

~ INTRODUCTION: Historic Houses of San Juan Hill

Until 1900, faculty housing on campus was confined to Alvarado, Salvatierra, and Lasuen streets, close to the core of the university. That year, Jane Stanford gave her friends Mr. and Mrs. George B. Cooksey the opportunity to build a house on San Juan Hill (it is now Synergy House; 550 San Juan Street), but not until 1905, when William Durand and Harris J. Ryan built their shingle-style houses on Cabrillo Avenue, did any faculty choose to build on the hill. This area became known, informally, as the Durand-Cooksey tract.

In October 1906, prompted by a notice from the Board of Trustees encouraging faculty to build houses on campus, 10 faculty members petitioned “that the semi-circular ridge east of Lagunita be opened for building purposes.” The following March, more faculty members petitioned to build, while urging that fraternities and sororities not be given leases there. However, at least one fraternity (Zeta Psi) had a 10-year lease that preceded the request. Whether or not the possibility of coexisting with student housing deterred faculty from the Lagunita tract, by 1908 attention had moved to San Juan Hill.

From 1908 on, Board of Trustees housing documents mention at least three subdivisions on San Juan Hill: Cooksey, San Juan, and Reservoir. Insurance maps for 1917 show the

Cooksey subdivision bordered by Santa Ynez, Cooksey Lane, Lasuen (now Mayfield), and County Road (now Campus Drive East). The San Juan subdivision was divided into two parts: San Juan I, bordered by Santa Ynez, San Juan, Lasuen (Mayfield), and Dolores; and San Juan II, the area within Cabrillo, which, with Dolores Street, circled the top of San Juan Hill and now comprises Dolores, Santa Ynez, and Cabrillo. Part of San Juan II was also called Reservoir or Water Tower after the water tower that still stands at the top of the hill. Today the Faculty Staff Housing Office refers to all three as the San Juan II subdivision.

WHY SAN JUAN HILL?

Stanford President David Starr Jordan’s book, *The Days of A Man*, spells out quite clearly the connection between campus architecture and Mission San Juan Capistrano, in San Diego County, for which the hill was apparently named. In the book, Jordan wrote of his December 1879 trip to the mission: “Towards midnight we changed horses at picturesque San Juan Capistrano, the first Mission I ever saw and the one which six years later furnished the architectural motive of Stanford University.”

Later in the book, he wrote: “Architecturally the buildings of Stanford

University are of a type happily derived, though with some difference in detail, from the Franciscan Missions of California, that of San Juan Capistrano...having doubtless furnished the acceptable motive.”

And this: “San Juan Capistrano, with its splendid array of arcaded cloisters around a central quadrangular patio, furnished...the art idea of Stanford.”

At Leland Stanford’s request, Jordan had already taken on the task of naming Stanford’s streets. He named many, for example, for California pioneers: Alvarado Row was named for Juan Bautista Alvarado, leader of the 1836 revolt against Mexican authority, and governor of Alta California 1836–42. Salvatierra Street was named for Juan Maria Salvatierra, the Jesuit father in Mexico who first urged the founding of missions in Alta California. And Serra Street commemorates the work of Father Junipero Serra, who built the first nine missions in Alta California.

The San Juan Hill area provided Jordan with an opportunity to give residential streets names that recognized the influence of the Spanish explorers: Cabrillo, a Portuguese navigator who sailed up the coast of California as far as Monterey; and the Franciscan padre Crespi, a member of the Portolá expedition and founder of the Carmel mission.

It thus stands to reason that Jordan would choose San Juan as the name of the hill because of the inspiration that the design of San Juan Capistrano had on the new university buildings—buildings that were within splendid view of hilltop residents.

NEW STREET NAMES AND NUMBERS

Many of the houses described in the following pages have been identified over the years by more than one address. President Jordan took seriously his responsibility to name campus streets and, on occasion, decided to change names that he thought were inappropriate. For example, in April 1910, at his written request, the Board of Trustees changed the street name Aibonito to Cabrillo, by which it is known today. Jordan had written that the name was a “sort of slang Spanish meaning ‘pretty,’ and would have about as much dignity as to name a street ‘nobby’ in English. I therefore ask that this name be changed from ‘Aibonito’ to some name connected with the early history of the missions. I may suggest ‘Crespi,’ ‘Cabrillo,’ ‘Vizcaino’ or ‘Vellicata’ as names appropriate for this purpose.”

The university changed house numbering and some street names as of January 12, 1928. At that time, the section of Cabrillo that formerly circled the hill became known as Santa Ynez Street. It extends from Alvarado Row to present-day Cabrillo and around the hill to Gerona Road.

A MIX OF ARCHITECTURAL STYLES

The 16 houses described in this book were built between 1900 and 1927, and their styles reflect architectural styles of their era. More than half of the houses, which were built between 1900 and 1917, are in the shingle style, also known as Craftsman or, with slight modifications, First Bay Tradition. This style,

which incorporated the philosophy and design of the 19th-century British Arts and Crafts movement, stressed simplicity of design and advocated use of natural, even local, materials to create objects in harmony with their environment.

Five of the houses, built between 1912 and 1927, are in Mediterranean style, with stucco walls and red tile roofs. Beyond those unifying materials, each house is a unique expression of its owners' (and the architects') inspiration.

The prominent Palo Alto architect Birge Clark, son of Stanford art professor Arthur Bridgman Clark, designed an English Tudor house (1926) and his father an English country house (1914). Arthur B. Clark's biography is on the following page.

Other architects who designed houses in this book include John Kennedy Branner, Henry Gutterson, Charles E. Hodges, Walter H. Ratcliff Jr., A. W. Smith, and Charles Kaiser Sumner. For biographical sketches of Birge Clark, John Branner, and Charles Sumner, see *Historic Houses III: San Juan Neighborhood, Stanford University* (Stanford Historical Society, 2005).

These are the houses described in this book: 550 San Juan (Cooksey House), 607 Cabrillo, 622 Cabrillo, 623 Cabrillo, 649 Mirada, 639 Mirada, 618 Mirada, 761 Dolores, 773 Dolores, 775 Santa Ynez, 774 Santa Ynez, 770 Santa Ynez, 767 Santa Ynez, 756 Santa Ynez, 746 Santa Ynez, and 739 Santa Ynez. For their locations, see the shaded areas on the map at the front of this book.