

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.



1. Name of Property

Historic name: Zschokke, Theodore, Cottages
Other names/site number: N/A
Name of related multiple property listing:
N/A
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

Street & number: 617 and 621 High Street
City or town: Palo Alto State: California County: Santa Clara
Not For Publication: Vicinity:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,
I hereby certify that this ___ nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets
the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic
Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.
In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I
recommend that this property be considered significant at the following
level(s) of significance:
___ national ___ statewide ___ local
Applicable National Register Criteria:
___ A ___ B ___ C ___ D

Signature of certifying official/Title: **Date**

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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

Signature of commenting official: **Date**

Title : **State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government**

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4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling
DOMESTIC/multiple dwelling

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/multiple dwelling
COMMERCE/TRADE/business

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE VICTORIAN/Queen Anne

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: WOOD/V-groove rustic, shingles

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

This National Register nomination is for a pair of Victorian-era dwellings on adjoining lots at 617 and 621 High Street in Palo Alto, California. Built on speculation in 1897 by Theodore Zschokke, only two years after the incorporation of Palo Alto, 617 and 621 High Street constitute a tiny district of intact and rare nineteenth-century dwellings in downtown Palo Alto. Designed and built by a well-known local contractor named George W. Mosher, the modest dwellings are clad in V-groove siding and painted shingles with front-facing gable roofs and projecting porches on the front and rear sides. Each cottage is embellished with a spare amount of Queen Anne ornament, including lathe-turned porch supports, raking cornices with pediment returns, fishscale shingled gables, and scroll-sawn brackets. Surrounded by much larger commercial buildings built during the second half of the twentieth century, the Theodore Zschokke Cottages are the only intact nineteenth-century pioneer-era dwellings remaining in downtown Palo Alto. The cottages' simple yet durable materials testify to their unassuming history as rental properties that housed generations of blue collar residents in what was historically Palo Alto's only working-class enclave in the vicinity of downtown. Indeed, their virtually identical designs and siting on tiny urban lots is more characteristic of an East Coast mill town than an affluent college town like Palo Alto. Although both properties have undergone some upgrades in recent years, overall, their integrity level is quite high, with 617 and 621 High Street both retaining the aspects of location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

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Narrative Description

617 High Street: Site Description

617 High Street occupies approximately sixty percent of its level lot, which measures 23 feet along High Street and approximately 102' 6" feet deep. The dwelling is set back about 15 feet from High Street, leaving space for a small front yard. The front yard is paved in brick laid in a herringbone pattern, with planting beds flanking low brick walls punctuated by raised consoles. The planting beds contain carefully trimmed hedges and potted trees and plants. The rear yard of the property was originally larger, but in the mid-1930s the City of Palo Alto condemned the rearmost 10 feet of both 617 and 621 High Street, as well as two feet along the northwest side of 617 High Street, to build a mid-block alley and parking lot. Today, the rear yard of 617 High Street is composed of two sections: a small concrete patio enclosed within a high wooden fence, and behind that, a level unfenced area used for parking and storage. There is no landscaping at the rear of the property.

617 High Street: Exterior Description

617 High Street is a two-story, wood-frame dwelling with a brick perimeter foundation and a front-facing gable roof. Clad in V-groove siding at the first floor level and painted shingles at the second floor level, the exterior, which is entirely fenestrated with historic, double-hung wood windows, is embellished by a modest amount of ornament, most of which is confined to the primary (southwest) façade. Aside from the enclosure of a small mud porch at the rear of the building, the exterior is unchanged.

Primary (Southwest) Façade

The primary façade of 617 High Street faces High Street to the southwest. It is two bays wide and two stories high. The left bay contains the primary entrance, which is at the back of a deep porch. The porch, which is accessed by a low wood stair, is partially recessed within the building. The porch has painted wood flooring and the walls are clad in V-groove rustic siding. The entrance itself contains the original three-panel wood door with a single lite at the top. The door is bounded by flat wood trim. The porch roof is supported by three lathe-turned posts linked by a low wooden balustrade. Triangular scroll-sawn brackets join the posts to the entablature above. The entablature is capped by a gable-roofed pediment outlined by a molded cornice. The tympanum is clad in painted fishscale shingles. The right bay contains an angled bay window at the first floor level. The bay window is fenestrated by four double-hung wood windows featuring a lite pattern of one-over-one. The windows in the left and right facets of the bay window are both narrow, whereas the central window is wider. The second floor level of the primary façade has three double-hung wood windows; the left bay contains one and the right bay has two adjoining windows. The windows at the second floor level have plain wood trim without any decoration. The attic level contains only a louvered vent outlined by plain wood trim. The attic gable is outlined by a raking cornice that springs from narrow pediment returns.

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Rear (Northeast) Façade

The rear façade of 617 High Street faces the rear yard and the interior of the block. Similar to the primary façade, it is two bays wide, two stories high and capped by a gable roof. The first floor level is clad in V-groove rustic siding, with the exception of the mud porch, which is clad in novelty siding. The left bay of the first floor level has a bulkhead entrance to the basement/crawl space, and above it, a double-hung wood window with plain wood trim. The right bay of the first floor level contains the mud porch, which was enclosed ca. 1925. The left side of the porch is articulated by a double-hung wood window and the rear wall of the porch contains a solid-core wood door. The porch is accessed by a concrete stair leading up from the rear yard. The second floor level of the rear facade is clad in painted shingles. It contains just one double-hung wood window in the left bay. Similar to the primary façade, the attic level of the rear façade contains a louvered vent. The gable roof is outlined by a raking cornice springing from narrow pediment returns.

Northwest Façade

The northwest façade of 617 High Street faces a narrow mid-block alley and parking lot that belong to the City of Palo Alto. Similar to the rest of the exterior, the first floor level of the northwest façade is clad in V-groove rustic siding and the second floor level is clad in painted shingles. Almost windowless, the northwest façade features an irregular fenestration pattern, including a fixed wood window at the far left side of the first floor level. This window is part of the mud porch that was enclosed ca. 1925. To the right of the mud porch is a double-hung window that dates to the original 1897 construction. At the far right side of the first floor level is the previously described front porch. The second floor level of the northwest façade has a pair of double-hung wood windows toward the rear of the building, including a small window providing ventilation to the bathroom and a larger window illuminating the interior stair.

Southeast Façade

The southeast façade of 617 High Street faces a narrow side yard between it and 621 High Street. Clad in V-groove rustic siding at the first floor level and painted shingles at the second floor level, the southeast façade has a symmetrical fenestration pattern. The first floor has individual double-hung wood windows in each of the corner bays and a pair of adjoining double-hung windows in the center bay. The second floor level has a similar fenestration pattern except that there is no window in the left bay.

617 High Street: Interior Description

The interior of 617 High Street, which was for many decades used as a lodging house, presently contains two dwelling units, including one on the first floor and the other on the second floor. There is a shallow crawlspace beneath the building that includes a small excavated area used for storage. The attic, which is accessed via a drop-down ladder in one of the bedrooms in the upper unit, is also used for storage.

The lower unit is accessed via the entry hall at the front of the house. A door on the left side of the entry hall provides access to the upper unit and a door on the right accesses the lower unit. The lower unit contains three rooms: the parlor at the front of the house (now used as a bedroom), the dining room at the center, and the kitchen at the rear. The parlor, which measures 10' 11" wide by 14' 1" deep, has an angled bay window at the front and a pair of pocket doors at the rear that can be closed to separate it from the dining room. The dining room, which measures 14' 3" wide by 12' deep, has an original brick

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fireplace in one corner. The parlor and dining room both retain their original finishes and materials, including 12-inch-high wood baseboards, five-panel wood doors, molded door and window casings with bullseye corner blocks, lath and plaster walls and ceilings, and narrow picture moldings. In contrast, the kitchen, which measures 17' 4" wide by 10' 4" deep, was remodeled in the late 1980s. Although it retains some original materials, it now has newer flooring, cabinetry, and plumbing and light fixtures. At the rear of the house are the bathroom and the laundry room, which were also remodeled in the late 1980s.

As mentioned, the upper unit is accessed by a stair at the left side of the entry hall. The stair, which retains its original balustrade and newel posts, is walled off from the entry hall and the rest of the lower unit. The upper unit has a side-hall plan with a combined kitchen/dining room at the front, a bathroom at the rear, and two bedrooms in between. The kitchen and dining room occupy what were originally a pair of small bedrooms at the front of the house. Edwardian-era paneling in the rooms suggest that they were converted to their present use sometime in the early twentieth century. Much of the upper unit is carpeted but it retains the original wood flooring beneath, as well as the original lath and plaster walls and ceilings, 12-inch-high wooden baseboards, wood door and window trim with bullseye corner blocks, and picture moldings. The bathroom at the back of the house also appears to be original, with tongue-and-groove paneling and an old clawfoot tub.

621 High Street: Site Description

621 High Street occupies approximately fifty percent of its level lot, which has 25 feet of frontage along High Street and is 102' 6" feet deep. The dwelling is set back about 15 feet from High Street, leaving space for a small front yard. The front yard is paved in brick laid in a basketweave pattern. Planting beds containing hedges define an outdoor seating area. A metal sign advertising the property owner's business is located at the center of the front yard. Similar to 617 High Street, the rearmost 10 feet of the property was condemned by the City of Palo Alto in the mid-1930s to build an alley and a mid-block parking lot. The remaining part of the rear yard is bounded by a high wooden fence along the northwest property line and an adjoining commercial building to the southeast. At the rear of the property is a one-story, corrugated metal shed that dates to the middle of the twentieth century. Most of the rear yard is paved in brick, although there are several planting beds along the perimeter that contain an assortment of ornamental plants, including banana trees, bougainvillea, and flowering vines.

621 High Street: Exterior Description

621 High Street is a two-story, wood-frame dwelling with a brick perimeter foundation and a front-facing gable roof. Clad in V-groove rustic siding at the first floor level and painted shingles at the second floor level, the exterior, which is fenestrated with double-hung wood windows, is embellished with a modest amount of ornament that is principally confined to the primary (southwest) façade. Aside from the enclosure of the front porch on the primary façade before 1950, the exterior remains essentially unchanged.

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Primary (Southwest) Façade

The primary façade of 621 High Street faces High Street to the southwest. It is two bays wide and two stories high. The left bay of the first floor level contains the primary entrance, which is located at the rear of a deep porch. The porch, which is accessed by a low wood stair, is partially recessed within the house. The exterior walls of the porch are clad in flush tongue-and-groove boards attached to the intervening lathe-turned wood posts. The original scroll-sawn brackets remain attached to the upper part of the posts. The porch walls are fenestrated by four-lite wood windows on the sides and multi-lite fixed windows on the front. The main entrance itself contains a non-historic, 10-lite wood door. The porch is capped by a gable-roofed pediment defined by a molded raking cornice. The tympanum is clad in painted wood shingles laid in a fishscale pattern. The right bay of the first floor level contains a rectangular bay window. The bay window is articulated by a pair of double-hung wood windows with a lite pattern of one-over-one. Both windows have plain wood trim. The second floor level of the primary façade contains three double-hung wood windows; the left bay has one and the right bay has two adjoining windows. Similar to the first floor level, the windows at the second story have flat wood trim without any ornament. The attic level above contains a louvered vent. The front-facing gable roof is defined by a raking cornice that springs from narrow pediment returns.

Rear (Northeast) Façade

The rear façade of 621 High Street faces the rear yard and the middle of the block. Similar to the primary façade, it is two bays wide, two stories high and it terminates with a steeply pitched gable-roof. The first floor level is clad in V-groove rustic siding, with the exception of the mud porch, which is clad in vertical tongue-and-groove siding. The left bay features a bulkhead entrance to the basement, and above it is a double-hung wood window. The window has flat wood trim with no ornament. The right bay contains the mud porch, which is enclosed in vertical tongue-and-groove siding. The back door, which is located on the left-hand wall of the mud porch interior, contains an original five-panel wood door. The second floor level of the rear façade, which is clad in painted wood shingles, contains one double-hung window in the left bay. Similar to the primary façade, the attic, which is defined by a molded raking cornice with narrow pediment returns, contains only a louvered vent.

Northwest Façade

The northwest façade of 621 High Street faces a narrow brick walkway and a fence that separates it from 617 High Street. Similar to the rest of the exterior, the first floor level is clad in V-groove rustic siding and the second floor level in painted wood shingles. Largely windowless, the northwest façade has an irregular fenestration pattern. Apart from the previously described front porch and one double-hung wood window near the midpoint of the façade, the first floor level is windowless. The second floor level features only a pair of double-hung windows, including a small window providing ventilation to the bathroom and a larger window illuminating the stair.

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Southeast Façade

The southeast façade of 621 High Street adjoins a one-story concrete commercial building at 639 High Street. This building obscures most of the first floor level of the southeast façade, which is clad in V-groove rustic siding and has three windows, including one double-hung wood window in the right bay and a pair of adjoining double-hung windows near the midpoint of the façade. The second floor level, which is clad in painted wood shingles, features a similar fenestration pattern.

621 High Street: Interior Description

The interior of 621 High Street, which was for many decades used as a single-family dwelling and later as a mixed-use (residential and commercial) building, is presently in use as an office building. There is a shallow crawl space, with a small area excavated for storage, beneath the building. There is also an attic that appears to be inaccessible and unused.

At the rear of the entry hall is the stair to the upper floor on the left. Unlike 617 High, the stair is not partitioned off from the lower floor. Straight ahead and to the right is a doorway leading into the dining room and to the right is a door leading into the parlor. The first floor level contains just three rooms: a parlor at the front (now used as a conference room), a dining room at the center (now used as an office), and a kitchen (now used as a work room and break room) at the rear. The parlor, which measures 10' 11" wide by 14' 1" deep, features a rectangular bay window at the front and a pair of pocket doors at the rear that can be closed to separate it from the dining room. The dining room, which measures 14' 4" wide by 11' 9" deep, has an original brick fireplace in the northeast corner and built-in cabinets at the northwest corner. The parlor and the dining room retain their original Victorian-era finishes and materials, including fir flooring, 12-inch-high baseboards, five-panel wood doors, molded door and window casings with bullseye corner blocks, lath and plaster walls and ceilings, and picture moldings. In contrast, the kitchen, which measures 17' 4" wide by 10' 3" deep, has undergone some changes, including the installation of contemporary cabinets and plumbing fixtures. At the rear of the first floor level, housed within the mud porch, is a former bathroom that has been converted into a utility closet.

The stair to the second floor retains its original turned balusters and newel posts. Similar to 617 High Street, the second floor level of 621 High Street has a side-hall plan with a bathroom at the rear and four bedrooms that are today used as offices. The second floor level retains nearly all of its original materials, including unpainted fir flooring, 12-inch-high baseboards, door and window trim with bullseye corner blocks, and picture moldings. The two rear offices measure roughly 10 feet by 10 feet and have undergone no visible alterations. The front offices are slightly smaller and have undergone some changes, including the installation of painted wood plank paneling in the southwest office—possibly a quick fix for crumbling plaster. Meanwhile, the southeast office is finished entirely in acoustical tile, suggesting that it may have once been used as a recording studio.

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Alterations

Over the course of their 123 years of existence, neither 617 nor 621 High Street have undergone any substantial alterations. The only changes to 617 High Street include the enclosure of the rear mud porch ca. 1925 and a handful of interior alterations, including the enclosure of the stair to create two independent units ca. 1925, as well as upgrades to the downstairs bathroom and kitchen in the 1980s. 621 High Street has undergone even fewer alterations, with the most notable change being the enclosure of the open-air front porch ca. 1940 and a handful of minor interior upgrades.

Suburban Queen Anne Cottages

Built on speculation in a tiny working-class enclave on the southern edge of downtown Palo Alto, 617 and 621 High Street are not typical of the “high style” Queen Anne houses seen elsewhere in town. Indeed, 617 and 621 High Street are so simple that they might also be accurately classified as “Folk Victorian” cottages with Queen Anne detailing.¹ Nonetheless, they were both built by an experienced contractor who had built high-style Queen Anne houses before, strongly suggesting that their spare design is more a product of a modest construction budget than an untutored builder.

Built in 1897 when the Queen Anne style was at its height in California, 617 and 621 High Street embody several hallmarks of the style, including their front-facing gables clad in fishscale shingles, lathe-turned porch supports, scroll-sawn brackets, bay windows, and raking cornices with narrow pediment returns. Unique in downtown Palo Alto, their small size, uncomplicated massing, restrained ornamental program, and identical appearance are reminiscent of a type of vernacular housing popular during the same time in working-class sections of industrial cities in the East and Midwest.

The Queen Anne style originated in England in the 1870s with the work of architect Richard Norman Shaw. The style’s name refers to English vernacular buildings erected during the reign of Queen Anne (1702-14), which were themselves amalgams of indigenous late-medieval forms and imported Italian Renaissance motifs. Shaw, who specifically drew on this heritage for his widely published English country houses during the 1860s and 1870s, was quite influential on both British and American architects and builders during the last quarter of the nineteenth century.²

The Queen Anne style made its first appearance in the United States at the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia, when the British government erected two half-timbered buildings that were designed in the style.³ During the late 1870s and early 1880s, the Queen Anne, or “Free Classic,” style took America by storm, particularly for large summer residences outside Boston, New York, and Philadelphia. The style’s profusion of picturesque elements, including corner turrets, wraparound porches, lathe-turned posts, tiled chimneys, art glass windows, and gabled dormers, were well-suited for ostentatious display, particularly on large suburban lots where most of the house’s exterior could be seen from the street. Widely admired for its richness of detail – mainly achieved with mass-produced millwork – the Queen Anne style quickly moved down the social ladder and was disseminated throughout the United States in

¹ Helaine Kaplan Prentice and Blair Prentice, *Rehab Right: How to Realize the Full Value of your Old House* (Oakland: Oakland Planning Department, 1978, rev. 1986), 14-15.

² Marcus Whiffen, *American Architecture since 1780* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1988), 115.

³ *Ibid.*, 117.

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the pages of millwork catalogs, architectural pattern books, and architectural trade magazines. Eagerly adopted by building contractors with varying degrees of education and expertise, by the late 1880s, vernacular Queen Anne cottages and rowhouses could be found in nearly every American community of any size.

Like many other things in the nineteenth century, the Queen Anne style arrived in California later than in the cities of the East Coast or the Midwest. In California, the semi-indigenous San Francisco Stick-Eastlake style had reigned supreme until the mid-1880s, when the Queen Anne style began to make inroads. By the late 1880s, the Queen Anne style had displaced the San Francisco Stick-Eastlake style, especially in the state's bigger cities and towns. In California, the Queen Anne style's most enthusiastic ambassadors were the brothers Samuel and Joseph Cather Newsom. The brothers soon made the style their own, and by the late 1880s, most of the work produced by their firm, Newsom & Newsom, was designed in the Queen Anne style, including the Carson Mansion in Eureka – arguably the most famous Queen Anne house in the country.

Similar to the East Coast, the Queen Anne style was initially used for custom villas on the outskirts of California's cities. However, by the early 1890s, the style had been widely adopted by contractors for speculative housing. In San Francisco's Western Addition and Mission District, where many Queen Anne houses remain today, the style was employed for lot-line hugging rowhouses and flats. With little or no space between buildings, nearly all of the ornament was placed on the primary façade. This led to a profusion of richly ornamented Queen Anne rowhouses throughout San Francisco's middle and upper-middle-class neighborhoods, as demonstrated by the world-famous "Postcard Row" on Alamo Square in the Western Addition.

In addition to larger and more expensive houses, a smaller and cheaper Queen Anne cottage type emerged in San Francisco during the 1890s. Typically built on narrow 25-foot-wide rowhouse lots on the city's southern fringes, the Queen Anne cottage was a no-frills housing type that was expressed on the exterior as a one-and-a-half-story, gable-roofed volume with a front porch and a bay window. Usually clad in rustic channel siding at the first floor and shingles at the second floor and/or attic level, the typical Queen Anne cottage had a modest ornamental program confined to the street façade. They were often built atop a raised basement that could be used for storage or finished for living quarters.

In California's many smaller cities and suburbs, local contractors also eagerly embraced the humble Queen Anne cottage. Typically built on more generously sized lots than their urban counterparts, suburban Queen Anne cottages were often larger and many had space for yards on all four sides. This of course meant that contractors had to extend the façade ornament around to the other three sides of the building. Designed with flexibility in mind, most suburban Queen Anne cottages in California had raised basements and attics that could be converted into additional living space. Consequently, their roofs were often provided with headroom and natural light by one or more attached dormers. Nearly all suburban Queen Anne cottages were designed with at least one bay window and an entrance sheltered within a porch on the primary façade. The porch typically featured lathe-turned posts and decorative brackets supporting the entablature. The entablature would then be capped by a gable-roofed pediment clad in decorative shingle patterns and/or a sunburst molding. On more expensive cottages, the porch

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would often stretch across the entire primary façade to provide an outdoor seating area. Other common ornamental motifs included plaster swags and cartouches, raking cornices with pediment returns, and molded door and window trim with bullseye corner blocks. Turrets or towers, which were common on high style Queen Anne houses, were rarely used on suburban cottages due to their expense and the complicated framing required.

In regard to their interiors, most suburban Queen Anne cottages were either designed with side or center hall plans. With the former, the main entrance is located in one of the corner bays. Upon entering the house, the entry hall has doorways providing access to the stair and to the main “public” rooms— typically the parlor and the dining room. Houses with a center hall plan are often slightly wider and the central hall typically extends from the entry hall to the back of the house with doorways on either side providing access to all of the rooms. Interior finishes for most suburban Queen Anne cottages are usually fairly simple, typically consisting of hardwood and/or fir flooring, lath and plaster walls, coved plaster ceilings, milled wood trim, wood and tile fireplace mantels, paneled pocket doors, built-in sideboards and other cabinetry, and gas and/or electric light fixtures. Higher-end finishes are typically confined to “public” spaces like the entry hall, dining room, and parlor. By the 1890s, most California cities and towns had utilities in place, meaning that almost all new houses within their boundaries had indoor plumbing, central heating, and gas and electricity.

Character-defining Features

The character-defining features of 617 and 621 High Street are essentially the same. Significant exterior features include their two-story height and massing with front-facing gable roofs; V-groove rustic siding on the first floor levels and painted shingles on the second floor levels; projecting front porches with turned posts, scroll-sawn brackets, and pedimented roofs; shingled attic stories with louvered vents; raking cornices with pediment returns; angled (617) and rectangular (621) bay windows; generally symmetrical fenestration pattern consisting of double-hung wood windows; and paneled exterior doors. Interior character-defining features include all original finishes and materials, such as fir flooring; lath and plaster walls and ceilings; molded wood trim, including baseboards, door and window casings, and picture moldings; built-in cabinetry; brick fireplaces; stairs with turned balusters and newel posts; and five-panel wood doors.

Non-character-defining features include all outdoor site materials, such as fencing, walkways, signage, plantings, and outbuildings. No interior changes made since the late twentieth century are character-defining, including and 1980s or 1990s-era changes made to the bathrooms and kitchens in both houses, utilities, and all light and plumbing fixtures.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

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

Criteria Considerations

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

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

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1897-1935

Significant Dates

1897

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

George W. Mosher

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Theodore Zschokke Cottages Historic District is eligible for the National Register under Criteria A (Events) and C (Design/Construction) at the local level of significance. The period of significance is 1897 to 1935. The district comprises a pair of Queen Anne cottages built in 1897 by Theodore Zschokke, son of pioneer settler Anna Zschokke, better known as the “Mother of Palo Alto.” Although Leland Stanford originally envisioned Palo Alto as an upscale community of professors and merchants serving Stanford University, the southern edge of the city’s downtown quickly evolved into Palo Alto’s working-class enclave, where local service workers, lower level tradespeople, and day laborers could find inexpensive housing within easy walking distance of University Avenue, the light industrial area along Alma Street, and Stanford University. Indeed, both cottages served as rental housing for working people throughout most of their first century of existence. Their modest exteriors are quite different from the typical high-style Queen Anne house built for members of Palo Alto’s professional and managerial classes. Closely resembling industrial workers’ housing, the two cottages are all that remain of downtown Palo Alto’s tiny working-class enclave. Spared from redevelopment by their tiny lots, 617 and 621 High Street are the only intact nineteenth-century dwellings known to survive within the 30-square-block area encompassing downtown Palo Alto.

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

Brief History of Palo Alto:

Prehistory to 1863

What is now Palo Alto was for time immemorial home to the Ohlone people. Leading a hunter-gatherer lifestyle, the Ohlone lived up and down the San Francisco Peninsula in seasonal villages next to creeks and other sources of fresh water. They depended for their livelihoods on hunting and fishing, as well as gathering acorns, seeds, and roots. They made their own hand tools and jewelry from stone and shell and lived in conical houses made of saplings and reeds. With few natural enemies and abundant food sources at hand, Ohlone culture changed little over several thousand years – that is until the arrival of Spanish explorers in 1769. This earliest Spanish expedition, led by Gaspar de Portolá, camped near a towering redwood with twin trunks next to San Francisquito Creek, which Portolá named *El Palo Alto*, or “the tall tree.” *El Palo Alto* became a landmark for future explorers, and five years later, Father Francisco Palou set up a cross next to the tree to mark it as a potential mission site. Later parties decided against opening a mission at this spot when it was discovered that San Francisquito Creek was only seasonal. Instead, members of the De Anza expedition founded *Misión de Santa Clara de Asís* fifteen miles away on January 12, 1777.⁴

The forced relocation of the Ohlone people to the Spanish missions destroyed their culture, language, and traditional way of life, as well as decimating their population through overwork and disease.

⁴ Arthur Coffman, *An Illustrated History of Palo Alto* (Palo Alto: Lewis Osborne, 1969), 12.

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Nonetheless, the missions lasted approximately sixty years, prospering off forced Indian labor and the sale of livestock, cattle hides, and manufactured goods. In 1822, México freed itself from several centuries of Spanish colonial rule, taking California with it. Between 1833 and 1836, the new Mexican government secularized the missions and granted their lands to well-connected individuals. Present-day Palo Alto was divided into five *ranchos* during this period. Most of the original town site, including the subject properties, was encompassed within the boundaries of the 2,200-acre *Rancho Rinconada del Arroyo de San Francisquito*.⁵

The first owner of *Rancho Rinconada del Arroyo de San Francisquito* was Don Rafael Soto, a native of San José, whose father had come to California with the De Anza party in 1776. Soto and his family had built a wharf near the present-day intersection of University Avenue and Newell Road in what is now East Palo Alto for shipping redwood to Yerba Buena (now San Francisco).⁶ Following Soto's death in 1841, the rancho was divided among his children, with the bulk of it going to María Luísa Soto. In 1850, María Luísa Soto – by that point a young widow – married an Irish seafarer named Captain John Lucas Greer.⁷

Not long after their marriage, Greer and Soto were compelled by U.S. authorities, who had seized control of California in the Mexican-American War, to prove title to *Rancho Rinconada del Arroyo de San Francisquito*. The process of obtaining acceptable documents and presenting them to the U.S. Land Commission was both arduous and expensive, and the Greers pledged half their land to a well-connected Irish businessman named Thomas Seale in exchange for his assistance. Seale owned a road-grading business in San Francisco along with his brother Henry, and they were both interested in the Greers' land to grow good feed for their horses. In 1861, Thomas Seale conveyed his interest in the land to Henry, and four years later, in 1865, the U.S. Land Commission validated the Greers' claim. This decision meant that Henry Seale ended up with 1,400 acres of prime agricultural land in what is now downtown Palo Alto.⁸

Arrival of the San Francisco-San José Railroad and Early Estate Development: 1863 to 1884

The Greers and the Seales, by then the two biggest landowning families in what is now Palo Alto, rented most of their land to tenant farmers who grew wheat and hay, along with some row crops and fruit trees. The goods were then shipped to San Francisco by barge or along the bumpy wagon track that was then El Camino Real. Aside from a post office and several saloons in a tiny crossroads settlement known as Mayfield, Palo Alto was entirely rural.⁹

In 1863, the San Francisco and San José Railroad laid track from San Francisco to Mayfield, greatly easing travel from San Francisco to the scenic and temperate mid-Peninsula region. The arrival of the railroad inspired several wealthy San Francisco families to purchase land in the area, including Leland Stanford, one of the founders of the Central Pacific Railroad and governor of California from 1862 to 1863. Later, Stanford served in the U.S. Senate from 1885 until his death in 1893. In 1876, Leland Stanford purchased

⁵ Ward Winslow, *Palo Alto: A Centennial History* (Palo Alto: Palo Alto Historical Commission, 1993), 16.

⁶ Coffman, 12.

⁷ Coffman, 14.

⁸ Winslow, 18.

⁹ Coffman, 14.

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a ranch called *Rancho San Francisquito*, as well as several other tracts, instantly making him the largest landholder in what is now Palo Alto, with more than 8,000 acres.¹⁰ He named his property the Palo Alto Stock Farm and he used it to raise racing and trotting horses. He and his family also used it as a weekend retreat and summer escape from San Francisco's fog.¹¹

Stanford University Founded: 1884 to 1891

Initially Leland Stanford had no intention of founding either a university or a town in Palo Alto, but the sudden death of his only son Leland Stanford Jr. in Europe in 1884 inspired him and his wife Jane to endow a university "for all of California's children." Planning got underway in 1885, with famed landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted devising the campus plan and the Boston architecture firm of Shepley, Rutan and Coolidge designing the first buildings. Construction began in May 1887 and Leland Stanford Jr. University opened four years later in 1891, enrolling 440 students.¹²

Palo Alto Established: 1887 to 1894

Although accessible from San Francisco by train, Stanford University was not close to any large towns. Leland Stanford realized that some sort of settlement would be needed to house faculty members, as well as a place for university-serving businesses to operate. Stanford reportedly offered to make Mayfield his "college town," but with the condition that it close its saloons. Mayfield residents were unwilling to comply with Stanford's request.¹³ Stanford then considered building the town on his own land, but a redesign of the university campus made that infeasible as well. Running out of options, Stanford turned to his friend Timothy Hopkins, son of Stanford's deceased business partner, Mark Hopkins. The two men decided to lay out the town opposite the Southern Pacific railroad station next to Palm Drive, the main entrance to Stanford University. However, the land they wanted belonged to Henry Seale. By good fortune, Seale had optioned much of the land several years earlier to Timothy's father, Mark Hopkins. Timothy exercised the option and acquired 700 acres from Seale. He rounded out this land with some additional purchases from John and María Greer, increasing the town site to about 900 acres.¹⁴

Timothy Hopkins began laying out the new town of University Park in 1887, recording the subdivision at the Santa Clara County Recorder's Office in 1889. Laid out in a gridiron plan comprising 115 blocks, Hopkins named the streets after prominent statesmen and authors (**Figure 1**). Initially, Hopkins only sold land in larger units consisting of entire blocks, half-blocks, or quarter-blocks.¹⁵ Then, in 1890, as Stanford University was nearing completion, he began auctioning off house lots, selling 106 individual parcels in the first auction.¹⁶

Settlement of University Park got underway in 1892, and by the end of 1893 the new town had a population of 400. Upon his return from Washington D.C. in 1892, Leland Stanford asked Hopkins to

¹⁰ Winslow, 20-1.

¹¹ Winslow, 35.

¹² Winslow, 38-9.

¹³ Winslow, 39.

¹⁴ Coffman, 14.

¹⁵ Coffman, 16.

¹⁶ Winslow, 40-1.

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change the settlement's rather generic name to "Palo Alto."¹⁷ Two years later, residents decided to incorporate it as the Town of Palo Alto.¹⁸ At this point there were around 700 people and 165 buildings within the corporate boundaries.¹⁹ Incorporation meant that local authorities could begin building streets, sewers, a water system, a school, a library, and other infrastructure. The Board of Trustees also banned saloons, in keeping with Leland Stanford's wishes to keep Palo Alto a "dry" town.²⁰

Palo Alto Continues to Grow: 1894 to 1930

The 1895 Sanborn Maps, the first to depict Palo Alto, show a near-continuous corridor of commercial development along University Avenue, as well as a significant amount of residential development between Lytton and Hamilton Avenues. A little over decade later, the 1906 Earthquake heavily damaged or destroyed several buildings on the campus of Stanford University and severely shook several masonry commercial buildings on University Avenue. However, most of the wood-frame houses within the adjoining residential areas were spared anything worse than a toppled chimney.²¹ In the wake of the disaster, several hundred displaced San Franciscans moved to Palo Alto, causing a minor building boom during the first decade of the twentieth century. By 1910, Palo Alto was home to 4,486 people, more than double the 1,658 who lived there at the beginning of the decade.²²

Since its earliest days, Palo Alto's leaders had cultivated the town's reputation as an urbane community of professors, university administrators, and other highly educated professionals. However, Stanford University also employed many blue collar people, including groundskeepers, janitors, clerks, and cooks. Although many of the university's blue collar employees lived in nearby Mayfield, Redwood City, or Menlo Park, some also lived in Palo Alto. Most resided in Palo Alto's tiny blue collar enclave which ran parallel to the railroad tracks from University Avenue to Homer Avenue, along Alma and High Streets. This neighborhood consisted of several dozen modest workingmen's cottages, lodging houses, and residential hotels.²³ In addition to being close to Stanford University, the area was within easy walking distance of the Southern Pacific depot and several warehouses and light industrial businesses that employed manual laborers and service workers.

Palo Alto's population began to level off after 1910, growing at a slower pace until 1917, when the U.S. Army established Camp Fremont in nearby Menlo Park. At its peak, Camp Fremont, which trained European-bound soldiers in the American Expeditionary Force, housed 42,000 men. The influx of Army officers and other administrators spurred on some residential and commercial growth in Palo Alto, including the construction of several apartment houses downtown.²⁴

With the annexation of Mayfield in 1925, the population of Palo Alto doubled overnight to over 8,000. The 1924 Sanborn Maps show the city's built-up area extending well beyond the boundaries of the

¹⁷ Coffman, 16.

¹⁸ Coffman, 16.

¹⁹ Pamela Gullard and Nancy Lund, *History of Palo Alto: The Early Years* (San Francisco: Scottwall Publishers, 1989), 111.

²⁰ Coffman, 20.

²¹ Coffman, 30.

²² U.S. Census Bureau, Population figures for Palo Alto, 1900 to 1910.

²³ Coffman, 31.

²⁴ Winslow, 38-9.

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original University Park subdivision. During the latter half of the 1920s, much residential growth occurred within the newly annexed lands south of Embarcadero Road and east of Middlefield Road. Nearly all of this development consisted of single-family dwellings on generous lots, giving Palo Alto a suburban appearance. At the same time, property owners began replacing many of the pioneer-era commercial buildings downtown with much larger shops, hotels, and mixed-use buildings. Many were designed by local architect A. Birge Clark in the Spanish Colonial Revival style, giving the downtown a more cohesive look than it had had in the past. By 1930, just after the Stock Market Crash, Palo Alto's population had reached 13,652.²⁵

Depression and World War II: 1930 to 1945

The nation's economic downturn certainly affected Palo Alto, although not to the same degree as other less-favored Bay Area communities. Population growth slowed after the Stock Market Crash but picked up again during the second half of the 1930s, reaching 16,774 in 1940.²⁶ During the Depression, the Works Progress Administration (WPA) greatly improved the city's infrastructure, building several new sewer lines and streets and constructing Bowling Green Park. City authorities also built a new junior high school, a new post office, and a hospital, as well as an underpass beneath the Southern Pacific tracks at University Avenue. Around the same time, Lucie Stern funded the Palo Alto Community Center at 1305 Middlefield Road. Stanford University was also busy with several major building projects, including Hoover Tower, which opened in 1941.²⁷

The Second World War witnessed the birth of Palo Alto's electronics industry. Immediately before the war, in 1939, David Packard and William Hewlett started an electronics shop in a garage on Addison Avenue. Their first major invention, the model 200A audio oscillator, was picked up by the Walt Disney Company for use in its animated film, *Fantasia*. Hewlett-Packard's business took off during the war, setting the stage for the rise of "Silicon Valley" after the war.²⁸ Tragically, during this same period, the U.S. government forcibly relocated Palo Alto's 300 "enemy aliens" – mostly Japanese-Americans – to remote desert concentration camps for the duration of the war.²⁹

Postwar Residential Growth: 1945 to 1970

After the Second World War, a flood of returning GIs, as well as a steady influx of newcomers from other states, caused Palo Alto's population to explode. The housing boom of the 1950s and 1960s was abetted by an aggressive annexation campaign that extended Palo Alto's corporate limits into the area south of Oregon Avenue – a vast swath of orchards on the way toward Mountain View. Palo Alto also annexed several thousand acres in the foothills of the Santa Cruz Mountains.³⁰ Palo Alto's population more than doubled between 1950 and 1960, increasing from 25,475 to 52,287.³¹ This influx fueled the construction of several new shopping centers, including Town & Country Village and the Stanford Shopping Center –

²⁵ U.S. Census Bureau, Population figures for Palo Alto, 1910 to 1930.

²⁶ U.S. Census Bureau, Population figures for Palo Alto, 1930 to 1940.

²⁷ Carol Blitzer, "The '30s: down but not out," *Palo Alto Weekly*, April 15, 1994.

²⁸ Winslow, 208.

²⁹ Coffman, 71.

³⁰ Winslow, 53.

³¹ U.S. Census Bureau, Population figures for Palo Alto, 1950 to 1960.

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both on El Camino Real. Meanwhile, high technology office parks began to pop along Page Mill Road in the Stanford Research Park, which became the major incubator of Silicon Valley's rapidly expanding electronics industry after the war.³²

Desperate to keep up with the city's seemingly ever-expanding population, Palo Alto's leaders built six new schools, several parks and playgrounds, and a new Civic Center. However, many longtime Palo Altans seethed at their city's transformation from a bucolic college town into a sprawling suburban city afflicted by freeway gridlock, overcrowded schools, and disappearing open space. Galvanized by an unsuccessful attempt to stop the conversion of Oregon Avenue into a limited access highway, a consortium of slow-and no-growthers took control of the City Council in the late 1960s. This group then successfully fought off proposals for several high-rise office buildings in downtown Palo Alto and set aside much of the newly annexed Foothills and Baylands areas as permanent open space.³³ This coalition was indeed successful in slowing Palo Alto's explosive post-war growth, with 1970's population figure of 56,040 representing only a modest increase of 7.2 percent from 1960.³⁴

Palo Alto Matures: 1970 to the Present

With new development off the table, Palo Alto stopped growing in the early 1970s. In addition to no new housing being built, the so-called "Greatest Generation" was graying and many of their children – members of the Baby Boomer cohort – had left to go to college or seek opportunities elsewhere. Because of this, Palo Alto's population actually declined in the 1970s and 1980s, even with the annexation of the community of Barron Park in 1975. Meanwhile, slow and no-growthers continued to hold sway on the City Council. Although their goal of protecting Palo Alto's quality of life was laudable, some less-principled residents used anti-growth rhetoric to oppose housing at any cost – especially housing that might attract lower-income people.³⁵

With its top public schools, beautiful parks, and highly paid tech jobs, Palo Alto had become one of the Bay Area's most desirable cities by the 1980s. Nonetheless, with little new housing having been built, as early as 1985 Palo Alto had a jobs-to-housing imbalance of 3-to-1. A growing demand for homes pushed up real estate values so that only wealthy people could afford to buy in Palo Alto. This led to a surge in residential demolitions in the 1990s, because most new homebuyers enjoyed lifestyles incommensurate with the city's aging housing stock. Although Palo Alto's historic preservation regulations have preserved some older residential enclaves like Professorville, the worldwide demand for Palo Alto real estate is insatiable. In recent years, Palo Alto's professional classes – including Stanford professors, doctors, and government officials – have increasingly found themselves squeezed out. In response, Palo Alto's civic leaders have begun loosening up on long-term prohibitions of multi-family housing.³⁶

³² Diane Sussman, "The 1950s: So long, sleepy town," *Palo Alto Times*, April 15, 1994.

³³ Winslow, 56-7.

³⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, Population figures for Palo Alto, 1950 to 1960.

³⁵ U.S. Census Bureau, Population figures for Palo Alto, 1970 to 2000.

³⁶ Gennady Sheyner, "Palo Alto Adopts Plan to Build More Housing," *Palo Alto Online*:

<https://www.paloaltoonline.com/news/2018/02/13/palo-alto-adopts-plan-to-build-more-housing>, accessed June 12, 2019.

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Construction of 617 and 621 High Street: 1897

According to the 1895 Sanborn Maps, 617 and 621 High Street were still both vacant lots. At that time, Block 6 of the University Park subdivision contained only seven houses. Nonetheless, it was located only a little over a block away from the Southern Pacific depot and even closer to University Avenue. It also adjoined a light industrial district that had grown up along Alma Street, where several prominent businesses, including Hanson & Co.'s Lumber Yard, Palo Alto Park Nursery, and George B. Worrell's Palo Alto Feed & Fuel, were already in business. Manual laborers and service workers also lived in this area near the southern edge of downtown, including in a handful of cottages and lodging house along High Street and in several residential hotels facing The Circle.

In 1896, a 22-year-old man named Theodore Zschokke, son of prominent pioneer Anna Zschokke, bought the adjoining two vacant lots at 617 and 621 High Street. In December of that year, he hired a prominent local contractor named George W. Mosher to build a pair of identical two-story cottages on the lots; they cost \$1,500 each.³⁷ A few weeks later, on January 6, 1897, Theodore Zschokke hired Mosher to build a third six-room cottage on Hamilton Avenue, between Bryant and Waverly Streets. This cottage also cost \$1,500.³⁸ Based on their location, modest appearance, and low cost, it seems that Theodore Zschokke built all three as speculative income properties.³⁹

According to the 1897 Sanborn Maps, 617 and 621 High Street each contained a two-story, single-family, wood-frame dwelling with a large front porch and a bay window on the primary façade, a small utility porch at the back, and a large shed at the rear that overlapped the shared property line (**Figure 2**). The only difference between the two cottages was that 617 High Street had an angled bay window and 621 had a rectangular bay window.

Theodore Zschokke and Family

Theodore Christian Zschokke was born October 9, 1874 in Wapello, Iowa to Oscar Zschokke, a Swiss immigrant farmer, and Anna (née Probst) Zschokke, a native of Bavaria.⁴⁰ The family moved from Iowa to Bakersfield, California in the mid-1870s, operating a ranch on the banks of the Kern River.⁴¹ In 1884, for health reasons, the family moved from Bakersfield to Santa Clara, where Oscar became a druggist. The family lived in a cottage at Market and Lincoln Streets, near downtown Santa Clara, for five years. Oscar had long suffered from tuberculosis, eventually succumbing to the disease on October 7, 1889.⁴² Seeking new opportunities, Anna Zschokke decided to move to Palo Alto and build a house on a lot that her husband had recently purchased. Arriving in 1890, Anna Zschokke and her children: Arthur, Irma, and Theodore, were one of the first five families to take up residence in the new town.⁴³

Anna Zschokke, who was widely admired for her energy and "pluck," organized a high school for local Palo Alto youth when it became apparent that no provisions had been made to educate teenagers in the

³⁷ "Building Announcement," *Palo Alto Times* (December 31, 1896).

³⁸ "Building Announcement," *Palo Alto Live Oak* (January 6, 1897), 1.

³⁹ 1902 Palo Alto Directory.

⁴⁰ California Death Index, 1940-1997.

⁴¹ Kern County, California Voter Registers, 1866-1898 for Oscar Zschokke.

⁴² California Death and Burial Records, 1873-1987 for Oscar Zschokke.

⁴³ Gullard and Lund, 109.

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town. The high school was initially housed in a two-story dwelling at 536 Forest Avenue that Anna commissioned from contractor George Mosher.⁴⁴ Once the city built a public high school, Anna and her family moved into the building, making 536 Forest Avenue their primary residence. Widely known as the “Mother of Palo Alto,” Anna Zschokke wrote a book about her experiences as a Palo Alto pioneer that she published in installments in the *Palo Alto Live Oak* from 1896 onward.⁴⁵

Theodore Zschokke graduated from high school in 1896. Perhaps looking for a steady source of income, in 1897, he built three rental houses in downtown Palo Alto, including 617 and 621 High Street. A little less than a year later, in June 1898, Zschokke enlisted in the Army, serving in the First California Infantry during the Spanish-American War.⁴⁶ Zschokke was initially sent to the Philippines, which U.S. forces had seized from Spanish control in the early days of the war. He continued to serve in the Philippines until 1901, fighting Filipino forces when it became apparent that the U.S. was planning to colonize the Philippines instead of granting the country its independence.⁴⁷

Theodore Zschokke returned home in 1901 and enrolled at Stanford University. Graduating from Stanford with a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1903, Zschokke matriculated at Yale University’s Forest School in 1904. While on break from Yale, Theodore married Mabel G. Lyman of Mountain View on September 15, 1904. Following Theodore’s graduation from Yale in June 1905, the couple moved to the Philippines so Zschokke could take a job in the new U.S. Territory’s Bureau of Forestry. The Zschokkes remained in the Philippines for six years. In 1906, while they were still in the Philippines, Mabel gave birth to a boy, whom they named Theodore O. Zschokke.⁴⁸

In 1910, Theodore and Mable Zschokke returned to California, living alternately in San Francisco and Palo Alto until July 1912. Tragically, Mabel suffered from a mental breakdown while pregnant with her second child. After attempting to commit suicide, the couple’s second son died shortly after childbirth. Their marriage over, Theodore returned alone to the Philippines in December 1915 for another decade of work in the Bureau of Forestry.⁴⁹ In the mid-1920s, Zschokke became the chief forester of the U.S. Territory of Hawaii. He worked there until the early 1930s, before retiring to Palm Springs. Theodore Zschokke lived in Palm Springs for the rest of his life, where he was instrumental in the founding of the Desert Museum.

⁴⁴ Winslow, 125-127.

⁴⁵ Winslow, 42-43.

⁴⁶ “Local News,” *Palo Alto Live Oak* (June 22, 1898).

⁴⁷ “Theodore C. Zschokke,” *Biographical Record of the Graduates of the Yale Forest School*, Yale University, New Haven, CT, 1913.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ U.S. Passport Applications, 1795-1925 for Theodore Christian Zschokke.

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Theodore C. Zschokke Owns 617 and 621 High Street: 1897 to 1909

Upon its completion in 1897, Theodore Zschokke rented 617 High Street to Angela M. Detro. Detro, a 41-year-old native of Wisconsin, lived there with her 27-year-old daughter, Maud, and Angela's 70-year-old mother, Julia Hibbard. Around the same time, Zschokke rented 621 High Street to George B. and Augusta L. Worrell. The Worrells were the owners of Palo Alto Feed & Fuel Company, which was located across the street at the corner of High Street and Hamilton Avenue.⁵⁰ The Worrell household consisted of George B. Worrell, a 61-year-old native of Ohio; his wife, Augusta L. Worrell, a 57-year-old Ohioan; and their two sons: Frank L. Worrell, 34 years old; and Fred J. Worrell, 30 years old. George, Frank, and Fred all worked at Palo Alto Feed & Fuel Co.⁵¹

Between 1900 and 1909, which is approximately when he sold both properties, Theodore Zschokke rented 617 High Street to several different people. In 1901, he rented the cottage to Mr. T. Clancy, a ticket agent at Southern Pacific's Palo Alto depot.⁵² In 1902, Zschokke rented the house to S.W. Remington, a carpenter. Remington shared the house with a butcher named E.W. Kent.⁵³ Ca. 1903, Mrs. J.R. Bartruff and her two daughters, Mary and Zoe, moved into 617 High Street, remaining there for a little over a year.⁵⁴

Meanwhile, the Worrells were the only tenants of 621 High Street while Zschokke owned it. George B. Worrell was a native of Farmington, Ohio. A Civil War veteran, Worrell came to California in 1874, settling first in St. Helena, in Napa County. He lived there with his wife Augusta and their two young sons: Frank, born 1866; and Fred, born 1870. In 1877, Augusta gave birth to a daughter named Louise. The Worrells owned a vineyard in St. Helena for almost two decades.⁵⁵ The family moved to Palo Alto in 1896. Like many other pioneer residents of Palo Alto, they probably saw business opportunity in the newly established town.⁵⁶

Worrell Family owns 617 and 621 High Street: 1909 to 1924

On May 28, 1909, Frank L. and Amanda Worrell, George and Augusta Worrell's son and daughter-in-law, purchased 617 and 621 High Street from Theodore Zschokke.⁵⁷ In 1910, the Worrell household at 621 High Street included George B. Worrell, age 71; and Augusta L. Worrell, age 67. Meanwhile, Frank and Amanda Worrell lived around the corner at 164 Hamilton Avenue. Their other son, Fred Worrell, and his wife Mary, lived just down the street at 635 High Street. All three of the Worrell men continued to work at Palo Alto Fuel & Feed.⁵⁸ George B. Worrell died October 9, 1914. After his death, Augusta Worrell continued to live at 621 High Street for the rest of her life. In 1920, she lived there with her grandson,

⁵⁰ 1897-1898 Palo Alto Directory.

⁵¹ 1900 U.S. Federal Census for Palo Alto, California, Enumeration District 80, Sheet 3.

⁵² 1900-1901 Palo Alto Directory.

⁵³ 1901-1902 Palo Alto Directory.

⁵⁴ 1903-1940 Palo Alto Directory.

⁵⁵ 1880 U.S. Federal Census for St. Helena, California, Enumeration District 76, sheet 413.

⁵⁶ "George B. Worrell: Dies at Palo Alto," *San Jose Mercury News* (October 11, 1914), 12.

⁵⁷ Santa Clara County Recorder's Office, Mortgage between Palo Alto Building & Loan Association and Amanda and Frank L. Worrell, May 28, 1909, Book 43, page 282.

⁵⁸ 1910 U.S. Federal Census for Palo Alto, California, Enumeration District 79, Sheet No. 8B.

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George B. Worrell, and a 42-year-old lodger named Tom C. Miller, owner of a local grocery store.⁵⁹

Augusta Worrell died on August 22, 1924.⁶⁰

The Worrell family converted 617 High Street into a two-family dwelling after they bought it in 1909. In addition to building a demising wall to separate the first and second floors, they built a kitchen in the new upper unit. In 1911, Fred and Mary Worrell moved into 617 High Street, remaining there until 1916.⁶¹ From 1916 until 1925, the Worrell family rented 617 High Street to several different people, including to a laundry worker named Mrs. Sublette, who lived there from 1916 to 1917.⁶² Between 1917 and 1920, A.L. Enderson, owner of Enderson's Furniture, and his wife Myrtle, lived at 617 High Street.⁶³ From 1920 until 1922, an electrician named W.B. Calhoun, and his wife Stella, lived there.⁶⁴ In 1923, Timothy R. Clark, a hospital worker, and his wife Margaret, moved in, remaining there for a year. Finally, between 1924 and 1925, Fount B. Howard, manager of the Palo Alto Woolworth's, lived at 617 High Street with his wife Geneva.⁶⁵

Not long before Augusta Worrell's death in August 1924, her children sold 617 High Street to Arthur W. Frazer, proprietor of a Palo Alto soft drinks store. Then, a few months later, on February 24, 1925, the Worrells sold 621 High Street to Frances E. Dowdy, wife of a Palo Alto auto mechanic named Walter R. Dowdy.⁶⁶

Poston Family Owns 617 High Street: 1926 to 1942

Not long after buying 617 High Street in 1924, Arthur W. Frazer entered into an agreement with his new tenant, a woman named Amy M. Poston. In this agreement, Frazer agreed to sell the property, which was described as a "seven room, two-story house known as 617 High Street, and all furniture located in said house" to Poston, who planned to operate it as a lodging house.⁶⁷ In the agreement the property would officially change hands once Amy had paid off a mortgage executed between the parties. Less than two years later, on May 15, 1926, Amy Poston acquired title to 617 High Street.⁶⁸

Amy H. (née Boyd) Poston was born ca. 1880 in California to a couple from Massachusetts. Amy was married to Edgar H. Poston, a livery stable manager from Iowa. In 1910, the couple lived at 733 Ramona Street in Palo Alto with their two children: Mina, who was seven; and William, who was six; as well as several lodgers.⁶⁹ Edgar Poston died on April 8, 1919.⁷⁰ Following her husband's death, Amy took in

⁵⁹ 1920 U.S. Federal Census for Palo Alto, California, Enumeration District 137, Sheet 16B.

⁶⁰ U.S. Find A Grave Index, 1600s-Curret for Augusta L. Worrell.

⁶¹ 1911-1912 to 1915-1916 Palo Alto Directories.

⁶² 1916-1917 Palo Alto Directory.

⁶³ 1917-1918 to 1919-1920 Palo Alto Directories.

⁶⁴ 1920-1921 to 1921-1922 Palo Alto Directories.

⁶⁵ 1923 to 1925 Palo Alto Directories.

⁶⁶ Santa Clara County Recorder's Office, Grant Deed: Amanda and Frank L. Worrell to Frances E. Dowdy, February 25, 1925, Book 141, page 329.

⁶⁷ Santa Clara County Recorder's Office, Agreement between Arthur W. Frazer et al and Amy M. Poston, July 9, 1924, Book 100, page 113.

⁶⁸ Santa Clara County Recorder's Office, Grant Deed: Dana Frazer to Arthur W. Frazer and Amy M. Poston, May 15, 1926, Book 285, page 273.

⁶⁹ 1910 U.S. Federal Census for Palo Alto, California, Enumeration District 79, Sheet No. 5B.

⁷⁰ California Death Index, 1905-1939 for Edgar H. Poston.

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additional lodgers to support her family.⁷¹ She was evidently quite successful, because in 1926 she was able to purchase 617 High Street to expand her business.

In 1930, Amy H. Poston was living at 617 High Street along with her two sons: 24-year-old William and eight-year-old Douglas. Living with them were two lodgers: Axel Anderson, a 52-year-old Swedish lumber yard worker; and James Michelugga, a 45-year-old, Italian immigrant janitor employed by Stanford University. Amy Poston and her sons lived downstairs while the lodgers lived upstairs.⁷²

Amy H. Poston died suddenly on February 7, 1935 at the age of 57.⁷³ She left her estate to her three children: Mina, William, and Douglas. Her oldest child, William Poston, who had moved to 359 Middlefield Road in 1936, took over the family business, renting 617 High Street, which was listed in Palo Alto Directories as "William Poston Furnished Rooms," to various lodgers. Until Poston sold 617 High Street in 1944, the primary tenant of the house was John Doody, an Irish immigrant laborer born ca. 1881. According to the 1940 Census, in addition to Doody there were several other lodgers, including Tom C. Miller, a 61-year-old retail food merchant; Frank A. Reuter, a 61-year-old gardener; and George E. Van Gordon, a 76-year-old retiree.⁷⁴

On November 22, 1944, William Poston sold 617 High Street to Charles S. Padgett, a machinist who owned a machine shop at 111 Hamilton Avenue in Palo Alto.⁷⁵ Padgett, a resident of Redwood City, continued renting the rooms at 617 High Street to John Doody and the others until August 24, 1946, when he sold the property to Louis Emanuel and Lorenza F. Marinsik.⁷⁶

Frances E. Dowdy Owns 621 High Street: 1925 to 1937

Meanwhile, Frances Dowdy, who had bought 621 High Street from the Worrells in 1925, converted the cottage into a two-family dwelling. This conversion left no lasting physical imprint on the building, because unlike 617 High Street, there were no interior walls built to separate the first and second floors. From 1928 until 1930, Dowdy rented the house to R.J. Matthews and his wife Edith. R.J. was enlisted in the Army. Living in the other unit were William Sullivan, a 55-year-old laborer from Michigan; and Emil Butzer, a 28-year-old, German-born electrician.⁷⁷ In 1931, these tenants were replaced by Benjamin M. and Katherine Horr. Other tenants during the early 1930s included James M. Hicks, who was variously employed as a shoe shiner and car washer. He lived at 621 High Street with his wife Johnnie and his brother Henry Hicks until 1936.⁷⁸ Frances Dowdy owned 621 High Street for 12 years, selling it to Homer W. Reed on May 4, 1937.⁷⁹

⁷¹ 1920 U.S. Federal Census for Palo Alto, California, Enumeration District 137, Sheet 30A.

⁷² 1930 U.S. Federal Census for Palo Alto, California, Enumeration District 43-21, Sheet 2A.

⁷³ "Rites Planned for Mrs. Amy Poston," *Oakland Tribune* (February 8, 1935), 13.

⁷⁴ 1940 U.S. Census for Palo Alto, California, Enumeration District 43-48, Sheet 64A.

⁷⁵ Santa Clara County Recorder's Office, Grant Deed: William H. Poston to Charles S. Padgett, November 22, 1944, Book 1189, page 354.

⁷⁶ Santa Clara County Recorder's Office, Decree Distribution: Charles S. and Eleanor Padgett to Louis Emanuel and Lorenza F. Marinsik, August 24, 1946, Book 1365, page 597.

⁷⁷ 1930 U.S. Federal Census for Palo Alto, California, Enumeration District 43-21, Sheet 2A.

⁷⁸ 1930 to 1936 Palo Alto Directories.

⁷⁹ Santa Clara County Recorder's Office, Grant Deed: Frances E. Dowdy to Homer W. Reed, May 4, 1937, Book 824, page 105.

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Homer W. Reed Owns 621 High Street: 1937 to 1960

Homer Williams Reed was born July 26, 1877 in Scranton, Pennsylvania.⁸⁰ Little is known about his upbringing, but by 1906 he had moved to San José.⁸¹ Homer worked in several jobs in San José, including as the city's "poundmaster."⁸² By 1910, Homer Reed had moved to Mayfield to operate a new business with his brother, Samuel P. Reed, and his nephew, Luke C. Reed. Their company, Reed Electric Works, specialized in servicing the electrical systems of automobiles, which were just then beginning to catch on with the wider public. Homer worked as a machinist at Reed Electric Works, which was originally located at the corner of Stanford Avenue and Princeton Street in the College Terrace neighborhood of Palo Alto.⁸³

Homer Reed continued to work at Reed Electric Works for nearly three decades. In addition to servicing his customers' vehicles, Reed sold and charged batteries and sold wiring harnesses, light bulbs, fuses, and other parts. Homer's nephew, Luke C. Reed, was the president of the company. In 1930, their shop was located at 541-47 High Street, a block west of 617 and 621 High Street. At that time, Homer Reed lived in a lodging house at 14 The Circle. In 1930, Luke lived with his mother, Florence, and three other siblings at 657 Homer Avenue.⁸⁴

Reed Electric Works went out of business in 1935, almost certainly a victim of the Depression. Afterward, Homer began working as an independent electrician and Luke started driving a taxi for Yellow Cab of Palo Alto. Two years later, in 1937, Homer Reed bought 621 High Street from Frances Dowdy. According to the 1940 Census, published three years later, Homer Reed, who was then 62 years old, lived in the cottage with a lodger named Henry A. Hoffman, a 59-year-old handyman from Minnesota.⁸⁵ In 1940, Homer was still employed as an independent electrician.

In 1940, Luke C. Reed opened a radio sales and repair shop called L.C. Reed Radios on the first floor of his uncle's house at 621 High Street. The store occupied the parlor and the repair shop was in the dining room behind it, meaning that Homer probably lived upstairs.⁸⁶ At some point, Luke Reed erected – evidently without permits – a steel radio mast in the front yard and an enclosed display case next to the sidewalk. Luke Reed also opened a recording studio in one of the front bedrooms on the second floor of 621 High Street.

Homer W. Reed lived at 621 High Street for the rest of his life. For most of that time he lived by himself, but in 1957 a man named Thomas Miller moved into the house. His unit was described in Palo Alto directories as 621b High Street. It is not known where this unit was located, but it is possible that may have been in the shed at the rear of the property. Meanwhile, Homer Reed lived at 621a High Street until his death on May 25, 1959 at the age of 81.⁸⁷

⁸⁰ California Death Index, 1940-1997 for Homer W. Reed.

⁸¹ 1906 San Jose Directory.

⁸² 1908 San Jose Directory.

⁸³ 1910 San Jose/Santa Clara County Directory.

⁸⁴ 1930 U.S. Federal Census for Palo Alto, California, Enumeration District 43-21, Sheet 19A.

⁸⁵ 1940 U.S. Federal Census for Palo Alto, California, Enumeration District 43-38, Sheet 7B.

⁸⁶ 1940 Palo Alto Directory.

⁸⁷ California Death Index, 1940-1997, Homer W. Reed.

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Luke C. Reed Owns 621 High Street: 1960 to 1999

Homer W. Reed left his estate, including 621 High Street, to his nephew, and on February 17, 1960, Luke C. Reed took title to the property. In 1961, Palo Alto directories report that both 621a and 621b High Street were vacant. Luke Reed, who continued to live at 657 Homer Avenue, carried on operating Reed's Electric Company at 621 High Street through the rest of the century. At some point he took his son, Gerald Reed, on as a business partner. Photographs taken of the property in the late 1980s illustrate a dilapidated building with a large radio mast and a collapsing display case in the front yard (**Figures 3 and 4**). Signage on the front of the house indicated that it also contained a recording studio. In February 1988, the Palo Alto Division of Inspectional Services compelled Luke Reed to dismantle the radio mast and demolish the display case.⁸⁸ Luke C. Reed died June 14, 1998 in Menlo Park.⁸⁹ A year later, on May 12, 1999, Gerald L. Reed and Nancy Walters sold 621 High Street to its present owners, Steve and Carolyn Pierce.⁹⁰

Steve and Carolyn Pierce Own 621 High Street: 1999 to Present

Steve Pierce is a Palo Alto-based realtor and property investor. He founded Zane MacGregor Realty in 1985 after working as a real estate consultant with the Stanford Research Institute. He holds degrees in civil engineering and planning from UC Berkeley. Pierce operates his own real estate business out of 621 High Street, which he has gradually restored since 1999. Pierce has made no significant changes the property in the two decades that he has owned it.

Louis and Lorenza Emanuel Own 617 High Street: 1946 to 1975

As mentioned previously, Louis Emanuel and Lorenza Marinsik bought 617 High Street from Charles S. Padgett in 1946. Louis D. Emanuel was born October 15, 1896 in Italy.⁹¹ He immigrated to the United States with his brother Umberto in 1922. According to the 1930 Census, Louis was a 33-year-old, unmarried truck driver living in Fremont Township, in rural Santa Clara County. He lived with his brother, Umberto Emanuel, and Umberto's wife, Louise.⁹² A decade later, Louis Emanuel was still living with Umberto and Louise in Menlo Park. He was single and unemployed at the time.⁹³

When he bought 617 High Street in 1946, Emanuel was still living with Umberto and Louise at 1060 Santa Cruz Avenue in Menlo Park.⁹⁴ He bought 617 High Street with Lorenza F. Marinsik, a widow with whom he was romantically involved. Lorenza (née Viglino) was born December 28, 1906 in Giaveno, Italy. She immigrated to the United States in 1911 as a child. She married Andrew Marinsik on March 1, 1927 and lived with him in San Bruno until his death in 1938.⁹⁵ In 1946, Lorenza was living in Redwood

⁸⁸ Palo Alto Development Services Department, Correspondence and permit applications on file for 617 High Street.

⁸⁹ U.S. Social Security Index, 1935-2014 for Luke C. Reed.

⁹⁰ Santa Clara County Recorder's Office, Grant Deed between Gerald L. Reed and Nancy Walters and Steve and Carolyn L. Pierce, May 12, 1999.

⁹¹ U.S. Social Security Death Index, 1935-2014 for Louis D. Emanuel.

⁹² 1930 U.S. Federal Census for Fremont Township, Santa Clara County, California, Enumeration District 43-9, Sheet 19B.

⁹³ 1940 U.S. Federal Census for Menlo Park, California, Enumeration District 41-50, Sheet 2A.

⁹⁴ 1946 Redwood City Directory.

⁹⁵ U.S. Federal Naturalization Records, 1843-1999 for Lorenza Marinsik.

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City and working as a sales clerk at a women's clothing store in Palo Alto.⁹⁶ By 1947, Emanuel and Lorenza were married and living together at 920 Iris Street in Redwood City.⁹⁷

Louis and Lorenza Emanuel operated 617 High Street as a lodging house throughout the three decades that they owned it. John J. Doody, who had lived there since 1936, moved out in 1947 and Mrs. Grace O. Espelin moved. Grace was a widow and she lived there with her daughter, Agnes L. Espelin, a bookkeeper for Pacific Poultryman.⁹⁸ After they moved out in late 1948, 617 High Street was vacant for several years. In 1953, Edward C. Bradbury, a carpenter, and his wife Josephine lived at 617 High Street.⁹⁹ Andrew Kavanagh, an employee of Palo Alto's Varsity Theater, also lived there. In 1954, the Bradburys were replaced by Lester B. Brown and Jim and Margaret Mooneyham.¹⁰⁰ In 1955, Andrew Kavanagh was the only one of these former tenants still left, although he had been joined by a painter named John Nokkleby and his wife Geneva.¹⁰¹

During the second half of the 1950s and the first few years of the 1960s, there was an ever-changing roster of residents at 617 High Street. However, instead of the usual blue collar service workers, tradespeople, and retirees that had lived there previously, the new residents were almost all students at Stanford University, including William Gunter in 1958, Gurçan Mete from 1959 to 1960, Walt D. Laffranchini from 1961 to 1962, and Dale Quinn in 1963.¹⁰²

Between 1966 and 1971, only one occupant was listed in city directories at 617 High Street: Eugenie M. Kelly, an employee of Stanford University.¹⁰³ From 1972 until 1973, Claudia Gjersten lived there. In 1974 Larry Avdes, who had no known occupation, lived at 617 High Street and in 1975, Tony Nieves, also with no known occupation, lived there.¹⁰⁴

Louis D. Emanuel died on April 15, 1974 in Redwood City.¹⁰⁵ Following the completion of probate, Lorenza Emanuel became the sole owner of 617 High Street.

David Lawrence et al own 617 High Street: 1975 to 1987

In 1975, Lorenza Emanuel sold 617 High Street to a local realtor named David Lawrence. Lawrence, the executive director of the Palo Alto Board of Realtors, owned at least two businesses at the time, including Stanford Financial Company and Palo Alto Real Estate Investors, LLC. Both were located at 664 Gilman Street in Palo Alto. Between 1975 and 1977, several members of Lawrence's staff traded 617 High Street back and forth until David Lawrence finally took title on December 8, 1977.¹⁰⁶

⁹⁶ 1946 Palo Alto Directory.

⁹⁷ 1948 Redwood City Directory.

⁹⁸ 1948 Palo Alto Directory.

⁹⁹ 1953 Palo Alto Directory.

¹⁰⁰ 1954 Palo Alto Directory.

¹⁰¹ 1955 Palo Alto Directory.

¹⁰² 1956 to 1964 Palo Alto Directories.

¹⁰³ 1966 to 1971 Palo Alto Directories.

¹⁰⁴ 1972 to 1975 Palo Alto Directories.

¹⁰⁵ U.S. Social Security Death Index, 1935-2014 for Louis D. Emanuel.

¹⁰⁶ Santa Clara County Recorder's Office, Grant Deed between Gregory Padgett and Thomas Halsaple, December 8, 1977.

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According to Palo Alto city directories, which ceased publication in 1979, David Lawrence converted 617 High Street from a lodging house into a two-family dwelling with each unit having its own address: 617a and 617b High Street. In the final Palo Alto City Directory published in 1979, Jeff Sherwood lived at 617a High Street and William Holswade lived at 617b High Street.¹⁰⁷ Nothing is known about any subsequent tenants. David Lawrence owned 617 High Street for a little over a decade, selling it to the current owner, Martin D. Bernstein, on March 27, 1987.¹⁰⁸

Photographs taken of 617 High Street in the mid-1980s indicates that it looked essentially the same as it does today (**Figure 5**).

Martin D. Bernstein owns 617 High Street: 1987 to Present

Martin Bernstein, the current owner of 617 High Street, is an architect with offices in Palo Alto and San Francisco. He earned his architecture degree from California Polytechnic University in San Luis Obispo. He then studied architecture in Italy, where he became interested in the Italian Renaissance. Bernstein, who specializes in classical architecture and historic preservation, has practiced in Palo Alto since 1984. He is a member of the Palo Alto Historic Resources Board and in the past he has served as president of Palo Alto Stanford Heritage (PAST) and the Los Altos Hills Historical Society.

After purchasing 617 High Street in 1987, Martin Bernstein completed a series of repairs and upgrades to the building, including installing new plumbing fixtures and finishes in the kitchen and bathroom on the first floor, new electrical and plumbing, new light fixtures, and completing a seismic retrofit. However, he made no notable exterior changes to the building and he has kept the interior finishes intact. Mr. Bernstein currently lives and works in the lower unit and rents the upper unit to others.

George W. Mosher

The builder of both 617 and 621 High Street was George W. Mosher. George Wilbert Mosher was born April 4, 1863 in Newport Landing, Nova Scotia.¹⁰⁹ He grew up working on his parents' farm, as well as in a plaster quarry that his father owned near the town of Windsor. To help support his family, the young George Mosher apprenticed as a carpenter and a shipbuilder. He then immigrated to the United States, landing first in Portland, Maine in 1880, where he took a job in a shipyard.¹¹⁰

In 1884, George and his brother Edgar left Maine for California. Upon arriving in San Francisco, George Mosher applied for a job with the Southern Pacific Railroad's engineering department. The railroad hired him and promoted him to construction foreman overseeing the erection of several bridges in Santa Cruz County. In 1887, Mosher returned to Nova Scotia to marry his sweetheart, Helena McNealy, whom he brought back to Santa Cruz.¹¹¹ Helena eventually gave birth to a daughter named Allene. George and Helena Mosher moved to Palo Alto in 1891 after George accepted a job working on the construction of Stanford University. In 1893, after his work at Stanford was done, George Mosher started Palo Alto's

¹⁰⁷ 1979 Palo Alto Directory.

¹⁰⁸ Santa Clara County Recorder's Office, Grant Deed between Gregory Padgett and Thomas Halsaple, December 8, 1977.

¹⁰⁹ U.S. Find A Grave Index, 1600s-Current, George W. Mosher.

¹¹⁰ Page & Turnbull, *565 Hamilton Avenue, Palo Alto, Historic Resource Evaluation* (San Francisco: 2017), 17.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

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first contracting firm. He soon became very busy building houses for many of the town's new residents, and he recruited his brothers, Charles and James, to emigrate from Canada to help him.¹¹²

Over the course of his career, which lasted nearly half a century, George Mosher constructed some 300 buildings in Palo Alto. Although he occasionally worked with architects on bigger jobs, he designed most buildings on his own.¹¹³ Mosher worked in a variety of styles. His earliest work dating to the early 1890s was often designed in the San Francisco Stick-Eastlake and Queen Anne styles. By the late 1890s, the Colonial Revival style supplanted the Queen Anne style in Mosher's repertoire. After 1900, Mosher began experimenting in the fashionable Craftsman, American Four-square, and Mission Revival styles. Several of Mosher's buildings are listed in the National Register and the Palo Alto Historic Inventory:

- Squire House, 900 University Avenue (Category 1, Palo Alto Historic Inventory; also listed in the National Register); architect: T. Paterson Ross, 1904;
- Thoits House, 119 Bryant Street (Category 2, Palo Alto Historic Inventory), 1897;
- House at 301 Coleridge Avenue (Category 4, Palo Alto Historic Inventory), architect: William Crim, 1925;
- House at 425 Embarcadero Road, Professorville Historic District (Category 2, Palo Alto Historic Inventory), architect: A.W. Smith, 1907;
- Wing House, 345 Lincoln Avenue (Category 2, Palo Alto Historic Inventory), designer: A.B. Clark, 1893;
- House at 353 Melville Avenue (Category 3, Palo Alto Historic Inventory), architect: H.L. Upham, 1897;
- House at 1432 Webster Street, (Category 3, Palo Alto Historic Inventory), architect: Mary D. Thomas, 1914.

George Mosher continued to operate his contracting business until 1937, at which point he retired. Mosher was also a director of the Palo Alto Building & Loan Association, which provided construction loans to many of his clients. He was also quite active in Palo Alto politics, having first been elected a town trustee in 1898, a position he held until 1904.¹¹⁴ Five years later, in 1909, Mosher was elected to the newly established Palo Alto City Council, serving on and off on that body until his death in May 1939. He was also a member of several fraternal organizations, including the Citizens' Alliance, the Knights of Pythias, and the International Order of Odd Fellows.¹¹⁵

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Professor J.W. Quinn, *History of the State of California and Biographical Record of the Coast Counties, California*. (Chicago: The Chapman Publishing Co., 1904), 1172.

¹¹⁴ "Council Lauds Civic Service of Late George W. Mosher," *Palo Alto Times* (May 9, 1939).

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

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National Register Criterion A

The Theodore Zschokke Cottages Historic District is eligible for the National Register under Criterion A (Events) as two very early and intact district comprising a pair of nearly identical Queen Anne dwellings constructed during the earliest period of settlement in Palo Alto. Constructed in 1897, only two years after Palo Alto incorporated as a city and a bare six years since the first house lots had been put up for sale, 617 and 621 High Street are by far the oldest remaining dwellings in downtown Palo Alto and the only intact examples dating to the nineteenth century. As such, they are exceedingly rare artifacts from the original settlement of Palo Alto in the 1890s.

Downtown Palo Alto, whose boundaries include Alma Street to the southwest, Lytton Avenue to the northwest, Webster Street to the northeast, and Forest Avenue to the southeast, encompasses approximately 30 blocks. Within this area there are about 25 single-family dwellings. Similar to 617 and 621 High Street, most have been converted into commercial uses. Most are located on the fringes of downtown – often sandwiched between much larger late twentieth century buildings. Most date to the first two decades of the twentieth century and the majority are designed in either the Colonial Revival or the Craftsman styles. In addition, there is a much smaller contingent of pre-1906 buildings designed in the Queen Anne or a blend of the Queen Anne and Colonial Revival styles, such as the well-known Charles Decker House at 510 Waverley Street. Only three of these were built before 1900, including 617 and 621 High Street and 525 Hamilton Avenue. 525 Hamilton was built in 1898 but it was extensively enlarged and extensively remodeled in 1912, removing its Victorian ornament. This leaves 617 and 621 High Street as the sole intact nineteenth-century dwellings in downtown Palo Alto.

Through the first half of the twentieth century, 617 and 621 High Street were surrounded by a dozen or so comparable lodging houses, hotels, and workers' cottages. However, by 1949, this tiny blue collar residential enclave had been incrementally razed and replaced by much larger commercial and light industrial buildings. It appears that 617 and 621 High Street were spared only because they occupied very small lots that were under different ownership, making redevelopment difficult, if not entirely infeasible.

National Register Criterion C

The Theodore Zschokke Cottages Historic District is eligible for the National Register under Criterion C as well-preserved and exceedingly rare examples of nineteenth-century workers' dwellings in downtown Palo Alto. Built on a tight budget of \$1,500 each, 617 and 621 High Street are designed in a modest Queen Anne vocabulary with a minimal amount of ornament befitting their status as speculative rental properties. Virtually identical, and built on narrow "rowhouse" lots with their short sides facing the street, the pair has an "urban" industrial flavor that is very unusual for Palo Alto. Indeed, their character is more in keeping with a New England mill town or a Midwestern railroad town than an affluent California university town.

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Simplicity is the most important characteristic of the design of the Theodore Zschokke Cottages. Massed as narrow gable-roofed boxes with projecting front and rear porches, both are clad in V-groove rustic siding at the first floor level and painted shingles at the second floor level. Their only ornament includes their lathe-turned porch supports, scroll-sawn brackets, pedimented porch roofs containing fishscale shingles, and raking cornices with pediment returns. The interiors of the cottages are also unassuming in regard to their materials and finishes, with fir flooring, lath and plaster walls and ceilings, molded wood trim, brick fireplaces, and paneled doors. The interior layout of both cottages is functional and they contain little wasted space.

The Theodore Zschokke Cottages Historic District is also eligible under Criterion C as the work of a master builder, George W. Mosher. George Mosher was responsible for upwards of 300 buildings in Palo Alto during his half-century-long career. As Palo Alto's leading contractor from the town's founding in 1894 until his retirement in 1937, Mosher's work virtually defines pre-war Palo Alto. Most of Mosher's best-known work consists of comfortable – if not opulent – single-family dwellings built for professors and other members of Palo Alto's professional classes, including the National Register-listed Squire House at 900 University Avenue (built 1904) or the Slonaker House at 334 Kingsley Avenue in Professorville (built 1903). Although these examples are two of Mosher's more high-profile commissions, they share a similar understated aesthetic as the Theodore Zschokke Cottages. Mosher's conservative aesthetic, which may have been derived in part from his upbringing in rural Nova Scotia, gives the older parts of Palo Alto their distinctive – almost East Coast – character. This character began to change in the 1920s, with the fanciful Spanish Colonial buildings of A. Birge Clark, but it remains intact in residential areas like Professorville and Old Palo Alto.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 - Other State agency
 - Federal agency
 - Local government
 - University
 - Other
- Name of repository: Palo Alto Historical Association

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property Less than one acre

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (decimal degrees)

Datum if other than WGS84: _____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- | | |
|------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 37.443133 | Longitude: -122.161736 |
| 2. Latitude: 37.443357 | Longitude: -122.161520 |
| 3. Latitude: 37.443283 | Longitude: -122.161407 |
| 4. Latitude: 37.443056 | Longitude: -122.161614 |

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

- NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

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- | | | |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundaries of the Theodore Zschokke Cottages Historic District encompasses the entirety of Assessor Parcel Numbers 12027035 and 12027036. The southwest boundary is High Street. The northwest and northeast boundaries are defined by a mid-block alley connecting High Street and Emerson Street. The southeast boundary is the property line shared by 621 High Street and the commercial building at 635 High Street.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The proposed boundaries of the Theodore Zschokke Cottages Historic District encompass the two legal parcels upon which the cottages were built, with the exception of the sections of both parcels that were transferred to the City of Palo Alto in 1935-36 to build the mid-block alley connecting High Street and Emerson Street.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Christopher VerPlanck, principal
organization: VerPlanck Historic Preservation Consulting
street & number: 57 Post Street, Suite 810
city or town: San Francisco state: CA zip code: 94104
e-mail: chris@verplanckconsulting.com
telephone: (415) 391-7486
date: August 26, 2019

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Zschokke, Theodore, Cottages

Santa Clara, California

Name of Property

County and State

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Theodore Zschokke Cottages Historic District
City or Vicinity: Palo Alto
County: Santa Clara
State: California
Name of Photographer: Christopher VerPlanck
Date Photographed: June 7, 2019
Location of Original Digital Files: 57 Post Street, Suite 810, San Francisco, CA 94104
Number of Photographs: 22

CA_Santa Clara County_Theodore Zschokke Cottages_0001
617 and 621 High Street together, camera facing northeast

CA_Santa Clara County_Theodore Zschokke Cottages_0002
617 and 621 High Street together, camera facing southwest

CA_Santa Clara County_Theodore Zschokke Cottages_0003
Southwest (primary) façade of 617 High Street, camera facing east

CA_Santa Clara County_Theodore Zschokke Cottages_0004
Detail of porch on primary façade of 617 High Street, camera facing northeast

CA_Santa Clara County_Theodore Zschokke Cottages_0005
Detail of bay window on primary façade of 617 High Street, camera facing east

CA_Santa Clara County_Theodore Zschokke Cottages_0006
Northwest façade of 617 High Street, camera facing east

CA_Santa Clara County_Theodore Zschokke Cottages_0007
Northeast (rear) façade of 617 High Street, camera facing southwest

CA_Santa Clara County_Theodore Zschokke Cottages_0008
Detail of porch on rear façade of 617 High Street, camera facing west

CA_Santa Clara County_Theodore Zschokke Cottages_0009
Southeast façade of 617 High Street, camera facing northwest

CA_Santa Clara County_Theodore Zschokke Cottages_0010
Front yard landscaping of 617 High Street, camera facing southwest

CA_Santa Clara County_Theodore Zschokke Cottages_0011
Interior of 617 High Street, first floor, camera facing northeast

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CA_Santa Clara County_Theodore Zschokke Cottages_0012

Interior of 617 High Street, second floor, camera facing southwest

CA_Santa Clara County_Theodore Zschokke Cottages_0013

Southwest (primary) façade of 621 High Street, camera facing east

CA_Santa Clara County_Theodore Zschokke Cottages_0014

Detail of porch on primary façade of 621 High Street, camera facing northwest

CA_Santa Clara County_Theodore Zschokke Cottages_0015

Detail of bay window on primary façade of 621 High Street, camera facing northwest

CA_Santa Clara County_Theodore Zschokke Cottages_0016

Detail of second floor level of primary façade of 621 High Street, camera facing northwest

CA_Santa Clara County_Theodore Zschokke Cottages_0017

Northwest façade of 621 High Street, camera facing southwest

CA_Santa Clara County_Theodore Zschokke Cottages_0018

Northeast (rear) façade of 621 High Street, camera facing southwest

CA_Santa Clara County_Theodore Zschokke Cottages_0019

Detail of porch on rear façade of 621 High Street, camera facing southwest

CA_Santa Clara County_Theodore Zschokke Cottages_0020

Rear yard of 621 High Street, camera facing northeast

CA_Santa Clara County_Theodore Zschokke Cottages_0021

Interior of 621 High Street, first floor, camera facing northwest

CA_Santa Clara County_Theodore Zschokke Cottages_0022

Interior of 621 High Street, second floor, camera facing northeast

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

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

Zschokke, Theodore, Cottages
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Photo Key for Theodore Zschokke Cottages Historic District

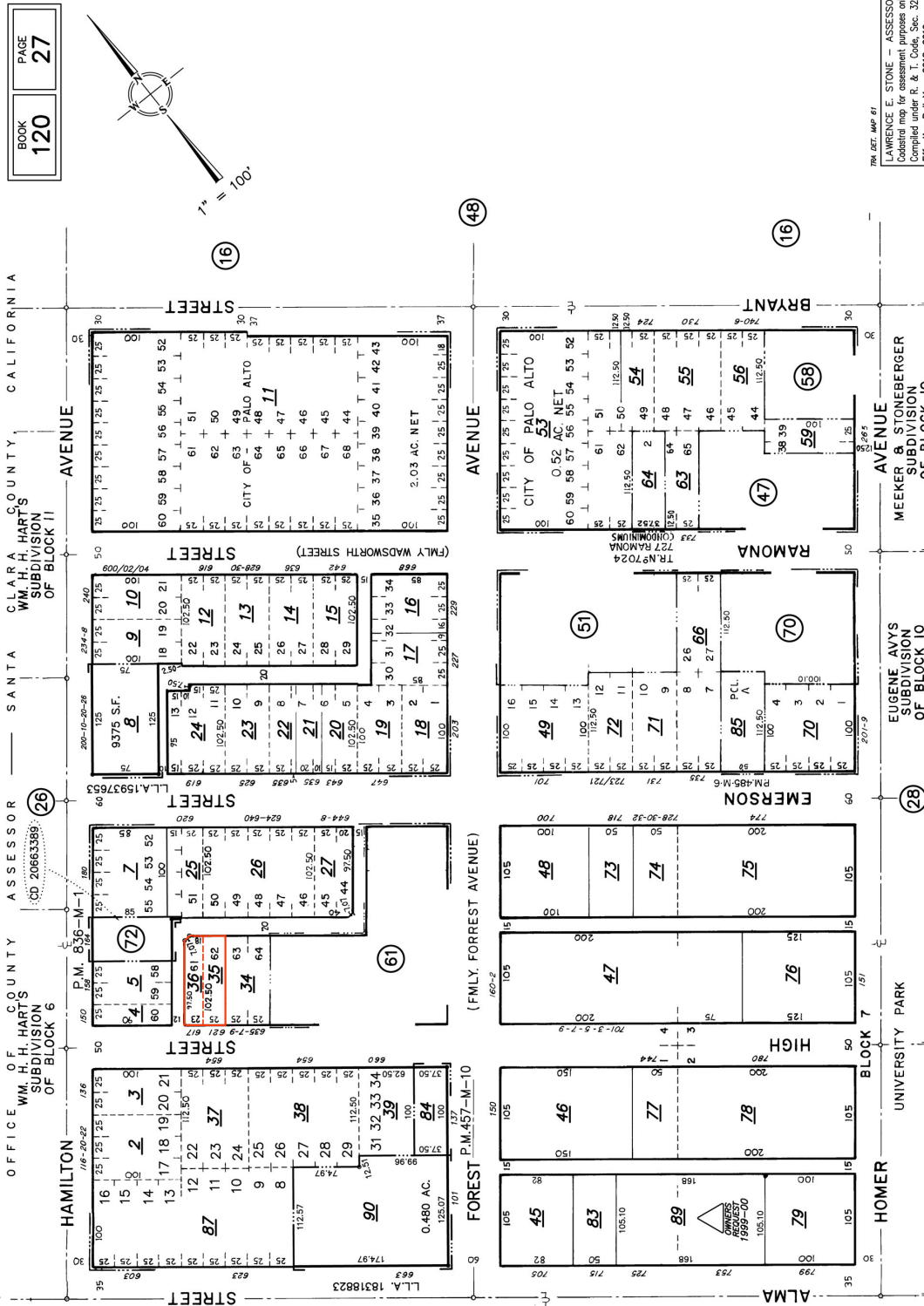
Source: Google Maps; annotated by Christopher VerPlanck



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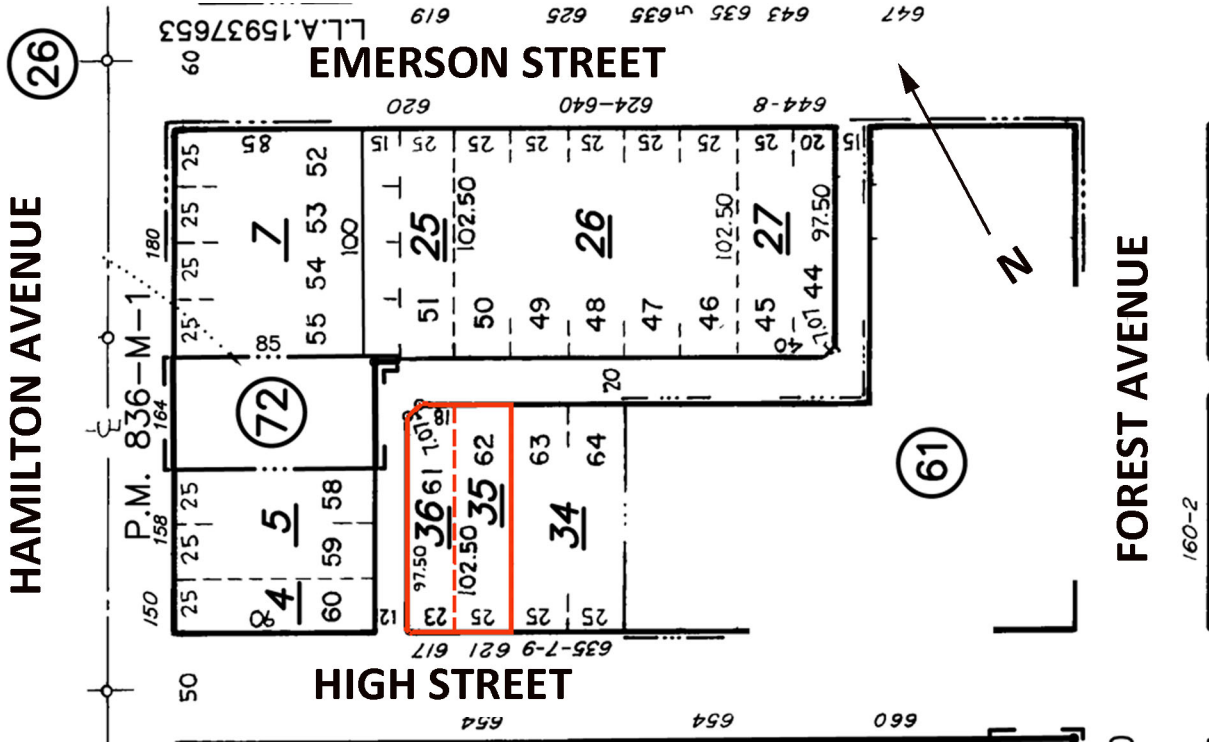
Location Map 1: Assessor Parcel Map showing Theodore Zschokke Cottages Historic District
 Source: Santa Clara County Recorder's Office.



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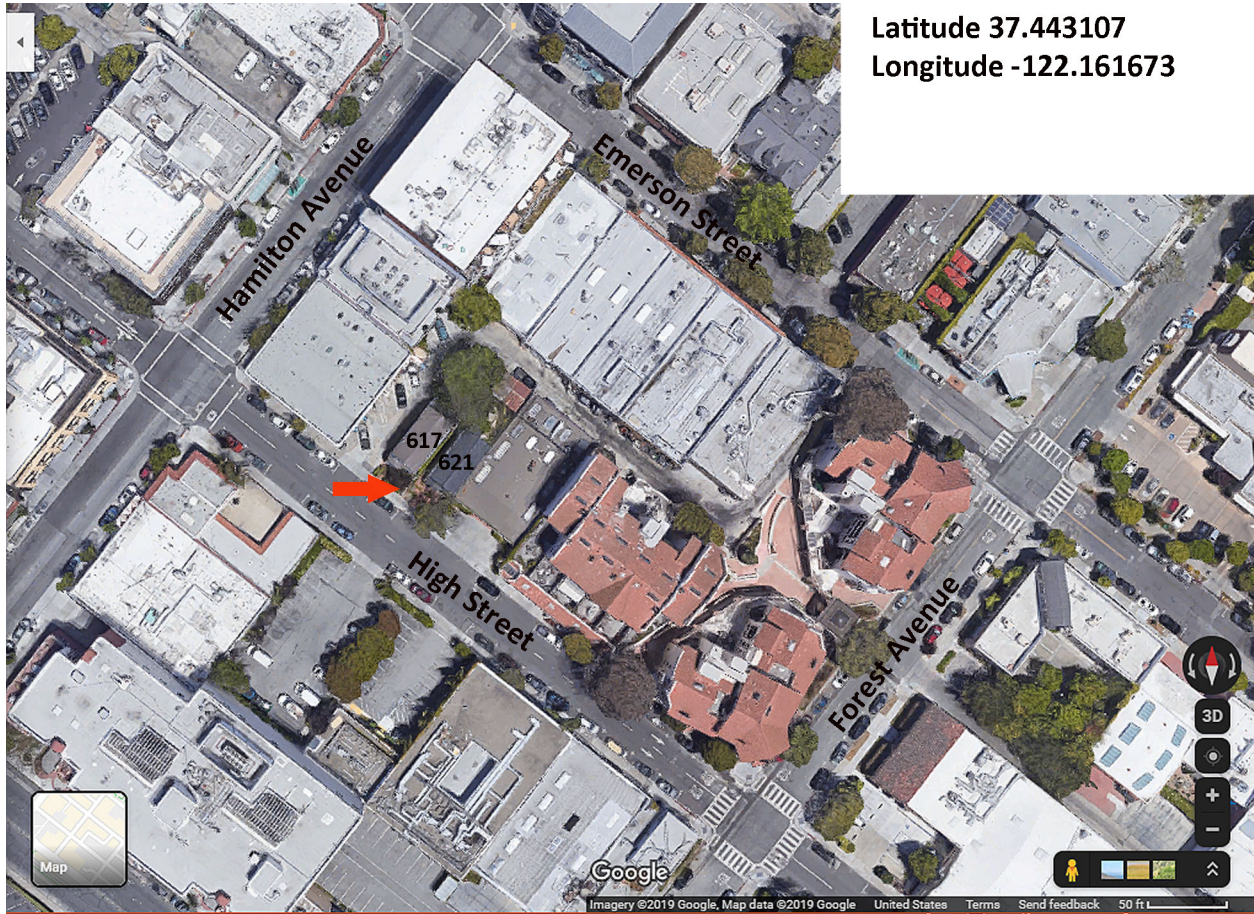
Location Map 2: Detail of Assessor Parcel Map showing Theodore Zschokke Cottages
Historic District
Source: Santa Clara County Recorder's Office



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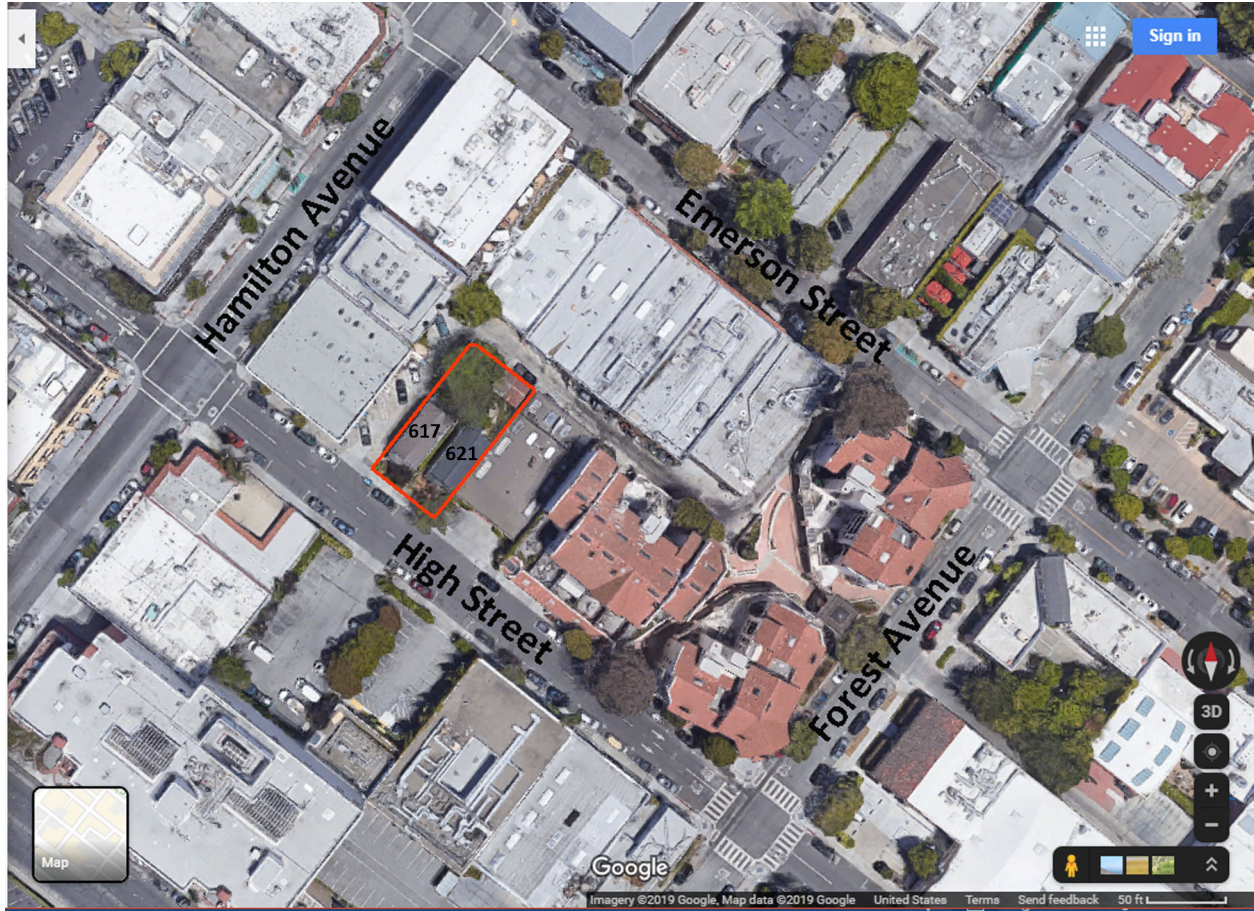
Location Map 3: Aerial showing location of Theodore Zschokke Cottages Historic District
Source: Google Maps; annotated by Christopher VerPlanck



Zschokke, Theodore, Cottages
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Location Map 4: Aerial showing Area Proposed for Designation
Source: Google Maps; annotated by Christopher VerPlanck



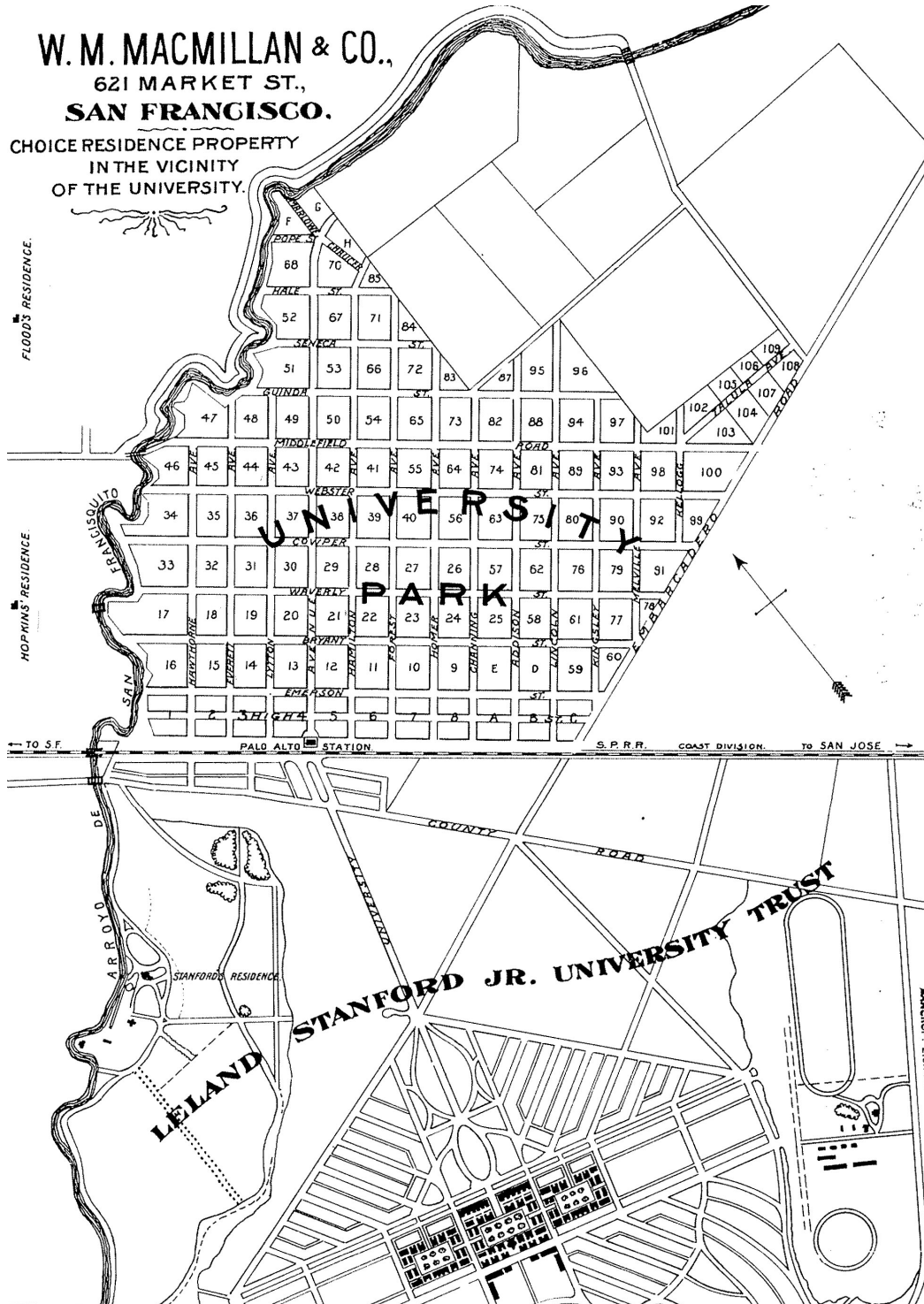
Zschokke, Theodore, Cottages
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Additional Information: Historic Maps and Photographs

Figure 1. Map of University Park Subdivision, 1889.

Courtesy of Santa Clara County Recorder's Office



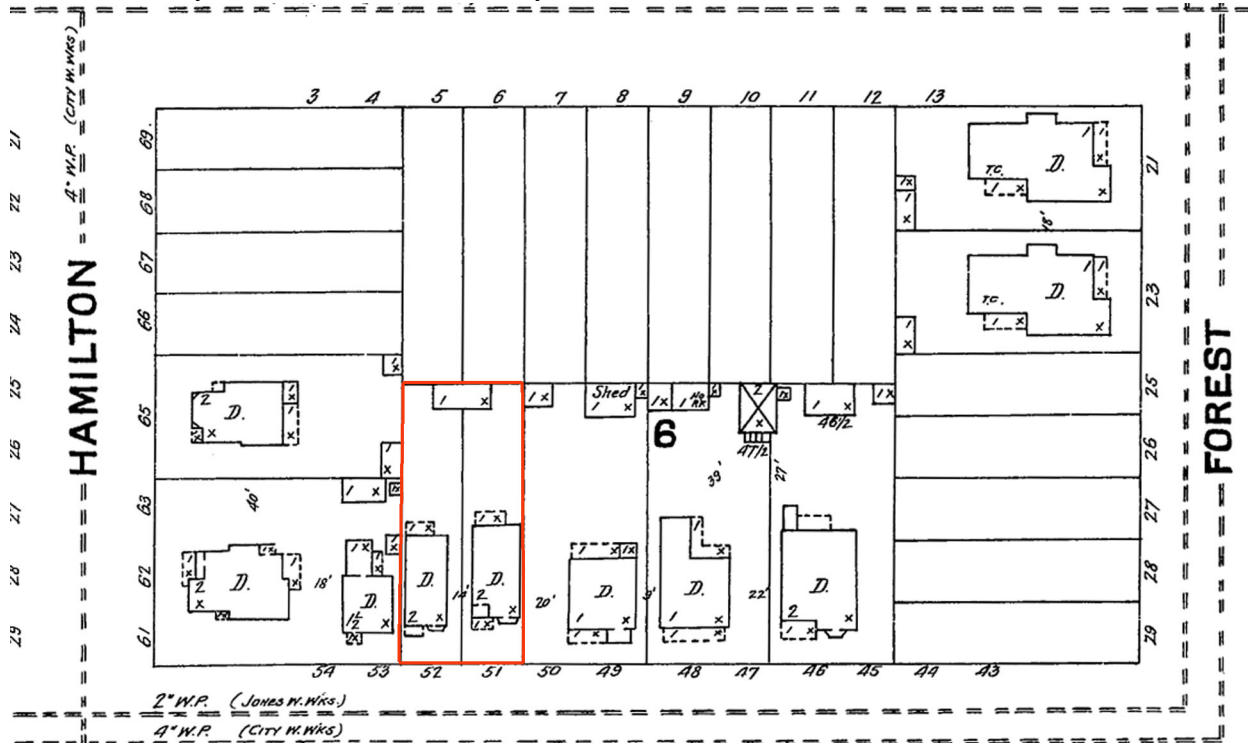
Zschokke, Theodore, Cottages
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Additional Information: Historic Maps and Photographs

Figure 2. 1897 Sanborn Map showing 617 and 621 High Street in red.

Courtesy of San Francisco Public Library



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Additional Information: Historic Maps and Photographs

Figure 3. Photograph of 621 High Street in 1985.

Courtesy of Palo Alto Historical Association



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Additional Information: Historic Maps and Photographs

Figure 4. Photograph of 617 and 621 High Street in 1983.

Courtesy of Palo Alto Historical Association



Zschokke, Theodore, Cottages
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Additional Information: Historic Maps and Photographs

Figure 5. Photograph of 617 High Street in 1985.

Courtesy of Palo Alto Historical Association

