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**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**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 Cordelia A. Culbertson House

and/or common n/a

**2. Location**

street & number 1188 Hillcrest Avenue n/a not for publication

city, town Pasadena n/a vicinity of congressional district

state California 91106 code 06 county Los Angeles code 037

**3. Classification**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Present Use</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	xx n/a	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name Ruth and Robert Peck

street & number 1188 Hillcrest Avenue

city, town Pasadena n/a vicinity of state California 91106

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Office of the County Recorder of Los Angeles

street & number 227 North Broadway

city, town Los Angeles state California 90012

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

A Guide to Architecture in Los Angeles  
title and Southern California has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

(Published by Peregrine Smith, Inc., Salt Lake City)

date 1977 n/a federal n/a state n/a county n/a local

depository for survey records D. Gebhard & R. Winter Records with Dr. David Gebhard  
Department of Art History, University of California

city, town Santa Barbara state CA

# 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<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
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		date <u>    n/a    </u>

**Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance**

The Cordelia A. Culbertson residence is a frame gunite-clad one story gabled residence with luminescent ceramic tile roof and Craftsman/Oriental detail designed by Greene and Greene in 1911. Set close to the street, the building has a U plan configuration with the open end of the U along the eastern portion of the property. Along the interior courtyard a pergola with rare white wisteria creates privacy by forming an eastern edge and encloses a central courtyard. A unique design along the northern portion of the U plan creates the only wing of two stories by fitting the building into the slope of the terrain.

The front southern facing facade, set close to the street, creates a long, low appearance. The green glazed baked porcelain tile roof has four separate gable roofs set gable end to gable end. The central gable roof creates an entry roof with beam ends extending over the flanking tiles. Rafter tails extend below metal gutters. The front facade is fairly symmetric with banks of windows to each side of the central doorway.

The main entry is approached by a central walkway. The wide front door has three long lights and is flanked by long narrow lights. Pilasters support a cross beam. Niches fit into the walls behind each pilaster. Copper downspouts flank both sides of the entry with lanterns hanging in front of the pilasters. Ceramic urns designed by Greene & Greene for Mrs. Prentiss, the second owner of the property, are set in front of the pilasters.<sup>1</sup> The central walkway has the appearance of natural stone. Extra sand has been added to the cement so the cement will peel away as stone does naturally. Small square Batchelder tiles create tile courses leading to the front door. Original metal lanterns flank the walkway at the sidewalk. Each lantern is set on a marble base. It is this marble the Greens used to create the urns at the doorway entrance for Mrs. Prentiss.

At the western edge of the building is a low gunite wall and wooden gate. The gate is inset with three green oriental design tiles similar to others used by Greene and Greene in other commissions. At right angles to the gate is the gable end. Attic venting is five long stepped louvered vents. The gabled roof for the western section of the U plan fits under the rafter tails and under the venting for the southern facade.

The eastern end of the front facade is highlighted by a corbelled chimney. The corners of the building have ribbons of stepped gunite to add depth and interest. The loggia of the interior courtyard extends beyond the southern wing adding yet another layer of interest.

<sup>1</sup>Mrs. Allen was the second owner of the house. She married F. F. Prentiss in 1918.

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Inside the U plan, the living room opens onto the loggia. Original brass lanterns hang from the loggia. Greene & Greene treated the metal so the lanterns would turn green to match the greening of the copper downspouts. The tiles on the loggia roof are not mortared, but placed together. Scarf joints and strap and wedge supports are found here also. Windows with multi-paned sections look onto the open garden from the entry. A portion of the roof extends above the larger roof line above these windows, creating space for additional lighting. This roof area appears to be floating above the rest of the roof.

Set into the crook of the U shape is the garden room. Its windows slide up into the walls allowing for circulation. The windows have the same mullion pattern as the entry way windows. The basement vents for the entire house are the same Chinese tiles as found in the front side gate.

Moving further around the U plan is the western wing. All one story, it has french doors with molded gunite surround. Downspouts and banks of windows flank each side of the doorway with three cement steps which lead to the entry. A skylight is built into the roof line of this section of the house. Windows are set into an opening in the roof with slightly raised gabled roof set onto the main roof.

The final leg of the U, the bedrooms, is the most interesting. The patio side is one story, while the opposite side is two stories. Three windows step down the wall in a slanted line to the left of french doors. A small night/skylight fits into the roof as was seen on the western section. This section is fit under a portion of the gabled roof, creating another multi-layered roof line. A pergola is attached to this portion of the house. A rosebush covers the pergola, but may not be original. The posts of the pergola are capped by Batchelder cherub tiles. In the center of the U plan is an octagonal tile fountain. Small, luminescent square detailed tiles form the floor, sides, and a portion of the rim. A tile rosette is at each junction of the octagon. Plain larger tiles form the pond border.

To the east of the bedroom wing is a cement terrace with three stepped levels. An incised cement wall surrounds the terrace while an original Ingleman oak shades the entire area. The garage with its car turn-around sits under this terrace. From here it was originally possible to look down on the formal Italian gardens on the northern portion of the lot. Cement steps are the only remaining feature of these gardens. Seventeen of the original 100 Gladding, McBean & Co. pots still decorate the garden areas. A pergola on the eastern edge of the upper gardens is crafted from handhewn solid Douglasfir. While some beams have been replaced, most of this structure is original. The pergola is covered by a wisteria, the oldest and rarest white wisteria in the state.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Identified by Mr. Whimple, landscape restorationist for the Gamble House and the designer for gardens at the Getty Museum.

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The final facade of the building is the two-story elevation of the bedroom wing. The upper portion of this wing contains bedrooms with windows piercing the wall. A balcony with marble floor and supported by ironwork brackets is suspended from the wall. Another window is found at the western end of this wall, under the N/S gable end. Slatted vents fill in the gable end.

The lower portion of this section was originally an open, screened billiard or entertainment room. Mrs. Prentiss had Greene & Greene remove the screens and add glass to create a ballroom. Square posts with double "T" cornice supports the second floor. Set into each post at the base of the cornice are Batchelder bas relief tiles. Between each post are mullioned windows. Below these windows are two sets of french doors. Terrazzo tiles and Batchelder tiles are original.

The interior of the house still retains much of the original detailing. Fireplaces of Travernelle marble and Benou Jaune and Numidian marble still grace the living room and dining room. The original wall covering still hangs on the walls, and the alabaster light remains in the entry. While many features have been lost in the ensuing years, the hardwood floors remain intact. Interestingly, several original paintings done by Charles Greene which hung in the entry way spaces specifically designed for them, have been recently discovered by the Gamble House. It is hoped the paintings will be restored and rehung in their original places.

When Cordelia Culbertson purchased her lot in 1910 from Edward Libbey, she owned all of Lot 22, Oak Knoll Tract Sheet A. In 1915, the tax assessor shows that Elizabeth Allen owns Lot 22 and Lot 23. When Mrs. Allen marries F. F. Prentiss, the assessor continues to show the Prentisses continue to own both lots. Lot 23 was landscaped by Mrs. Prentiss, until it was developed at a much later time. In the 1960s, the northern portion of Lot 22 was sold and a new home built on that portion.

J-2961H

## 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 type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

**Specific dates** 1911

**Builder/Architect** Greene & Greene

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Charles and Henry Greene are thought to be Pasadena's own architects. The Gamble House, owned jointly by the City of Pasadena and the University of Southern California, is one of this city's most famous buildings. The Greenes influenced the architectural development of Pasadena unlike any other architects of their period. Such projects as the Bandini House, the Bolton House and the Blacker House encouraged other to design bungalows in the style of Greene & Greene. Equally famous is the Cordelia A. Culbertson House. Designed in 1911 for the Culbertson sisters, this home remains a local landmark because of its experimental design and rare gunite exterior. Done almost totally outside the Greenes' typical wooden vernacular, the Culbertson House has a greater sense of sculpture than woodworking. The combination of unique oriental design and nationally famous architects creates one of Pasadenas most exceptional residences.

The Greenes were born in Ohio in the late 1860's. Their architectural training included Washington University's Manual Training School and MIT. They are believed to have developed their great love of craftsmanship and woodworking at the training school. By 1893 the brothers were ready to begin a partnership which would last until 1922.

Because of Mrs. Greene's poor health, the brothers' parents moved to Pasadena in 1891. On a trip to visit their parents in California, Charles and Henry stopped by the World's Columbian Exposition in 1893 in Chicago. This trip was to change their designs for a lifetime by introducing them to Oriental art and design. Throughout their careers shades of Oriental would be found in their work.

Beginning an architectural office in Pasadena in 1893, most of the Greene's early work resembled the current cluttered Victorian style, more classic in design. By 1901, however, this was to change. Charles' marriage and honeymoon in England introduced them to the Arts and Crafts movement. The love of the simple, unadorned beauty of construction and handmade creations epitomized by the Arts and Crafts movement spoke directly to the Greenes' training and their deep interest in the simplicity and depth of oriental design. The James Culbertson House, designed in 1902, set them apart forever. Designed in the English tradition, the house related to its environment in a new way.

The Greenes continued at the forefront of craftsman architecture for many years. Their interest in things oriental continued. Their friendship with John Bentz, a collector of Oriental artifacts, increased their knowledge and interest. They read books popular at the time which dealt with the Orient. In 1904 the Greenes designed the shingled Tichenor House in Long Beach. Oriental features were emphasized more predominantly than ever before. Green tiles associated with Oriental design were used for the first time as roofing material.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property .69 ±

Quadrangle name Pasadena, Calif.

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A 

1	1	3	9	5	5	9	0	3	7	7	6	7	0	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

B 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

C 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

D 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

E 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

F 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

G 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

H 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

Verbal boundary description and justification Map # 5325-25-13

See continuation sheet

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state n/a code  county n/a code

state n/a code  county n/a code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Lorraine Melton

organization Pasadena Heritage date August 6, 1984

street & number 54 West Colorado Blvd. telephone (818) 793-0617

city or town Pasadena state California 91105

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature Kathryn Gualtieri Kathryn Gualtieri

title State Historic Preservation Officer date July 25, 1985

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

for Melvyn Byers  
Keeper of the National Register

Entered in the  
National Register

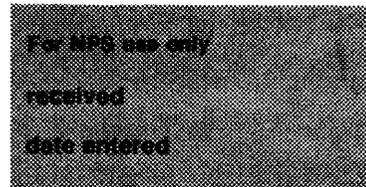
date 9/12/85

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

Chief of Registration: \_\_\_\_\_

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The Craftsman style and the Oriental influence share certain characteristics. Visual gardens are essential. Relating with and to nature is of the utmost importance. Simplicity of construction is emphasized in both periods. The Greenses often used a slight lift in the eaves, as found in Oriental design. They also were fond of Oriental rugs, Oriental pottery, and Oriental furnishings. The Tichenor House is their first attempt to emphasize the Oriental within the Craftsman context.

By 1910, most of Charles and Henry's most famous Pasadena designs had been completed. Commissions for their work became astronomical, as seen in the Blacker House with estimated value of over \$100,000 in 1907. Since many architects, contractors, and plan books were able to create "Greene & Greene type" designs, the remainder of their designs were often more experimental.

In 1911, James Culbertson's three maiden sisters hired the Greenses to design a home for them on a lot in the Oak Knoll area. They wanted a one-story home, but also requested that the bedrooms be secluded. With their request, the Greene brothers began one of their most unique residences and, ultimately, the most expensive of all the Pasadena residences.<sup>1</sup>

The design used for the Cordelia Culbertson house was perfect for the site. The Greenses used the U-form plan found in houses such as the Bandini House (1903), but turned it on its side. The southern and western wings of the house are one story, while the final leg of the U on the north fits into the slope of the terrain. The bedrooms appear to be on the ground level, but also have a second side which is 16-20 feet above ground and overlooked the formal Italian gardens still further below.<sup>2</sup> A ballroom fills the space below the bedrooms on this lower level. Minor alterations were made by Mrs. Prentiss, owner of the home from 1918-1943 with Greene & Greene as architects. The lower garden room was glassed in to create the ballroom. The marble urns at the front were also added.

The exterior of the house is gunite, rarely used by the Greenses. Only six other residences were designed entirely with a gunite exterior.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Janann Strand, A Greene & Greene Guide, p. 70.

<sup>2</sup> The gardens were razed in the 1960s when the property was subdivided.

<sup>3</sup> All gunite residences: Henry Robinson House (1905); Freeman Ford House (1907); Mortimer Fleishhacker House (1911); Herkimer Arms (1912); Dr. Nathan H. Williams House (1915); William Thus House (1925).  
Half gunite/half shingle: Kew House (1912); Ware House (1913).

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They were all more vertical than the Culbertson House, most with an Arts & Crafts feeling. All had shingle roofs, some with a suggestion of thatching. The Herkimer apartments are the most unusual gunite design, being very square with only wooden pergolas to soften its cubist exterior. Two other designs were done in half shingle-half stucco.

None of these designs used a tile roof. In fact, the Culbertson House is the only design by the Greenes to combine gunite and a tile roof. The Tichenor House features a green tile roof, and has a strong oriental influence, but is shingled. The Culbertson roof tiles are oriental in feeling, and are variegated grayish green tile. The soft brown of the walls and the colors of the tile harmonize with the Oak trees found throughout the area. The Greenes had found yet another way to emphasize a oneness with nature used so often in their more traditional craftsman designs.

Nature is futher emphasized in the garden room. Set in the crook between the southern and western wings, a wonderful view of the upper gardens is visible through unique windows. The windows can be pushed up into the walls and the screens lowered to bring the outside in. The southern and western wings, in fact, are higher than the northern, ensuring views of the mountains to the north.

Another innovative use of windows is in the bedrooms of two wings. Openings in the roof create sun/moon windows. It is possible at night to lie in bed and watch the moon and the stars. The iridescent roof and pond tiles shimmer in the moonlight.

Landscaping is also unusual at the Culbertson House, having both formal and informal areas. Formal gardens were set at the lowest level of the property to the north. The large fountain found there was frequently the subject of magazine articles. This fountain was fed in part by another smaller fountain in the upper terrace area. The upper fountain remains. Water was fed through tiles to the lower area. The upper gardens are less formal and more inviting. None of the gardens feel the intrusion of the garage since it has been neatly tucked under a cement terrace on the upper level. It is commonly believed that Greene and Greene designed both the lower and upper gardens.

The Cordelia A. Culbertson House, despite the Oriental flavor of the southern facade, also reflects the Greenes' love of the Craftsman period. Pergola and loggia are still important elements, as are banks of windows for ventilation. Exposed beam ends, rafter tails, gable roofs, and handcrafted Batchelder tiles and pots by Gladding, McBean & Co. are again used.

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Pasadena has always been a unique center for architectural design. Its climate induced wealthy visitors from every part of the world to establish winter homes here. It is not surprising, then, to see architects of international reputation such as Charles and Henry Greene establish offices in this area. It is unusual, however, to see the range of styles these architects could produce. It is even more rare to find such perfect examples of their work in one area. Because the Cordelia Culbertson House is unlike any of their other designs while it also embodies so many of the Greenes' architectural beliefs, it is a most exceptional home. The Gamble House, in fact, has selected the Culbertson House as its next major exhibit of Greene and Greene's work for March, 1985. Working together, the Culbertson House's unique design and its famous architects create a residence worthy to be listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

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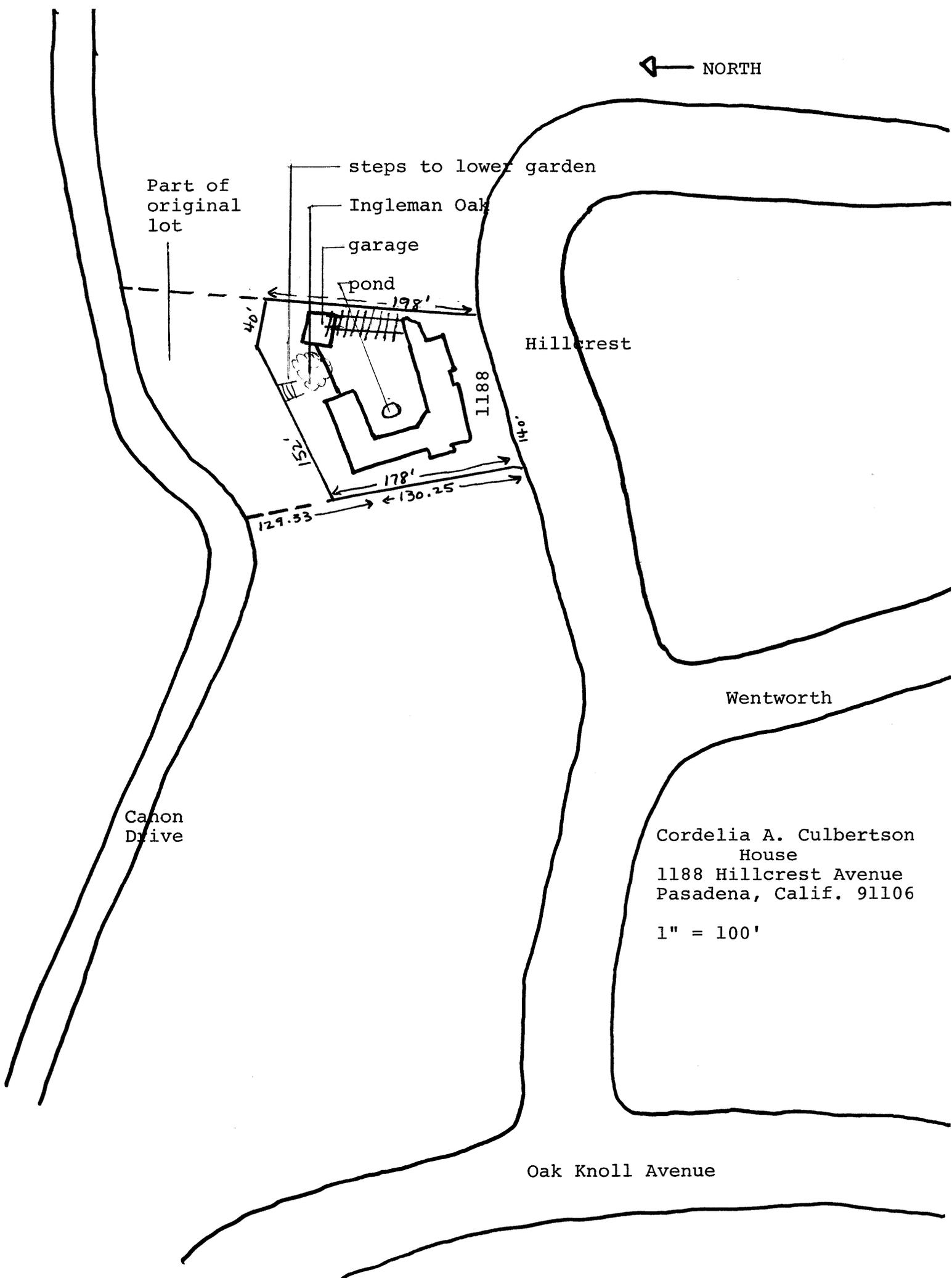
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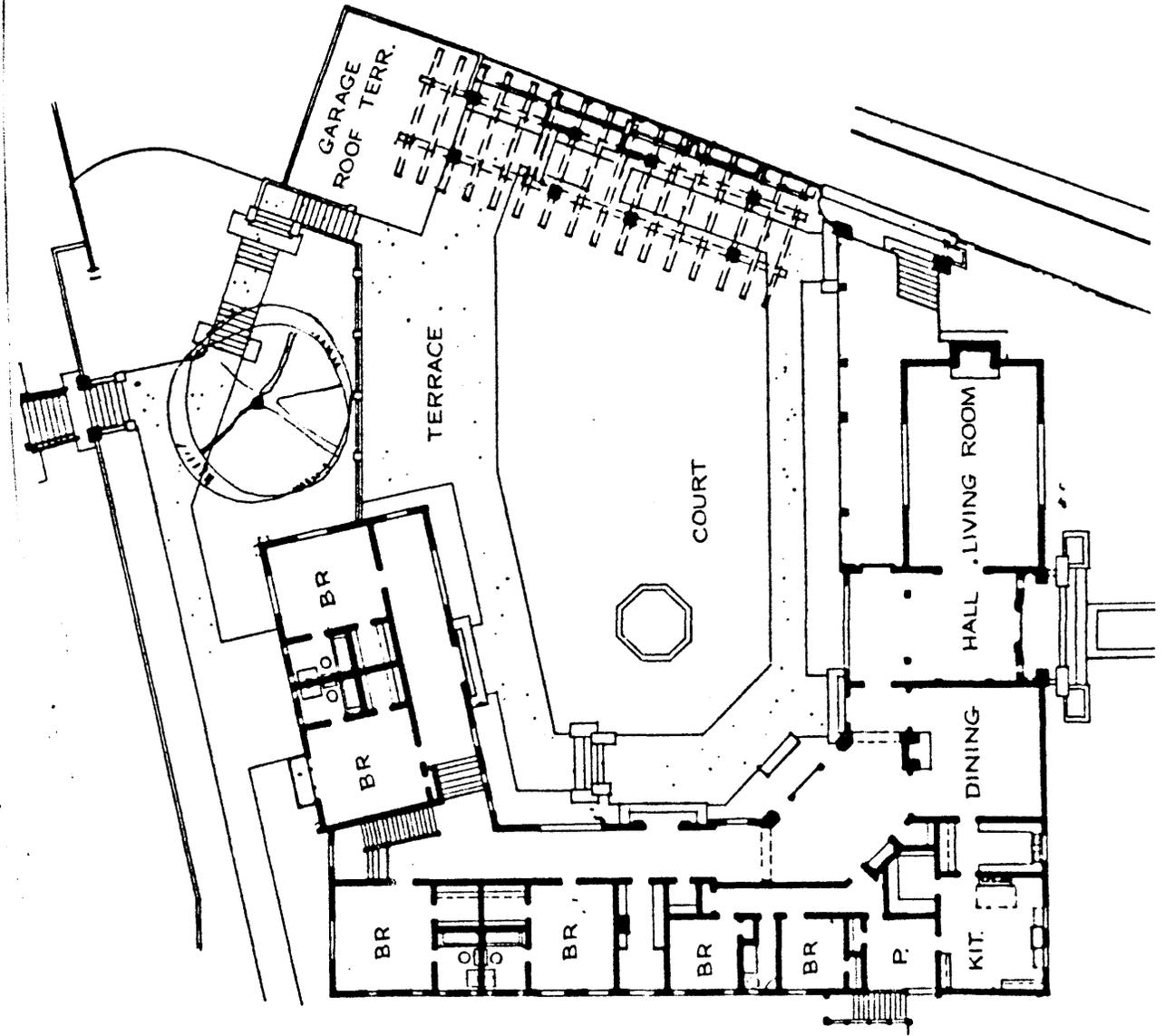
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Roughly rectangular lot starting at the NE corner of Hillcrest and Oak Knoll commence 569.05' east then 178' north then 152' northeast then 40' southeast then 140' southwest. AKA a portion of lot 22 Oak Knoll Tract Sheet A. This is a portion of the original lot. The northern .45 acres were sold in the 1960's.

← NORTH



North



Cordelia A. Culbertson House  
1188 Hillcrest Avenue  
Pasadena, California 91106

Floorplan