

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



1053

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).

1. Name of Property

historic name Comstock House

other names/site number The Oates/Comstock House

2. Location

street & number 767 Mendocino Avenue

☐ not for publication

city or town Santa Rosa

☐ vicinity

state California code CA county Sonoma code 097 zip code 95401

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

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

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

national statewide X local

[Signature]
Signature of certifying official

7 DEC 2011
Date

California State Historic Preservation Officer
Title

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official

Date

Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

Comstock House
Name of Property

Sonoma, California
County and State

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

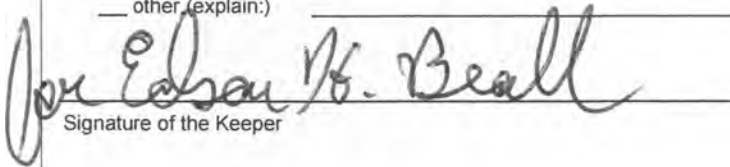
☒ entered in the National Register

☐ determined eligible for the National Register

☐ determined not eligible for the National Register

☐ removed from the National Register

☐ other (explain):


Signature of the Keeper

1-27-12
Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

☒ private
☐ public - Local
☐ public - State
☐ public - Federal

Category of Property
(Check only **one** box)

☒ building(s)
☐ district
☐ site
☐ structure
☐ object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
2	0	buildings
0	0	district
0	0	site
0	0	structure
0	0	Object
2	0	Total

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

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

None

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling/house

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

First Bay Region Tradition

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation: CONCRETE

walls: WOOD, shingle

roof: WOOD, shingle

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

Summary Paragraph

The Comstock House is a two and one-half story wood frame, First Bay Region Tradition residence with a modified rectangular plan, a cross-gabled gambrel roof, and a front porch. The 4,600 square-foot residence is located at 767 Mendocino Avenue in the City of Santa Rosa, Sonoma County, California. The 1905 house is a contributing member of the Ridgway Historic District, a middle-class residential neighborhood of predominantly small houses on city lots. The house faces eastward onto Mendocino Avenue in the center of a .55-acre parcel, one of the largest parcels in the neighborhood, with a lawn and multiple historic trees, all defined by a low rusticated basalt wall. The walls and roof are finished with wood shingles, the chimney is brick, and the perimeter foundation is a canted grade beam of reinforced concrete. An overhanging gambrel, 'squat' wooden piers, and heavy timber balustrades define the front porch. A contributing ca. 1911 garage sympathetic to the house design is set near the western property line of the parcel, and is accessed by a straight gravel driveway from Benton Street. Many original landscape elements such as trees, rock walls and other historical landscape materials remain. The superior design quality, woodwork, built-in cabinetry and interior detailing of the house exemplify the height of the First Bay Tradition genre. This is an outstanding example of the work of a master architect and of early 20th century craftsmanship. The property is in excellent condition with few alterations since its construction. It is the only substantially original remaining example of the First Bay Region Tradition in Santa Rosa.

Narrative Description**Architectural Description****Exterior**

The house is centered on a lot landscaped in mature trees, shrubs, and other plantings, bounded by a low rusticated basalt wall. A gambrel roof with one large gambrel dormer each on the east and west façades top the imposing cedar shingled single family home. The house style is composed in the First Bay Region Tradition of architectural design, which composition balances independent symmetrical uses of asymmetrical elements into a harmonious theme.

The house is shingled with eastern white cedar in a traditional overlap pattern and a 4.5 inch face. The roof is shingled with western red cedar in an overlap pattern on the north/south oriented gambrel roof. Shaped bargeboards finish the edges of all the gables and major horizontal roof elements. The major cross gable creates a front dormer and is in a gambrel roof form. All the exterior trim is heart redwood. Window heads have a colonial trim and most have a curved shingled hood with a minimum of a three- to five-inch projection beyond the face of the wall. The hood element is shingled along a curve that feathers into the wall pattern. The first story doors, windows and trim have an oiled finish, and the second story window surrounds and head trim have been faux painted with a wood grain effect. The original double-hung windows with divided top lights of four or five panes are stacked three to four muntins high. The front stairs and balustrades are constructed of large oil finished redwood newels formed like a bishop's mitre. The rear horizontal stair rails are supported by union jack patterned balusters.

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Architectural Description, Exterior, continued from Registration Form, Page 3

East (Front) Elevation

The eastern façade facing Mendocino Avenue is based on a hierarchy of asymmetrical elements forming a dynamic balanced composition. The ridge of the main gambrel is aligned slightly to the right of center on this elevation. The gambrel form itself is truncated by a horizontal line with a curved window hood above a bow window. These curvilinear hood elements are repeated over one half of the windows in each gable end. A Palladian-style window under the roof ridge and a set of three double-hung bow windows beneath it are centered on the longitudinal axis of the gambrel dormer. The bow windows are of equal width with a slightly elongated center window. The bow is flanked by two unequally sized windows placed symmetrically about the gambrel. Two small shed dormers are placed equidistant on either side of the gambrel dormer, with the south dormer set above the roof curb and the north set below the curb.

The porch on the front elevation spans nearly two thirds of the first story, with the remaining third given to a dining room bay to the north. The porch has bead board soffits and is covered by the overhanging roof. The main entry stairs are offset to the south of the façade center. The porch entrance has two over-scaled Doric columns on either side of the porch stairs, supported at the base by a shingled boxed column. These squat columns are a typical design feature of Brainerd Jones residences. Boxed platforms that step down with each set of four risers flank the steps. The porch balustrade of large turned redwood spindles with a heavy timber top rail follows the proportions of the porch columns. Recessed within the covered porch between two bays is a wide Dutch Colonial Revival style front door with divided lights in diamond patterned muntins. The bay on the northeast corner to the right of the entry door encloses a window seat in the interior. The living room bay to the south of the door is approximately the same size as the dining room bay to the north, but the curved dining room bay projects beyond the front porch line and is the foremost element on this elevation. Both bays feature casement windows. All doors and windows have full surrounds and head trim of crown bead and cove molding.

South (Side) Elevation

The southern elevation is dominated by a brick chimney centered on the gable end of the gambrel roof. Two quarter-round fan lights flanking the chimney below the eaves illuminate the attic space. The second floor has paired double-hung windows on either side of the chimney, however a smaller set of eight-light casement windows separates the eastern-most set of windows from the chimney. Only the top sash of each double-hung set is patterned in twelve-over-one muntins. An asymmetry is created by an overhanging projection that shades the two windows to the west of the chimney. This overhang truncates the roof line just below the upper gambrel break point to the east. The slightly set back porch and its overhanging roof complete the lower break roof form. The porch has a large turned balustrade for one half its western length and terminates at a shingle-clad pony wall east of the chimney. A continuous plank of oiled redwood forms its top rail. Double-hung ten-light windows flank the chimney and are canted back at 45 degrees. This creates a bay window effect that is set back from the face of the second floor wall plane by approximately four feet at its furthest intersection with the body of the house. A double-hung window with diagonal muntins creating four "x" forms on the top sash is set under the overhang created by this bay at the western-most wall plane. Two half-round wooden louvered vents are set into the foundation.

North (Side) Elevation

The northern elevation has the only complete gambrel roof form on the house. A horizontal soffit projecting off the wall line returns the length of the wall plane in a shingled curved form. This mimics the window hoods but is

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smaller in scale. A bank of three small attic windows sits just below the ridge. Two of the three are similar double-hung windows and the third smaller casement window is the size of the upper sash of diamond patterned lights. The second story has four double-hung windows separated by a smaller casement window, also with diamond muntins. The westernmost set of windows is mullied. The third smaller window near the center has diamond muntins in a casement sash that is similar in scale to the upper sashes of the double-hung windows. The easternmost set comprises two individual windows slightly larger than those to the west and are separated by a wall section the approximate width of the window proportions. A bay on the ground floor projects three feet beyond the plane of the kitchen wall. The bay is roofed with a low slope hip that returns to the wall just below the horizontal curved hood line that ties the lowest gambrel roof at the lowest point of the barge trim. Two thirty-inch square double-hung kitchen windows are to the left of center. One of the windows is new, matching the other window that was installed ca. 1940. Two two-foot four-inch, four-light awning windows are set at the basement level just above the foundation stem wall.

West (Rear) Elevation

The roof ridge for the main mass of the house runs north-south. The major mass of the rear elevation repeats that of the front but with stronger asymmetries. Its gambrel gable element is offset to the right of center of the main roof form. The gambrel dormer gable is truncated at the lower barge trim line of the roof. A window shed returns horizontally across the face of the elevation stopping just short of the center point of the gambrel. A half-round fan light is centered just below the ridge. Three stained glass windows with a central shield design are stacked to the north of center of the elevation. On the northernmost section of the lower shed of the gambrel roof form is a thirty-inch square, four-light dormer window with a Craftsman shed roof. Below the shed the ground story is accessed through a screened porch. The basement is accessed through a six-light door below the porch. The south side of the screened porch is accessed by a stair with a solid redwood handrail with large newel and three-by-four-inch 'union jack' patterned redwood balustrades. These are mirrored on the southern side of the elevation with entry stairs to the hall that access the library within the southwest corner of the house. Perpendicular to this entry door is a ten-foot by twelve-foot hipped-roof mass projecting to the west that houses the interior sitting room. A single double-hung, five-light divided sash window is centered on this mass and its north eave extends to create a shed over a three-foot bathroom extension off the library entry hall. The intersection of this wall is near the center of the main mass of the house. The library hall entry below and behind the ceremonial stair in the entry hall has its own stair and landing with redwood rail and balustrade. A double-hung window with triangular top lights perforates the library wall between the room extension and the southern edge of the façade.

Garage

The original ca.1911 garage was square in plan, in wood frame construction diagonally sheathed in redwood and faced with red western cedar shingles. The hipped roof is clad in composition shingles. It currently measures 23.5 feet x 20 feet. Except for the roof form, which is flat, a later ca. 1930 six-feet-wide expansion on the north end of the building detracts little from the look and feel of the original. The east and west façades each have one double-hung window; the south façade has two. A beadboard side door on the west façade and on the northeast façade two sets of double doors strap-hinged to open outward provide access to the interior. Electrical service has been upgraded except for the original knob-and-tube wired overhead light.

Landscaping

The yard is planted in numerous mature ornamental trees and shrubs, including Garry oak, ginkgo, and Lombardi poplar. The many flowering shrubs include oleander, camellias, and roses, and vines include ivy and Virginia

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creeper A lawn on the east (front) and south sides of the house completes the park-like setting. A number of the trees are old enough to have predated the house, and others may date to the Oates and/or Comstock periods¹.

The parcel is bounded on the east and north by a low rusticated basalt wall of large irregularly shaped stone in raised bead mortar. The wall is punctuated by gateways on the Mendocino Avenue (east) and Benton Street (north) frontages. The original iron gates were removed at some unknown date. The basalt wall terminates at the driveway from Benton Street. A new white picket fence that replaced one of wire extends from west of the driveway to the property line, completing the defined boundary. The south and west property lines are defined by wire fencing between the neighboring parcels.

Interior

The interior spaces of the Comstock house are organized around a central hall and ceremonial stair to the second floor. There is a large unfinished attic and a basement. The ground floor is divided into approximate thirds. Starting at the northwest corner of the building, working clockwise, a screened-in rear porch containing storage space and the original servant's toilet leads into the kitchen. The kitchen is separated from the dining room by a butler's pantry that is adjacent to a utility core. The core includes two fireplaces and the original nook location for the kitchen stove. A total of five major and minor spaces comprise the northern third of the ground floor.

The central third includes the reception hall and ceremonial stair with the main entry to the left of the hall. The original plans depict a lavatory with hall on the west side of the hall. This hall formerly segregated the public from the service areas of the house with a bisecting wall. Removal of the wall rendered the space into a full cross hall, uniting the northern and southern thirds of the ground floor. These central spaces of the middle third of the ground floor form part of the utility core and comprise the reception hall, cross hall, and sitting room with lavatory that are accessed from the kitchen. To the south of the kitchen is a servant's stair and closet. The fireplace on the west wall of the dining room is perpendicular to the run of the servant's stair.

The southern third of the ground floor is made of up of two rooms, the living room with a sitting bay to the southeast and a fireplace inglenook to the south. The library is accessed through the west wall of the living room. The library door to the north enters the back hall that joins the library and the kitchen behind the ceremonial stairway.

The second story of the Comstock house has six rooms that form a 'u' shape around the main stairway. A servant's bedroom and stairs with a small hall is above the kitchen adjacent to the main stairway. It has its own entry hall and bathroom separated from the public space off the hall. The servant's bathroom was originally without a toilet, but one was added by the Comstock family ca. 1941. The second of five bedrooms is in the northeast corner. Across from the main stairs and off the landing is a large bedroom with walk-in closet and a sink alcove in the northeast corner. This bedroom features a view through the triple-glazed bow window on the east façade. The master bedroom with three walk-in closets and one small closet, and a wall sink in an alcove comprise the southeastern corner. The remaining bedroom is in the southwest corner of the second floor. The family bath and toilet between this final bedroom and the main staircase are entered through a small hall framed by two built-in chiffoniers.

The interior appointments, finishes, and trim conditions of the Comstock House exemplify the Arts and Crafts style. The ground floor has elaborate redwood trim and detailing with refined classical and Victorian appointments. The ground floor and upper floor public spaces have three-inch oak floors. The trim in the

¹ Jeff Elliot Personal communication 2011

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bedrooms, bathrooms, pantry, sitting room, and kitchen is painted. The windows, casements, stools and skirt are unstained waxed redwood consistent in level and detail throughout the residence.

The fine carpentry and detailing show the influence of the First Bay Region Tradition of interior design with its emphasis on artistry of form and sensibility. The entry hall, identified as the 'reception hall' on the original blueprints, with its original gas/electric light fixture references eastern shingle style entry halls, as does the open plan where large wooden sliding doors allow a sense of flow between spaces. These large doors separate the entry hall and the dining room to the north from the living room to the south. The living room sliding door system is celebrated with a full corniced and columned door surround with half-height and engaged columns resting on a plinth at about 30 inches from the finish floor. The First Bay Region Tradition is also expressed through finish and materiality. Both the entry and living room have prominent classically designed fireplaces with traditional surrounds. The classical columns, sophisticated trim, and detailing express Brainerd Jones at his creative best.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

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

Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

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

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Community Development

Architecture

Period of Significance

1905-1936

Significant Dates

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Brainerd Jones

Williamson & McKenzie

Period of Significance (justification)

Under Criterion A the period of significance begins in 1905, the year the Comstock House was constructed, and ends in 1936, the year that the Ridgeway Historic District was mostly built-out. The period of significance under Criterion C is 1905, the year the house was completed.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary) N/A

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria)

The Comstock House is significant under National Register Criterion A within the context of the growth and development of early 20th Century Santa Rosa. The Comstock House is also eligible under Criterion C because it embodies the distinctive characteristics of the First Bay Region Tradition architectural style and represents the work of regionally prominent master architect Brainerd Jones. The Comstock House also possesses high artistic values. The Comstock house is nominated to the National Register at the local level of significance under both contexts.

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

Under Criterion A, the Comstock House is significant for its association with the development and expansion of early 20th Century Santa Rosa. As the first residence built in the 1902 Merritt's Addition subdivision the Comstock House began the trend of burgeoning 20th Century suburban development of Santa Rosa. The Comstock House extended the range of elite homes and high style architecture to the north of the original town center.

Under Criterion C, the Comstock House is significant because it embodies the distinctive characteristics of, and is representative of, the First Bay Region Tradition architectural style developed and practiced by Bernard Maybeck, Julia Morgan, Joseph Worchester, Ernest Coxhead, A.C. Schweinfurth, and other prominent San Francisco Bay Area architects in the early years of the 20th Century. The First Bay Region Tradition is a regional variant of the Eastern Shingle Style of architecture and was influenced with forms such as the Dutch Colonial Revival. The Comstock House is additionally eligible as a representation of the work of regionally prominent architect Brainerd Jones. Jones designed hundreds of buildings in San Francisco, Marin County, and Sonoma County in a broad range of styles. Over 100 of his buildings remain in service, however the Comstock House is one of only two of his commissions designed in the First Bay Region Tradition that survive in Santa Rosa.

Developmental history/additional historic context information (if appropriate)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form)

See Continuation Sheet **Section 9**

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
☐ Local government
☐ University
☐ Other
Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property .55 acres
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage)

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Statement of Significance

The Comstock House is eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places for local significance under Criterion A for its association with the development and expansion of early 20th century Santa Rosa, and for local significance under Criterion C for its First Bay Region Tradition architecture as realized by noted San Francisco Bay Area architect Brainerd Jones.

Criterion A: Association with a pattern of events contributing to the development and expansion of early 20th century Santa Rosa and its culture.

Setting

The Comstock House is located in Santa Rosa, California (population 160,000), a major California city 60 miles north of San Francisco and the county seat of Sonoma County. The house is within the Ridgway Historic District, so designated by the City of Santa Rosa in 2007. The Ridgway District comprises primarily single-family residences built between ca. 1870 and 1936, with the exception of a single cul-de-sac developed in the late 1950s. These residential properties are bounded by a ring of commercial properties, most of which are themselves converted single family residences dating to the 1890's through the 1920s.

The Comstock House faces onto Mendocino Avenue, formerly called Healdsburg Avenue, which was historically and today remains a major north-south thoroughfare of the city. It was the first house built on the north side of Block 188 in Merritt's Addition at the time of its construction in 1904-05². Since that time residential buildings have filled in the neighborhood. Two other contemporary Brainerd Jones houses abutted Mendocino/Healdsburg Avenue, both of which were built just before the Comstock House: the Paxton House, located two doors to the south at 739 Mendocino Avenue, built in 1902 and demolished following the 1969 earthquake, and the extant Queen Anne style Lumsden House (NR83001245) at 727 Mendocino Avenue. The ca. 1870s WS Davis house, next door at 759 Mendocino Avenue, retains much of its architectural integrity and supports the historical feeling of the setting. A 1924 Prairie style bungalow next door to the west and a Victorian vernacular house across the street to the north on Benton Street are the Comstock House's immediate neighbors. The remainder of this neighborhood as well as the larger one to the east across Mendocino Avenue largely retains the look and feel of early 20th century suburban residential development. The Comstock House however is one of the few remaining grand homes of its era in Santa Rosa that has been continuously maintained as a family dwelling.

Historical Context

The town of Santa Rosa grew rapidly from a general store on Maria Carrillo's *Rancho Cabeza de Santa Rosa*³, established in 1851 by David Mallagh, a son-in-law of Maria's, to a 70-acre future town site established the next year on land acquired from Julio Carrillo, Maria's son.⁴ By 1854 Santa Rosa had become the county seat, and its first newspaper, the *Sonoma Democrat*, began printing in 1857 when the town had but 300 or so residents. The population increased tenfold with the coming of the railroad in 1870.^{5 6}

² Sanborn Map Company 1904

³ Maria Carrillo was Mariano Vallejo's mother and one of very few women to receive a Mexican land grant in California.

⁴ Munro-Fraser 1880

⁵ City of Santa Rosa 2009

⁶ LeBaron 1985

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As the town outgrew its original 70 acres, surrounding farms and ranches were subdivided into 'additions', beginning as early as 1855. These small and medium-sized farms were split into increasingly smaller parcels; more than 30 additions can be counted on an 1896 map of the town.⁷ One of these additions north of the town center was to become the site of the Oates/Comstock House.

The Santa Rosa of James Wyatt Oates' time had grown from a small farming community to a regional commercial center serviced by both the Southern Pacific and the San Francisco and North Pacific Railroad. An interurban electric train from Petaluma through Sebastopol to the west opened in 1904, the year Mr. Oates started building his new house. By this time two banks, nine churches, and eight hotels were well established, and three local horse car lines operated within the city. Santa Rosa educational resources included two public high schools, two colleges, and two seminaries.

The land on which the Comstock House sits changed ownership 19 times, beginning with Julio Carrillo in 1855, the first year Sonoma County kept records. In 1866 Carrillo sold 160 acres of his patent to farmer Cornelius Money for \$1920.00. Then followed a series of deed exchanges for successively smaller parcels until 1901, when Amber E. and Amanda Merritt purchased two parcels from the Santa Rosa National Bank.

The following September the Merritts sold one of the parcels to their son Edson. Edson, a cashier at the Santa Rosa National Bank, then added to his holdings by buying two more properties from the same bank in April and May, 1902. The combined cost of the properties was \$30.00. Just seven weeks later he filed a subdivision map, 'Merritt's Addition' with the City of Santa Rosa. Merritt had divided his addition located between Healdsburg (now Mendocino) Avenue and Glenn Street into 28 lots, with the new western extension of Benton Street bisecting the addition. On January 29, 1903 James Wyatt Oates bought lots 26, 27, and 28 from Merritt for \$10.00. On March 17, Oates returned to buy a fourth adjoining lot for \$10.00⁸. These lots were consolidated to create the parcel that the Comstock House now occupies. The end lot, numbered 28, faces onto Mendocino Avenue. The size of the combined parcel is larger than average for the neighborhood but commensurate with adjacent properties along the avenue.

James Wyatt Oates built his house on Healdsburg Avenue, which was renamed Mendocino Avenue in 1904-5. The location on the major north-south artery through town, indicates that Oates wanted his house to be seen by locals as well as travelers. Its exposure would later be amplified by the designation of the avenue as a segment of a national highway. US 101 was originally routed from California's Mexican border to the Olympic peninsula in Washington⁹. The section in Santa Rosa ran right through the middle of town on Santa Rosa and Mendocino avenues, which development greatly intensified traffic congestion and its attendant casualties, as through traffic was obliged to stop at each of many intersections. Having become an intolerable nuisance, US 101 was rebuilt in the mid-fifties as an elevated freeway approximately one-half mile to the west¹⁰. Although no longer a national highway, Mendocino Avenue has since been widened to four lanes and remains a busy city thoroughfare, much as it was in Oates' day.

The Residents

The Oates

The home that would be best known as the Comstock House was built for James Wyatt Oates and his wife, Mattie. Over his prior quarter-century in Santa Rosa, Oates had forged a reputation as a respected lawyer and a

⁷ Smyth 1896

⁸ Sonoma County Abstract Bureau 1918

⁹ Wikipedia 2010

¹⁰ LeBaron 1993

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savvy speculator who owned property all over town. In addition to his law and real estate interests, Oates was an avid motorist, having bought three successively grander automobiles within two years and was the president of the local automobile club in 1911. He built the small garage on the parcel sometime between 1910 and 1915¹¹, the year that Oates succumbed to the flu.

The Comstock Family

When James Wyatt Oates died in 1915, ownership of the house passed seamlessly into the Comstock era. Oates had read for the bar under the tutelage of his brother and briefly had become his law partner. He subsequently made young Hilliard Comstock a partner in his own practice in Santa Rosa, having taught him law since at least 1911¹². In the months before Oates' death, Hilliard Comstock was also living at the Oates home¹³. Once Oates passed away, Hilliard's mother and sister moved into the house as "unpaid caretakers"¹⁴, and remained at the home until the probate court accepted Nellie Comstock's purchase offer of \$10,000 in 1916.

An artist and writer, Nellie educated all of her seven children herself with the aid of private tutors. Many went on to make significant contributions to the formation of the American Arts & Crafts movement. Two of Nellie's children, John and Catherine, apprenticed at the Roycroft community in East Aurora, New York in the craft of fine leatherworking, and at some point prior to 1907 were in charge of the Roycroft Shop¹⁵. By 1908, John and Catherine moved to Santa Rosa, which had the tannery that provided their raw materials¹⁶. Nellie, meanwhile, had been corresponding with Luther Burbank from her home in Evanston, Illinois. Burbank encouraged her to move here with her other children as well¹⁷.

With the possible exception of oldest son John Adams Comstock Jr., all of Nellie Comstock's children lived at Comstock House, some for extended periods, between 1916 and 1940.

Two other Comstock siblings made significant Arts and Crafts contributions. Hurd Comstock, who did not move to California until around 1930, commissioned Frank Lloyd Wright's associate, Walter Burley Griffin, to design two notable homes in Evanston, Illinois in 1911¹⁸. Hugh Comstock became a noted architect in Carmel-by-the-Sea, where he innovated the design of whimsical fairy cottages inspired by the watercolor illustrations of the British children's book illustrator Arthur Rackham that are still a hallmark of the community¹⁹. His sister Catherine also moved to Carmel, where she and her husband were key figures in establishing Carmel as a pioneering arts community on the West Coast in the 1920s²⁰. Nellie Comstock was the first patron of the Carmel Art Association²¹.

When Nellie died in 1940, her home was inherited by son Hilliard. Hilliard became a key civic leader instrumental in the construction of parks, hospitals, and schools. With a keen interest in children's issues, he was president of the Santa Rosa Board of Education from 1920-1929. During this period of reorganization and rapid expansion Comstock's purview included the construction of Santa Rosa High School, four elementary schools, and

¹¹ Jeff Elliott, Personal Communication 2011

¹² Elliott, Interview with Helen Finley Comstock c.1980

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ Ibid

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ Santa Rosa Republican April 2, 1908.

¹⁷ Elliott 2010b

¹⁸ Historic American Buildings Survey nd

¹⁹ Wright 2002

²⁰ Ibid

²¹ Santa Rosa Republican, April 2, 1908

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launching the building program for the junior college. Hilliard was elected Superior Court judge, then re-elected for the next 35 years. During his tenure as judge, only of his decisions was reversed²². Today he is commemorated in the community by the naming of the downtown city transit mall and pedestrian corridor, and by Comstock Middle School, not far from Comstock House.²³

Other Owners

The Comstock House continued to be occupied by the Comstock family until 1991 when it was purchased by Florence Grover who lived there until 2006, at which time the fourth and current owners bought it.

Criterion C: First Bay Region Tradition Architecture Representing the Work of a Master Architect

The Comstock House is significant under Criterion C because it embodies the distinctive characteristics of the First Bay Region Tradition of architectural design, which is a regional variant that synthesizes elements of the East Coast Shingle and Dutch Colonial revival styles as well as elements of the Arts and Crafts movement. The house is also significant under Criterion C as a representation of North San Francisco Bay Area architect Brainerd Jones, whose hallmarks are high artistic expressions in quality materials.

Brainerd Jones and the First Bay Region Tradition

Brainerd Jones (1869-1945) created more than a hundred buildings of almost every description. His work, much of it still standing, extended from San Francisco to Cloverdale, at the far north of Sonoma County. Most of Petaluma's historic core, as well as three Carnegie Libraries within the county were Jones' buildings. He designed only seven known homes in Santa Rosa, five of which are extant. One of them, the nearby Belvedere/Lumsden House, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRIS 83001245).

Jones' buildings were appreciated by his contemporaries and continue to be admired today as exemplars of artful design and quality construction. "Jones was not known for any particular style. Like many of his contemporaries, he was adept at many different design and prepared plans for a variety of building types ranging from Carnegie libraries, school building, banks, churches, fraternal halls, commercial structures, residences, fire stations, and more"²⁴. He was well enough appreciated by his contemporaries to have been chosen over Julia Morgan to build the Petaluma Women's Club in 1913.²⁵

Brainerd Jones was born March 25, 1869 to Cyrus R. Jones, a prominent Chicago lawyer, and Helen L. Brainerd of New York.²⁶ He came to Petaluma in 1875 at age 6 with his mother after his father died. By age 13 he was winning prizes for his drawing and drafting.²⁷ Jones' early employment was as a bookbinder in Petaluma, then he apprenticed with the MacDougal Brothers architects in San Francisco until opening his Petaluma office in 1899. In 1900 he married Jeanette Gibson, the daughter of an early Petaluma settler. One of his first jobs was remodeling the opera house in 1901 and designing a series of mostly two-story classical buildings that still define Petaluma's historic downtown, along with its earlier Victorian-era cast-iron retail and commercial blocks.

²² Bostock 1964

²³ The preceding biographic text is courtesy of its author, Jeff Elliot: <http://comstockhouse.org/about/index.html>

²⁴ Rinehart 2005:Frontispiece

²⁵ Montoya n.d.

²⁶ Gregory 1911:701-702

²⁷ Weinstein 2006

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Jones applied wide-ranging styles, from Colonial Revival to American Queen Anne, but he perfected his own idiosyncratic expression within them. "Typical Jones details of the 1905-1920 periods, seen in dozens of houses throughout [Petaluma], include roofs that flare out at the end like Chinese pagodas, giving even his most Eastern of Colonials a curious Asian flavor. Dormer roofs often flare as well, and he loved paired dormers and heavy window boxes".²⁸ He preferred squat columns, often supporting a series of low arches. Bungalows typically used exposed roof rafters to create rhythmic interest, but Jones added syncopation, often by doubling rafters or treating them like giant dentils.²⁹

All of his extant buildings, some of which are on national or local registers, are still cherished in their communities, and many of his trademark designs are incorporated into the Comstock House. Brainerd Jones "was a small town architect only in the sense that he lived and worked in a small town."³⁰

Architectural Style

The First Bay Region Tradition (c. 1890-1910) was developed by architects Bernard Maybeck, Ernest Coxhead, Willis Polk, Soule Edgar Fisher, Julia Morgan, and others. The earliest recognition of "The Bay Area's architectural idiom, the Bay Tradition, which eschewed stylistic orthodoxy for an informal approach"³¹ was noted in an 1891 publication. As the idiom developed through the work of its practitioners, it came to derive many features of the East Coast Shingle Style and the Dutch Colonial Revival Style. The Comstock House adopts a large "living hall" with fireplace, window bays, an emphasis on horizontal space, and an abundance of whimsical and asymmetrical details, all however eschewing the stylistic orthodoxy of the Shingle Style. From the Dutch Colonial revival it inherits the strong gambrel roof forms and the major symmetrical composition yet it ignores the strong symmetries and formal composition typical to the style. The First Bay Region Tradition synthesizes these influences with simple, clean lines without distracting frill and made maximum use of woods in their natural state. It maintains the simple natural material, finish palette, and Arts and Crafts detailing. These characteristics are typical of the Tradition and can be seen in the work of other architects working in this style.

At least two other structures in the San Francisco Bay Area clearly set precedence for and were apparently strong influences on architect Brainerd Jones for the design of Comstock House: the Anna Head School in Berkeley and the Francis Avery House, Sausalito.

The Anna Head School designed by Soule Edgar Fisher, another First Bay Region Tradition pioneer, has many First Bay Region Tradition and Eastern Shingle Style elements which are evident in the Comstock House. The school's stylistic and elemental design themes are reflected most obviously in the Comstock's shingled cross-gable design with a gambrel roof. The buildings also share deliberately extreme asymmetry in detailing and proportions. Windows are all sizes and shapes, which, along with entryways, are off center. The scale and materiality, other than the use of brick over stone for the chimneys, the gambrel features, the window style, and the triangular muntins of the Comstock House are nearly identical to the Head School.

The Paxton House (1902), formerly one property to the south of the Comstock House, was also unmistakably inspired by the Anna Head School for Girls. Blitz Paxton, a close friend of James Oates, hired Jones to design a

²⁸ *ibid*

²⁹ *ibid*

³⁰ *Argus Courier* March 3, 1945, cited in Rinehart 2005: frontispiece

³¹ Bernard 2007:15

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Shingle Style house on his Healdsburg (now Mendocino) Avenue property. Jones used the opportunity to expand on his earlier ideas as well as unifying the Mendocino Avenue frontage with the newer Comstock house.

Built less than three years apart, both the Paxton House and the Comstock House show the influence of the First Bay Region Tradition. Although stylistically different, the Paxton House also reflects the design logic of the Anna Head School. Certain nearly identical details, such as a unique group of Tudor revival windows tucked beneath an overhang, link the Comstock and the Paxton houses. The two share similar scale and proportions. The location and design detailing of major elements such as the entry and the northern covered porch are similar; the materiality of both houses is identical (see accompanying digital photographs).

In the Comstock specifications, Jones' directed the contractor that the exterior must be "white cedar shingles...left in their natural state, to weather stain." For the interior redwood, Jones specified "two coats of white wax" and no paint. This treatment mirrored the plan for Willis Polk's Avery House: "The interior will be finished throughout in redwood, simply waxed. The exterior is covered entirely with split white cedar shingles put on without stain or oil, which are expected to weather to a silvery gray."³²

The specification of cedar siding linked the house with the First Bay Region Tradition while the use of eastern white cedar instead of the more readily available western red cedar linked the houses closer to the look found in its east coast inspirations, the Shingle Style homes of Newport, rather than San Francisco. Their unstained wood was true to the ideals of both styles; the interior and exterior woods were to be left unpainted.

The craftsmanship expressed in the design and artistry of execution of the Comstock House speak for its inherent value to the community and has ensured the affection of the few residents who have lived in and preserved it.

Integrity

The Comstock House remains in its original location and with very few exceptions retains its original 1905 design and condition. The floor plan and interior rooms as well as finish details remain nearly unchanged. The landscaping contains trees that predate the original owner, as well as plantings installed during Oates' and the Comstock family's tenure. An original rock wall boundary remains virtually intact; its only modification was shortening the east-west walls to accommodate widening Mendocino Avenue.

Some alterations have been made to the house since the death of its original owner in 1915. A gas stove was added to the fireplace in the dining room ca. 1920. In 1940-1941 the Comstock family added oak floors over softwood on the second floor. A servant's water closet at the rear porch and a servant's scullery were removed to add space to the kitchen. Also at this time new cabinets and a new sink were installed on the northern wall of the kitchen. Earthquake damage in 1969 necessitated a chimney reconstruction, as well as plaster repairs, and some lath and plaster replacement with sheet rock to the south wall. In addition, a small 18 by 24-inch window was removed on the east façade near the false corbel on the southwestern corner of the second floor, as well as one in the servant's WC and an ornamental window in the library.

The third owner of the house removed the wall between the servant's stairs and the family lavatory on the ground floor, and relocated the hand sink onto the wall adjacent to the lavatory ca. 1991. The dining room paneling was removed for use as cabinet doors in the dining room.

The ongoing 2010 restoration of exterior details and interior finishes closely follows the architect's original specifications. Badly deteriorated or missing bargeboards throughout were recreated in custom old growth

³² Architectural News, January, 1891

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redwood³³. Both bath rehabilitations were done with period-appropriate fixtures, finishes and equipment. The original coal boiler was replaced by an oil boiler in the Comstock era. The fuel oil tank was underground outside the garage until 1989, when its removal with mitigation was required for the house sale. The oil burner was converted to natural gas in 1956, and was replaced by a new one in 2008. Extensive upgrades have been made to the electrical service throughout to accommodate modern power and safety requirements. Knob and tube wiring is still in use for the overhead lights, wall sconces, and now-abandoned outlets.

The second floor window trim and surrounds have been painted with a faux finish to mimic the original architect-specified oiled clear heart redwood. The original internal down spout system was never used, was designed with a unique vented high volume downspout pipe within the wall that drained directly onto the foundation³⁴. Drainage is now controlled with new external copper gutters and downspouts. All the original windows remain intact or have been repaired, including the three stained glass windows on the west elevation. Three-by-four-inch redwood balustrades have been replaced with new redwood on the back porch.

Although the majority of the residential neighborhood around them is unchanged and is now included in a preservation district, the Mendocino Avenue properties have been most changed by the widening of the avenue from two to four lanes in the late 1960's when city sidewalks and the front rock walls defining the Comstock House were rebuilt closer to the residence. The widening has also further distanced the Ridgway District from the historical neighborhoods³⁵ east of the avenue.

Much of the understanding of the house, its construction, and its history comes from the meticulous conservation of documents and photographs by the original Comstock family and its descendents. Some of these materials include the architect's original blueprints and 25-page construction specifications, the property's *Abstract of Title*, and even Nellie Comstock's \$10,000 cancelled check that purchased the house from the Oates family.

The Comstock House retains its setting in an early twentieth century residential neighborhood within the Ridgway Historic District, which location also maintains its historical feeling and sense of place. Original or conforming construction materials display the workmanship and intentions of a master builder. Its excellent integrity is a result of its continuity of ownership by a single family for 75 years and their close association with the original owner.

The Comstock House retains its integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association; portions of its larger setting have been altered.

³³ <http://comstockhouseobscure.blogspot.com/2010/08/bargeboard-mysteries.html>

³⁴ An extensive discussion of the unusual rainwater management design and its early failures can be found on the Comstock House web site at: <http://comstockhouseobscure.blogspot.com/2010/08/case-of-mysterious-vent.html>

³⁵ "JC" and Benton Street districts recording and nomination in progress

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UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1 10 524710 4255310
Zone Easting Northing

3
Zone Easting Northing

2
Zone Easting Northing

4
Zone Easting Northing

Verbal Boundary Description (describe the boundaries of the property)

The parcel, APN 180-760-024, is located in Township 7 North, Range 8 West in unsectioned lands of the *Rancho Cabeza de Santa Rosa*, as depicted in the *Santa Rosa, CA 7.5 minute USGS quadrangle*. The property is on the southwest corner of the intersection of Mendocino Avenue and Benton Street, approximately one-half mile north of the city center on flat terrain. The parcel incorporates Lots 25, 26, 27, and 28 of Merritt's Addition, a small 1902 subdivision north of the original city limits.

Proceeding clockwise from the northeastern corner of the property line at Benton Street, turning south onto Mendocino Avenue for 757 feet to the southeastern corner of the southern property line, then turning west for 457 feet along the same southern property line to the southwestern corner, then turning north for 757 feet along the western boundary to the northwestern corner, thence 498 feet east back to the beginning.

Boundary Justification (explain why the boundaries were selected)

With the exception of the eastern boundary facing Mendocino Avenue, which was slightly modified by road expansion in the 1960s, these are the original property boundaries.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Mark Parry, AIA, CSI, SAH with assistance from J Longfellow, MA, RPH, RPA
organization Idea Studios date March 19, 2011
street & number 822 College Avenue telephone 707-543-5444
city or town Santa Rosa state CA zip code 95401
e-mail mark@ideastudios.com

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **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. Key all photographs to this map.

- **Continuation Sheets**

Section 7 pages 1-4

Section 8 pages 1-8

Section 9 pages 1-3

Addenda pages 1-5

Comstock House Location Map, page 1

Sketch Map, page 2

Photographs, pages 3-4

Floor Plans, page 5

- **Additional items:** See accompanying hardcopy photographs and compact disc for additional documentation.

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Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property: Comstock House
City or Vicinity: Santa Rosa
County: Sonoma **State:** California
Photographer: Mark Parry AIA, CSI, SAH
Date Photographed: September 24, 2010
Description of Photograph(s) and number:

Note: The following list references hardcopy and digital photographs submitted with application.

- 0001. Black and white 8" x 10" print, east façade, view to west
- 0002. Black and white 8" x 10" print, west façade, view to east
- 0003. Color 5" x 7" print east façade
- 0004. Color 5" x 7" print west façade
- 0005. Color 5" x 7" print south façade
- 0006. Color 5" x 7" print north façade
- 0007. Color 5" x 7" print Garage north and east façades, view to southwest
- 0008. Color 5" x 7" Front parlor, view to south from entry hall
- 0009. Color 5" x 7" Staircase from entry hall
- 0010. Color 5" x 7" Original overhead gas/electric hanging lamp
- 0011. Color 5" x 7" Original sconce light in front parlor

Property Owner:

(complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO)

name Jeff and Candice Elliott

street & number 767 Mendocino Avenue

telephone 707/544-4222

city or town Santa Rosa

state CA 95401

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

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

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National Park Service

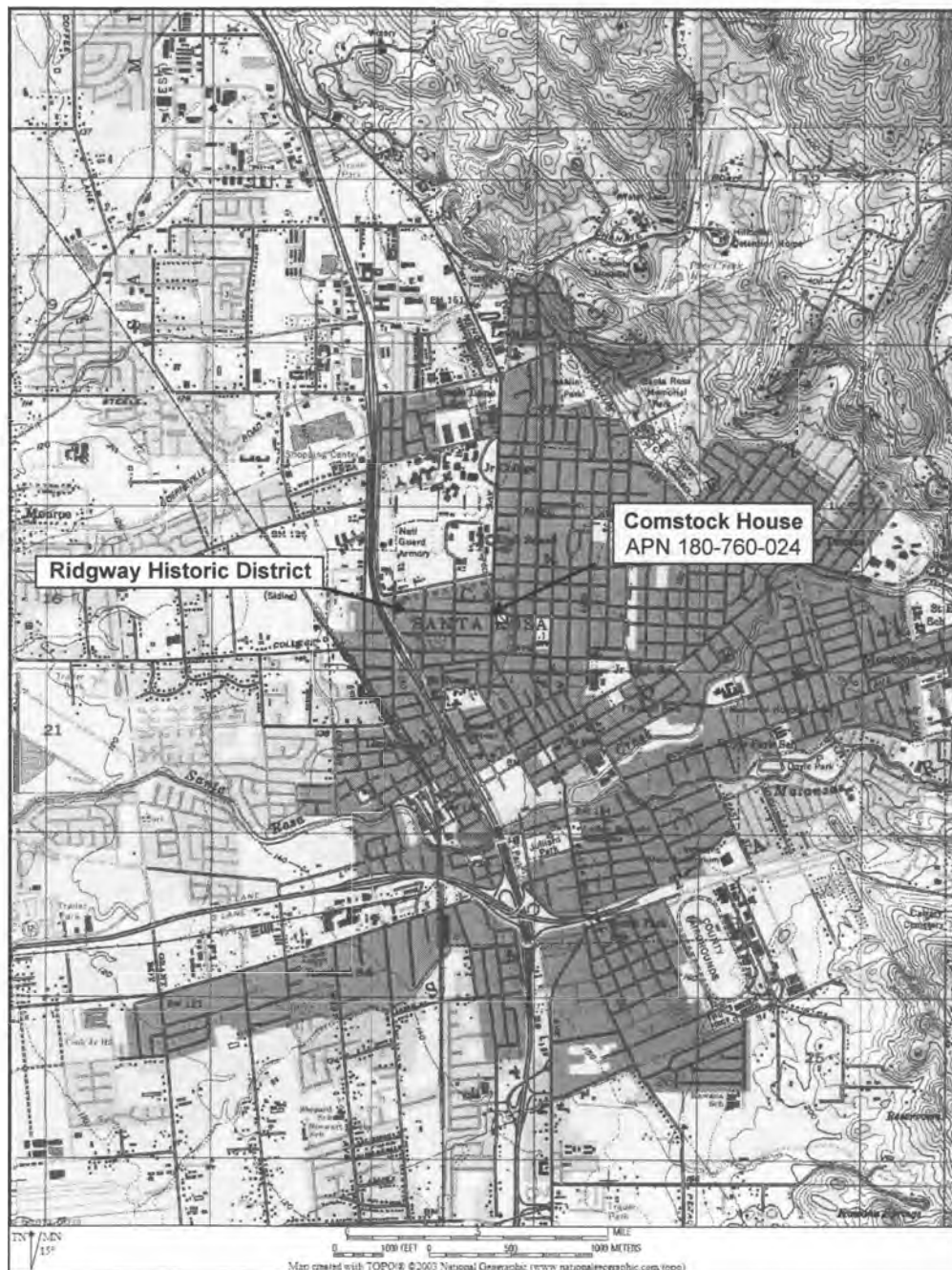
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Comstock House Location Map



Map Name: Santa Rosa, CA

Scale: 1:24,000

Date of Map: 1994

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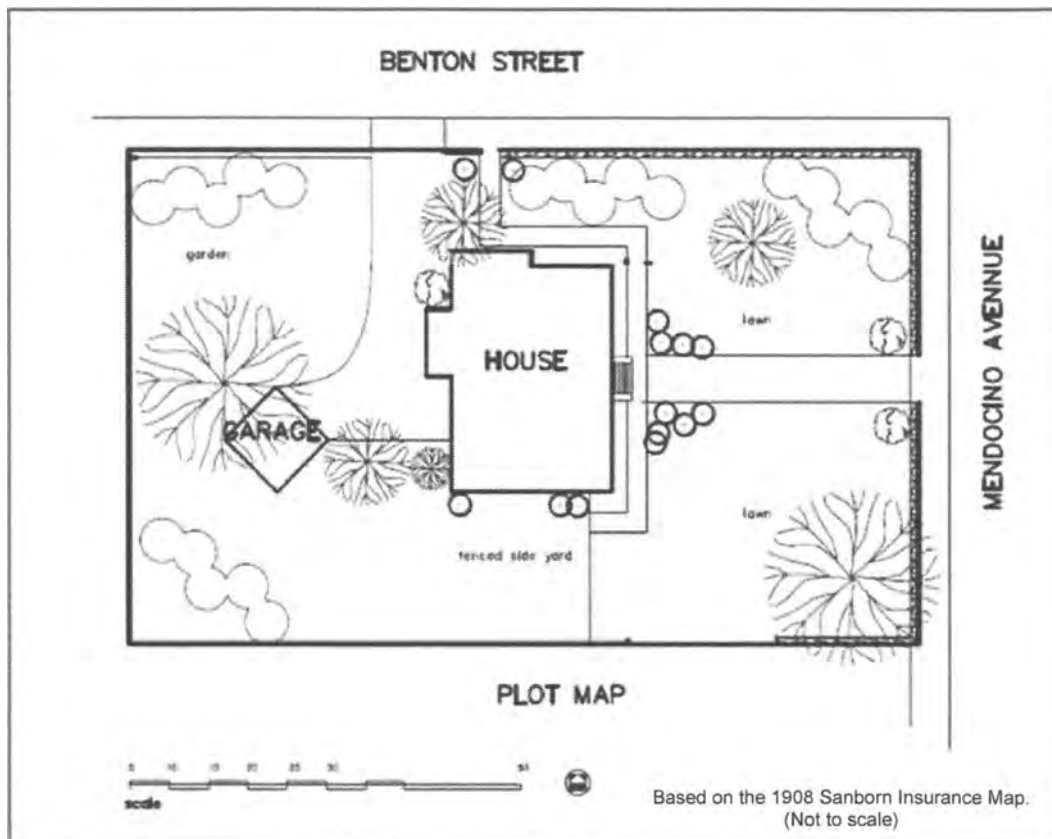
County and State

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Sketch Map



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Photographs



Comstock House 1908



Comstock House 2010

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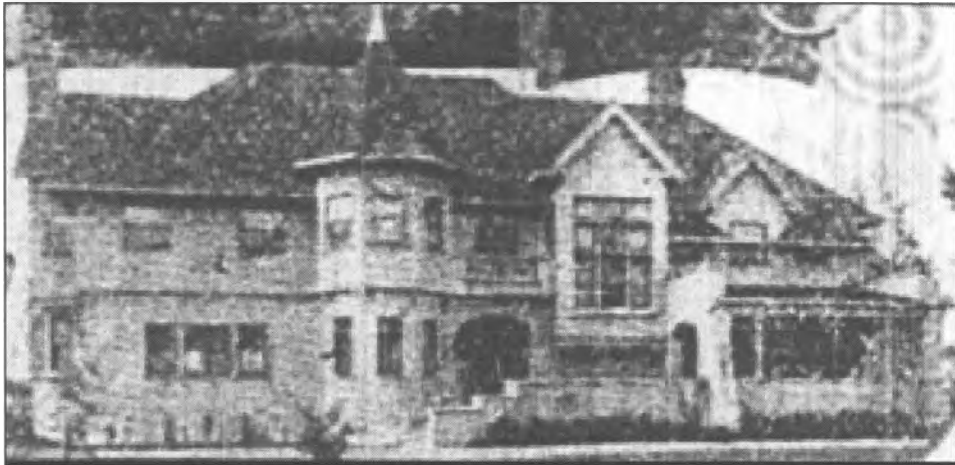
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Paxton House(date unknown) <http://comstockhouse.org/about/paxton.jpg>



Anna Head School for Girls http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/6/69/Anna_Head_School_for_Girls_%28Berkeley%2C_CA%29.JPG

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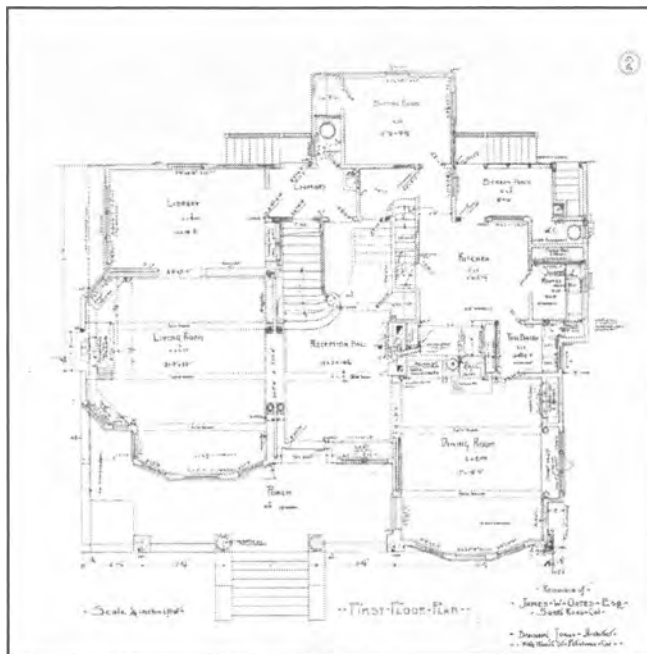
County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

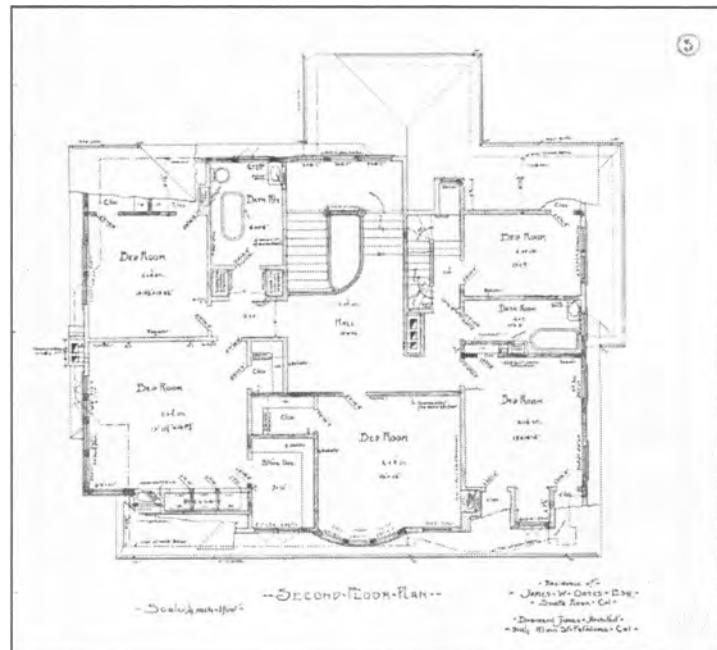
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Floor Plans



First Floor



Second Floor

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Comstock House
NAME:

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: CALIFORNIA, Sonoma

DATE RECEIVED: 12/16/11 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 1/11/12
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 1/26/12 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 1/31/12
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 11001053

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

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

COMMENT WAIVER: N

☒ ACCEPT ☐ RETURN ☐ REJECT 1-27-12 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Entered in
The National Register
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Historic Places

RECOM./CRITERIA _____

REVIEWER _____ DISCIPLINE _____

TELEPHONE _____ DATE _____

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

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



Photo 1 of 11: C.A. - Sonoma County - The Constock House



Photo 2 of 11: CA Sonoma County - The Comstock House. West façade, view to southeast



Photo 3 of 11: CA-Sonoma County- The Comstock House
East façade, view to northwest



Photo 4 of 11: CA-Sonoma County-The Comstock House
West façade



Photo 5 of 11: CA-Sonoma County - The Comstock House
South façade, view to north



Photo 6 of 11: CA -Sonoma County -The Cornstock House
North façade, view to south



Photo 7 of 11: CA, Sonoma County - The Comstock House
Garage north & east façades, view to southwest



Photo 8 of 11 : CA-sonoma County -The Comstock House
Front parlor, view to south from entry hall

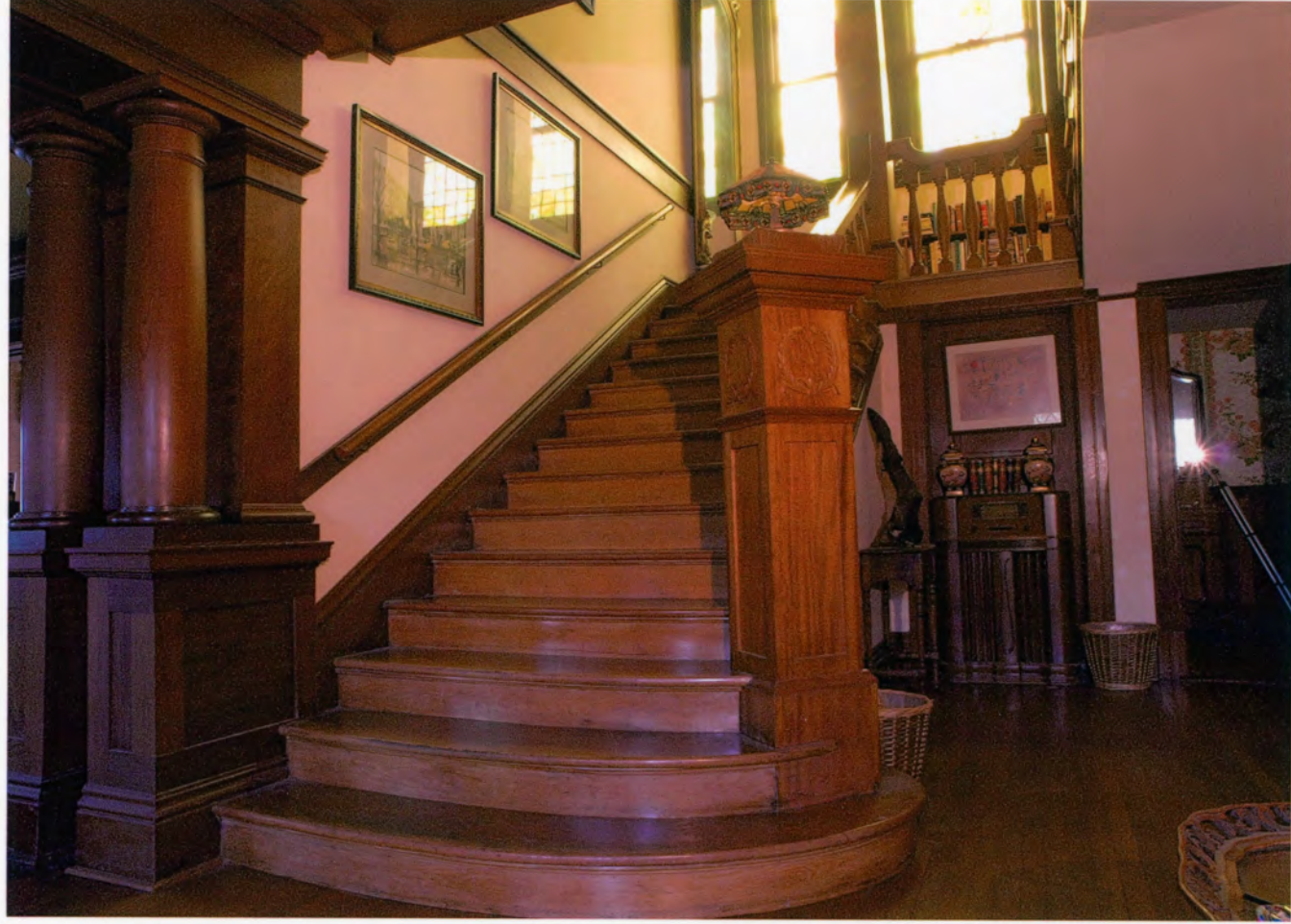


Photo 9 of 11: CA-Sonoma County-The Comstock House
Staircase from entry hall



Photo 10 of 11: CA Sonoma County - The Comstock House
Original overhead lamp detail



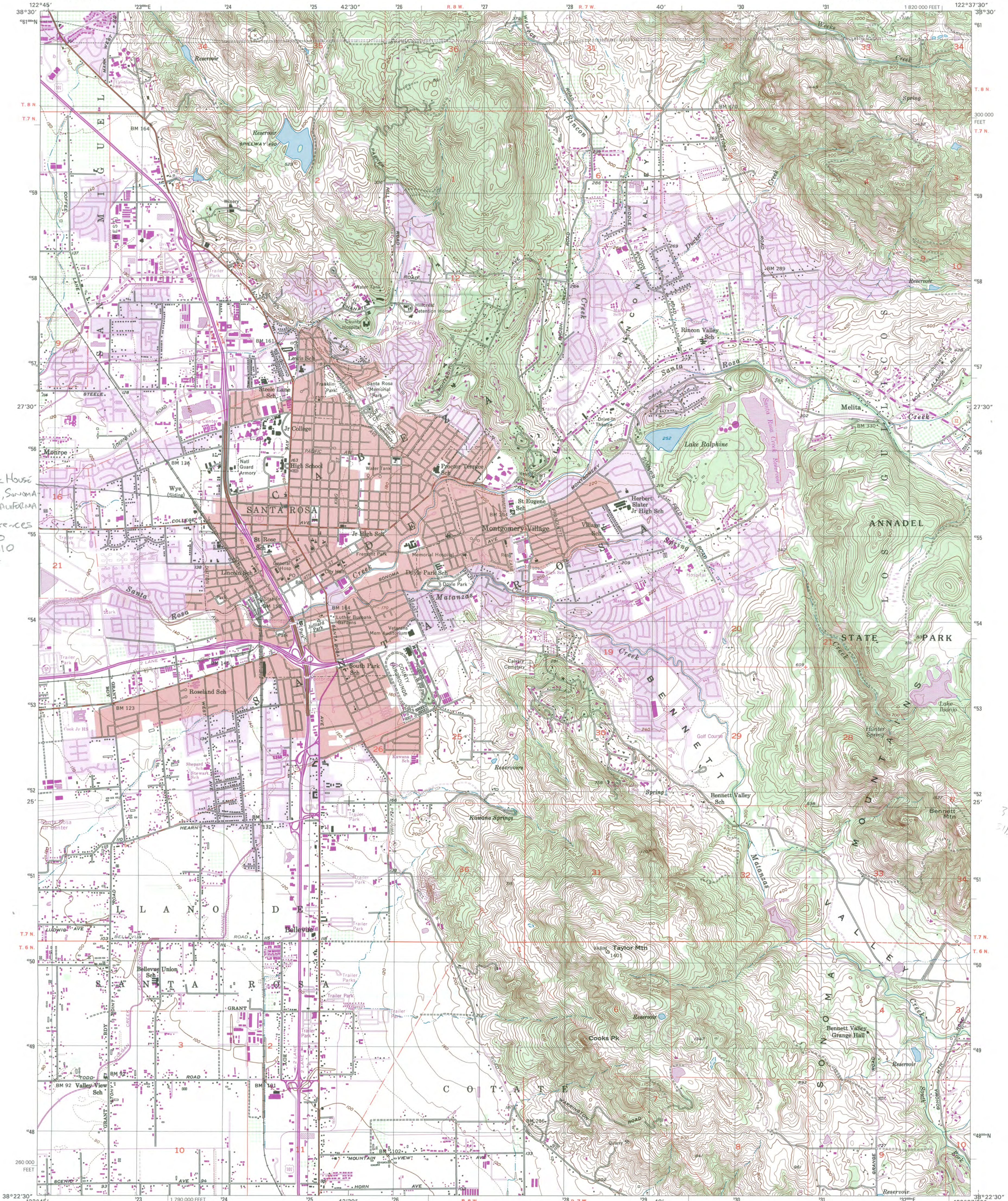
Photo 11 of 11: CA_Sonoma County-The Comstock House
Original lighting in front parlor



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

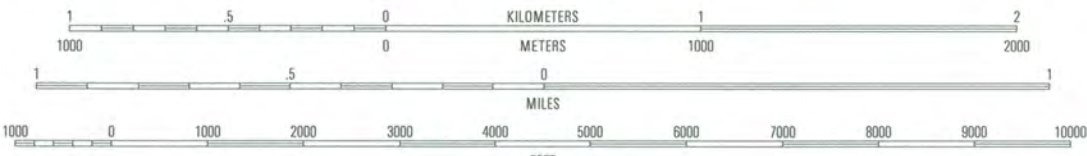
SANTA ROSA QUADRANGLE
CALIFORNIA-SONOMA CO.
7.5-MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

Comstock House
Santa Rosa, Sonoma
County, California
UTM References
E 524710
N 4255310
NAD 27



Produced by the United States Geological Survey
Topography compiled 1954. Planimetry derived from imagery
dated 1978 and other sources. Photomaps using
imagery dated 1994; no major culture or drainage changes
observed. PLSS and survey control current as of 1954.
Boundaries, other than corporate, revised 1998.
North American Datum of 1927 (NAD 27). Projection and
1000-meter grid: Universal Transverse Mercator, zone 10
10 000-foot ticks: California Coordinate System of 1927
(zone 3)
North American Datum of 1983 (NAD 83) is shown by dashed
corner ticks. The values of the shift between NAD 27 and NAD 83
for 7.5-minute intersections are obtainable from National Geodetic
Survey NADCON software.
Information shown in purple may not meet USGS content standards
and may conflict with previously mapped contours.

UTM GRID AND 1999 MAGNETIC NORTH
DECLINATION AT CENTER OF SHEET



CONTOUR INTERVAL 20 FEET
SUPPLEMENTARY CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 FEET
NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929
TO CONVERT FROM FEET TO METERS, MULTIPLY BY 0.3048



QUADRANGLE LOCATION

1	2	3
4	5	6
7	8	9

ROAD CLASSIFICATION
Primary highway
hard surface
Secondary highway
hard surface
Light-duty road, hard or
improved surface
Unimproved road
Interstate Route
U.S. Route
State Route

SANTA ROSA, CA
1994

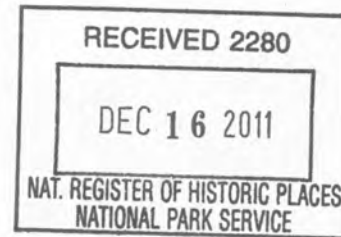
NIMA 1460 1 NW-SERIES V895

THIS MAP COMPLES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
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A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST



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

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calshpo@ohp.parks.ca.gov



December 7, 2011

Ms. Carol Shull, Keeper
National Register of Historic Places
National Park Service 2280
1201 I (Eye) Street, NW
Washington, DC 20005

Subject: **Comstock House National Register of Historic Places Nomination**

Dear Ms. Shull: *Carol*

Enclosed please find the **Comstock House** nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. Jeff and Candice Elliott, the owners of the house, are the applicants. The Comstock House embodies the distinctive characteristics of the First Bay Region Tradition Style of architecture and represents the work of Brainerd Jones, a regionally significant architect. The house is also associated with the early 20th Century development of Santa Rosa.

On October 28, 2011 at its regular quarterly meeting, held in Redlands, the California State Historical Resources Commission found the Comstock House eligible for the National Register under Criterion A and Criterion C at the local level of significance.

If you have questions regarding this nomination, please contact Jay Correia of my staff at 916-445-7008 or jcorr@parks.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

Wayne

Milford Wayne Donaldson, FAIA
State Historic Preservation Officer

Enclosures

Comstock House
Santa Rosa, Sonoma County
Staff Report

The Comstock House is a two and one-half story wood frame residence built in the First Bay Region Tradition. Located on Mendocino Avenue in Santa Rosa and constructed in 1905, the Comstock House is eligible for the National Register under Criterion A for its association with the development and expansion of early 20th Century Santa Rosa. The House is also eligible for the National Register under Criterion C as a representative example of the First Bay Region Tradition architectural style, and as the work of regionally significant Master Architect Brainerd Jones.

A regional variant of the East Coast Shingle, Dutch Colonial Revival, and Arts and Crafts Styles, the First Bay Region Tradition Style is distinct for its deliberate, extreme, asymmetry and the maximum use of woods in their natural state. Windows of all sizes and shapes, to the point of playfulness, are typical expressions of the First Bay Region Tradition. The proportion, use of materials, the gambrel roof, the window style, and triangular muntins of the Comstock house are nearly identical to the Ana Head School in Berkeley, a monumental example of the style.

The Comstock House is also representative of the work of regionally prominent architect Brainerd Jones. Jones began his architectural practice in Petaluma in 1899 and designed over one-hundred buildings, mostly in the communities between San Francisco to northern Sonoma County. Although Jones is not known for a particular style, his commissions exhibit high artistic expression and the use of quality materials as seen in the elaborate, but refined waxed-redwood detailing throughout the Comstock House's interior, the classically-designed fireplaces, and the classical columns in the entry and living room spaces.

The Comstock House is in excellent condition and also retains a high degree of historical integrity. The owner of the house is the applicant. Staff recommends the State Historical Resources Commission determine the Comstock House eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion A for its association with the growth and development of early 20th Century Santa Rosa. Staff also recommends that the Commission determine the Comstock House eligible under Criterion C at the local level of significance because the dwelling embodies the distinctive characteristics of the First Bay region Tradition Style of architecture. Staff further recommends the State Historic Preservation officer approve the nomination for forwarding to the National Park Service for listing in the National Register.

Jay Correia
State Historian III
October 4, 2011