

618 Mirada Avenue

(4 CABRILLO, 767 SANTA YNEZ)



1909 ~ Craftsman style

ARCHITECT: Arthur B. Clark OWNERS: Clark ~ Zimmerman ~ Paret ~ Rohlen ~ Gardner

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MARIAN LEIB ADAMS AND PHYLLIS GARDNER

In 1909, Arthur Bridgman Clark, professor of graphic arts at Stanford, hired a contractor to build his own house on San Juan Hill, though he and his son Birge did a considerable amount of the work themselves. At that time, the family was living in the town of Mayfield, today the College Terrace neighborhood of Palo Alto.

The stucco-and-shingle house has three stories on the foothills-facing side and two on the opposite side. The footprint of the approximately 3,000-square-foot house is rectangular, with the southeast corner of the main floor extended to provide a very pleasant wraparound porch. Outside the west-facing front door, a roof extension shelters the entry. Both it and the porch are supported by oversized columns: round at the front door, and square on the porch. Across the porch and extending along the west side of the house, iron-and-wood trellises support thick trumpet vines and wisteria.

Exterior elements, functional as well as decorative, include a graceful sweep of steps to the large porch, and stucco walls with shingle siding on the upper stories. The original gabled roof was probably shingled but is now composition, and the original double-hung windows, some of which remain, were wood-framed.

Inside are 10 rooms. The first floor contains a 17- by 26-foot living room, 13- by 19-foot dining room, and 12-foot-square kitchen—all adjacent to a wraparound porch—as well as a music room, study, and half-bath. The partially underground lower floor contains a large wood-paneled study, a full bath, and several storage areas. The second floor comprises four bedrooms and three baths. (Original house plans show the second floor with five bedrooms, one bath, and three sleeping porches, which have since been incorporated into adjacent bedrooms, by the Clarks and subsequent owners.) The full attic could be converted to living space.

In keeping with the Craftsman style, the original interior contained very simple cabinetry without moldings or decorative trim. Drawer fronts and cabinet doors were made of flat slabs of redwood or cedar, and the double-hung window frames, originally stained dark, have no fancy trim.

On the main floor, board-and-batten paneling on walls or used as wainscoting is the only embellishment. The one notable exception to the original lack of ornamentation is the dark redwood balusters of the stairs, which have prominent repetitive cutouts, hand-carved by A. B. Clark in the Craftsman tradition. The original kitchen had a cool closet, vented below to the outside, which stayed cool enough to chill milk and butter; the third owners removed it. Floors on the first floor are oak, while the upstairs ones are wide cedar boards.

Though the house has been remodeled and renovated, its original character still dominates.

THE OWNERS

Arthur Bridgman Clark. He was born in East Onondaga, New York, in 1866, and received both his B.A. in 1888 and master's in architecture in 1891 from Syracuse University. After serving as an instructor in architecture at Syracuse, he became drawing instructor and director of the trade school at the State Reformatory at Elmira, which had an experimental program to develop a curative treatment of crime. In 1891, he married Hanna Grace Birge (1866–1959), of Hector, New York. David Starr Jordan recruited him to

come to Stanford in 1892 as a professor of graphic arts; later he was chairman of the Art Department.

Before moving to the campus, the Clarks lived in a house he designed and built at 519 (later 2257) Hanover Street in the town of Mayfield. He was also the town's first mayor. Besides his teaching duties at Stanford, Clark designed a number of houses in Palo Alto and on the campus. He retired from Stanford in 1931 and died in May 1948. His widow died in 1959.

The Clarks' four children all had distinguished careers: Birge and David as architects, Esther as an early pediatrician, and Donald as a chemical engineer. Esther Clark lived at home until 1932, when she moved into a house on Old Trace Road, Palo Alto, designed by her brother Birge.

Edwin M. Zimmerman. An associate professor of law, he bought the house after Grace Clark's death and lived there with his family from late 1960 until 1969. He had received his B.A. in 1944 from Columbia College and L.L.B. in 1949 from Columbia University Law School. He served in the U.S. Army from 1944 to 1946, practiced law in New York City, and held various positions in government. From Stanford, the family moved to Washington, D.C., where he joined the law firm of Covington and Burling.

In the fall of 1960, the Zimmermans employed a contractor to make a number of alterations to the house. The major change was expanding the kitchen to take in an area under the second-floor overhang and out to the edge of the porch off the dining room. The back

stoop was enclosed to serve as a laundry; it is now an entry and mudroom.

In the living room, they removed the large central chandelier, formed of oak planks supporting bulbs in glass shades. The Zimmermans also replaced the solid front door, with its small upper window pane, with a Dutch door. They converted the basement room into a study by adding shelving and a straw rug, and painted the concrete floor white. They joined one of the upstairs sleeping porches to the master bedroom.

Peter Paret. From 1969 until 1986, Peter Paret, professor of German military and cultural history, and his wife, Isabel Harris, owned the house. Paret, who was born in Berlin in 1924, was the Raymond A. Spruance Professor of International History at Stanford. After a year at UC Berkeley in 1943, he served in the U.S. Army from 1943 to 1946, returning to get his B.A. in 1949. He earned his Ph.D. from the University of London in 1960. He also holds honorary doctorates from the University of London, University of South Carolina, and The College of Wooster in Ohio, and has won prizes for his writings. The Paretts have two children. He is currently professor emeritus of modern European history at the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton.

The Paretts hired John Hans Ostwald, a Berkeley architect who specialized in remodeling old houses, to guide a number of changes. The major one was in the living room, where the three small windows facing the hills and the window seat in front of them were replaced with much larger plate-glass windows. Amusingly, when the back of the window seat

was removed, Arthur Clark's 1912 license to practice architecture was found; Paret passed it on to Clark's son Birge. The dark-stained paneling, which was in bad shape, was refinished. A see-through glass cabinet between the kitchen and dining room was altered by turning it into a solid wall with wallpaper finish on the dining room side. It was also at this time that ceiling-high walls were installed beside the fireplace.

The Dutch front door was by then in bad condition, so a modern door with heavy glass replaced it. Upstairs, the Paret's remodeled half of the third sleeping porch into a covered porch and half into a full bath.

About 1970, since the flower borders along the narrow path to the front door had never flourished, Paret laid a small brick patio, which extends from the porch overhang into the front yard.

Thomas P. Rohlen. Rohlen owned the house from 1986 until 1993. Now emeritus, he was a professor in the School of Education and senior fellow of the Institute for International Studies affiliated with the Asia/ Pacific Research Center at Stanford. He is also a fellow of the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research and a former U.S. Foreign Service officer. Rohlen has also taught at Harvard and UC Santa Cruz, and is the author of five books and numerous articles on aspects of Japanese society.

He and his wife proceeded with a modernization in period style with glass-paned cabinets and counters of butcher block, marble, and Corian. On the second floor, the original bathroom was completely redone, with

a large Japanese-style tub. A smaller bathroom in the basement was given a Japanese-style shower-bath combination. The Rohlens also replaced the aluminum-framed windows in two of the upstairs bedrooms with multipaned wood-framed ones.

In a back section of the lot, which had been wild, Rohlen planted a garden and added a trellis from the Mirada Street entrance to the driveway. Mrs. Rohlen converted half of the four-car garage into a potting studio with a wood-burning stove. (Mrs. Clark's basement kiln still exists, near the outside door in the dirt-floor section of the basement.).

Phyllis I. Gardner. In 1993, Phyllis Gardner, professor of medicine and pharmacology, bought the property. She was born in 1950 in Ames, Iowa, and received her B.S. in biology from the University of Illinois (1972) and M.D. at Harvard Medical School (1976). After postgraduate training at Massachusetts General in Boston, and at Stanford, Columbia, and University College London, she came to the Stanford Medical School in 1984 as an assistant professor of medicine and pharmacology.

She has also served as dean of education and student affairs in the Medical School. Widely published in the fields of cell biology and pharmacology, she has coauthored a pharmacology text and has received numerous national awards and honors. Her husband, Dr. Andrew J. Perlman, after three years on the faculty of the Stanford School of Medicine, served in executive positions at Genentech and Tularik (now Amgen) and started a company, Innate Immune Inc.

Gardner and Perlman enlisted interior designer Elizabeth Hill of Selby House Ltd. to guide some modest remodeling. The brick fireplace in the living room, which had been painted by a previous owner, was refaced with red granite, the badly worn living room floor replaced with oak, and the board-and-batten wall surfaces painted white.

Later, architect Heidi Hansen, assisted by interior designer Ruth Soforenko, directed a more substantial remodeling. By incorporating an adjacent bedroom, they remodeled the master bedroom into a master suite with a large walk-in closet and a bathroom that opened to a porch made from the last remaining sleeping porch.

The upstairs cedar floors were maintained, except in the master bath, which has cedar surrounding a lighter bamboo, separated by a thin strip of dark wood. The master bedroom's aluminum-framed windows, added by the Parets, were replaced with large double-hung wood-framed ones.

Downstairs, Mrs. Clark's sewing room was converted into a powder room and a small study with built-in shelving.

Guided by landscape architect Walter Guthrie, the owners have also enhanced the front garden, bordered by oleanders and white roses. In addition, they added a large slate terrace and walks in the back, with a fountain designed by sculptor Peter Hansen.

These new additions have altered the Craftsman style in relatively modest ways. The various styles of windows illustrate the changes

over time, from A. B. Clark's original double-hung wood-frame windows in the dining room, to plate-glass windows added by the Parets, and single-pane double-hung wood-frame windows in the master bedroom installed by the current owners. Some of the cabinetry added by Gardner and Perlman has paneled doors with decorative cuts and moldings, though the design is still relatively simple. The original dark-stained wood paneling has been painted white, giving the interior a light and airy feeling.

The family's teenage son is currently using the large basement area, formerly a study, as a bedroom and recreation room. Carpet covers the concrete floor. Storage space on this level includes a security room originally designed to hold artworks, and another space used as a wine cellar.

The grounds around the house are mostly lawn. In the mid-1990s, several mature elm trees infected with Dutch elm disease were removed. The four-car garage is unusual: two cars enter from the east side, and two from the north, making it much less intrusive.

Like many of its neighbors, this house has worn well. It is flexible enough to accommodate an extended family but intimate enough to be comfortable for one or two occupants. It is efficient to heat. It has survived earthquakes without significant damage. It has been tastefully altered, in most cases so subtly that the alterations look original, and it remains a dwelling in the Craftsman style.

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