

Villa Montezuma
1925 K Street
San Diego, San Diego County
California

HABS No. CAL-432

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Western Office, Division of Design and Construction
450 Golden Gate Avenue
San Francisco, California

PHOTOGRAPH-DATA BOOK REPORT
HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

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VILLA MONTEZUMA

San Diego, San Diego County, California

ADDRESS: 1925 K Street (Twentieth and K Streets)
OWNER: Mrs. C. F. Jaeger
OCCUPANT: Mrs. C. F. Jaeger
USE: Residence

HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

"Villa Montezuma a magnificent and artistic home, devoted to music, art and literature"

"Situated on a Gently sloping hill-side on the corner of Twentieth and K Streets, and commanding a magnificent view of San Diego and its incomparably lovely surroundings, stands a private residence that the citizens may look upon with pardonable pride. It is the Villa Montezuma, the home of world-famous pianist and vocalist Jesse Shepard, whose wonderful performances thrilled the music loving of two continents. There is something so very peculiar, something so very striking about even the exterior of the building that the passer-by cannot but stop and admire its extreme unostentatious eccentricity."

So wrote a contemporary of the owner of this remarkable dwelling in the City and County of San Diego Biographical Sketches, the Leberthon Taylor Publishers, 1888.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Villa Montezuma was designed for and by Jesse Francis Shepard, said to have been through the architectural firm of N. A. Comstock and

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Carl Trotsche outstanding exponents of the frilly treatment of wood, plaster and metal prevailing during the Victorian Period.

Built in 1887 at the corner (S.W.) of Twentieth and K Streets, the original site is said to have included the entire block.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

The grandure of Villa Montezuma is emphasized by the unique and varied handling of the details, many of which were the fashion of the time.

The building seems to be with only minor exceptions (plumbing alterations) in its original form and structurally sound though the finish is suffering some deterioration.

EXTERIOR

Overall Dimensions:

The present site measures one hundred feet on Twentieth Street and ninety four and one half feet on K Street. The site slopes down to the west along K Street about five and one half feet.

The structure has an overall length of approximately 76'-0" including the northeast octagonal tower and the westerly chimney which projects 1'-4". The overall width of 56'-8" includes the 8" corbled bay window on the upper stairway landing at the north and the added 10'-0" of Terrace-Porch at the south, beyond the main tower.

The Twentieth Street set-back is about 18'-6" from the sidewalk. And the K Street set-back is about 14'-1" from the sidewalk.

Foundation and Wall Construction:

The building rests upon spread concrete footings, including the fireplace chimneys.

The walls from the Basement floor up to the Main floor are of

solid brick faced with cement marked off as large masonry blocks. However, the west end and part of the south side are above grade and the walls like the upper levels are constructed of normal wood frame.

Exterior walls display many of the fancy patterns in shingles popular in the 1880's, diamond, round, square, etc. A remarkable feature is the placing of these pattern shingles on curved surfaces with very small radii. Half timber with intermediate plaster panels (textured with embedded pebbles) occurs in several places. A wood plaque in bas-relief (round) is set in a shingled area on the east wall. Diagonal and horizontal tongue and groove siding is frequently used on the exterior (also on interior), as exposed panels. Other features of the exterior are cove wood cornice, corbled wood bay, spindle type columns at windows, stock wood mouldings and panels.

There are five fireplaces, their flues carried by two brick chimneys. Each chimney is surmounted by two tall terracotta chimney pots. There is another chimney on the exterior, at the west end, that is constructed of masonry blocks to the Main floor level and brick on above the roof height.

Porches:

There are two porches, the Entrance Porch on the north side (K Street) and the Terrace Porch on the south side, both are raised above ground.

Doorways:

The original entrance door to the Entrance-Stair Hall is about four feet wide, a Dutch door with a glazed upper panel and a simple wood moulding surrounding it. The newer door, that enters directly to the music room, is about three feet wide, fully glazed and surrounded with a curved pediment, carried on pilasters.

Other exterior doors at the west (service end) are about two feet eight inches to three feet wide with one or two glazed upper panels and wood lower panels. Doors to the Terrace Porch are glazed.

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Windows:

The windows in this house are perhaps its most remarkable aspect, as viewed from either the exterior or the interior. They are in great variety and include round, rectangular, oval head, round head, straight and curved in plan. They are vented both as double hung and as casement but most of them are fixed sash.

Pictorial colored glass windows are used throughout the principal rooms and elsewhere also. The most striking window is the three panel window in the Music Room, consisting of a central oval head with round head either side. A magnificent three panel curved colored glass window in the Drawing Room is protected on the outside by corresponding panels of curved clear glass.

The colored glass windows are used as pictures to express the character and ideals of the owner by reference to cultural masters and master works in art, music and literature.

Roof:

The roof has a number of variations. One of these results when the characteristically wide gables are modified by the use of central narrower projecting bays of a tall proportion, thus giving the gables unusual prominence. The roof now is covered with asphalt shingles on the moderate slope of forty five degrees.

Cupolas and towers are frequent and are usually round in plan though the main tower is square in plan with a reverse curve dome suggesting Saracenic influence. A round bay window with conical roof is located at the northeast corner.

Metal finials and ornamental ridge cresting are used on nearly all roof prominances.

INTERIOR

Floor Plans:

The basement extends under the entire building with approximately

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one half housing the kitchen and service facilities, which are located in the westerly portion and consist of a large kitchen with an adjacent room suitable for dining or sitting, with what appears to be an unused brick chimney on its east wall. Also, there are two store rooms, a dumb-waiter, a half bath and a door to the lower area of the Terrace Porch. There is a service stair to the Main floor.

The Main floor is entered through the Entrance Stair Hall near the middle of the K Street elevation. From this hall a pair of six foot wide sliding doors leads eastward to the elegant Reception Room (with fireplace), and continuing eastward through another pair of six foot wide sliding doors leads to the magnificent Music Room (with fireplace). The room extends across the entire east end of the house. At the northeast corner, there is a small octagonal tower alcove.

Turning west at the south end of the Music Room leads through a pair of six foot wide sliding doors to the Drawing Room (with corner fireplace) and a curved south bay window. A single four foot sliding door leads back to the Entrance Stair Hall.

Continuing west from the Drawing Room leads through a pair of six foot wide sliding doors to the Master Bed Room (with fireplace and an adjacent bath room).

From the Entrance Stair Hall and proceeding west leads through a pair of six foot wide sliding doors to the Dining Room (with fireplace).

The remaining westerly portion of this floor has a hall with dumb waiter, the Basement stair, two bedrooms one of which has a small sitting room.

The Bed Room in the southwest corner of the building above the sitting-dining space in the basement, seems to have an un-used chimney.

The principal rooms have wainscote of walnut, together with six inch (nominal) base, plinths and trim moulding. Coordinated Redwood upper paneling on the walls and ceilings (all carrying a dark hard finish) contrasted with the silver gray lincrusta walton background of the ceiling patterns gives a very luxurious effect. The Music Room has an addition-recessed central panel

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in the ceiling and coved frieze which add to the impressiveness. There are five fireplaces with tile surrounds and flush tile hearths.

Stairways:

The main stairway from the Entrance Stair Hall to the Upper floor (owner's sanctum) consists of a wood stair of generous proportions with twelve risers straight away to the first winder where the stair turns a right angle continuing to a total of eighteen risers. The first riser returns about a rather massive square newel post. The banister is of wood carved in an unusual and interesting vertical-diagonal pattern. All of this is carried on a free hung stringer that is ornamented with lincrusta walton. Other features are the wood paneling above the inner stringer, a wood handrail each side, the heavy cornice mould with egg and dart mould surrounding opening to the Upper floor. The floor thickness is covered with a frieze of lincrusta walton.

The stairway from the basement to the Main Floor is of wood enclosed both sides. There are four risers along the west wall from the dining-sitting space adjacent to the kitchen, also, there are four risers from outside the west wall that continues through an exterior door and up an additional twelve risers to the Main Floor. The two four riser runs join in an unusual manner without benefit of a landing.

A third stair continues from the Upper floor (owner's sanctum) to the observation tower. It is built of Spanish Cedar in three straight runs. The first run is open string and rises along the south wall of the room to a free standing Corinthian column. The second run proceeds along the west wall of the tower. The third run proceeds along the south wall of the tower to the Observatory.

Floors:

In the Basement, the floor is of cement finished concrete and extends under the entire house. It is in three stepped planes. The two most easterly slope several inches down toward the west. The westerly panel is occupied by the kitchen service facilities and is level.

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The Main Floor is of four inch flooring (probably select vertical grain Douglas Fir) at present it has a gymnasium finish on it. In the small tower alcove from the Music Room, the floor is colored pattern ceramic tile and, also, in the middle of the Entrance Stair Hall there is a panel of colored pattern ceramic tile about four feet by eight feet. The Upper floors of wood have similar characteristics.

Miscellaneous Items:

The hardware is of superior quality and unique design. The entrance door, for example, has very tall, patterned dull brass hinges and very long vertical bolts for locking the double part of the Dutch Door.

The original lighting was gas and in the Music Room, at its center hung an elaborate oriental candelabra containing on the outer circle six pale blue wax candles and within was a heavily jeweled metallic shade with a single wax candle.

REFERENCES

1. City and County of San Diego Biographical Sketches, Leberthon and Taylor, Publishers 1888
2. San Diego Union, June 16, 1957 - May 28, 1961
3. Mrs. Amelia Jaeger, Widow of the late Carl F. Jaeger

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December 1964

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DATE: *Jan 22 1965*

Addendum to
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National Park Service
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Washington, D.C. 20240