Register Merit Resource for its association with the life and career of noted botanist and UC Davis scholar/professor Katherine Esau. Further research is needed to determine if the property may be eligible for the NRHP/CRHR for association with Esau's career, particularly to provide a greater understanding of Esau's location(s) or work at the University of California at Davis, and if associated campus buildings are extant, as well as the work Esau completed at specific locations. Esau's research and publications in the field of botany are established as highly influential works. Available information indicates that Esau prepared drafts of her manuscript for the textbook, *Plant Anatomy*, in the subject building during the late 1940s; a period of ascendance during her career. The subject building was her primary residence between ca. 1938 and the late 1940s and potentially into the 1950s, based upon available occupancy information. Although Esau's scientific work would typically be more strongly associated and reflected by the laboratory or university building she conducted her work in—a converted garage—it appears

<sup>11</sup> Debra Cleveland, "Remembering Katherine Esau, Pioneer in Plant Biology," Katherine Esau Postdoctoral Fellowships, online. October 1997. Accessed March 18, 2019. <http://www-plb.ucdavis.edu/esau/about.htm>.

<sup>12</sup> Karen Freeman, "Katherine Esau is Dead at 99; A World Authority on Botany," *New York Times*, June 18, 1997.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> "Dr. Katherine Esau," FindAGrave memorial website. Accessed March 18, 2019. <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/33831749>; and, "The President's National Medal of Science: Recipient Details: Katherine Esau," National Science Foundation website, accessed March 18, 2019. [https://www.nsf.gov/od/nms/recipient\\_details.jsp?recipient\\_id=120](https://www.nsf.gov/od/nms/recipient_details.jsp?recipient_id=120).

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that building may no longer exist. Nonetheless, the subject building remains an important location in the City of Davis associated with the Davis-based botanist's early career and thus appears to have historical value to the citizens of Davis.

### *Criterion C/3 (Architecture-Design)*

The subject property appears to be eligible as a Davis Register Merit Resource for its embodying distinct characteristics of a Minimal Tradition style residence built in Davis ca. 1938. The building does not appear to be individually eligible for listing in the California Register or National Register as research did not find evidence that the building stands out as an individually important example of its style relative to the examples of the style across the State or nation. The subject building provides a very good local example of the Minimal Traditional Style, which was a predominating style of residential design and construction in the United States between the mid 1930s and late 1940s. These generally small, one-story residences typically featured side-gabled roofs, with minimal architectural detail, and were often clad with a single siding material. The subject building embodies distinct characteristics of this style through its side-gabled roof, uniform asbestos siding, cross-gabled projection at the facade, minimal architectural ornamentation, and roof eaves with little to no overhang. Although original windows have been replaced by vinyl-sash, the building's fenestration at prominent facades appears to have been unaltered otherwise, reflecting the original design of the building. The building is not known to be the work of an important or master design professional, and does not possess high artistic value.

### *Criterion D/4 (Information Potential)*

Archival research and physical investigation of the property focused on the above ground resource only. Therefore, no informed determination could be made regarding the property's eligibility for the NRHP, CRHR, or local register under Criterion D/4.

### Integrity

To determine if the subject building remain capable of expressing its apparent significance as a Davis Merit Resource for its association with prominent botanist Katherine Esau as Esau's personal residence during her career at UC Davis, and for its embodiment of the Minimal Traditional style, its historic integrity must be analyzed. The seven aspects of historic integrity include:

The following seven aspects define historic integrity:

- Location. The place where the historic property was constructed or the place where the historic event occurred.
- Design. The combination of elements that create the form, plan, space, structure, and style of a property.
- Setting. The physical environment of a historic property.
- Materials. The physical elements that were combined or deposited during a particular period of time and in a particular pattern or configuration to form a historic property.
- Workmanship. The physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture or people during any given period in history or prehistory.
- Feeling. A property's expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time.
- Association. The direct link between an important historic event or person and a historic property.

### *Analysis of Integrity*

Location. The subject property retains integrity of location. The subject building remains situated at the site of its original construction.

Design. The subject property retains integrity of design. The building's overall design has been retained through minimal alteration of the building's exterior. The building retains its side-gabled roof, original height, original cladding materials, and original fenestration pattern. Windows and doors appear to have been replaced within original openings.

Setting. The subject property retains integrity of setting. 237 1st Street retains the setting of a rectangular residential lot with a detached residence and detached garage. Spatial characteristics shared between the two buildings remain consistent with historic site conditions. The property continues to be situated within a primarily residential area at the south end of the University Avenue/Rice Lane neighborhood.

Materials. The subject property retains integrity of materials. The buildings original material palette and modest ornamentation has not been altered, resulting in retention of integrity of materials.

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Workmanship. The subject property retains integrity of workmanship. Integrity of workmanship has been diminished due to the replacement of original windows and doors, but has not been lost entirely due to retention of additional original materials at the exterior.

Feeling. The subject property retains integrity of feeling. The building retains the feeling of a Minimal Traditional style residence and that of the ca. 1938 property as location, setting, and design have been retained. The residence's appearance in terms of massing, exterior materials, and form appears to reflect the appearance during the known period of ownership and occupancy of Katherine Esau.

Association. The subject property retains integrity of association. The property's association to Esau, and to its particular style, have been retained as the building's retention of all other aspects of integrity enables the building to express aspects of its style to a high degree, and to reflect the period during which Esau owned and occupied the building.

Overall, the property retains high historic integrity and is capable of expressing its apparent significance such that it remains eligible for listing as a City of Davis Merit Resource for its association with noted botanist and original property occupant, Katherine Esau and as an example of a Minimal Traditional residence in Davis.