

559 KINGSLEY AVENUE

APN: 120-06-071

1997-2001 SURVEY UPDATE SUMMARY

Identified National Register Criteria of Significance: Criteria A (Events), B (Persons), and C (Architecture)

Identified Period of Significance: 1912

Summary of Significance: 559 Kingsley Avenue was found significant under three criteria. Under Criterion A, it was identified as significant for demonstrating the enduring attractiveness of Palo Alto for the upper class. Under Criterion B, for its association with Margery Bailey, a Stanford University professor in the English department. And under Criterion C as an excellent example of a Craftsman bungalow.

2023 RECONNAISSANCE SURVEY SUMMARY

Alterations Since 2001: No alterations identified.

Status in 2023: Extant, retains historic integrity.

Recommended Revisions to Significance: The period of significance has been revised to end in 1963, thereby including the years in which Margery Bailey lived at the subject building. The significance of the building as demonstrating Palo Alto's appeal to the upper class has been omitted, as this trend does not appear to be particularly closely associated with this small residential bungalow.



Figure 1: 1997-2001 Survey Update photograph.



Figure 2: 2023 Reconnaissance Survey photograph.

RECOMMENDATION FOR LISTING IN THE PALO ALTO HISTORIC INVENTORY

Palo Alto Historic Inventory Criteria for Designation:

- Criterion 1 (The structure or site is identified with the lives of historic people or with important events in the city, state, or nation)
- Criterion 2 (The structure or site is particularly representative of an architectural style or way of life important to the city, state, or nation)

Statement of Significance: 559 Kingsley Avenue is significant as an excellent example of a Craftsman bungalow and for its association with Margery Bailey a highly notable English professor at Stanford University. Bailey was the first woman to achieve tenure at Stanford University and taught many well-known American authors—including John Steinbeck—from 1916 until her death in 1963. She lived at 559 Kingsley Avenue from 1939 to 1963.

Period of Significance: 1912-1963

Palo Alto Historic Inventory Category: Category 2

State of California — The Resources Agency
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION
PRIMARY RECORD

Primary # _____
HRI # _____
Trinomial _____
NRHP Status Code 3S

Other Listings _____
Review Code _____ Reviewer _____ Date _____

Page 1 of 5 *Resource Name or #: (Assigned by recorder) 559 Kingsley Ave

P1. Other Identifier: 559 Kingsley Ave
P2. Location: Not for Publication Unrestricted *a: County Santa Clara
and (P2c, P2e, and P2b or P2d. Attach Location Map as necessary.)
*b. USGS 7.5' Quad Palo Alto, CA Date 1991 T ___; R ___; ___ 1/4 of ___ 1/4 of Sec : ___ B.M.
c. Address 559 Kingsley Ave City Palo Alto Zip 94301
d. UTM: (Give more than one for large and/or linear resources) Zone ___; ___ mE/ ___ mN
*e. Other Locational Data: (e.g., parcel #, directions to resource, elevation, etc., as appropriate) APN 120 06 071

*P3a. Description: (Describe resource and its major elements. Include design, materials, condition, alterations, size, setting, and boundaries)

The house at 559 Kingsley is a fine example of a Craftsman Bungalow. It is a wood-frame structure clad in shingles and covered by a gable roof. As built, it was rectangular in plan with a full porch across the front and the back and a projecting bay window on each side. It is a 1 1/2-story structure with a low profile established by the flaring of the roof over the front porch and by a front-facing, low pitched, gabled dormer. In addition to its form and its shingled walls, decorative details include heavy (fake) cantilevered beams under the wide overhanging eaves, a stuccoed chimney, and square porch posts. Inside, there is redwood paneling in the dining room. Two additions were made at the rear in 1977 and 1989. With the large wisteria vine across the front, the house presents an archetypal image of the Craftsman Bungalow in California.

*P3b Resource Attributes: (List attributes and codes) HP2 Single family property
*P4. Resources Present: Building Structure Object Site District Element of District Other (isolates, etc.)



P5b. Description of Photo:
(View, date, accession #) _____
559 Kingsley Ave; view northwest;
09/16/99; by B. Vahey; roll BRV-81,
neg #23
*P6. Date Constructed/Age and
Source: Historic
 Prehistoric Both
1912; Palo Alto Times
*P7. Owner and Address:
Judith Leahy
559 Kingsley Ave Palo Alto CA
94301
*P8. Recorded by: (Name,
affiliation, and address)
Michael Corbett, Dames & Moore
221 Main Street, Suite 600
San Francisco, CA 94105
*P9. Date Recorded:
February 23, 2000
*P10. Survey Type: (Describe)
Intensive

P11. Report Citation*: (Cite survey report and other sources, or enter "none".) Palo Alto Historic Survey Update (Corbett and Bradley for Dames & Moore, 2000)

*Attachments: NONE Location Map Sketch Map Continuation Sheet Building, Structure and Object Record
 Archaeological Record District Record Linear Feature Record Milling Station Record Rock Art Record
 Artifact Record Photograph Record Other (List) _____

BUILDING, STRUCTURE, AND OBJECT RECORD

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*NRHP Status Code 3S

*Resource Name or # (Assigned by recorder) 559 Kingsley Ave

B1. Historic Name: _____

B2. Common Name: _____

B3. Original Use: _____ B4. Present Use: Single family property

*B5. Architectural Style: Craftsman Bungalow

*B6. Construction History: (Construction date, alterations, and date of alterations)
1912: Built (*Palo Alto Times*)
1977 and 1989: Addition to rear

*B7. Moved? No Yes Unknown Date: _____ Original Location: _____

*B8. Related Features:

B9a. Architect: A.J. Bain b. Builder: unknown

*B10. Significance: Theme A: Pattern of development, B: ?, C: Craftsman Bungalow Area Palo Alto

Period of Significance 1912-1960s Property Type residential Applicable Criteria A, B, C
(Discuss importance in terms of historical or architectural context as defined by theme, period, and geographic scope. Also address integrity.)

History

Site: The house at 559 Kingsley is situated on a 50-by-150-foot lot in Block 80 of the original University Park subdivision of 1889.

Structure: The *Palo Alto Times* reported, on 3 January 1912, the construction of a new residence for \$2,500 at 559 Kingsley designed and owned by the architect A.J. Bain. According to the record in the *Palo Alto City Directory*, Mr. Bain never lived at the address.

Use: The *Palo Alto City Directory* first listed the single family residence at 559 Kingsley in the edition of 1914-1915. From 1914 to 1938, eleven resident families were listed at the address for periods of one to three years each. In 1929 and 1930, the address was not listed, and, in 1934, it was listed as vacant. This represents the pattern of a rental property. It has not been determined if the architect, A.J. Bain, built the house on spec and sold it upon completion to an investor who managed it as a rental property or if he built it to own and manage himself as such. Sometime prior to 1935, the property was purchased by Axel E. Backlund and rented out before he moved into it in 1935. The first occupant, John Roberts White, who was listed only in 1914, was listed in *Who's Who in America* as a soldier born in England in 1874, who took a degree from Oxford, and then served as a private and corporal in the Greek Foreign Legion in 1897. He went as a private in the U.S. Army in the Philippines
See continuation sheet

B11. Additional Resource Attributes: (List attributes and codes) _____

*B12. References:

See continuation sheet.

B13. Remarks:

(Sketch map with north arrow required)

*B14. Evaluator: Michael Corbett

Date of Evaluation: February 23, 2000

(This space reserved for official comments)

CONTINUATION SHEET

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Resource Identifier: 559 Kingsley Ave

Recorded by Michael Corbett/Steve Hardy (history)

*Date February 23, 2000

Continuation Update

History (continued)

in 1899. From 1906-1908, he was superintendent of the Iwahig Penal Colony. By 1908, he was a lieutenant colonel in the Philippine Constabulary. He was acting governor of Agusan Province in 1911 and was decorated for valor during the fighting of the Philippine insurgents in Cavite, Negros, Zamboanga, etc. *Who's Who* does not say what brought him to Palo Alto.

Among subsequent residents at 559 Kingsley, from 1935 to 1939, the house was home to Axel E. and Adele Backlund. Mr. Backlund was a hardwood floor contractor and a craftsman who was a member of a significant crafts culture, represented by the Builder's Association of Palo Alto, that was an important contributor to the many fine houses built in Palo Alto in the 1920s to 1930s. Backlund worked regularly for leading builders, including E. Schmaling, Aro & Okerman, and William Klay. In 1949, Mrs. Backlund established in Palo Alto the shop called Adele's Antiques which is still in operation. Mr. and Mrs. Backlund owned the Kingsley house until 1939 when they sold it to Dr. Margery Bailey, a Stanford English professor. From 1939 until her death in 1963, Dr. Bailey lived at this address. She was born in Santa Cruz and received her bachelor's degree from Stanford in 1914. She recalled in her talk "The Intellectual Vacation at Stanford" her time at Stanford before the First World War when a professor there, the first intellectual she had ever met, "insisted that the students should smoke to show that they were free." At this professor's seminars ladies "either sat on the floor or on the knees of gentlemen . . . Before lunch we all had to drink a glass of 'jackass brandy.' I took a sip of mine and hid the glass. The professor found it and asked, ' Whose glass is this?' I swallowed it all. But later I found that drinking it was a good thing. After lunch everybody began feeling very intellectual" (*Stanford Daily* 9 January 1956).

She began teaching in the English department at Stanford in 1915, received her masters from the same university in 1916, and her Ph.D. from Yale in 1922. In 1926, she was promoted from instructor at Stanford to assistant professor, in 1953 she was made a full professor, and in 1958, she was made emeritus. Though her priority was on teaching rather than research, she published two editions of Boswell's periodical essays as *The Hypochondriac*, a concordance of Edward Young's poetry, an *Anthology of Regional Ballads* and three fairy tales she wrote for children. Creative writing was one of her teaching interests. The *Palo Alto Times* said of her, in an article published at the time of her retirement, that "Among her Stanford students who have gained recognition in the literary world are John Steinbeck, Rosemary Drachman Taylor, James Gunna, Bruce Bliven, Maxwell Anderson, Archie Burns and Wallace and Will Irwin."

She was instrumental in the establishment of the Ashland Shakespeare Festival in the 1930s and established there an Institute of Renaissance Studies. She was herself an accomplished and dedicated actress who appeared in productions of the Greek tragedies, Ibsen, and Shakespeare at Ashland as well as locally. The *Palo Alto Times* published a notice on 20 October 1959 that she was presenting a reading from works by Charles Dickens in a benefit program for the Palo Alto-Stanford branch of the NAACP.

The local press, colleagues, and students betray in their quotes admiration for her but also intimidation by her and perhaps little affection. She was called "a tough teacher, a grizzly bear, alive in mind and heart, honest, sometimes kind" and "a combination of rare efficiency and sheer witchery." She was described as having a "scissors-sharp tongue" and using language with "sharp, rapier thrusts."

Evaluation

This house, at 559 Kingsley, appears eligible for the NRHP under criteria A, B, and C at the local level of significance. The period of significance runs from 1912, when the house was built, to the 1960s, when Dr. Bailey died.

Under criterion A, this house represents the enduring attractiveness of Palo Alto to various elites in the presence of John Roberts White, a military man, and Dr. Margery Bailey, a Stanford English professor. In Dr. Bailey, it also represents the strong connection between Palo Alto and Stanford.

Under criterion B, the house is eligible as the home of Margery Bailey, English professor.

Under criterion C, the house is a fine example of a Craftsman Bungalow.

CONTINUATION SHEET

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Resource Identifier: 559 Kingsley

Recorded by Michael Corbett

*Date February 23, 2000

Continuation

Update

References

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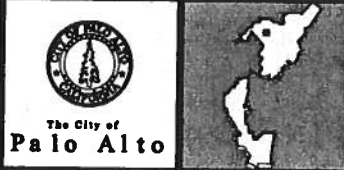
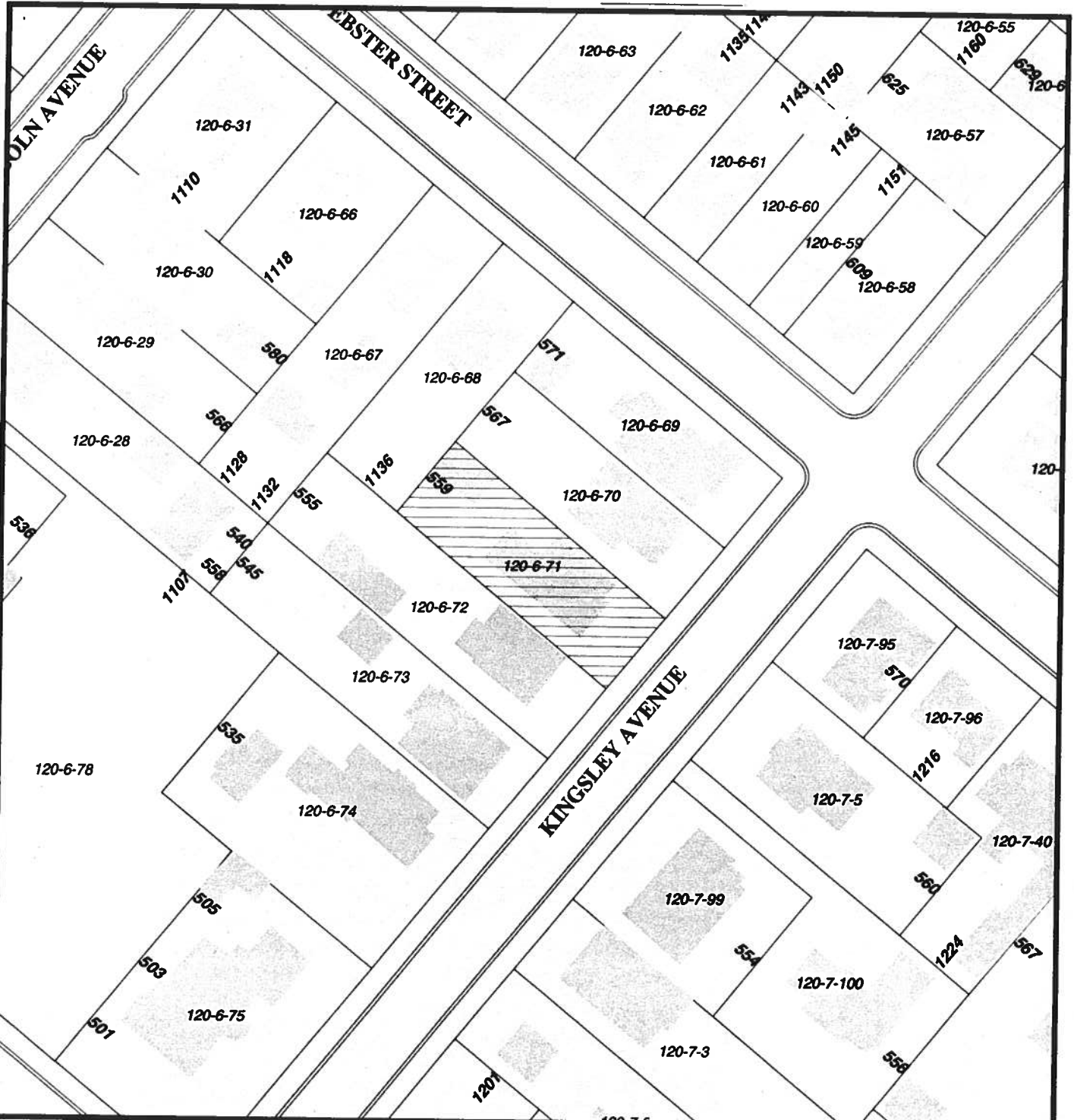
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Who's Who in America 1930-1931. Bailey, Margery.



559 Kingsley Ave
120-06-071

This map is a product of the City of Palo Alto GIS

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