

Metes and Bounds
Sophie Kovel

31 August - 29 October

Metes and bounds is a system used to designate property in legal descriptions. First used in England, and later brought to the United States during westward expansion, this system precedes the gridded property lines of urbanization otherwise known as 'lot and block.'

Metes: a boundary defined by survey methods of a compass, often measuring property lines.

Bounds: a boundary designated by geographic features such as stone walls, rocks, rivers, or trees.

The Jack L. Warner Estate in Los Angeles's Beverly Hills is perhaps best known for its looming hedge, one of the tallest residential fences in the US (measuring 20 feet or approximately 6 meters). The estate might be secondly known as the last standing "trophy" property from Hollywood's Golden Age. And, more notably, for its consequent chain of title, and the associated companies of its various owners—from Jack Warner (Warner Bros., Warner Records), to David Geffen (DreamWorks, Geffen Records), to Jeff Bezos (Amazon, Blue Origin, The Washington Post, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, etc.).

Although a residential property, the estate's parcel map models the logics of these two property systems. The estate is a land assemblage near equal to its 28 neighboring lots, itself acquired parcel by parcel throughout the 1920s–30s, with one further lot added in 2021, otherwise known as a lot-by-lot acquisition. Meanwhile, at its eastern limit, the property bound is demarcated by the Benedict Canyon channel. Metes and bounds methods also have more contemporary uses in map redistricting, charting election constituencies, and in census cartography.

There is an "imaginary economy" of images¹—picket fences, hedges, property lines—but these photographs also document a real economy. Met with the "real" of real estate, these very real property bounds speak to the imaginaries propagated by their proprietors' media ventures. A present day spatial study, these images could just as well be an incomplete history of media ownership.

—Sophie Kovel, Amsterdam 2025

1 Allan Sekula, "Photography Between Labor and Capital," in *Mining Photographs and Other Pictures: A Selection from the Negative Archives of Shedden Studio, Glace Bay, Cape Breton*. (1983): 193.

Room 1:

Property Line, Jack L. Warner Estate, Beverly Hills, Los Angeles, 2025

Archival pigment print

60 x 39,6cm

Property Line, Jack L. Warner Estate, Beverly Hills, Los Angeles, 2025

Archival pigment print

39,6cm x 60cm

Room 2:

Two Palms, Jack L. Warner Estate, Beverly Hills, Los Angeles, 2025

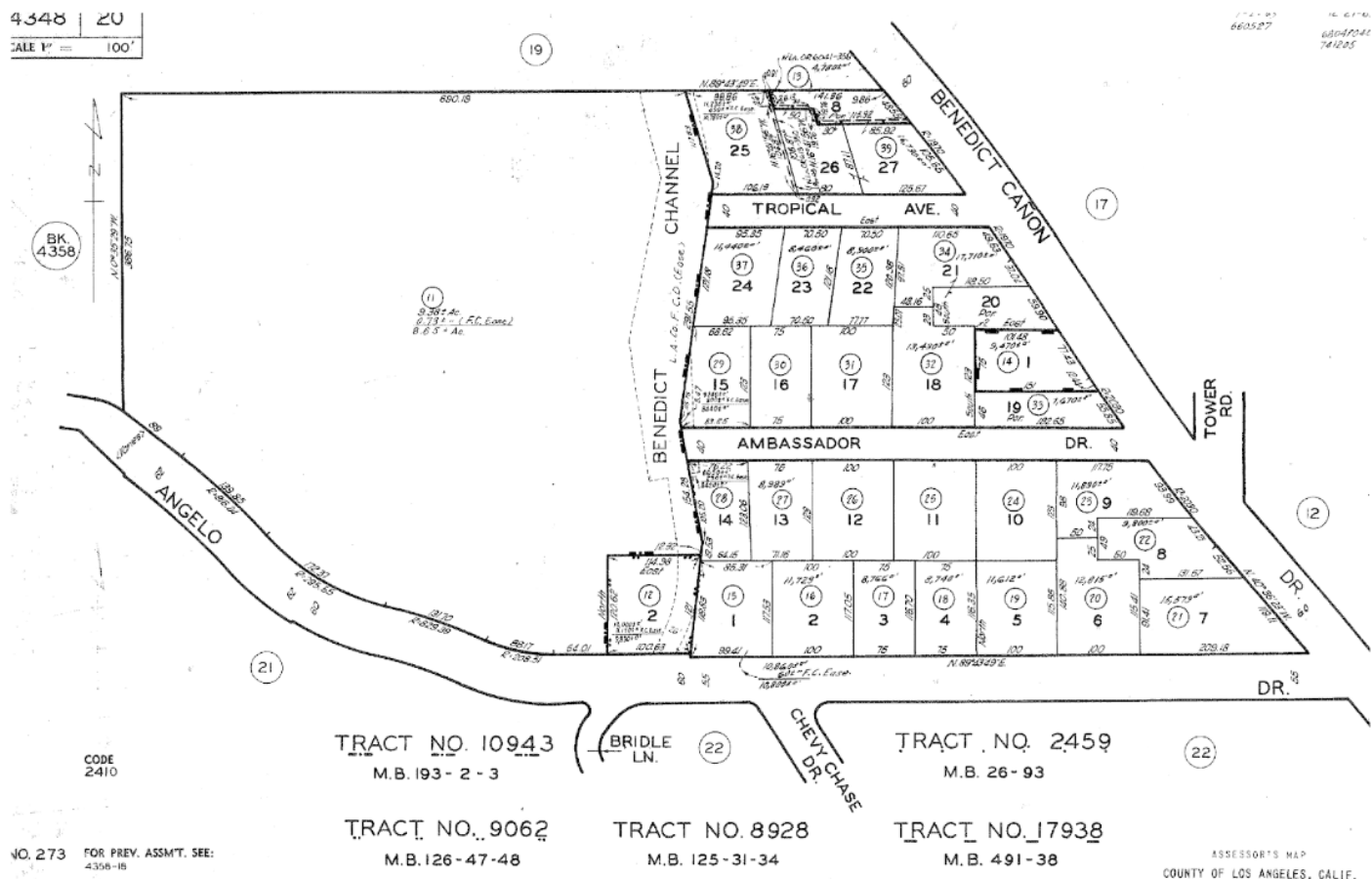
Archival pigment print

60 x 39,6cm

Cameras, Jack L. Warner Estate, Beverly Hills, Los Angeles, 2025

Archival pigment print

60 x 39,6cm



Parcel map of 1801 Angelo Drive, Beverly Hills, California via the Los Angeles County Assessor Portal.