

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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RECEIVED MAY 31 1978
DATE ENTERED APR 4 1978

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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

1 NAME

APR 4 1978

HISTORIC

Woodhills

AND/OR COMMON

Cora and Fremont Older House

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

End of Prospect Road

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

X VICINITY OF Cupertino

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

13th

STATE

California

CODE

06

COUNTY

Santa Clara

CODE

085

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

OWNERSHIP

STATUS

PRESENT USE

__DISTRICT

X PUBLIC

__OCCUPIED

__AGRICULTURE

__MUSEUM

X BUILDING(S)

__PRIVATE

X UNOCCUPIED

__COMMERCIAL

X PARK

__STRUCTURE

__BOTH

__WORK IN PROGRESS

__EDUCATIONAL

__PRIVATE RESIDENCE

__SITE

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

ACCESSIBLE

__ENTERTAINMENT

__RELIGIOUS

__OBJECT

__IN PROCESS

__YES: RESTRICTED

__GOVERNMENT

__SCIENTIFIC

__BEING CONSIDERED

__YES: UNRESTRICTED

__INDUSTRIAL

__TRANSPORTATION

__NO

__MILITARY

__OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Midpeninsula Regional Park District

STREET & NUMBER

745 Distel Drive

CITY, TOWN

Los Altos

VICINITY OF

STATE

California

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE.

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Santa Clara County Recorder's Office

STREET & NUMBER

70 West Hedding Street

CITY, TOWN

San Jose

STATE

California

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Historic American Buildings Survey Santa Clara County Project 1977

DATE

summer 1977

X FEDERAL __STATE __COUNTY __LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR

SURVEY RECORDS

HABS Archives, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress

CITY, TOWN

Washington

STATE

D.C. 20540

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

_EXCELLENT
_GOOD
_FAIR

_DETERIORATED
_RUINS
_UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

_UNALTERED
_ALTERED

CHECK ONE

_ORIGINAL SITE
_MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Situated in the foothills of Santa Clara Valley, Woodhills presents a most unusual and interesting combination of architectural elements. The plan and facade of the front block are formal and largely symmetrical. The building is adapted to the irregularity of its site by an asymmetrical arrangement of the remaining elevations. This house effectively fuses two very different stylistic traditions: the informal Bay Area shingle style and the asymmetrical horizontal massing of the emerging "modern movement." The house is well adapted to its site by extensive landscaping.

The house is L-shaped and measures approximately 64' x 63', each wing is about 28' wide. The exterior walls of the building are set on concrete foundation walls. Interior columns are set on concrete footing. The house itself is of frame construction. Its walls are constructed of 2" x 4" uprights with solid horizontal sheathing nailed to the exterior and covered with cedar shingles. Above the main floor there is a horizontal board, originally studded with blocks of wood resembling beam ends. Above that is a parapet wall which apparently was covered by simple horizontal boards.

An open porch on the northeast corner of the house has been enclosed by the addition of sliding windows at each opening. A broad front stairway, leading to a terrace gives access to the front door. The double front door is composed of thirty-six small square panes of glass.

There is a wide variety of window types in the house. The largest windows, in the living room, are fixed. The dining room has casement windows with fixed transom panes above. The majority of windows are simple casement-style. Two of the bedrooms have ingenious double-hinged casement windows.

The roof of the front wing of the building is nearly flat with low central ridge. It is not visible from the ground because of the parapet walls. The roof of the rear wing is a terrace or sun deck.

The living room is located at the center of the front wing of the building. To the south of the living room are the kitchen and dining rooms. To the north is the enclosed sleeping porch. The wing has a corridor along the south wall which is on an east-west axis. Access to the master bedroom and a second bedroom is off this corridor. At the west end of the corridor there is a flight of five stairs leading to the raised upper portion of the rear wing. This area contains three bedrooms, closets, a bathroom and lavatory. A stairway leading up to a studio on the next level is located between the two rear (west) bedrooms. The studio is located in the southwest corner of the rear wing and gives access to the roof terrace. There is a full basement under portions of the front wing and a partially excavated basement under the remainder of the house. The basement is connected with the kitchen by a full flight of stairs.

The floors of the front wing and rear corridor are hardwood and those of the remaining rear wing rooms are soft wood. The walls and ceilings throughout are plaster over lath. Most of the interior doors and doorways are wooden. There are overhead electrical

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Woodhills
CONTINUATION SHEET Description ITEM NUMBER #7 PAGE #2

lights in several rooms. The house is heated by a large circular furnace in the basement. Ducts lead to heavy metal floor registers throughout the house.

To the southeast of the house is a pool house of 2" x 4" stud frame construction with a veneer of large, fired clay bricks which faces onto a large pool. This area was extensively landscaped--there were rose gardens with a stage, cascading pools, and a pergola. The area is now quite overgrown.

Mrs. Older planted peach, nectarine, apple and quince trees; nasturtiums, climbing roses, three varieties of violets, and pansies along the pathways. The house was approached through a grove of bay trees, oaks, manzanitas, toyons, and madrones. A mural on the courtyard's west wall, depicting St. Francis, was done by Camille Solon, and may have been commissioned in the late 1920's.

When the Olders first arrived at this site, there was a deteriorated two-story structure on the property. According to sketches found in the records of the San Jose Abstract Company, this building was originally owned by Peter Davidson, a wealthy landowner and early advocate of California statehood, in the late 1840's. In 1926-27, a studio for Fremont Older was constructed from bits and pieces of this and other buildings. The floors were made of tiles from the Convent of Notre Dame, in San Jose. The convent's window arches were inserted in the garden walls. Windows on the upper level of the studio were scavenged by Mrs. Older from "various old church structures."

The studio steps, called the "Friendship Stairway" were covered with dozens of different ornamental tiles collected and given to the Olders by their friends. The studio walls are adobe and brick. Mrs. Older scavenged wall in-fill from an 1847 San Jose house. This structure was undergoing renovation and was not accessible for structural review.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

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

SPECIFIC DATES 1913-1914 BUILDER/ARCHITECT probably Frederick D. Wolfe or Charles W. McCall

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

This house was one of the most elegant and radical designs in Santa Clara County when it was built in 1913 for editor Fremont Older and his wife, historian Cora Older. Fremont Older, managing editor of the San Francisco Bulletin and later of William Randolph Hearst's Call, conducted journalistic crusades against the Southern Pacific Railroad, the Abraham Ruef political machine, and domination of the State by special interests; an advocate of penal reform and labor unions, he demanded the acquittal of Thomas J. Mooney after the Preparedness Day bombings, 1916. Cora Older followed a career of social reform through journalism, she wrote feature stories for the woman's section of the Bulletin and reported on the 1913 West Virginia miners strike; a noted local historian, her biography of William Randolph Hearst received an award of merit from the California Historical Society. Mrs. Older directed much of the architectural design of Woodhills and planned much of the extensive landscaping with the assistance of the ex-convicts and parolees who lived and worked at Woodhills. The hillside site of Woodhills was terraced and the house was carefully integrated with its gardens by means of planter boxes, trellises and pergolas.

There has been much debate over the architect of this house. Local preservationists have attempted to attribute the work to Julia Morgan (1872-1957). Mrs. Older maintained a diary during the period of construction in which she never explicitly named the architect. The names of Frederick D. Wolfe and Charles W. McCall appear frequently, while Miss Morgan's name is never mentioned.

Frederick D. Wolfe first appeared as a contractor and builder in the San Jose City Directory in 1890. In 1911 Wolfe was joined by his son, Carl, an architect, with whom he produced several flat-roofed, shingled, Wright-influenced houses in San Jose. Charles McCall was listed in the Oakland City and Builder's Association directories from the 1900's. He was first associated as a partner in an architectural and engineering firm and later as an independent architect. His work included sophisticated, flat-roofed residential designs inspired by pueblo architecture as well as designs in the "Bay Area" version of the Arts and Crafts movement.

Reportedly, Woodhills was originally planned as part of a colony to be settled cooperatively with editor Lincoln Steffans, attorney Clarence Darrow, and other close friends. Although these plans never materialized, the Olders went ahead and built their home in the Santa Clara Valley foothills. This was the Olders' first home as they had been apartment dwellers since their marriage.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Unpublished sources; Diary of Cora Older, 1913-1930 in possession of Earl and Donna Harris, Cupertino, California.
- (2) Scrapbooks of Cora Older. Harris collection
 - (3) Woodhills Guestbook, 1914-1964. Harris Collection
 - (4) Interviews--conducted by HABS Historian, Carolyn Hamm (cont'd)

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 3.7 acres

QUADRANGLE NAME Cupertino Quadrangle

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24000

UTM REFERENCES

A 10 | 518.314.2.0 | 4.112.618.8.0
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B | |
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C | |

D | |

E | |

F | |

G | |

H | |

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The rectangular boundary chosen encompasses all of the cultural resources of the Woodhills estate, and is shown on the attached maps.

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Candace Reed, Architectural Historian

ORGANIZATION

Historic American Buildings Survey Division

DATE

11/8/77

STREET & NUMBER

Department of the Interior

TELEPHONE

202-523-5474

CITY OR TOWN

Washington

STATE

D.C. 20240

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL STATE X LOCAL

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

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

K. Knowlton

TITLE State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE 5/22/78

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

ATTEST: *William Levovich*
 CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

DATE 12/20/78

DATE 12/18/78

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Woodhills

CONTINUATION SHEET

Significance

ITEM NUMBER #8

PAGE #2

Cora and Fremont Older pitched tents in the then-wild area of the ranch and lived along with the workmen. Mrs. Older's diary reveals that she and the builder laid out the building and that she "worked and planned, had all the responsibility myself-- reduced bill \$400;" that she then "changed" the maid, Maria's, room and the guest room, moved the sleeping porch and enlarged her bathroom by adding a closet and moving the linen closet downstairs. In her diary she reported that she liked the plans very much and that "Mr. Wolfe came--was surprised to see the house all done over." A later reference mentions that the architect came and thought the revised house "was well arranged."

Mrs. Older's relationship with Wolfe soon became strained when she repeatedly changed her mind and altered the plans. "The electrician said Mr. Wolfe had given him a dreadful opinion of me."; "the builder hates me and would like me thrown over the terrace because I make so many changes." The terrace, presumably the one at the east entry level, was a source of trouble and was described as a "blunder" that "turned out to be a blessing by the architect because (it) gave us a terrace to look down." While she "was greatly disappointed when McCall's assistant came instead of him," all were pleased when she lowered the terrace three feet and added large window boxes. Only after this was arranged did she decide to install large-paned glass windows in the living room "so not to abstract the view" of the valley.

In general the workmanship of the house was shoddy and problems arose immediately. The roof leaked in the living room, dining room and guest room. There were problems with the French doors all of which were "sprung" shortly after being hung. The fireplace and chimney were not aligned, the ceilings were crooked, and the plaster was "all wrong, work had been neglected." The furnace, which Mrs. Older herself had found, was installed, but the carpenter pointed out to her that "the furnace man had put in the registers next to the electric lights so there might be a short circuit."

Mrs. Older hired a crew of workmen which consisted of parolees and ex-convicts who were filled with mirth at the crooked work of the "honest" builders and subcontractors. One houseman, Albert, a former burglar, did everything from digging for the septic tank, to making hanging flower baskets for the living room, to repairing the roof leaks. The aged Charley Dorsey, last of the convicted Wells Fargo stage coach robbers, gardened and made repairs.

Mrs. Older decided to do the landscape planning herself. She chose a steeply terraced approach and laid out three terraces on the hilltop behind the house. The garden terrace walls of rock were completed while the house was going up, despite the fact that contractor Wolfe made it difficult for her to find someone to lay them because he warned them of her constant changes of mind. The terraces and rockwalls, including a shrine to St. Roche, patron saint of the Older's favorite pets, dogs, were done between 1917 and 1923 by Fredrico Quinterno, an Italian mason.

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INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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DATE ENTERED	MAY 20 1978

Woodhills
CONTINUATION SHEET Significance ITEM NUMBER #8 PAGE #3

Fremont Older was born August 30, 1856, and raised in Wisconsin. He undertook his only formal education at Ripon College in Wisconsin from 1868-1871. In 1869 he began working as a printer for a series of small newspapers as he wandered about the mid-west. He reached San Francisco in 1873 and by 1876 was printer's foreman for Davidson Dalzril's short-lived San Francisco Daily Mail, a sensationalizing rag. By the 1890's he was himself a top-rated sensationalizing reporter and assistant city editor for the San Francisco Morning Call.

In 1895 Older was listed in the city director as Managing Editor of the Evening Bulletin. The then-moribund paper which he was to build into San Francisco's most popular daily over the next ten years. Since it was founded in 1855 the Bulletin had earned a reputation for fighting gambling and political corruption. Older developed and expanded this commitment. His first concern was to increase circulation at whatever moral cost. He said "here was a fighting chance for me to make a success...so I decided it was not a time to concern myself with the ethics of journalism that could be considered later when the paper was on a paying basis." Older first capitalized on the gruesome Durant Murder case of 1895, which involved the brutal killing of two girls and the mutilation and sexual violation of their corpses by a member of their church social group. Older's first "scoop" occurred when only his reporter got out of the sealed courtroom after the guilty verdict was delivered.

At the turn of the century the Bulletin had the leading circulation in the area. Older initiated a crusade against City Hall corruption. Older's queries and exposes revealed that Mayor Eugene E. Schmitz and attorney Abraham Ruef had received graft from railroaders, liquor licensees, owners of famed French dining-bedrooms, Chinatown opium dealers, gambling houses, and prostitution rings. Older published this information during the 1905 mayoralty campaign. City Hall retaliated against the Bulletin by masquerading thugs as newsboys, making repeated threats on his life, and a kidnapping.

At Abe Ruef's second trial in 1908 public sentiment began to swing in favor of the anti-corruption crusaders. Older's friend, prosecuting attorney Francis J. Heney, was shot in the courtroom by a corrupt juror and ex-convict named Haas, whom Heney had just exposed. News of the shooting brought a telegram from Roosevelt supporting the Older faction. The gunman, Haas, was found dead in his cell, an apparent feigned suicide. Ruef was sent to San Quentin.

Older's campaign to incarcerate Ruef's gang made journalism history by popularizing the "extra" and coining the terms "gangster" and "higher-ups". However, Older's victory was a pyrrhic one: Mayor Schmitz and railroad magnate Patrick Calhoun, who had bribed Ruef, had the charges against them dismissed by the succeeding prosecutor, Charles Fickert.

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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	MAY 31 1978
DATE ENTERED	

Woodhills

CONTINUATION SHEET Significance ITEM NUMBER #8 PAGE #5

incorporated in California law during his terms as governor. The abolition of capital punishment. Prison reform and better understanding of the causes of crime, so that scientific methods may eventually be substituted for stupidity and brutality. Understanding of the problem of prostitution and similar problems in the light of the latest sociological research. Equality before the law for rich and poor. Fair trial for Mooney and the other bomb defendants in order to remove the stain of a legal frame-up from the courts of California. A square deal for the workers and frank discussion of their problems and aims."

Older published a pamphlet entitled "Why I Left the Bulletin and Have Come to the Call." In it he explained that "had I stayed I would have been obliged to betray them, the Bulletin readers, in little things day by day. I could not do this. I could not sit pretending that the Bulletin was what it had been when I knew it was not. Just as strongly as I felt that I had work to do, I recognized that I could not do it on the Bulletin."

The Mooney case became a world-wide cause celebre among liberals. Protest demonstrations were held when Mooney was sentenced to hang. President Wilson reprieved him, appointed an investigatory commission headed by the Secretary of Labor to report on its effects on labor, and had secret federal investigators move into San Francisco. San Francisco district attorney Fickert was exposed as corrupt by the government's subsequent Densmore Report. With the aid of Captain Charles Gaff of the Police Department, Older got wind of the secret investigation and was able to eavesdrop by dictaphone on Fickert discussing fixing the trial with bought witnesses (Wells. p. 326). The Densmore report eventually went to Congress, exposing judicial bribery and case fixing up to the Supreme Court level, but not before Older's Call published it and Older had the greatest scoop of his career.

Older died of a heart attack on March 3, 1935. Journalists William Randolph Hearst, Annie Laurie, and Arthur Brisbane wrote glowing eulogies. The California legislature and the San Francisco Board of Supervisors adjourned in honor of his memory. The city passed a resolution, written in a romantic style akin to Older's own and which read, in part, as follows:

In days when San Francisco was in the depths of political infamy, Older was chief crusader in the movement to purge the municipality of official corruption. He relentlessly pursued the bribe-givers as well as prosecuting the bribe-taker.

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INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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DATE ENTERED

Jul 20 1977

Woodhills

CONTINUATION SHEET

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ITEM NUMBER #9

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- b. Professor Emeritus Sara Bontelle, University of Santa Cruz, Director of the Julia Morgan Association, Santa Cruz, California.
- c. A. Lewis Kone, 7/6/77
- d. William L. Higgins, AIA, 7/7/77
- e. Morgan Stedman, AIA, 7/7/77
- f. Richard Longstreth, 7/7/77
- g. Mr. and Mrs. John Baggerly, 7/8/77
- h. Evelyn Wells, 7/20/77

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1. Anonymous, "Cora Older," Cupertino Courier, October 2, 1968 p. 12.
2. Anonymous. "Cora Older Dies," San Francisco Examiner and Chronicle September 29, 1968, p. B 6.
3. Befaine, Jeanette. "Older House Sets Pace for Outdoor Living," San Jose Mercury-News, January 2, 1955 p. 6.
4. Bliven, Bruce. "My Most Unforgettable Character" Readers' Digest, August 1964, pp. 129-133
5. Older, Fremont. "My Own Story." Oakland, Ca.: Post Enquirer Publishing Co., 1925.
6. Wells, Evelyn. "Fremont Older." New York: D. Appleton-Century Co., 1936.