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L.A. Group May Have a Valid Hughes Will

Los Angeles

Los Angeles authorities have filed a petition in court claiming that a document that could constitute a valid will of billionaire Howard Hughes has been found.

The petition, filed late Wednesday by the Los Angeles County Counsel, claims the document has been in the hands of Hughes' Summa Corp. since May, about a month after he died on a flight from Mexico to Houston.

It said the document consisted of an unsigned copy of a 1938 will drawn up by Hughes with a signed codicil attached. The two documents together could constitute a valid will, the petition says.

It asks the Superior Court to order Hughes' estate to produce the will and codicil.

The will left the bulk of the \$2.3 billion estate to medical research, according to the petition.

The petition said the county

counsel had evidence that Summa Corp. officials learned of the will in May when they forced open a safe in the Hollywood mansion of the late Neil S. McCarthy, a one-time Hughes attorney.

The safe contained a transmittal letter from McCarthy to a Texas bank sending the bank a copy of the will and instructions on what to do in case of Hughes' death.

The petition said it was believed that the copy of the will and codicil are now held by Richard

Gano, a Hughes cousin who is an administrator of his estate.

Arelo Sederberg, a spokesman for Summa Corp., would not comment on the possible discovery of the document.

Court sources said if such a will were found to be valid and the money went to research, it would rescue the estate from death duties of up to 77 per cent.

Reuters