NPS Form 10-900a
(8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section _____ Page ___

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 05000251 Date Listed: 4/7/2005

Merrill, Charles W., House | Contra Costa | CA
Property Name | County | State

N/A
Multiple Name

This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action 4/7/05

Amended Items in Nomination:

Architect/Builder:

The nomination is amended to add the name: *Symmes, Mabel (landscape architect)* [Although the nomination discusses the need for additional research and context relating to Symmes career, the inclusion of the name on the nomination cover form may assist researchers using National Register data.]

These clarifications were confirmed with the CA SHPO office.

DISTRIBUTION:
National Register property file
Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)

257

FEB 7

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NPS Form 10-900
(Rev. Aug. 2002)
United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

OMB No. 1024-0018
(Expires Jan. 2005)

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 *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. 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. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Merrill, Charles W., House

other names/site number

2. Location

street & number 407 Camino Sobrante N/A not for publication

city or town Orinda N/A vicinity

state California code CA county Contra Costa code 013 zip code 94563

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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 _____nationally _____statewide X locally. (___See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Michael Wayne Olson 16 FEB 2005

Signature of certifying official Date

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER

State or Federal Agency or Tribal government

In my opinion, the property ____ meets ____ does not meet the National Register criteria. (___ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

_✓_ entered in the National Register _____
___ See continuation sheet.
____ determined eligible for the National Register _____
___ See continuation sheet.
____ determined not eligible for the National Register _____

____ removed from the National Register _____

____ other (explain): _____

_____ 4/7/05
Signature of Keeper Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)
_x_ private
___ public-local
___ public-State
___ public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)
_x_ building(s)
___ district
___ site
___ structure
___ object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
__1__	____ buildings
_____	____ sites
__1___	_1_ structures
_____	____ objects
__2__	__1_ Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register __0__

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

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Category: Domestic Subcategory: Single Dwelling

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Category: Domestic Subcategory: Single Dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Late 19th and 20th Century Revivals: Spanish Colonial Revival / Monterey Style

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation	concrete
roof	tile
walls	stucco
other	stone
	iron
	wood

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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.
- x B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- x 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 a grave.
- ____ d a cemetery.
- ____ e a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ____ f a commemorative property.
- ____ g less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Engineering/Invention/Industry
Architecture

Period of Significance 1938-1957 Significant Dates 1938

Significant Person Merrill, Charles Washington

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder Ratcliff, Walter Harris

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

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 # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data

___ State Historic Preservation Office
___ Other State agency
___ Federal agency
x Local government
x University
x Other

Name of repository:

Files of current owners
Historical files of the Ratcliff architectural firm

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 0.77 acres

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1	__	_____	_____	3	__	_____	_____
2	__	_____	_____	4	__	_____	_____

10 571400 4194540

___ See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title	Dr. Robert R. Weyeneth		
organization	University of South Carolina	date	revised, 6 January 2005
street & number	Department of History	telephone	803-777-6398
city or town	Columbia state SC	zip code	29208

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets
Maps
A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.
Photographs
Representative black and white photographs of the property.
Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

name	Rich and Jayne Weyeneth		
street & number	407 Camino Sobrante	telephone	925-254-0280
city or town	Orinda state CA	zip code	94563

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. 470 et seq.). A federal agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the 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 Keeper, National Register of Historic Places, 1849 "C" Street NW, Washington, DC 20240.

DESCRIPTION OF THE HISTORIC AND CURRENT CONDITION OF THE PROPERTY

The Charles W. Merrill House is a 6,000-square-foot residence built in 1938 in Orinda, Contra Costa County, California. The house was designed by regionally prominent architect Walter H. Ratcliff of Berkeley for mining engineer and San Francisco businessman Charles W. Merrill. Its architecture reflects elements of the Spanish Colonial Revival, but with its two stories, low-pitched roofline, and second-story balcony on the front elevation, the house is most characteristic of the Monterey style popular in large California homes built between 1925 and 1940. The house and grounds were designed as a small country estate in the rolling hills of Orinda. The house occupies a hillside location and is sited on two stonework terraces that are pierced by three stone staircases placed among gardens designed by landscape architect Mabel Symmes in 1938-1939. The current 0.77-acre lot includes all the resources historically associated with the property that retain integrity: the residence and its setting.[1]

The present appearance of the house and grounds reflects the historic appearance of the property to an impressive degree. The form and footprint of the house are unchanged, and the public view of the house from the street is the same as when it was constructed in 1938, including even the identical color palate of white stucco, blue shutters, and the original blue roof tile. The character-defining features of the landscape design – the stonework terraces, stone staircases and paths, the rock-edged driveway, lawn and patio, as well as much of the original plantings – are extant. Changes to the exterior of the residence have been minimal. A back window in the service area of the house was replaced with a sliding glass door in 1958 when the kitchen was updated. The most significant change to the exterior has occurred at the back of the house, out of public view, where a swimming pool and deck were constructed in 1967 and a small window was replaced by a door to provide access to the deck. Stone pillars and iron gates were added at the head of the driveway in the late 1960s. When the property passed out of the hands of the Merrill family in 1958, the site of a former orchard was sold off and developed as a building lot. Two original outbuildings, a tool house and a hothouse, are extant but in poor condition; neither is included in the resource count because they are small sheds. For the purposes of this nomination, contributing resources include one building (the residence) and one structure (the system of stonework terraces, staircases, and paths). There is one non-contributing structure, due to its recent vintage: the swimming pool and deck.[2]

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[1]On the revival of the Monterey style in California, see David Gebhard, "The Monterey Tradition: History Reordered," *New Mexico Studies in the Fine Arts* 7 (1982), 14-19. Stylistic definitions are drawn from Virginia McAlester and Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1986), 416-433; Rachel Carley, *The Visual Dictionary of American Domestic Architecture* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1994), 128-133, 196-199.

[2]The description of the historic appearance of the house and grounds is based on original blueprints in the possession of the current owners of the property, plans and construction notes in the client files of the Ratcliff firm of Emeryville, California; and contemporary observation. I appreciate the generosity of Christopher P. Ratcliff, AIA, in making the material in the client files available to me. I am indebted to James Weyeneth for field-checking a number of details for this description and for the sketch map.

The Residence

In form, the residence follows a modified "U"-plan, with the base of the "U" oriented as the northeastern elevation (and front of the house) and the sides of the "U" opening to the southwest and the outdoor living spaces of the home (For a depiction of the "U-plan" and roof configuration, see Image A.)

Northeastern Elevation (Front). The home presents an appearance of striking verticality. This impression is emphasized by a low-pitched roof with slight eave overhangs that renders the roof virtually invisible from this elevation. Dominating the front of the house and covered by the principal roof is an inset wood-framed balcony with iron balustrade and simple wood supports. This is the character-defining feature of the house that evokes the Monterey style. A one-story servants and utility wing extends to the southeast of the main structure. The exterior walls of the residence are white stucco. Of the nine windows on this elevation (including one set of french doors), seven have decorative blue shutters; two windows are covered with iron grilles reminiscent of the Spanish Colonial Revival. The roof system consists of two intersecting hipped roofs (over the main house block and the bedroom wing), a hipped roof on the one-story servants wing, and a gabled roof on the one-story dining room wing. The entire roof is clad in blue-colored clay shingle tile oriented in plain pattern. In 2004 new waterproofing underlayment was added to the roof; the original blue clay tiles from 1938 were retained and reused. (For a depiction of this elevation, see Image B.)

Northwestern Elevation (The Driveway). An extensive basement level is located on the northwestern elevation, giving this side of the hillside home three stories. Visible on the exterior of the basement level are the sliding wooden doors of a four-car garage and the window of the "man's room" (the male servant's bedroom). Visible on the first floor of the house are two sets of french doors. On the second floor are windows at both corners, separated by an iron balcony accessible by two interior doors. The only set of hinged and operable shutters on the house (there are twenty-two pairs of decorative shutters in total) is located at the western corner. The stuccoed rectangular block chimney (for the two first-floor fireplaces) on the ridge line is most visible from this elevation. (For a depiction of this elevation, see Image C.)

Southwestern Elevation (The Patio and Terrace). Along the southwestern elevation is the open side of the "U"-plan. Here two wings project from the main house block. To the northwest is a two-story bedroom wing with an iron balcony oriented to the southwest. To the southeast is the one-story dining room wing. Six sets of french doors open onto ground level: one from the bedroom wing, three from the main house block, and two from the dining room wing. Running the full width of the second floor of the main house block is a twenty-three-foot wide screened patio porch accessed by a set of french doors. A cast concrete decorative vent reminiscent of the Spanish Colonial Revival is set in the stucco on the second floor of the bedroom wing. Also visible is a second stuccoed rectangular block chimney (for the original kitchen venting system) at the junction of the dining room wing and main house. (For a depiction of this elevation, see Image B.)

Southeastern Elevation (The Service Area). The service area is located at the "back" of the house in a one-story wing along the southeastern elevation. The kitchen, pantry, and laundry room are located here, accessible for deliveries and service calls through a rear door. It is no longer called the service area because no servants have been employed in the house since the original owners moved in 1957. When

the property was sold in 1958, the kitchen was updated and a small back window on this elevation was replaced with a sliding glass door. (For a depiction of this elevation, see Image C.)

The Grounds

Because of its hillside location the original building site sloped to the northwest and to the southwest and, consequently, the house is constructed on two sets of stonework terraces. The rock wall of the lower terrace supports the driveway on the northwestern slope. The upper terrace creates the plane on which the house itself is sited and consists of rock walls on all but the southeastern (uphill) slope. A total of three stone staircases penetrate the walls to give access to the front door, to the terraced lawn and living room, and to the lawn and patio. Much of this lawn is supported by (and planted directly on top of) the concrete ceiling of the basement level. A landscaped setting was created for the residence through extensive plantings among the stonework of the paths, stairways, and terrace walls. Within the native oak woodland setting was planted a wide range of ornamental shrubs, as well as trees chosen for the color of their foliage and for their fruit. The two stonework terraces, the three stone staircases, the front flagstone path, the rock edging of the original driveway, the lawn and patio area are all extant and in good condition.

Front Gardens. The two-story northeastern elevation of the residence rises from an expanse of azaleas, oaks, and redwoods that separate the house from a formal driveway and the street. A long flagstone path with flagstone steps connects the driveway with the front door of the residence. Original plantings in the front garden included (and still include) azalea, rhododendron, dogwood, camellia, fern, and redwood trees. The rustic rock wall of the upper terrace is tallest and most visible at the northern corner. Stone pillars and iron gates were added at the head of the driveway in the late 1960s (they are small and non-historic and therefore not counted as resources). Today, the gardens in the front have matured, some oaks have been lost due to oak root fungus, and additional redwoods have been added for greater compatibility with the surrounding landscape of azaleas. The front flagstone path and stonework terrace are all extant and in good condition.

The Driveway. Immediately below the northwestern elevation, at the basement level of the residence, is the terminus and turnaround for the driveway. The rock wall of the upper terrace and its curving staircase with flagstone steps are visible at its northern corner. A rounded stucco retaining wall creates a planting bed below the stone staircase. The lawn is located above the basement level and it surrounds much of the first floor of the residence. Along its northwestern and southwestern sides the lawn is enclosed by an iron balustrade set among stuccoed rectangular piers. Supporting the driveway on the northwestern slope of the property is the lower stonework terrace. Further down the slope is the site of a former orchard; this property was sold off in 1958 and subsequently developed as a building lot. The historic driveway consisted of chips of red rock set in emulsified asphalt; it has been covered with asphalt but retains its original rock edging. The upper and lower stonework terraces, the flagstone staircase, the stucco retaining wall, the lawn, the stuccoed rectangular piers, and the form of the original driveway are all extant and in good condition.

The Patio and Terrace. The main house block and the two wings on the southwestern elevation enclose an outdoor patio that opens onto the lawn and a small circular reflecting pond that is four feet in diameter. (As a small object of plain design, the pond is not included in the resource count.) An orange tree was planted adjacent to the patio, and wisteria was encouraged to cover the exterior walls of the residence; both the orange tree and the wisteria survive today. Grape vines extended along the iron balustrade and

stuccoed piers that enclosed the terraced lawn; grape has been recently replanted there. The original marble-tiled patio was enlarged in 1965, retaining and reusing the original marble tiles as decorative accents. A stone staircase set in this portion of the upper stonework terrace led originally to a rose garden that occupied the sunny slope below the lawn. Today the staircase leads down to a swimming pool and deck constructed in 1967. To provide access to the pool and deck from the basement level, a small window was replaced by a door. During the period of significance, a redwood tool house, two glass hothouses, a lath house, and an incinerator for household and garden refuse were located on the western slope some distance below the house. Two of these original outbuildings are extant: the tool house and one hothouse. Both are frame structures measuring ten by twelve feet, and both are in poor condition today. As small sheds, neither is included in the resource count for this nomination. The stonework terrace, staircase, patio, reflecting pond, and much of the original vegetation are extant and in good condition.

The Service Area. The door at the back of the residence opens into the service yard, which is enclosed by a long stucco wall with a wooden gate providing access to a small parking area and the street. Bins used originally to store coal, charcoal, and wood have been replaced by a redwood shed. The service yard is screened from an adjacent dining room garden and its small flagstone terrace by a redwood fence of carved wooden irises and blades, along which is planted a foliage screen of a half-dozen Meyer lemon trees. Oral tradition attributes to Mrs. Merrill the creation of a collection of carved redwood animals and flowers that decorated the stone paths and landscaped portions of the grounds: a wooden squirrel greeted visitors to the front door, for example, and birds marked water faucets in the gardens. Much of this redwood ornamentation survives, as does the Meyer lemon hedge, the flagstone terrace, the stucco wall, and the wooden gate.

The Interior Plan

The first floor of the house was designed as a set of socializing and entertaining spaces, and the second floor was entirely private living space. For a house of this size it is rather remarkable how few bedrooms were incorporated into the original design: only three on the second floor (plus servants quarters on the first floor and basement level). The house is designed to take full advantage of the attractive natural setting and the mild climate of coastal California. All of the social spaces of the first floor have views of the gardens, as well as multiple sets of french doors leading outdoors onto the patio and lawn. All of the bedrooms on the second floor have doors leading outside to balconies (there are a total of four in the house) and vistas of the grounds and the oak-covered hills of Orinda.

Interior Design Features. While the exterior of the house exhibits elements of both the Spanish Colonial Revival and the Monterey architectural styles, the interior design incorporates features of the English Colonial Revival that was popularized in the United States by the Rockefeller restoration of Colonial Williamsburg in Virginia that began in the late-1920s.[3] The influence of the English Colonial Revival is

[3]On the late-nineteenth-century origins of the English Colonial Revival in the United States and its subsequent national influence in decorative arts and popular culture, see: Geoffrey L. Rossano, ed., *Creating a Dignified Past: Museums and the Colonial Revival* (Savage, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1991); Pauline C. Metcalf, ed., *Ogden Codman and the Decoration of Houses* (Boston: The Boston Athenaeum, 1988); Alan Axelrod, ed., *The Colonial Revival in America* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1985); and William B. Rhoads,

most evident on the first floor. Lighting fixtures such as the chandelier in the dining room (probably of Czechoslovakian crystal), the brass sconces of the hallway, and the brass chandelier above the staircase all reflect this stylistic influence. The woodwork on the first floor is also illustrative: the paneled wainscot in the dining room, the full-height paneling in the game room, the three-paneled doors found throughout the house, and the cornice moldings. The living room fireplace has marble facing, a mantel with keystone, and a pair of elaborate crystal and gold-plated sconces. The game room fireplace has marble facing and a simple mahogany mantel. The staircase is characterized by turned balusters, a banister of West Coast mahogany, and a cluster of three balusters at the newel post. The painted woodwork throughout the house – the doors, moldings, and wainscot – is enameled California white pine; the game room paneling is ribbon-grained Philippine mahogany; and the floors are stained plank oak. The windows in the home are recessed metal-frame casement, and the windows and french doors are equipped with either roller screens or pocket screen doors. Wall coverings are chiefly painted canvas over plaster.

The interior architecture also reflected the social hierarchy of a house inhabited by owners and staff. In the servants quarters and service areas, the doors were plain not paneled, the floors were pine not oak, and the hardware of the doors, windows, sinks, and tubs was of a different quality than elsewhere in the residence.

First Floor. The front door opens through an archway into a formal entry hall with a ceiling that rises above a curving staircase to the second floor. The living room (called the "small living room" during the Merrill residency) is located in the northern corner beyond a cloak room and through a second archway and a set of three-paneled pocket doors. The living room has french doors on both the northeastern and northwestern elevations. The room itself has a nine-foot ceiling and a fireplace on the southwestern wall. The game room is connected to the living room through short passageways on either side of the living room fireplace. The game room is the largest room in the house, twenty-five feet by twenty feet. The game room fireplace is located on the northeastern wall, which is fully paneled and flanked by eight-foot tall paneled doors. Built-in bookcases and cabinets are placed in the northwestern and southeastern walls, and a set of three silk-covered lights hang at the southwestern end of the room to illuminate a table for billiards, pool, or snooker. French doors open to the southeast onto the patio and to the northwest onto the lawn.

At the far end of the house is the dining room, located in a one-story wing that projects from the main house toward the south. It is accessible across the patio in good weather or down a hallway in the main house block and through a pocket door (which is the only six-paneled door in the house). Adjoining the dining room, in the original design, were a china pantry, kitchen, kitchen closet, and laundry room. Also on the first floor were two bedrooms for two female servants (the cook and maid) and a servants bathroom. For guests, a formal powder room with mirrored vanity and stall toilet was placed adjacent to the front door. Total square footage on the first floor is 2,550.

The presence of a tiny room located off the main hallway – the "phone booth" as it was called – reflected the centrality of the telephone to gracious modern living in the 1930s, as well as the importance of privacy in conversations. Remarkable as well is that there were only 225 households with telephones in

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The Colonial Revival, 2 vols. (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc.), 1977.

Orinda in 1938, the first year in which an Orinda phone book was published.[4] (For a plan of the first floor, see Image D.)

Second Floor. Three bedrooms were located on the 1,785-square-foot second floor, reached by the central staircase from the first floor entry hall and hallway. The original owners of the house, Mr. and Mrs. Charles W. Merrill, had their bedroom/sitting rooms in their own wing on the second floor, separated from the rest of the house by a locking privacy door. Mrs. Merrill's rooms were located in the northern corner of the house with views of the front gardens and hills. In addition to the bedroom/sitting room was a separate dressing room with a mirrored dressing table, sink, and a wall of closets with mirrored doors. Mr. Merrill's bedroom/sitting room (called the master bedroom) and his dressing room were located at the southwestern end of the wing with a panoramic three-sided view to the north, west, and south. Off the common hallway were a shared shower/tub, a separate "water closet," and additional closet space. There are two balconies in this second-floor living space: one on the northwestern elevation jointly accessible from the two dressing rooms and one at the southwestern end of Mr. Merrill's rooms. When the residence was sold in 1958, the two Merrill bedrooms in the northwestern wing were each divided into two.

The third bedroom ran the length of the southeastern elevation and functioned as a guest room. The second largest room in the house, it measures twenty-six feet by fourteen feet, plus a full bath and walk-in closet. Its walls were covered in a French wallpaper in a floral pattern. As with the other second-floor bedrooms in the house, it has access to a balcony, in this case the twenty-seven-foot-long balcony that stretches across much of the northeastern (front) elevation. The fourth balcony on the second floor is the screened "patio porch" along the southwestern elevation, in between the bedroom wing and the guest room. Also on the second floor were a storage closet lined with Port Orford cedar (called the "trunk room"), a linen closet, and a small utility room. (For a plan of the second floor, see Image E.)

Basement Level. More than any other floor in the residence, the 1,750-square-foot basement level reveals the extent to which ideas of semi-self-sufficiency were incorporated into the house plan. The four-car garage is the central feature of the basement. For servicing the family automobiles the basement was equipped with a built-in workbench and an air compressor that powered an outdoor hydraulic hoist manufactured by Baker Air Compressors of Alameda. To the southwest of the garage was the male servant's living quarters with full bath. To the northeast of the garage was a furnace room with a combination air conditioner and furnace from the Aladdin Heating Corporation of Oakland, a storage area for fireplace wood, and a walk-in vault (manufactured by the Oakland Safe and Lock Company) that was intended for wine storage. Also located in the garage were closets used for storage of kitchen preserves. (For a plan of the basement level, see Image F.)

The Infrastructure of the House. Operation of the house depended upon a staff of servants, and consequently three sets of servants rooms were incorporated into the interior design, two on the first floor adjacent to the kitchen for the cook and maid and one in the basement level for the live-in gardener who

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[4]Curiously, the Merrills' four-digit phone number seems to have changed several times in the early years of their residency, from 6471 in 1938, to 4211 in 1939, to 2244 in 1941. The thermostat for the furnace was also located in the phone booth, a Sangamo Time Switch from the Sangamo Electric Company of Springfield, Illinois. Muir Sorrick, *The History of Orinda: Gateway to Contra Costa County* (Orinda: The Friends of the Orinda Library, 1986), 158; Pacific Telephone and Telegraph Company, *Contra Costa County Telephone Directories*, 1938-1941.

took care of the grounds and the cars. To facilitate communication with the staff, the house was equipped with two forms of intercoms. A six-button annunciator for a call-button system from the Edwards Company was mounted on a kitchen wall. It alerted the servants whether there was a visitor wishing entrance (at the front door, patio door, or rear door) or whether a family member within the house wanted assistance. Thus, when entertaining the hostess could summon the maid to the dining room with a foot-activated button placed in the floor under the table. A wall-mounted button located between the living room and game room functioned similarly. A sixth button was located at the entrance to the bedroom wing. A second means of communication was an in-house telephone system powered by a set of eight 1½ volt batteries in the basement. Handsets that permitted voice communication were located in the family quarters upstairs, in the kitchen, and at the workbench in the basement level. The telephone in the self-contained "phone booth" on the first floor was a standard outside line operated by the Pacific Telephone and Telegraph Company.

Other infrastructure features reflected the extent to which the Merrills were interested in incorporating state-of-the-art technology into their home and their ability to afford the expense. The house was built with an air conditioning system, certainly unusual in a California residence in 1938. A perimeter burglary system monitored access through all exterior doors on the first floor, including the french doors. In addition, a system of "burglar lights" permitted the household to illuminate the first floor with the flick of a switch if intruders were suspected. Provision was made for fire as well as theft. Architect Walter H. Ratcliff and the Merrills were all familiar with the catastrophic fire of 1923 that had devastated so much of North Berkeley – in fact, the home of Ratcliff's parents at Euclid and Virginia had burned to the ground – so the house in Orinda was designed with fire suppression very much in mind. A large-bore canvas fire hose and a high pressure water faucet, manufactured by the fire protection company Shand & Jurs of Berkeley, were located on the back wall of the service yard. In addition, all the rooms in the house were fitted with built-in fire extinguishers – an "automatic waterless sprinkler system" – made by the Fire-Gard Corporation of San Francisco. Knowledge of the frequency of earthquakes in California – and recent memories of the San Francisco earthquake of 1906, the Santa Barbara trembler of 1925, and the Long Beach quake of 1933, only five years before construction of the house – meant that the residence was designed from the outset with a system of "earth quake bracing" on the first and second floors. (For the bracing schedule, see Image G.)

Present Appearance of the Residence and Grounds

The house and grounds retain an impressive degree of integrity: today the residence and its setting look remarkably as they did during the Merrill residency from 1938 through 1957. The form and footprint of the house are unchanged, and the public view of the house from the street is the same as when it was constructed, including even the identical color palate of white stucco, blue shutters, and the original blue roof tile. Stone pillars and iron gates were added at the head of the driveway in the late 1960s. The character-defining features of the landscape design – the stonework terraces, stone staircases and paths, the rock-edged driveway, lawn and patio, as well as much of the original plantings – are extant. The most significant change to the exterior has occurred at the back of the house, out of public view, where the rose garden was replaced with a swimming pool and deck in 1967, and a small window was replaced by a door to provide access to the pool deck. On the upper terrace near the house, the small marble-tiled patio was expanded in 1965, retaining the original marble tiles as decorative accents. Other changes to the exterior have included asphalting the driveway and adding a redwood shed in the service yard. Two original outbuildings are extant but in poor condition, but neither is included in the resource count because they

are small sheds. The site of a former orchard was sold and developed as a residential lot in 1958. The current 0.77-acre lot includes all the resources historically associated with the property that retain integrity. In terms of changes to the interior of the house, the most significant occurred when the property passed into the hands of the Weyeneth family in 1958: the two Merrill bedrooms in the northwestern wing were each divided into two, and the kitchen was updated at which time a small back window in the kitchen wing was replaced with a sliding glass door. In 2004 new waterproofing underlayment was added to the roof; the original blue clay tiles from 1938 were retained and reused. The original owners of the property, the architect, and the landscape architect would all easily recognize the present house and garden design even after the passage of almost seven decades. (For the current exterior and interior appearance, see Images H to P.)

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Charles W. Merrill House is significant under Criterion B for its association with the life of metallurgical engineer and San Francisco businessman Charles W. Merrill and under Criterion C as an example of the residential architecture of regionally prominent architect Walter H. Ratcliff.

Criterion B. The house is significant for its association with the life of Charles W. Merrill and exemplifies the final stage of his long and distinguished career. During the period in which he lived in the house, he presided over an international engineering corporation that had grown from Merrill's pioneering discoveries and patents of the 1890s and 1900s to become a highly-diversified firm with involvement in mining operations around the globe. By the late 1930s, the Merrill Company's operations had expanded beyond engineering research and development to include design, development, and manufacture of technologies with applications in mining as well as other fields. Largely because of its diversified capacities, the company competed successfully for defense contracts during World War II and played an important role in producing munitions then. The residence is the last home of Charles W. Merrill and reflects the culmination of his career as an engineer, entrepreneur, and corporate executive. It is the one extant property that best conveys the achievements of Merrill's career in engineering, invention, and industry.

Criterion C. As a large California residence that combines the Spanish Colonial Revival and the Monterey styles with interior elements reminiscent of the English Colonial Revival, the Charles W. Merrill House is an outstanding example of the eclecticism that Walter H. Ratcliff brought to his residential architecture. The house represents the mature phase of Ratcliff's career and is one of a limited number of projects he undertook in the 1930s. Its design illustrates Ratcliff's distinctive blend of academic eclecticism and keen awareness of regional topography, climate, and setting.

Charles W. Merrill
(1869-1956)

The house is significant for its association with the life of Charles W. Merrill and exemplifies the final stage of his long and distinguished career. During the period in which he lived in the house, he presided over an international engineering corporation that had grown from Merrill's pioneering discoveries and patents of the 1890s and 1900s to become a highly-diversified firm with involvement in mining operations around the globe. By the late 1930s, the Merrill Company's operations had expanded beyond engineering research and development to include design, development, and manufacture of technologies with applications in mining as well as other fields. Largely because of its diversified capacities, the company competed successfully for defense contracts during World War II and played an important role in producing munitions then. The residence is the last home of Charles W. Merrill and reflects the culmination of his career as an engineer, entrepreneur, and corporate executive. It is the one extant property that best

conveys the achievements of Merrill's career in engineering, invention, and industry.[5]

Charles Washington Merrill was born in Concord, New Hampshire but raised in San Francisco. He was born on 21 December 1869 to bookkeeper Sylvester Merrill (1837-1924) and Clara Lydia French (1841-1926), both New Englanders. Sylvester Merrill had gone to San Francisco toward the end of the Civil War to work as a clerk for a furniture dealer and manufacturer, and he returned to Concord in 1868 to marry Clara Lydia French. Shortly thereafter the new bride followed her husband back to San Francisco, making the journey by ship to Panama, across the isthmus by rail, and finally up the Pacific coast by ship. Clara returned east in November 1869 on the recently completed transcontinental railroad (the formal dedication ceremony had been in May) in order to have her baby at her parents' home. Mother and son traveled to San Francisco in March 1870.[6]

Toward the end of the 1870s, the family moved across the bay to Alameda, where "Charlie" Merrill attended the Alameda public schools and, in 1887, entered the University of California at Berkeley as a student in the College of Mining. (Reflecting the importance of the Gold Rush and the Comstock Lode for the state's history, mining had long been regarded as an essential curriculum in California higher education.) Fours years later, in 1891, Merrill earned his Bachelor of Science degree in metallurgy and mining. To an extent that would astound undergraduates today, Merrill's senior thesis was the foundation for both his professional success and his subsequent wealth. He wrote his thesis on the "cyanide process" for recovering gold from ore, and in just a few years he perfected his techniques which came to be known as the "Merrill Cyanide Process." This process remains in use today and facilities that utilize it are called Merrill-Crowe plants.[7]

Shortly after his graduation, in November 1891, Charles Merrill began working for Alexis Janin, who operated a prominent metallurgical engineering firm in San Francisco. Merrill worked in the Janin

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[5]No other extant property associated with Charles Merrill conveys his life and career as well as the Orinda residence. The Merrill Company never constructed its own office building. Instead, it leased a succession of commercial spaces, as at 143 Second Street, 343 Sansome Street, and 582 Market Street. Like most rented offices in large commercial buildings in San Francisco, these interior spaces were in continuous use and were regularly modified to suit the needs of a series of tenants and, consequently, they do not retain integrity from the years they were associated with the Merrill Company. Charles Merrill lived in three Berkeley houses. The Merrill home at 2310 Prospect (also known as 2311 Warring) saw the longest residency, from 1916 to 1938, but it has been converted into a fraternity house, has a non-historic addition, and lacks integrity from the period of the Merrill residency. The home at 2307 Warring is not extant. The building at 2317 Prospect was occupied by Merrill for only a couple of years, from 1910 to 1912, far shorter than his residency in the Orinda house from 1938 to 1956. The industrial complexes and mining landscapes associated with Merrill's early career are no longer extant. I am grateful to Daniel O. Holmes and Susie Elkind for their field inspections of these properties. The Merrill addresses can be traced through telephone books and city directories such as Pacific Telephone and Telegraph Company, *Oakland, Alameda, Berkeley, San Francisco and Counties of Alameda, Marin, San Mateo and Palo Alto Exchanges; Husted's Oakland, Berkeley and Alameda Directory* (Oakland: Polk-Husted Directory Co.); *Polk's Oakland (California) City Directory including Alameda, Berkeley, Emeryville and Piedmont* (San Francisco: R.L. Polk & Co.).

[6]David W. Ryder, *The Merrill Story* (San Francisco: The Merrill Company, 1958), 4-16. A second son died at five months of age, in 1875.

[7]Ryder, *The Merrill Story*, 17-21, 24. As the process was refined over the decades, it became the "Merrill-Crowe Simultaneous Clarification-Deaeration-Precipitation Process," reflecting the contributions of Thomas B. Crowe, who subsequently joined the Merrill Company.

laboratory testing and studying ores, and he was allowed to make use of the company laboratory for his own research in his spare time, where he refined the ideas in his thesis. By 1893 he had the confidence to strike out on his own, establishing an office for himself on the upper floor of a building at 117-121 Geary Street in San Francisco where the furniture company for which his father worked was located. Between 1893 and 1898, his work at mining operations in California, Arizona, and Montana confirmed the technical practicality and commercial viability of his ideas.[8]

Mining is an inherently inefficient undertaking. The extraction of ore-bearing rock from open pits or underground shafts and tunnels always requires technologies for separating ore from rock. The first stage is a mechanical process – the rock extracted from the earth is crushed and ground – and the next stages are a series of chemical reactions. Once crushed, the finely ground rock is mixed with a chemical broth designed to cause the metal to combine with particular chemicals, thus separating ore from stone. In the mining of gold during much of the nineteenth century, for example, mercury was the chemical of choice for its ability to "amalgamate" with the gold. Charles Merrill's work in the 1890s directed attention to the properties of cyanide, rather than mercury, as a more effective bonding agent (and therefore one that would be more productive in the amount of gold that was recovered). Merrill did not invent the cyanide process; a version of it had originated in England in the 1880s, but the English process had never proved a viable technology in the American mining industry. Throughout his professional career, Merrill made refinements to his cyanide process – including using zinc dust, rather than zinc shavings, to precipitate the gold from the cyanide solution in the final phase – and his engineering work enabled it to become the industry standard. Today it is the most common method for processing gold because, by one estimate, it captures ninety percent of the gold that is present.[9]

In the early 1890s Merrill may not have foreseen the success he was to have with his engineering innovation but he did have the confidence to convince three different mining companies to experiment with the technology. Knowing that the mine tailings of the Standard Consolidated Mine at Bodie, on the eastern side of the Sierra Nevada, were rich in unrecovered gold, he persuaded the company to build a prototype facility to test the efficacy of his cyanide process with the ore at that site. When the prototype proved successful, the company ordered the construction of a large commercial plant and hired Merrill, who would have been in his mid-twenties, to direct operations. He approached subsequent projects similarly. At the invitation of the owners of the Harqua Hala gold mine near Yuma, Arizona, he tested the ore at the site to learn if the process might be promising, then encouraged the mining company to construct a facility to try the process on a more extensive scale. When the prototype proved productive, a full industrial facility was constructed under Merrill's direction. Finishing in Arizona, Merrill moved on to the Montana Mining Company's plant at Marysville with similar results recovering gold from the mine tailings.[10]

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[8]Ryder, *The Merrill Story*, 22-30.

[9]Ryder, *The Merrill Story*, 25, 47, 50. The English system was the "McArthur-Forrest Cyanide Process," for which patents had been issued in 1887-1888. On the processes used to recover gold today and the prevalence of Merrill-Crowe Plants, see two websites maintained by Denver Mineral Engineers, Inc.: www.denvermineral.com/basicp~1.html and www.denvermineral.com/merrillcroew.html, accessed 17 May 2004. As a result of the electronic revolution, modern recycling efforts now target the recovery of precious metals from circuit boards and other computer parts.

[10]Ryder, *The Merrill Story*, 25-30.

Perhaps his most significant achievement – from the perspective of technical engineering complexity, the size of the operations, and the potential value of the recovered gold – was his work at the Homestake Mine near the towns of Lead and Deadwood in the Black Hills of South Dakota, where three thousand tons of tailings were flushed out daily. The mines there had been producing gold for over twenty years when Merrill was hired in 1899 to develop ways to apply his industrial process. After the preliminary work at Homestake indicated that the Merrill Cyanide Process could be effective, Merrill was hired on a ten-year contract (1899-1908) to supervise operations. As compensation, he was to receive a percentage of the gold that his industrial process recovered, rather than a conventional salary. Because every mining operation is different, as is the composition of the ore-bearing rock at a mine, Merrill always had to identify problems specific to a locale, then devise an engineering solution, test it, and refine it.[11] When he received a professional award in later years, it was the decade of work at Homestake that was singled out as his achievement:

> The Merrill methods of treatment, precipitation and filtration are in use throughout the world. Through his efforts, water tailings and lean gold-bearing rock have become commercial ore. Operators and engineers owe him a debt of gratitude for making it possible to convert material loss into substantial profit, while the world at large is richer by many millions of gold.[12]

By one estimate, the output of the Homestake Mine as a direct result of Charles Merrill's metallurgical innovations was raised by twenty million dollars.[13] By the time Merrill left South Dakota in 1908 – he was only in his late thirties – his discoveries and patents had earned him an international reputation and considerable wealth. In these ways, Merrill's work made significant contributions to this later "scientific" phases of the western mining industry, when the expertise of professionally trained engineers pioneered new technologies for the recovery of ore.

Merrill returned to the Bay Area from South Dakota and proceeded to establish a family home and a profitable business. Prior to going to the Homestake Mine, Merrill had married Clara Scott Robinson, whom he had known since high school, in Alameda on 9 February 1898, and in the course of their time in South Dakota he had fathered three children. After moving back west, the family took up residence near the University of California campus in Berkeley after 1909. A fourth child was born two years later. Merrill's professional successes had persuaded him to market his metallurgical processes and equipment internationally and, to this end, he founded the Merrill Company in 1908 with offices located originally at 143 Second Street between Mission and Howard. The outbreak of war in Europe in 1914 disrupted the supply of one commodity crucial in the precipitation portion of the Merrill Cyanide Process, zinc dust, much of which was imported from Belgium where it was a byproduct of smelting operations. The Merrill Company responded by establishing a subsidiary, the Alloys Company, in 1916 to manufacture zinc dust locally, eventually marketing the product as "Merrillite."[14] (For a photograph of Merrill during the

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[11]Ryder, *The Merrill Story*, 31-50, 101.

[12]Remarks at the awarding of the James Douglas Medal by the American Institute of Mining and Metallurgical Engineers at a ceremony in the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, New York, 20 February 1924, quoted in Ryder, *The Merrill Story*, 101.

[13]Ryder, *The Merrill Story*, 50.

[14]Ryder, *The Merrill Story*, ix, 30, 51-61. The children were Beatrice Maude Merrill (born 8 March 1900), John Lisgar Merrill (born 29 March 1903), Gregor Charles Merrill (born 2 December 1906), and Bruce Robinson Merrill (born 22 May 1911).

1910s, see Image Q.)

The American entry into World War I in 1917 took Charles Merrill to Washington, D.C. to work for the federal government as part of the home front effort. He came at the invitation of Herbert Hoover who, like Merrill, had pursued work as a mining engineer after his graduation from college. (Hoover had graduated from Stanford University with a degree in geology in 1895 and worked in San Francisco for metallurgical engineer Louis Janin. Hoover eventually left the Janin firm in 1897 to work as a mining consultant in Australia and China for several years.[15]) Hoover and Merrill had gotten to know each other when both were employed in the mining business in San Francisco, as Hoover recalled:

> Charlie Merrill and I first became friends when he was working for one Janin brother [Alexis Janin] and I was working for another [Louis Janin] in the 1890's. My next full contact with him was when he took charge of one of the divisions in the Food Administration for me in 1917. He did a magnificent job. I tried to get him into the Government in 1928 [when Hoover was elected president], but his professional obligations prevented it. His qualities of mind and character, as well as his diversified interest in life, made him fit for great public service. And he gave that service in a multitude of directions all his life.[16]

Hoover had been appointed by President Woodrow Wilson to direct the United States Food Administration that was charged with overseeing the domestic food supply for the duration of the war through improving production, regulating distribution, setting prices, encouraging conservation, and promoting backyard "victory gardens." Merrill was placed in charge of the Division of Collateral Commodities which had responsibility for ensuring that there were sufficient quantities of the non-food materials needed for food production. Many of his duties called on his skills as a businessman familiar with international markets, such as locating domestic and foreign sources of supplies and negotiating prices in the volatile wartime market. Merrill served in this capacity for two years, until the war ended.[17] Merrill and Hoover maintained a friendship in subsequent decades and, following construction of the Merrill House in Orinda in 1938, the former president and his wife were guests of the Merrills during their regular visits to the Bay Area.[18]

From Washington, Merrill returned to the Bay Area to focus on the operation of his company during the 1920s. It was also a decade when his achievements earned him considerable recognition: an honorary degree from his alma mater, the University of California, in 1922 and a professional award from the American Institute of Mining and Metallurgical Engineers in 1924. When he was elected president of the university's alumni association, Merrill became an *ex officio* member of the university's governing body, the

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[15]David Burner, *Herbert Hoover: A Public Life* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), 16-43.

[16]Foreword by Herbert Hoover, in Ryder, *The Merrill Story*, xi.

[17]Ryder, *The Merrill Story*, 62-72.

[18]The current owners of the Merrill House learned about the Hoover visits from several people shortly after their purchase of the house in 1958. Herbert Hoover's daily calendar from 1917 to 1964 is available on the website of the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library and Museum; it indicates business, rather than social, correspondence with Merrill from 1917 to 1918 when they were colleagues at the Food Administration and sporadic correspondence in 1923 and 1924. See: www.hoover.archives.gov. On Merrill's support for Hoover in the 1928 campaign, see the correspondence with Merrill in the John Debo Galloway Papers, The Bancroft Library. On Hoover's years after the White House, see Gary Dean Best, *Herbert Hoover: The Postpresidential Years, 1933-1964*, 2 vols. (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1983).

Board of Regents. Like many in his social and financial circumstances, he was tapped to head up various charitable causes, such as San Francisco's Community Chest campaign for 1926 and an effort to establish a locally based charitable foundation similar to the Rockefeller and Russell Sage foundations on the East Coast. The latter venture attracted the attention of the *New York World*, which characterized it as a campaign among "fourteen of San Francisco's wealthiest men" to donate "millions of the surplus wealth of the richer families...to the future benefit of the community as a whole." The project was slow to get off the ground, got derailed by the Depression of the 1930s, and was eventually established by others in the 1940s. In addition, Merrill became a reliable and generous patron of the University of California.[19] (For a photograph of Merrill in his later years, see Image R.)

It was a testament to his business acumen and corporate leadership that Charles Merrill was able to build a country estate in Orinda at the height of the national depression. When Merrill decided to construct the 6,000-square-foot house, he was successfully steering a diversifying international company through the economic turmoil of the time. Merrill was then in his sixties, and he would continue to preside over his company well into the early 1950s. By the 1930s, Charles and Clara Merrill's four children were adults, in their twenties and thirties, and the Merrills no longer needed a home in which to raise a family. Instead they wanted a house appropriate for the gracious entertaining expected of an active mid-twentieth-century corporate executive who moved in international circles.

When it was completed in 1938, the house represented a monument to both his professional interests and his financial successes. The infrastructure of the residence reflected an engineer's fascination with incorporating state-of-the-art technology into his new house and an executive's ability to afford the expense even in the midst of the Depression. The Orinda residence was constructed to include earthquake bracing on the first and second floors, exterior and interior fire suppression systems, perimeter and interior burglar alarms, air conditioning, and two forms of in-house intercoms. The house was an early and especially prominent home within the real estate development that transformed Orinda into a fashionable suburban enclave. Since the 1920s local booster Edward I. DeLaveaga had been marketing the area's rural heritage as a setting for gracious country living for prosperous San Francisco businessmen like Charles Merrill. The Merrill home and similar Spanish-style estates in the Haciendas del Orinda development reflect this important period in Orinda's history, and they remain today among the most architecturally significant historic buildings in the city.[20]

The Merrill residency in the Orinda house during the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s coincided with the globalization of the Merrill Company and the apogee of Merrill's professional life as an engineer and entrepreneur. In these years Charles Merrill expanded the reach of his company internationally, establishing subsidiaries and affecting mining operations throughout the world. One estimate suggests that by the 1940s, every major gold or silver mining operation in the world used products developed by the

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[19]Ryder, *The Merrill Story*, 91-105. The *New York World*, 13 July 1926, is quoted in Ryder, *The Merrill Story*, 95. I am grateful to David Kessler for surveying the record of Merrill's gifts and donations to the University of California in the University Archives at The Bancroft Library. Merrill College at the university's Santa Cruz campus is named for Charles E. Merrill, founder of the Merrill Lynch Company; $650,000 from the Charles E. Merrill Trust helped to establish the college in the 1960s.

[20]For a discussion of Edward I. deLaveaga, the Merrill purchases of land, and the forces that transformed Orinda into a Bay Area suburb after the 1920s, see the Addendum: Orinda during the Merrill Residency at the end of this section. For a discussion of the infrastructure of the house, see the earlier discussion in section 7.

Merrill Company. In addition, the Merrill Company diversified into a more general research and development firm to design, manufacture, and market a range of technologies that included a popular self-lubricating valve (the Merco Nordstrom Valve) and the Merco Centrifuge. Innovations such as these, together with the invention of other machine forms and countless technical processes, found applications in industries as disparate as food processing, pharmaceuticals, chemicals, and petroleum refining by the 1950s. In time the firm established an engineering consulting division. By the early 1950s, the Merrill Company had been issued 156 patents in the United States, 64 in Canada, 50 in Mexico, 35 in South Africa, 33 in Great Britain, 28 in Australia, 26 in the Philippines, 20 in Japan, 16 in Ghana, 13 in Southern Rhodesia, 10 in Germany, and 146 more in 36 other countries. Under Charles Merrill's leadership in these years, the Merrill Company became one of the first San Francisco-based companies to operate on such a scale internationally.[21]

Largely because of its diversified capabilities and industrial track record, the Merrill Company competed successfully for defense contracts during World War II and played an important role in producing munitions for the American war effort. For the Army Ordnance Department, the Merrill Company organized a subsidiary called Metals, Inc. to construct a plant across the bay in Albany and produce magnesium powder. Magnesium powder had multiple uses in wartime: in tracer bullets employed by fighter pilots, in parachute and signal flares, and in flares used for aerial night photography. The plant was staffed by a workforce of about one-hundred women working under male supervisors, and it operated with three shifts around the clock. The plant earned an award from the War Department for its speed and safety in producing this volatile chemical. A second government contract with the Chemical Warfare Service enabled Merrill to establish the first facility on the West Coast for the manufacture of aluminum powder. Aluminum powder was a major ingredient in the propellant for the large-caliber shells fired from American battleships, as well as a component in the aerial fire bombs dropped on German cities during the war. A new subsidiary, the Merrill Products Company, was established to produce the chemical in a reconverted plant in Emeryville for the United States Navy.[22]

In 1953, at age eighty-three, Charles Merrill formally stepped down as president of the Merrill Company, relinquishing that role to his eldest son, John Lisgar Merrill. His wife, Clara Merrill, had died in 1941 and sometime in his seventies Merrill had remarried, to Mrs. Margaret Barker Cope. In their later years Mr. and Mrs. Merrill began a tradition of spending winters in Honolulu, traveling to the islands in late November on the *Lurline* and returning to San Francisco in March. It was on one such visit, while staying at the Halekulani hotel, that Charles Merrill suffered a stroke. He died two days later in the Queen's Hospital, on 6 February 1956. The Associated Press story on his death characterized him as a "distinguished and internationally known San Francisco metallurgical engineer." Former president Herbert Hoover made a point of sending a note of condolence to the family, calling Merrill "my steadfast friend for over fifty years." His ashes were interred at Mountain View Cemetery in Oakland. Mrs. Merrill lived in the Orinda house until 1957.[23]

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[21]Ryder, *The Merrill Story*, 73-90, 106-123, 140-147.

[22]Ryder, *The Merrill Story*,124-129.

[23]Ryder, *The Merrill Story*, ix, 137-139; "C.W. Merrill, 86, Dies; Metallurgical Expert," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 8 February 1956; "San Francisco Engineer Dies at Queen's Hospital," *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 8 February 1956; "Stroke Fatal To C.W. Merrill, Noted Engineer," *The Honolulu Advertiser*, 9 February 1956. In June 2004 the Merrill family plot at Mountain View Cemetery (plot 13, lot 68) contained the remains of Charles Merrill, his first wife,

The Merrill house in Orinda is closely tied to this final phase of Charles Merrill's productive life. Between 1938 and 1953 Merrill navigated the Merrill Company through depression, cemented its international reputation and influence, reorganized its divisions onto a war footing, and presided over its return to industrial production in the postwar world. The residence is the last home associated with the life and work of Charles W. Merrill and reflects well the pinnacle of his achievements as an engineer and executive.

Walter H. Ratcliff
(1881-1973)

As a large California residence that combines the Spanish Colonial Revival and the Monterey styles with interior elements reminiscent of the English Colonial Revival, the Charles W. Merrill House is an outstanding example of the eclecticism that Walter H. Ratcliff brought to his residential architecture. The house represents the mature phase of Ratcliff's career and is one of a limited number of projects he undertook in the 1930s. Its design illustrates Ratcliff's distinctive blend of academic eclecticism and keen awareness of regional topography, climate, and setting.

Walter Harris Ratcliff was born in Blackheath, County Kent, England, in 1881 to the Reverend Walter Henry Ratcliff and Evelyn A. Ratcliff. (Although the future architect would become widely known as "Walter H. Ratcliff, Jr.," this name was actually a fiction of convenience. Ratcliff did not have the same middle name as his father, and only as an adult did he add the clarifying suffix "Jr." when both were living and working in the San Francisco Bay Area.) In 1893 Walter and Evelyn Ratcliff moved their family from England to southern California, first to San Diego and then to Pasadena, and finally to Berkeley in 1897. The young Walter Ratcliff attended Berkeley High School and then enrolled in the University of California, where he studied chemistry and graduated in 1903. But a part-time job building houses with his friend Charles Louis MacFarland inspired Ratcliff to ponder architecture as a career.[24] (For a photograph of Walter Ratcliff at the time of his graduation, see Image S.)

The precise chronology of Ratcliff's life immediately following his graduation remains somewhat unclear. We know that he worked in the Bay Area for several architectural firms, including that of Henry A. Schulze. He was also employed as a draftsman by John Galen Howard, who at that time was the supervising architect for the University of California campus. Among his projects for Howard was engineering work on the Hearst Memorial Mining Building. (The building was funded by Phoebe Apperson Hearst as a memorial to her husband, Senator George R. Hearst, a self-made mining engineer who had made his fortune owning various western mines including the Homestake, the genesis of Charles Merrill's

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his parents, his wife's parents, three members of his mother's family, his brother who had died in infancy, and three of their four children and their spouses.

[24]Particularly helpful on the family history has been the research conducted by Kenneth E. Ratcliff and kindly shared with the author via e-mail, 25-26 June 2004. See also: Robert W. Ratcliff, *The Ratcliff Architects, in Berkeley Since 1909*, an oral history conducted in 1989 by Suzanne B. Riess, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1990; Lesley Emmington, Anthony Bruce, and Don Craig of the Berkeley Architectural Heritage Society, A Conversation with Peter Ratcliff, Son of Walter Ratcliff, Jr., Berkeley Architect, 11 August 1997, unpublished typescript transcribed by Walter W. Ratcliff; Nicholas Hanson, "Walter H. Ratcliff, Jr.," in Berkeley Architectural Heritage Association, *The Residential Work in Berkeley of Walter H. Ratcliff, Jr.* (Berkeley: Berkeley Architectural Heritage Association, 1980).

fortune. Merrill himself had graduated from the College of Mining in 1891.) At some point, probably in 1906, Ratcliff decided to embark on a European tour. Through the assistance of an affluent and well-connected English uncle, Ratcliff traveled to England, Italy, and France to study architecture at the British School in Rome and the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris. He returned to the United States in July 1907, landing at Ellis Island on the *Teutonic* from Southampton and then making his way back to California. Following his return from Europe, Ratcliff formed a short-lived partnership with Alfred Henry Jacobs at 20 Montgomery Street in San Francisco between 1907 and 1909. Ratcliff established his own firm in Berkeley in 1909, initially at 211 First Street. By 1923 Ratcliff's offices were located at 2140 Shattuck Avenue.[25]

During a professional career that spanned the first five decades of the twentieth century, Ratcliff worked primarily in Berkeley but also throughout the Bay Area. He designed buildings in San Francisco, in the East Bay (Oakland, Piedmont, Montclair, El Cerrito, Kensington, Orinda, Walnut Creek, and Concord), in Marin County (Belvedere and Mill Valley), and on the Peninsula (Palo Alto, Los Gatos, and San Mateo). In northern California more generally, Ratcliff worked as far south as Carmel where he designed residences (two in the 1920s); as far north as Ukiah where he designed the Mendocino County Courthouse (1927); and as far east as Norden where he designed the Sierra Club's Clare Tappaan Lodge (1934) at 7,000 feet in the Sierra Nevada.[26]

In terms of the number of projects that he undertook, most were dwellings. Ratcliff's residential architecture included well over one-hundred single-family homes and at least twenty apartment buildings or multiple-family residences. Some of the more noteworthy included an English-style cottage for Anna Head in Berkeley and substantial Spanish Colonial houses such as the mansion for state senator A. H. Breed in Piedmont and the residences for E.A. Nickerson, Dr. Hubert Heitman, and his own family, all in the Claremont district of Berkeley.[27]

He also designed a number of important institutional structures. Particularly impressive were the range and scale of the educational facilities associated with Ratcliff, chiefly in Berkeley: several buildings and additions to others at the private Anna Head girls school (1911-1927),[28] the Sacramento School

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[25]This summary is based on Kenneth E. Ratcliff to author, 26 June 2004; *The Ratcliff Architects*, 32-45; *Crocker-Langley San Francisco Directory* (San Francisco: H.S. Crocker Company, 1905); Pacific Telephone and Telegraph Company, *Oakland, Alameda, Berkeley, San Francisco*, 1907-1909; *The Architect & Engineer* (October 1914), 58; *Husted's Oakland, Berkeley and Alameda Directory*, 1923; Sally B. Woodbridge, *John Galen Howard and the University of California: The Design of a Great Public University Campus* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 79-80, 90. John Galen Howard served as supervising architect for the Berkeley campus from 1901 to 1924.

[26]Unless otherwise indicated, the attribution of buildings to Walter H. Ratcliff and the estimates of their dates of construction are based on the inventory compiled by Walter W. Ratcliff and graciously made available to the author. A recent publication is also invaluable in identifying and dating Ratcliff properties: Susan Dinkelspiel Cerny, *Berkeley Landmarks: An Illustrated Guide to Berkeley, California's Architectural Heritage*, rev. ed. (Berkeley: Berkeley Architectural Heritage Association, 2001). It should be noted that students of Ratcliff's architecture often disagree about the date to assign to his buildings. On the idea for Clare Tappaan Lodge, see: Joel H. Hildebrand, "Ski Heil!," *Sierra Club Bulletin* 20:1 (February 1935).

[27]*The Architect & Engineer* (October 1914); (May 1927).

[28]"Anna Head School for Girls, Berkeley, Alameda County, California," nomination to the National Register of Historic Places, prepared 12 August 1979.

(1914),[29] the Thomas Edison School (1915),[30] Armstrong Business College (1923),[31] the campus plan and various buildings at the Pacific School of Religion (1923-1939),[32] Hillside School (1925),[33] the Morrison Reading Room (1926) at the Doe Library on the University of California campus,[34] the Berkeley Day Nursery (1927) which was one of the first day-care facilities in the country for working-class parents when it opened in 1908,[35] and a number of University of California fraternities and sororities on Piedmont Avenue, some built for that purpose and others adapted from former single-family residences.[36] His most significant school architecture outside of Berkeley was a campus plan and various buildings for Mills College (1917-1935) in Oakland.[37] Ratcliff's other institutional architecture included the Berkeley Tennis Club (1908) on Hillegass,[38] the Berkeley Elks Club (1913),[39] four Berkeley firehouses (1913-1914),[40] the Berkeley Country Club (1924),[41] and the West Berkeley YMCA (1938-1939).

Ratcliff's commercial work was similarly concentrated in Berkeley and included the Mercantile Trust Company bank (1925) at College and Ashby, the Chamber of Commerce Building (1925-1927),[42] the Fidelity Guarantee Building and Loan Association offices (1926), and the Mason-McDuffie Company office (1928). The Chamber of Commerce Building on Shattuck Avenue at Center Street, Berkeley's financial center, was the first high-rise in the city, at twelve stories. Several of Ratcliff's commercial structures are associated with the emergence of the automobile on the urban scene, such as a car showroom, garages, and service stations like the Richfield Garage and Service Station (1930) on Oxford Street. Ratcliff's commercial designs outside of Berkeley included an addition of two floors to the top of the Merchants

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[29] *The Architect & Engineer* (October 1914), 62.

[30] *The Architect & Engineer* (May 1916), passim.

[31] *The Architect & Engineer* (February 1926), 99.

[32] *The Architect & Engineer* (May 1924), 67-68; (February 1926), 100-101.

[33] *Pacific Coast Architect* (November 1928), 12; "Hillside School, Berkeley, Alameda County, California," nomination to the National Register of Historic Places, prepared 30 April 1982.

[34] *Pacific Coast Architect* (November 1928), 22.

[35] *Pacific Coast Architect* (November 1928), 12; "Berkeley Day Nursery, Berkeley, Alameda County, California," nomination to the National Register of Historic Places, prepared 11 October 1976.

[36] *Pacific Coast Architect* (November 1928), 24, 25; Burl Willes, ed., *Picturing Berkeley: A Postcard History* (Berkeley: Berkeley Historical Society and the Berkeley Architectural Heritage Association, 2002), 167, 168.

[37] *The Architect & Engineer* (February 1926), 90-98 and (June 1932), 13-35; *Pacific Coast Architect* (November 1928), passim.

[38] Walter Ratcliff designed the clubhouse when he was in partnership with Alfred Henry Jacobs; the tennis club moved to its present location adjacent to the Claremont Hotel in 1917. See Cerny, *Berkeley Landmarks*, 224-226.

[39] The Berkeley Elks Club is described as "one of Mr. Ratcliff's best efforts" in *The Architect & Engineer* (October 1914), 51, 63-64.

[40] *The Architect & Engineer* (October 1914), 66-67.

[41] *The Architect & Engineer* (February 1926), 102-103.

[42] *The Architect & Engineer* (February 1926), 88; *The Ratcliff Architects*, 72-74; "Chamber of Commerce Building, Berkeley, Alameda County, California," nomination to the National Register of Historic Places, prepared 31 October 1984.

Exchange Building in San Francisco for the Commercial Club (1914),[43] the Hershey Store (1922) in Woodland, the Halliday & Son Store (1929) in Point Arena, and the Tenth Street Market (1940) in Oakland.

Walter Ratcliff's career began in the first decade of the twentieth century, thrived in the 1910s and 1920s, and continued apace through the 1930s and 1940s. One indication of Ratcliff's growing reputation was the attention that his work attracted in the professional literature. A San Francisco journal, *The Architect & Engineer of California*, featured Ratcliff's designs in at least ten issues between 1913 and 1932. Most of these features were extended articles that discussed and illustrated his work in-depth, as in "Some Recent Residences and Other Work by Walter H. Ratcliff, Jr." (October 1914), "The City of Berkeley's New Public School Buildings" (May 1916), "Portfolio of Recent Work of W.H. Ratcliff, Jr." (February 1926), and "Plot and Plan at Mills College" (June 1932).

Ratcliff was appointed city architect for Berkeley, serving from 1914 to 1920, and in that role he helped to establish a municipal planning commission and oversaw a building boom in public school construction.[44] *The Architect & Engineer* had special praise for the design of these architecturally impressive schools. Ratcliff proved creative in using the talents of four architects, as well as his own, and a tight municipal budget: "By just what process the Berkeley authorities chose a really first-class man for their city architect, I personally do not know," the reviewer (who was a practicing architect himself) wrote, going on to congratulate the city for constructing the schools, each of which displayed "individuality and distinction of design" and was equipped with "the most modern appliances," and all at "surprisingly low cost." Berkeley was lucky to have Ratcliff, the reviewer concluded, arguing that "there are few young men in the profession of better parts, deeper learning or wider travel." He predicted a promising career for the thirty-five-year-old. The five schools and their architects were: the Thomas Edison School (Walter H. Ratcliff), Francis Willard School (Hobart and Cheney), Luther Burbank School (Walter D. Reed), Garfield School (Coxhead & Coxhead), and the John Muir School (James W. Plachek).[45]

Shortly after his service as city architect in Berkeley, Ratcliff was appointed college architect for Mills College in 1923. In this role he devised a new campus plan, superceding an earlier plan by Bernard Maybeck, as well as designs for a music building, art gallery, library, dormitory, and health center, among others. Two separate articles in *The Architect & Engineer*, in 1926 and in 1932, highlighted his work at Mills College.[46]

Ratcliff's corpus of work defies easy categorization. Although most of his buildings were residential, some of his most important contributions were institutional and commercial structures, and these properties show the influence of a range of architectural idioms, as in the Classical Revival Berkeley Elks Club, the Tudor Revival Hillside School and Berkeley Day Nursery, the Spanish Colonial Armstrong Business College, the Gothic Revival buildings at the Pacific School of Religion, the Art Deco West

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[43]B. J. S. Cahill, "New Home of San Francisco Commercial Club," *The Architect & Engineer* (February 1916), 65-74; (October 1914), 51-52.

[44]Peter Ratcliff interview; *The Ratcliff Architects*, 44.

[45]B. J. S. Cahill, "The City of Berkeley's New Public School Buildings," *The Architect & Engineer* (May 1916), 38-54. The quoted material appears on pages 39, 53, 54. See also the subsequent article by Walter Ratcliff on "The Recent Berkeley School Buildings," 55-63.

[46]*The Architect & Engineer* (February 1926), 90-98; (June 1932), 13-35.

Berkeley YMCA, the Mission Revival Mercantile Trust Company bank, and the Mediterranean-styled buildings for the Fidelity Guaranty Building and Loan Association and the Mason-McDuffie Company.

Ratcliff had majored in chemistry at the university and was a man who had essentially taught himself architecture: sketching plans and building houses in college with his friend Louis MacFarland; traveling through Europe to study English, Italian, and French building techniques and styles; and apprenticing with a variety of Bay Area architects before striking out on his own. Even as an established professional, Ratcliff's method was that of the autodidact. As one of his sons explained:

> Because his formal architectural studies consisted only of a year at the Rome Academy followed by a grand tour of Europe, he was aware of the fact that he needed more background, and he developed a pretty good library of books. He actually had a librarian, and the books were all indexed and marked as they would be in a public library.... He was much more inclined to go to a book and find a detail and reproduce it than architects today would do.... When he was doing his work – the Pacific School of Religion for example – I know that they just got the books out and copied the details from different cathedrals in France and England. They also did this with a lot of his Spanish work. They chose what they thought they liked, personally, and then imitated them.[47]

This confidence to browse the inventory of the world's architectural history for insights into modern building made Ratcliff's architecture robustly eclectic. Much of his early work impressed critics as English in inspiration, as in this commentary from *The Architect & Engineer*. Ratcliff's residential designs showed:

> a true appreciation of home life – practical floor plans, ideally arranged for comfort and convenience. The architecture, in most cases, smacks of the true English feeling, while apparently as much care is given to the garden and landscape effects as to the house itself. And this is as strong a characteristic of Mr. Ratcliff's residence work as it is a failing with some of his brother architects.[48]

It stands to reason that his English heritage would have this influence on his work, but it is also clear that his residency in California affected his thinking about architecture. Many of Ratcliff's residential buildings draw on the rustic brown-shingle style popularized by a generation of architects already working in the Bay Area: Ernest Coxhead, John Galen Howard, Bernard Maybeck, Julia Morgan, Louis C. Mullgardt, Willis Polk, A.C. Schweinfurth, and John Hudson Thomas, to name a few.[49] And – in addition to the influences of the English building tradition and Bay Area regionalism – one would have to add the Spanish Colonial Revival. Ratcliff was by no means unique in his interest in Spanish-inspired details and building materials.

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[47] *The Ratcliff Architects*, 39-40.

[48] *The Architect & Engineer* (October 1914), 52, 58.

[49] On early Bay Area architecture, see: Robert Winter, ed., *Toward a Simpler Way of Life: The Arts & Crafts Architects of California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Sally Woodbridge, ed., *Bay Area Houses: New Edition* (Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith, 1988); Sara Holmes Boutelle, *Julia Morgan, Architect* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1988); Richard Longstreth, *On the Edge of the World: Four Architects in San Francisco at the Turn of the Century* (New York: The Architectural History Foundation, 1983); Leslie Mandelson Freudenheim and Elisabeth Sussman, *Building with Nature: Roots of the San Francisco Bay Region Tradition* (Santa Barbara: Peregrine Smith, 1974); Berkeley Architectural Heritage Association, *The Residential Work in Berkeley of Walter H. Ratcliff, Jr.* The latter is the pamphlet for the 1980 house tour.

A number of California architects were working with Spanish Colonial elements by the 1920s.[50] One formative event in Ratcliff's professional life was the commission from Mills College to design in a "Spanish Mediterranean" style. As one son remembered:

> Aurelia Rinehart [the president of Mills College] wanted the Spanish Mediterranean architecture. I recall one Sunday we met, he took us along; we met Aurelia Rinehart at the Oak Knoll Country Club. They had just completed their country club, which was a rather nice colonial Spanish. She said this is the kind of thing I want. Dad and Mom packed up and went to Mexico. He took lots of pictures and did a lot of sketching.[51]

Another son suggested that his father's eclecticism derived not only from a wide-ranging interest in the world's architecture but also from the practicalities of the profession:

> He was not really interested in producing something which would have such a strong common denominator that it would be recognized as one of his projects. He was more interested, really, in serving his client, to try to figure out what that person really liked and then try to do something that would be really in that mood.[52]

Walter Ratcliff practiced a form of architectural eclecticism, drawing freely on English, Spanish, and regional influences, while focusing on meeting client wishes rather than defining a distinct personal style. His approach seems to have paid off. By one estimate, Ratcliff had the largest architectural practice in the Bay Area in the 1920s.[53]

In addition to being an accomplished architect, Ratcliff was a smart businessman. Throughout his professional career, one of Ratcliff's most important business relationships was his association with realtor and developer Duncan McDuffie, one of the founders of the Mason-McDuffie Company in 1905. McDuffie specialized in "private residential parks," such as St. Francis Wood in San Francisco and the Claremont district, The Uplands, and Northbrae in Berkeley. Characteristic of these high-end residential developments were entrances demarcated by stone pillars, curving tree-lined streets that followed topographical contours, pocket parks, and substantial architect-designed homes. McDuffie's pattern was to lay out a subdivision as a whole and to market lots, leaving construction of individual houses to a stable of favorite architects that included Henry Gutterson, John Galen Howard, and Walter Ratcliff. Duncan McDuffie was also a neighbor of Walter Ratcliff. The McDuffie home, designed by Willis Polk in 1924 with grounds landscaped by the Olmsted firm of Boston, was located on Roble Road near the house Ratcliff built for his family in 1914. In addition to the houses that he designed for McDuffie clients, Ratcliff built a home in Carmel for the McDuffie family in 1920 and an office building for the Mason-McDuffie Company in

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[50]On the origins and appeal of the Spanish Colonial in California, see Kevin Starr, *Americans and the California Dream, 1850-1915* (Santa Barbara: Peregrine Smith, 1981), 390-414; on some of its architectural manifestations, see David Gebhard, Eric Sandweiss, and Robert Winter, *The Guide to Architecture in San Francisco and Northern California*, rev. ed. (Salt Lake City: Gibbs-Smith, 1985), 570, 573-576.

[51]Peter Ratcliff interview.

[52]*The Ratcliff Architects*, 39-40.

[53]Anna Head School for Girls," nomination to the National Register.

Berkeley in 1928.[54]

Business at the Ratcliff architectural firm peaked in the 1910s and 1920s, and then subsided somewhat during the 1930s and 1940s. Ratcliff had only about 25 projects during the 1930s, compared with about 90 in the 1910s and 90 in the 1920s.[55] The decline in projects reflected the economic dislocations of the national depression in two ways. First, fewer clients could afford to build houses. Secondly, Walter Ratcliff was a partner in a banking business, as well as the proprietor of an architectural firm. His involvement in the world of finance dated to his college days and his association with Louis MacFarland, the friend with whom he had started building houses. At that time, Ratcliff would sketch designs for houses, MacFarland would locate funding, and the two men would hire contractors to undertake the construction. Their enterprise expanded and was called various names over the years: Alameda County Home Builders, Alameda County Home Investment Company, and Fidelity Mortgage Securities Company, among others. In 1921 it was organized as the Fidelity Guaranty Building and Loan Association; MacFarland assumed the presidency and Ratcliff served as vice president. Fidelity built houses for the mass market and made general construction loans to all builders, not just Ratcliff-MacFarland clients. When the company experienced tumbling fortunes in the early 1930s, MacFarland suffered a nervous breakdown and Ratcliff was forced to play a greater role at Fidelity to keep it afloat. One consequence was that Ratcliff had less time for architectural commissions during the 1930s and into the 1940s. During the 1920s when business was booming, Ratcliff had employed eight draftsmen; by the 1930s he employed one, Scott Haymond.[56]

The Charles W. Merrill House was one of only a few residences that Walter Ratcliff undertook in the 1930s. Ratcliff was in his late fifties when Charles Merrill hired him to design his house in Orinda. The Merrill residence was one of three houses that Ratcliff designed in Orinda, the most that he built in any community beyond the Berkeley-Oakland hills area. The first Ratcliff project in Orinda was in 1937, a home at 12 Camino Encinas for his newly married son, J. Peter Ratcliff, and his wife Katherine Amelia Joy Ratcliff.[57] The Merrill home on Camino Sobrante was completed the next year, and two years later in 1940 Ratcliff completed the D.J. Hannah House at 140 Camino Don Miguel.

With its blending of elements of the Spanish Colonial and the Monterey styles with English Colonial interior features, the Merrill house reflected Ratcliff's long-recognized talents for successfully integrating several architectural idioms into a single project. Similarly, the siting and orientation of the Merrill house

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[54]Dave Weinstein, "Natural Neighborhoods: Visionary developer created elegant urban residential parks," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 7 February 2004; Peter Ratcliff interview; *The Ratcliff Architects*, 4-5; Cerny, *Berkeley Landmarks*, 115-116, 216-217, 267-269, 272-273. Like his fellow Californian Charles W. Merrill, Duncan McDuffie had worked in Washington, D.C. during World War I for Herbert Hoover.

[55]This is an enumeration based on the chronology of buildings in the inventory of Walter H. Ratcliff's projects compiled by Walter W. Ratcliff.

[56]Peter Ratcliff interview, *The Ratcliff Architects*, 22-23, 53, 74-78, 82.

[57]Kenneth E. Ratcliff, e-mail to author, 26 June 2004. Peter Ratcliff and his brother, Robert W. Ratcliff, each acquired a lot in this Orinda subdivision, laid out by the Broadmoor Improvement Company in 1930. See: Official Records of Contra Costa County, on microfilm at the Office of the Recorder in Martinez: vol. 424, pp. 446-447; vol. 437, pp. 29-30. The development company was headed by A.H. Breed, whose Spanish Colonial Revival mansion in Piedmont had been designed by Walter H. Ratcliff about 1912. As a state senator, Breed was a vigorous advocate for building what is now called the Caldecott Tunnel linking Orinda, Berkeley, and Oakland.

drew upon his decades of experience building large homes in the Berkeley hills where he paid close attention to the dictates of topography, the amenities of climate and natural setting, and the importance of views from windows and the grounds. The design for the Merrill home was largely conceptualized by the end of February 1938, when plans for the house were completed. The most significant deviation from the original design was the composition of the roof. The original plans had called for a standing-seam copper roof. By March, though, it was decided to replace the copper with clay tile, and the weight of the new roofing material necessitated modifications in the system of steel supports and concrete beams.[58] Actual construction seems to have continued for at least seven months. By August plans were being prepared for such final details as gate hardware and specifications for paving the driveway. It seems likely that the house was ready for habitation sometime in the fall of 1938. The total cost of construction of this three-story, 6,000-square foot house was approximately $40,000. The most costly components were labor for the roof ($3,700); plastering ($3,300); millwork ($3,300); sheet metal ($2,700); concrete ($2,200); forms, nails, and lumber ($2,200); plumbing ($2,100); sashes and glass ($1,600); lumber ($1,600); the heating system ($1,500); roof tile ($1,400); painting ($1,200); electrical ($1,100); reinforcing steel ($900); excavation ($750); floors ($670); brickwork ($400); trenching ($300); iron work ($250); and tile work ($220).[59] Walter Sorensen was the Swedish-born general contractor for the Merrill house, as he was for a number of Walter Ratcliff projects over the years, including the Ratcliff family home on Roble Road in Berkeley. An Italian named Mashio may have been the stonemason.[60]

Ratcliff worked closely with landscape architect Mabel Symmes to fashion a setting that joined the residence with its rustic hillside setting. In this way, house and grounds were designed from the beginning to complement one another. Attention turned to designing the grounds even as the site was prepared, the system of stonework terraces erected, and the house itself constructed. Mabel Symmes (1875-1962) had graduated from Berkeley in 1896 and she returned to the campus in the 1910s to study in the university's newly established landscape architecture program. She is perhaps best known for her work in the 1920s on the grounds of the residence of Anson Stiles Blake and Anita Day Blake at 70 Rincon Road, Kensington. Mabel Symmes and Anita Blake were sisters, and they are credited with devising the initial design for the ten acres that surrounded the house, making liberal use of stone from the East Bay quarry owned by Anson Blake. More than likely, Mr. and Mrs. Merrill were acquainted with Mabel Symmes through Charles Merrill's friendship with her brother-in-law: Merrill and Anson Blake had known each other since college when both were members of Berkeley's Class of 1891. (Eventually, in 1957, the home and grounds of the Blake estate were donated to the University of California, and the house serves today as the official residence of the university's president.) This National Register nomination makes no claim for the historical significance of the Charles W. Merrill House based on landscape architecture because there is not yet a body of scholarship to understand the corpus of Symmes's work or its influence on the history of landscape architecture in the state, but this preliminary research suggests that she may have been one of

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[58]Ratcliff client files.

[59]These are rounded figures based on an undated chart with ambiguous categories, located in the Ratcliff client files. They are included here only to provide a general sense of the types of work and materials that were involved in building a house like this one in 1938. The figures should not be regarded as the actual costs of construction.

[60]Ratcliff client files; Peter Ratcliff interview; *The Ratcliff Architects*, 56-59, 69-71.

the earliest female landscape architects to practice in California.[61]

For the Merrill gardens in Orinda, Symmes prepared a plan in May 1938 that envisioned most of the major features that would be incorporated into the final layout, and these drew from a palate of rustic design principles: stone staircases and paths set among the native oaks near the house, a flower garden on the sunny slope below the lawns to the southwest, and an orchard to the northwest with a system of trails that opened through a gate onto El Sueño. Special attention was devoted to the views from the dining room windows. On the patio side were lawns and a small reflecting pond (and in time an orange tree). Out the southeastern windows was a more formally geometric design, the central feature of which was the "path of thyme" that bisected the four beds of the cutting garden.[62] In September, Charles Merrill purchased a portion of an adjacent lot, adding a thirty-five foot wide parcel and bringing the total size of his property to 1.27 acres. This acquisition had a significant impact on the landscape (and may have been inspired by the evolving garden design): it permitted an expansion of the front gardens, a lengthened flagstone entrance path, a different trail head for the orchard paths, a rerouted driveway, and the planting of a small forest of redwoods along the new property line.[63] By November, Symmes provided the Merrills with a detailed proposal that depicted the precise locations for hundreds of plantings in the gardens and on the grounds. The estimated cost for the plants alone was well over two thousand dollars. By July 1939 Symmes had developed a similarly detailed proposal for the orchard that envisioned a grove of almost fifty trees, selected for the color of their flowers or the edibility of their fruit, surrounded by a hedge of olive trees. The orchard was to include nine varieties of crabapple, seven of peach, six of apple, five of apricot, four of pear, three of cherry, and single varieties of persimmon and pineapple quince. Lilacs and coral trees were included for their color and fragrance. Symmes's plans for the gardens and the orchard were implemented in 1938 and 1939.[64]

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[61]Mabel Symmes was one of the first women to enter Berkeley's landscape architecture program; apparently she took classes but chose not to earn a second college degree. On Symmes, see: Michael Laurie, 75 *Years of Landscape Architecture at Berkeley: An Informal History*, 2 vols. (Berkeley: Department of Landscape Architecture, University of California, 1992), I, 59-60, Appendix III; Gladys C. Wickson, "In Memoriam: Anita [sic: Anson] Stiles Blake, Anita D. Symmes Blake, and Mabel Symmes," *California Historical Society Quarterly* 42:2 (June 1963), 177-180; "Blake Estate," College of Environmental Design Archives, University of California, Berkeley, www.ced.berkeley.edu/cedarchives/profiles/blake.htm, accessed 18 June 2004; Julia Sommer, "Blake Abloom," on-line archives of the Office of Public Affairs, University of California, Berkeley, 24 May 1995, accessed 29 June 2004; Carolyn Barnes, "For gardening ideas and inspiration, there's nothing like a spring tour," *Los Altos Town Crier*, 27 June 2001, on-line archives, accessed 18 June 2004; Ryder, *The Merrill Story*, 20-21.

[62]Mabel Symmes, "Garden Plan for Charles W. Merrill," 16 May 1938. The garden plans are in the possession of the current owners.

[63]It remains unclear why this additional property on the unimproved lot to the north was purchased in September 1938. An undated, handwritten note on the "Plot and Grading Plan" (prepared 25 February 1938) from Ratcliff draftsman Scott Haymond states that a component of the drainage system was relocated because of this purchase – "Location on job changed due to obtaining property to west [he means to the north] & drive change due to this. I would be glad to meet with gardener or Mr. Merrill on job and show them where [the concrete drainage distribution] box is" – but he is silent on the motives for the purchase. It is possible that the land was acquired specifically to facilitate drainage on the sloping site; it is also possible that the intention was to augment the landscape design, and the drainage system was then reconfigured as a result. On the calculation of the size of the Merrill property, see: Official Records of Contra Costa County: vol. 486, pp. 8-9; vol. 3258, p. 574; vol. 3261, p. 345.

[64]Mabel Symmes, "Planting Plan for Charles W. Merrill," 30 November 1938; "Rough Estimate and Planting List for C.W. Merrill Garden;" "Diagram of Orchard for Mr. Charles W. Merrill," 29 July 1939.

The overall impression of the Symmes design for this country estate was one of western rusticism that complemented the Spanish Colonial and Monterey architectural influences of the residence, and the essential design remains intact today. Although the orchard was sold off in 1958 and developed as a building lot, the flower garden was replaced by a swimming pool in 1967, and the path of thyme is no longer extant, most of the character-defining features of the original landscape design are still extant: the stonework terraces, the stone staircases and paths, the lawn with its reflecting pond and patio, and the rock edging of the original driveway. Much of the ornamental plantings also survive in mature form: the front gardens with their azalea, rhododendron, dogwood, camellia, fern, and oaks; the small forest of redwoods; the orange tree, wisteria, and roses in the outdoor living spaces of the patio; and the hedge of Meyer lemon trees between the dining room and service area.

Walter Ratcliff designed and built the Merrill house in 1938, and Mabel Symmes completed her plans for the grounds in 1939. Over the next decade, Walter Ratcliff designed relatively few buildings. His eldest son, Robert W. Ratcliff, had earned his architecture degree in 1936, and he joined his father and Ratcliff draftsman Scott Haymond in 1945 in a partnership that lasted several years. (For a photograph of Walter Ratcliff and his wife Muriel about this time, see Image T.) Meanwhile, leadership of Fidelity Guaranty Building and Loan Association had passed from Walter Ratcliff to his second-born son, J. Peter Ratcliff. Robert W. Ratcliff operated the architectural firm until 1980. Together with architects Murray Slama and Burns Cadwalader, he formed Ratcliff, Slama & Cadwalader in 1961 and then in 1978 renamed the practice The Ratcliff Architects. Christopher P. Ratcliff, grandson of Walter Ratcliff and son of Robert Ratcliff, has headed the practice since 1986. During that time, the Crosby Helmich firm merged with The Ratcliff Architects in 1996, and since 1999 the firm has been known simply as Ratcliff. Having been led by three generations of Ratcliffs, it has the distinction of being one of the longest continually operating architectural practices in the United States.[65]

By way of concluding this discussion of the Charles W. Merrill House within the context of Walter Ratcliff's architectural career, it might be of interest to note that the Ratcliff family maintained an association with the Orinda property even after the residency of the Merrills ended in 1957. When the house and gardens were purchased by Rich and Jayne Weyeneth in 1958, they elected not to buy the land used as an orchard by the Merrills. This area on the northwestern slope of the property was purchased soon after, also in 1958, by J. Peter Ratcliff as a building site for his own home. This residence was subsequently designed by his brother, Robert W. Ratcliff, and the Peter Ratcliff family lived in the house at 7 El Sueño from 1959 to 2003.

Walter Ratcliff's professional career extended from the turn of the century through World War II, and it had a significant impact on the built environment of the Bay Area, especially in Berkeley. It is therefore curious that his work has not received more attention. Not only has Ratcliff never been the subject of an extended or systematic study, but his work tends to be accorded only passing references in discussions of Bay Area architecture. Ratcliff is mentioned in *Toward a Simpler Way of Life: The Arts & Crafts Architects of California* (1997) only as someone who employed the young William Raymond Yelland; he is not among the twenty-eight architects who are profiled. He merits a short biographical blurb in *Bay Area Houses* but does not figure prominently in the anthology's general discussions. *The Guide to*

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[65]Interview with Peter Ratcliff; *The Ratcliff Architects*, 125-215. Details of the corporate history are also on the Ratcliff website: www.ratcliffarch.com, accessed 28 April 2004.

Architecture in San Francisco and Northern California (1985) makes no mention of Ratcliff in its introductory essay, and the guidebook cites only his work at the Anna Head School, Mills College, and the Pacific School of Religion. In *On the Edge of the World: Four Architects in San Francisco at the Turn of the Century* (1983), Richard Longstreth recognizes – in a footnote – that a number of architects, including Ratcliff, "made a significant contribution to the region's rustic ambience" of architectural design, while conceding that "much additional research needs to be conducted for the full richness of the 1900s and 1910s to be revealed."[66] More than anyone, the Berkeley Architectural Heritage Association has made significant efforts to recognize the contributions of Walter Ratcliff. The group organized a tour of some of his residential architecture in Berkeley in 1980; it has worked to place Ratcliff properties on the National Register of Historic Places; and it conducted and transcribed an oral interview with J. Peter Ratcliff in 1997. In addition, its publications have made Walter Ratcliff's work known to a wider audience, especially *Berkeley Landmarks: An Illustrated Guide to Berkeley, California's Architectural Heritage* (revised edition, 2001) and *Picturing Berkeley: A Postcard History* (2002). To date there are four Walter Ratcliff properties on the National Register, all in Berkeley: the Anna Head School for Girls, the Berkeley Day Nursery, the Chamber of Commerce Building, and the Hillside School. Listing of the Charles W. Merrill House in the National Register of Historic Places would bring to five the number of Ratcliff properties on the National Register.

Addendum: Orinda during the Merrill Residency

The Charles W. Merrill House was an early and especially prominent residence within the real estate development that transformed Orinda from an agricultural hinterland into a fashionable suburban enclave. The residence and its grounds are an excellent example of the Spanish-style estates that Edward I. deLaveaga promoted in the 1920s and 1930s in his efforts to market the area's rural heritage as a setting for gracious country living for prosperous San Francisco businessmen like Charles Merrill. The homes in the Haciendas del Orinda subdivision reflect this important period in Orinda's history, and they remain today among the most architecturally significant historic buildings in the city.

Historically, the area had been shaped by the larger population centers that lay to the west: Berkeley and Oakland on the other side of the hills and San Francisco across the bay. The rolling terrain with its Mediterranean climate had long supported cattle ranching and farming, beginning with the land grants of the Mexican era and continuing after American annexation in 1848 and statehood in 1850. Timber in the area, particularly the redwood groves in nearby Moraga, helped to build the cities of San Francisco and Oakland. The meteoric growth of San Francisco in the second half of the nineteenth century helped spur in Orinda a broadening agricultural economy of dairy farms, orchards, and hog and poultry production. In time, a steady supply of hay, grain, and farm produce was making its way by two wagon roads (and briefly an ill-fated narrow-gauge railroad) to city markets. The development of Orinda was affected by urban needs in another way. As concerns emerged about a reliable long-term water supply for the cities of the East Bay, water companies began purchasing farm and ranch land in Orinda for the

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[66]Lauren Weiss Bricker, "William Raymond Yelland," in Winter, ed., *Toward a Simpler Way of Life,* 95; Woodbridge, ed., *Bay Area Houses*, 10, 14, 16, 102, 104, 109, 358, 366; Gebhard, et al., *The Guide to Architecture in San Francisco and Northern California,* 263, 275, 309; Longstreth, *On the Edge of the World,* 395 note 33. Ratcliff is not mentioned at all in Freudenheim and Sussman, *Building with Nature* or in Peter Booth Wiley, *National Trust Guide: San Francisco* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2000).

metropolitan watershed. Even as late as the first decades of the twentieth century, Orinda was a landscape dotted with farms and ranches, a small schoolhouse, a blacksmith shop, and a modest hotel for city sportsmen who had come to the country to hunt and fish. In each of these ways, rural Orinda was tied to city life as a recreational destination, environmental resource, and agricultural hinterland.[67]

The transformation of Orinda into a fashionable Bay Area residential community began in the 1920s, largely through the initiative of Edward I. (E.I.) deLaveaga. There had been several previous attempts to sell lots in the area for home development but nothing had happened on the scale of the deLaveaga venture or with its eventual success. The deLaveaga family had purchased almost 1,200 acres in Orinda in 1887 and taken up residence on an extensive country estate, Bien Venida, that they created on a portion of the property.[68] In the early 1920s E.I. deLaveaga, a son of one of the original purchasers, decided to subdivide the family property (and to acquire additional properties) and sell real estate. For his first subdivision in 1921 in the steep geography now known as El Toyonal, deLaveaga constructed a network of narrow twisting roads as well as an elaborate water supply system which drained to a catchment he dubbed "Lake Orinda" (later, the Orinda Park Pool). To bring electricity to his lots, deLaveaga tapped into the power line that had been erected for the construction of the San Pablo Dam and Reservoir just completed in 1920. DeLaveaga next turned to two simultaneous projects, building a country club and a commercial center for the nascent community. The Orinda Country Club complex was constructed between 1924 and 1927 and consisted of a multi-story hillside clubhouse in a Spanish-Mediterranean style, a swimming pool with waterfall, a rambling eighteen-hole golf course designed by William Watson, and an artificial lake for irrigating the golf course and supplying drinking water. Lake Cascade, the golf course, and the buildings of the country club extended over about 160 acres. Just down the hill from the clubhouse was the village center. Built between 1924 and 1928, "Orinda Village" consisted of several stores, a riding academy, and an automobile garage, all with picturesque stuccoed walls and red tile roofs sited adjacent to the golf course. (For a photograph of the village in the 1920s, see Image U.) Reliable electric service arrived in Orinda in 1926 via a 60,000 volt line from Oakland, and a natural gas line reached Orinda in 1937.[69]

The residential subdivision that included the country club and golf course was named "Haciendas del Orinda," and sales of lots within it commenced in 1924, at the same time that construction began on Orinda Village and the Orinda Country Club. DeLaveaga set up an entity called Hacienda Homes, Inc. to market building lots in the development. Robert Brent Mitchell and Harold Austin of the Oakland real estate firm Mitchell and Austin were the primary agents for home sales in the 1920s and 1930s. Their Orinda office was located in a small stucco building, subsequently demolished in the 1980s, on a tiny triangle of land between the village and the golf course. The Depression slowed real estate sales in Haciendas del Orinda, and some buyers were forced to default on previously negotiated purchases. One consequence was that deLaveaga himself was unable to keep up payments on his business loans. Banks, though, chose not to foreclose on deLaveaga and allowed Hacienda Homes, Inc. to continue selling property.[70] (For a copy of the original plat of Haciendas del Orinda, see Image V.)

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[67]Sorrick, *The History of Orinda,* vii-59.

[68]The house, built in the 1880s and rebuilt in 1915 after a fire, is still extant on a road also named Bien Venida.

[69]Sorrick, *The History of Orinda*, 60-77, 155-157.

[70]Sorrick, *The History of Orinda*, 71-77.

The name Haciendas del Orinda was intended to evoke both the area's rural setting and its Spanish heritage. As the early promotional literature made clear, Hacienda Homes sought "to insure the development of the highest type of country homes, or rather estates, for that is the meaning of the word 'Haciendas.' It has been the aim of the company to preserve for all time the natural beauties of the country." Toward this end, covenants incorporated into each deed prohibited cutting timber, discharging firearms, and building structures for commercial use. Although they vigorously marketed Orinda's rural past, the developers wanted no evidence of modern rural industry in the hills of Orinda: the covenants specifically restricted the raising of poultry or livestock and the operation of dairies.[71] The golf course and the country club, not pig pens and milk depots, were to be the landmarks of the new community. "A Country Home for all the Family" and "Golf before Breakfast" were the titles of two early pamphlets from Hacienda Homes that promised prospective buyers proximity to Berkeley, Oakland, and San Francisco but a better climate (no summer fog), as many miles of recreational horse-riding trails as automobile roadways, and a caretaker service for those who only wished to maintain a weekend or summer residence.[72] In addition to promoting the country setting, Hacienda Homes tried to market the area's colonial heritage. DeLaveaga insisted that the names of streets in Haciendas del Orinda be coined from Spanish words and linked when possible to topographical characteristics, as in La Espiral (the spiraling road) and Mira Loma (view of the hills), or to historical features, as in Camino Sobrante (named for the former Mexican rancho) and La Noria (a reference to the site of a well on the deLaveaga estate).[73] Property owners were required to submit all construction plans and specifications to Hacienda Homes for written approval from the company architect, although there is no evidence that the company mandated specific building designs. Ideas about appropriate architectural styles were apparently the decisions of individual property owners and, significantly, many of the substantial homes built in the early years incorporated elements of the Spanish Colonial Revival. (For a photograph of some of the homes in the subdivision in 1926, see Image W.)

Charles and Clara Merrill decided to build their new house in Haciendas del Orinda. The Merrills selected Lot 346 of Unit No. 2, a parcel on Camino Sobrante adjacent to the "natural" swimming pool that E.I. deLaveaga's father had constructed for his family's Bien Venida estate.[74] Oral tradition is that Charles Merrill initially purchased two lots in Orinda – apparently to discover which had the better site and climate for their house and garden – before deciding to build at the present home site. However, documentary evidence cannot confirm that Merrill bought more than one lot. Publically available real estate records

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[71]Typescript instructions to real estate agents for Haciendas del Orinda [c. June 1924], Orinda Historical Society. Typical of this era in the United States, the covenants in each deed also included racial restrictions: "No African, Mongolian, Japanese, or person of African, Mongolian or Japanese descent shall be allowed to purchase, own, or lease the property." (See, for example, Official Records of Contra Costa County: vol. 263, pp. 125-126.) Restrictive covenants such as these were declared unconstitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court in *Shelley v. Kraemer* in 1948.

[72]*Haciendas del Orinda: "A Country Home for all the Family"* (Oakland: DeLaveaga & L'Hommedieu, c.1925); *Haciendas del Orinda* (Oakland: DeLaveaga & L'Hommedieu, c.1920s); *Golf before Breakfast: Haciendas del Orinda* [undated]; *Orinda* (Orinda: Hacienda Homes, Inc., c.1937). The brochures can be found at the Orinda Historical Society and at The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

[73]Sorrick, *The History of Orinda*, 119.

[74]On the proximity of the Merrill parcel to the land reserved by the deLaveaga family within the Haciendas del Orinda development, see J. H. L'Hommedieu & Co., *Unit No. 2, Haciendas del Orinda, Contra Costa County, California,* map book 19, sheet 463, filed 15 October 1924, Office of the Recorder, Contra Costa County, Martinez.

indicate that Lot 346 was initially purchased by Archibald and Kaui Andrew from the American Trust Company on 7 March 1932. Four years later the Andrews sold the land to Malcolm W. and Dorothy C. Lamb, on 12 May 1936. At the end of the following year, the Lambs sold the parcel to Clarence A. and Sevilla H. Shuey, on 30 December 1937. What is unusual about this chain of title is that the Shueys did not transfer the deed for Lot 346 to Charles W. Merrill until 15 November 1938, fully nine months after Walter H. Ratcliff had first prepared his architectural plans, in February 1938, and about the time when the Merrills would have moved into their new house. Because a savvy and experienced businessman like Charles Merrill would not have risked building on land that he did not own, it seems almost certain that Merrill was buying the property through some sort of installment contract that was simply not recorded in the land title records of Contra Costa County. It also seems probable that Clarence Shuey purchased Lot 346 at the specific request of Charles Merrill. Shuey was an East Bay attorney and a relative of Herbert S. Shuey, a long-time business associate and close friend of Charles Merrill's. The most likely explanation for the surprising date on the Merrill deed is that Clarence Shuey acquired the land on behalf of Charles Merrill, who then purchased it from Shuey between December 1937 and November 1938, at which time the title was formally transferred.[75]

When the Merrills moved into their new home in 1938, they had several neighbors who also lived in large Spanish Colonial Revival homes: Frank R. Fageol at 12 El Sueño, Malcolm W. Lamb at 38 La Noria (the same Lambs who had owned the unimproved Merrill lot in 1936-1937 before selling it to Clarence Shuey), J.W. Dieterich at 317 La Espiral, William A. Davis at 301 La Espiral, Claude E. Donaldson at 261 La Espiral, and Chester N. Williams at 40 Miner Road (this house has been called Casa Azul since the 1950s and its street address has been renumbered 8 Camino Lenada). Down the creek from the Merrills was the deLaveaga residence, Bien Venida, a two-story frame structure which had been rebuilt in the Queen Anne style after a fire in 1915. Within just the next couple of years, other sizeable Spanish style homes were constructed near the Merrills. By 1942 were the houses of Deryck W. Fernhout at 404 Camino Sobrante, Dwight W. Chapman at 416 Camino Sobrante (the house has since been remodeled with a significant loss of its historic character), Mrs. F. R. Axton at 3 Mira Loma, and Alan W. S. Young at 1 Via Hermosa. Erskine D. Thompson had built a large Tudor Revival home on Lot 345 (9 El Sueño) adjacent to the Merrills on the west. Frank M. and Josephine W. Cerini had built a smaller home on Lot 347 (411 Camino Sobrante) immediately to the northeast of the Merrills.[76]

Haciendas del Orinda was one of several subdivisions developed by E.I. deLaveaga – and deLaveaga was by no means the only real estate entrepreneur trying to market residential lots in Orinda in the 1920s and 1930s: the Mason-McDuffie Company had an Orinda office by the thirties – but deLaveaga was without question the developer who jump-started the twentieth-century growth of Orinda into a

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[75]Suggesting his own confidence in the security of the title, on 21 September 1938 (two months prior to the formal transfer of title for Lot 346) Charles Merrill purchased a portion of the neighboring Lot 347, apparently to resolve an on-site construction problem or to augment the landscape design. The real estate transactions can be followed through the Official Records of Contra Costa County: vol. 263, pp.125-126; vol. 417, p.145; vol. 458, pp.118-119; vol. 486, pp. 8-9; vol. 486, p. 325. I am grateful to Bruce Nye for his assistance in suggesting a possible solution to the transactional mystery. Three years after construction of the Merrill house in Orinda in 1941, Merrill associate Herbert S. Shuey asked architect Walter H. Ratcliff to undertake alterations to his own home in Piedmont.

[76]Pacific Telephone and Telegraph Company, *Contra Costa County Telephone Directory*, 1938-1942.

residential community.[77] The homes in the Haciendas del Orinda subdivision reflect this important period in Orinda's history, and they remain today among the most architecturally significant buildings in the city of Orinda. Oddly, none of these residences is on the National Register of Historic Places. In fact, there is only one property in Orinda currently on the National Register: the Moraga Adobe constructed about 1841 and subsequently restored.

Charles Merrill lived in Orinda from 1938 to 1956. During that time, he continued to guide his company through the Depression, and he presided over the transition of the company onto a wartime footing when it completed government contracts for the production of magnesium and aluminum powders. One indication of how the war affected the home front in Orinda was the willingness of Hacienda Homes to relax its prohibitions on the raising of meat- and egg-producing animals so that residents could contribute to domestic food production efforts.[78] Although it is not known whether chicken houses and rabbit hutches sprang up on the Merrill property during World War II, the Merrills did have sets of muslin "blackout curtains" fabricated so that they could continue to use the first floor rooms for evening entertaining. Charles Merrill also lost his first wife during these years, in 1941. He had been married to Clara Merrill since his days as a young mining engineer at the Homestake Mine.

After World War II, Charles Merrill and his second wife, Margaret Barker Cope Merrill, would have seen the community of Orinda as a whole begin to change, starting to take on the form it has today of a suburban bedroom community.[79] Similar to the pattern elsewhere in the country, suburban growth in the San Francisco Bay Area in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s was stimulated by a range of factors: postwar affluence, a rise in the marriage rate, the birth of the baby boom generation, a burst of housing construction fueled by federal policies that subsidized home ownership, widespread automobile ownership, and federal highway programs, among others.[80] But one important technological development from the decade in which the Merrills moved to Orinda also laid the foundation for the exponential growth of the Contra Costa County suburbs in subsequent decades. The completion of the Caldecott Tunnel in 1937 (following years of promotion by E. I. deLaveaga and other boosters) opened the way, quite literally, for suburban expansion. Construction of the Caldecott Tunnel was funded by Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal, and the president himself attended the ground-breaking ceremonies in 1934. A third bore was added in 1964, and thousands of cars continue to use the three tunnels daily.[81]

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[77]For other deLaveaga projects, as well as other real estate developers who worked in Orinda at this time, see Sorrick, *The History of Orinda*, 75-99.

[78]Hacienda Homes, Inc. to Owners of Property Subject to Hacienda Homes Restrictions, 31 December 1945, located in the files of the Orinda Historical Society.

[79]Today Orinda has a population of about 18,000.

[80]For a history of American suburbs since the early nineteenth century, see Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

[81]This was not the first tunnel bored through the hills to facilitate travel between Berkeley, Oakland, and Orinda. As its original name suggested, the "Broadway Low Level Tunnel" was three hundred lower in elevation than the earlier Contra Costa Tunnel that had opened in 1903. The new tunnel was actually two separate tunnels, each three thousand feet in length. And, unlike the old tunnel where two lanes of traffic picked their way through the darkness, each bore of the new tunnel was lined with concrete, well-lighted, and ventilated. See: Sorrick, *The History of Orinda*, 104-114.

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Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Parcel number: 262-111-010-1

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

The boundaries of Parcel 262-111-010-1 encompass all of the resources historically associated with this property that still retain integrity. The site of a former orchard is not included, as it was sold off in 1958 and developed as a building lot.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE CHARLES W. MERRILL HOUSE

1869	Charles Washington Merrill is born in Concord, New Hampshire; he is raised in San Francisco.
1881	Walter Harris Ratcliff is born in Blackheath, County Kent, England; the family moves to California in 1893.
1887	The deLaveaga family purchases almost 1,200 acres in rural Orinda for their country estate.
1891	Charles Merrill graduates from the University of California, Berkeley with a degree in metallurgy and mining; writes his senior thesis on the cyanide process for recovering gold; begins working for Alexis Janin in San Francisco.
1893	Charles Merrill establishes his own business at 117-121 Geary Street, San Francisco.
1893-1894	Charles Merrill adapts his cyanide process to mining conditions in Bodie, California for the Standard Consolidated Mining Company.
1894-1895	Charles Merrill adapts his cyanide process to mining conditions at the Harqua Hala Mine near Yuma, Arizona Territory.
1895	Herbert Hoover graduates from Stanford University with a degree in geology; works for Louis Janin in San Francisco.
1895-1897	Charles Merrill adapts his cyanide process to mining conditions in Marysville, Montana for the Montana Mining Company.
1898	Charles Merrill marries Clara Scott Robinson in Alameda, California.
1899-1908	"Cyanide Charlie" Merrill adapts his cyanide process to mining conditions at the Homestake Mine in the Black Hills of South Dakota; his compensation is a percentage of the value of the recovered gold.
1903	Walter Ratcliff graduates from the University of California, Berkeley with a degree in chemistry.
1903-1907	The Hearst Memorial Mining Building is constructed on the Berkeley campus; at the time the mining college at the University of California is the largest in the world and twenty percent of the student body is enrolled in the mining curriculum. During these years, and at least in 1905, Walter Ratcliff works in John Galen Howard's architectural office as an engineer on construction of the Hearst Mining Building.

1905	Mason-McDuffie Company is founded in Berkeley by realtors Joseph Mason and Duncan McDuffie.
1906-1907	Walter Ratcliff travels to Europe to study architecture in England, Italy, and France.
1907-1909	Walter Ratcliff and Alfred Henry Jacobs are partners in an architectural firm located at 20 Montgomery Street, San Francisco.
1908	Charles Merrill establishes the Merrill Company at 143 Second Street, San Francisco, to market his mining equipment and processes internationally.
1909	Walter Ratcliff establishes his own architectural practice, at 211 First Street, Berkeley, as "W.H. Ratcliff, Jr., Architect."
1911	Walter Ratcliff begins his association with the Anna Head School for Girls in Berkeley, where he designs several buildings and makes alterations to others.
1912	Walter Ratcliff marries Muriel Cora Williams in Oakland.
1913-1914	Walter Ratcliff designs four firehouses for the city of Berkeley.
1914	Walter Ratcliff builds the family home at 55 Roble Road, Berkeley; the contractor is Walter Sorensen.
1914-1920	Walter Ratcliff serves as city architect for Berkeley; he helps establish a planning commission and presides over the construction of a number of architecturally distinctive public schools.
1915	The Merrill Company displays products at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco.
1916	Charles Merrill establishes the Alloys Company to manufacture "Merrillite" zinc dust when World War I disrupts the supply from Belgium.
1917-1918	Charles Merrill works for Herbert Hoover as Chief of the Division of Collateral Commodities of the United States Food Administration in Washington, D.C. during World War I. Duncan McDuffie also works for Hoover during the war.
1920	San Pablo Dam is completed near Orinda.
1921	E.I. deLaveaga begins subdividing, developing, and selling house lots in Orinda
1921	Walter Ratcliff and Louis MacFarland organize the Fidelity Guaranty Building and Loan Association.

1922	Charles Merrill receives an honorary degree from the College of Mining at the University of California, the first in metallurgical engineering awarded by the university.
1923	Walter Ratcliff's architectural office is located at 2140 Shattuck Avenue, Berkeley.
1923	Walter Ratcliff is appointed college architect for Mills College, Oakland; he designs a campus plan and several major buildings.
1923	Fire destroys much of North Berkeley; the parents of Walter Ratcliff lose their house on Euclid.
1923	Walter Ratcliff begins his association with the Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, where he devises a campus plan and several major buildings.
1924	Charles Merrill receives the James Douglas Medal from the American Institute of Mining and Metallurgical Engineers in New York to recognize his contributions with the cyanide process at the Homestake Mine.
1924-1926	Charles Merrill serves on the Board of Regents of the University of California.
1924-1928	E.I. deLaveaga constructs Orinda Village, the Orinda Country Club, Lake Cascade, and a golf course; he lays out the Haciendas del Orinda subdivision.
1925	Walter Ratcliff designs Berkeley's first high-rise, the twelve-story Chamber of Commerce Building on Shattuck Avenue at Center Street.
1925	Walter Ratcliff designs the Hillside School in Berkeley.
1926	Walter Ratcliff designs an elegant interior for the Morrison Reading Room at Doe Library at the University of California, Berkeley.
1926	Reliable electric service reaches Orinda.
1927	Walter Ratcliff designs the Berkeley Day Nursery.
1928	Charles Merrill declines invitation to join the administration of newly elected president Herbert Hoover (1929-1933).
1928	Walter Ratcliff designs the Mason-McDuffie Company office building in Berkeley.
1933	Earthquake destroys parts of Long Beach, California.
1933	Walter Ratcliff takes on operation of Fidelity Guaranty Building and Loan Association, in addition to his architectural practice.

1934	Walter Ratcliff designs Clare Tappaan Lodge for the Sierra Club.
1934	President Franklin Roosevelt (1933-1945) speaks at ground-breaking ceremonies for the Caldecott Tunnel, construction of which is funded by New Deal programs.
1937	Caldecott Tunnel is completed.
1937	Natural gas line reaches Orinda.
1937	Walter Ratcliff completes his first home in Orinda, at 12 Camino Encinas for his son.
1938	Walter Ratcliff builds the Charles W. Merrill home in Orinda; the contractor is Walter Sorensen.
1938-1939	Landscape architect Mabel Symmes designs the gardens and grounds for the Merrill house.
1940	Walter Ratcliff completes his third home in Orinda, at 140 Camino Don Miguel.
1940	Charles Merrill receives award from the National Association of Manufacturers recognizing "distinguished achievement in the field of science and invention which has advanced the American standard of living."
1941	Clara Scott Robinson Merrill dies; subsequently Charles Merrill marries Mrs. Margaret Barker Cope.
1941-1945	The Merrill Company's industrial plants are on a war footing with government contracts to manufacture magnesium powder and aluminum powder.
1945	Leadership of the Ratcliff architectural practice passes to Robert W. Ratcliff, son of Walter Ratcliff.
1953	Charles Merrill retires from active management of the Merrill Company.
1956	Charles Merrill dies in Honolulu; his ashes are interred in the Merrill family plot at Mountain View Cemetery, Oakland.
1957	Margaret Barker Cope Merrill moves from the Merrill House.
1958	The Merrill Company publishes a commemorative history, *The Merrill Story,* by David W. Ryder.
1958	The Charles W. Merrill house and garden are purchased by Rich and Jayne Weyeneth.

1958	J. Peter Ratcliff purchases the Merrill orchard and constructs house with design by Robert W. Ratcliff; his family lives there until 2003.
1972	Moraga Adobe is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the first Orinda property placed on the National Register.
1973	Walter Ratcliff dies in Berkeley.
1977	Walter Ratcliff's Berkeley Day Nursery, 2031 Sixth Street, Berkeley, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the first Ratcliff property placed on the National Register.
1980	The Berkeley Architectural Heritage Association devotes its annual house tour to Walter Ratcliff homes.
1980	The Anna Head School for Girls, 2538 Channing Way, Berkeley, with several campus buildings designed by Walter Ratcliff, is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.
1982	Walter Ratcliff's Hillside School, 1581 LeRoy, Berkeley, is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.
1985	Walter Ratcliff's Chamber of Commerce Building (the Wells Fargo Building), 2140-2144 Shattuck Avenue, Berkeley, is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.
1985	City of Orinda is incorporated.
1986	Leadership of the Ratcliff architectural practice passes to Christopher P. Ratcliff, grandson of Walter Ratcliff.
1987	City of Orinda adapts an historic landmark ordinance to encourage preservation of historic structures.
1989	The Regional Oral History Office of The Bancroft Library interviews Robert W. Ratcliff about the work of his father, Walter Ratcliff.
1997	The Berkeley Architectural Heritage Association interviews J. Peter Ratcliff about the work of his father, Walter Ratcliff.
2001	The Berkeley Architectural Heritage Association publishes *Berkeley Landmarks: An Illustrated Guide to Berkeley, California's Architectural Heritage* (revised edition) which recognizes the contributions of Walter Ratcliff to the built environment of Berkeley by identifying a number of his commercial and institutional structures.

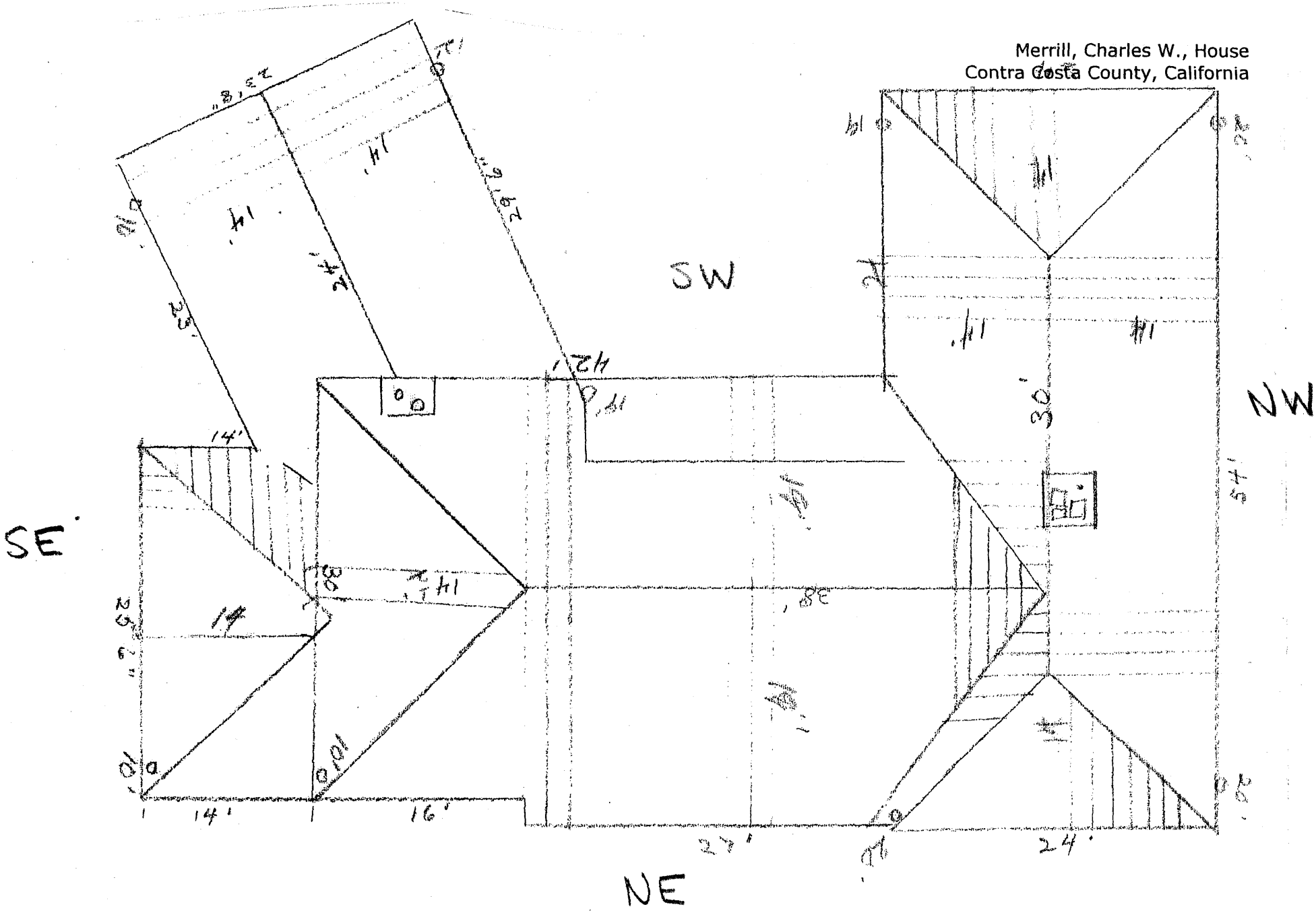

Image A. The "U"-plan of the house and its roof configuration.
Source: Ratcliff client files.

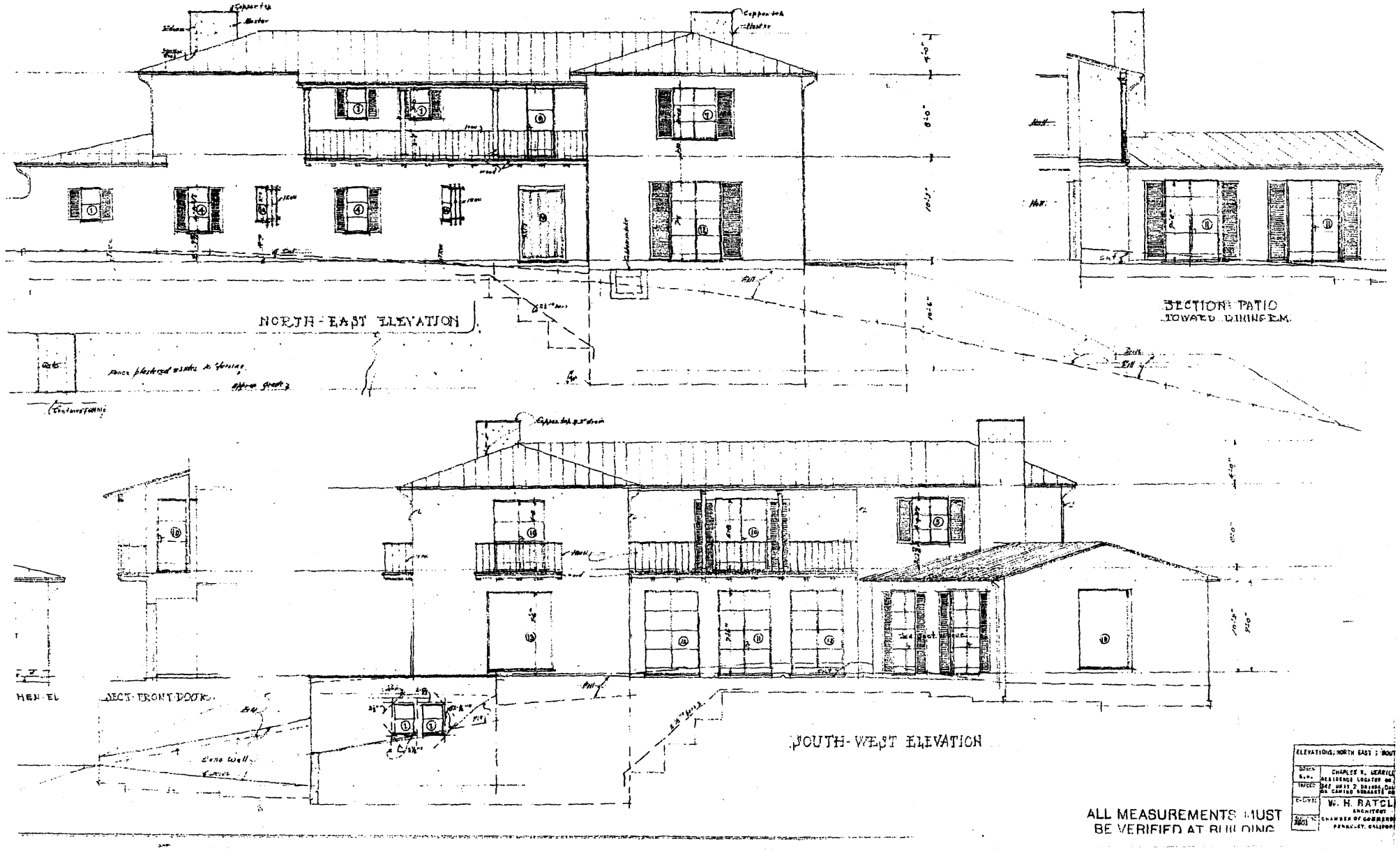

Image B. Northeastern Elevation (Front) and Southwestern Elevation (The Patio and Terrace).
Source: Ratcliff client files, original plans, 25 February 1938.

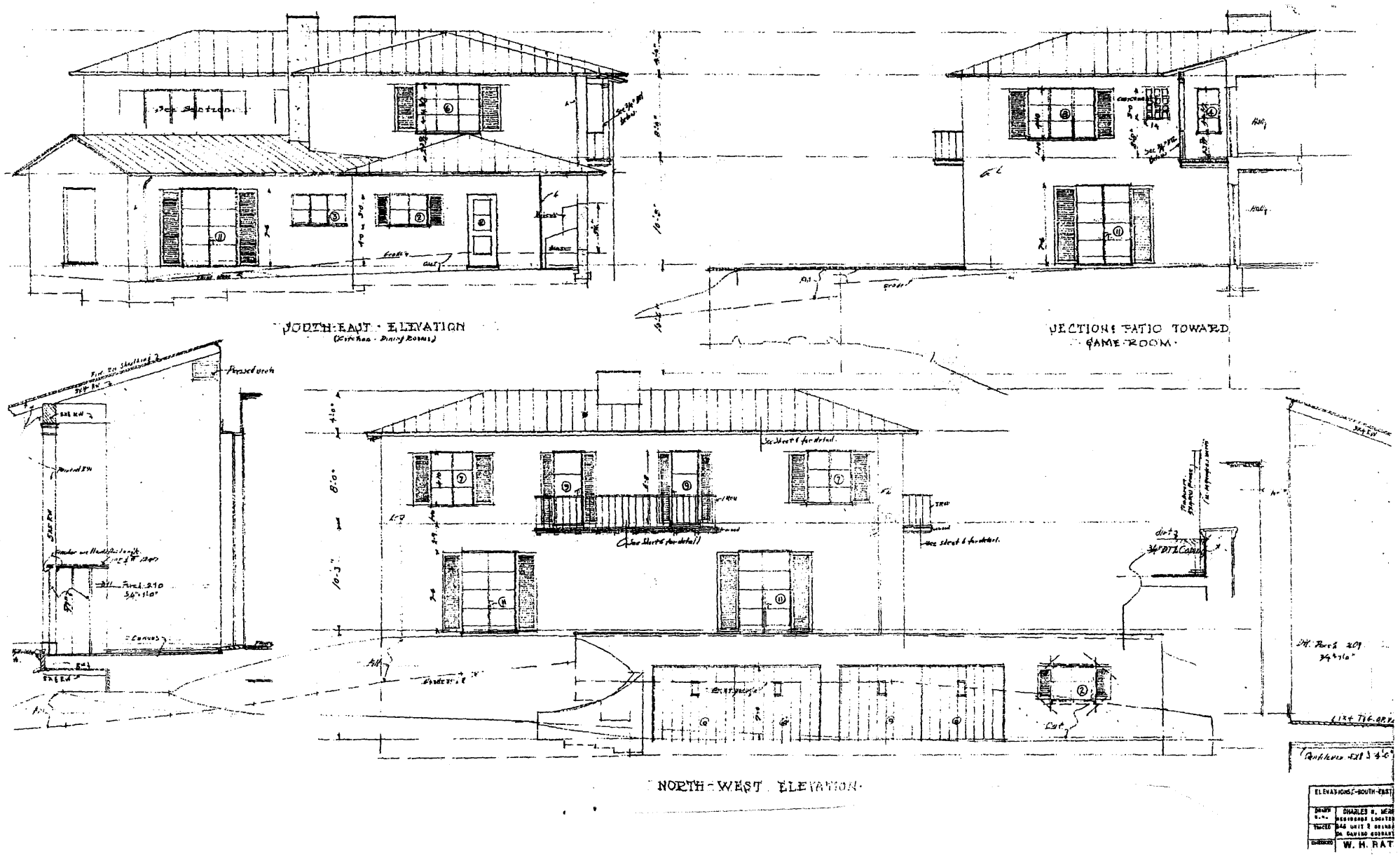

Image C. Southeastern Elevation (The Service Area) and the Northwestern Elevation (The Driveway).
Source: Ratcliff client files, original plans, 25 February 1938.

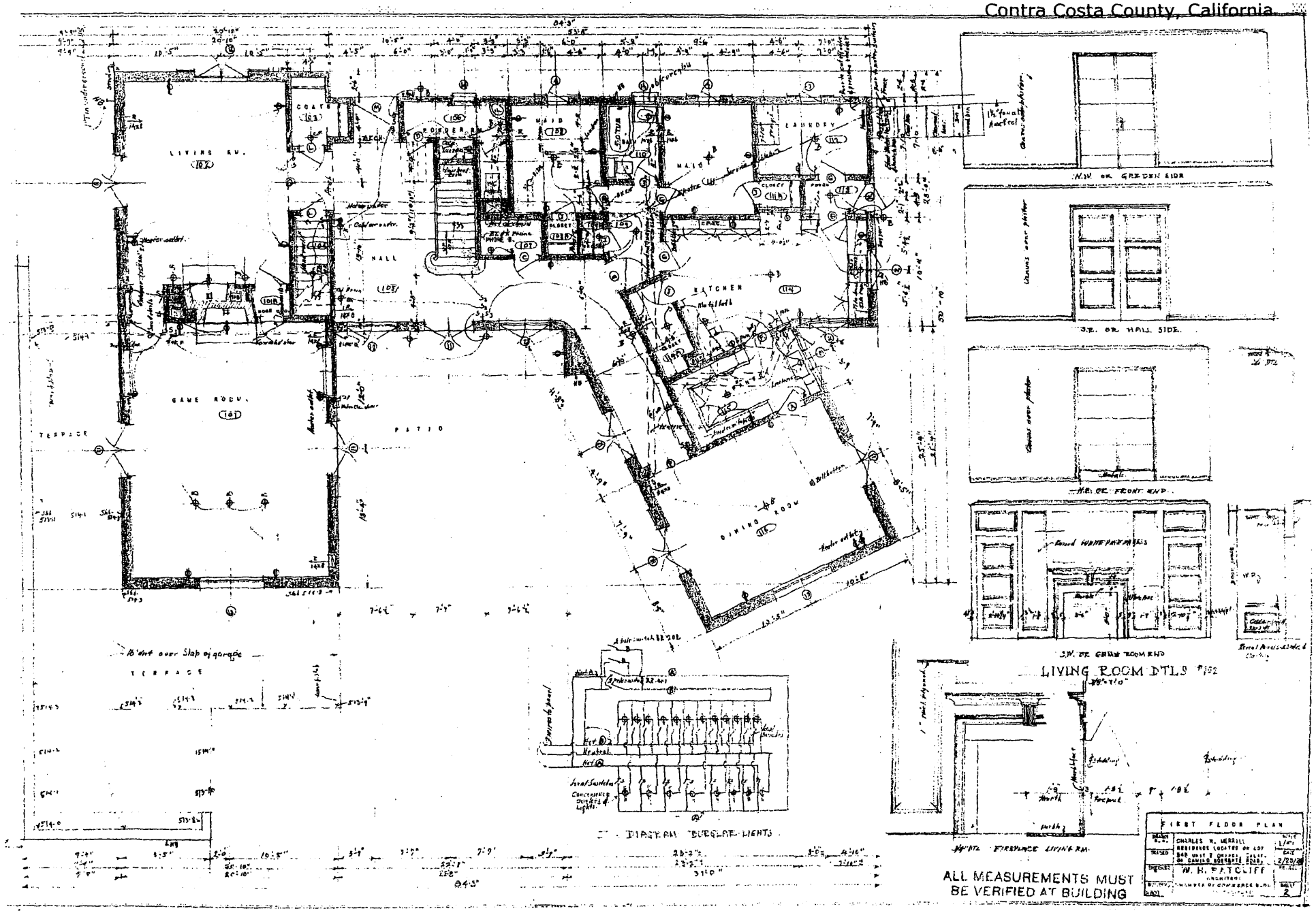

Image D. First Floor Plan.
Source: Ratcliff client files, original plans, 25 February 1938.

Merrill, Charles W., House
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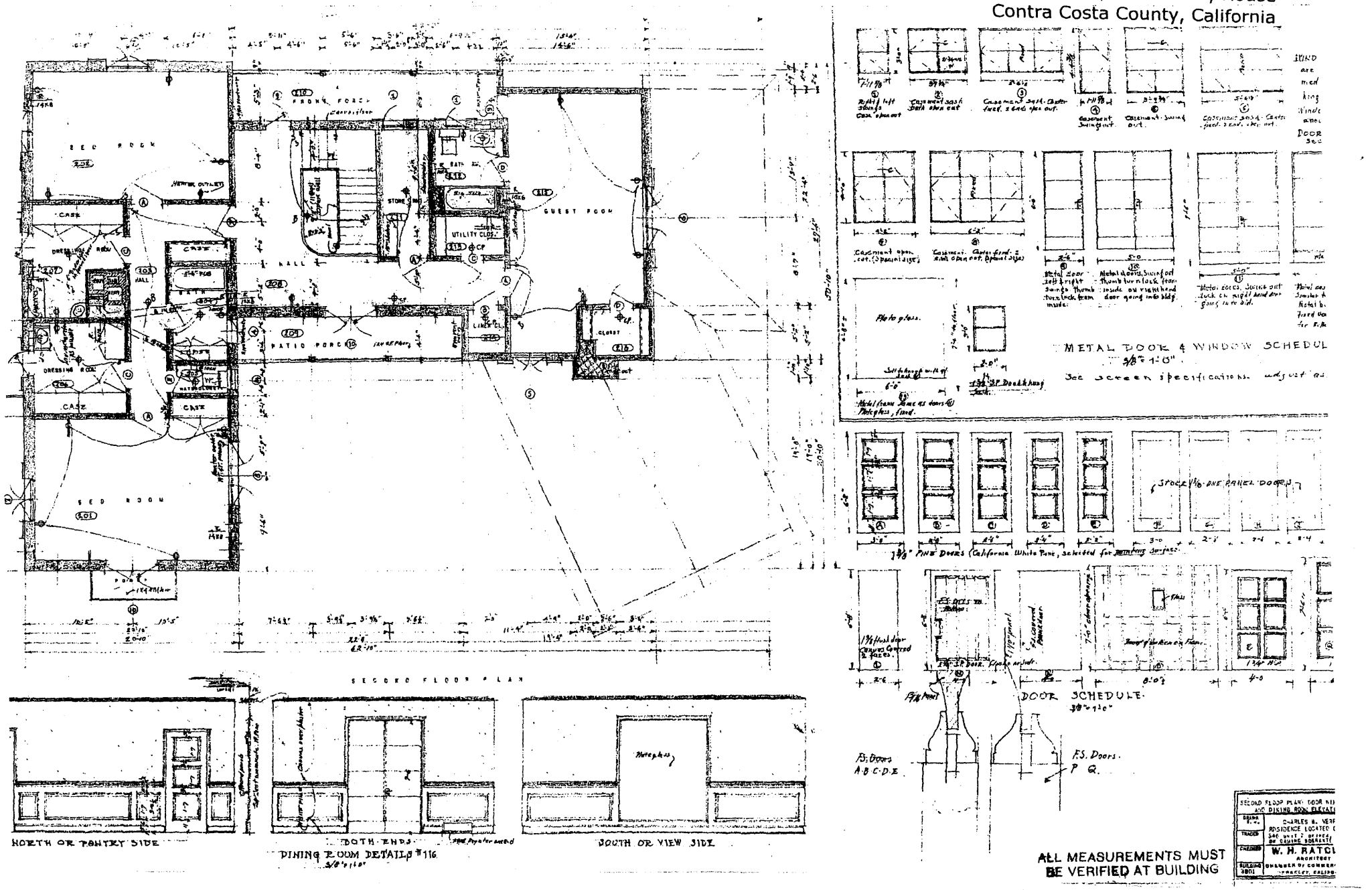
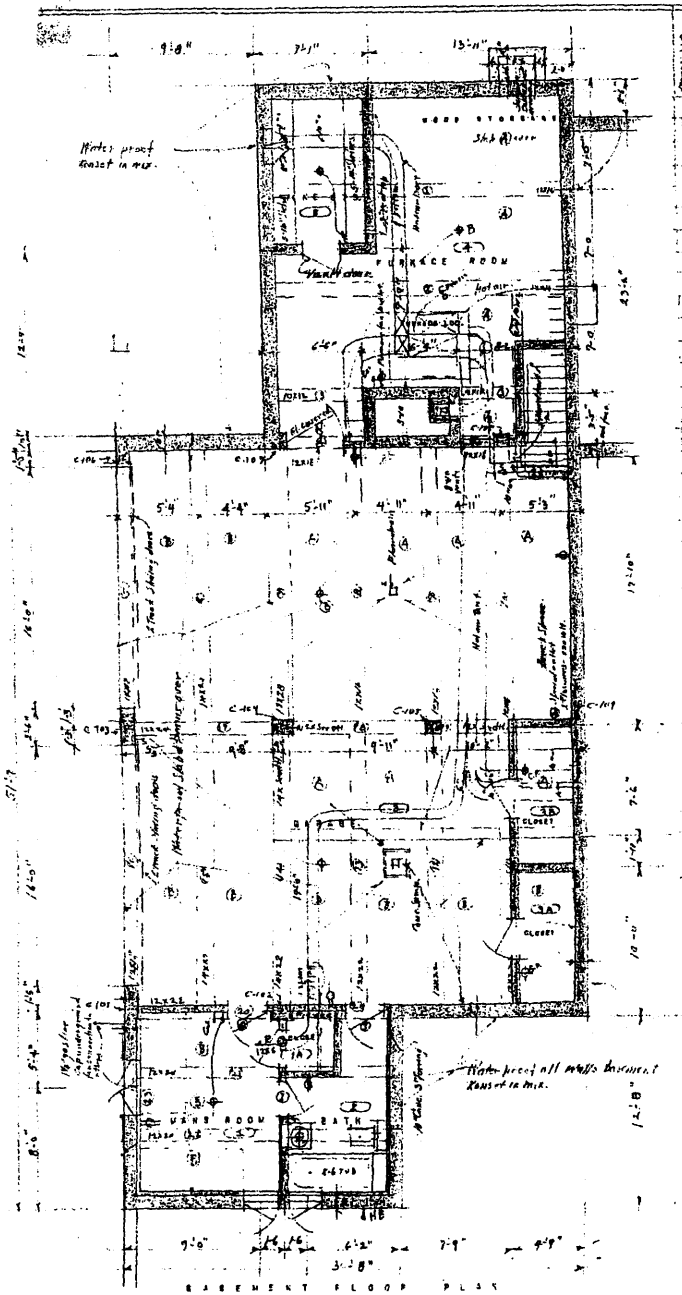


Image E. Second Floor Plan.
Source: Ratcliff client files, original plans, 25 February 1938.



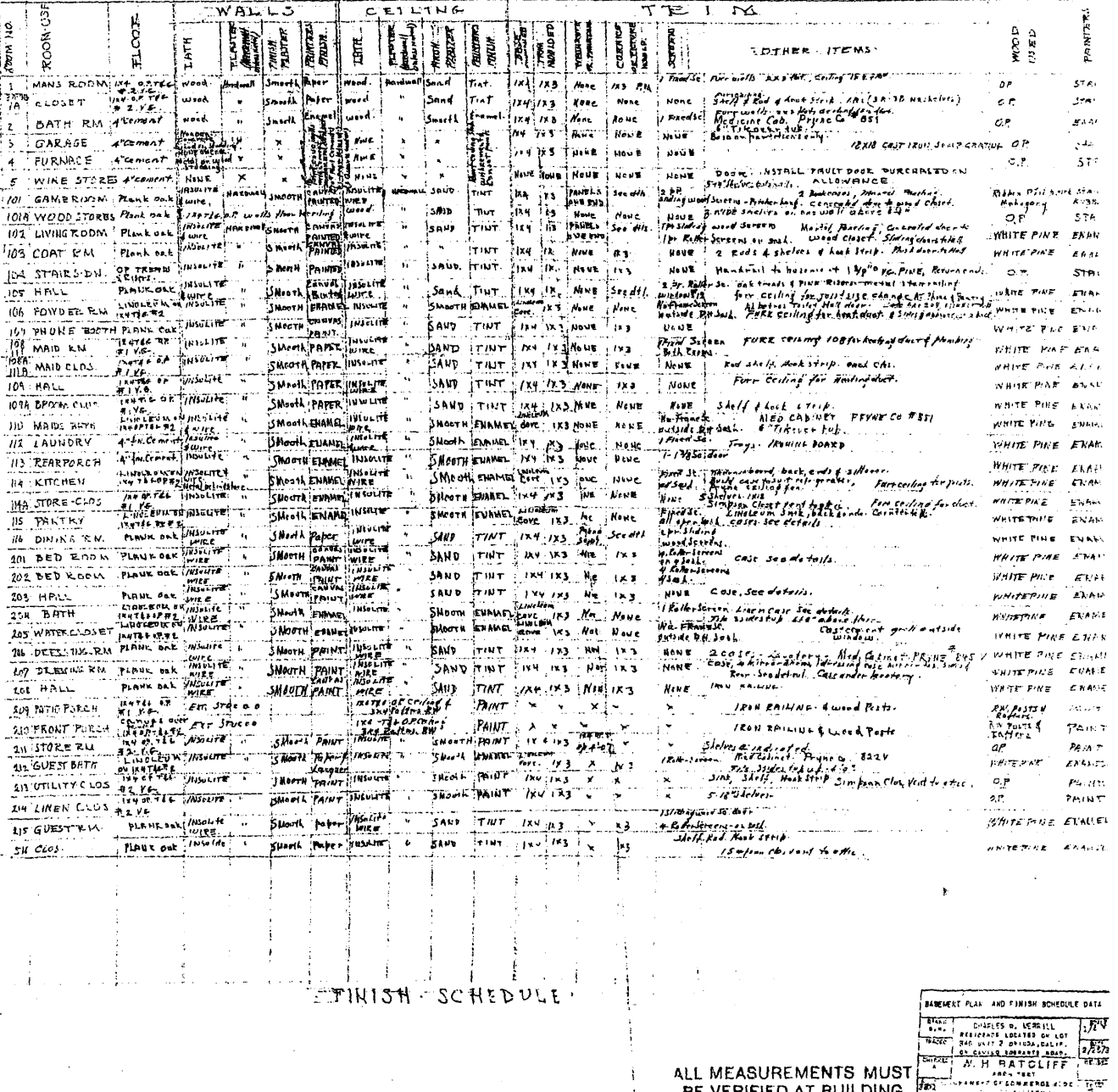


Image F. Basement Level Plan.
Source: Ratcliff client files, original plans, 25 February 1938.

Merrill, Charles W., House
Contra Costa County, California

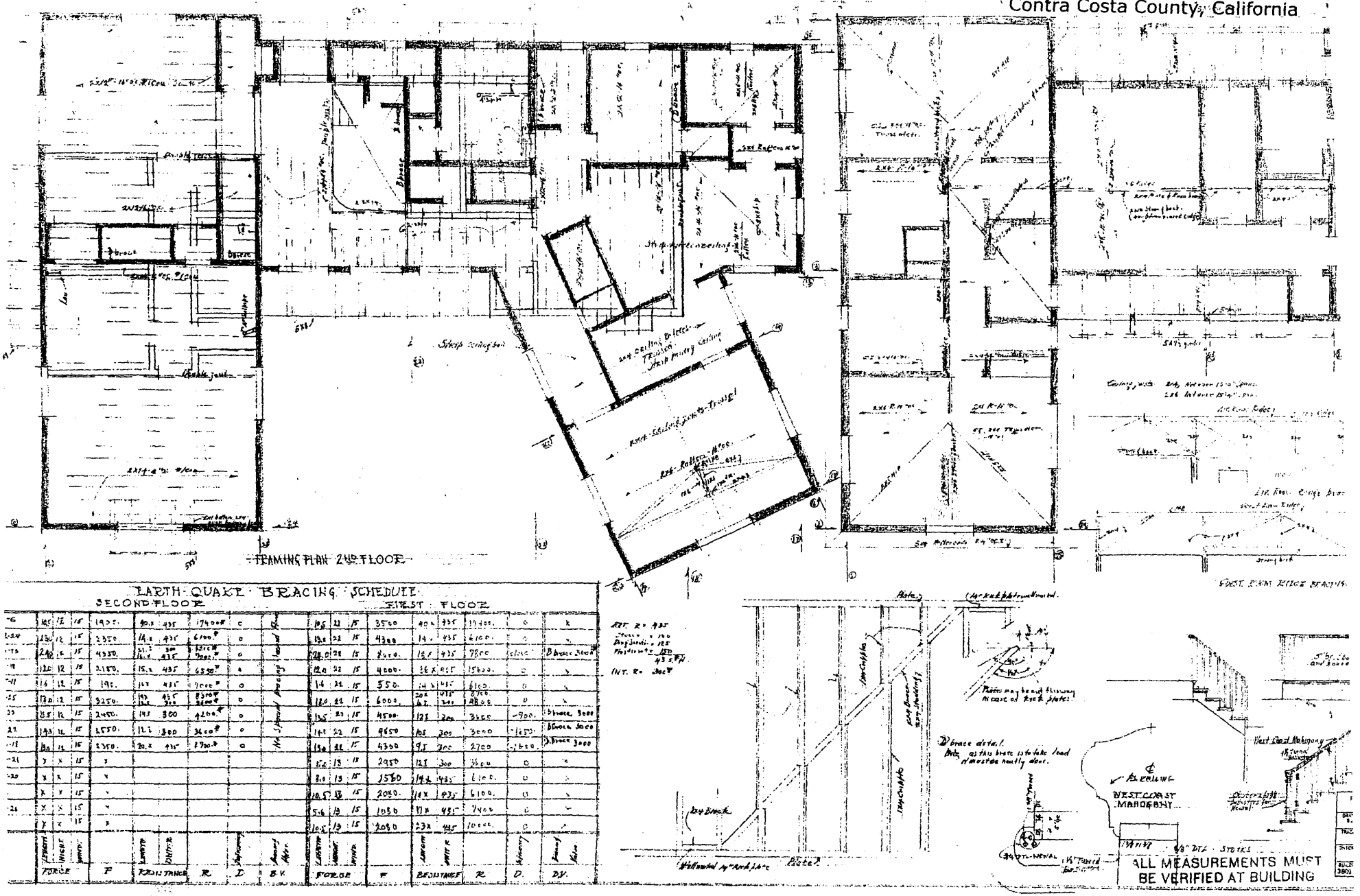


Image G. Earthquake Bracing Schedule.
Source: Ratcliff client files, original plans, 25 February 1938.

Image H. Northeastern Elevation from Camino Sobrante, July 2004.
Source: Ratcliff.

Image I. Northeastern Elevation with Flagstone Entrance Walk, July 2004.
Source: Ratcliff.

Image J. Southwestern Elevation with Patio and Dining Room Wing, July 2004.
Source: Ratcliff.

Image K. Northwestern Elevation and Stuccoed Piers of the Terraced Lawn , July 2004.
Source: Ratcliff.

Image L. Front Entry Hall and Patio Door, July 2004.
Source: Ratcliff.

Image M. Patio Door and Patio Porch Door from Landing, July 2004.
Source: Ratcliff.

Image N. Southwestern Wall, Living Room, July 2004.
Source: Ratcliff.

Image O. Philippine Mahogany Paneling, Game Room, July 2004.
Source: Ratcliff.

Image P. Chandelier and Paneled Wainscot, Dining Room, July 2004.
Source: Ratcliff.

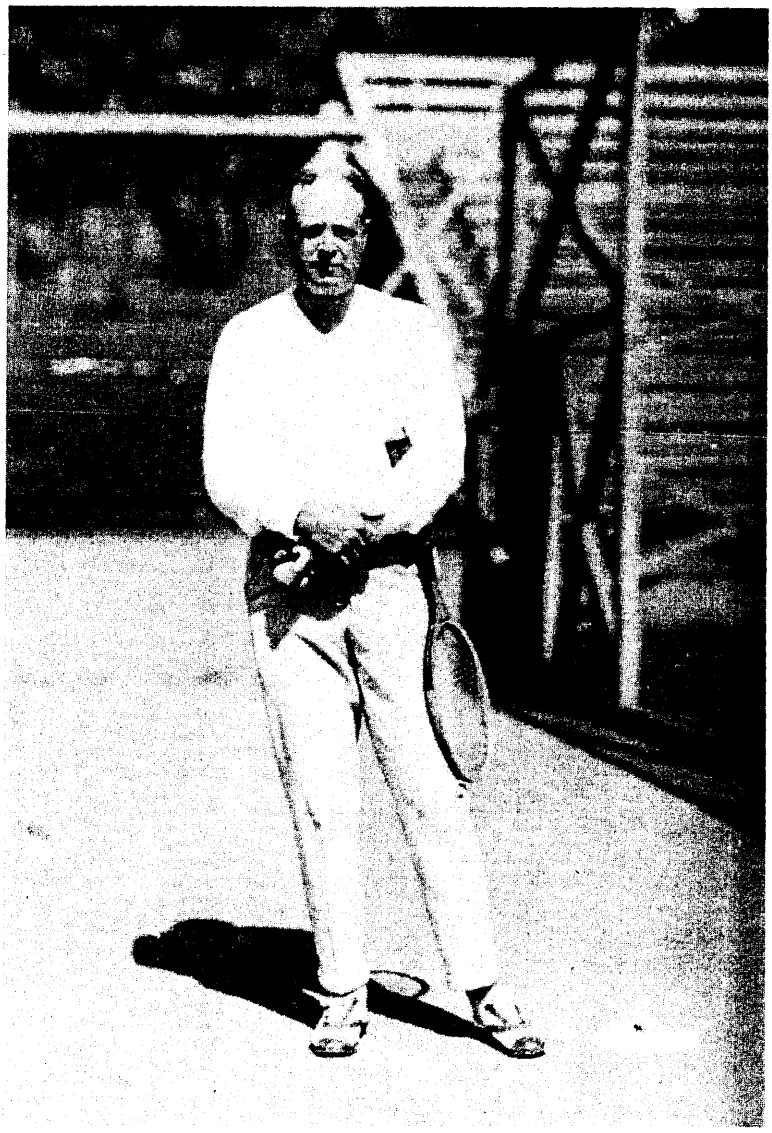


Image Q. Charles W. Merrill at the Berkeley Tennis Club, 1910s.
Walter Ratcliff helped organize the Berkeley Tennis Club in 1906
and he designed its first facilities on Hillegass in 1908.
Source: David W. Ryder, *The Merrill Story* (San Francisco: The Merrill Company, 1958), 78.

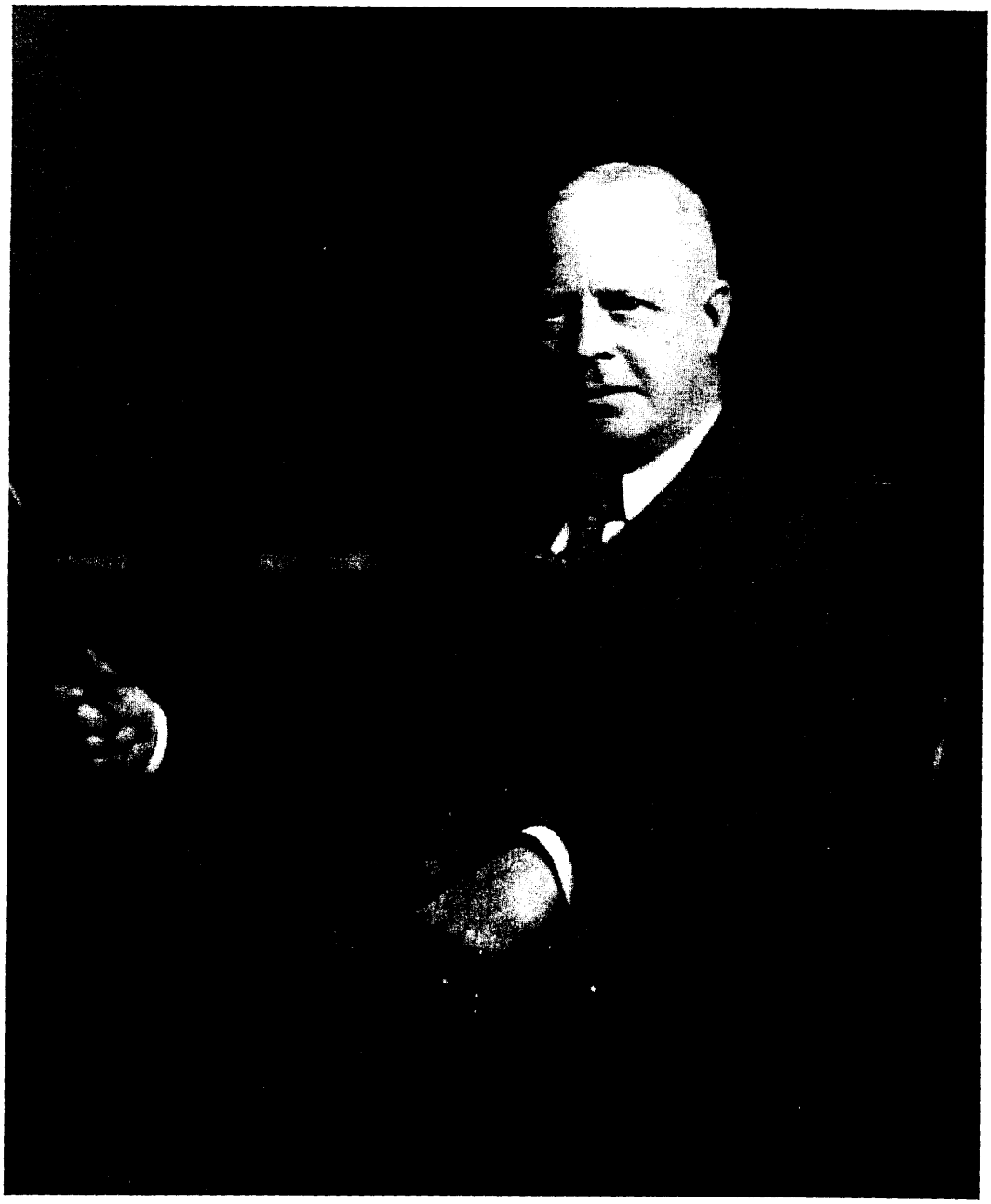


Image R. Charles W. Merrill.
Source: David W. Ryder, *The Merrill Story* (San Francisco: The Merrill Company, 1958), xv.

Image S. Walter H. Ratcliff, 1903.
Source: *The Ratcliff Architects* (Regional Oral History Office, Bancroft Library, 1990), 20.

Image T. Walter Harris Ratcliff and Muriel Williams Ratcliff, about 1950.
Source: Ratcliff family.

Image U. The Spanish-style buildings of Orinda Village in the 1920s.
Source: Muir Sorrick, *The History of Orinda* (Orinda: The Friends of the Orinda Library, 1986), 68.

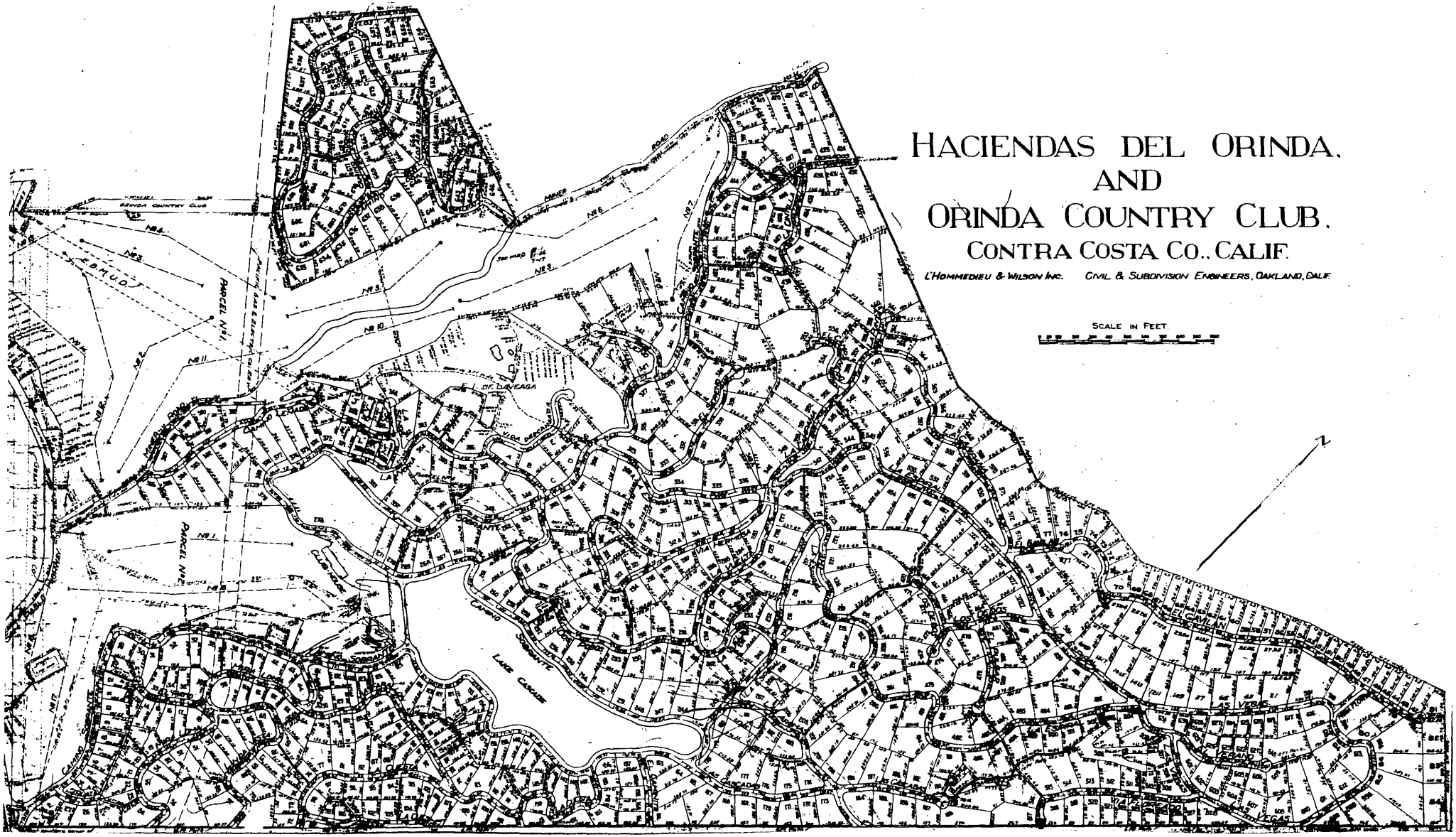


Image V. Original plat for the Haciendas del Orinda subdivision and Orinda Country Club, 1924.
The Charles W. Merrill House was constructed on Lot 346, in upper center.
Source: Weyeneth family.

Image W. A portion of the Haciendas del Orinda subdivision in 1926,
showing the Orinda Country Club, Lake Cascade, and some of the early homes.
The Charles W. Merrill House would be built in the upper left corner in 1938.
Source: Muir Sorrick, *The History of Orinda* (Orinda: The Friends of the Orinda Library, 1986), 74.

PHOTOGRAPHS

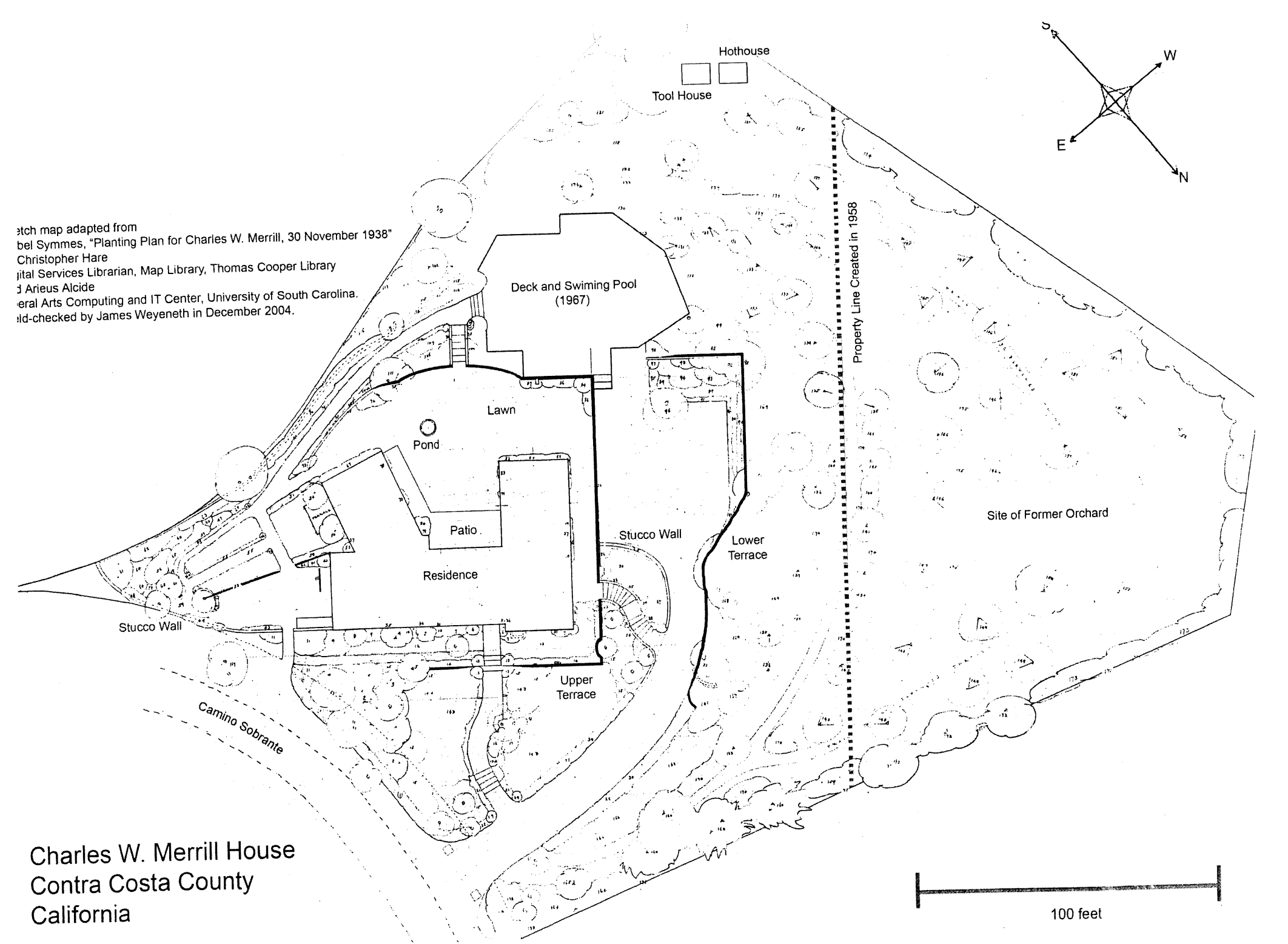
The following information is the same for each of the photographs:

Name of property: Merrill, Charles W., House
Location of property: Contra Costa County, California

Name of photographer: James W. Weyeneth
Date of photographs December 2004
Location of original negatives: California Office of Historic Preservation

List of photographs:

1. Northeastern elevation and front garden (negative #36).
2. Northeastern elevation and front garden (negative #21).
3. Balcony and front door on northeastern elevation (negative #12).
4. Northeastern elevation and front flagstone path (negative #0).
5. Northeastern elevation looking northwest (negative #34).
6. Northwestern elevation (negative #2).
7. Southwestern elevation, portion of northwestern elevation, and pool (negative #36).
8. Southwestern elevation, stonewall of upper terrace, and stairs to pool (negative #11)
9. Southeastern elevation showing rooflines and dining room wing (negative #21).
10. Southeastern elevation (negative #8).
11. Lawn and reflecting pond looking west (negative #6).
12. Lawn looking west down to swimming pool and deck (negative #28).
13. Stone staircase below living room on northwestern elevation (negative #4).
14. Stonewall of upper terrace at northern corner (negative #35).
15. Non-contributing tool house and hothouse (negative #20).



etch map adapted from
bel Symmes, "Planting Plan for Charles W. Merrill, 30 November 1938"
Christopher Hare
ital Services Librarian, Map Library, Thomas Cooper Library
d Arieus Alcide
eral Arts Computing and IT Center, University of South Carolina.
eld-checked by James Weyeneth in December 2004.

Charles W. Merrill House
Contra Costa County
California