

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

663

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

RECEIVED 2280

AUG 12 2016

Nat. Register of Historic Places
National Park Service

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Holbrook-Palmer Estate, "Elmwood"

Other names/site number: Gen Merrill Carriage House and Water Tower

Name of related multiple property listing:

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

Street & number: 150 Watkins Avenue

City or town: Atherton State: CA County: San Mateo

Not For Publication: Vicinity:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,


I hereby certify that this X nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

 national statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

 A B X C D

	<u>8/17/16</u>
Signature of certifying official/Title: <u>State Historic Preservation Officer</u> Date	
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	

In my opinion, the property <u> </u> meets <u> </u> does not meet the National Register criteria.	
Signature of commenting official:	Date
Title :	State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:) _____


Signature of the Keeper

9.26.16
Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>2</u>	<u> </u>	buildings
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	sites
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	structures
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	objects
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE/agricultural outbuildings

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RECREATION AND CULTURE/outdoor recreation

SOCIAL/clubhouse

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS/Colonial Revival (Carriage House)

LATE VICTORIAN/Second Empire (Water Tower)

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: redwood rustic channel siding

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

Located in Holbrook-Palmer Park in Atherton, California, is a pair of nineteenth-century agricultural outbuildings constructed as part of a rural estate historically known as the Holbrook-Palmer Estate, or "Elmwood." The older of the two buildings is the "Water Tower." Built ca. 1883, it is a three-story, heavy timber-frame tankhouse built to store groundwater in a large redwood tank on the top floor. Water was then distributed by gravity to the nearby house, fields, gardens, and other outbuildings. The Water Tower is clad in redwood rustic channel siding and it is embellished with applied ornament designed in the Second Empire style, a French-inspired architectural movement popular in the United States during the 1870s and early 1880s. Unusually elaborate for a utilitarian building type, the Water Tower is capped by an ornamental balcony and a French "Mansard" roof clad in wooden shingles. Located across a driveway from the Water Tower is the Gen Merrill Carriage House. Built in 1897 by Charles Holbrook, the two-story, heavy timber-frame building features a carriage storage room, stables, and tack rooms on the first floor; and a large hay loft and bunkhouse on the second floor. The building is capped by a compound hip-and-gable roof that is crowned by a pyramidal-roof ventilator. In contrast to the flamboyant Water Tower, the Carriage House is designed in the restrained Colonial Revival style, an indigenous American architectural style popular during the 1890s. Both buildings are in very good condition and neither has undergone any substantial exterior or interior alterations. They both retain the following aspects of integrity: location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. Neither building retains the aspect of setting because the surrounding landscape was changed from a rural estate into a municipal park in the late 1960s. Nonetheless, the boundaries of the park correspond to the limits of the Elmwood Estate and both buildings are still surrounded by open space.

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Narrative Description

Setting: Holbrook-Palmer Park

The Gen Merrill Carriage House and Water Tower are both located near the center of Holbrook-Palmer Park, a 22-acre public park in Atherton, California. The park is bounded by Watkins Avenue and the Atherton Storm Channel to the northwest, residential neighborhoods to the northeast and southeast, and the Peninsula Corridor (Caltrain) railroad tracks to the southwest. Atherton is an affluent and exclusively residential community that prides itself on its lush canopy of mature oaks, redwoods, and other native trees. Holbrook Park, Atherton's only public park, is no exception. Landscaped in the late 1960s by the well-known landscape architecture firm of Royston, Hanamoto, Mayes, & Beck, the centerpiece of Holbrook-Palmer Park is a complex of three buildings comprising what was the core of the Holbrook-Palmer Estate, including the ca. 1883 Water Tower, the 1897 Carriage House, and the 1959 Main House, which replaced the original ca. 1875 mansion that was destroyed by fire in 1958. These three buildings face a rectangular lawn bounded on four sides by trees and flowering shrubs. The southwest side of the lawn is defined by a modest community center called Jennings Pavilion dating to 1976-77. Paved roads access the interior of the park from the main park entrance along Watkins Avenue. Three surface parking lots provide parking for approximately 125 automobiles throughout the park.

Site: Water Tower

As mentioned previously, the Water Tower and the Carriage House stand on opposite sides of an asphalt-paved driveway that accesses the park from the main entrance at 150 Watkins Avenue. The Water Tower stands in a grassy glade between the driveway and the previously described lawn. Low foundation plantings delineate the structure's brick and concrete perimeter foundation. To the northwest of the Water Tower is a mature Norfolk pine, several oaks, and other trees. To the northeast is a maple and a small electrical utility box. To the southeast and southwest are narrow lawn panels bounded by raised asphalt curbs.

Exterior Description: Water Tower

The Water Tower is a three-story, heavy timber-frame structure capped by a wood shingle-clad Mansard roof. Approximately 20' square at its base, the building tapers inward toward the second floor level, which measures 18' square. The Water Tower has a partial concrete perimeter foundation with brick footings visible along the northeast wall. The exterior of the building is clad in redwood rustic channel siding with flat and scroll-sawn detailing, including plain corner boards and ornamental door and window moldings. The first floor level features a pair of pedestrian entrances – one on the southeast façade and the other on the northwest façade. The southeast entrance contains a non-historic single-panel wood door dating from ca. 1950. The northwest entrance retains what appears to be its original four-panel wood door. The entrances are both accessed by utilitarian wood stairs. The northeast and southwest façades both contain large double-hung wood windows with a light configuration of four-over-four. Because the walls slope inward toward the second story, the bottom of each window is recessed approximately 18" inboard of the exterior walls. This condition matches the doors on the northwest and southeast façades. The second floor level features four essentially identical façades, with each wall articulated by a double-hung wood window. Three of these windows appear to retain their original four-over-four, double-hung sash windows. In contrast, the southeast façade, which also has the non-historic door at the first floor level, has what appears to be a non-historic wood window dating to

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ca. 1950. Between the second and third floor levels is an elaborate balcony supported by angular knee braces (four to a side). The knee braces support the balcony flooring and the balustrade, which consists of 4 x 4 posts embellished with dropped pendants at the bottom and turned finials at the top. Between the posts are narrow 2 x 4 balusters arranged in an X-pattern. The third floor level also tapers inward as is characteristic of a Mansard roof. Clad in wood shingles and outlined with wood corner moldings and a narrow cornice, each facet of the roof is punctuated by a dormer containing a segmental-arched window. The windows each contain double-hung wood sashes with a light pattern of four-over-four. Each dormer is capped by a squeezed pediment surmounted by a finial.

Interior Description: Water Tower

The interior of the Water Tower consists of three unfinished rooms located in vertical sequence above each other from the first floor to the third floor level. The first floor level is square with a wood floor formed of rough-sawn 6" planks. There are several areas of flush-jointed wainscoting to a height of 80", suggesting that this room may have been used as a residential unit at some time. Thick, angled 9 x 9 corner posts and similarly dimensioned framing around the doors support the upper floors. A quarter-turn stair at the northeast corner leads up to the second floor level. The second floor level is similar to the first floor level except that it is smaller and unfinished. In addition, the heavy timber posts are not angled inward. Instead, large 9 x 9 angle braces let into the posts along the northwest and southeast walls. These angle braces provide additional support for the third floor, where the heavy water tank was originally located. A metal ladder at the northwest corner of the second floor level leads up to the third floor level. The pentagonal outline of the tank, which measured 14' high and 15' across until it was dismantled and removed in 1971, is still visible at the center of the floor. The unfinished walls have exposed framing and spaced sheathing. The upper facet of the roof is plywood and contains a hatch accessible by a wood ladder.

Second Empire Style: Water Tower

The Second Empire style was popular in the United States from around 1865 until about 1885. Named for the architecture produced in France during the reign of Emperor Napoleon III – known in France as the "Second Empire" – the style was ultimately derived from French Renaissance architecture of the seventeenth century, in particular the work of François Mansart, and his nephew Jules Hardouin Mansart. Characterized by symmetrical façades composed of a central tower and flanking pavilions, low squared-off domes, and faceted hipped roofs (popularly known as "Mansard" roofs in the English-speaking world), the Second Empire style made its way to the rest of Europe and the United States in the 1860s. In the United States, the Second Empire style became the semi-official style of the U.S. Government under the aegis of Alfred B. Mullet, the Supervising Architect of the U.S. Department of the Treasury. His crowning achievement, and today the best-known Second Empire-style building in the United States, is the Executive Office Building (formerly the State, War, and Navy Building) in Washington, D.C., of 1871-88 (**Figure 1**). The style was used on several other major federal commissions, civic buildings, art galleries, and colleges and universities. The Second Empire style was also popular as a residential style, but mainly for larger mansions where the Mansard roof could be employed to good effect. The Second Empire style remained popular in the United States until the mid-1880s, when the corruption of the Grant administration brought it into disrepute. In California, Second Empire style buildings are comparatively rare.

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Site: Carriage House

The Gen Merrill Carriage House is on the opposite side of the driveway from the Water Tower. It is set back from the driveway approximately 20 feet and a concrete drive leads from the driveway to the main entrance of the Carriage House. Foundation plantings, including oleander and other flowering shrubs, flank the driveway and the portico that shelters the entrance. The northeast façade faces a gravel driveway/service alley containing garbage cans and recycling bins. On the opposite side of the service alley is a corrugated metal maintenance building that was erected on the site ca. 1990. The southeast façade faces a concrete-paved yard enclosed behind a board fence. A concrete-paved footpath separates the fenced-in yard from residential properties southeast of Holbrook-Palmer Park. The southwest façade faces a gravel side yard containing a grove of redwood trees. The redwoods provide a visual buffer between the Carriage House and several modular buildings presently used as a daycare center.

Exterior Description: Carriage House

The Carriage House is a two-story, heavy timber-frame building capped by a compound hip-and-gable-roof clad in asphalt shingles. All four façades are clad in redwood rustic channel siding with a modest amount of Colonial Revival ornament, including corner moldings, classically inspired door and window moldings, a broken entablature, and large gables defined by raking cornice moldings. The building has a modern concrete perimeter foundation, which is about the only visible alteration to the exterior of the Carriage House.

Primary (Northwest) Façade

The primary façade of the Carriage House faces northwest. It is the most elaborate elevation in terms of its design and ornamentation, and in contrast to the asymmetrical fenestration patterns of the other three façades, the primary façade is entirely symmetrical. The first floor level contains the primary entrance to the building. This entrance, which is sheltered within an elaborate pedimented portico supported by turned balusters, contains a pair of paneled wood "barn" doors that slide on metal tracks. The doors are large enough to accommodate both horse-drawn vehicles and pedestrians and it would have originally been the only way to bring vehicles in or out of the building. Flanking the main entrance are two large double-hung wood windows with a light pattern of four-over-four. These windows, like all of the windows of the Carriage House, are capped by classically inspired cornice moldings. The second floor level of the primary façade cantilevers beyond the first floor by approximately 1'. The cantilevered section is defined at the bottom by simple curved brackets and a narrow molding that aligns with the entablature of the portico. In addition, the cantilevered section is defined along its sides by narrow corner boards and at the top by a raking cornice molding terminating with broken entablature returns at each corner. Fenestration consists of a pair of small double-hung wood windows with a light pattern of two-over-two at the center. This group is flanked to either side by larger double-hung windows matching those on the first floor level of the primary façade. Above this grouping is one double-hung wood window at the apex of the gable. It has a light profile of two-over-two.

Southwest Façade

As mentioned, the southwest façade of the Carriage House faces a gravel side yard and a small redwood grove. Clad in rustic redwood siding, it sits atop a concrete perimeter foundation punctuated by metal vents. Unlike the primary façade, the fenestration pattern of the southwest façade is asymmetrical. Near

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the center of the southwest façade, the first floor level is punctuated by a pair of large double-hung wood windows with a light pattern of four-over-four. To the right of these two windows, toward the rear of the southwest façade, is a pair of small, widely spaced wood sliding windows historically used to ventilate the stables inside the Carriage House. Fenestration at the second floor level of the southwest facade, which is enclosed within a large gable, consists of two medium-sized, double-hung wood windows with a light pattern of four-over-four. Similar to the primary façade, the gable on the southwest façade is defined by a bold raking cornice molding with broken entablature returns at the corners.

Southeast Façade

The southeast façade of the Carriage House faces a paved yard used by the children attending the daycare facility next door. The least complex of the four façades, it is dominated by a pair of large wood-panel “barn” doors at the center of the elevation. The doors slide on metal tracks and they are surmounted by a transom consisting of five lights. Flanking the doors to the right and to the left, near the corners of the southeast façade, are two small wood sliding windows that were historically used to ventilate the stables inside the Carriage House. The second floor level is fenestrated solely by a pair of small horizontally proportioned wood awning sash windows that illuminate the hay loft. The southeast façade terminates with a simple molded entablature.

Northeast Façade

The northeast façade of the Carriage House resembles the southwest façade in terms of its length and its gabled massing but it contains a larger number of openings. The left side of the first floor level is punctuated by three small sliding wood windows set high in the wall. These windows were historically used to ventilate the stables in the rear of the Carriage House. To the right of these windows, near the center of the first floor level, are two large double-hung wood windows with a light pattern of four-over-four. To the right of these windows, toward the front of the building, are water and electrical hook-ups, utility boxes, and a large wall-mounted fan unit. Fenestration on the second floor level consists of a grouping of three openings within the large roof gable. At the center of this grouping is a pair of hinged wood doors that provide access to the hay loft. A wooden hoist beam is located above the doors. Flanking the doors are two medium-sized double-hung wood windows with a light pattern of four-over-four. The only other window at the second floor level is a small double-hung wood window located beneath the entablature toward the front of the building. This small window illuminates the stair inside the building.

The best place to see the roof-top ventilator is from the northeast façade. The ventilator, which is a characteristic feature of more elaborately designed carriage houses and stables, sits at the juncture of the three gables that comprise the roof and the upper portion of the northwest, southwest, and northeast façades. It features four louvered facets sheltered beneath a wide soffit. Above the soffit is the pyramidal roof capped by a brass weather vane.

Interior Description: Carriage House

The interior of the Carriage House comprises two floor levels that both occupy the entire floorplate of the building. Though it was constructed as an outbuilding with utilitarian functions, including storing carriages, boarding horses, and storing hay, the interior of the Carriage House – like its exterior – is finished in high-quality materials, as befitting the wealth of its builder, Charles Holbrook. The first floor level consists of eight rooms, including the main carriage room, kitchen, men’s toilet room, women’s

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toilet room, and three horse stalls that are currently used for storage. Most of the wall and ceiling surfaces of the first floor level are finished in redwood (both painted and unpainted) vertical tongue-and-groove paneling. The floors are mainly finished in unpainted fir planking, though resilient sheet and tile flooring has been overlaid on top of the original flooring in several areas. The second floor level of the Carriage House, which is accessed by a quarter-turn stair near the northwest corner of the carriage storage room, is mostly unfinished, though there is a bunkhouse accommodating two persons along the northwest side of the building. The bunkhouse contains two bedrooms (each with its own closet), and a bathroom divided into two sections, including a shower and a sink in one room and a toilet and a sink in the other. The bunkhouse is accessed by a narrow corridor running between it and the hay loft, though the four rooms are also accessible via interconnecting doors from within the bunkhouse. The bunkhouse has lath and plaster walls and ceilings with tongue-and-groove wainscoting in the bathrooms. Presented below is a room-by-room description of the Carriage House.

Vestibule

The vestibule is directly accessed via the main entrance on the northwest façade. It measures 12'-9" wide (n/s), 7'-6" deep (e/w), and 12' high. The vestibule, which is finished like most of the interior, has unpainted fir flooring, 8"-high baseboards, painted tongue-and-groove paneling on the walls and ceiling, and 6" wood trim around the doors and windows. A door on the left side of the vestibule access the men's toilet room. A pair of non-historic French doors, flanked by sidelights, infills what was an unenclosed entrance to the carriage room. The four transoms above the entrance appear to be original. Non-historic fluorescent strip lighting and sprinkler pipes are mounted to the ceiling.

Men's Toilet Room

The men's toilet room, which was probably originally a tack room, is located to the left of the vestibule and accessed via a Victorian-era wood-panel door. Overall, the space measures 10'-9" wide (n/s) by 9'-6" deep (e/w), including a closet. The toilet room contains one toilet and a urinal (both within their own stalls), and a sink (all non-historic). The walls and ceiling are finished in painted tongue-and-groove paneling and the baseboards and door and window trim match those found elsewhere in the interior.

Carriage Room

The carriage room, as its name suggests, is where carriages owned by the Holbrook-Palmer family were stored when they were not in use. The room, which measures 41' x 1" wide (n/s) by 29'-8" deep (e/w), is the most important space in the Carriage House. The room features unpainted fir flooring, unpainted redwood tongue-and-groove wall paneling, and unpainted redwood baseboards and door and window trim. The ceiling, which is also finished in unpainted redwood paneling, is partly concealed behind acoustical tiles applied ca. 1990. The ceiling (and the second floor above) of the carriage room is in part supported by a pair of large chamfered 8 x 12 beams that divide the room into three equal sections. The beams, which also serve as the bottom chord of large trusses in the hay loft, allow the carriage room to be free of intermediary columns, though the trusses are supported along the northwest and southeast walls by chamfered pilasters. The carriage room is illuminated by six non-historic ceiling-mounted fan light fixtures added ca. 1990. A pair of non-historic French doors, also installed ca. 1990, punctuate the southeast wall, providing access to the stables at the rear of the building. Other openings in the walls of the carriage room contain historic Victorian-era wood-panel doors. A large Eastlake-style mirror is mounted to the southeast wall. This mirror, which was a gift from the City of Menlo Park, is from the Flood Estate. A redwood-paneled stair leads up to the second floor along the northwest wall of the carriage room.

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Kitchen

The kitchen is located off the northwest wall of the carriage room. It measures 13'-8" wide (n/s) by 9'-6" deep (e/w). This room, which was probably always a kitchen, retains several historic features, including a wall-mounted cast iron sink and Victorian-era counters on the northeast wall. The rest of the kitchen was remodeled ca. 1990 with Formica-finished countertops, cabinets, and appliances. The floors are covered in non-historic resilient tile flooring overlaid on top of the fir planks. The walls and ceiling are finished in painted tongue-and-groove paneling with doors, baseboards, and door and window trim matching the rest of the interior.

Women's Toilet Room

The women's toilet room opens off the northeast corner of the carriage room. The space measures 11' wide (n/s) by 10' deep (e/w) and consists of two smaller interconnected rooms. Like the men's toilet room, the women's toilet room was probably originally a tack room. It has non-historic resilient sheet flooring overlaid on top of the fir plank flooring and the walls and ceiling are finished in painted tongue-and-groove paneling. The doors and windows and door and window trim match those found elsewhere in the Carriage House.

Stables

The stables occupy the easternmost third of the first floor level. Divided into three stalls, with a separate wash rack accommodating two horses, the stables are described in one section because their materials, finishes, and features are the same throughout. Overall, the stables measure 41' wide (n/s) by 21' deep (e/w). The stables all originally had furrowed floors with gaps between the planks to absorb food and waste and prevent the wood surface from becoming slippery. A section of this original flooring is exposed in the wash rack near the entrance to the carriage room. The wash rack area communicates with the rear yard through a pair of historic wood sliding doors. A large trap door in the ceiling of this space communicates with the hay loft above. A pair of Tuscan columns supports the ceiling in the wash racks area. In contrast, the three stalls at the northeast and southeast corners of the building have non-historic raised flooring installed above the original furrowed flooring. Each of the stables is accessed by a sliding redwood pocket door with iron bars comprising the upper panel and each has a trough fed by a hay chute from the hay loft above. The stables have horizontal butt-joined paneling up to a height of 7 feet. The planks are thick and designed to absorb kicks and resist "cribbing," or horses chewing the projecting wood elements. Above this flush paneling, the walls and ceiling are clad in painted tongue-and-groove paneling like the rest of the interior. The stables are all ventilated by sliding wood windows set along the upper parts of the walls so that they could not be kicked by the horses inside.

Bunkhouse

The bunkhouse is located on the second floor level, above the vestibule, men's toilet room, and kitchen along the northwest side of the Carriage House. Consisting of a narrow single-loaded corridor, two bedrooms (each with a large closet), and a central bathroom/toilet room divided into two sections, the bunkhouse presumably housed from two to four workers assigned to the Carriage House. Both bedrooms measure 12' wide (n/s) by 11' deep (e/w) and the bathrooms each measure 3'-6" wide by 11' deep. Abandoned since at least 1964, the bunkhouse is in poor condition and used for storage, making it difficult to photograph. The bunkhouse has painted fir flooring, wood baseboards and door and window trim, Victorian-era paneled doors, and lath and plaster walls and ceilings without any ornament. In

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addition, the two bathrooms have tongue-and-groove wainscoting to a height of 5'. The bunkhouse is accessed by a tongue-and-groove-paneled stair located near the northwest corner of the building.

Hay Loft

The majority of the second floor of the Carriage House is devoted to the hay loft, an unfinished space measuring 42' wide (n/s) by 41'-4" deep (e/w). It measures about 22' high at the ridge beam. The hay loft has unpainted fir flooring, exposed redwood framing, with the underside of the redwood sheathing mostly exposed as well. Massive bridge trusses composed of 8' x 10' members support the ceiling of the carriage room on the first floor level. Non-historic sprinkler pipes and electrical lines are attached to the underside of the framing. The hay loft is today used for storage. Historically it was used to store hay and grain for the horses boarded in the building. Feed would be hoisted into the hay loft from outside and then distributed to each of the stalls below via wood chutes. Non-historic plywood partition walls occupy a portion of the hay loft adjoining the bunkhouse.

Colonial Revival Style: Gen Merrill Carriage House

The Colonial Revival style, the style of the Gen Merrill Carriage House, was the first architectural movement in the United States to outwardly celebrate the nation's own domestic architectural traditions. Pioneered by the prominent New York firm of McKim, Mead, & White, the style directly referenced eighteenth-century buildings built in Colonial New England and New York. The Colonial Revival style gained popularity in the patriotic fervor that accompanied the United States Centennial of 1876. In contrast to the "excessive" Late Victorian-era styles, including the Queen Anne and the Eastlake styles (both of which originated in England), the Colonial Revival style honored the modest and lightly ornamented workmanship of Colonial-era American craftsman and gentlemen architects. One of the best examples of the style was the H.A.C. Taylor House in Newport, Rhode Island, completed in 1886, and demolished in 1952 (**Figure 2**). A typical Colonial Revival building like the H.A.C. Taylor House has a rectangular plan and cubic massing, often with a hipped roof and/or multiple gables. The exterior façades are most often symmetrically arranged, with the main entrance located at the center of the primary façade. Prominent architectural motifs include projecting porticos supported by fluted or smooth columns, Palladian windows, dormers, shutters, and classical detailing around the doors and windows. Broken entablatures with narrow returns at the corners are also very popular. Though most Colonial Revival style buildings are built of wood, they are often embellished with quoins and other detailing to imitate masonry construction. More of an eastern style, the Colonial Revival style never caught on widely in California.

Integrity: Water Tower and Carriage House

Neither the Water Tower nor the Carriage House have undergone any extensive alterations. Aside from the demolition of a non-historic addition ca. 1970 and the replacement of one window and one door on the southeast façade ca. 1950, the exterior of the Water Tower has not been changed. The removal of the redwood water tank from the third floor of the Water Tower is the only change to the interior. Though the Carriage House was converted into an events facility ca. 1990, this work only lightly touched the building, leaving the exterior unaltered. Within the interior the only changes include the installation of fire sprinklers and modern electrical service, the conversion of a tack room into the men's toilet room, the conversion of a tack room or storage room into the women's toilet room, upgrades to the existing kitchen, the installation of two sets of French doors within existing openings on the northwest and southeast walls of the carriage room, installation of acoustical tiles and light fixtures on the ceiling of the carriage room, and the construction of raised floors in the stables. These changes are all

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comparatively minor and easily reversible. In conclusion, both buildings retain all seven aspects of integrity aside from setting, which changed when the Holbrook-Palmer Estate was converted from an estate into a municipal park in the late 1960s/early 1970s.

Location:

The Water Tower and the Carriage House retain integrity of location. Neither building has been moved since they were built ca. 1883 and 1897, respectively.

Design:

The Water Tower and the Carriage House retain integrity of design. Neither building has undergone any substantial exterior changes. The interior of the Carriage House has only been lightly updated to meet the needs of an events center with no changes to its original floorplan, materials, or architectural features.

Setting:

Neither the Water Tower nor the Carriage House retain integrity of setting. Built as part of a rural estate/working farm, the main complex at the heart of the estate suffered a significant blow in 1958 when the ca. 1875 Main House was destroyed by fire. The house was replaced with a new one designed in the Minimal Traditional style, which shares little in common with the original house's Second Empire design, or with the proximate Water Tower or Carriage House. Though the conversion of the estate into a public park retained the undeveloped parts of the former estate as recreational open space, the property was entirely redesigned, regraded, and replanted, retaining very little of the original landscaping aside for a small eucalyptus break located north and east of the Carriage House and a handful of other trees located elsewhere in the park. Several new buildings have been constructed near the Carriage House and the Water Tower, including a utilitarian metal shed that was built north of the Carriage House and a pair of modular buildings, now used as a daycare facility, that were moved to the area south of the Carriage House after 1990.

Materials:

The Water Tower and the Carriage House retain integrity of materials. Both buildings retain virtually all of their original construction materials aside for their foundations. The original brick foundation of the Carriage House was replaced with concrete ca. 1992. The original brick foundation of the Water Tower was partially replaced in concrete at an unknown date. In addition, one door and one window on the southeast façade of the Water Tower were replaced ca. 1950. Aside from those few changes, both buildings retain all of their original materials.

Workmanship:

The Water Tower and the Carriage House retain integrity of workmanship. Though both buildings were originally constructed of commonly available industrially produced materials, both buildings embody some examples of sophisticated millwork and joinery. The exterior of the Water Tower, in particular the brackets supporting the balcony and the moldings around the windows on the third floor level, display evidence of workmanship. The Carriage House retain examples of skilled workmanship as well, including the turned columns supporting the portico, the custom-fabricated sliding doors in the main entrance, and the broken entablatures on the northeast, southwest, and northwest façades. The chamfered beams and posts inside the carriage room, as well as the hand-built stairs and horse stall partitions and columns, display some handcrafted details as well.

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Feeling:

The Water Tower and the Carriage House retain integrity of feeling. Though the setting has changed from a rural estate/working farm into a public park, the two buildings are still surrounded by a 22-acre expanse of open space conterminous with the boundaries of the historic Elmwood Estate. These surroundings, combined with the buildings' nearly unchanged exteriors and interiors, perpetuate the feeling of a nineteenth-century estate, a property type that was once quite common in southern San Mateo County.

Association:

The Water Tower and the Carriage House retain integrity of association. The two buildings appear as they did when they were part of the Holbrook-Palmer Estate. Their design, building type, materials, and apparent age, all convey a direct link to the period in which they were constructed.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Architecture

Period of Significance

1883 – 1897

Significant Dates

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

H.C. Macy, architect
J. MacBain, builder

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Water Tower and the Carriage House at Holbrook-Palmer Park are eligible for the National Register under Criterion C, at the local level, as a rare surviving pair of agricultural outbuildings constructed on one of the rural estates developed in Atherton during the late nineteenth century. The Water Tower was constructed ca. 1883 by the prominent San Francisco wholesale hardware dealer Charles C. Holbrook, as part of his "Elmwood" estate. The building was designed in the Second Empire style by San Francisco architect H.C. Macy to match the ca. 1875 Main House that Macy had also been hired to expand and remodel. The Colonial Revival-style Carriage House was constructed in 1897 by Charles Holbrook to replace a three-year-old barn destroyed earlier that year. The Water Tower is significant under Criterion C both for its Second Empire styling, as well as being a rare surviving example of a nineteenth-century tankhouse in Atherton. Most tankhouses were designed in a utilitarian mode, but the Water Tower at Holbrook-Palmer Park was designed to match the nearby "Parisian-style" Main House. The Carriage House is also significant as an example of a utilitarian building type designed in a recognizable architectural style, in this case the Colonial Revival style. It is one of only a handful of remaining barns or carriage houses in Atherton. Located approximately 75' apart, the pair of outbuildings remain essentially unchanged from the late nineteenth century, providing a rare window into a now almost entirely vanished world of nineteenth-century estates of southern San Mateo County. Atherton was once home to several-dozen of these grand rural estates. The twentieth century witnessed the sale, subdivision, and redevelopment of all of these estates. The Holbrook-Palmer Estate was one of the last to go, but unlike the rest its grounds were not subdivided and developed. Instead, it was converted into a park, which at least preserved its open space and its integrity as a single large landholding.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Brief History of Atherton

Atherton, founded in 1923, is one of San Mateo's newer incorporated communities. However, its history goes back approximately a century earlier to 1835, when the Mexican government granted 35,200 acres to Luís Argüello. He named his landholding *Rancho de las Pulgas* (**Figure 3**). In 1848, following the American conquest, dozens of American immigrants squatted on Argüello's land, hoping to acquire the land under preemption claims. A Puerto Rican lawyer named Simon Mezes successfully defended Argüello's claim, receiving 5,000 acres in what is now Redwood City as payment for his services. Over time the Argüellos began selling off acreage to the newly arrived American and European immigrants. In 1854, they sold 1,700 acres west of the County Road (now El Camino Real) to Dennis J. Oliver and Daniel C. McGlynn. Oliver and McGlynn were natives of Ireland and they collectively named their holdings "Menlough Park," named for their home village in County Galway. "Menlough" was soon shortened to "Menlo." After the San Francisco and San Jose Railroad was completed from San Francisco to San Francisquito Creek in 1863, the new depot serving the area was named Menlo Park and the name was soon applied to most of southeastern San Mateo County, including the modern-day communities of Menlo Park, Atherton, Fair Oaks, and East Palo Alto.¹

¹ Michael Svanevik and Shirley Burgett, *Menlo Park, California: Beyond the Gate* (San Francisco: Menlo Park Historical Association, 2000), 6.

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Southern San Mateo County was widely recognized by contemporary observers as being one of the most appealing regions of California, in part because of its moderate and largely fog-free climate. But what really distinguished the area was its scenic beauty – chiefly its thick canopy of mature oak trees, whose dense spacing reminded many of an English park. The arrival of the San Francisco-San Jose Railroad in 1863 brought Menlo Park within reasonable commuting distance of San Francisco, and during the 1860s and 1870s, many wealthy San Franciscans began buying land from the Argüellos and their heirs to build country estates. During this time the area between present-day Menlo Park and Redwood City came to be known as “Fair Oaks.” Now known as Atherton, Fair Oaks became the most desirable location for estate development in southern San Mateo County throughout the rest of the nineteenth century.

The first of the grand Fair Oak estates, “Valparaiso Park,” was developed by Faxon Dean Atherton. Atherton, a native of Massachusetts, was a prosperous hide and tallow trader who had lived in Chile for some time. In 1860, he purchased 600 acres along the County Road to build a home for his Chilean wife, Dominga, and their children. Atherton was soon followed by several other wealthy San Franciscans, including the “silver baron” James C. Flood, who built the opulent “Linden Towers;” Timothy Hopkins (son of Central Pacific Railroad magnate Mark Hopkins), who built “Sherwood Hall;” and several others, including the patriarchs of the Mills, Selby, and Eyre families. Employing small armies of Irish, Italian, and Chinese immigrant gardeners, workmen, servants, and craftsmen, the estate owners leased undeveloped portions of their holdings to tenant farmers. Some visitors described Fair Oaks as a “new Eden,” while others criticized what they saw as the recreation of feudal society.² Many of the workers who did not board on the estates lived in the village of Menlo Park (subdivided in 1863 as the Menlo Park Villa Association), creating a long-lived rivalry between working-class Menlo Park and the affluent district of Fair Oaks.

Menlo Park incorporated for the first time in 1874. As proposed, the city limits encompassed all of southeastern San Mateo County, including Fair Oaks. Residents of Fair Oaks opposed paying taxes to the “sordid little village” of Menlo Park and actively opposed being attached to Menlo Park.³ Ultimately, financial difficulties forced Menlo Park to revert to unincorporated status in 1876, quelling the controversy for almost half a century.⁴

The 1906 Earthquake signaled the beginning of the end of the grand estates of Fair Oaks. The disaster inspired many moderate-income San Franciscans to seek permanent homes outside San Francisco, which increased development pressure in San Mateo County. Increasing property values, combined with the introduction of the federal income tax after 1913, made the maintenance of the great estates financially infeasible for most. Over the next five decades nearly all of Fair Oaks’ estates were sold and subdivided into one, two, three and four-acre “villa” lots. One of the first to go was Faxon Atherton’s “Valparaiso Park,” which was subdivided in 1911. In 1920, Thomas Selby’s 420-acre “Almendra” was subdivided into villa lots, and in 1934, the Flood family’s “Linden Towers” was demolished and the estate subdivided into house lots as part of a subdivision called Lindenwood. Only a few large estates survived intact until after World War II, including the Holbrook-Palmer Estate, otherwise known as “Elmwood.”

² Michael Svanevik and Shirley Burgett, *Menlo Park, California: Beyond the Gate* (San Francisco: Menlo Park Historical Association, 2000), 7.

³ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁴ Alan Hynding, *From Frontier to Suburb: The Story of the San Mateo Peninsula* (Belmont, CA: Star Publishing Company, 1982), 117.

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In 1923, Menlo Park again attempted to incorporate with Fair Oaks within its boundaries. In a story that has become almost legendary, officials of both Menlo Park and Fair Oaks raced to the County Courthouse in Redwood City to file separate incorporation papers – one set with Fair Oaks included and the other set without. Just beating Redwood City’s deputies, Fair Oaks’ representatives filed papers to incorporate separately from Menlo Park as the Town of Fair Oaks. Discovering that there was already a city in Sacramento County with the same name, the name Atherton was chosen instead.⁵ After putting the matter to a vote, the majority of the residents in the area voted to join the new Town of Atherton, which formally incorporated in 1923.⁶

From its earliest days, Atherton was predicated around protecting its semi-rural atmosphere. Much like its slightly older counterpart of Hillsborough in northern San Mateo County, Atherton would have no businesses or retail within its town limits. One-acre minimum parcel sizes were implemented to keep a generous buffer around most houses and to preserve as much of the town’s mature oak canopy as possible. Sidewalks and street lighting were also omitted from many streets. Though one-by-one, all of the old estates were subdivided, in some cases the main house was preserved as part of the new subdivision, such as the Hopkins House at 41 Lowery Drive, or as part of an educational campus, such as Douglass Hall, which is now part of the Menlo School. In very few cases did any of the agricultural outbuildings survive, though several gatehouses, gates and fences, and at least one carriage house escaped demolition.

Property History: 1868-1882

As the original grantee of *Rancho de las Pulgas*, Luís Argüello is the first known European-American owner of what is now Holbrook-Palmer Park. In the early 1860s, California’s Governor Henry H. Haight purchased a little over 98 acres from Argüello. The tract, which appears to have been an investment property, was bounded by Middlefield Road to the northeast and the County Road (El Camino Real) to the southwest. It appears on the 1868 Official Map of San Mateo County (**Figure 4**). In 1874, a San Francisco stockbroker named John C. Winans purchased a 22-acre section of Haight’s property. The property was located along the southeast side of Watkins Lane, between Middlefield Road and the San Francisco-San Jose (by then the Central Pacific) Railroad tracks. The property was undeveloped when he bought it.

John Carver Winans was born November 2, 1828 in New York. He came to California during the Gold Rush, eventually becoming a successful San Francisco commission merchant.⁷ He married in 1857 and by the late 1860s, he was employed as a stockbroker. Winans was a prosperous man, as suggested by his residential address in South Park, one of early San Francisco’s most prestigious residential enclaves.⁸ However, by the early 1870s, conditions in South Park had deteriorated as the surrounding South of Market area industrialized. In 1873, Winans and his family moved to nearby Rincon Hill, but this wealthy residential enclave was also becoming engulfed in pollution. Seeking an escape the city’s smoke and noise likely accounts for Winans’ purchase of two 11-acre lots from Henry Haight in Fair Oaks in 1874. Ca. 1875, he built a house on his land and moved his family to San Mateo County, because San Francisco City Directories published that year describe the Winans as living in “Menlo.”⁹

⁵ Jane Knoerle, “Recalling Atherton’s Early Days on its 60th Birthday,” *The Country Almanac* (September 7, 1983), 12-13.

⁶ Unlike most incorporated municipalities in California, Atherton calls itself a “Town” instead of a “City.” The definition is solely semantic and has now implication on how the community is run.

⁷ California Pioneer and Immigrant Files, 1790-1950.

⁸ San Francisco City Directories, 1861-1874.

⁹ Ibid.

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Little is known about Winans or how he utilized his property in Fair Oaks. It is known that he commissioned a house designed in the "Parisian" style, and that it was furnished with expensive imported furnishings from France. It seems unlikely that Winans farmed the land based on the fact that he commuted into San Francisco every day. As a San Francisco stockbroker during this era, Winans was almost certainly involved in trading silver stocks. Huge fortunes were made in the Silver Bonanza stock bubble of the 1870s, including several future residents of Fair Oaks, such as James C. Flood. The speculative bubble burst in the late 1870s, ruining thousands of investors and ushering in the so-called "Dull Times" of the early 1880s. By the early 1880s, Winans was in financial trouble, forcing him to mortgage his Fair Oaks estate and sell the house's furnishings at public auction on January 26, 1882. According to advertisements announcing the auction, offered up for sale were "Elegant" and "Choice" furniture and architectural fittings, including chandeliers, cornices, and draperies.¹⁰ Before the property was foreclosed by the banks, Winans leased it to Count Olarovsky, the Russian Consul to California. In 1882, Winans and his family moved back to San Francisco, where he lived out his years as a commission merchant dealing in engineers' supplies.¹¹

Charles Holbrook Buys and Remodels "Elmwood": 1882-1883

A native of New Hampshire, Charles Holbrook (born 1830) arrived in Sacramento in 1852. After trying and failing at gold prospecting, he decided it would be more lucrative to sell supplies to miners rather than be one himself. In 1859, Holbrook joined with John F. Merrill and James B. Stetson to form Holbrook, Merrill & Stetson. The firm dealt in wholesale hardware, mining supplies, and building materials. In 1869, the firm relocated from Sacramento to San Francisco, and it soon became one of the largest wholesale hardware companies in the United States.¹²

Having reached the age 50 in 1880, Holbrook was overworked and in poor health. Seeking a weekend/summer retreat where he could relax and recuperate, Holbrook toured Fair Oaks, including the Winans property. He was escorted around it by Count Olarovsky, who was then renting it from the Winans family. Immediately impressed with the property, he offered to buy it on the spot. After purchasing Winans' country estate for \$10,000 in late 1882 or early 1883, Holbrook immediately set about transforming it into a model gentleman's farm. In June 1883, Holbrook hired San Francisco architect H.C. Macy to expand and remodel the existing Winans house and complete another unspecified \$8,000 worth of work on the property. The contractor hired to do the work was John MacBain, Menlo Park's best-known contractor.¹³ Macy was evidently responsible for expanding the exterior of the house, refinishing its interior, and probably building the Water Tower. Holbrook hired other workers to landscape the 22-acre estate. As a working farm, Holbrook planted 17 acres in hay, one acre in fruit trees, half-an-acre in vegetables, and landscaping the remaining three acres as lawns, a tennis court, and flower gardens.¹⁴ Holbrook also planted several dozen elm trees in tribute to his home state of New Hampshire. The graceful hardwoods thrived and Holbrook decided to call his estate "Elmwood."

Beginning in 1883, the Holbrook household, which included Charles, his wife Susan (Hurd), and their four children: Henry, Mary, Susan, and Olive, took up residence at Elmwood during the summers and

¹⁰ "Auction Sales," *Daily Alta California* (January 25, 1882).

¹¹ San Francisco City Directories, 1883-1903.

¹² Pamela Gullard and Nancy Lund, *Under the Oaks: Two Hundred Years in Atherton* (San Francisco: Scottwall Associates, 2009), 138-9.

¹³ "Building Intelligence," *California Architect & Building News* (June 1883).

¹⁴ Pamela Gullard and Nancy Lund, *Under the Oaks: Two Hundred Years in Atherton* (San Francisco: Scottwall Associates, 2009), 140.

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some weekends during the rest of the year. Other permanent residents of the estate included a farmer, a gardener, a coachman, a nurse, a cook, and a "second girl."¹⁵

Elmwood first appears on the 1894 Official Map of San Mateo County. The property consisted of two parcels a little over 10 acres each. Watkins Lane formed the northwestern boundary and the Southern Pacific railroad tracks formed the southern boundary (**Figure 5**). To the southeast the property was bounded by the similarly sized Felton Estate, and to the northeast by the Prior Estate.

Water Tower Built: ca. 1883

There is no record of John C. Winans having used the Fair Oaks property for any agricultural purposes, so it seems most likely that the Water Tower was designed by H.C. Macy and built by John MacBain in 1883 as part of Charles Holbrook's conversion of the property into a farm.¹⁶ Hay, flowers, and vegetables are thirsty crops, requiring daily irrigation during the dry summer and fall months. The existing Water Tower, which originally held a huge redwood tank, was constructed for intensive agricultural use, well beyond what a domestic household like the Winans would have needed. According to Olive Holbrook-Palmer, the Water Tower was originally paired with a windmill and a steam pump that pumped groundwater from an underground aquifer to the tank at the top of the Water Tower. From there, water was distributed via gravity to the house, to the fields, or to wherever else it was needed. The tank had to be kept full or it would spring leaks along its seams, so it was immediately refilled as the water was used.¹⁷

Carriage House Built: 1897

The Holbrook family owned horses for both agricultural work and to pull their carriages. The horses needed a place where they could be groomed, fed, and boarded. Ca. 1894, Charles Holbrook built a large barn to house them, and his carriages as well. This barn, which cost \$7,000 to build, was destroyed in a major fire that swept a portion of the farm on April 26, 1897. The fire wrecked the barn, as well as a smaller barn next to it, a paint shed, and a chicken house. Though the horses and carriages were saved, 50 tons of hay were destroyed. The fire, which apparently started in the paint shop, threatened the Main House and the Water Tower, before a change in the direction of the wind saved these structures.¹⁸ Within a year, Charles Holbrook had rebuilt the barn, known today as the Carriage House. Nothing is known about its commission, including who designed it, who built it, or how much it cost. Its academic design, which pulls upon the then-popular Colonial Revival style, indicates that it was almost certainly designed by a trained architect or a very highly skilled and knowledgeable builder.

The 1899 United States Geological Society map shows Elmwood in that year. Though the map does not show every outbuilding on the farm, it does show the Main House surrounded by a driveway, and the Carriage House located southeast of the driveway (**Figure 6**). The Water Tower is not shown, likely because its footprint was too small and located too close to the Main House to be accurately depicted.

¹⁵ Pamela Gullard and Nancy Lund, *Under the Oaks: Two Hundred Years in Atherton* (San Francisco: Scottwall Associates, 2009), 140.

¹⁶ Most secondary accounts state that the Water Tower was constructed ca. 1875, at the same time as the Winans House. Though a tankhouse may have been built by the Winans on the site of the existing Water Tower, it was probably a different, smaller structure more suitable for domestic usage.

¹⁷ Pamela Gullard and Nancy Lund, *Under the Oaks: Two Hundred Years in Atherton* (San Francisco: Scottwall Associates, 2009), 140.

¹⁸ "Many Buildings Food for Flames," *San Francisco Chronicle* (April 27, 1897).

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Elmwood: 1897-1963

Following the construction of the Carriage House in 1897, it seems that Elmwood changed little over the next six decades. The Holbrook family typically relocated to their estate from San Francisco in the spring and returned to the city in the fall. Susan Holbrook, who had long suffered from poor health, died on November 5, 1895 at the age of 54.¹⁹ Charles Holbrook, on the other hand, recovered from his overwork and ill health, continuing to live for another three decades. He died in San Francisco on July 18, 1925, at the age of 94.²⁰

Charles Holbrook was not the only occupant of Elmwood following Susan's death in 1895. Their daughter Olive took over the management of the Holbrook household following her mother's death. Born in San Francisco on February 24, 1878, Olive Holbrook graduated from Miss West's School in San Francisco, and then from a finishing school in New York.²¹ On June 3, 1903, Olive H. Holbrook married Silas H. Palmer, the son of a prominent contractor. Silas Palmer was born July 7, 1874 in Oakland. He was a graduate of the University of California, where he had studied engineering and finance. Silas went to work as a financier and he eventually founded his own contracting business. Though they married at Elmwood, the Palmers' primary residence continued to be at the Holbrook mansion in San Francisco. Nevertheless, the couple spent nearly every summer at Elmwood. At Elmwood, the Palmers socialized with the other prominent families, including the Adams, Eyre, Flood, Hopkins, Boardman, and Donohoe families.²² The Palmers did not have any children, but according to Census records they helped to raise Silas' nephews, George and Palmer Wheaton. The Palmer household also consisted of several servants, a housekeeper, a chauffeur, and a cook. In 1946, the Palmers sold the 22-room Holbrook mansion at the corner of Washington Street and Van Ness Avenue in San Francisco and moved into an apartment in Pacific Heights. They continued spending their summers in Atherton for the rest of their lives.²³

Over the ensuing decades the Palmers evidently made no significant changes to Elmwood. According to a 1956 article in the *San Mateo Times*, Elmwood was "a glamorous country place." The article went on to describe Elmwood as having been maintained in its "original state," which by the mid-1950s had already become a rarity in Atherton:

Today the Silas H. Palmers maintain their summer home in its original state – the same wallpaper, rugs, furnishings – and with its original purpose, as a country house-farm....It's a working farm with grain for the cattle and orchards, and the mechanized age doesn't show; horses still pull the hay rakes.²⁴

Photographs taken of the estate in the mid-1950s suggest a working farm from the nineteenth century, seemingly oblivious to the major changes that were then going on around it as southern San Mateo County suburbanized after World War II. The Main house appears to have remained unchanged since it was expanded and remodeled in 1883 (**Figure 7**). The same was true for the Water Tower and the Carriage House, which both appear largely as they do now (**Figure 8**).

¹⁹ Pamela Gullard and Nancy Lund, *Under the Oaks: Two Hundred Years in Atherton* (San Francisco: Scottwall Associates, 2009), 140.

²⁰ California Death Index, 1905-1939.

²¹ "Society, by Lady Teazle," *San Francisco Chronicle* (April 17, 1903).

²² "90th Birthday is Occasion for Reception at Menlo Park," *San Francisco Chronicle* (September 2, 1890).

²³ "Olive Palmer, Daughter of Pioneer, Dies," *Oakland Tribune* (March 29, 1958).

²⁴ Jane Barber, "Talk of the Times," *San Mateo Times* (April 4, 1956).

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After Silas Palmer retired in the late 1940s, the couple turned to philanthropy. In 1953, they gave Stanford University \$300,000. They were also active in efforts to save California's redwoods, donating intact redwood groves in Humboldt County to the California State Parks system.²⁵ Olive Palmer died in San Francisco on March 28, 1958 after a long illness.²⁶ She was 80. Her estate was valued at well over \$4 million. Because the Palmers did not have any children, she willed most of her fortune to various charities, including Stanford University, the Pacific School of Religion, the Episcopal Old Ladies Home in San Francisco, Grace Cathedral, Children's Hospital in Oakland, the Colonial Dames, and several churches and organizations in and around Atherton and Menlo Park.²⁷ She left her family's 22-acre Elmwood Estate to the Town of Atherton on the condition that the Town use it only for recreational purposes. If Atherton did not want the property, or if it ceased being used as a park, it would go to Stanford University. Olive's will also stipulated that Silas would have lifetime tenancy rights at Elmwood.²⁸

Less than a year after Olive's death, in 1958, the elaborate Second Empire-style mansion that had been built ca. 1875 and remodeled and expanded in 1883 was destroyed by fire. Because the fire struck in December Silas was not in residence at the time.²⁹ In early 1959, Silas Palmer decided to rebuild. He hired the prominent San Francisco architect George Livermore to design the replacement house. It sat on the same foundation, retaining the original front entry steps and wine cellar, and it closely replicated the floor plan of the original house. And, like the original house, the replacement had a broad porch/veranda that looked out over a lawn and some flower beds. Aside from these details, the modest "Minimal Traditional" style replacement looked nothing like its ornate Victorian-era predecessor. Silas H. Palmer lived on for another four years, continuing to come to Elmwood every summer, where he enjoyed sitting on the veranda and looking at the grounds. He died February 8, 1963 in San Francisco.³⁰

Holbrook-Palmer Park: 1964-1972

In 1964, less than a year after the death of Silas Palmer, the Town of Atherton formally took possession of Elmwood. The process of converting one of Atherton's last intact rural estates into a municipal park was a daunting task. The biggest challenge was lack of funds to even prepare a master plan, much less let contracts and build the park. Atherton, a town that had traditionally offered few public services, had no Recreation Department because it had no parks. Nonetheless, the Town did establish an advisory committee and set aside a small annual fund to take care of security and basic upkeep.³¹

Recognizing that raising property taxes to build Holbrook-Palmer Park would be controversial in conservative Atherton, local residents founded a non-profit organization called the Holbrook-Palmer Park Foundation to raise private contributions for the initial master planning work. It also established a fundraising target of \$500,000 for the park's ultimate build-out. The Foundation hired the well-known landscape architecture firm of Royston, Hanamoto, Mayes, and Beck to prepare the master plan. The resulting Holbrook-Palmer Park Master Plan, divided the work into three phases. The first phase entailed the demolition of everything on the site aside for the Main House, the Water Tower, and the Carriage

²⁵ "Olive Palmer, Daughter of Pioneer, Dies," *Oakland Tribune* (March 29, 1958).

²⁶ San Francisco Area Funeral Home Records, 1895-1985.

²⁷ "S.F. Philanthropist: Mrs. Palmer's Estate 4 Million," *San Francisco Chronicle* (October 10, 1958).

²⁸ "Windfall for Atherton," *San Francisco Chronicle* (April 20, 1958).

²⁹ Lola Sherman, "Old Elmwood's...Modern Heir," *Peninsula Living* (October 18, 1959).

³⁰ San Francisco Area Funeral Home Records, 1895-1985.

³¹ "Recap of Financial Problems of Holbrook-Palmer Park since 1962." Undated typed manuscript on file at the Atherton Heritage Association.

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House, including the caretaker's house, several greenhouses, and all other outbuildings. In addition, a small garden pavilion located near the Southern Pacific Railroad tracks was kept.³²

In 1966, the Foundation published a public relations document titled: "A Park for Atherton." The professionally designed brochure contained an introduction by Marshall Madison touting the value of a park in a county whose fabled rural beauty was fast disappearing beneath the treads of bulldozers and asphalt. The brochure tackled head-on the main question that many Athertonians were apparently asking about the proposed park, paraphrased as: "Why does Atherton need a park when most residents already have small parks of their own?"³³ The authors of the brochure responded by stating that Holbrook-Palmer Park would prevent one of the last major estates in Atherton from becoming tract houses and that the "period buildings" on the property could be repurposed for "events, arts and crafts, or a local history museum." They also argued that the park would "fill a void in the community" by making "the recreational, social, and cultural life of our community richer and more cohesive."³⁴

Building out the first two phases of Holbrook-Palmer Park Master Plan took several years due to the Town's requirement that nearly all funds come from private donations. In 1968, a group called the Atherton Dames was founded to assist the Foundation in fundraising efforts. At first the lack of interest among many Atherton residents crippled progress. Nevertheless, by the early 1970s, the Atherton Dames had hit their stride, raising enough money to complete both Phases I and II of the Master Plan. To help raise revenue the Dames held festivals and renovated the Main House for weddings, social events, and classes.

Restoration of the Water Tower: 1970-1972

As part of Phase I work, the Town demolished a non-historic addition on the southeast façade of the Water Tower, and in 1971, the unused and deteriorating redwood water tank on the third floor of the Water Tower was removed and sent to Baja California, where it was put into use in a water-deprived village. In 1972, the Town, with the assistance of the Dames, spent \$4,000 to repair the third floor level of the Water Tower and replace the deteriorated roof.³⁵ Meanwhile, the Carriage House remained unchanged, although it was periodically opened to the public for barn dances and other social events.³⁶

Implementation of the Holbrook-Palmer Park Master Plan: 1972-1980

During the early 1970s, the Atherton Dames continued raising funds needed to implement Phase III of the Master Plan. Every year they continued hosting "country fairs" at the park, a tradition that had begun in the late 1960s. They also continued to raise money from renting the Main House for weddings, as well as from fees from recreational activities and classes. Though several features planned for the park as part of Phase III had to be scrapped because they were too expensive, by 1980 the park as planned was largely complete. Credit for much of the Atherton Dames' effectiveness during this period goes in large part to Genevieve "Gen" Merrill, for whom the Carriage House was renamed in 2000. Serving as president of the Atherton Dames from 1972-73, and again from 1992-93, Gen Merrill was a tireless fundraiser and organizer who marshalled her group's resources to make the park a reality. Other

³² Royston, Hanamoto, Mayes & Beck, "Master Plan – Holbrook-Palmer Recreation Park." Rendering on file at the Atherton Heritage Association.

³³ The question alludes to the fact that most Atherton properties adhere to a one-acre minimum lot size.

³⁴ Holbrook-Palmer Recreation Park Foundation, *A Park for Atherton* (Atherton: 1966).

³⁵ Vicki Graham, "From Atherton to Mexico: Redwood Tank to Aid Baja," *Redwood City Tribune* (March 26, 1971).

³⁶ "Recap of Financial Problems of Holbrook-Palmer Park since 1962." Undated typed manuscript on file at the Atherton Heritage Association.

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prominent members included Mrs. Dorothy Bochner, Mrs. Suzanne Eyre, and Mrs. Joan Donahoe.³⁷ The park received a boost in 1976 when Rita Corbett-Evans left \$100,000 to the Town to build an arts and crafts center at the park. A year later, Jennings Pavilion was constructed opposite the Water Tower, at the south end of a grass lawn called the Water Tower Green. The building, designed by Menlo Park architect Kingsford Jones, was designed for community gatherings and classes.

Rehabilitation of the Carriage House: 1980-2000

The statewide passage of Proposition 13 in 1978 essentially stopped any local property taxes from being used to support Holbrook-Palmer Park, so from 1979 onward the park had to be entirely self-supporting. The Carriage House, which had served as little more than a scenic backdrop, was identified as a possible source of revenue. As early as 1979, plans had been developed by architect Kingsford Jones to convert the Carriage House into an arts and crafts center, but the work was never done, probably due to the high cost of physical improvements that would be necessary to comply with modern building codes.³⁸ In 1987, the Holbrook-Palmer Recreation Park Foundation commissioned a study by a San Francisco architecture firm to assess the building's potential for adaptive reuse. The study found the building to be in very good physical condition, attributing this to the building's top-grade redwood lumber, as well as its consistent maintenance. However, the Carriage House's outdated electrical system would need to be replaced. In addition, men's and women's toilet rooms would need to be installed, as well as life-safety improvements, including a fire sprinkler system, exit signage, and emergency lights. The cost of the work was estimated to be \$200,000 and it was completed by JRC Home Improvements of Redwood City in 1991. The Carriage House was formally opened and dedicated on April 17, 1991.³⁹ These upgrades made the Carriage House usable for group functions of up to 90 people. Additional work done in the mid-1990s included the replacement of the original (presumably brick) foundation with concrete and the replacement of the roof.⁴⁰ The Carriage House was renamed after Gen Merrill in 2000.⁴¹

Holbrook-Palmer Park: 2000-2015

Few changes have been made to Holbrook-Palmer Park since 2000. In 2003, the Atherton Dames launched a project to renovate the Water Tower as a small museum. Though exterior work was completed, including repairs to the balcony and foundation, nothing was done to the interior.⁴² The Carriage House does not seem to have undergone any changes since the 1990s, though two new buildings were built next to it, including a metal shed in the corporation yard to the north and a daycare center based in a pair of modular buildings to the south.

Summary of Significance

The ca. 1883 Water Tower and the 1897 Carriage House at Holbrook-Palmer Park are the some of the last surviving agricultural outbuildings from the late nineteenth century in Atherton. They date to the period when Atherton – then known as Fair Oaks – had become the most important concentration of rural estates for San Francisco's elite in southern San Mateo County. Between 1906 and 1950, nearly all of the major estates in Atherton were subdivided into smaller lots and developed. Other estates were preserved as intact landholdings but converted into school campuses or other institutional uses. Though several of the main houses from the nineteenth-century estates have survived, the vast majority of the

³⁷ Albert Morch, "There's No One like a Dame," *San Francisco Chronicle* (May 11, 1969).

³⁸ "Foundation Plans Carriage House Conversion," *Menlo-Atherton Recorder* (October 16, 1979).

³⁹ Barbara Wood, "Council to Dedicate Renovated, Historic Carriage House in Park," *Country Almanac* (April 17, 1991).

⁴⁰ Page, Anderson & Turnbull, *Feasibility Study for the Rehabilitation of the Carriage House (at) Holbrook-Palmer Park* (San Francisco: 1988).

⁴¹ "Carriage House Renamed for Genevieve Merrill," *Country Almanac* (November 1, 2000).

⁴² Bret Putnam, "Water-tower Restoration underway in Atherton," *San Mateo County Times* (April 14, 2003).

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ancillary buildings, including gatehouses, carriage houses, barns, stables, bunkhouses, etc., were demolished. The few outbuildings that have survived have all have been converted into dwellings or other non-agricultural uses, resulting in significant alterations to them. The Water Tower and Carriage House at Holbrook-Palmer Park are therefore very important in Atherton as rare and highly intact examples of agricultural outbuildings dating from the era of estate development in southern San Mateo County. The Water Tower is the last example of its building type in Atherton and the Carriage House is one of three comparable examples in town, but it is by far the most intact example. In addition to being rare examples of their respective property types, the Water Tower and the Carriage House are both unusual for agricultural outbuildings in that they were both likely architect-designed. They are also both representative examples of two important architectural styles popular in the United States (if not California) during the late nineteenth century: the Second Empire and Colonial Revival styles.

National Register Criterion C: Water Tower

The Water Tower at Holbrook-Palmer Park is eligible for the National Register under Criterion C (Design/Construction), at the local level of significance, with a period of significance of 1883. The Water Tower is significant because it embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, and method of construction. Though most California water towers, or tankhouses as they are popularly known, were designed in a utilitarian manner, the Water Tower at Holbrook-Palmer Park was designed in the exuberant Second Empire style to match the Holbrook family's house, which was built ca. 1875 by John C. Winans and remodeled and expanded by San Francisco architect H.C. Macy for Charles Holbrook in 1883. A comparison of the Water Tower with the original Main House, which burned in 1959, indicates that their exterior detailing is identical, suggesting that H.C. Macy probably designed both buildings in the same style.

Type: Tankhouse

The Water Tower at Holbrook-Palmer Park is an increasingly rare example of a property type invented in California in the nineteenth century to store water under pressure so that it is ready to be used at any time. At least two stories in height, a typical rural tankhouse was sturdily built to withstand the weight of the water tank, which was either mounted on the roof or enclosed within the top floor of the building. The framing of most tankhouses is angled inward toward the top of the building to help brace the water tank, which always had to be kept full to avoid leaks. The bottom floor(s) of most California tankhouses were nearly always enclosed, creating a room(s) on the lower floor(s) that could be used as ancillary dwelling units, tack rooms, or storage. Tankhouses were typically paired with a windmill, which pumped the groundwater to the top story of the tankhouse. The water was then stored in the tank until it was needed. Because the water tank was elevated, the water was always under pressure, allowing it to be distributed via pipes and used for irrigation, drinking water, or any other purpose. Tankhouses were an essential part of most farm and ranch complexes in semi-arid California. The Water Tower at Holbrook-Palmer Park fits the definition and use of a California tankhouse and based on its size and its architectural styling, it is an especially notable example. Though tankhouses occasionally survive in the rural hinterlands of California, in most suburban or urban areas they were either torn down or allowed to collapse once a property was hooked up to city water.⁴³

⁴³ Thomas Cooper, *Tankhouse: California's Redwood Water Towers from a Bygone Era* (Santa Rosa, CA: Barn Owl Press, 2011).

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Period: Late Nineteenth Century/Second Empire Style

The Second Empire styling of the Water Tower at Holbrook-Palmer Park originally matched the Main House that was destroyed in 1959. Built ca. 1875 by John C. Winans, the Main House was designed in the "Parisian style," suggesting that it was perhaps originally designed in the Second Empire style. However, it was substantially expanded in 1883 by H.C. Macy, Charles Holbrook's architect. Based on the scale and capacity of the Water Tower, which was clearly built for active agricultural operations, it is likely that Macy designed the Water Tower and that he designed it to match the nearby Main House, which Macy had also enlarged and remodeled. Based on historic photographs, the Water Tower shared many features in common with the Main House, including its Mansard roof, elaborate door and window trim, turned balusters, and finials on the attic dormers. The choice of the Second Empire style was not an obvious one given that the style was declining in popularity at the national level and that it had never been that popular in California.

Method of Construction: Heavy Timber Frame

The Water Tower at Holbrook-Palmer Park is framed using massive hewn timbers that are secured with mortise-and-tenon joints and wooden pegs instead of nails. By the time that Anglo Americans had begun settling in California in the 1840s and 1850s, balloon framing had already begun to supplant the more labor-intensive and expensive mortise-and-tenon construction methods that had dominated English and American construction for centuries. For most residential construction in California, where lack of substantial snow loads in most of the state made it unnecessary, mortise-and-tenon construction had effectively disappeared for residential construction by the 1860s. The only exception was for large industrial and agricultural buildings where wider spans and heavy live and dead loads were expected, including factories, mills, and barns. The Water Tower at Holbrook-Palmer Park is an excellent and increasingly rare example of an agricultural outbuilding framed with anachronistic mortise-and-tenon framing techniques, required because of the dead loads exerted on the building by a full water tank on the third floor.

National Register Criterion C: Carriage House

The Carriage House is eligible for the National Register under Criterion C (Design/Construction), at the local level of significance, with a period of significance of 1897. The Carriage House is significant because it embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type and period of construction. In contrast to tankhouses, which are an indigenous California vernacular building type, carriage houses were built all over the United States during the nineteenth century. Because they were often part of expensive estates they were often designed in "high-style" architectural fashions. Constructed at least a decade-and-a-half later than the Water Tower, the Carriage House at Holbrook-Palmer Park was designed in the simpler Colonial Revival style, which was popular in the 1890s and often used for Carriage Houses and other buildings on aristocratic estates.

Type: Agricultural Outbuilding

The term "carriage house" is an American idiom referring to buildings whose main purpose is the storage of horse-drawn conveyances. In England, where the building type emerged, they were called cart sheds or coach houses. In the nineteenth-century United States, an era in which horses continued to provide the dominant method of transportation, carriage houses could be found anywhere, including cities, suburbs, and the countryside. The complexity of a carriage house often depended in large part on where it was located. Urban carriage houses were often much smaller and simpler; many were just one-

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story in height because their only function was to house a carriage or two. In cities, horses were usually boarded in separate stables. Rural carriage houses were often more elaborate than their urban counterparts because they usually also contained stables for driving horses, a hay loft for storing feed, "tack" rooms for storing harnesses and gear, and sometimes rooms for personnel. Hay lofts, as their name suggests, were located on the second floor above where the horses were boarded. Exterior doors with beams above them allowed feed to be hoisted up from outside. Chutes in the hay loft allowed the feed to be distributed to each of the horse stalls below. Another important feature of most rural carriage houses is a roof-top ventilator to facilitate air flow and to remove odors. The Carriage House at Holbrook-Palmer Park is easily identifiable as a rural carriage house. Distinctive features include its "barn" doors at the first floor level and within the hay loft, its large roof-top gables, the pyramidal-roof ventilator, the large carriage room, tack rooms, stables, and wash racks. The modest Colonial Revival ornament, though it does not call attention to itself, gives the building a quasi-monumental feel appropriate to an estate like Elmwood.

Period: Turn of the Last Century/Colonial Revival Style

In contrast to the older Water Tower, with its elaborate French-inspired Second Empire detailing, the Carriage House at Holbrook-Palmer Park is designed in a very spare Colonial Revival style that owes its inspiration to the domestic vernacular architecture of the original Thirteen Colonies – particularly New England and New York. Its original architect is not known, and it also not known if its design was based on any particular prototype. Nonetheless, the Carriage House does share much in common with other major carriage houses built on similar estates across the United States, particularly on the East Coast. Its Colonial Revival styling – in particular its three steeply pitched gable-roof volumes with broken entablature returns, its entrance portico composed of turned balusters, and its pyramidal-roofed ventilator – are the most expressive elements signifying the Colonial Revival style. For the most part the Colonial Revival style is confined to the exterior of the Carriage House. The interior is much more functional, consisting for the most part of off-the-shelf fir flooring and redwood tongue-and-groove paneling. In addition to being popular at the time, the choice of the Colonial Revival style may have been inspired by Charles Holbrook's upbringing in New Hampshire, where original Colonial architecture was plentiful in Portsmouth and other coastal ports. His choice of elms to landscape the indicate Holbrook's nostalgia for his New England youth and may reflect his choice of a comparatively rare architectural style (in California, anyway) for his estate's Carriage House.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: Atherton Heritage Association, Redwood City Public Library, San Mateo County History Museum, San Mateo County Recorder's Office

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property Less than one acre

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (decimal degrees)

Datum if other than WGS84: _____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 37.463565 Longitude: -122.190698

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Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundaries encompass a portion of Holbrook-Palmer Park including the Carriage House and the Water Tower. To the west, the boundary is defined by a parking lot between the Main House and the Water Tower. To the north it is defined by a driveway that enters the park from Watkins Avenue. The boundary follows the middle of the driveway to a point between the Carriage House and the adjoining corporation yard to the north. The boundary then follows an imaginary line tracing the southwestern wall of the metal shed in the corporation yard to a footpath running parallel to the southeasterly boundary of Holbrook-Palmer Park. The boundary continues in a southwesterly direction to the fence separating the Carriage House from the adjoining children's daycare center. The boundary turns ninety degrees and follows the fence in a northwesterly direction to the previously mentioned driveway. The boundary crosses the driveway and takes a ninety degree turn toward the north, continuing to a paved footpath directly opposite the Carriage House. The boundary then turns approximately ninety degrees toward the west and continues back to the point of commencement.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundaries encompass the Water Tower and the Carriage House and the portions of the park immediately adjacent, and roadways, and footpaths (See Boundary Map). Aside from several trees, the Carriage House and the Water Tower are the only tangible remnants of the Holbrook-Palmer family estate, "Elmwood." The Main House was not included because it was constructed in 1959 on the foundation of the original house, which was destroyed by fire in 1958. With the exception of several eucalyptus trees, which run along the north side of the previously described roadway, there do not appear to be any historic plantings in the vicinity of either the Carriage House or the Water Tower, which was entirely regraded and re-landscaped in the late 1960s and early 1970s as part of the conversion of Elmwood into a city park.

11. Form Prepared By

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organization: VerPlanck Historic Preservation Consulting
street & number: 57 Post Street, Suite 512
city or town: San Francisco state: California zip code: 94104
e-mail: chris@verplanckconsulting.com
telephone: (415) 391-7486
date: September 29, 2015

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

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- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property:	Gen Merrill Carriage House and Water Tower, Holbrook-Palmer Park
City:	Atherton
County:	San Mateo
State:	California
Name of Photographer:	Christopher VerPlanck
Date of Photographs:	July 21, 2015
Location of Original Digital Files:	57 Post Street, Suite 512, San Francisco, CA 94104
Number of Photographs:	30

CA_San Mateo County_Holbrook-Palmer Park_0001
Setting, camera facing northeast

CA_San Mateo County_Holbrook-Palmer Park_0002
Water Tower, camera facing west

CA_San Mateo County_Holbrook-Palmer Park_0003
Water Tower, camera facing east

CA_San Mateo County_Holbrook-Palmer Park_0004
Water Tower, camera facing south

CA_San Mateo County_Holbrook-Palmer Park_0005
Water Tower, entrance on northwest facade

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CA_San Mateo County_Holbrook-Palmer Park_0006

Water Tower, detail of balcony and roof on southwest façade

CA_San Mateo County_Holbrook-Palmer Park_0007

Water Tower, detail of window and balcony on southwest façade

CA_San Mateo County_Holbrook-Palmer Park_0008

Water Tower, first floor, camera facing southeast

CA_San Mateo County_Holbrook-Palmer Park_0009

Water Tower, second floor, camera facing west

CA_San Mateo County_Holbrook-Palmer Park_0010

Water Tower, third floor, camera facing west

CA_San Mateo County_Holbrook-Palmer Park_0011

Carriage House, setting, camera facing southeast

CA_San Mateo County_Holbrook-Palmer Park_0011

Carriage House, setting, camera facing southeast

CA_San Mateo County_Holbrook-Palmer Park_0012

Carriage House, primary (northwest) façade, camera facing southeast

CA_San Mateo County_Holbrook-Palmer Park_0013

Carriage House, main entrance, camera facing southeast

CA_San Mateo County_Holbrook-Palmer Park_0014

Carriage House, detail of primary facade, camera facing northeast

CA_San Mateo County_Holbrook-Palmer Park_0015

Carriage House, southwest façade, camera facing east

CA_San Mateo County_Holbrook-Palmer Park_0016

Carriage House, southeast façade, camera facing southwest

CA_San Mateo County_Holbrook-Palmer Park_0017

Carriage House, northeast façade, camera facing east

CA_San Mateo County_Holbrook-Palmer Park_0018

Carriage House, detail of hay loft door on northeast façade

CA_San Mateo County_Holbrook-Palmer Park_0019

Carriage House, detail of ventilator, camera facing southeast

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CA_San Mateo County_Holbrook-Palmer Park_0020
Carriage House, vestibule, camera facing southeast

CA_San Mateo County_Holbrook-Palmer Park_0021
Carriage House, carriage room, camera facing southwest

CA_San Mateo County_Holbrook-Palmer Park_0022
Carriage House, carriage room, camera facing northeast

CA_San Mateo County_Holbrook-Palmer Park_0023
Carriage House, stables, camera facing northeast

CA_San Mateo County_Holbrook-Palmer Park_0024
Carriage House, rear entrance, camera facing east

CA_San Mateo County_Holbrook-Palmer Park_0025
Carriage House, wash rack, camera facing west

CA_San Mateo County_Holbrook-Palmer Park_0026
Carriage House, bunkhouse, camera facing northeast

CA_San Mateo County_Holbrook-Palmer Park_0027
Carriage House, bunkhouse, camera facing northwest

CA_San Mateo County_Holbrook-Palmer Park_0028
Carriage House, stair, camera facing northwest

CA_San Mateo County_Holbrook-Palmer Park_0029
Carriage House, hay loft, camera facing southeast

CA_San Mateo County_Holbrook-Palmer Park_0030
Carriage House, hay loft, camera facing south

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

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Photo Key 1, Site Plan



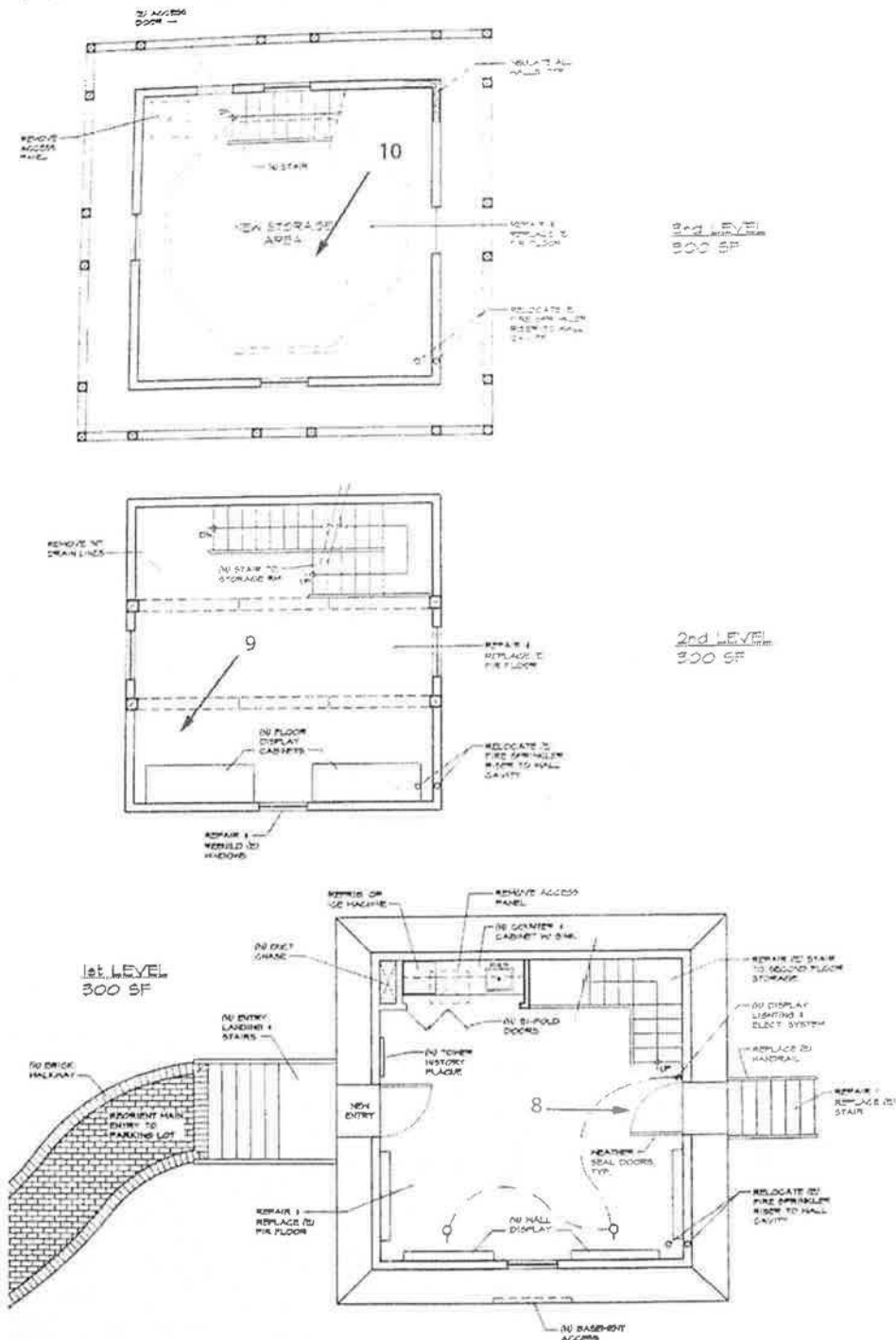
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Photo Key 2, Water Tower, First, Second, and Third Floors



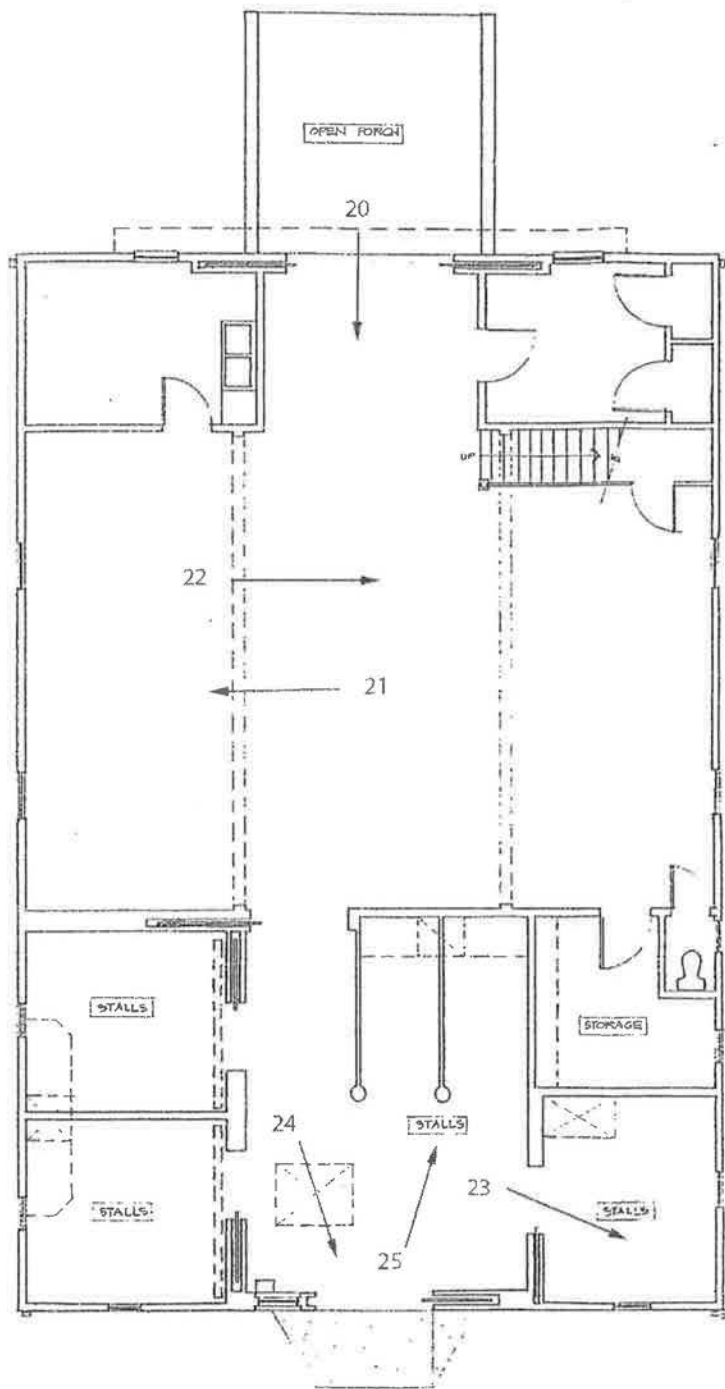
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Photo Key 3, Carriage House, First Floor

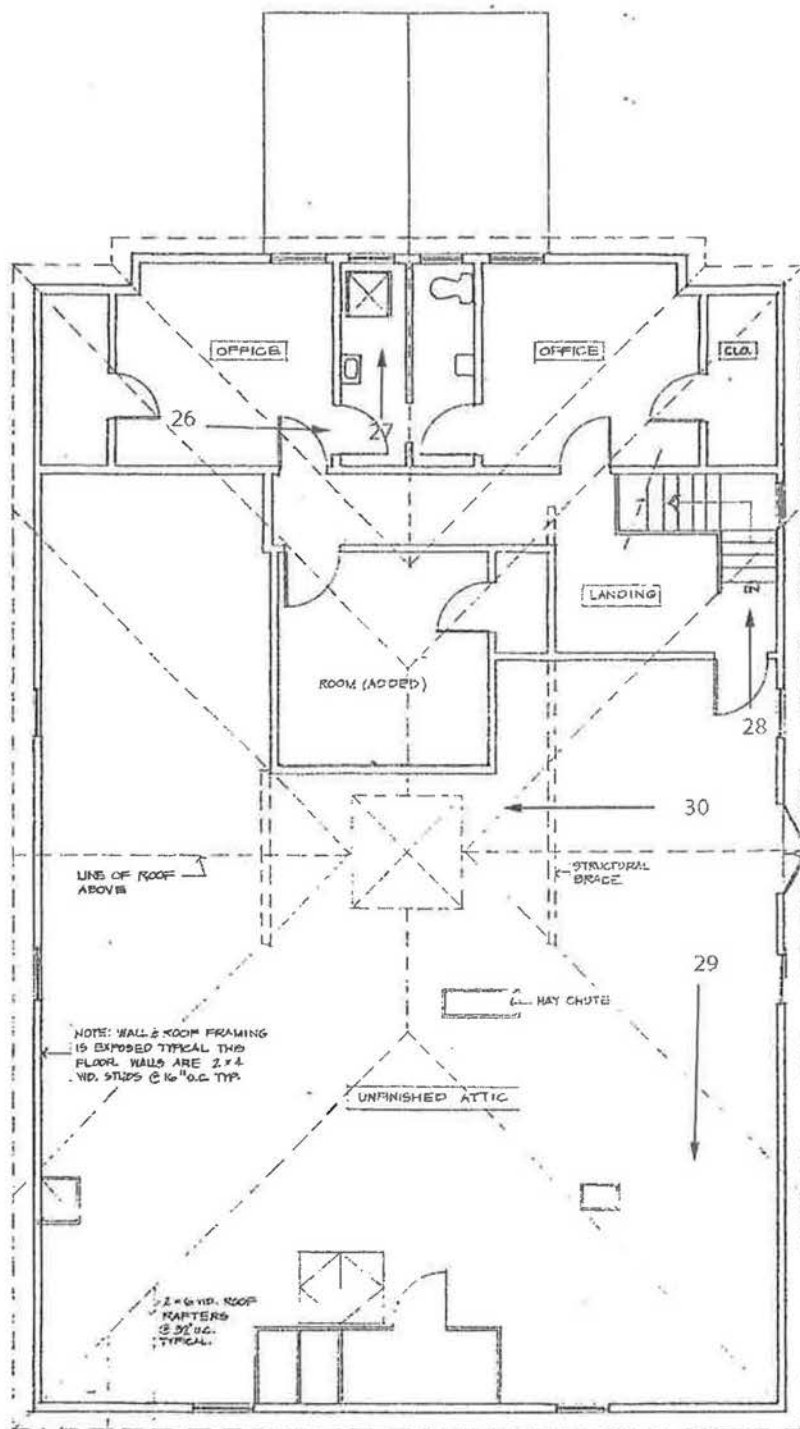
San Mateo, California

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Gen Merrill Carriage House and Water Tower
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Photo Key 4, Carriage House, Second Floor

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Gen Merrill Carriage House and Water Tower

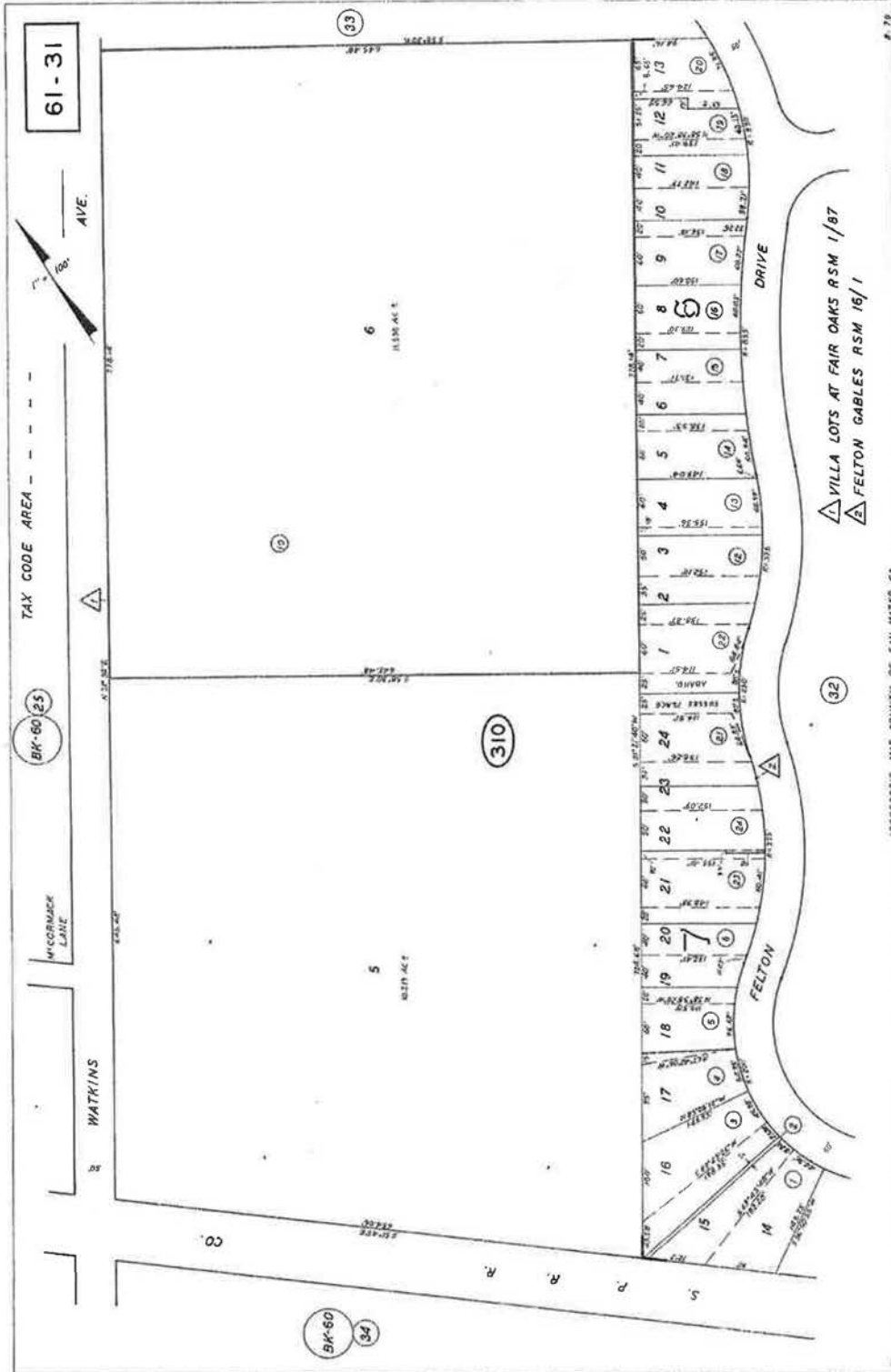
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Location Map 1 Assessor parcel map showing the location of 150 Watkins Avenue, Atherton

Source: San Mateo County Office of the Assessor-Recorder



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Location Map 2 Annotated aerial photograph of 150 Watkins Avenue, Atherton

Source: Google.com; annotated by Christopher VerPlanck



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Sketch Map: Annotated aerial photograph showing area proposed for designation
Source: Google.com; annotated by Christopher VerPlanck



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Additional Information: Historic Maps and Photographs

**Figure 1. Executive Office Building in Washington, D.C., by Alfred A. Mullett
Courtesy of the Society of Architectural Historians, Architectural Resources Archive**



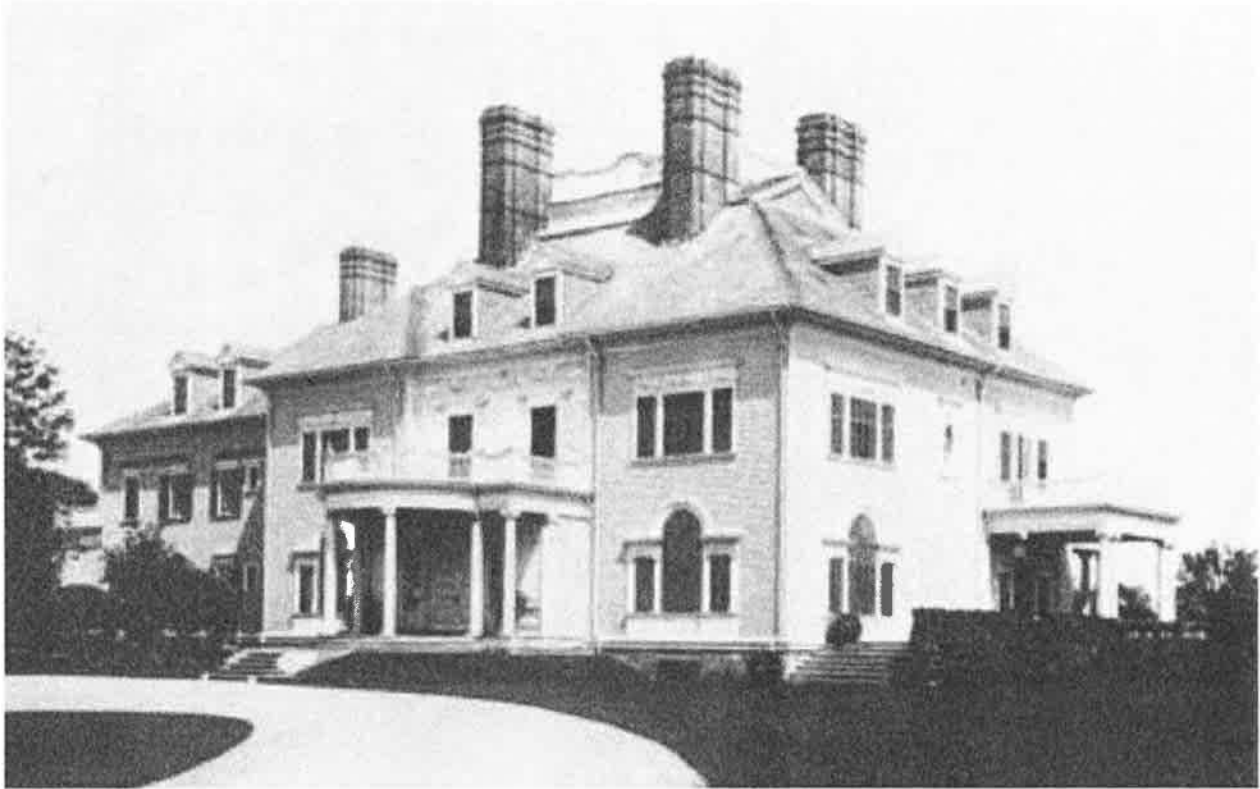
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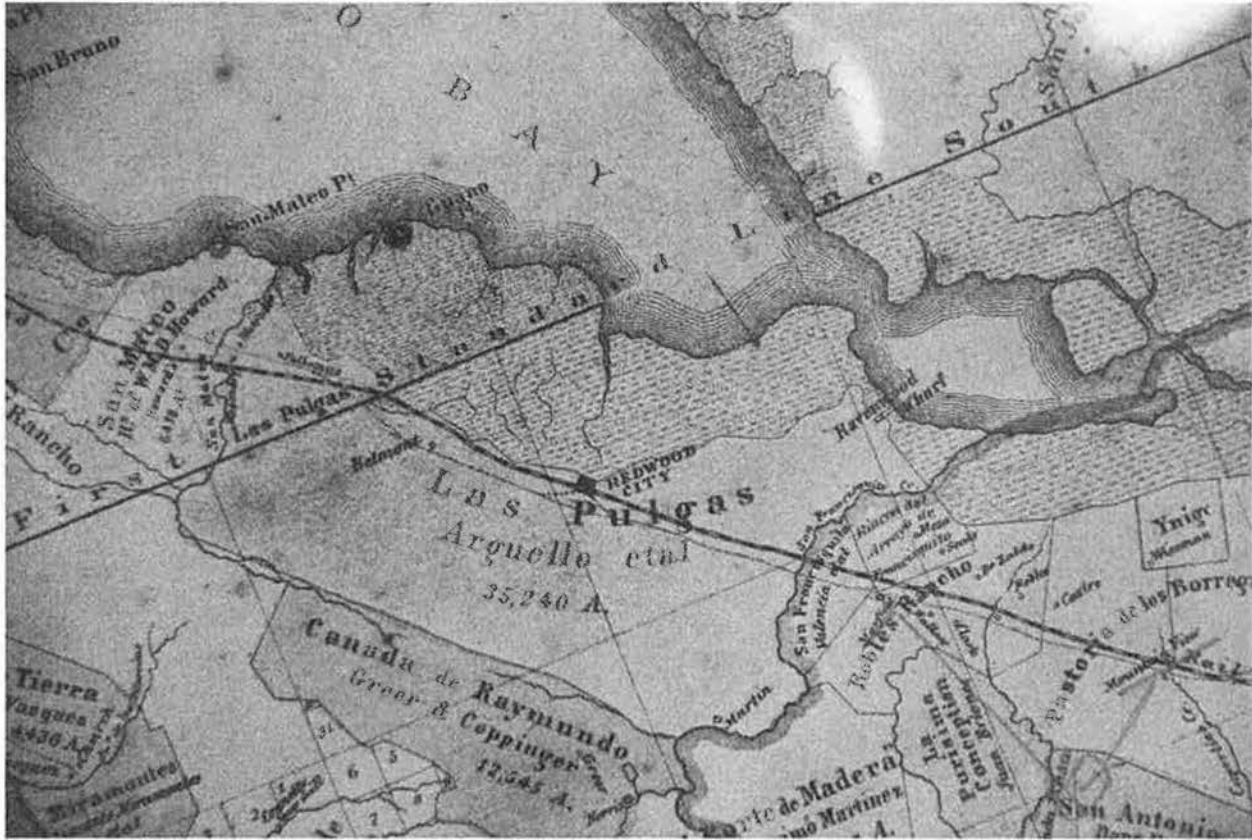
**Figure 2. H.A.C. Taylor House in Newport, R.I., by McKim, Mead, & White (demolished)
Courtesy of the Society of Architectural Historians, Architectural Resources Archive**



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Figure 3. Map of Rancho de las Pulgas
Courtesy of the Karl A. Vollmayer History Room, Redwood City Public Library



Gen Merrill Carriage House and Water Tower

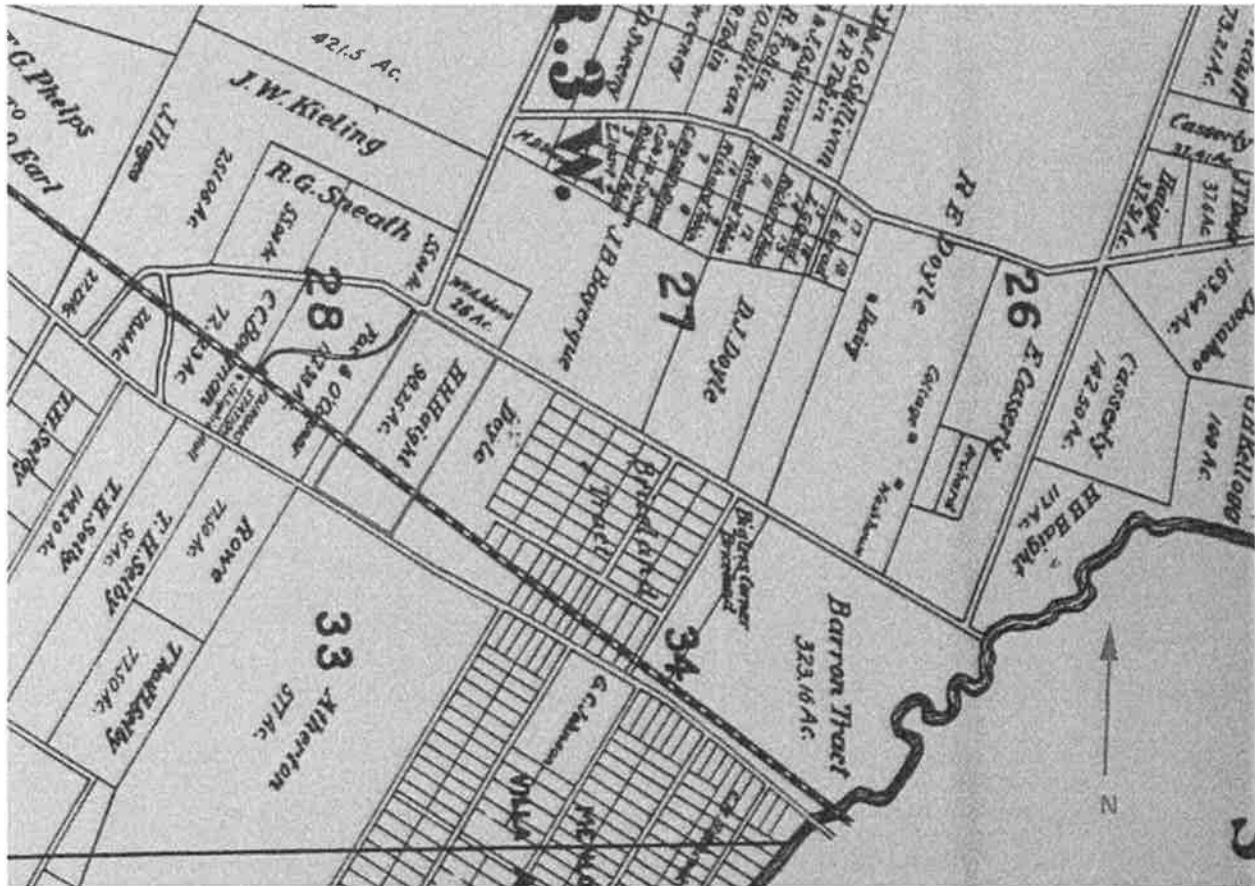
Name of Property

San Mateo, California

County and State

Figure 4. 1868 Official Map of San Mateo County, showing location of the property of Governor Henry H. Haight

Courtesy of the Karl A. Vollmayer History Room, Redwood City Public Library



Gen Merrill Carriage House and Water Tower

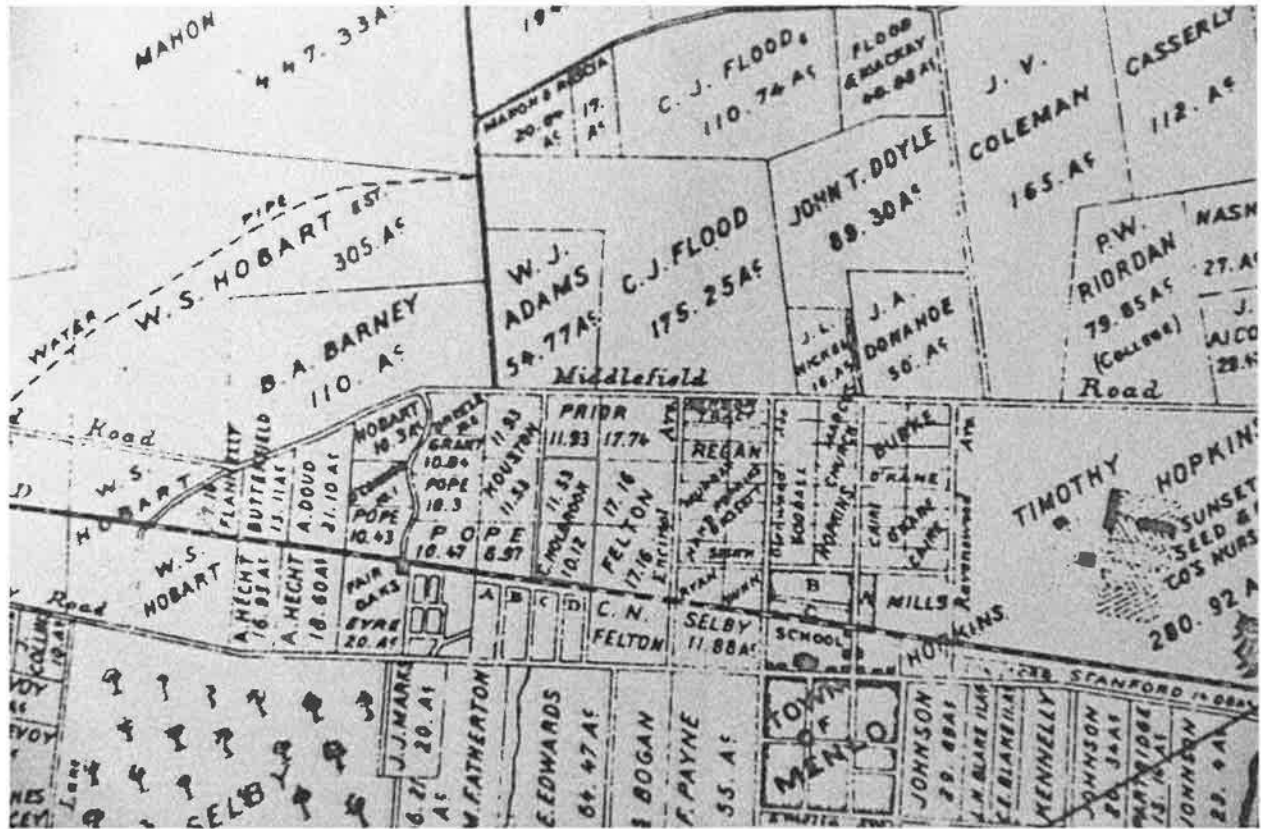
San Mateo, California

Name of Property

County and State

Figure 5. 1894 Official Map of San Mateo County, showing the location of the property of Charles Holbrook

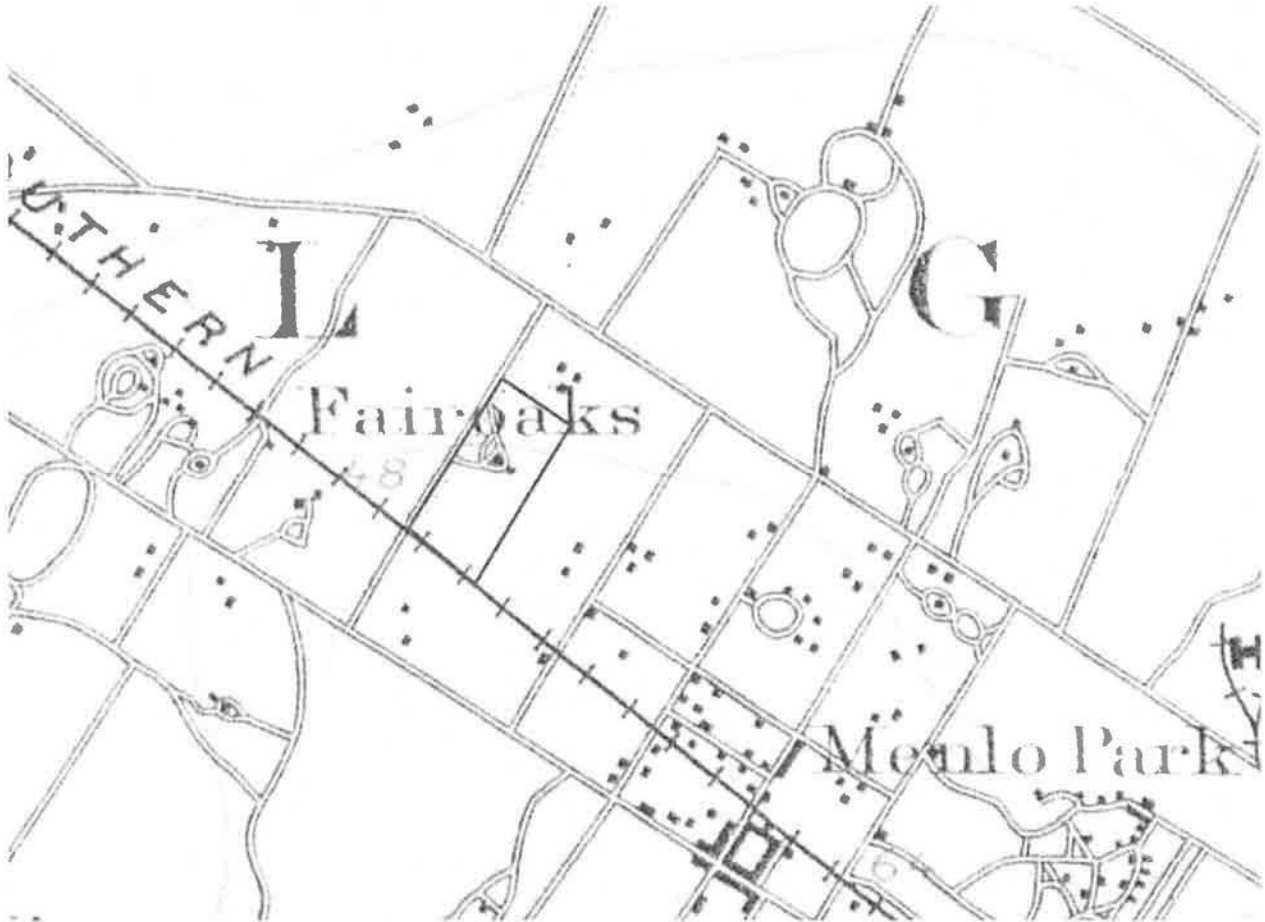
Courtesy of the Karl A. Vollmayer History Room, Redwood City Public Library



Gen Merrill Carriage House and Water Tower
Name of Property

San Mateo, California
County and State

Figure 6. 1899 United States Geological Survey Map of San Mateo County, showing the location of the property of Charles Holbrook
Courtesy of the Earth Sciences Library, UC Berkeley



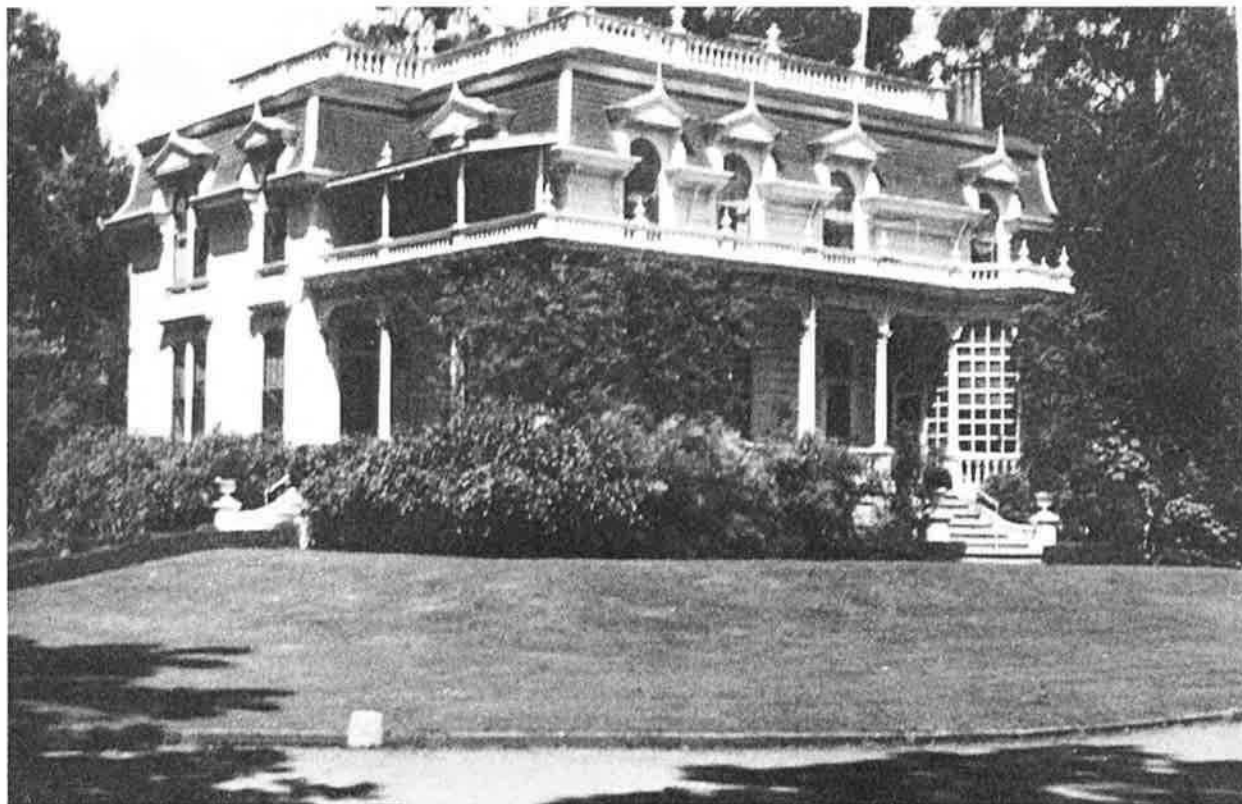
Gen Merrill Carriage House and Water Tower

Name of Property

San Mateo, California

County and State

**Figure 7. Ca. 1950 photograph of the Main House at Elmwood
Courtesy of the Atherton Heritage Association**



Gen Merrill Carriage House and Water Tower

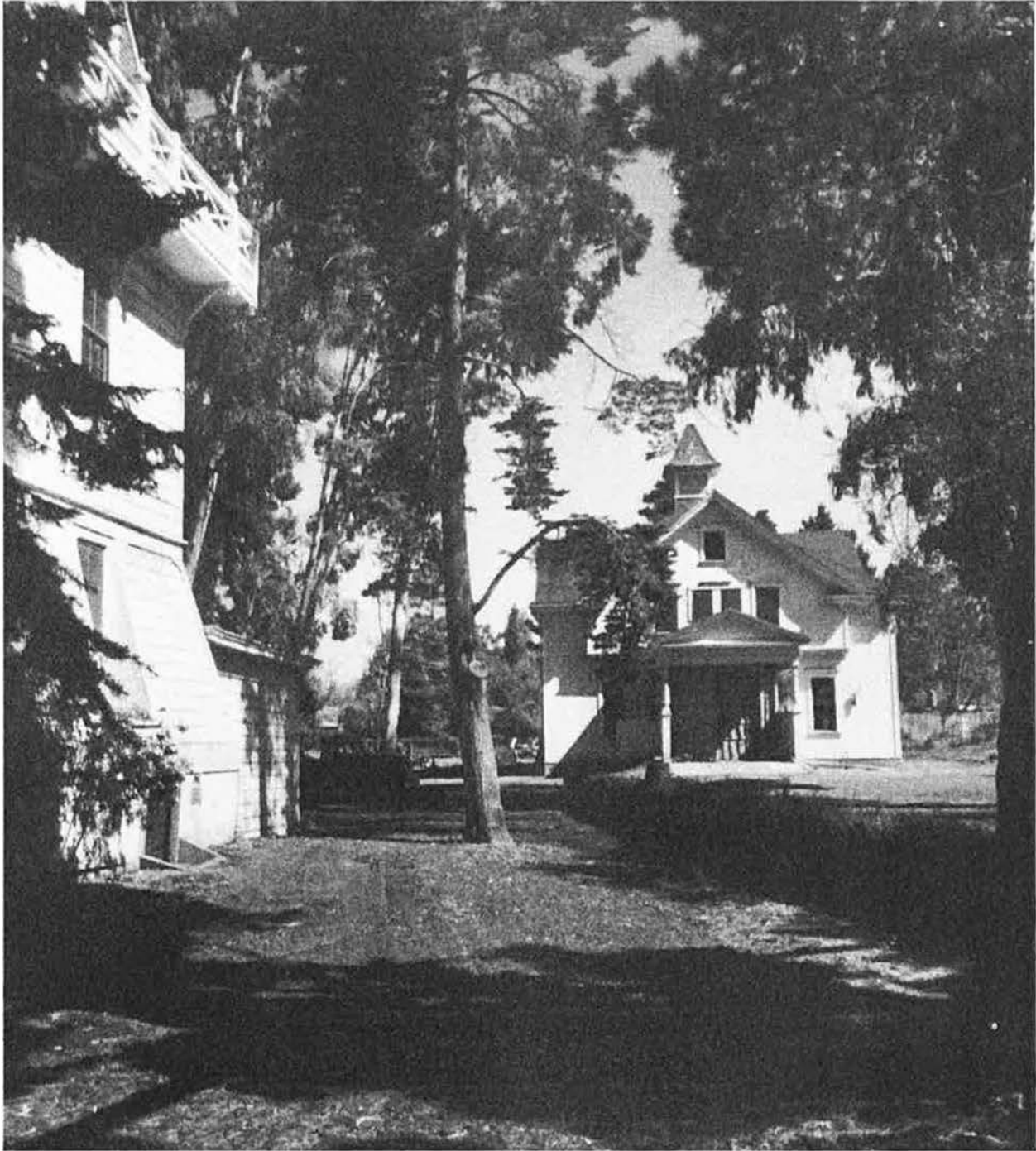
Name of Property

San Mateo, California

County and State

Figure 8. Ca. 1950 photograph of the Water Tower (left) and the Carriage House (right) at Elmwood

Courtesy of the Atherton Heritage Association



















































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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Holbrook--Palmer Estate, "Elmwood"

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: CALIFORNIA, San Mateo

DATE RECEIVED: 8/12/16 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 9/02/16
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 9/19/16 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 9/27/16
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 16000663

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 9.26.16 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

**Entered in
The National Register
of
Historic Places**

RECOM./CRITERIA _____

REVIEWER _____ DISCIPLINE _____

TELEPHONE _____ DATE _____

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.

**Holbrook-Palmer Estate
Atherton, San Mateo County
Staff Report**

Located in Holbrook-Palmer Park is a pair of nineteenth-century agricultural outbuildings constructed as part of a rural estate historically known as the Holbrook-Palmer Estate, or "Elmwood." The older of the two buildings is the Water Tower, built by prominent San Francisco wholesale hardware dealer Charles C. Holbrook circa 1883, as part of his "Elmwood" estate. It is a three-story, heavy timber-frame tankhouse built to store groundwater in a large redwood tank on the top floor. Water was then distributed by gravity to the nearby house, fields, gardens, and other outbuildings. The Water Tower is clad in redwood rustic channel siding and it is embellished with applied ornament designed in the Second Empire style, a French-inspired architectural movement popular in the United States during the 1870s and early 1880s. Unusually elaborate for a utilitarian building type, the Water Tower is capped by an ornamental balcony and a French Mansard roof clad in wooden shingles.

Located across a driveway from the Water Tower is the General Merrill Carriage House. Built in 1897 by Holbrook to replace a three-year-old barn destroyed earlier that year, the two-story, heavy timber-frame building features a carriage storage room, stables, and tack rooms on the first floor; and a large hayloft and bunkhouse on the second floor. The building is capped by a compound hip-and-gable roof that is crowned by a pyramidal-roof ventilator. In contrast to the flamboyant Water Tower, the Carriage House is designed in the restrained Colonial Revival style, an indigenous American architectural style popular during the 1890s.

Both buildings are in very good condition and neither has undergone any substantial exterior or interior alterations. Located approximately 75' apart, the pair of outbuildings remain essentially unchanged from the late nineteenth century, providing a rare window into a now almost entirely vanished world of nineteenth-century estates of southern San Mateo County. They both retain integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. Neither building retains the aspect of setting because the surrounding landscape was changed from a rural estate into a municipal park in the late 1960s. Nonetheless, the boundaries of the park correspond to the limits of the Elmwood Estate and both buildings are still surrounded by open space.

The Water Tower and the Carriage House at Holbrook-Palmer Park are eligible for the National Register of Historic Places at the local level of significance under Criterion C in the area of Architecture, as a rare surviving pair of agricultural outbuildings constructed on one of the rural estates developed in Atherton during the late nineteenth century. The period of significance, 1883 to 1897, encompasses the construction of the two buildings. The Water Tower is significant under Criterion C both for its Second Empire styling, as well as being a rare surviving example of a nineteenth-century tankhouse in Atherton. Most tankhouses were designed in a utilitarian mode, but the Holbrook Water Tower was designed to match the nearby "Parisian-style" Main House (no longer extant). The Carriage House is also significant as an example of a utilitarian building type designed in a recognizable architectural style, in this case the Colonial Revival style. It is one of only a handful of remaining barns or carriage houses in Atherton.

The property is nominated on behalf of the owner. No letters have been received to date. Staff supports the nomination as written and recommends the State Historical Resources Commission determine that the Holbrook-Palmer Estate meets National Register Criterion C at the local level of significance with a period of significance from 1883 to 1897. Staff recommends the State Historic Preservation Officer approve the nomination for forwarding to the National Park Service for listing in the National Register.

Jay Correia

**OFFICE OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION**

1725 23rd Street Suite 100
SACRAMENTO, CA 94296-0001
(916) 445-7000 Fax: (916) 445-7053
calshpo@ohp.parks.ca.gov

RECEIVED 2280



AUG 12 2016

Nat. Register of Historic Places
National Park Service

August 5, 2016

J. Paul Loether
Attention: Paul Lusignan
National Register of Historic Places
National Park Service 2280
1201 I (Eye) Street, NW
Washington, DC 20005

Subject: **Holbrook-Palmer Estate National Register of Historic Places
Nomination**

Dear Mr. Loether:

Enclosed please find the **Holbrook-Palmer Estate** nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. On April 18, 2016 at its regular quarterly meeting held in Sacramento, the California State Historical Resources Commission found the Water Tower and the Carriage House at the historic Holbrook-Palmer Estate eligible for the National Register under Criterion C at the local level of significance.

The Water Tower and the Carriage House are rare agricultural outbuildings constructed on one of the rural estates developed in Atherton during the late nineteenth century. The Water Tower is clad in redwood rustic channel siding and is embellished with applied ornament designed in the Second Empire style, while the Carriage House is designed in the restrained Colonial Revival style. The period of significance, 1883 - 1897, encompasses the construction of the two buildings.

The Holbrook-Palmer estate is nominated to the National Register by the Friends of Holbrook-Palmer Park. The Town of Atherton owns the property. No letters of objection or support were received for the nomination. If you have questions please contact Jay Correia of my staff at 916-445-7008 or jay.correia@parks.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Julianne Polanco".

Julianne Polanco
State Historic Preservation Officer

Enclosures