

ELMSHAVEN
(Robert Pratt Place)
125 Glass Mountain Lane
Saint Helena
Napa County
California

HALS CA-94
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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY

ELMSHAVEN (Robert Pratt Place)

HALS NO. CA-94

Location: 125 Glass Mountain Lane, St. Helena, Napa County, California
Latitude: 38.537072, longitude: -122.478606 (tower on the main house, Google Earth, Simple Cylindrical Projection, WGS84)

Significance: The following statement of significance is excerpted from the National Historic Landmark Nomination. "Elmshaven is historically significant as the home, from 1900 to 1915, of Ellen Gould White (1827-1915), a co-founder of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Her pioneering efforts were the basis for the widespread success of the Church. Her achievement is recognized by a variety of important historical sources, including the Dictionary of American Biography which states that "during [her] long life span she exerted the most powerful single influence on Seventh-day Adventist believers." ¹

Ronald Numbers, a noted historian in the Department of the History of Science at the University of Wisconsin, concluded in his study of White that she should be recognized as the co-founder and driving force behind what became "one of the nation's largest indigenous denominations." As a part of her efforts, she fostered the creation of a worldwide group of sanitariums that stretched from Scandinavia to the South Pacific. "Few contemporaries, male or female, accomplished more."²

Although White lived at Elmshaven in the latter part of her life, she energetically continued her lifelong administrative and organizational efforts while residing there. Elmshaven was more than Ellen White's home, it was the place from which she generated and directed a campaign to establish Seventh-day Adventist Sanitariums across the United States. Additionally, from 1901-1909, Ellen White used her influence and weight within the Church to assist a "major reorganization of the Seventh-day Adventist Administrative structure."³

Ellen White did not wither as she grew older but wrote voluminously during her residence at Elmshaven. In fact, her latter years were "one of her most productive periods."⁴ During her "Elmshaven years" Ellen White consolidated the substantial gains she struggled to attain in her lifetime. The rise in Seventh-

¹ Dumas Malone, ed., Dictionary of American Biography, vol. 10 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), 98.

² Ronald L. Numbers, *Prophets of Health: A Study of Ellen G. White*, (New York: Harper & Row Pubs., 1976), ix, 186.

³ Roy E. Graham, *Ellen G. White: Co-founder of the Seventh-day Adventist Church*, (New York: Peter Lang Pub. Inc., 1985), 31-32.

⁴ Numbers, 186.

day Adventist membership has been meteoric, growing from 100 followers involved in intense Bible study in 1849 to 3,500 members in 1863. At the time of Ellen White's death in 1915, the Church had grown into an international religious movement of 136,879 members. The rise in membership continued after White's death.”⁵

Description: Access to Elmshaven is off Glass Mountain Lane via a small, triangular-shape visitor parking area. The parking is located at a low point in the southwest corner of the site. An arched entry gate at the far end of the parking lot consists of brick columns and a wrought iron arch with the name Elmshaven. From the gate a 12'-wide asphalt drive leads to the southeast corner of the main house. On the north side of the entry drive there is a stone wall, a sloped bank of periwinkle (*Vinca major*), mature trees surrounding the main house and a view of the south façade. The trees include incense cedar (*Calocedrus decurrens*), a multi-trunk redwood (*Sequoia sempervirens*), deodar cedar (*Cedrus deodar*) and a Japanese maple (*Acer palmatum*). Elms (*Ulmus americana*) at the top and bottom of the slope arch over the entry drive. As you walk up the entry drive a viburnum hedge screens the adjacent property to the east, and a southern magnolia (*Magnolia grandiflora*) is on the right at the top of the drive. This tree replaced an elm visible in historic photos at this location.

Today the property includes five buildings that surround a central open space. Three are contributing and two, added during restoration work from 1978 to 1981, are non-contributing. The main house built in 1885 is classified as a late Victorian Stick/Eastlake style. It has a stone foundation, wood siding, a shingle roof and three brick chimneys. In 1902 Ellen White added a tower with bay windows on the southeast corner of the house. This room is where she did most of her writing. The main house is painted white with green shutters.

Forty feet northeast of the main house is a four-story tank house. It has a 3000 gallon water tank. A one-story cottage was added to the tank house, and there is a detached garage. One hundred feet north of the main house is a two-story office/library/vault building built in 1903. The tank house and office/library/vault are wood and painted white. The fourth and fifth structures are a small carriage house and a masonry (CMU block) public restroom.

The 100' x 55'⁶ central open space is paved with asphalt, and an asphalt path wraps around the south side of the main house. Concrete steps on the south side

⁵ Putnam Miller, Dr. Page & Mesirrow, Jill S., National Historic Landmark Nomination, 12 November 1992. NPS Form 10-900 USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form (Rev. 8-86) OMB No. 1024-0018, United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service National Register of Historic Places Registration Form.

⁶ Dimensions are taken from Google Earth and are approximate.

lead to a wood porch and the front door. The base of the steps is marked with two egg-shaped granite boulders. Foundation planting beds are defined by bricks set on edge at an angle. The beds are three feet wide and planted with shrubs, vines and perennials. A boxwood (*Buxus suffruticosa*) hedge at the northwest corner appears to be original as does a very large sarcococca (*Sarcococca ruscifolia*) on the north side of the residence. Other foundation plantings include hydrangea, rhododendron, bear's breech (*Acanthus mollis*), heavenly bamboo (*Nandina domestica* hybrid), roses, and pittosporum (*Pittosporum eugeniodes*).

Pink and white camellias (*Camellia japonica*) were planted after the period of significance (1900 – 1915) on the east side of the house. These have been sheared into a solid mass that obscures the lattice and porch on the southeast corner of the main house. A jasmine vine (*Jasminum polyanthum*) is planted on the west side of the front porch. Historic photographs depict this porch covered with what looks like a Cecile Brunner Rose (*Rosa 'Cecile Brunner'*). A photo dated 1915 shows a profusely blooming vine covering much of the west and south sides of the porch on the ground floor and more blooms up on the second story porch where Ellen White can be seen lying in bed after she fell and broke her hip.

A half-circle-shaped bed, also edged with brick, is on the west side of the house and is planted with roses. In historic photos this bed appeared to be planted with lawn. Currently there is also lawn on the south side of the main house. Within the lawn is a stone drinking fountain – a plaque reads: “A gift from Healdsburg College Students and Teachers 1882 – 1908.”

Two large shrubs, both sheared into spherical shapes, are at the edge of the lawn – one is a holly (*Ilex* sp.) and may date to the period of significance while the other, a privet (*Ligustrum lucidum*) is likely a volunteer that was left to grow. Between this lawn and the bank of periwinkle there are shrub beds. These beds are edged with rock. Paths between the beds are gravel. They are planted with a mixture of small trees, shrubs and perennials that include an ornamental crabapple (*Malus* sp.), azalea, Japanese aralia (*Fatsia japonica*), roses, viburnum, mock orange (*Choysia ternata*), iris, quince (*Chaenomeles* sp.), coral bells (*Heuchera* hybrid), lily-of-the-Nile (*Agapanthus africanus*) daylilies (*Hemerocallis* hybrids), shore juniper (*Juniperus conferta*), coast rosemary (*Westringia fruticosa*), and tulip and daffodil bulbs . These plantings appear to be recent additions.

Off the southeast corner of the main house, and under one of the two incense cedars there are remnants of a small two-tiered pond from the period of significance. The lower basin is concrete and approximately three feet in diameter. The upper basin is proportionately smaller. Both basins are surrounded by craggy rocks. Also in this area of the garden are two trapezoidal-

shaped concrete piers. In historic photos planted pots sit on top of each pier.

A massive live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*) anchors one corner of the central open space at the northwest corner of the main house. Its 63 foot canopy provides shade over the carriage house and restroom building. Foundation plantings around the tank house and office/library/vault are more limited and include sheared shrubs and vines. North of the tank house there is a small patio area and kitchen garden – both recent additions.

Views from the main house and central open space look out into the garden, and over a small vineyard that originally extended to Glass Mountain Road. The now 3-acre property includes remnants of orchards, a small greenhouse/potting shed, a brick furnace, and a kitchen garden north of the Tank House.

History: The property was originally purchased in 1885 by Robert Pratt, Assistant General Superintendent of the Southern Pacific Railroad. Pratt purchased 74 acres on which he designed and built the main house, a barn, cottages and a fruit-dipping shed. He planted orchard trees including 2000 plums, peaches, and five acres each of wine grapes and olive trees. Pratt also imported and planted some of the ornamental trees that remain around the main house including the incense cedars and deodar cedar.

In 1892 Pratt sold his property to J.A. Burden who managed the nearby Rural Health Retreat. Burden wanted the property because it included deeded access to Crystal Spring that would provide a reliable source of water for the retreat. In 1900, Burden sold 60 of the original acres to Ellen G. White for \$5000, which included the main house with all its furnishings and even bed linens. A photograph dated 1900 shows the Pratt-built house on a small knoll. The stone wall along the entry drive is visible as is a barn east of the house. A few small trees had been planted around the house and there is a group of large trees between the house and the barn. The Rural Health Retreat and a few other structures can be seen on the hills above the house. When Ellen G. White purchased the property a row of young elm trees inspired the name Elmshaven.

Ellen G. White “advocated vegetarianism, healthy eating, temperance, hydropony, and saw the solution to the urban problems of America “in returning to an agrarian economy”⁷ As such she maintained the orchards planted by Pratt. Her property included the barn, horse stables, a cottage, a carriage shed, a well and windmill. The fruit-dipping shed north of the barn was used to process fruit produced by the orchard. During White’s residence the Home Fruit Company was established and provided food for the household, church workers and sales

⁷ Putnam Miller, Dr. Page & Mesirov, Jill S., National Historic Landmark Nomination, National Park Service, 12 November 1992, p. 15.

helped sustain the household. They grew peaches, prunes, table grapes, olives and maintained gardens, berry patches, hay fields and cow pasture. One historic photograph provides an overview of the property from the St. Helena Sanitarium. This image shows acres of fruit trees at peak bloom – they look like a mass of white cotton balls in the landscape.

Ellen Gould Harmon White

Ellen G. White was born 26 November, 1827 in Gorham, Maine. She and her twin sister were the seventh and eight children of the Harmon family. The Harmons were a strict Methodist family until William Miller began to preach of the coming of Jesus. The Harmons supported Millers beliefs and that led to their expulsion from the Methodist Church. The Harmons and others became known as Millerite Adventists. In December 1844 at the age of 17 Ellen G. White had her first religious vision. She saw the Adventist people traveling up an illuminated path to a city. White believed the message was intended to reassure the Adventist followers of the coming of Jesus. During the course of her life she experienced and wrote about some 2000 visions. She described these visions as messages from an angel who came to her in a glow of light.

Ellen became a messenger for the Adventist and began traveling, writing and speaking for the church. She met and married James White, another Millerite, in Portland, Maine on 30 August 1846. Ellen and James continued to travel extensively throughout the United States, Europe, Australia and New Zealand. James White founded the *Pacific Press* in Oakland, California and used it as a venue for publishing his wife's writings as well as other Adventist literature. Ellen G. White was a prolific writer. During her lifetime she wrote 5000 articles and 27 books – nine of them during the time she lived at Elmshaven. Since her death the church has continued to compile her writings bringing the total number of books to 40. White wrote about her visions, scripture, healthy living and the value of education. The site brochure notes, "She is the most translated woman writer in the entire history of literature, and the most translated American author of either gender. Her masterpiece on successful Christian living, *Steps To Christ* ... has been published in more than 140 languages"⁸

In the 1850s and 60s Ellen and James White played a key role in changing how the Seventh-Day Adventist Church was organized. Before this time church leaders were fundamentally opposed to being organized. The Whites understood the need to change and their efforts led to a major reorganization. Beginning in 1901 Ellen G. White again catalyzed another major denominational reorganization of the church.

In December of 1865 Ellen G. White had a vision that led her to advocate for the

⁸ Elmshaven, Pacific Press Publishing Association, p. 3.

establishment of health institutions. In 1866 the church opened the Western Health Reform Institute in Battle Creek, Michigan, and they started a periodical devoted to health – the *Health Reformer*. She played an instrumental role in the churches acquisition of three established hospitals – Paradise Valley Sanitarium, Glendale Sanitarium and Loma Linda Sanitarium. Ellen G. White then went on to promote Loma Linda as a training facility for physicians – now Loma Linda University Medical Center. She wrote *The Ministry of Healing* in 1905. By the mid-1990s these efforts resulted in 152 hospitals, 330 dispensaries, clinics and medical launches and 95 retirement homes and orphanages.⁹

In 1874 Ellen G. White had a dream about missions. This vision ultimately led the church to take up a broad based missionary plan. “The Seventh-day Adventist Church has sent a steady stream of personnel to every corner of the globe. By early 1995 the denomination had established programs in 208 of the world’s 236 nations and was preaching the Advent message in 732 languages.”¹⁰

In 1872 Ellen G. White wrote *Proper Education* which began her advocacy for “the physical, mental, moral and religious education of children. The concept of a balanced education of the whole person would become a hallmark of Mrs. White’s writings on education for the next 40 years.”¹¹ While living in New South Wales, Australia she focused on establishing the Avondale School for Christian Workers and used it as a venue to put her educational vision into practice. The Avondale School “emphasized the Bible, missionary activities, and the spiritual side of life. In addition it taught young people useful skills for practical life.”¹² Ellen G. White also advocated for the elementary school movement – not previously a focus of the Adventist. Battle Creek College in Michigan, Atlantic Union College in Massachusetts and Pacific Union College in Healdsburg, California are three institutions established by the Adventists, in large part as a result of Ellen G White’s advocacy.

Though Ellen G. White is considered a pioneer leader of the Seventh-day Adventist church she never held an official position in the church’s leadership structure. Though she was trained as a minister she was never ordained. One of the exhibits in a hall way of the main house has photographs of twelve Seventy-day Adventist pioneer leaders; eleven are men and the twelfth is Ellen G. White. The caption identifies her as “God’s messenger (Prophetess), author, a

⁹ Knight, George, *Meeting Ellen White, A Fresh Look at her life, writings, and major themes* (Review and Herald Publishing Association), 1996, p. 50

¹⁰ Knight, p. 53

¹¹ Knight, p. 55

¹² Knight, p. 66

missionary.”

Ellen G. White died on 16 July 1915 while living at Elmshaven. Memorial services were held for her at Elmshaven and in Battle Creek, Michigan where she is buried with her husband.

Elmshaven is listed on the Register of Historic Places and was designated as a National Historic Landmark in 1993. It is currently owned and operated by the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Sources: Knight, George, *Meeting Ellen White, A Fresh Look at Her Life, Writings, and Major Themes*, Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1996.

Putnam Miller, Dr. Page and Mesirov, Jill S., National Historic Landmark Nomination, 12 November 1992. NPS Form 10-900 USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form (Rev. 8-86) OMB No. 1024-0018, United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service National Register of Historic Places Registration Form. NHLS 93001609, Published 4 November 1993.

Elmshaven History at <http://www.elmshaven.org/elmshaven-history>.

Ellen G. White Estate Gallery, <http://www.whiteestate.org/photos/photos.asp>

Information presented during a docent-led house tour by Dennis Brown, March 2013.

Site Brochure: Elmshaven, Pacific Press Publishing Association. Undated and no identified author.

Historian: Chris Pattillo, FASLA

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4 May 2013

2013 HALS Challenge Entry: *Documenting the Cultural Landscapes of Women*



Elmshaven gate, entry drive with stone wall and slope planted with periwinkle. Elm trees arch over the drive. Main house at the left. (Chris Pattillo, March 2013).



Tank house. Southern magnolia at the right, incense cedar, left foreground. One of two trapezoid-shaped piers with a pot. (Chris Pattillo, March 2013).



East facing façade of the main house with the tower added by Ellen G. White. Sheared camellias. (Chris Pattillo, March 2013).



Southwest corner of the main house with a jasmine vine at the front porch, foundation beds edged with brick, rose bed on the west side of the house. The egg-shaped stones can be seen at the foot of the porch steps. (Chris Pattillo, March 2013).



Interior of the tower room where Ellen G. White did most of her writing while she lived at Elms Haven 1900 – 1915. The view from her room looks out over the garden and orchards. (Chris Pattillo, March 2013).



Central open space defined by the main house (not visible to the right), the tank house with one-story addition and free-standing garage (right) and the office/library/vault (left of center). The live oak anchors the southwest corner of the central open space. (Chris Pattillo, March 2013).