

SIMPSON-HUNTER HOUSE
3055 Crane Street
Lemon Grove
San Diego County
California

HABS No. CA-436

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Building Survey
Pacific West Region
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
San Francisco, California 94102

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDING SURVEY

SIMPSON-HUNTER HOUSE

HABS No. CA-436

- Location:** 3055 Crane Street
Lemon Grove, CA 91945

Latitude: 32°44'17.99" N
Longitude: 117°00'59.11" W
- Present Owner:** California Department of Transportation
1120 N Street
Sacramento, CA 95814
- Present Use:** Residence
- Significance:** The Simpson-Hunter House illustrates the trend among residents of San Diego in the 1920s and 1930s to establish residences in the nearby countryside, a phenomenon associated with the rising popularity of the automobile. It is also an excellent example of the Tudor Revival style, and the work of master architect Frederick C. Clemeshaw.
- Historians:** Margo Nayyar, Historian
California Department of Transportation
Cultural Studies Office, Division of Environmental Analysis
1120 N Street
Sacramento, CA 95814
- Project Information:** The Simpson-Hunter House recordation was completed as one of the mitigation measures for the State Route 54/125 improvement project (Caltrans #11-SD-54/125-PM 5.3/6.7 and 11.2/R15.6), and was prepared as stipulated in the Memorandum of Agreement submitted to the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, in compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended. Photographs were taken by Don Tateishi in April 1996. The Simpson-Hunter House was determined eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places on November 3, 1992 under Criterion C for its Tudor Revival architecture, and as the work of master architect Frederick C. Clemeshaw.
- Date:** January 2014

Part I. Historical Information

A. Physical History

- 1. Date of erection:** ca. 1926
- 2. Architect:** Frederick Chapman Clemeshaw

Frederic Chapman Clemeshaw was born August 3, 1876 in Preston, Lancashire, England. As a young man he spent several years managing a tea plantation in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) with his brother Theodore. The two moved to Argentina in 1900 to engage in the cattle business, and later they moved to Canada. Chapman served as an officer in the Canadian armed forces during World War I.

Clemeshaw shortly lived in Regina, Saskatchewan where he was a member of the Theosophical community. It was here that he met cabinetmaker and builder George Simpson, also a Theosophist. The two were distantly related by marriage. Clemeshaw relocated to the San Diego area in the 1920s, maintaining association with the Theosophical community and the large Canadian colony in Ocean Beach and the La Jolla area.

Projects in his Canadian years included work on the Province of Manitoba capitol building at Winnipeg and design of the Memorial for Canadian Dead in Ypres, Belgium.

According to a letter at the San Diego Historical Society, during most of the 1920s Clemeshaw worked for a San Diego architect named Quayle¹, and then for an architect named Wheeler.² Projects while associated with Quayle included the Russ High School Auditorium and Glen Abbey cemetery chapel. While with Wheeler he was associated with projects at San Diego State College. Other known works include the Bank of Italy building at Ocean Beach. Clemeshaw did a large amount of residential work in the San Diego area. His English heritage likely influenced his predominately Tudor Revival style in residential architecture.³

¹ Written in: Randall Robertson, Letter to Sylvia Arden, San Diego Historical Society, October 30, 1987. Held by San Diego Historical Society. Robertson is likely referring to the Quayle Brothers, an architectural firm run by Charles and Edward Quayle between 1906-1940. For more information on the Quayle Brothers see: Historical Resources Board, "Biographies of Established Masters," Historical Resources Board: San Diego, 2011, <http://www.sandiego.gov/planning/programs/historical/pdf/201109biographies.pdf>.

² Written in: Randall Robertson, Letter to Sylvia Arden, San Diego Historical Society, October 30, 1987. Held by San Diego Historical Society. Robertson is likely referring to William Wheeler, a master architect. For more information regarding William Wheeler see: Historical Resources Board, "Biographies of Established Masters," Historical Resources Board: San Diego, 2011, <http://www.sandiego.gov/planning/programs/historical/pdf/201109biographies.pdf>.

³ David W. Powers, "Historic Architectural Survey Report for the Route 54/125 Project, Sweetwater Lemon Grove/Spring Valley, near San Diego, San Diego County, California," (Dames & Moore, Inc.: San Diego, March 1992), 3-4.

3. Original owner: Unknown

The house is commonly known as the Simpson-Hunter House, for its association with George and Annie Simpson and Howard and Alice Hunter, however, this association has unknown origins.

It was documented in 1992⁴ that the original owners were George (June 24, 1878 – August 8, 1968) and Annie G. Simpson, and that George, a carpenter, built the house for him and his family. The Simpson's emigrated from Scotland to Canada at an unknown date, and emigrated from Canada to San Diego in 1923. They lived at the residence for only a short time, and sold the house to Howard and Alice Hunter in the 1930s.⁵

Howard H. (June 24, 1880 – February 7, 1974) and Alice Isabel (April 5, 1892 – January 13, 1981) Hunter moved from Seattle to San Diego in 1919. Howard was a retired fireman/engineer for Northern Pacific Railroad and opened a citrus orchard and nursery, known as Hunter's Nursery, in Lemon Grove. Hunter's Nursery, as of 2013, remains in business, and is owned and operated by the Hunter family.⁶

With this said, research into both the Simpson and Hunter families does not tie either family to the residence. San Diego City and County Directories from 1924-1940 and the 1930 and 1940 U.S. Census information places both families at various different addresses during the three decades.

The first known resident at the property was Charles Ubert (May 4, 1898 – October 8, 1983) and Rachel (September 26, 1905 – February 1, 1999) Giusti. They lived at the property from ca. 1953-1957. Charles was an engineer for Convair.⁷ It is unknown if they owned or rented the property.

The longest known owner of the property is Admiral Ira D. (August 23, 1919 – March 9, 1995) and Rosemary (born August 15, 1921) Putnam.⁸ They purchased the property in ca. 1958; Rosemary maintains ownership as of 2013.⁹ Ira was a probation officer, and

⁴ David W. Powers, "Historic Architectural Survey Report for the Route 54/125 Project, Sweetwater Lemon Grove/Spring Valley, near San Diego, San Diego County, California," (Dames & Moore, Inc.: San Diego, March 1992), 3-4.

⁵ Ancestry.com. *California, Death Index, 1940-1997* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2000; Ancestry.com. *U.S., Naturalization Records - Original Documents, 1795-1972 (World Archives Project)* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2010.

⁶ Helen M. Ofield and Pete Smith, *Images of America: Lemon Grove*, (Arcadia Publishing: San Francisco, 2010), 56-57; Hunter's Nursery, "About Us," <http://www.huntersnursery.com/fruit-trees/> (accessed March 2003).

⁷ Ancestry.com. Florida Death Index, 1877-1998 [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2004; Ancestry.com. Social Security Death Index [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2011; "Polk's San Diego (San Diego County) City Directory, 1953," Los Angeles: R.L. Polk and Co., 1953.

⁸ Ancestry.com. Social Security Death Index [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2011;

⁹ "Polk's San Diego (San Diego County) City Directory, 1958," Los Angeles: R.L. Polk and Co., 1958.

Rosemary has spent her life in community service helping raise money for the Lemon Grove library system.¹⁰

4. Builder: George Simpson

Simpson (June 24, 1878 – August 8, 1968) was born in Kirkcaldy, Scotland,¹¹ and immigrated to Canada where he worked as a carpenter in Saskatchewan before relocating to the San Diego area in 1923. Simpson worked as a cabinetmaker and builder in the San Diego area. His works include the Harold V. Lee House (HABS No. CA-437) in Lemon Grove, and the furniture for Barron Long's yacht.¹²

5. Original plans and construction: The house looks as it did at the time it was built in ca. 1926.

6. Alterations and additions: A stuccoed, one-story room at the northwest corner appears to be an early addition.

A pool was added on the east side of the house at an unknown date. It is no longer extant.

B. Historical Context¹³

The city of Lemon Grove is an incorporated city in San Diego County, and is located east of San Diego. It was first settled in 1869 and was known for sheep and poultry ranching and vegetable farming. Starting in the early 20th century, the town gained its name due to the shift from husbandry to citrus farming.

The area prospered during the 1880s when large transportation companies such as the Santa Fe Railroad and Southern Pacific Railroad completed their transcontinental rail service to San Diego, allowing easy transportation of trade goods in and out of San Diego County. As transportation improved throughout the San Diego County region, irrigation projects and real estate development boomed. Land developers quickly publicized the area's agricultural potential and salubrious climate, which resulted in rapid population growth. Rail access to Lemon Grove

¹⁰“Polk's San Diego (San Diego County) City Directory, 1958,” Los Angeles: R.L. Polk and Co., 1958.; Helen Ofield, “Lemon Grove Historical Society Honors Rosemary Putnam,” <http://lemongrove.patch.com/articles/lemon-grove-historical-society-honors-rosemary-putnam#photo-13773858>, March 24, 2013 (accessed March 2013); Melonyce McAfee, “Group helps tidy up around historic home before tour,” http://www.utsandiego.com/uniontrib/20050108/news_2m8home.html, January 8, 2005 (accessed March 2013).

¹¹ Ancestry.com. *California, Death Index, 1940-1997* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2000; Ancestry.com. *U.S., Naturalization Records - Original Documents, 1795-1972 (World Archives Project)* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2010.

¹² Powers, “Historic Architectural Survey Report for the Route 54/125 Project,” 4.

¹³ This historic context was altered slightly from: David W. Powers, “Historic Architectural Survey Report for the Route 54/125 Project, Sweetwater Lemon Grove/Spring Valley, near San Diego, San Diego County, California.” Dames & Moore, Inc.: San Diego, March 1992.

became available in 1889 after the completion of the San Diego, Cuyamaca and Eastern Railroad.¹⁴

The early 20th century in San Diego County saw a population increase due to three events. First, the completion of the transcontinental highway to San Diego in 1923 provided an easy cross country migration route. Second, San Diego was chosen to host the Panama California Exposition of 1915 which introduced many tourists to the area; and third, World War I military facility devolvement stationed many new servicemen around the county.

The population increase accounted for the improved and expanded road systems around the county, and as road construction increased to outlying farming communities such as Lemon Grove, urban dwellers began relocating to the country.

Improved road construction around San Diego County, and the growing popularity of the automobile made suburban living far from rail and streetcar lines possible. San Diegans began building residences in the nearby countryside, especially wealthier individuals who could afford second homes. The Harold Lee House illustrates this trend.¹⁵

The Simpson-Hunter House was part of the American Country Home Movement of the 1920s, a period when wealthy Americans purchased vacation homes in the countryside. The English Tudor Revival style was known as synonymous with country living, and was popular nationwide. The Simpson-Hunter House is located on a hillside with a view of the countryside. Two Tudor Revivals are located in Lemon Grove, and are built by the same architect Frederick C. Clemeshaw, and builder, George Simpson.

The Great Depression of the 1930s slowed real estate development, but World War II military growth in San Diego County instituted another wave of immigration and consequently, real estate development. Beginning in the 1950s, freeway construction created the opportunity for massive suburban developments, and transportation projects continue to affect the Lemon Grove area. In the late 1990s, the Simpson-Hunter House was located in the right-of-way of the six-mile State Route 125 extension project. The property required the construction of a sound barrier wall, thereby changing the historic setting.

Part II. Architectural Information

A. General Statement

- 1. Architectural character:** The Simpson House illustrates the trend among residents of San Diego in the 1920s and 1930s to establish residences in the nearby countryside, a

¹⁴ Samuel F. Black, *San Diego County California: A Record of Settlement, Organization, Progress and Achievement*, Chicago: S. J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1913, 387; Alex Summers ed., *Travel and Transportation in the Far Southwest: Brand Book Number Five*, San Diego: San Diego Corral of the Westerners, 1978, 105-119.

¹⁵ Richard F. Pourade, *The Rising Tide: The History of San Diego 1920-1940*, (San Diego: Union-Tribune Publishing Co., 1967), 37-38.

phenomenon associated with the rising popularity of the automobile. It is also an excellent example of the Tudor Revival style, and the work of master architect Frederick C. Clemeshaw. Notable Tudor Revival details include stucco walls, half-timbering, and a steep pitched roof.

2. **Condition of fabric:** The house is in good condition.

B. Description of Exterior

1. **Overall dimensions:** The two-story house has a rectangular ground plan.
2. **Foundation:** The concrete foundation is raised and vented.
3. **Walls:** The walls are clad with stucco. A half-timbering pattern in the gables consists primarily of vertical boards with bracketed gable ends. A decorative half-timber diamond pattern is located along the north and south gables.

A low brick wainscoting is located along the southwest façade.

A shed roof bay is located on the north façade on the first floor.

Dormer walls are clad with wood shingles.

4. **Structural system/framing:** The house is wood framed.
5. **Balcony:** A cantilevered balcony located in the south gable has a decorative half-timber diamond pattern. There is only window access to the balcony.
6. **Chimney:** Two interior brick chimneys clad with stucco are centered on the roof ridge; one is located on the north side of the house, the other on the south.

7. Openings

- a. **Doors:** The primary (southwest) entry consists of a heavy, wide wood panel door with original cast iron oversized hinges, heraldic knocker, door handle, and door bell. The door is wood framed with pegged band-sawn wooden members to give the half-timbering effect.

A second-story door is centered on the southwest façade in the roof dormer. Details of the door are not available. A wood staircase leads to the door.

An entry on the northeast façade is a wood framed and glass door with sidelights. Details of the door are not available.

- b. **Windows:** Windows throughout the house consist of 6/1 double-hung, and four-pane and six-pane casement windows.

The first-story, northeast façade contains two large single-pane, fixed-sash picture windows flanked by six-pane casement windows.

Windows in the roof dormers are four-pane casement style.

All windows are wood framed. Second-story, gable windows have thick wood surrounds. Dormer windows have simple wood surrounds. South façade windows have simple lintels and sills, and most windows have no surround and a simple wood sill.

8. Roof

- a. Shape/covering:** The steep pitch, side gable roof is clad with wood shingles.
- b. Cornice/eaves:** The eaves have moderate overhang, exposed rafter tails, and a very simple cornice.
- c. Dormers:** A shed roof dormer is centered in the east and west side of the roof. The dormer walls and roofs are clad with wood shingles. The east dormer has five symmetrically placed four-pane casement windows. The west dormer has three symmetrically placed four-pane casement windows.

C. Description of Interior

There is no interior information.

D. Site

- 1. Historic landscape design:** Sited on a hillside, the house has broad views of Sweetwater Valley. There is very lush landscaping.
- 2. Outbuildings:** None.

Part III. Sources

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