



historical resource evaluation report
445 virginia avenue
san mateo, ca

completed for:
the city of san mateo
community development department

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submitted by:

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I. Introduction

This historical resource evaluation was prepared by architecture + history, llc (a + h) at the request of the City of San Mateo Community Development Department, to determine whether the residence at 445 Virginia Avenue in San Mateo (APN 034-072-060) qualifies as an historical resource in accordance with Article 5, §15064.5 of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines.

Based on the findings in this report, the house at 445 Virginia Avenue in the Baywood Subdivision of San Mateo does not meet the California Register of Historical Resources criteria. It is the professional opinion of architecture + history, llc (a + h) that the house is not an historical resource under CEQA.

II. Methodology

The methodological approach for this historical property evaluation consisted of a site visit and research on the history of the property the neighborhood, and associated persons and events through the collections of the San Mateo Public Library, the Redwood City Public Library, the San Francisco Public Library, the San Mateo County Historical Association research archives and with the City of San Mateo. Additional research was conducted online using Ancestry.com (Census Records) and the San Mateo County Genealogical Society databases. Further research was conducted using the in-house library of architecture + history, llc. Planning Staff at the San Mateo Community Development Department provided a + h with copies of building permit information for the property.

The research conducted included a review of *San Mateo City Directories*, census records, general histories of San Mateo, and the library catalogue for any additional reference resources related to the properties. Additionally, the vertical file within the Library's California Collection was searched. This collection includes clipping files of topics from local newspapers from the 1940's, 1950's and 1960's. A small portion of this collection can be found within the Online Archive of California (OAC). The OAC was consulted with



regard to long-term occupants and affiliated business of the properties and historic photographs of San Mateo.

Historic Sanborn Fire Insurance Company Maps of San Mateo (1950, 1953, 1956, 1963) were viewed and printed through the San Francisco Public Library's online catalogue. The 1908 Sanborn Map did not illustrate this part of San Mateo or San Mateo Park.¹ As this house was built in 1925, it is not on the 1920 Sanborn Map, but is present on the 1950 Sanborn Map.

Research conducted at the San Mateo County Historical Association archives included consulting the finding aid for the collection including the card index, assorted clippings files, maps, photo albums, and articles. Additionally, the 1989 *City of San Mateo Historic Building Survey* was consulted; however, no properties in the immediate vicinity of this area of Baywood were included in the 1989 survey report.

Google Street Maps and Google Earth satellite images and maps were utilized for reference.



III. Historical Overview of San Mateo

The City of San Mateo was officially incorporated in 1894.² In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the town of San Mateo was an outpost crossroads connecting the north-south rail lines with the east-west stagecoach route to the Pacific. San Mateo had its beginnings as a small village, with development typical of growth along the Peninsula below San Francisco. Train service to San Mateo commenced in October 1863. A wealthy San Franciscan and railroad director, Charles Polhemus, purchased a large swath of land near what became downtown San Mateo and laid out lots for sale in the late 1860s. As rail service expanded, San Mateo became a frequent stop for travelers. The town was ideally situated mid-point on the Peninsula, where roads and rail lines between San Francisco and San Jose connected. Initially a popular summer community, San Mateo soon became a commuter town, a suburb of San Francisco, with families establishing year round homes, and businessmen commuting to the city via train service.

By the 1890s, the town had not extended much beyond Polhemus' original lot demarcations. The 1891 Sanborn Maps shows that development was clustered around the Railroad Depot near 2nd Street and what became Railroad Avenue.³ Richard Jury established a weekly newspaper, *the Leader*, in 1889. An industrious Irish carpenter, Robert Wisnom, built upon his earlier established lumber business and became a town leader at the turn of the century. The first two decades of the next century brought dramatic change to San Mateo; salt-harvesting operations dominated the Baylands, nurseries cropped up on the hillsides, a country club was founded for affluent weekenders, early large estates were subdivided for suburban residential development and a commercial downtown began to take shape. A large-scale hotel, the Peninsula Hotel, was established in 1908 on the former estate of Alvinza Hayward. The hotel was moderately popular as a destination until it was destroyed by fire in 1920. During this period, residential areas of San Mateo expanded through development of fairly large subdivisions such as the Western Addition (1889), Bowie Subdivision (1897), San Mateo Heights (1904) and Hayward's Addition (also 1904 - which included the former Peninsula



Hotel site).⁴ San Mateo Park was laid out in three sections above El Camino Real between 1902 and 1904.⁵

By 1900, San Mateo had 1,832 residents. In 1903 the town was linked to San Francisco by an additional mode of transportation, trolleys, which coupled with refugees from the 1906 earthquake, resulted in expanded residential construction in the first two decades of the twentieth century. From 1900 to 1910, the city's population doubled to 4,384. Downtown was growing and City Directories from this period list several general stores, two pharmacies, two bakeries, a jeweler, two furniture stores, three barbershops, and about a dozen saloons.

By 1920 there were almost 6,000 residents living in San Mateo. A second population boom occurred between 1920 and 1929, when San Mateo had 17,109 inhabitants. Building on its reputation as a summer destination for the elite, the town began to attract middle-class residents who desired the recreational opportunities and mild climate afforded along the Peninsula. Also in the 1920s, the extensive William Kohl estate, once part of Polhemus' lands, was subdivided, and an approximately 16-acre portion was purchased by the city to become Central Park, the first municipal park in the county.

During Prohibition, San Mateo and other parts of San Mateo County were known for their rum running, illegal saloons and speakeasies. The money made by transporting illegal liquor was staggering and gambling and prostitution accompanied the contraband. Bay Meadows race track, where the famous thoroughbred Seabiscuit won two races, was founded in 1934 and became one of the most successful west coast racing venues.

The expansion of the San Francisco International Airport (located on mudflats adjacent to San Bruno and purchased by the City of San Francisco in 1926) brought jobs and increased economic expansion to San Mateo, even during the Depression. Major Works Progress



Administration (WPA) airport projects during the 1930s provided work relief and much needed economic stimulus to both San Francisco and the Peninsula.

World War II brought many service men and women to the Bay Area. Military installations and affiliated businesses further invigorated the post-Depression economy. San Mateo's Bay Meadow Race track was a popular entertainment venue for soldiers and civilians alike, looking to forget wartime troubles. The track remained open primarily because portions proceeds of race gambling were donated to the War effort.

More than 10,000 San Mateo county men entered World War II, with over 300 losing their lives during service. Upon return to California after the war, these former military personnel contributed to major postwar development and expansion that was unprecedented in San Mateo County history. The "build out" of San Mateo and other Peninsula towns was extensive during this period. By the 1960s, the Peninsula's string of commuter towns contributed to the county's population that swelled close to half a million people. El Camino Real, the old county road, became a major thoroughfare lined with early suburban sprawl.



IV. Associated Historic Contexts

Land Use and Residential Development – Baywood

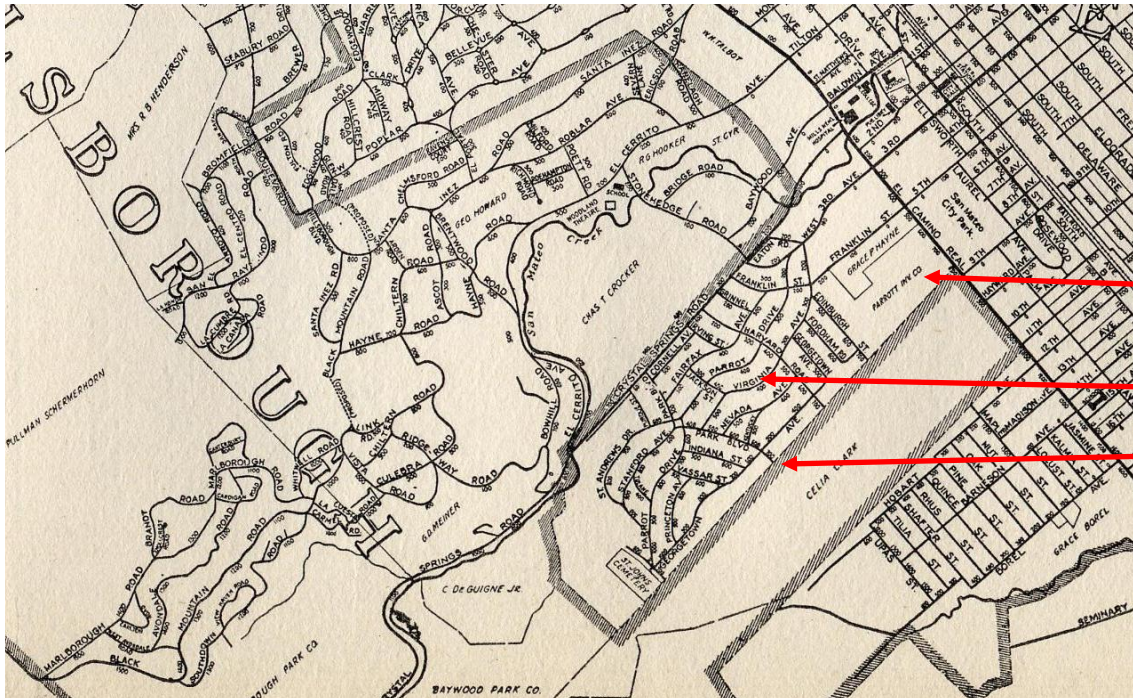
The house 445 Virginia Avenue is located in the Baywood subdivision, named after the estate of John Parrott, first developed nearby in the late 1860s. John Parrott (1811-1884) was a Virginian who served as U.S. Consul in Mazatlán, Mexico from 1837 to 1850. He settled in San Francisco in 1850, making his fortune in banking and finance. Parrott was interested in horticulture and his San Mateo estate included many varieties of trees, flowers and other plantings. The Parrott estate was named after a large cluster of Bay trees that were located on the property. One of these trees remains at the intersection of Fifth and Dartmouth Avenues in a small city park.⁶

This area of San Mateo was subdivided and developed beginning in the mid-1920s. In 1927, D. A. Raybould brokered a complicated deal to purchase the old Parrott estate for residential redevelopment. The players in this land deal included A.P. Giannini, a San Mateo resident and founder of the Bank of Italy, later the Bank of America. The Dunn-Williams Company eventually acquired with the property, which at the time, was San Mateo County's largest real estate venture.⁷ After construction commenced and the neighborhood was just beginning to take shape, a fire on August 5, 1928 destroyed Baywood, the historic John Parrott Mansion.

Unlike the neighborhoods east of El Camino Real which followed a fairly strict street grid, the streets in Baywood were laid out following the general topography, curving through the area. Overall, the Baywood lots were irregular in shape and size, often conforming to the land contours. Many of the pre-World War II Baywood houses reflect the popular Period Revival architectural styles of the time including Spanish, Mediterranean, Monterey, Colonial, Tudor, French, as well as the East Coast influenced "Cape Cod Cottage." Post War houses are most often executed in the Ranch Style, including the Split Level type. Many of the streets in the Baywood neighborhood are named after Colleges and Universities, including Harvard, Georgetown, Fordham, Cornell, and Notre Dame.



The Baywood Subdivision is bounded by Eaton Road and Edinburgh Street to the east, Notre Dame Avenue to the south, Alameda de las Pulgas (formerly Park Boulevard) at the west, and Crystal Springs Road on the north. The Baywood Knolls neighborhood is uphill and to the west of Baywood, while the Aragon neighborhood sits to the south.



A 1929 Map from the Burlingame San Mateo City Directory. The upper red arrow points to the remaining lands of the Parrott estate and the middle arrow points to the streets laid out in the Baywood Subdivision, including Virginia Avenue, and the lower arrow points to Park Boulevard, now called Alameda de las Pulgas.

V. History of Subject Property

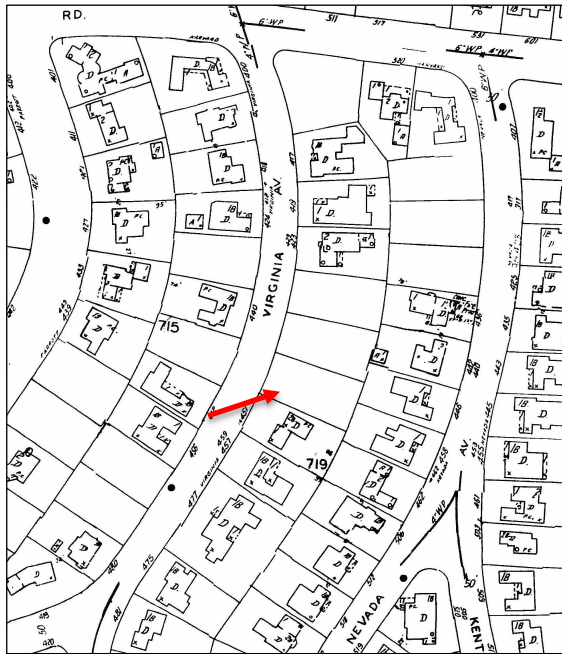
445 Virginia Avenue, San Mateo

Building Chronology

The original building permit for this house is dated June 20, 1955. A summary of building permit history follows:

Date	Permit Number	Names	Description / Cost
June 20, 1955	28001	D. M. Sturgeon, owner; W. S. Adams, builder / contractor; no architect listed	\$25,600.00; new construction; 2-story single family residence
June 22, 1976	61756	Charlotte Ross, owner; Rodriquez Roofing, contractor	\$3,800.00; reroof with heavy shakes
December 12, 1978	None listed	Charlotte Ross, owner; Izmirian Roofing & Sheet Metal, contractor	Cost not shown; replace furnace
November 25, 1992	27422	Charlotte Ross, owner; McCallion Construction, contractor	\$5,000.00; Repair fire damage to kitchen
December 15, 1992	27599	Charlotte Ross and Stan Fisher, owner; McCallion Construction, contractor	\$46,550.00; Add small addition to rear, remodel kitchen and bathrooms
July 16, 2003	214507	Thuy and Andy Wu, owner; J. A. Font Roofing, contractor	\$13,500.00; Reroof with fiberglass shingles
August 18, 2017	2017-263878	Josh Smith, owner; Flores Construction, contractor	\$3,000.00; Repair / Alter Deck





*Above: A detail of the 1950 Sanborn Map, with red arrow pointing to the lot where 445 Virginia Avenue would be constructed in 1955.
Below: The 1956 Sanborn Map showing the footprint of 445 Virginia Avenue.*



Occupants and Owners

City Directory listings and building permits inform the chronology of owners and occupants of the house at 445 Virginia Avenue. The home was constructed for David M. Sturgeon and family in 1955.⁸ The 1956 San Mateo City Directory indicates that Sturgeon and his wife, Jean, were residing at the house at 445 Virginia Avenue. Mr. Sturgeon worked at Bostich Inc. in San Francisco.⁹ A March 1958 *San Mateo Times* article about the family details an injury sustained by the Sturgeon's son, Larry, in a driveway scooter accident.¹⁰

From at least 1962 to 1974, Cecil H. Worrell a sales manager at Elgin Corporation, and his wife Florence, resided at 445 Virginia Avenue. Their son, Cecil E. Worrells, who was an assist professor at San Mateo College, also lived with them for a period of time before moving to San Jose with his family.¹¹ Cecil E. Worrells received a Ph.D. degree from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign in 1974.¹²

The home was listed for sale in March 1975.¹³ From 1976 until the mid-1990s Charlotte Ross owned and resided at 445 Virginia Avenue.¹⁴



VI. Architectural Analysis

Site and Building Description

The single-family residence at 445 Virginia Avenue in the Baywood neighborhood was constructed in 1955. The wood-frame house resembles what is often termed a Split Level-type Ranch Style home. There is a prominent Roman brick chimney at the front, north, elevation. The house has a low, hipped roof with an overhang and a second chimney projects from the southern portion of the roof. The house has horizontal wood siding above the garage level, which is stuccoed. The east side of the front elevation includes the garage door at the lower level and a corner, wrap around window at the upper level. The front stairs, L-shaped in plan, ascend from the driveway to the front porch and have a decorative metal railing. The solid front door is flanked by two full-height, divided side lights. The brick chimney is flanked on each side by sliding windows, that correspond to the interior living room at the main level. The east side of front yard is occupied by the driveway that directly accesses the garage and the front stairs. The west side of the front yard is situated behind a retaining wall.





Above: The front, north, façade of the house at 445 Virginia Avenue.

Below: A detail of the wrap-around window at the northeast corner of the house.



Architectural Type and Style

The house at 445 Virginia Avenue resembled what is often termed a Split-Level type house, a distinctive housing form that evolved after World War II in American suburban neighborhoods. The type responds to the ballooning number of cars and commuters, as well as escalating real estate costs in new housing developments. Often executed with the characteristics found in a one-story Ranch style home, in the Split-Level, two additional levels were added, differentiating it from the Ranch. With the Split-Level house, the bedroom level is situated a few steps up from the living area, and a lower level was located a few steps down frequently with the family and utility rooms, as well as access to the garage. Unlike the single level Ranch house, Split-Level homes featured a more innovative design where the floor levels were staggered, creating two levels of living space in distinct areas of the home. Typically, the front entry opens into the main level, which is halfway between the upper and lower floors. The main level often features common living areas, including a living room, dining room, kitchen, and deck off the back. The two half staircases, one running upward to the bedroom level and one going downward to a basement level, were accessed from the main living space. The lower level often featured a finished family room, a laundry room, and access to the garage at the same level as the driveway.

The house at 445 Virginia, was built into the hillside, with the garage at the downhill portion of the lot, resembling the configuration of a Split-Level house from the exterior.



Common Features of the Split-Level House

- Wood frame construction with more solid foundation of brick or concrete block or sheathed in stucco to appear more solid
- A low pitched, gable or hipped shaped roof
- Deep, overhanging roof eaves
- Rectangular, L-shaped or U-shaped in plan
- Asymmetrical façade
- Exterior stairs to front entry
- Horizontal wood siding
- Prominent chimney
- A large picture window, often lighting the living room
- Varying window types throughout rest of house
- Integrated garage at lower level
- Crawl space under part of the home
- Minimal exterior decoration, such as shutters or wood trim
- Often situated at center of lot with fairly spacious rear and front yards

Architect, Engineer, Builder or Landscape Architect

The original building permit indicates that this house was built by W. S. Adams of Millbrae. This was likely Wilbert S. Adams, builder, listed in both the 1946 and 1953 Burlingame-Hillsborough-San Mateo-Millbrae City Directories.¹⁵ A search of the *San Mateo Times* did not result in any additional information on Mr. Adams or any of his other projects.¹⁶



VII. Application of California Register Criteria

Under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) resources that meet the criteria of the California Register of Historical Resources are considered historical resources for the purposes of CEQA. Determinations of historical significance require that several factors are considered including: the property's history (both construction and use); the history and context of the surrounding community; an association with important persons or uses; the number of resources associated with the property; the potential for the resources to be the work of a master architect, builder, craftsman, landscape gardener, or artist; the historical, architectural or landscape influences that have shaped the property's design and its pattern of use; and alterations that have taken place, and lastly how these changes may have affected the property's historical integrity.

These issues must be explored thoroughly before a final determination of significance can be established. To be eligible for the California Register historic resources must possess both historic significance and retain historic integrity. The following are the four significance criteria of the California Register. Upon review of the criteria, if historic significance is identified, then an integrity analysis is conducted. To be eligible for the California Register, an historical resource must be significant at the local, state, or national level under at least one of the following criteria:

Criterion 1: Event or Patterns of Events

It is associated with events or patterns of events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of local or regional history, or the cultural heritage of California or the United States.

Historical research indicates that the house at 445 Virginia Avenue in San Mateo does not qualify individually under Register Criterion 1: Event/Patterns of Events. While the building possesses an association with the development of the Baywood Subdivision in San Mateo, this association does not rise to a level of significance to



justify individual California Register eligibility. While the house is illustrative of the housing type and pattern of development within the Baywood subdivision, that association is evident in many of the houses in the subdivision and is not individually significant in this case.

Criterion 2: Important Person(s)

It is associated with the lives of persons important to local, California, or national history.

Historical research has determined that the house at 445 Virginia Avenue is not associated with any individuals who have had an important role in local, California or national history. None of the individual or families that owned or occupied the appear to have been significant within the context of the history of San Mateo. As a result, this residence does not qualify individually under California Register Criterion 2: Important Person(s).

Criterion 3: Design/Construction

It embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, region, or method of construction, or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values.

No significant architect or designer has been identified with the property. The builder, W. S. Adams does not appear to be a master builder. No historical information was found that illustrates any significant contribution to Post War housing stock in San Mateo on the part of Mr. Adams. While the house embodies the distinctive characteristics of a Split-Level type Ranch house, it is not an outstanding example within the context of the style as represented in San Mateo and thus is not individually eligible for the California Register.



Criterion 4: Information Potential

It has yielded, or has the potential to yield, information important to the prehistory or history of the local area, California or the nation.

Evaluation of archeological resources was outside the scope of this report. There is the possibility that archaeological resources could be present on the site. This should be taken into consideration and standard monitoring practices should be employed if construction involves extensive excavation.

Since the house at 445 Virginia Avenue does not possess individual historical significance, an analysis of historic integrity or chronology of changes has not been undertaken.



VIII. Application of CEQA

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Public Resources Code §21084.1 provides that any project that may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an historical resource is a project that may have a significant effect on the environment. Public Resources Code §5020.1(q) defines "substantial adverse change" as demolition, destruction, relocation, or alteration such that the significance of the historical resource would be impaired. According to Public Resources Code §5024.1, an historical resource is a resource that is listed in, or determined to be eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources; included in a local register of historical resources; or is identified as significant in a historic resource survey if that survey meets specified criteria.

According to CEQA Guidelines §15064.5(a)(3), a lead agency can find a resource has been determined to be significant in the architectural, engineering, scientific, economic, agricultural, educational, social, political, military, or cultural annals of California, provided that the determination is supported by substantial evidence in light of the whole record.

The house at 445 Virginia Avenue does not meet the California Register of Historical Resources criteria and is thus not an historical resource under CEQA.



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X. Endnotes

¹ San Mateo Sanborn Maps, San Francisco Public Library Online.

² Research for the Historical Overview section of this report was generally taken from Alan Hynding. *From Frontier to Suburb: the Story of the San Mateo Peninsula* (1982); Mitchell Postel. *San Mateo: A Centennial History* (1994); and Frank Stanger. *A History of San Mateo County* (1938).

³ Sanborn Fire Insurance Map Company, 1891 San Mateo Map, Sheet 1.

⁴ Arthur Schade, “The Development of San Mateo Through Subdivision and the History of the City Limits of San Mateo,” Maps, 1 – 7, 9, and 12.

⁵ Ibid, Maps 8, 10 and 13.

⁶ Postel, *San Mateo: A Centennial History*, and Gregory Zompoli, *Images of America: San Mateo*.

⁷ Postel, *San Mateo: A Centennial History*, 174.

⁸ City of San Mateo Building Permit.

⁹ San Mateo City Directory, 1958

¹⁰ “Boy Injured in Scooter Crash.” *San Mateo Times*. March 24, 1958. Page 5.

¹¹ San Mateo City Directories 1962-1974.

¹² “Doctorate.” *San Mateo Times*. June 22, 1974. Page 4.

¹³ *San Mateo Times*. March 22, 1975. Page 18.

¹⁴ San Mateo City Directories 1976-1980 and City of San Mateo Building Permits.

¹⁵ San Mateo City Directories 1946 and 1953.

¹⁶ *San Mateo Times* as indexed in Newspapers.com 1925-1977.

