

550 SANTA RITA AVENUE

APN: 124-04-035

HISTORIC RESOURCE EVALUATION

Date of Evaluation: February 2022

Identified California Register Criteria of Significance: Criterion 3 (Architecture)

Identified Period of Significance: 1936

Summary of Significance: 550 Santa Rita Avenue was found significant as an excellent example of the Tudor Revival style and as the work of William F. Klay, a notable builder-contractor in Palo Alto.

2023 RECONNAISSANCE SURVEY SUMMARY

Alterations Since HRE: No alterations identified; however, a proposed project for an addition has been approved for construction. The project has been found to be substantially compliant with the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*.

Status in 2023: Extant, retains historic integrity.

Recommended Revisions to Significance: None.



Figure 1: 2022 Historic Resource Evaluation photograph.



Figure 2: 2023 Reconnaissance Survey photograph.

RECOMMENDATION FOR LISTING IN THE PALO ALTO HISTORIC INVENTORY

Palo Alto Historic Inventory Criteria for Designation:

- Criterion 2 (The structure or site is particularly representative of an architectural style or way of life important to the city, state or nation)
- Criterion 5 (The architect or building was important)

Statement of Significance: 550 Santa Rita Avenue is significant as an excellent example of the Tudor Revival style and as the work of William F. Klay, a notable builder-contractor in Palo Alto.

Period of Significance: 1936

Palo Alto Historic Inventory Category: Category 2

Imagining change in historic environments through
design, research, and technology

550 SANTA RITA AVENUE
HISTORIC RESOURCE EVALUATION

PALO ALTO, CALIFORNIA
[16252A.83]

FEBRUARY 9, 2022



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I. INTRODUCTION

This Historic Resource Evaluation (HRE) has been prepared at the request of the City of Palo Alto for the residential property at 550 Santa Rita Avenue (APN 124-04-035) on Block 79 of the Sherman Subdivision with the Seale Addition neighborhood.¹ The subject property is located on the southeast side of Santa Rita Avenue between Cowper Street (southwest) and Webster Street (northeast), and immediately north of the intersection of Tasso Street and Santa Rita Avenue in an R-1 (Residential single-family) zoning district. The parcel is a rectangular lot of approximately 6,780-square-feet and contains the single-family residence (**Figure 1**).² The residence was built in 1936 by builder-contractor William F. Klay for owner Ethel N. Brown.³

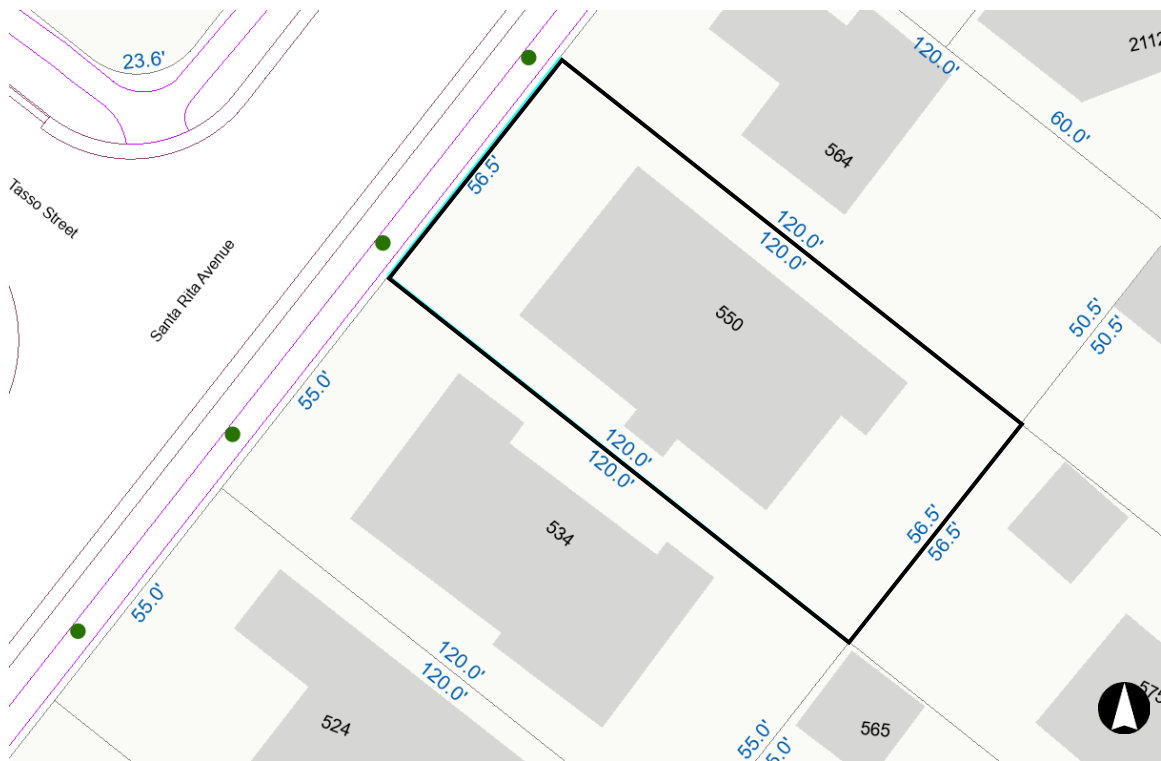


Figure 1: Current parcel map with 550 Santa Rita Avenue outlined in black.
Source: Palo Alto Online Parcel Report. Edited by Page & Turnbull.

¹ The Seale Addition neighborhood is sometimes referred to as “Old Palo Alto” in present-day real estate marketing. This report will refer to the neighborhood based upon its historic association to lands once owned by the Seale family, which served as the basis for study of the neighborhood during the Dames & Moore Survey Update in 1997-2001.

² City of Palo Alto Property Information, online. Accessed January 12, 2022.
<https://xmap.cityofpaloalto.org/parcelreports/>.

³ Reference to the original permit filed for construction of the residence is on file at Palo Alto Historical Association.

METHODOLOGY

This report follows the outline used for Historic Resource Evaluation (HRE) reports, and provides a summary of the current historic status, a building description, and historic context for the building at 550 Santa Rita Avenue. The report includes an evaluation of the property's individual eligibility for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources (California Register). Page & Turnbull prepared this report using research collected at various local repositories, including records of the Palo Alto Development Services Center shared by City staff and documentation on file at Palo Alto Historical Association (PAHA), as well as various online sources including Ancestry.com, Newspapers.com, Palo Alto Stanford Heritage (PAST), and University of California Santa Barbara's FrameFinder aerial photograph database. Key primary sources consulted and cited in this report include Palo Alto building permit applications, city and county directories, and historical newspapers. All photographs in this report were taken by Page & Turnbull during a site visit on January 11, 2022, unless otherwise noted.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

550 Santa Rita Avenue appears to be individually eligible under California Register of Historical Resources Criterion 3 (Architecture). The residence provides a distinct representation of the Tudor Revival style and is significant as an example of the work of William F. Klay, a significant builder-contractor in Palo Alto.

II. EXISTING HISTORIC STATUS

The following section examines the national, state, and local historic status currently assigned to the residential property at 550 Santa Rita Avenue.

National Register of Historic Places

The National Register of Historic Places (National Register) is the nation's most comprehensive inventory of historic resources. The National Register is administered by the National Park Service and includes buildings, structures, sites, objects, and districts that possess historic, architectural, engineering, archaeological, or cultural significance at the national, state, or local level.

550 Santa Rita Avenue is not currently listed in the National Register.

California Register of Historical Resources

The California Register of Historical Resources (California Register) is an inventory of significant architectural, archaeological, and historical resources in the State of California. Resources can be listed in the California Register through a number of methods. State Historical Landmarks and National Register-listed properties are automatically listed in the California Register. Properties can also be nominated to the California Register by local governments, private organizations, or citizens. The evaluative criteria used by the California Register for determining eligibility are closely based on those developed by the National Park Service for the National Register of Historic Places.

550 Santa Rita Avenue is not currently listed in the California Register.

California Historical Resource Status Codes

Properties listed or under review by the State of California Office of Historic Preservation are listed within the Built Environment Resource Directory (BERD) and are assigned a California Historical Resource Status Code (Status Code) of "1" to "7" to establish their historical significance in relation to the National Register of Historic Places (National Register) or California Register of Historical Resources (California Register).⁴ Properties with a Status Code of "1" or "2" are either eligible for listing in the California Register or the National Register, or are already listed in one or both of the registers. Properties assigned Status Codes of "3" or "4" appear to be eligible for listing in either register, but normally require more research to support this rating. Properties assigned a Status

⁴ California State Office of Historic Preservation, Built Environment Resource Directory (BERD), Santa Clara County, updated March 2020.

Code of "5" have typically been determined to be locally significant or to have contextual importance. Properties with a Status Code of "6" are not eligible for listing in either register. Finally, a Status Code of "7" means that the resource has not been evaluated for the National Register or the California Register, or needs reevaluation.

The subject property is not currently listed in the BERD database for Santa Clara County with a status code. The most recent update to the BERD database was in March 2020.

Palo Alto Historic Inventory

The City of Palo Alto's Historic Inventory lists noteworthy examples of the work of important individual designers and architectural eras and traditions as well as structures whose background is associated with important events in the history of the city, state, or nation. The inventory is organized under the following four Categories:

Category 1: An "Exceptional Building" of pre-eminent national or state importance. These buildings are meritorious works of the best architects, outstanding examples of a specific architectural style, or illustrate stylistic development of architecture in the United States. These buildings have had either no exterior modifications or such minor ones that the overall appearance of the building is in its original character.

Category 2: A "Major Building" of regional importance. These buildings are meritorious works of the best architects, outstanding examples of an architectural style, or illustrate stylistic development of architecture in the state or region. A major building may have some exterior modifications, but the original character is retained.

Category 3 or 4: A "Contributing Building" which is a good local example of an architectural style and relates to the character of a neighborhood grouping in scale, materials, proportion or other factors. A contributing building may have had extensive or permanent changes made to the original design, such as inappropriate additions, extensive removal of architectural details, or wooden façades resurfaced in asbestos or stucco.

550 Santa Rita Avenue is not listed in the Palo Alto Historic Inventory. When the inventory was initially prepared in 1979, the subject property was not yet 50 years old.

Palo Alto Historical Survey Update

Between 1997 and 2000, a comprehensive update to the 1979 Historic Inventory was undertaken by historic preservation firm Dames & Moore. The goal of this update was to identify additional properties in Palo Alto that were eligible to the National Register. This effort began with a reconnaissance survey of approximately 6,600 properties constructed prior to 1947. The reconnaissance survey produced two Study Priority lists. Approximately 600 properties were identified as Study Priority 1, indicating they appeared individually eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion C (Architecture). Approximately 2,700 properties were identified as Study Priority 2, representing those properties that did not appear individually eligible to the National Register under Criterion C (including common local building types) but retained high integrity. 550 Santa Rita Avenue was among those categorized as Study Priority 2.

The reconnaissance survey was followed by an intensive-level survey of all Study Priority 1 and 2 properties. Historic research was conducted on the owners, architects/builders, and past uses of the Study Priority 1 properties. Research also informed the preparation of historic context statements on topics such as local property types, significant historical themes, and prolific architects and builders, in order to identify any potential significant associations of Study Priority 2 properties.

In January 1999, Dames & Moore prepared an interim findings report that listed preliminary evaluations of the National Register and California Register eligibility of Study Priority 1 and 2 properties. The report properties were found 291 properties to be potentially eligible as individual resources to the National Register and California Register. An additional 1,789 properties were found potentially eligible to the California Register only. The survey update effort concluded with California Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) 523 forms prepared for those 291 properties that initially appeared eligible for listing in the National Register. Of the 291 properties, 165 were ultimately found to be eligible to the National Register. These DPR 523 forms were submitted to the California Office of Historic Preservation. Because the survey focused on determining National Register eligibility, the project did not finalize the preliminary evaluations regarding potential California Register eligibility.

550 Santa Rita Avenue was identified as a Study Priority 2 property by Dames & Moore for the Palo Alto Historical Survey Update in January 1999. A DPR 523 form was not prepared the property, and the finding of potential California Register eligibility under Criterion 3 (Architecture) was not finalized through a full historic evaluation.

III. ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

EXTERIOR

550 Santa Rita Avenue is a one-and-one-half story, Tudor Revival style single-family residence constructed by builder-contractor William F. Klay in 1936 (**Figure 2**). The residence has a rectangular footprint, concrete foundation, and is formed from a primary one-and-a-half story section with a gable roof with secondary hipped and gabled, one-story sections extending from it. The building features a projecting hip-roofed section at the front containing a two-car attached garage, and a non-original gabled addition at the rear. Roofs are covered with wood shakes and are trimmed with wood fascia boards that taper to a wider width near their ends. The exterior is covered with stucco, half-timbering (stucco between wood beams), and red brick on portions of the primary and rear façades. The side porch, where the main entrance is located, and the rear porch feature wood posts with a hand-hewn appearance. Fenestration consists of a mix of original wood casement windows with divided lites and projecting brick sills, and replacement windows with wood frames and divided lites, or wood frames and diamond-shaped leaded glass. Additional architectural features include dovescotes and gable vents at the primary façade, a recessed side entrance at the northeast façade, rear porch, a tall brick chimney with a non-original corbelled crown on the rear façade, and gabled dormers on the southwest side of the main roof.



Figure 2: Current aerial view of 550 Santa Rita Avenue (outlined in white). Source: Bing Maps, 2021.

Primary (Northwest) Façade

The primary façade features a two-car attached garage at the first story. The garage is capped by a gable-on-hip roof with dove-cotes set within a stuccoed gable peak. The garage doors are made of tongue-and-groove wood boards with a central square column dividing the bays. A wood header spans across both doors, with rafter end detailing visible beneath the soffit above. These rafter ends continue along the recessed, brick-clad portion of the primary façade to the west. This portion of the façade contains a paired casement window with leaded glass and continues seamlessly to the west beyond the building footprint to form a brick wall with wood gate that encloses the side yard. The gate is a replacement that replicates the original. The half story above features a half-timbered gabled end with an eight-lite window and a narrow gable vent with chevrons (**Figure 3**).



Figure 3: Primary façade viewed from Santa Rita Avenue, looking southeast.

Southwest Façade

The southwest façade features a casement window with leaded glass and a smaller replacement wood window with diamond muntins near the front of the property (**Figure 4**). The center of the first story contains a side entrance with a three-panel wood door; the upper panel has glass divided by interlaced wood muntins. This entrance is set beneath an eave extension that is supported by wood posts (**Figure 5**). Further toward the rear of the house, the façade contains a wood window with a paired casement and adjacent fixed sash. The second story features two gabled dormers, each with stucco walls and six-lite wood windows. The southernmost dormer features a stuccoed extension that continues to the rear façade and contains a small wood window with interlaced muntins; the dormer's smaller wood window appears to be original, while its extension to the rear façade was increased in 1989 by about 3'6" (**Figure 6**).



Figure 4: Leaded glass window at the northwest end of the southwest façade.



Figure 5: Side entrance at the southwest façade.



Figure 6: Oblique view of the southwest façade, looking north.

Rear (Southeast) Façade

The rear façade features a covered porch and an adjacent rear gabled addition at the first story (**Figure 7**). The porch floor is paved with brick, and the inner walls and ceiling are stuccoed. The porch's inner wall features a brick chimney base at center, which is flanked by 10-lite wood doors. The chimney's stack projects through the porch roof and extends to a point above the roof, with a decorative diamond motif and a corbelled crown. The porch's side wall, which accesses the rear addition, also features a 10-lite wood door. The rear addition has a three-lite wood window that faces southwest, and a non-original bow window on its southeast side. This window is set below a fanlight-shaped vent in the addition's gabled end, which appears to replicate an original gable vent in the rear gabled end of the main roof (**Figure 8**).

The second story of the rear façade features two replacement wood windows; the window opening located directly adjacent to the chimney appears to be original, while the one further to the right (east) was inserted in 1973, when a rooftop addition was completed.



Figure 7: Rear façade, looking north.



Figure 8: Non-original bow window and rear addition, looking northwest.

Northeast Façade

The northeast façade features a casement window with a wide center sash and operable outer sash in the wall of the rear addition (**Figure 9**). Moving toward the middle of the façade, a projecting bay with a tripartite leaded glass window projects from the first story. A double window with leaded glass is located to the right of this projecting bay, directly adjacent to a recessed side entrance porch. The entrance porch contains a two-panel wood door with a single lite in its upper half, and a wood window with leaded privacy glass (**Figure 10 and Figure 11**).



Figure 9: Looking west toward the northeast façade from the rear of the property.



Figure 10: Projecting bay and central portion of the northeast façade, looking north.



Figure 11: Recessed entrance and adjacent windows, looking southwest.

Another identical door is placed in the opposite wall of the recess. At this point the first story projects outward, where the rear wall of the garage is located. The second story is the result of a 1973 addition that replaced the original gabled roofline to accommodate a taller roof along the second story. The second story has two four-lite wood windows: one near the rear of the addition and one near the front, with a single-lite wood window at center.

SITE FEATURES

The site includes front, side, and rear yard areas. The front yard features an asphalt driveway aligned with the built-in garage near the north end of the property. A wood gate within a brick wall accesses a brick pathway that circulates to the rear yard, immediately to the northeast of the garage. The remainder of the yard is landscaped with a mix of mulch, grass, and brick pathway, which are arranged in generally concentric rings, with the brick pathway leading to the brick wall and gate that accesses the side yard. In addition to grass, ground covering plantings, small specimen trees of deciduous and coniferous types, and one large mature coniferous tree near the junction of the garage and brick wall comprise the landscape. The brick pathway circulating through the front yard was added after 1973, according to the account of a past owner (**Figure 12**).



Figure 12: Front yard, looking east.

The yard to the southwest of the residence was originally developed as a shared space between 550 Santa Rita Avenue and the neighboring residence at 534 Santa Rita Avenue, which were both commissioned by Ethel Brown and built by William F. Klay. As of this evaluation, this yard area is separated by a wood fence, near the front of each residence, with hedges framing pathways circulating along the sides of each residence (**Figure 13**). The brick pathways are laid in a basketweave pattern (**Figure 14**). The rearmost portion of the yard is open between the two neighboring properties (**Figure 15**). The rear yard is primarily lawn area, with gray stone separating the lawn from the rear porch. The rear east corner of the property features stepping stones and mulched ground, as well as an in-ground spa (**Figure 16**). The northeast side yard features another section of brick pathway that runs along the length of the northeast façade, to the aforementioned gate adjacent to the garage at the front of the property (**Figure 17 and Figure 18**).



Figure 13: Pathway and hedges leading from the brick property wall to rear yard, looking northwest.

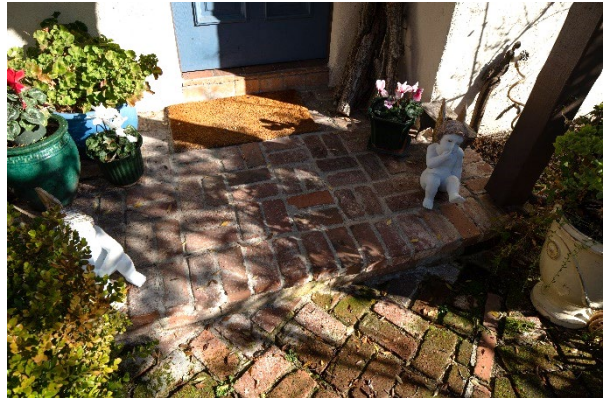


Figure 14: Basketweave brick paving in front of the side entrance, looking northeast.



Figure 15: Residence at 534 Santa Rita Avenue, viewed from the side yard, looking west.



Figure 16: Rear east corner of the site, neighboring property's garage at left, looking southeast.



Figure 17: Side yard adjacent to the northeast façade, looking southeast.



Figure 18: Brick pathway and gate to the immediate northeast of the garage, looking northwest.

SURROUNDING NEIGHBORHOOD

The surrounding neighborhood is entirely residential, with houses ranging in height from one to two stories. Most residences are capped by hip or gable roofs, or a combination the two, such as the roof at 550 Santa Rita Avenue. This portion of the Seale Addition neighborhood remained partially developed in the 1920 and early 1930s. During the 1930s and 1940s, the area was further developed with several subdivisions.

The most common architectural styles in the neighborhood can be categorized under the Period Revival trend that referenced earlier Old-World styles to create picturesque houses during the late 1920s and 1930s. Several residences including 514, 524, 534, 550, and 560 Santa Rita Avenue exhibit elements common to such Period Revival designs such as stucco cladding, complex roof forms, large divided lite windows, prominent chimneys, and in some cases dovecotes and half-timbering (**Figure 19**).



Figure 19: String of three residences at 560, 550, and 534 Santa Rita Avenue (left to right) designed in Period Revival styles, looking east.

514, 550, and 560 Santa Rita Avenue exhibit elements of the Tudor Revival style, a popular subset of the Period Revival style (**Figure 20** and **Figure 21**).



Figure 20: Period Revival style residence at 524 Santa Rita Avenue, looking southeast.



Figure 21: Tudor Revival style residence at 514 Santa Rita Avenue, looking southeast.

IV. HISTORIC CONTEXT

PALO ALTO HISTORY

The earliest known settlement of the Palo Alto area was by the Ohlone people. The region was colonized in 1769 as part of Alta California. The Spanish and Mexican governments carved the area into large ranchos which contained portions of land that became Palo Alto including Rancho Corte Madera, Rancho Pastoria de las Borregas, Rancho Rincon de San Francisquito, and Rancho Riconada del Arroyo de San Francisquito.⁵ These land grants were honored in the cession of California to the United States, but parcels were subdivided and sold throughout the nineteenth century.



Figure 22: Detail of "Official Map of Santa Clara, California" by Herrmann Brothers, 1890.

Source: Library of Congress.

The current city of Palo Alto contains the former township of Mayfield, which was located just southwest of Alma Street, and was established in 1855 (Figure 22). Starting in 1876, the railroad magnate and California politician Leland Stanford began to purchase land in the area for his country estate, and in 1882 he purchased an additional 1,000 acres adjacent to Mayfield for his horse farm.⁶ Stanford's vast holdings became known as the Palo Alto Stock Farm. On March 9, 1885, Stanford University was founded on land of the Palo Alto Stock Farm through an endowment act by the California Assembly and Senate. Originally looking to connect Stanford University as a part of the already established town of Mayfield, Stanford asked residents of Mayfield to make the town a

⁵ Ward Winslow and Palo Alto Historical Association, *Palo Alto: A Centennial History* (Palo Alto, CA: Palo Alto Historical Association, 1993), 12-17.

⁶ *Ibid*, 35.

temperance town. Their refusal in 1886 caused Stanford to found the town of Palo Alto with aid from his friend, Timothy Hopkins of the Southern Pacific Railroad. Hopkins purchased and subdivided 740 acres of private land, that was known initially as University Park (or the Hopkins Tract).⁷ This land was bounded by the San Francisquito Creek to the north and the railroad tracks and Stanford University campus to the south. A new train stop was created along University Avenue and the new town flourished in its close connection with the university. University Park, under its new name of Palo Alto, was incorporated in 1894.

In its early years, Palo Alto was a temperance town where no alcohol could be served. The residents were mostly middle and working class, with a pocket of University professors clustered in the neighborhood deemed Professorville. The development of a local streetcar in 1906, and the interurban railway to San Jose in 1910, facilitated access to jobs outside the city and to the University, encouraging more people to move to Palo Alto.⁸ In July 1925, Mayfield was officially annexed and consolidated into the city of Palo Alto.⁹ Like the rest of the nation, Palo Alto suffered through the Great Depression in the 1930s and did not grow substantially. World War II brought an influx of military personnel and their families to the Peninsula; accordingly, Palo Alto saw rapid growth following the war as many families who had been stationed on the Peninsula by the military, or who worked in associated industries, chose to stay. Palo Alto's population more than doubled from 16,774 in 1940 to 52,287 in 1960.¹⁰

Palo Alto's city center greatly expanded in the late 1940s and 1950s, gathering parcels that would house new offices and light industrial uses and lead the city away from its "college town" reputation. Palo Alto annexed a vast area of mostly undeveloped land between 1959 and 1968. This area, west of the Foothill Expressway, has remained protected open space. Small annexations continued into the 1970s, contributing to the discontinuous footprint of the city today. Palo Alto remains closely tied to Stanford University; it is the largest employer in the city. The technology industry dominates other sectors of business, as is the case with most cities within Silicon Valley. Palo Alto consciously maintains its high proportion of open space to development and the suburban feeling and scale of its architecture.¹¹

⁷ City of Palo Alto, *Comprehensive Plan 2030* (adopted by City Council, November 13, 2017), 16, accessed August 29, 2019, <https://www.cityofpaloalto.org/civicax/filebank/documents/62915>.

⁸ Dames & Moore, "Palo Alto Historic Survey Update," 1-4.

⁹ City of Palo Alto, *Comprehensive Plan 2030*, 16.

¹⁰ "City of Palo Alto, Santa Clara County," Bay Area Census, accessed August 27, 2019, <http://www.bayareacensus.ca.gov/cities/PaloAlto50.htm>.

¹¹ City of Palo Alto, *Comprehensive Plan 2030*, 11-20.

SEALE ADDITION NEIGHBORHOOD

The following historic context of the Seale Addition is excerpted from Dames & Moore's *Final Survey Report: Palo Alto Historical Survey Update*:

That part of Palo Alto known as the Seale Addition consists of several subdivisions of the old Seale Ranch in an area bound by Embarcadero Road, Middlefield Road, Oregon Avenue, and Alma Street, excluding several blocks in the west and southwest parts of this area (**Figure 23**). The first and largest of these subdivisions, in 1898, occupied only a portion of the ranch. This was followed by subdivisions of additional ranch land and by re-subdivisions of portions of the original subdivision. The 1949 *Map of the City of Palo Alto*, prepared by the City Engineer, showed these several Seale Ranch subdivisions with ambiguous boundaries. Some of the subdivisions were separately labeled, including Seale Ranch Subdivision No. 8, indicating the number of subdivisions that took place. Altogether, the Seale Addition was referred to as "South Palo Alto" until after World War II when the newly developed area across Oregon Expressway, which was located further south, came to be called South Palo Alto. [...]

When the Seale Addition was first laid out, it was outside the Palo Alto city limits on unincorporated county land. The area was annexed to Palo Alto in 1917 followed by improvements in utilities and services including a streetcar line on Waverley Street. [Historian-Writer] Roland Davis has described the progress of development in the Seale Addition as follows: "43 houses were built from 1898 to 1911 and 52 houses were built from 1912 to 1923, followed by more rapid development in the 1920s." Substantial development continued in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s, at which time the area was completely built up. The result of this pattern of development is a neighborhood that consists of a mix of houses of different decades and different styles. It may be that in the future, the entire neighborhood will appear eligible for the NRHP. For now, an area at the center of the neighborhood that contains a predominance of houses built between 1900 and 1940, deserves study as a potential historic district. Portions of this neighborhood have particularly rich concentrations of well-designed houses. Among these are the 200 to 600 blocks of Coleridge and the cross blocks of Bryant, Waverley, and Emerson streets, and the blocks of Cowper and Waverley streets between Seale and California avenues. These areas are characterized by Spanish Colonial, Mediterranean, Monterey, and Period Revival style houses for upper middle class residents.

The Seale Addition represents an expansion of the earlier neighborhood across Embarcadero Road called Professorville in its physical character. However, the population of this neighborhood was different than Professorville—by the time development of the Seale Addition was well underway, Stanford University had begun to provide housing for faculty on campus land, so that Stanford professors never constituted a large group in this neighborhood. The Seale Addition is also the earliest important example of several Palo Alto subdivisions with development restrictions designed to create an elite residential area.¹²

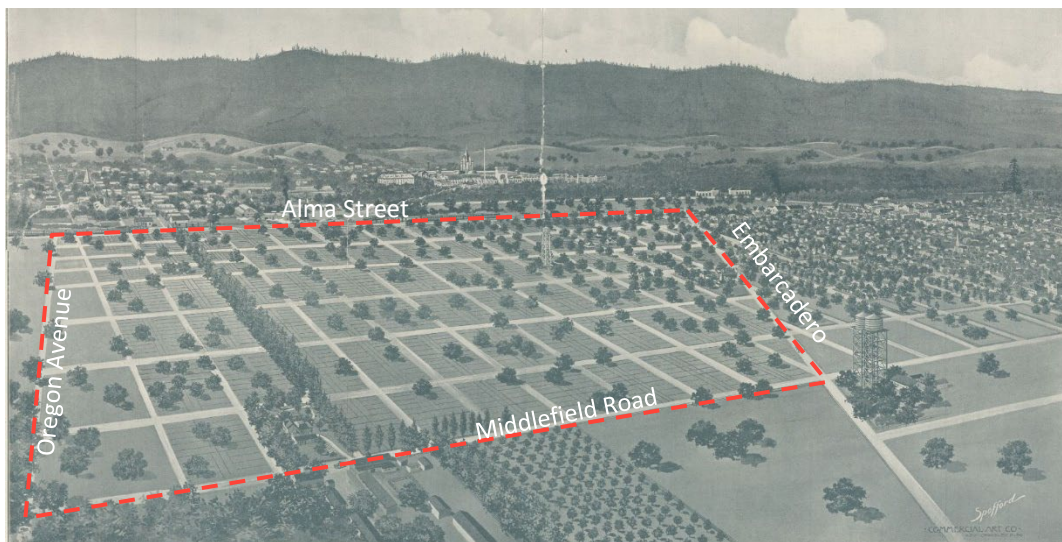


Figure 23: The Seale Tract in “South Palo Alto,” in an advertisement for developable land, 1905. Looking west. Note, the street grid has changed since 1905 as the blocks depicted on this illustration were in some cases further subdivided or cut through with additional streets. The dashed red line approximates the border of the Seale Addition. Source: Stanford University Special Collections. Edited by Page & Turnbull.

¹² Dames & Moore, *Final Survey Report: Palo Alto Historical Survey Update*, 4-29 and 4-30. See also, Paula Boghosian and John Beach, *Historical and Architectural Resources of the City of Palo Alto: Inventory and Report*, Prepared by Historic Environment Consultants for the City of Palo Alto, 1979; J.F. Byxbee, Palo Alto City Engineer, *Map of the City of Palo Alto*, 1949. Roland C. Davis, A Summary History of the Early Development of Palo Alto’s “Seale Addition”: An Account of How the First “South Palo Alto” Became Part of the Present “Old Palo Alto,” Prepared for the Palo Alto Historic Building Survey, July 1998. *Overland Monthly*, Advertisement, September 1904. Ward Winslow and the Palo Alto Historical Association, *Palo Alto: A Centennial History*, Palo Alto: Palo Alto Historical Association, 1993.

SHERMAN SUBDIVISION

The area that would contain the subject property is labeled as a part of the Sherman Subdivision within the Seale Addition in a 1926 map of the City of Palo Alto (**Figure 24**). Research did not reveal a date of recordation for the Sherman Subdivision, but available maps indicate it was created between 1908 and 1926. The subdivision appears to have been created from a larger tract within the Seale Addition neighborhood, as the area was subdivided multiple times during its historic development. As of 1926, the Sherman Subdivision contained only a portion of the area of the existing 500-block of Santa Rita Avenue. At the time, the street ended at the grounds of the West Coast Military Academy.¹³ The academy is labeled on a 1930 map prepared for Stanford University (**Figure 25**). By 1938, the land once occupied by military academy was redeveloped for residential purposes.

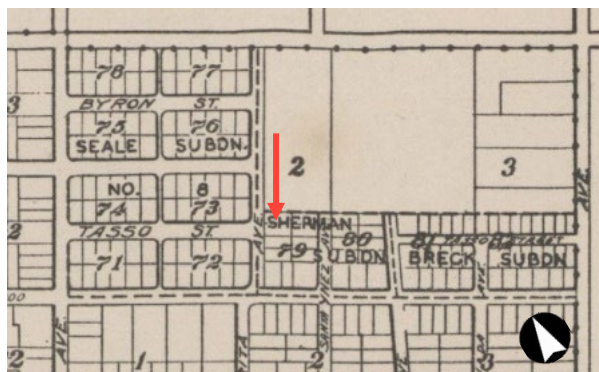


Figure 24: Map of the City of Palo Alto, 1926. The red arrow indicates the approximate future location of the subject building. Source: Stanford University Special Collections, original map printed by Slonaker's Printing House. Edited by Page & Turnbull.



Figure 25: Maps illustrating the former West Coast Military Academy site and the future site of the subject property (identified with a red arrow), 1930. Source: Stanford University Special Collections, A Stanford Atlas. Edited by Page & Turnbull.

¹³"546 Washington Avenue," Historic Property Inventory Files, Palo Alto Historical Association.

V. SITE HISTORY

SITE DEVELOPMENT

In early February 1936, Palo Alto-based builder-contractor William F. Klay was hired by the property owner, Ethel N. Brown, to construct a residence on a vacant lot at 550 Santa Rita Avenue, as published in the *Palo Alto Times*.¹⁴ Less than three weeks later, another notice was published, identifying Klay as the contracted builder for a residence on the neighboring property at 534 Santa Rita Avenue for owner R.L. Richards, the husband of Ethel N. Brown's daughter, Leola.¹⁵ Each property shared a central yard area and front yard, with 550 Santa Rita Avenue designed in the Tudor Revival style and 534 Santa Rita designed in a more generic Period Revival style. Klay's hiring by Brown and Richards came during a busy period of construction along the subject block face that also included permitting for 514 Santa Rita Avenue (F.J. Simpson, builder) by September 1936 and construction of 564 Santa Rita Avenue (Frank Armstrong, builder) in the fall of 1935.¹⁶

Ethel N. Brown, a manager at the Palo Alto grocer Fuller & Sons, and her daughter Ruth, who listed her occupation in 1936 as a householder, moved to 550 Santa Rita Avenue later in 1936, according to voter registration records.

The earliest available documentation of the property is provided by an aerial photograph taken in 1941 (**Figure 27**). The photograph shows the residence situated on its lot, with similar front and rear yard setbacks. The front of the property featured a driveway and adjacent lawn. A curved pathway led from the driveway to the brick wall enclosing the side yard and continued to the side entrance. Another curved pathway extended from the side entrance to the rear porch. The rear yard appears to have been a lawn, with plantings along the rear property line. An additional pathway was located along the northeast property line. The building itself featured a very similar footprint as is present as of this evaluation; however, an exception included the northeast side of the main gable roof, which featured a dormer that was later replaced to accommodate a rooftop addition in 1973. The rear façade would also be altered later with the existing rear addition with bay window.

¹⁴ Notice of contract published in the Palo Alto Times, February 10, 1936.

¹⁵ Notice of contract published in the Palo Alto Times, February 27, 1936.

¹⁶ Construction dates are approximate and based upon building permit documentation on file at the Palo Alto Historical Association.



Figure 26: Aerial photograph capturing 550 Santa Rita Avenue, 1941. A red dashed line surrounds the subject property. Source: UC Santa Barbara Special Collections, Flight C-7065. Edited by Page & Turnbull.

Between 1947 and 1953, the Sanborn Map Company completed updated fire insurance maps of Palo Alto properties. The 1953 map shown below illustrates the footprint and height of the residence at 550 Santa Rita Avenue during these years. Identifiable features include the built-in garage, rear porch, and original rear wing next to the porch (Figure 28).

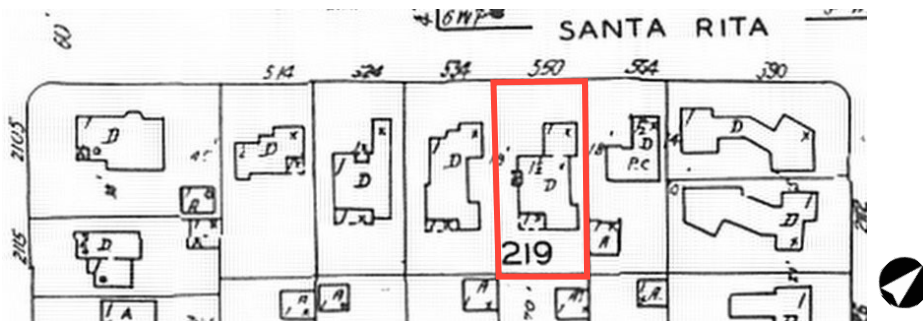


Figure 27: Sanborn Map Co.'s 1953 map of Palo Alto, with 550 Santa Rita Avenue outlined in red. Source: San Francisco Public Library, FIMO maps collection. Edited by Page & Turnbull.

Ethel and Ruth Brown remained residents of 550 Santa Rita Avenue until 1967, at which time Ethel moved to the property next door at 534 Santa Rita Avenue. In 1961, Ethel had an in-ground pool built in the rear yard. The pool appears in a 1965 aerial photograph, which indicates the rear yard lawn was replaced by concrete or similar paving materials around the pool perimeter (**Figure 29**).

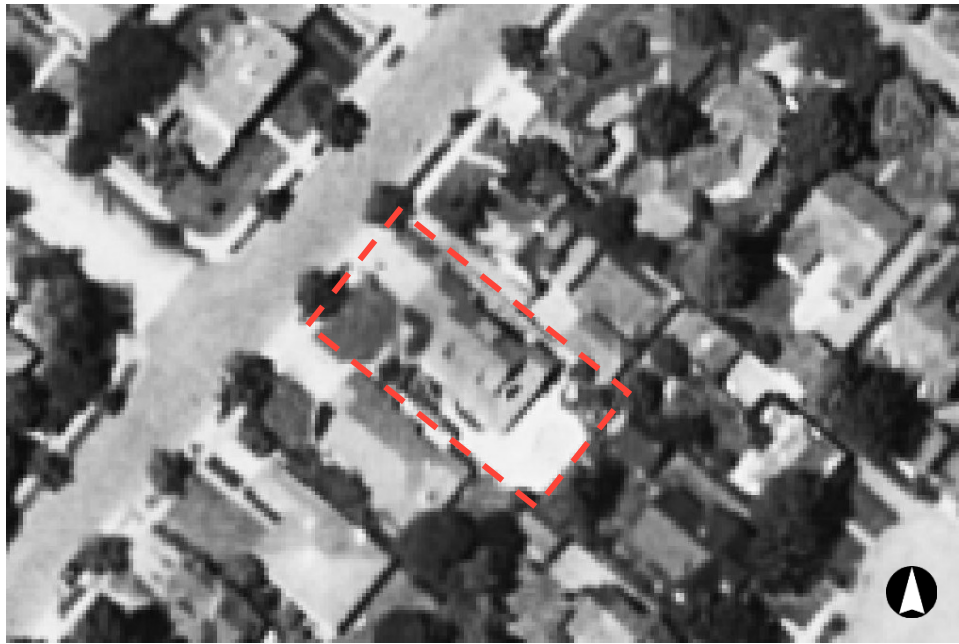


Figure 28: Aerial photograph capturing 550 Santa Rita Avenue, 1965. A red dashed line surrounds the subject property. Source: UC Santa Barbara Special Collections, Cartwright Aerial Surveys, Flight 65. Edited by Page & Turnbull.

In 1966, local contractor P.J. Meredith was contracted to complete residential repairs; however, documentation of the scope of these repairs was not found. In 1968, the property was acquired by its second owners, Lee and Marjorie Troutman. The Troutmans completed minor plumbing work in 1968 and sold the property to Roger and Carolyn Mansell in 1973. Members of the Mansell family owned the property until its recent sale in late 2021.

During the Mansells' ownership, several alterations were completed. In 1973, the Mansells constructed an addition on the northeast side of the main roof, which resulted in removal of an original dormer window and an increase in the roof's overall height (**Figure 30 and Figure 31**).

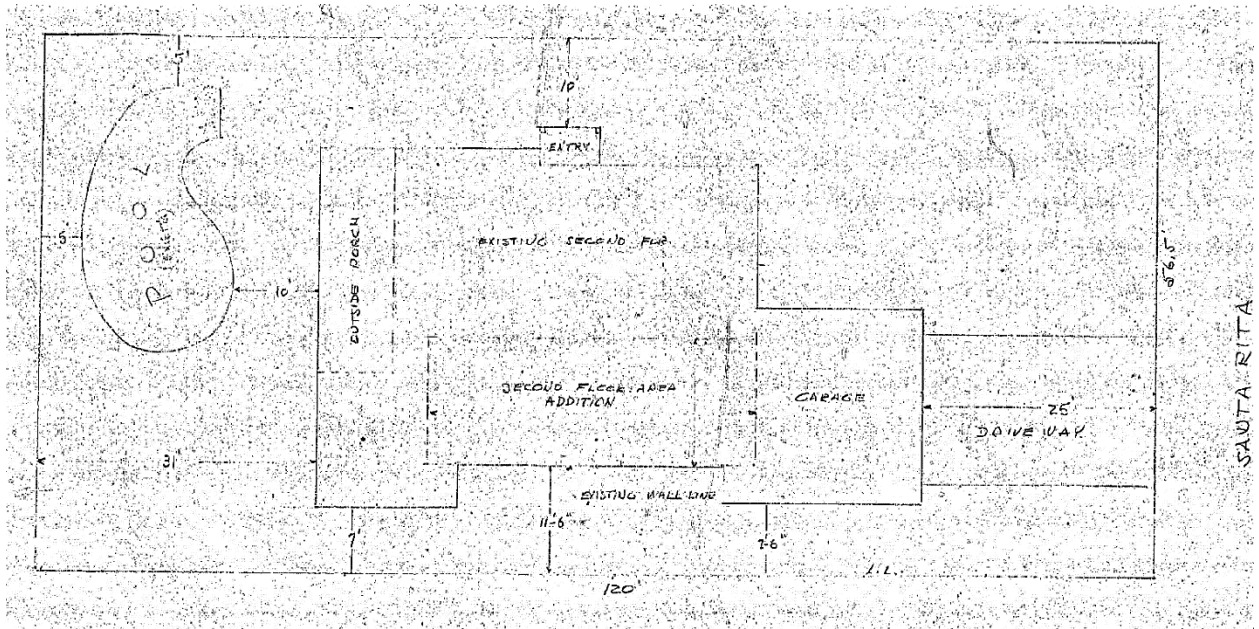


Figure 29: Site plan of 550 Santa Rita Avenue illustrating conditions prior to the 1973 addition.
Source: Palo Alto Development Services Center.

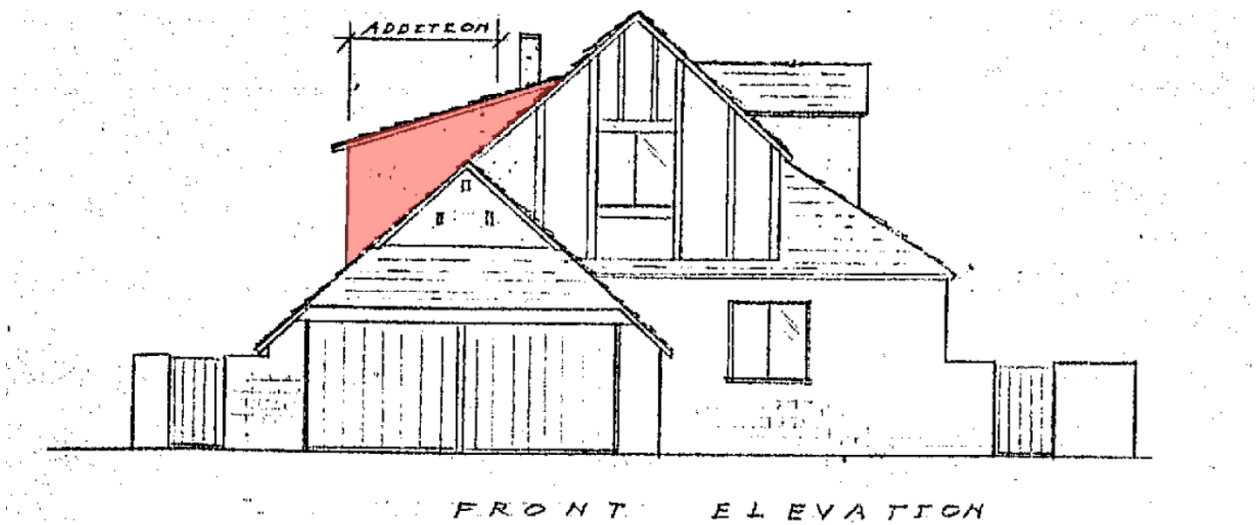


Figure 30: Elevation drawing with the 1973 rooftop addition shaded red.
Source: Palo Alto Development Services Center. Edited by Page & Turnbull.

Reroofing with similar wood shakes was completed in 2006. The in-ground pool installed in 1961 was replaced with a new in-ground spa with a smaller footprint in the rear yard in 2006.

The additional alteration history provided below is excerpted from an alteration history compiled by former owner and occupant Alice Mansell. It was provided to the current owner at the time of the sale of the building in 2021, and through email correspondence with Page & Turnbull in January 2022. The following changes occurred at unspecified dates between 1973 and 2021. A copy of the correspondence is provided in the appendix of this report.

- Original windows in the kitchen were replaced with leaded glass windows made by Franciscan Glass of Mountain View, California
- Original windows at the first-floor bedrooms were replaced with diamond-pane windows with slightly opaque glass
- The front gate leading to the main entrance on the southwest façade had decorative birds cemented to the top of the brick wall on either side of the gate
- The original front gates to the front door and the kitchen (northeast façade) were both replaced after the original wood had deteriorated. The style and thickness of each current gate is extremely close to the originals, but for the metal latch on the gate to the front door which had its metal latch style changed slightly to be thicker for strength.
- A brick walkway was added from the sidewalk to the existing brick pathway from the driveway to the front gate. Other brickwork was added at planting areas on either side of the garage and along the driveway. Brickwork was also added to the parking strip by the street. The brown basalt rocks in the front yard were from a previous 550 Santa Rita owner's garden as well as some large agapanthus plants, which with the liquidambar [also known as sweetgum or gum] street trees are the only front yard plants remaining from 1973.
- The Mansell family removed the kidney-shaped pool and concrete pad installed in 1961 and installed a lawn, tumbled stone pavers, a tanbark area, and new plants. The Mansell family also added a new brick pathway between the front door and the backyard.

- The window over the kitchen sink was pushed out with decorative corbels installed below and a small roof added above. Leaded stained glass windows were installed in the kitchen to replace the original plain glass wood windows.

Construction Chronology

The following table provides a timeline of construction activity at 550 Santa Rita Avenue, based on building permit applications on file with the Palo Alto Development Services Center. Cancelled and expired permits are not included.

Date	Permit App. #	Owner	Contractor	Work Completed
2/10/1936	Notice published in the <i>Palo Alto Times</i> ¹⁷	Ethel N. Brown	William F. Klay	Construction of a residence at 550 Santa Rita Avenue
9/14/1961	21118	Ethel Brown	[not listed]	Pool installation
2/3/1966	25469	Ethel Brown	P.J. Meredith	Residential repair amounting to \$2,400
11/15/1968	23746	Lee Troutman	Lee Troutman	Minor plumbing work
9/20/1973	32365	Roger and Carolyn Mansell	Davenport and Knoblauch, Inc.	Addition to 2 nd floor bedrooms and bath
6/26/1989	89-620	Roger and Carolyn Mansell	Peninsula Home Improvements	Renovation of dining room and bedroom ¹⁸
10/12/2006	06-2735	Roger and Carolyn Mansell	All Seasons Roofing Services	Remove existing shake roof and install new wood shake roof
12/5/2006	06-3173	Roger and Carolyn Mansell	Corby Gould	Build new spa
8/15/2011	11-2126	Carolyn Mansell	Rescue Rooter	Sewer Repair

¹⁷ Building permit index card, on file at Palo Alto Historical Association.

¹⁸ No permit included in available records; information taken from plan on file with Palo Alto Development Services.

OWNERSHIP AND OCCUPANT HISTORY

The following table provides a summary of the ownership and occupant history of 550 Santa Rita Avenue, beginning with the year of construction, compiled from available Palo Alto city directories, building permit and plan records on file at Palo Alto Development Services Center, U.S. Federal Census data from 1940, historic newspapers, and archival information at the Palo Alto Historical Association.

Dates	Owners (in bold) and Occupants	Occupation
1936–1967	Ethel N. Brown 1936-38: Ruth Brown (daughter)	Manager, Fuller & Co. (grocery store)
1968–1973	Lee Troutman Marjorie H. Troutman (wife)	Economist, Goodkin Research Not listed
1973–2021	Roger Mansell Carolyn Mansell (wife) Catherine Mansell (daughter) Alice Mansell (daughter, owner ca. 2020-21)	Businessman (retired ca.1990), researcher Realtor Author Attorney

Select Owner and Occupant Biographies

ETHEL N. BROWN

Ethel Nancy Brown (1883-1977) was born Ethel N. Vandevort in Centerville (since incorporated into Fremont), Alameda County in 1877. Information about Ethel’s childhood, beyond her having grown up on a farm was not found. Census data indicates that Ethel married George N. Brown (1881-1927) ca. 1905, shortly after she began residing in San Jose. By 1910, the Browns settled in Palo Alto, where they raised two daughters and resided for the remainder of their lives. By 1910, George began working as a salesman at the Palo Alto grocer, Fuller & Co., an occupation he continued until his death in 1927. In the same year George died, Ethel began working at the grocer Fuller & Co. as a manager. Ethel’s younger daughter, Ruth G. Brown (later Ruth G. Mitchell) (1913-2009) resided with her at 160 Waverly Street in Palo Alto between ca. 1920 and 1936, and relocated with her mother to 550 Santa Rita Avenue in 1936. Ruth moved out of her mother’s house after 1938. Ethel’s older daughter, Leola Ethelyn Richards (1907-2000), and her husband Robert Legrande (R.L.) Richards (1904-1985), an employee of Fuller & Co. grocery, moved into the neighboring residence at 534 Santa Rita Avenue in the same year, and do not appear to have ever resided at 550 Santa Rita Avenue. In 1967, Ethel relocated to 534 Santa Rita Avenue, and remained a resident of that property until her death in 1977.

ROGER MANSELL AND CAROLYN MANSELL

Roger Mansell (1935-2010) and Carolyn M. Mansell (1937-2019) were owners of the subject property between 1973 and 2019. Roger Mansell was born in Brooklyn, New York in 1935 and attended Brown University. Mansell was commissioned to the United States Army Artillery and completed military service in Korea and Fort Bliss, Texas.¹⁹ Carolyn Mayo Mansell was born in Chicago, Illinois in 1937. Carolyn's father, Dr. Frank R. Mayo, was an internationally recognized polymer chemist who worked at the University of Chicago prior to working for the Stanford Research Institute (SRI) in Menlo Park, California for three decades. While attending Brown University, Carolyn earned a bachelors degree in history, met, and later married, engineering student, Roger Mansell.. Their first daughter, Catherine, was born in Texas in 1961, where Roger was stationed at Fort Bliss. Their second daughter, Alice, was born in 1963 after the couple had settled in Sunnyvale, California, in the same region where Carolyn's parents had settled given Dr. Frank R. Mayo's position at SRI.

Roger Mansell entered into the printing sales business and retired in the early 1990s. It was at this time that Roger's focus shifted fully into research related to documentation of allied prisoners of war (POW) of the Japanese and founded the Center for Research of Allied POWs Under the Japanese. Mansell's work resulted in compilation of a database of over 90,000 POWs.²⁰

Carolyn M. Mansell entered the real estate industry in 1972, when she began working for Wright & Co. After finding success, she founded her own practice, Mansell & Co., in 1984. An obituary published in the *Los Altos Town Crier* notes that Carolyn was the first agent in the area to print marketing brochures and was among early adopters of interior staging and seller-financing deals. At the time of her death in 2019, Mansell's company was the oldest female-owned real estate company in Silicon Valley. Carolyn M. Mansell was joined in business by her daughter, Alice Mansell, who served as a broker for Mansell & Co. Following Carolyn's death in 2019, Alice owned the subject property until 2021.

¹⁹ "Roger Mansell," U.S. Naval Institute Website, no date, accessed online, January 25, 2022.
<https://www.usni.org/people/roger-mansell>.

²⁰ Roger Mansell's database remains available on the website www.mansell.com.

TUDOR REVIVAL ARCHITECTURAL STYLE

The residence at 550 Santa Rita Avenue is designed in the Tudor Revival style. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the United States saw rapid developments in industry and the economy that led to an unprecedented quality and increased pace of life for most Americans.²¹ These advances also prompted a keen nostalgia for the perceived virtues of the past, “traditional” architecture, and handcrafted construction, and catapulted into popularity the Arts & Crafts movement and architectural styles such as the Colonial, Italian Renaissance, Georgian, and Tudor revival styles. Considered more broadly under the umbrella of the Period Revival, such houses offered modern comforts and convenience, along with the reassuring details of earlier times: “We are [...] finding the new through the old,” wrote architect and critic Aymar Embury in 1917.²²

The Tudor Revival style first appeared in the U.S. in the 1880s, but it did not come into vogue until the twentieth century. The style initially developed as an expression of patriotism, elitism, and practicality.²³ It served as a link with the country’s colonial past and provided Anglo-Americans a way to distinguish themselves from the contemporary waves of immigrants. “The half-timber houses of England [...] were conceived and wrought out by our own progenitors; they are our architectural heritage, our homesteads, and hold an important place in our building history,” wrote architect and author Allen W. Jackson in 1912.²⁴ In addition to its association with heritage, the style’s costly materials and handcrafted details suggested the prosperity and aristocracy of medieval England. Finally, the asymmetrical designs of Tudor homes had a practical dimension. Rambling floor plans allowed for adaptation to uneven sites, garage additions, and the orientation of rooms to capture views. For consumers who wanted to flaunt American roots and wealth in large homes with modern amenities, the Tudor Revival style was a compelling choice.

The Tudor Revival style appeared on more modest houses from 1900 to 1920, but the style’s distinctive steeply pitched roofs, cross gables, tall narrow windows, large clustered chimney stacks, and decorative half-timbering were not widespread until after World War I.²⁵ At that time, new masonry veneering techniques allowed the brick and stone exteriors of English prototypes to be imitated at a lower cost that made Tudor Revival houses available to the mass market and second in popularity only to the Colonial Revival style in the growing middle-class suburbs.

²¹ Carole Rifkind, *A Field Guide to American Architecture*, (New York: Plume Books, 1980), 98.

²² Aymar Embury II, “The House Livable,” *The Countryside Magazine and Suburban Life* 24, (The Marsh Publishing Company, 1917), 63.

²³ Lee Goff, *Tudor Style: Tudor Revival Houses in American from 1890 to the Present*, (New York: Universe Publishing, 2002), 10-11.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Virginia Savage McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), 385.

The 1920s was the heyday of the Tudor Revival style, as large-scale developers looked to provide the impression of permanence and prosperity. In 1929, *Popular Mechanics* advocated for Colonial Revival houses with an argument that also applied to other revival styles: "Styles in houses come and go like styles in cars. [...] It pays to build in a style as liquid in public approval as a Liberty bond at a bank." The Tudor Revival style appeared less frequently in the 1930s, as the Depression quashed architectural embellishments, but it was revived in modified form in the 1970s and 1980s. Although most commonly used for residential buildings, the Tudor Revival style can also be found on civic and institutional buildings.

Character-defining features of Tudor Revival Style buildings can include, but are not limited to:

- A steeply pitched gable roof
- Tall, narrow windows
- Dormer windows
- Massive chimney, often of brick that stands out against stucco half-timbered exteriors
- A front and/or entry porch with a round or Tudor arch opening
- Flared eaves and eave extensions
- Oriel bay windows
- Windows glazed with diamond panes or leaded glass
- Exteriors of brick, stucco, and/or half-timbering

WILLIAM F. KLAY, BUILDER-CONTRACTOR

Palo Alto-based builder-contractor William F. Klay (1897-1997) was born in Richland County, Ohio, to Abraham and Marian Kneiss Klay, who immigrated to the United States from Switzerland in the 1880s.²⁶ William was the youngest of nine children and sought education in building construction and mechanical engineering through correspondence courses in addition to working for the Miller Tire and Rubber Co. and the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Co. in Ohio, as a draftsman and chief draftsman, respectively.²⁷ Klay served in the U.S. Army during World War I and returned to Ohio to work for the Cleveland Automatic Screw Co. as a tool designer.²⁸ In 1920, William relocated to Modesto, California with his father Abraham and brother Emil F. Klay and went into the building business with his father and brother.

²⁶ "William "Bill" Frederick Klay: local builder," *Palo Alto Weekly*, March 5, 1997.

²⁷ Guy C. Miller, *Palo Alto Community Book*, (Palo Alto, CA: 1952), 272-273.

²⁸ "Obituaries: William Klay, 100, builder behind California Avenue district," *Palo Alto Daily News*, February 26, 1997.

In 1922, William relocated to Palo Alto and worked in association with local builder Frank Cain for a short period.²⁹ By 1923, Klay established his own construction business and continued to practice into the 1950s. Regarding Klay's career in Palo Alto, late Palo Alto City Historian Guy C. Miller noted:

[...] practically all his work has been of his own design and planning, and the homes which he has erected are all exceptionally distinctive, and a large percentage of them have been of stone and brick...It is noteworthy that even during the depression of the thirties, Mr. Klay continued active in building, and persuaded numerous people to build during [a period when] very low building cost[s were] prevailing...During the height of his activities he had as many as sixty homes being constructed at the same time. While he is [as of 1952] practically retired from actual building, he still continues his designing work, principally for other builders.³⁰

Over the course of three decades spent in building construction, Klay established a reputation as a builder of distinctive homes in Palo Alto, including his own personal residences at 137 Primrose Way and 540 Seale Avenue, and a home for his brother, Emil, at 1145 Lincoln Avenue. In the case of the Klay brothers' personal residences, stone veneer exterior cladding was utilized, evidencing William Klay's apparently routine use of such materials, and may have also included work by his brother Emil, a stone mason and brick contractor. Like Miller's statement above, Klay's obituaries noted that much of the builder's work was of his own design and commonly featured stone and brick.³¹

Following his retirement from building in the early 1950s, Klay pursued commercial property management in Palo Alto's College Terrace area and owned several properties in the California Avenue district through the late 1980s. Klay also founded the California Avenue Development Association. Outside of his professional work, Klay was a member and president of the Palo Alto Lions Club, the Palo Alto Elks Lodge, and the American Legion.³² In 1999, Klay was identified among prominent historic builders in Palo Alto by Dames & Moore in the historic resource inventory survey update report.³³

²⁹ "William "Bill" Frederick Klay: local builder," *Palo Alto Weekly*, March 5, 1997.

³⁰ Guy C. Miller, *Palo Alto Community Book*, (Palo Alto, CA: 1952), 272-273.

³¹ Ibid. See also, "Obituaries: William Klay, 100, builder behind California Avenue district," *Palo Alto Daily News*, February 26, 1997.

³² Ibid.

³³ Dames & Moore, 6-63.

The following Palo Alto commissions designed and constructed by William Klay are referenced from Palo Alto Stanford Heritage's online historic buildings inventory and building permit references from the *Palo Alto Times* on file at the Palo Alto Historical Association. Ratings relating to Palo Alto Historic Resource Inventory (HRI) status and eligibility to other historic registers are provided, as available.

Address	Style	Year	Historic Status	Other notes
780 Hamilton Avenue	Spanish Colonial Revival	1931	HRI Category 3)	n/a
2340 Tasso Street	Eclectic/Tudor Revival	1933	Eligible for California Register, HRE prepared in 2020 by Page & Turnbull	n/a
1266 Hamilton Avenue	Tudor Revival	1934	HRI Category 4	n/a
534 and 550 Santa Rita Avenue	Separate Period Revival and Tudor Revival style residences built concurrently	1936	Not yet evaluated for CR eligibility	Both determined potentially eligible for CR during the Dames & Moore Survey update.
450 N. California Avenue	Streamline/Late Moderne	1937	HRI Category 2	n/a
540 Seale Avenue	Modern	1945	Not yet evaluated for CR eligibility.	Personal residence of William F. Klay
1145 Lincoln Avenue	Modern		Eligible for California Register, HRE prepared in 2018 by Page & Turnbull	Personal residence of Klay's brother and sister-in-law



Figure 32: 780 Hamilton Avenue, built 1931. Source: Google Street View, October 2020.



Figure 33: 1266 Hamilton Avenue, built 1934. Source: Google Street View, June 2021.



Figure 34: 450 N. California Avenue, built 1937. Source: Google Street View, January 2020.



Figure 35: Former residence of Emil Klay at 1145 Lincoln Avenue, built 1946. Source: Google Street View, October 2021.



Figure 36: Former personal residence of William F. Klay at 540 Seale Avenue, built in 1945. Source: Google Street View, February 2019.

VI. EVALUATION

CALIFORNIA REGISTER OF HISTORICAL RESOURCES

The California Register of Historical Resources (California Register) is an inventory of significant architectural, archaeological, and historical resources in the State of California. Resources can be listed in the California Register through a number of methods. State Historical Landmarks and National Register-listed properties are automatically listed in the California Register. Properties can also be nominated to the California Register by local governments, private organizations, or citizens. The evaluative criteria used by the California Register for determining eligibility are closely based on those developed by the National Park Service for the National Register of Historic Places. In order for a property to be eligible for listing in the California Register, it must be found significant under one or more of the following criteria.

Criterion 1 (Events): Resources that are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of local or regional history, or the cultural heritage of California or the United States.

Criterion 2 (Persons): Resources that are associated with the lives of persons important to local, California, or national history.

Criterion 3 (Architecture): Resources that embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, region, or method of construction, or represent the work of a master, or possess high artistic values.

Criterion 4 (Information Potential): Resources or sites that have yielded or have the potential to yield information important to the prehistory or history of the local area, California, or the nation.

The following section examines the eligibility of 550 Santa Rita Avenue for individual listing in the California Register.

Criterion 1 (Events)

550 Santa Rita Avenue does not appear to be individually significant under Criterion 1. The subject property was originally developed in 1936, as the neighborhoods in the area now known as the Seale Addition, between Embarcadero Road and the Oregon Expressway, was developed in a series of subdivisions during the first half of the twentieth century. Development of the Seale Addition began in the early 1900s and continued into the 1920s, with development tapering off during the Great Depression. 550 Santa Rita Avenue is located within the Sherman Subdivision, a smaller subdivision in the southeastern region of the Seale Addition area that was developed between the late 1920s and late 1930s. Very limited information was found relating to this subdivision, while the development of the subject property in its own right does not stand out in local, state, or national history. 550 Santa Rita Avenue does not individually represent the broader pattern of residential development that occurred across Palo Alto during the early twentieth century, and it is not known as the location of any singular events significant to history.

Criterion 2 (Persons)

550 Santa Rita Avenue does not appear to be individually significant under Criterion 2. The property's original owner, Ethel N. Brown, was a longtime Palo Alto resident who lived in Palo Alto from ca. 1910 and 1977. She resided at the subject building between 1936 and 1966 and its neighbor at 534 Santa Rita Avenue, built for Brown's daughter, between 1968 and 1977. Brown began working as a manager for the Palo Alto-based grocer, Fuller & Co., ca. 1927, and continued to work for the grocer into the 1950s. Brown's career as a merchant for Fuller & Co. does not appear to be historically significant. Brown's daughter, Ruth, resided at the subject property between 1936 and 1938. Very little information beyond her lifespan and relocation from the property in 1938 was found.

Subsequent owners Roger and Carolyn Mansell were the owner-occupants of longest tenure at 550 Santa Rita Avenue. The Mansells acquired the property in 1972 and renovated portions of the residence, including a rooftop addition in 1973, rear additions and chimney reconstruction in 1989, and replacement of several windows with stylistically compatible leaded glass between 1973 and 2021. During their ownership, Roger and Carolyn found success in their respective fields, Roger in the print sales industry and Carolyn as a real estate agent who established Mansell & Co., which was the Bay Area's oldest women-owned real estate business at the time of Carolyn's death in 2019. In Roger Mansell's retirement, which began in the 1990s, he became deeply involved in research relating to prisoners of war (POW) and was responsible for establishing a POW database derived from his research of various collections, including those of the National Archives in Washington, D.C.

Both Roger and Carolyn were successful individuals, but their professional achievements were not directly associated with their primary residence. Carolyn's career in real estate was tied to the many properties she brought to market, rather than her personal residence. Similarly, Roger's valuable archival research and database are not associated with his personal residence.

Criterion 3 (Architecture)

550 Santa Rita Avenue appears to be individually significant under Criterion 3 as a residence that embodies the distinctive characteristics of the Tudor Revival style and that represents an important example of the work of builder-contractor William F. Klay. The period of significance under this criterion is 1936, representing the year the residence was built by Klay. It was a relatively late entry into the trend of Tudor Revival style construction in the United States. Although not an early example of the style's use, the residence does appear to be among the earliest constructed and likely designed by Klay, whose career took off in the 1930s with many commissions in Palo Alto, and in particular the Seale Addition. Klay is not known to have favored a particular style, with his early residential projects applying Tudor Revival, Streamline Moderne, and other Period Revival styles in various sizes and forms. Klay's houses in many cases incorporated a mix of wood, stone, and brick, which were common elements of the Tudor Revival style and likely materials that Klay was most experienced with using. Klay is identified among prominent design professionals in Palo Alto's history in the Dames & Moore historic resources survey of 1999-2000, and several residences designed by Klay have been listed on the Palo Alto Historic Resources Inventory or have been found eligible for listing on the California Register. Klay, therefore, rises to the level of master builder at the local level.

In terms of embodying distinct characteristics of Tudor Revival design, the residence at 550 Santa Rita Avenue features one-and-a-half stories that were originally capped by a steep gabled roof covered in wood shakes, with secondary hip roofs and eave extensions. The main roof still features a gabled form and retains wood trim with molded fascia, a wood chevron attic vent, a half-timbered gabled end, and a mix of brick and stucco cladding. The residence also features wood posts and columns with a rustic, hand-hewn appearance, common to houses designed in Period Revival styles. Additional original features such as the garage's gable peak with dovescotes, paneled wood doors, and wood casement windows of a variety of dimensions embody Tudor Revival style design.

Regarding the concept of high artistic values, National Register Bulletin 15 states that "a property is eligible for its high artistic values if it so fully articulates a particular concept of design that it expresses an aesthetic ideal. A property is not eligible, however, if it does not express aesthetic

ideals or design concepts more fully than other properties of its type.”³⁴ Although 550 Santa Rita Avenue provides a very good local example of Tudor Revival style residential design, it does not appear to provide such an aesthetically idealistic example of the Tudor Revival style, given several very high-style examples in Palo Alto, that it can be considered to possess high artistic values.

Nonetheless, 550 Santa Rita Avenue appears to be individually significant under Criterion 3 as a property that embodies distinct characteristics of the Tudor Revival style and represents an important example of the work of master builder William F. Klay.

Criterion 4 (Information Potential)

The “potential to yield information important to the prehistory or history of California” typically relates to archeological resources, rather than built resources. When California Register Criterion 4 (Information Potential) does relate to built resources, it is relevant for cases when the building itself is the principal source of important construction-related information. The analysis of the property at 550 Santa Rita Avenue for eligibility under Criterion 4 is beyond the scope of this report.

INTEGRITY

In order to qualify for listing in any local, state, or national historic register, a property or landscape must possess significance under at least one evaluative criterion as described above and retain integrity. Integrity is defined by the California Office of Historic Preservation as “the authenticity of an historical resource’s physical identity evidenced by the survival of characteristics that existed during the resource’s period of significance,” or more simply defined by the National Park Service as “the ability of a property to convey its significance.”³⁵

Integrity standards are outlined by the *National Register Bulletin: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation* to evaluate whether the subject property retains sufficient integrity to convey its historic significance. Seven variables, or aspects, that define integrity are used to evaluate a resource’s integrity—location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. A property must possess most, or all, of these aspects in order to retain overall integrity. If a property

³⁴ United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *National Register Bulletin 15*, (Washington, D.C.: Revised for Internet, 1995), 20.

³⁵ California Office of Historic Preservation, *Technical Assistance Series No. 7: How to Nominate a Resource to the California Register of Historical Resources* (Sacramento: California Office of State Publishing, 4 September 2001) 11; U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *National Register Bulletin 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation* (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 1995) 44.

does not retain integrity, it can no longer convey its significance and is therefore not eligible for listing in local, state, or national registers.

The seven aspects that define integrity are defined as follows:

Location is the place where the historic property was constructed or the place where the historic event occurred;

Setting addresses the physical environment of the historic property inclusive of the landscape and spatial relationships of the building(s);

Design is the combination of elements that create the form, plan, space, structure, and style of the property;

Materials refer to the physical elements that were combined or deposited during a particular period of time and in a particular pattern or configuration to form the historic property;

Workmanship is the physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture or people during any given period in history or prehistory;

Feeling is the property's expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time; and

Association is the direct link between an important historic event or person and the historic property.

LOCATION

550 Santa Rita Avenue retains integrity of location. The subject building has remained situated at its location of original construction since 1936.

SETTING

550 Santa Rita Avenue retains integrity of setting. The subject building was constructed during the ongoing development of the Sherman Subdivision and the greater Seale Addition neighborhood. As of this evaluation, the property remains situated in an entirely residential area, and the immediate vicinity is comprised of many residences built in the 1920s to the 1930s, including a string of four residences on the 500 block of Santa Rita Avenue, among them 550 Santa Rita Avenue. The

residence retains its original setback from the street with a driveway leading directly to its garage, and its relationship to the neighboring residence at 534 Santa Rita Avenue remains very similar to when both properties were built in 1936 by the same builder. Changes to the rear yard and construction of a rear addition in 1989 have not significantly diminished the characteristics of the site that present a freestanding, single-family home with an attached garage.

DESIGN

550 Santa Rita Avenue retains integrity of design. Alterations to the exterior of the residence occurred beginning in 1973 with the construction of an addition on the northeast side of the main gable roof. This resulted in alteration of the gable's pitch on one side of the roof, and removal of an original dormer. This addition, as well as an original rear wing, were expanded roughly 3'6" rearward in 1989, and the original brick chimney was reconstructed. Several original wood windows have been replaced with leaded glass windows since 1973, but are in most cases placed in original locations. Overall, the residence's essential form has not been significantly changed, particularly when viewing the property from the northwest on Santa Rita Avenue, which provides the widest view of the building. Alterations to the northeast façade and the rear façade are marginally visible to not visible from the street. The residence's form, materiality, fenestration pattern, and key Tudor Revival style features such as half-timbering, brick, dovecotes, and its irregular massing have been retained, which upholds the original design to a large degree.

MATERIALS

550 Santa Rita Avenue retains integrity of materials. Alterations to the subject building have largely utilized compatible materials, replacing wood windows, wood gates, a brick chimney, and even wood shakes on the roof in-kind. The residence's material palette consists of brick wall cladding and entrance landings, wood shakes, roof trim, porch columns, most windows, stucco cladding, and half-timbering at the front gabled end. Overall, the building's integrity of materials is high.

WORKMANSHIP

550 Santa Rita Avenue retains integrity of workmanship. The most important materials that evidence workmanship include the brick cladding and site wall extending off the primary façade, wood beams with a hewn finish at the garage, side entrance, and rear porch, half-timbering at the front gable end, and wood windows and doors that enclose original openings at each façade. Since 1973, several wood casement windows with divided lites were replaced in their original openings with leaded glass windows. This reduced the number of original windows, but did not entirely remove evidence of the types, dimensions, or locations of original windows. The original chimney at the rear

façade was replaced in 1989 to comply with seismic code, a fairly common alteration to residences in areas of seismic sensitivity. Given the original chimney's location at the rear façade and marginal visibility from the street, its loss does not significantly diminish workmanship. The additions to the building were executed in a generally compatible form and do not result in the loss of very prominent features beyond raising of one eave of the main gable roof.

FEELING

550 Santa Rita Avenue retains integrity of feeling. The residence's design exhibits the stylistic qualities of the Tudor Revival style, and retains materials in wood, brick, and stucco that were employed in William F. Klay's original construction. Alterations to the building have not diminished its ability to communicate the aesthetic or historic sense of 1930s era construction.

ASSOCIATION

550 Santa Rita Avenue retains integrity of association. The residence's design has not been significantly altered since 1936. Changes to its roof in 1973 and expansion of the original rear wing and the rearmost portion of the second story in 1989 have not diminished the residence's form or materiality to a significant degree. Although some evidence of period workmanship has been lost, due to the replacement of original windows in several locations, the original fenestration pattern is largely intact with several original wood windows, brick sills, and original wood doors, and the residence retains a form, materiality, and details such as dovescotes, brick cladding, and façade wall extension, half-timbering, chevron attic vent, and an attached garage that are representative of William F. Klay's 1936 design.

Overall, 550 Santa Rita Avenue retains all seven aspects of integrity, which supports its eligibility to the California Register as a property that appears to be individually eligible under Criterion 3 (Architecture).

CHARACTER-DEFINING FEATURES

For a property to be eligible for national or state designation under criteria related to type, period, or method of construction, the essential physical features (or character-defining features) that enable the property to convey its historic identity must be evident. These distinctive character-defining features are the physical traits that commonly recur in property types and/or architectural styles. To be eligible, a property must clearly contain enough of those characteristics to be considered a true representative of a particular type, period, or method of construction, and these

features must also retain a sufficient degree of integrity. Characteristics can be expressed in terms such as form, proportion, structure, plan, style, or materials.

In the case of 550 Santa Rita Avenue, character-defining features are those which represent the property's architectural significance as a representative of the Tudor Revival style and as a work of master builder-contractor William F. Klay, built in 1936.

The character-defining features of 550 Santa Rita Avenue include, but are not limited to:

- Massing and height:
 - One-and-a-half stories with attached one-story garage
- Roof:
 - Primary gable roof and gable-on-hip roof over garage
 - Wood shakes on roof surfaces
- Wall cladding:
 - Stucco exterior cladding
 - Brick cladding at the primary façade and the façade wall extension
 - Half-timbering at the front gabled end
- Windows:
 - Original dormers on the southwest eave of the main gable roof
 - Original wood casement windows and original window locations with brick sills
 - Original window fenestration locations at the primary and southwest façades (containing compatible replacement windows)
- Entrances and doors:
 - Primary entrance porch at the southwest façade, set beneath a sloped eave extension, featuring a brick landing and paneled wood door
 - Wood garage doors and header
- Ornamental details:
 - Dovecote detail at the garage's gable peak
 - Chevron attic vent
 - Wood posts with a hewn appearance at primary entrance porch at southwest façade
 - Beams featuring a hand-hewn finish at rear porch
 - Wood gates between brick walls

VII. CONCLUSION

550 Santa Rita Avenue is a residential property in Palo Alto's Seale Addition neighborhood. The property contains a Tudor Revival style residence constructed in 1936 for owner Ethel N. Brown by local builder-contractor William F. Klay. The subject property was developed during the early period of Klay's career as a solo builder-contractor in Palo Alto, and during the Great Depression when development in the City and Seale Addition area ebbed from its earlier growth between the 1900s and 1920s. The property does not appear to be significant in association with historic patterns of development or a specific historic event, nor for association with individuals who made significant contributions to history. Under California Register Criterion 3 (Architecture), 550 Santa Rita Street appears to be individually eligible as a distinct representation of the Tudor Revival style and as an example of the work of Klay, a significant builder-contractor in Palo Alto.

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IX. APPENDICES

APPENDIX A – ALTERATION HISTORY, 1973-2021, PREPARED BY FORMER OWNER ALICE MANSELL

Here is a list of improvements the Mansell Family did between 1973 - 2021 to 550 Santa Rita Avenue, Palo Alto which are visible to the street:

1. Roof was popped up on the side of the house facing Middlefield Road. A strip of angled wood trim shows the rough location of the original roof line. Two low narrow windows were added on that side of the house's 2d floor and the original central window's dormer roof for the 2d floor bathroom was removed. The original clear glass window in that bathroom was changed to diamond pane slightly opaque glass.
2. Plain glass windows in the kitchen (but for the old exterior kitchen door) were changed to leaded stained glass made at Franciscan Glass in Mountain View.
3. 1st floor front bedroom's original clear glass windows were replaced with diamond pane slightly opaque glass.
4. Front gate to the front door had decorative birds cemented onto the top of the brick wall on either side of the gate.
5. The original front gates to the front door and the kitchen were both replaced after the original wood had deteriorated. The style and thickness of each current gate is extremely close to the originals but for the metal latch on the gate to the front door which had its metal latch style changed slightly to be thicker for strength.
6. A brick walkway was added from the sidewalk to the existing brick pathway from the driveway to the front gate. Other brickwork was added to the ground at planting areas on either side of the garage and along the driveway. Brickwork was also added to the parking strip by the street. FWIW: the brown basalt rocks in the front yard were from a previous 550 Santa Rita owner's garden as well as some large agapanthus plants which with the liquidamber street tree are the only front yard plants remaining here from 1973.
7. New sewer access points were added in the driveway and by the sidewalk when the original sewer lateral was replaced.
8. If needed, I can provide a list of other exterior changes the Mansell Family did to the house which are not visible from the street.

Sincerely,
Alice

Alice Mansell
California Bar #178801
DRE #01837013

Mansell & Co.
342 State Street, Suite 4
Los Altos, CA 9402

From: [Alice Mansell](#)
To: [Josh Bevan](#)
Subject: Fwd: 550 Santa Rita historic evaluation
Date: Monday, January 24, 2022 2:00:29 PM

Below is the information you requested from me today about exterior changes not visible to the street. -AJM

- - -

For exterior changes not easily visible to the street
done between 1973 - present by the Mansell Family at
550 Santa Rita Avenue, Palo Alto

1. Entrance: Modern deadbolt added to front door. (All the original circa 1936 exterior doors' hardware was made by the blacksmith in Palo Alto, including a new set made in 1973/4 when an interior bedroom door was added upstairs. Only one camellia bush remains in the entrance garden here from 1973. There used to be a line of them. Existing box hedges were there in 1973.
2. Original and existing entrance brick walkway used to end at a large concrete pad surrounding a kidney shaped pool. A swimming pool and concrete pad were installed by the original owner sometime, we think, after WW2. Mansell Family removed the pool and the entire concrete pad to install a lawn, and added new brickwork around the lawn, tumbled stone pavers, a tanbark area, in-ground spa, and new plants. Mansell Family added a new brick pathway between the front door and the backyard.
3. Where the spa is today there used to be a large magnolia and large loquat tree in 1973.
4. Mansell Family added wooden doors with metal garden gates under a wooden arch by the rear fence as a garden folly.
5. Low grapestake fence on the neighbor's property (564 Santa Rita) connected to their garage and the rear fence is a replacement circa 2007 of a higher redwood plank fence to match the grapestack fencing by the 550 Santa Rita front door which was here in 1973 and restored around 2019.
6. November 2021 an elm from 564 Santa Rita fell on 550 Santa Rita and destroyed (a second) garden folly installed by the Mansells (shutters and a mirror on a brick plinth in concrete) which has been mostly removed. The only part of that folly left in place today is the partially demolished plinth and part of one wooden structural member, partially demolished when the neighbor's contractor got "too enthusiastic" on 1/13/2022 removing parts of the damaged garage at 564 Santa Rita. (N.B. I think that brick and concrete plinth and its very strong wooden supports for its mirror and shutters prevented a great deal of possible damage to the 550 Santa Rita roof from that fallen tree because much if the tree trunk was prevented from falling on the ground by that garden folly's lucky placement.
7. Chimney was rebuilt after the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake replacing a very plain and shorter chimney with a taller one with a diamond brick detail and a much fancier top. The City

had red-tagged the chimney after the earthquake due to exterior cracking but on rebuild it was discovered there was not a single crack inside the chimney.

8. Dining room extension included installing a brand new window to face the porch. Then large and flat window facing the spa was made bowed and an internal low shelf below it was added. Dining room window facing 564 Santa Rita was moved to the new center of the room. Interior glazed tile window stills in living and dining rooms changed to stone.

9. Window over kitchen sink was pushed out with decorative corbels installed below and a small roof added above. Leaded stained glass windows installed in the kitchen to replace the original plain glass wood windows that had been there before.

10. Side yard off kitchen in 1973 had large flagstones as stepping stones with a lot of dirt between them running all the way to the driveway which the Mansells removed and placed closely together near the spa heater and added bricks for a new patio, service area, and walkway to the driveway.

11. Ground floor bathroom window in 1973 was a plain clear glass wood window the Mansell Family replaced with a leaded glass diamond pane opaque glass window.

12. The garage door to the kitchen porch might not have had a window in 1973. I recall there being a solid door there in 1973.

13. Mansell Family installed new exterior wall light fixtures for the kitchen and rear porches, front door, and the front gate, plus replaced an old mailbox by the front door.

Alice J. Mansell
550 Santa Rita Avenue, Palo Alto
1/24/2022

APPENDIX B – PREPARER QUALIFICATIONS

This Historic Resource Evaluation was prepared by Page & Turnbull of San Francisco, California. Page & Turnbull staff responsible for this report include: Ruth Todd, FAIA, Principal-in-charge; Christina Dikas, Associate Principal; Josh Bevan, AICP, Cultural Resources Planner, primary author; and Barrett Reiter, Cultural Resources Planner, author, all of whom meet or exceed the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualification Standards for Historic Architecture, Architectural History, or History.