

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

NATIONAL  
REGISTER

1. Name of Property

historic name: de Sabla, Eugene J., Jr., Teahouse and Tea Garden

other name/site number:

2. Location

street & number: 70 de Sabla Avenue

not for publication: NA

city/town: San Mateo

vicinity: NA

state: CA county: San Mateo code: 081 zip code: 94402

3. Classification

Ownership of Property: private

Category of Property: district

Number of Resources within Property:

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>  1  </u>	<u>  1  </u>	buildings
<u>  1  </u>	<u>      </u>	sites
<u>  2  </u>	<u>      </u>	structures
<u>      </u>	<u>      </u>	objects
<u>  4  </u>	<u>  1  </u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register:   0  

Name of related multiple property listing:   NA

4. 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. See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official: Steven R. Craig Date: June 22, 1997

California Office of Historic Preservation State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is: entered in the National Register

- 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):

Signature of Keeper: Alloune Byers Date of Action: 7/30/92

6. Function or Use

Historic: Landscape Recreation and Culture Other: Sub: Garden Work of Art Teahouse
Current: Landscape Domestic Recreation and Culture Sub: Garden Single Dwelling Work of Art

7. Description

Architectural Classification:

Late 19th and 20th Century Revivals

Other Description: Japanese\_\_\_\_\_

Materials: foundation: stone\_\_\_ roof: Wood shingle
walls: wood\_\_\_\_\_ other \_\_\_\_\_

Describe present and historic physical appearance. \_X\_ See continuation sheet.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: statewide\_\_\_\_\_.

Applicable National Register Criteria: A, C

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) : NA\_\_\_

Areas of Significance: Landscape Architecture\_\_\_\_\_
Ethnic Heritage/Asian\_\_\_\_\_

Period(s) of Significance: 1907-1909 \_\_\_\_\_

Significant Dates : \_\_\_\_\_

Significant Person(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Cultural Affiliation: \_\_\_\_\_

Architect/Builder: Hagiwara, Makota\_\_\_\_\_

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.
\_X\_ See continuation sheet.

9. Major Bibliographical References

X See continuation sheet.

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 -- Specify Repository:

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: 1 acre

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing
A 10 559 150 4157 580 B
C D

See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description: Lot 13 as shown on that certain map entitled "El Cerrito Manor," Map No. 3, Hillsborough, San Mateo, filed in San Mateo County Recorder 's Book 22 of Maps, page 73.

Boundary Justification: The boundaries encompass all that remains of the historic property.

11. Form Prepared By

Name/Title: Cherilyn Widell

Organization: Date: August 26, 1991

Street & Number: 738 Guinda Telephone: (415) 326-4016

City or Town: Palo Alto State: CA ZIP: 94301

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number   7   de Sabla Teahouse and Garden Page 5  
=====

The Eugene de Sabla, Jr. teahouse and tea garden is located on the north side of de Sabla Road which was the original entrance drive to the de Sabla estate. The district contains a c. 1909 one story frame teahouse constructed in a Japanese farmhouse style with wooden shingle double roof, tokonoma and veranda. The teahouse is located on the west side of the garden and is carefully integrated into a c. 1947 one and two story frame addition which transformed it into a residence. The c. 1906 tea garden is a "Shin" elaborate style of hill garden surrounded by a "looking through" bamboo fence with roof gateway. The approximately one acre garden contains waterfalls and nine objects including lanterns, a tsukabai, a stone Buddha and a bridge. At the southeast corner of the building is a small, non-contributing one story frame garage constructed in 1947. Despite the additions to the original teahouse and gardens, the district is in excellent condition overall, and retains integrity in location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association as a Japanese-style building and historic landscape.

The teahouse is a one story, frame Sen no Rokyu style chashitsu (teahouse), with a Japanese farmhouse style wooden shingle double roof, tokonoma and veranda. Rokyu style teahouses are intended to be in the style of a simple farm dwelling. The reflection pool setting of the teahouse closely resembles the setting of the Katsura Detached Palace in Kyoto, Japan. The walls and ceiling are finished with white plaster and exposed finished wood beams.

Across the front of the teahouse facing the garden are two large shoji style doors with delicate wooden shoji style transom panels which extend across the front of the building and part way into the building at either corner. The shoji doors leading to the garden would never be open during the tea ceremony, as stated in early tea books. "(T)he guests ought not to be distracted by the garden so that they can devote themselves wholeheartedly to the Chanoyu (tea ceremony) and to the appreciation of the meibutsu (tea utensils)." The shoji were primarily for ventilation and light control. Two more shoji doors, which have been removed but are still in the possession of the owner, were once located below these corner spaces. These transom panels and doors were once covered on the exterior with paper. These doors remain unchanged. At the edge of the veranda are now sliding glass doors which protect the original doors and veranda of the building. These outer doors, which were originally wood, were added in 1947.

In the northwest corner of the building is the tokonoma, or alcove for display of the scroll, incense, and flower arrangement. An unfinished limb supports the tokonoma. The floors, it is believed, were originally covered with tatami, but now have bare wood which is the condition in

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number   7   de Sabla Teahouse and Garden Page 6  
=====

which they were found by the existing owner. The building is attached on either side by one-story and two-story additions carefully added in 1947.

The 625 square foot additions were made by Eri Richardson, an Army major and part-time house designer, after careful research in Japanese architecture source books. The additions include a one-story living room addition to the south of the teahouse and a two-story frame residence on the north side of the teahouse. An original doorway on the north side of the teahouse was used to connect the two story addition. On the south side of the tea house there is a low stone alcove between the tea house and the one-story addition which preserves the action of stepping into the teahouse and preserves it as a separate unit of space. Thus, while the building has been altered rather substantially, it has been changed in a sympathetic manner and still is capable of making a contribution to the overall significance of the garden.

The teahouse is centered in the roji (garden) with a winding path leading to the teahouse. The purpose of the tea garden was to allow participants of the tea ceremony to "enter into a state of purification before the tea ceremony and empty the mind of distractions....commune with the inner spirit of the world."

The garden is a "Shin" , or elaborate style of hill garden. The design was first published in an 1828 manual for garden makers, Tsukiyama Teizo-Den, written by Akizato Rito and published in Tokyo. The de Sabla garden is named Higurashi-En, the Garden Worthy of a Day of Contemplation. It closely follows the plan published in the manual. The book was still being used when Makota Hagiwara designed this garden in c. 1906.

A "shin" style hill garden contains several essential elements, all of which are represented in the de Sabla garden. These elements are the sacred island, the guardian stone, the stone of worship, the principal tree, tree of the setting sun, view perfecting tree, tree of solitude, tree of the distancing pine, cascade screening tree, keystones set at important viewing stations, stone lanterns and bridges. It is also imperative that a tea garden contain a "dewy path" leading to the tea garden and a tsukabai (stone wash basin for purification before the tea ceremony). Although small portions of the garden were changed or removed during the 1947 building additions, the basic form of the garden remains unchanged. The integrity of the original design and planting materials is due to careful gardening by a limited number of committed individuals over seventy years.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number   7   de Sabla Teahouse and Garden Page 7  
=====

The site furnishings consist of various original small stone objects such as Buddhas and lanterns. Two new cast iron cranes closely resembling those originally located in the Pan Pacific International Exposition Garden are located on the island.

The Garden

After Eugene de Sabla, Jr., sold the property in 1919, the Japanese gardens were cared for by Harold Peterson, the gardener of the St. Cyr Estate for twenty years. Beginning in 1947 and continuing until the present, two generations of the Obata family have cared for the garden.

Unfortunately there is no known documentation of the process used for constructing the garden. It is known that Hagiwara, working with other gardeners, constructed the hills in the garden by carting in dirt and volcanic rock from Mt. Lassen. There are also other pieces of volcanic rock which are believed to be from Japan. According to the 1914 House Beautiful article, "Before the Japanese gardeners started on this beauty spot it was perfectly flat, like the rest of the highly developed grounds. But in all typical gardens...there is a little cascade or waterfall and this in turn necessitates a hillside, down which a tiny streamlet may meander. It took hundreds of tons of dirt and rock to provide a pretty background for the De Sabla Japanese garden....the ingenious Japanese landscape artists found it comparatively easy to prepare a Japanese garden which, in detail, surpasses anything I have seen in California."

The gardeners were able to take advantage of the specimen trees and mature growth planted by John McLaren on the estate twenty five years earlier. These included a Spanish fir, Canary Island pines, an atlas cedar and a deodar cedar, a Himalayan spruce and Douglas firs. Also used were several of the same plants used in the Japanese Tea Garden in Golden Gate park, such as the Hinoki cypress, the Hiba arborvitae and camellias. The source of a very old Gingko tree measuring one and a half feet in girth is unknown.

The garden is entered through a rojii (gate of wood and bamboo with a shallow wood shingled gable roof which still serves as the main entrance to both the garden and house today. In 1914 a walk through the garden was described as follows: "From the moment you enter the high gateway, flanked on each side by wings that join the rustic fence, you find a wealth of charming detail introduced in the pretty garden. Every little nook and corner contains some pleasant surprise. From the tea-house you note to the left a substantial yet artistic bridge, then a hillside pathway, marked with irregular flat stones that serve as steps, leading past a beautiful stone lantern to a fragile bamboo fence and fringe of pines and wide-spreading oaks. You see delicate shrubs sprouting from

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number   7   de Sabla Teahouse and Garden Page 8  
=====

rocky crevices, and little trees, twisted into most impossible curves and angles, jut from the banks of the lake. Strange little creeping vines and wild flowers seek the edge of the water, and if you will walk past the waterfall to the farther end of the garden, you will find several small lotus ponds filled with floating pads and blossoms. Beyond is a wonderful bed of iris surrounded by a wild tangle of verdant shrubs and native trees." (House Beautiful)

The configuration of the garden has changed little except for some very small portions which are now part of adjacent properties and no longer retain integrity. In 1947 a banked, one and a half story frame garage with sleeping quarters was carefully placed inconspicuously in the northwest corner of the garden. Shrubbery has substantially concealed this non-contributing building.

Summary of contributing and non-contributing elements:

Teahouse -- one contributing building

Garage with sleeping quarters -- one non-contributing building

Garden with ornamental objects -- one contributing site

Stone bridge -- one contributing structure

Wood fence with entry gate -- one contributing structure

Total: 1 contributing building                      1 non-contributing building

1 contributing site

2 contributing structures

      
4 contributing

      
1 non-contributing



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number   8   de Sabla Teahouse and Garden Page 9  
=====

The Eugene de Sabla Japanese teahouse and garden, built c. 1907, is significant as an early expression of the influence of Japanese culture on the development of California design at the beginning of the twentieth century. The garden is the work of Asian landscape designer Makoto Magiwaru during the time of his association (1894-1925) as chief gardener and concessionaire of the Japanese Tea Garden at Golden Gate Park in San Francisco. The de Sabla tea garden is the only other known extant example of his work and the only private Japanese tea garden that remains from the many that existed on the grand estates of San Mateo/Hillsborough. The garden and teahouse were part of the El Cerrito estate owned by Eugene de Sabla during the time he became a major industrialist in the west and co-founded Pacific Gas and Electric Company.

The exact dates and information surrounding the construction of the de Sabla tea garden and teahouse are not known. Numerous historic accounts of the property have stated in error that after the close of the Panama Pacific Exposition of San Francisco, de Sabla had the garden and teahouse moved to its present location.

Research shows, however, that a Japanese tea garden on land owned by de Sabla was definitely in existence by September 10, 1907 as indicated by a published photograph of the property in the San Francisco Call on this date. Photographs and an article entitled "Japanese Gardens" by Horatio S. Stoll in the July, 1914 issue of House Beautiful magazine date the construction of the teahouse prior to the end of the Pan Pacific Exposition in 1915. Further review of the correspondence between the Japanese Commission for the Exposition and the President of the Pan Pacific Exposition clearly shows that none of the buildings were officially purchased by or given to de Sabla. It is quite possible, however, that plant materials and small objects such as stone lanterns were acquired quietly after the Exposition through his many influential contacts.

Extensive research now indicates that the de Sabla tea garden was most likely constructed between 1906 and 1907 in its present form and the teahouse built between 1907 and 1909. These early construction dates have great significance when viewed in the context of the region and the influence of Japanese architecture and landscape design on the development of Craftsman style architecture in California and the anti-Japanese conflict which was a major movement in northern California during this time period.

According to a May, 1906 Craftsman magazine article entitled "Japanese Architecture and its Relation to the Coming American Style," Japanese architecture was seen as "a return to honesty and simplicity in construction, rejection of all false ornamentation and the meeting of all

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number   8   de Sabla Teahouse and Garden Page 10  
=====

actual requirements in the simplest and most direct way. The architectural gospel preached by The Craftsman ever since the issue of its first number is here echoed in no uncertain tones, and from the other side of the world."

At the time the design magazines began to promote articles and photos of Japanese architecture, the de Sabla teahouse and garden were already in existence. The simple wood construction and Japanese joinery methods of the teahouse and controlled traditional and labor intensive design of the garden were expressive of the principles of the Arts and Crafts movement and its architecture.

Between 1870 and 1920, the wealthy elite of San Francisco transformed the grassland and farms of the San Francisco peninsula into a series of large, majestic estates with meticulously landscaped gardens. After World War II, most of the estates and gardens were demolished and the land subdivided for housing to accommodate suburban growth. The de Sabla teahouse and garden, surrounded by suburban development, is a unique and splendid survivor of one of these estates, El Cerrito, and is significant in the San Francisco bay region.

The site of the teahouse and garden was originally part of the estate of William Davis Merry Howard, an early wealthy San Mateo pioneer merchant who purchased this part of the San Mateo rancho in 1853. The estate became known for its grounds because they were groomed by John McLaren, who, upon leaving the Howard estate, would become Superintendent of Golden Gate Park.

At the same time that the white wealthy were transforming the peninsula, the first Japanese immigrants began to trickle into San Francisco. Prior to 1880 there were fewer than 200 Japanese living in the San Francisco bay region; by 1889 there were almost 2000. In 1886, Japan re-legalized emigration, which had been suspended in 1868 due to the poor treatment of Japanese workers by Hawaiian planters. The desire of the Emperor of the Meiji period to modernize and westernize the country encouraged many to go abroad and at the same time, laborers from impoverished farming areas were attracted to a new land. Many took the place of laborers in the United States excluded by the 1888 Chinese Exclusion Act, angering members of the labor unions.

In 1898, Hawaii was annexed as a U.S. territory, making it legal for 60,000 Japanese to enter the U.S. without passports. By 1900, 12,635 had arrived from Hawaii. One was Makota Hagiwara, the son of an Osaka landholder and industrialist. Hagiwara was to make a profound contribution to America as a master designer of Japanese gardens in the San Francisco bay region. His most famous work would be the Japanese Tea Garden in Golden Gate Park. It is also known that he designed a garden

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 8 de Sabla Teahouse and Garden Page 11  
=====

for George Marsh in Mill Valley (demolished), Charles F. Crocker in San Mateo County (demolished), M.H. Huff in San Leandro (demolished), and a garden on Lincoln Avenue between 8th and 9th Avenues in San Francisco (demolished). Of all his work, the only private garden designed by Makota Hagiwara still in existence is the de Sabla tea garden.

Japanese influence on architecture and landscape design in the United States began in the late nineteenth century and was most pronounced in the architecture of the arts and crafts movement and landscape architecture in California at the beginning of the twentieth century. The first real architectural display of Japanese style architecture in the United States after the opening of Japan by Perry in 1853 was at the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exposition in the form of a Japanese bazaar and garden. In the decade following this exposition, Japanese style architecture and design elements began to find their way into architecture magazines and design books.

This trend got a major boost in 1885 with the publication of Japanese Homes and their Surroundings by Edward Sylvester Morse. Morse, an American scientist from Salem, Massachusetts had gone to Japan to teach at Imperial University. In April, 1887, American Architect printed a lecture on the topic. By this time, on the west coast, George Turner Marsh, an Australian fluent in Japanese, had opened a shop in 1876 in the Palace Hotel in San Francisco and was selling Japanese art objects. He built a "Japanese style" house in San Francisco. Later, in Mill Valley, Marin County, he brought in four Japanese families to help build a Japanese garden which had been demolished.

Marsh may also have been one of the clients of Bruce Price, an architect for Tuxedo Park, New York, who received a commission for a large rural residence at San Mateo, California and "a house near San Francisco." As reported in Building Magazine, March 18, 1887, these houses were designed in a Japanese style. It is believed that Henry Bowles' residence, Severn Lodge, was the "rural residence at San Mateo." Unfortunately, this building was just demolished in 1985. It was clear that the interest in the Japanese style had begun in northern California.

In 1893, the World's Columbian Exposition was held in Chicago. A Japanese village, consisting of several buildings, was constructed by Japanese workmen. These buildings were retained after the fair closed, and stood until a fire destroyed them in 1946. A review of the work of many of the principal architects of the midwest including Daniel Burnham, Louis Sullivan, and Frank Lloyd Wright after 1893 reveals the influence of these "organic" buildings on the development of the Chicago School. (See The Japanese Influence in America, by Clay Lancaster.)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 8 de Sabla Teahouse and Garden Page 12  
=====

The first major display of Japanese architecture and landscape design on the west coast came in the form of the Japanese village at the California Midwinter Fair in Golden Gate Park in San Francisco, which was built in less than five months and opened on January 27, 1894.

The Japanese village, small portions of which still exist today in the form of the Japanese Tea Garden of the Golden Gate Park, consisted of a hill and water garden and five buildings with a torii or Shinto gateway. The one acre garden was constructed by Japanese workmen and gardeners. The chief designer and concessionaire of the Japanese village and garden was George Turner Marsh. He also supplied numerous stone lanterns and artware from his shop to the exhibition, some of which are identical to those found in the de Sabla tea garden today.

Marsh had designed the village with the advice of Makota Hagiwara and at least one other Japanese gardener, T. Aoki, of whom little is known. Marsh had known Hagiwara from working with him on the development of his own garden in Mill Valley. After the Fair, one of the buildings, a theater, was moved to that garden at the Marsh estate. The remainder of the village and garden was conveyed intact to the City of San Francisco Park Commission in August, 1894, by Marsh.

Immediately following the Fair, John McLaren and the San Francisco park commissioners hired Makota Hagiwara to run the Japanese village concession. Hagiwara had learned the trade of gardening from his father and family gardener before coming to the United States in 1890. He and his family became totally dedicated to the development of the Japanese Tea Garden from 1894 to 1942, even to the point of bringing over plants from his ancestral home in Osaka. The garden became the oldest and most famous Japanese tea garden in the United States.

In 1893, Agnes Poett, who had brought John McLaren to her Howard estate and the United States, died leaving her third husband, Henry Pike Bowie (1848-1920) owner of the Howard estate known as El Cerrito or Little Hill.

Bowie was an attorney and originally from the Bowie family of Maryland, who came to San Francisco as a child in 1855. Upon the death of his wife in 1893, Bowie traveled to Japan where he stayed until 1902, becoming fluent in Japanese and Chinese and studying under several artists in Tokyo and Kyoto. He became one of America's leading experts on Japan, and became so proficient in the art of Japanese painting that his work was acquired by the Emperor and Empress of Japan. They decorated him with the Order of the Rising Sun. Upon his return to the United States, he lectured before universities and other organizations, and on October 7, 1905, became a founder and first president of the Japan Society of

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 8 de Sabla Teahouse and Garden Page 13  
=====

America. In 1911 he published his seventy two laws on the methods of Japanese painting in a book entitled On the Laws of Japanese Painting.

Bowie is known to have been instrumental in the development of Japanese gardens on his own estate, Severn Lodge, and in the surrounding area. He developed a Japanese garden on five acres north of the grounds of Severn Lodge with fish ponds, rows of cherry trees and stone statuary as early as 1886. It is believed that part of these early gardens were expanded and developed into the de Sabla garden that still exists today. According to his obituary (December 26, 1920, San Francisco Chronicle), "his Japanese gardens were a source of great interest to local residents and visitors and were always maintained in splendid condition by famous Japanese gardeners."

One of those Japanese gardeners was Naoharu Aihara (1870-1940) who was born in Koyobashi, Tokyo, and came to the United States between 1902 and 1905. It is believed that his garden skill was brought to the attention of Bowie in Japan by a relative during the 1890s, and upon recommendation of Bowie, he was employed by John McLaren in the extension of the Japanese Tea Garden at Golden Gate Park with Makota Hagiwara between 1902 and 1905. It is also known that Aihara "designed and constructed a hill and water landscape for a resident of San Mateo for whom and when is not known." (Hakone Garden, p. 99) It is very possible that he could have worked on the de Sabla garden although there is no documentation to verify this. In 1918-1919, Aihara designed and landscaped a Japanese garden for Mr. and Mrs. Oliver Charles Stine which was later to become the Hakone Garden, now owned by the city of Saratoga.

Eugene Joly de Sabla, Jr., (1866-1956) was a major industrialist who manufactured and marketed hydro-electric power in the west, and, with John Martin, was a co-founder of Pacific Gas and Electric Company. In 1906 he purchased part of the Howard Estate in order to construct "the finest and most expensive country home in California." (San Francisco Call, April 1, 1906) This estate would continue to be named El Cerrito. He commissioned Willis Polk to design and build a Tudor style home on the grounds, a mile from San Mateo.

It is unknown how Makota Hagiwara or any other Japanese gardeners or laborers who participated in the design and construction of the teahouse and garden were first introduced to Eugene de Sabla. There are no known records or evaluation of Hagiwara's work and any materials that do exist are written in Japanese. It is known that by 1900, Hagiwara had laid out a garden for Charles F. Crocker at Mateo Robles in San Mateo County, and for M.H. Huff of San Leandro. In that same year, due to an anti-Asian clause in the San Francisco city charter, Hagiwara was forced out of the Japanese Tea Garden in Golden Gate, and built a new garden on

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number   8   de Sabla Teahouse and Garden Page 14  
=====

Lincoln between 8th and 9th Avenues in San Francisco. Construction of the de Sabla garden most certainly took place during the time period 1900-1907 when Hagiwara was exiled from the garden in Golden Gate Park. In 1907, John McLaren asked Hagiwara to return as concessionaire of the garden.

There are few if any records of the names of Japanese gardeners who were working in San Mateo County or northern California in this time period. The fact that there were many very skilled gardeners is recorded in a September 19, 1907 article in the Redwood City Democrat, "Japanese gardeners in the county soon gained a reputation for showplace gardens that were built on estates in San Mateo, Burlingame and Hillsborough." Unfortunately, little of this work has survived.

It is extremely likely that the idea for the garden and guidance in locating the labor to construct both tea garden and teahouse came from de Sabla's friend, Henry P. Bowie. Bowie returned from a nine-year study visit to Japan in 1902. By this time, racial discrimination against Japanese immigrants was growing very quickly, heated by the inflammatory remarks and orders against the immigrants of Mayor James D. Phelan of San Francisco.

By 1905, the San Francisco Chronicle featured the February 23 headline, "The Japanese Invasion, The Problem of the Hour," sixty seven organizations, mostly representing labor, organized into the Asiatic Exclusion League and the California State Legislature was urging their US congressional representatives to introduce a resolution limiting Japanese immigrants.

As a recognized expert in Japanese art, Bowie ran in privileged and intellectual circles lecturing to the Arts and Crafts Guild of San Francisco, the Art Institute of the University of California, the Sketch Club of San Francisco, the Saturday Afternoon Club of Santa Cruz, and the Art Students of Stanford University. Interest in the "Japanese Style" was keen with these groups as evidenced by articles published in 1906 in Architectural Record and Craftsman Magazine (Gustav Stickley's magazine for the arts and crafts movement) especially an article entitled "Japanese Architecture and its Relation to the Coming American Style."

In the same year, two southern California houses designed by Greene and Greene in One Hundred Country Houses were characterized as "the utmost limits to which Japanese architecture could be stretched, and still meet American requirements." (Japanese Influence in America) The construction of the de Sabla tea garden and teahouse was a clear message of support for the Japanese community and interest in the new fashionable trends of the arts and crafts movement being espoused by Gustav Stickley

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 8 de Sabla Teahouse and Garden Page 15  
=====

and expressed by Greene and Greene and others in the bungalow style in California.

Although there were many Japanese gardens constructed on the grand estates of the San Francisco peninsula during the first part of the twentieth century, only the Hakone garden in Saratoga, constructed approximately ten years later than the de Sabla garden, remains.

In October, 1905, Henry Bowie, Dr. David Starr Jordan, President of Stanford University, and Kisaburo Uyeno founded the Japan Society of America in an effort to stem the tide of negative feeling toward the Japanese community. Mr. and Mrs. Eugene de Sabla, Jr., were two of the organization's first members. Also included was Willis Polk, who would later become the architect of El Cerrito. The Society hosted social events, lectures, published a bulletin, and awarded fellowships to Japanese students attending American universities.

One of those events confirms extensive collaboration between Mr. and Mrs. de Sabla and Henry Bowie. In 1906, Henry Bowie began to make plans to mark the end of the Russo-Japanese War (1899-1905) by erecting a gate dedicated to the valor of the Japanese Army. It was built by Japanese workmen opposite his residence and led into his Japanese garden. Although it was completed several years earlier, official dedication of the gate waited until November 27, 1909, when 57 members of the Japanese Commercial Commission visited San Francisco on a nationwide tour of the United States. The group of officials included Baron Eiichi Shibusawa, president of the Dai Ichi Bank and the leading financier of Japan. After a welcome in the city, the group was brought by rail to Burlingame and on to San Mateo in private cars.

According to the November 28, 1909 San Francisco Call, "A glimpse of their own home life was given to the visiting members of the honorary commercial commission of Japan yesterday when, as the guests of Henry P. Bowie and Eugene de Sabla of San Mateo, they assisted in the formal dedication of a Japanese gate erected to the memory of the valor of the Japanese army in the Russo-Japanese War and were received in the beautiful Japanese gardens attached to the country residences of the two men....The formality over, the visitors were served tea in the de Sabla gardens. They were received by Mrs. de Sabla and conducted over the grounds by Eugene de Sabla."

Over the years, the de Sabla teahouse and garden were the site of many important social events in the community. The first known mention of the garden is on September 10, 1907 in The San Francisco Call announcing a "Baby Show Fete" on September 21, 1907, sponsored by the San Mateo Woman's Club. This was one of a number of events sponsored by the Woman's Club, an organization that played a very active and important

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 8 de Sabla Teahouse and Garden Page 16  
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role in the development of public facilities in the growing community of San Mateo. The profits of this benefit were dedicated to the Carnegie Library fund in the community.

On November 8 and November 15, 1909, The San Francisco Call described in great detail the ball celebrating the formal presentation of Miss Vera de Sabla to society on November 12, 1909. According to the articles, "The grounds contain the most admired examples of landscape gardening to be found in the west. They embrace 14 acres, all under intensive cultivation. The most highly developed feature is the Japanese tea garden....The Japanese tea garden where refreshments will be served during the evening will be brilliant with electric lights." The San Mateo Times, November 13, 1909, stated, "The Japanese tea garden, the grottoes, fountains, miniature landscapes and all the little byways were radiant with kallescopic (sic) coloring..."

In June 1919, El Cerrito and the Japanese teahouse and garden were sold to Anne St. Cyr. She was the second wife of Jean de St. Cyr, a New York socialite, who had inherited a fortune estimated at between 20 and 30 million from his first wife, Mrs. James Henry Smith de St. Cyr when she died in 1915. In 1922, upon dissolution of the second marriage, Anne sold it back to her husband.

The garden continued to be the site of numerous social events. The most celebrated during this time period was the marriage of film actress Constance Talmadge to Captain Alistair MacIntosh of the British Army on February 27, 1926.

In 1939, Jean de Saint Cyr was married for a third time to Helen Carter Strong de St. Cyr, the wife of the late governor of Hawaii, George R. Carter, and daughter of Col. Henry A. Strong of Rochester, N.Y., a photographic pioneer with George Eastman. In May, 1939, Mrs. de Saint Cyr formally purchased the property from Jean de St. Cyr for \$400,000 and proceeded to have the entire mansion renovated. But, in 1940, the two were divorced in Reno.

In March, 1940, Mrs. de St. Cyr sold the mansion and twenty five acres to David D. Bohannon, a local builder and developer. After a highly publicized auction of the contents of the mansion in April, 1940, the land, now called "El Cerrito Manor," was subdivided into residential lots at a cost of 1.5 million dollars. During the 1940s, most of the estates in the area suffered a similar fate. This was largely due to economic expansion in the area which caused the population to triple in San Mateo County from 1940-1970.

Fortunately the site of the Japanese garden was not developed. It was subdivided into a special lot under the private rather than corporate



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number   8   de Sabla Teahouse and Garden Page 17  
=====

ownership of David Bohannon. During this time, Shirley Temple considered buying the garden and was photographed viewing it with David Bohannon in the 1940s. Finally, in 1944, the garden and teahouse were sold. It was not until 1946, when Eri Richardson, an Army major and part-time home designer, purchased it, that any major additions and changes were made to the property.

After careful research in Japanese architecture source books, nine months of construction and \$8000, two additions totalling 625 square feet were made to either side of the original teahouse. Also, a garage and sleeping quarters were constructed in a far corner of the garden. Richardson sold the property in 1949.

Since that time, there have been numerous owners. The teahouse and garden have been featured in many house and garden tours. The current owners purchased the property in 1988 and are taking steps to preserve the garden through easements and local landmark designations.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 9 de Sabla Teahouse and Garden Page 18  
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United States Department of the Interior  
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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number   9   de Sabla Teahouse and Garden Page 19  
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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number:   Photos                   de Sabla Teahouse and Garden           Page 20  
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All photos taken by Cherilyn Widell, August 1991. Negatives are with photographer at 738 Guinda Street, Palo Alto, CA 94301.

1. Main gate and fence.
2. Overall view of teahouse and addition.
3. North addition to teahouse.
4. South addition to teahouse.
5. Alcove of teahouse showing paper covered window with bamboo lattice. Hall area between teahouse and south addition.
6. General view of garden.
7. View of garden from the south.
8. Bridge.
9. Statuary, lighting and fence.
10. Non-contributing garage.

Le Sabla Teahouse & Garden  
San Mateo, Calif.

N = waterfall

