

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

DATA SHEET

FOR NPS USE ONLY  
RECEIVED **MAR 23 1977**  
DATE ENTERED **AUG 22 1977**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC Merrill (R. D.) House

AND/OR COMMON

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER 919 Harvard Avenue East

CITY, TOWN

Seattle

— NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

— VICINITY OF

1st - Hon. Joel Pritchard

STATE

Washington

CODE  
53

COUNTY  
King

CODE  
033

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

**CATEGORY**

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

**OWNERSHIP**

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH

**PUBLIC ACQUISITION**

- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

**STATUS**

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

**ACCESSIBLE**

**PRESENT USE**

- AGRICULTURE
- COMMERCIAL
- EDUCATIONAL
- ENTERTAINMENT
- GOVERNMENT
- INDUSTRIAL
- MILITARY
- MUSEUM
- PARK
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- RELIGIOUS
- SCIENTIFIC
- TRANSPORTATION
- OTHER: Reception Center and Guest House

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME The R. D. Merrill Foundation, Mrs. Prentice Bloedel and Mrs. Corydon Wagner

STREET & NUMBER c/o Merrill and Ring Company  
1411 Fourth Avenue, Suite 1415

CITY, TOWN

Seattle

— VICINITY OF

STATE

Washington 98101

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. King County Administration Building

STREET & NUMBER Fourth Avenue at James Street

CITY, TOWN

Seattle

STATE

Washington 98104

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE None

DATE

— FEDERAL — STATE — COUNTY — LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

## 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED      DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

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### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

#### GENERAL STATEMENT

The stuccoed brick Colonial Revival house of Richard Dwight Merrill on Capitol Hill overlooking downtown Seattle and Puget Sound is one of the distinguished residences in the city and state dating from the first decade of the 20th century. Characterized not by showy grandeur, but by simple elegance and comfortable living spaces, it was completed 1909-1910 after designs by New York architect Charles A. Platt, one of the nation's foremost practitioners of country house architecture for a period of thirty years following the turn of the century. In the tradition of his time, Platt advised his client on site-planning; he prepared plans and specifications for the house and formal garden, and he personally gathered antique furnishings and works of art for the project. Maxfield Parrish's original oil study of "Reveries" was obtained as an overmantel painting for the Drawing Room.

The house and garden have continued under family ownership to the present day and remain almost precisely as conceived by architect and clients. For many years the well-maintained property -- little over an acre in size -- has been made available to charitable and educational organizations of the community for fund-raising receptions. At present, however, it is used for such purposes exclusively by the Seattle Art Museum, which is located in Volunteer Park but a few blocks away.

#### LEGAL DESCRIPTION

The Merrill House is located in the NE $\frac{1}{4}$  Section 29, T.25N., R.4E., of the Willamette Meridian. It occupies Lots 2 through 6 and Lots 19 through 23 of Block 1 of Sarah B. Yesler's First Addition to the Plat of Seattle.

#### GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SITE

Situated in a fashionable residential neighborhood on the west slope of Capitol Hill, the property commands a choice view of the city and the Olympic Mountains beyond Puget Sound. Little over an acre in size, it measures 250 by 230 feet and fronts Harvard Avenue on the east and Boylston Avenue on the west. Shading the front parking strip along Harvard Avenue are eight mature Big-leaf maples towering to a height of 95 feet. These stately trees are in good condition and have been little modified by pruning.

A front fence of wrought-iron and concrete walls contain the north half of the property. Within this private enclosure are the house, its forecourt, or semi-circular driveway, and its Italianate garden which extends to Boylston Avenue in the rear. Boylston Avenue is about 14 feet lower in grade than the garden. A garage and chauffeur's quarters are oriented along the street front directly beneath the pergola and rear garden wall.

The south half of the estate is an informally landscaped lawn which falls off toward the west. It is bordered by laurel hedges, other shrubs and several rose beds, and at the foot of a bank in the center of the lawn is a cluster of mature evergreen trees. This south lawn provides the foil of green space adjacent to the compact, more densely planted formal grounds of the house. It opens directly onto Harvard Avenue and can be reached also through a wrought-iron gate in the south garden wall. Tennis courts and a playhouse appear to have been planned for the area at one time, but were never carried out.

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Neighboring houses on the 60-foot-wide tree-lined avenue range in style and date from "half-timbered" brick and stucco cottages and shingled and clapboarded bungalows to grander homes in the Jacobethan vein and modern "Colonial" residences. Few, however, exceed the normal height of 2½ stories, and a majority occupy 50 by 100-foot lots. In general, the immediate neighborhood is eclectic in character; its scale is intimate, and its air of quiet seclusion is enhanced by an abundance of mature plantings. The Merrills' property was among the earliest to be developed there.

THE HOUSE AND ITS FURNISHINGS

Scrupulously formal in elevation and superbly proportioned, the house is compact but nonetheless imposing. Measuring 42 by 76 feet, its rectangular plan is parallel with the street. Its basement and two and a half stories rest upon a concrete foundation, and its brick masonry walls have a white-painted cement, or stucco exterior finish. The house has a flat, tar and gravel roof and a tin-sheathed, cross-axial gable over the center section. Street and garden facades are divided into five bays, the inner three of which are contained within pedimented central sections projecting slightly from the basic wall plane. A belt cornice marks the division of first and second stories. The bolder terminal cornice outlines gable ends and incorporates the eaves troughs. A low parapet of painted galvanized iron crowns the walls. Four straight-sided flues -- tall, rectangular planes with corbeled neckings -- are symmetrically arranged at each corner of the central section.

Either pediment, or gable end, is lighted by an oval window with curvilinear muntins and a framement accented by keystones -- a treatment peculiar to the Colonial Revival Style. For the most part, linteled windows with molded surrounds are fitted with double-hung sash containing eight lights over eight. Outer bays of the ground story have, in addition, fixed sidelights separated from the larger opening by engaged columns. Centered in the entablatures over these columns are classical wreath motifs. A small Doric portico shelters the front entrance giving onto the driveway. Its tapered but unfluted columns support a deck with solid railing. The columns and shadow pilasters of the portico carry a frieze in which carved discs and fleurs-de-lis alternate with triglyphs. On the garden facade, ground story openings in the central section are French doors which open onto a porch with wrought-iron railing, concrete posts, and double stairs descending to a narrow, brick-paved terrace. A single-story, flat-roofed loggia or porch measuring 16 by 19 feet telescopes from the northwest corner of the house. Doric columns flank openings in its north and west walls, and its brick pavement is laid in a herringbone pattern. Adjacent to the porch on the east is a 13 by 19-foot pantry extension from the kitchen, the exterior finish of which matches that of the main block.

The interior of the house is finished with hardwood floors parqueted in a herringbone pattern, plaster ceilings, natural-finish walnut and ivory-painted paneling and plaster walls with fir trim. Rooms on the ground story are ten feet in height, and those on the second story have ceilings eight feet high. Modification of the interior has been so negligible that, except for a few paintings, original furnishings and decorative arts collected and specially-manufactured at the architect's and clients' direction are still

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in place. Among the few unobtrusive alterations that have been carried out are the following: an elevator was installed in a portion of the downstairs coat closet, grass cloth was added to the walls of one of the bedrooms in later years, and, owing to their deteriorated condition, silk damask wall coverings and draperies in the Library, Drawing Room and Dining Room were recently replaced in kind.

The core of the ground floor plan includes a full-paneled Entry Hall with fluted Doric columns setting off a semi-circular niche containing a geometric staircase which is open at the string but not free-hanging. Beyond the Hall is the Drawing Room with its garden prospect and architectonic paneling in the Georgian mold. The marble-faced chimney-piece on the north wall has a kneed frame and mantel decorated with classical motifs and an overmantel painting specially obtained for the space. The latter is the original oil-on-canvas study for "Reveries", an unpublished Hearst's Magazine cover by Maxfield Parrish. The keynote of the room's decoration is the vibrant blue which is characteristic of so many of the famed American artist-illustrator's idyllic, nearly surreal, landscapes. In this painting, completed in May 1913, Parrish launched a theme which would recur in his later work. A young girl dressed in the himation of classical antiquity is seated in a swing suspended from boughs in the foreground. A large area of the lower canvas is a glazed, vivid blue monochrome, and in the background sunlight streams through a mountain pass. On the east wall of the Drawing Room, on either side of the Hall doorway, are a pair of large oil-on-canvas murals likewise enframed by the ivory-painted paneling. The latter landscapes with figures in the Chinese Style, were painted by Alden Twachtman in 1916. These permanent features of the decor were obtained through the architect's connections, for Charles Platt, who began his career as a painter and etcher, had been a colleague of either muralist's father: the etcher Stephen Parrish, and John Henry Twachtman, one of the celebrated "Ten American Painters" influenced by French Impressionism. Antique furnishings selected for this light and airy room include a pair of gilded fiddle-backed side chairs and a set of oval-backed armchairs and "Grecian" settee in the Neo-Classical tradition of Robert Adam. These pieces are combined with a sofa and pair of overstuffed armchairs upholstered in antique velvet a shade of blue which picks up the keynote color. Blue silk damask draperies, blue-backgrounded Oriental area rugs, a refectory table, piano, Louis XV cabinet, a Rococo Revival caned armchairs complete the ensemble.

Extending across the south end of the house at ground level is the Library, the largest single interior space and undoubtedly the most imposing in terms of its decoration. The latter is patterned after ballrooms and galleries in stately country homes of the later English Renaissance. Here, the focal point is a large chimney-piece centered on the long inner wall. It has marble facing and an elaborate walnut mantel supported by engaged Ionic columns. The overmantel frame contains a panel of Moroccan leather tooled and painted appropriately in a Renaissance motif: a cartouche flanked by putti and surrounded by arabesques. Except for paneling around the chimney-piece and trim consisting of a heavy cornice and pilasters, the walls are covered in rose silk damask. The rose keynote is carried out by matching draperies, Oriental carpet and a pair of buttoned sofas upholstered in antique velvet. A large tapestry hangs in the central panel of the wall opposite the chimney-piece. A two-tiered ceramic-topped tea table is a souvenir acquired by the Merrills

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at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893. A 17th century chest of drawers, a pair of tapestry-upholstered armchairs, a gilded Empire sofa, a tall case clock, and two heavily-carved Italian press cupboards complete the catholic furnishing scheme typical of Platt's interiors. Two built-in bookcases on the fireplace wall contain staples of the family library, including several sets of encyclopedia, a set of German classics; the works of Dickens, James Fenimore Cooper, Washington Irving, and Luther Burbank; and classical, European, United States and local histories. Symbolically placed over either bookcase are two framed grisaille paintings which, by their simulation in tints of grey of portrait busts of epic poets and bas-relief figures personifying Greece and Rome, are commentaries on the legacy of the ancient world.

Completing the ground story plan, on the north end of the house, are the Dining Room with its views onto the garden and north porch, and the Kitchen and Butler's Pantry. The Dining Room is finished with walnut paneling and is lighted, as is typical of other rooms, by electrified wall sconces. Here, they are silver-plated. The marble-faced chimneypiece is decorated with a bas-relief mantel panel in the form of an Adamesque urn. At the center of the room is a pedestal extension table and a set of leather-upholstered high-backed chairs. Centered over the table is a Neo-Classical hanging lamp of alabaster carved in the antique manner with a frieze of figures in bas-relief. A credenza or sideboard displays an antique silver service.

The Kitchen and adjoining Butler's Pantry have fir trim and built-in storage cabinets and contain much of their original equipment, including an auxiliary stainless steel sink with drainboards, an electric warming oven, round dining tables, and a suite of Austrian-made bentwood chairs. These rooms are little altered except by the laying of new linoleum floor covering and the installation of a modern sink and drainboard cabinetry. The original cooking range was supplanted many years ago, but is still in storage on the premises. Unfinished basement rooms with concrete floors contain the heating plant, laundry and other utility areas.

Second story bedrooms are arranged around the central stairhall and a cross-axial corridor. The master suite includes a walnut-paneled Study with fireplace, a Dressing Room, Bath Room, and Bed Room. Three additional bedrooms with adjoining baths complete the floor plan. The attic space, reached by a continuation of the back stairs, contains the quarters of the household staff.

#### THE FORECOURT AND FORMAL GARDEN

Charles Platt was celebrated for designing gardens which were integral parts of the residences they accompanied. In fact, his interest in architecture evolved from a prior interest in landscape painting and gardening. In 1894, while still primarily an artist, Platt published a survey of Italian gardens illustrated with his own paintings and photographs. An annotated copy of Italian Gardens in the Merrill library shows that on the Merrill estate architect and client sought to achieve a flower garden of simple, formal design with a central water basin to reflect the growth - a scheme typified by the Colonna Garden at the heart of Rome. The desired effect was brought about with meticulous care soon after the house became habitable.

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Characteristically, Platt and his client devoted as much attention to the details of the grounds as they trained upon the finish work and furnishing of the house. The former included the nature and scale of pavements and stepping stones, the color of paint to be used on trellis work, and so on. Blueprints among the complete set of original plans and drawings stored in the house show that Platt planned the garden in association with Brett and Hall of Boston. Further suggestions for massing trees on the estate were provided in correspondence and a perspective sketch by Ellen Shipman, landscape architect of Cornish, New Hampshire. A key to the identification of plant materials on the garden plan shows that recommendations were not followed in every case, but the result nevertheless remained true to the initial concept in general outline and effect.

The front boundary of the forecourt developed in the 50 feet of space between Harvard Avenue and the house is lined with a high wrought-iron fence with concrete posts with ball finials. Between open gateways at either end of the fence sweeps a semi-circular driveway paved with stretcher bricks. The resulting apron of lawn inside the fence is accented with a pair of hawthorn trees. In the corners of the foreyard, between the driveway, house and concrete side walls, are beds of holly, camelias, rhododendron, and Oregon grape planted in mirror-image fashion. A pair of English yew trees flanks the portico.

Pathways lead around either end of the house to the garden in the rear. On the south, the path leads across a paved terrace ornamented with antique urn-planters and wall basin. A shallow loggia once designed for this space as a balance to the north porch was never carried out. In the intervening years the plantings have screened the north porch and pantry wing, and either elevation now appears in perfect symmetry.

The garden face of the house is set off by cedars, laurel, rhododendron, and Oregon grape. Short flights of stairs descend to a narrow, brick-paved terrace measuring 9 x 95 feet and terminating in bays for antique statuary at either end of its long axis. The concrete garden walls are stepped at this point, corresponding to the changes in grade.

From the terrace a final descent is made via central stair-steps giving onto the level of the parterre, which extends some 120 feet to the rear property line overlooking Boylston Avenue. The garden walls are lined with espaliered cherry-plums, apple and pear trees developed from stock acquired by Merrill from the Belgian exhibit at the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition in Seattle in 1909. The marble garden benches, too, were acquired from the Italian exhibit at the conclusion of the Fair. Yew trees flank a wrought-iron gate in the south wall which is on axis with the garden's centerpiece - a water basin 23 feet in diameter in a square of lawn. A fountain on pedestal with water-spouting putto was centered in the basin some time after the garden was completed. Set off by laurel topiary trees in wooden cache-pots, beds surrounding the central square were originally filled with annuals - tulips, phlox, narcissus, hyacinth and the like, which produced a luxuriant, colorful effect. The beds have since been simplified to reduce the cost of maintenance, and now contain roses and curvilinear patterns of boxwood hedges and colored gravels. The borders at the base of the side walls, however, still bloom with white tulips at springtime.

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At the center of the west border, directly on axis with the center section of the house, is a pergola, or garden pavilion fronted with coupled Doric columns with entasis. Originally, the pergola was open so that one glimpsed an infinite view from the garden. Owing to the growing up of trees and houses on the street below, louvered shutters were later inserted in the concrete framework of the back wall. Completing the backdrop at the rear wall are holly and cedar trees, double white lilacs and rhododendrons planted mirror-image fashion on either side of the pergola.

At grade level on Boylston Avenue, an understory of the pergola, is a 22 by 35 foot three-bay concrete garage with transoms and fanlights over the doors. The garage is flanked on the north by a single-story shop area and on the south by chauffeur's quarters. The entire concrete facade of 124 feet is softened by vine-covered trellises.

# 8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD		AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY) Decorative Arts	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES 1909-1910

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Charles A. Platt, New York, Architect  
Harvey J. Allan, Seattle, Builder

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

GENERAL STATEMENT

The Harvard Avenue property developed by R. D. Merrill between 1909 and 1910 is significant to the city of Seattle and Washington State as an intact example of fashionable house and garden architecture by New York architect Charles A. Platt. Platt ranked with Wilson Eyre, Charles Barton Keene, John Russell Pope, Cope and Stewardson and others of their ilk in formulating a kind of country-house architecture which, owing to its utility in spatial organization, its expressive use of native materials and its harmonious integration with the setting, was felt by architectural critics of the day to have achieved a distinctly American character. Like all those identified with the so-called "rational modern movement" Platt worked in several idioms - including the Jacobethan, but he was best known for his work in the Georgian vein. The R. D. Merrill House is a choice example of his stately home in the Colonial Revival Style. Its significance is enhanced by the fact that, down to the furnishings, the initial concept has remained unaltered to the present day. Moreover, a complete set of original plans and drawings is stored on the premises.

No statistical survey of the extant work of Charles Platt is known to exist, but, in addition to campus and apartment buildings, art museums and other work, Platt is said to have designed over a hundred houses across the country. They are found chiefly in the East: in Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts and Connecticut; in New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Illinois and Michigan. On the West Coast, Seattle claims two of his houses, and, of the two projects, the estate of R. D. Merrill was the first to be undertaken.<sup>1</sup>

Richard Dwight Merrill arrived in Washington State in 1898 as an executive of the Merrill and Ring Lumber Company formed by his family in Michigan. He directed the company's expansion in the Pacific Northwest and, with his wife, took a prominent part in community affairs from the time he settled in Seattle in 1903. St. Nicholas School, a leading private school in Seattle, had its beginnings at 919 Harvard Avenue. The Merrill daughters and other children of the neighborhood were educated there for a time until separate facilities were established for the school. The Merrills resided in the house until 1938. Following his wife's death in that year, Merrill moved to a downtown hotel suite and made the house available for the fund-raising events of charitable and educational organizations. Since 1964 the property has been impeccably maintained by the Merrills' daughters in association with the R. D. Merrill Foundation.

<sup>1</sup> Platt also designed a house for lumberman Thomas D. Stimson in Seattle's exclusive residential section known as The Highlands. William Platt, one of Platt's sons and successors in the firm, designed a home in The Highlands for Edward Garrett. The present-day architectural firm - still under the title Charles A. Platt, is located at 12 East 44th Street in New York City.



# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See attached sheets.

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1.3 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,0	5,5,10,5,0	5,27,4 <sup>920</sup> 9,0,0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Elisabeth Walton Potter, Historic Preservation Specialist

ORGANIZATION

Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation

DATE

January 1977

STREET & NUMBER

P. O. Box 1128

TELEPHONE

(206) 753-4117

CITY OR TOWN

Olympia

STATE

Washington 98504

## 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL X

STATE     

LOCAL     

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

*Jeanne M. Welch*

TITLE

Acting State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

3/16/77

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

*W. M. Smith*

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST:

*Charles M. ...*

DATE

8/22/77

DATE

8.18.77

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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CHARLES A. PLATT - A LEADING FIGURE IN AMERICAN ART

Charles Adams Platt (1861-1933), a native of New York, gained his education in painting and etching at the National Academy of Design and the Art Students League in New York City. Stephen Parrish, father of artist-illustrator Maxfield Parrish, was his mentor in etching. In 1882 Platt left for Paris, where he studied at the Academie Julian under Boulanger and Lefevre. After having exhibited and achieved recognition for his work, he returned to the United States in 1887 and joined an artists' workshop at Cornish, New Hampshire. Platt later maintained a summer home at Cornish and spent much of his time there in semi-retirement after 1928.

In 1892 Platt toured Italy with his younger brother, William, who had studied landscape architecture with Frederick Law Olmsted for a time after leaving Harvard. Together, they inspected the country's celebrated Renaissance gardens, and two years later Platt brought out Italian Gardens, one of the early illustrated monographs published on the subject in the United States.

Platt's interest in landscape design evolved to the point that he was fully engaged in the practice of architecture shortly after the turn of the century. He joined the New York Chapter of the American Institute of Architects in 1902 and was advanced to Fellowship status in 1907. One of his first clients was William Astor, for whom he designed the Astor Court Apartments and other projects in Manhattan. Among the early country houses for which he became widely known were the "Villa Turicum" for Meredith Hare in Lake Forest, Illinois, the Francis Weld estate in Huntington, Long Island, and the estate of F. B. Pratt in Glen Cove, New York. Representative of his various city residences were the New York City homes of Irving Brokaw and William Fahnestock and the home of James Parmele in Washington, D.C. By all reckoning, Platt's best-known work in the nation's capital is the Freer Gallery. He also was noted for a number of Colonial Revival Style school buildings erected in the 1920s at Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts, the Connecticut College for Women in New London, and the University of Illinois. In addition, he served as consulting architect on buildings plans for Dartmouth College, John Hopkins University, and the University of Rochester. The Leader-News Office Building in Cleveland, Ohio was considered the outstanding example of Platt's commercial architecture. The Lowell Memorial Fountain in New York City's Bryant Park was also designed by Platt.

In addition to his longstanding affiliation with the American Institute of Architects, Platt was elected an honorary corresponding member of the Royal Institute of British Architects. He was a member of the Society of Landscape Architects, the National Institute of Arts and Letters, the Society of American Artists, the American Water Color Society, and the London Society of Painters and Etchers. From 1928 to the time of his death in 1933 he served as president of the American Academy in Rome.

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R. D. MERRILL - A LEADING FIGURE IN THE NORTHWEST LUMBER INDUSTRY

For fifty years Richard Dwight Merrill (1869-1964) was a leading figure in the lumber industry in the Pacific Northwest. A native of Saginaw, Michigan, Merrill was graduated from the University of Michigan in 1892. He promptly entered the family-owned Merrill and Ring Lumber Company which had been formed in 1886 by his father, Thomas Merrill, who had begun his years in the industry in Penobscot County, Maine.

Merrill worked for a time in Saginaw and at company lumber yards in Toledo, Ohio and Duluth, Minnesota. In 1898 he was transferred with company headquarters to Hoquiam, Washington, where the company had acquired extensive timber holdings scouted by his older brother, Thomas Merrill, Jr. Merrill's brother-in-law, Clark L. Ring, remained in Saginaw to look after the company's Eastern interests. In 1903 company headquarters was moved again to Seattle, and Merrill arrived in the city as vice-president of the operation. In 1907 he was elected company president, a position he held with distinction through 1947. In 1903 he had been elected vice-presidence of the Polson Logging Company of Hoquiam and he served in that capacity until 1936, at which time he became president. Under Merrill's direction, holdings of the Merrill and Ring Company were expanded throughout Washington and British Columbia.

In Clallam County, on the Olympic Peninsula in Washington, the company garnered a stand of Douglas fir in the Pysht River drainage which Merrill considered among the finest in the state. It had been located by his brother. By 1908 the firm had acquired 23,000 acres. Several thousands of additional acres were acquired, and between 1917 and 1930 some 90,000,000 board feet of lumber were logged there annually from a camp that was regarded a model of its kind. At its height the camp was populated by as many as 300 loggers. Though no second crop would be harvested at Pysht in his lifetime, Merrill was a firm believer in reforestation. Typically, the company's 27,000-acre holdings in Clallam County became a tree farm.

Merrill's interest in perpetuating forest resources led him to establish a generous trust fund for scholarships and research at the University of Washington College of Forestry in 1954. Records of the Merrill and Ring Company recently turned over to the University of Washington Library are believed to offer an exceptionally complete picture of a lumber business which has been in continuous operation in the state since before the turn of the century.

BACKGROUND OF THE PROJECT AT 919 HARVARD AVENUE

R. D. Merrill married Eula Lee of Lansing, Michigan in 1893. Mrs. Merrill had been educated at Lasell Seminary near Boston and, with her "quiet charm, dignity and tact", she was a much-appreciated hostess on the Seattle scene. Correspondence between Merrill and the architect Charles Platt in letterpress copybooks included with company records in the University of Washington Library Manuscript Collection show that within a few years of their arrival in Seattle, at least by 1906, the Merrills sought to build a new home

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for themselves and their two young daughters on property they had acquired on Harvard Avenue on the west slope of Capitol Hill.

Clearly, the New York architect was selected by his clients because he had designed in Saginaw a brick house in the Colonial Revival Style for Merrill's sister, Elizabeth, and her husband, Clark L. Ring (1862-1933), and executive in the family lumber business. Charles Platt traveled to Seattle twice in connection with the Merrills' project. The first occasion was for the purpose of establishing the precise siting and orientation of the house. Thereafter, his representatives on the site during construction were L. H. Dixon and R. C. Dunbar. Harvey J. Allan, a local builder, was the general contractor.

Shipments of antique furniture and decorative arts collected by Platt in Italy and France began arriving by railroad in 1908, a full year before ground was broken. From all evidence, once construction was commenced, in March 1909, the project proceeded smoothly and was complete with garden by the fall of 1910. Correspondence shows that the architect and his clients enjoyed a cordial partnership in the development of the estate. Platt's taste and judgment were deferred to in customary measure, but the Merrills exercised their judgment in the final analysis. As Platt himself pointed out in an interview toward the end of his career: "No matter how beautiful the execution of the plan and furnishings, unless the client plays his part the thing will not live". Above all, the house at 919 Harvard was designed to be lived in comfortably.

The Merrills evinced a particular interest in the development of their garden. Much of the correspondence with Platt was devoted to it. While attending to a variety of civic activities in subsequent years, Mrs. Merrill presided for a time over the Seattle Garden Club; she served on the board of directors of the University of Washington Arboretum and was the vice-chairman of the billboard and roadside committee for the Garden Club of America, Western Zone. As an outgrowth of the latter experience, in 1930 she formed the Washington State Council for Roadside Beauty which pioneered many of the state's highway beautification projects.

#### HISTORICAL EVENTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE HOUSE

The Merrill House played a significant part in the educational activities of the neighborhood. It was the setting for recitals sponsored by the Cornish School of art, music, dance and drama on nearby Roy Street. More importantly, it is associated with the founding of St. Nicholas School, another of Seattle's leading private educational institutions. For a full season the Misses Buddecke, German schoolteachers, conducted a school for the Merrill daughters and six or seven neighbor children in the family library. R. D. Merrill was instrumental in gaining permanent legal status for the school, which at various times in its history ranged from kindergarten to the 12th grade. The St. Nicholas School building was designed in the Jacobethan Style by the eminent local firm of Bebb and Gould and was erected in 1925 but a few blocks away at 1501 10th Avenue East. The school was consolidated in the fall of 1971, and is now known as Lakeside Middle School.

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SOURCES ON THE HOUSE AND GARDEN

Original and revised plans and specifications for house and garden; two record photographs by Curtis and Miller (ca. 1911); miscellaneous file material. One carton and over a dozen blueprint tubes, stored 919 Harvard Avenue East.

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