

CITY OF BERKELEY
Ordinance #4694 N.S.
LANDMARK APPLICATION

Charles H. Spear House
1905 Martin Luther King, Jr. Way
Berkeley, CA 94704



Figure 1. Spear House, 2017 (photo: Daniella Thompson)



Figure 2. Spear House, 1971 (Donogh files, BAHA archives)

1. **Street Address:** 1905 Martin Luther King, Jr. Way
County: Alameda **City:** Berkeley **ZIP:** 94704
2. **Assessor's Parcel Number:** 57-2058-14 (Twichell Tract, Lot 20)
Dimensions: 134.65 feet x 50 feet
Cross Streets: Hearst Avenue & Berkeley Way
3. **Is property on the State Historic Resource Inventory?** Yes
Is property on the Berkeley Urban Conservation Survey? Yes
Form #: 21484
4. **Application for Landmark Includes:**
 - a. **Building(s):** Yes **Garden:** Front Yard **Other Feature(s):**
 - b. **Landscape or Open Space:** Two large palm trees
 - c. **Historic Site:** No
 - d. **District:** No
 - e. **Other:** Entire Property
5. **Historic Name:** Charles H. Spear House
Commonly Known Name: N/A
6. **Date of Construction:** 1904
Factual: Yes
Source of Information: *Berkeley Daily Gazette*, 5 July 1904, p. 6.
7. **Architect:** Unknown
8. **Builder:** Robert Greig
9. **Style:** Colonial Revival
10. **Original Owners:** Charles Henry Spear & Tillie Rose Spear
Original Use: Single-family residence
11. **Present Owner:**
Jacqueline F. & David E. Hartenstein
6617 Verandah Court
Elk Grove, CA 95758

Present Occupant: Tenants
12. **Present Use:**
Residential: Rental property
Current Zoning: R-2A **Adjacent Property Zoning:** R-2A
13. **Present Condition of Property:**
Exterior: Fair **Interior:** Unknown **Grounds:** Untended
Has the property's exterior been altered? Yes. Front staircase altered, metal railings added on street façade.

Executive Summary

The Charles H. Spear House is one of the most notable and elegant Colonial Revival residences in Berkeley. Constructed in 1904, the building is remarkably intact, retaining a very high degree of its historic fabric and detail.

Among the building's significant features are a symmetrical façade; a cornice decorated with molded corbels and egg-and-dart molding; a central dormer with arched window; a pair of oval portholes set in wide, molded casings and ornamented with medallions and elaborate scrollwork; a central portico with a circular canopy decorated with dentils and egg-and-dart molding, supported by two round columns with Ionic capitals and flanked by two pilasters, also with Ionic capitals; and two large triple-window bays set in wide, molded casings and surmounted by arch pediments ornamented with dentils and scrollwork.

Charles Henry Spear (1862–1928) was a well-known political figure in the State of California. He began his political career in 1884 as Assistant Postmaster of West Berkeley, rising to Postmaster in 1885. He served as Berkeley's City Clerk from 1886 to 1893 and was elected Alameda County Recorder in 1894. In 1900, he was appointed Port Warden in San Francisco. In 1902, Spear acted as chairman of the state's Republican Campaign Committee, and in 1903, Governor George C. Pardee made him president of the State Board of Harbor Commissioners. His term coincided with the 1906 Earthquake and Fire, and Spear received high praise from Commander Charles J. Badger, U.S. Navy, for restoring "normal business conditions in the shipping district in the shortest possible time."

In 1923, Spear was reappointed president of the State Board of Harbor Commissioners, this time by Governor Friend W. Richardson. Resigning from that position in 1925, Spear became general manager of Los Angeles Harbor, remaining in that office until 1927, when ill health forced him to retire and return to Berkeley, where he passed away the following year.

The architect of the Spear House has not been identified, but the builder was well known in both building and political circles. As a contractor, Robert Greig (1861–1931) was Berkeley's premier practitioner, constructing some of the city's most prominent buildings, including City Hall (1908); the first public library (1904, demolished); Berkeley High School's main building (1901, demolished); the Masonic Temple (2105 Bancroft Way, 1905); and the Barker Block (2486 Shattuck Avenue, 1905).

Like Charles Spear, Robert Greig was prominent in the Republican Party. In 1915, he was appointed as Berkeley's Building Inspector, and in 1924 he became Director of Housing for the State of California. "He was a recognized authority on building codes, and many of his suggestions were incorporated in the State Building Law and in housing regulations," stated his obituary.

When the Charles H. Spear House was built, the neighborhood north of Berkeley Way was purely residential, composed of Victorians and Colonial Revival houses. The area's character persisted largely unaltered until the 1950s, when large, boxy apartment buildings began to replace many historic houses.

In the 1960s, BART acquired and removed the houses along five and a half blocks on the north side of Hearst Avenue between Milvia Street and Sacramento Street. Concurrently, commercial establishments began replacing some of the houses along Grove Street. These days, the east side of the 1800 block and the

west side of the 1900 block of M.L. King, Jr. Way are composed entirely of commercial buildings, making the Spear House a rare and noteworthy reminder of the street as it used to be a century ago.

The Charles H. Spear House retains integrity of location, design, materials, setting, feeling, and association.



Figure 3. Two large palm trees frame the approach to the Spear house.

14. Description

The Charles H. Spear House is a wood-framed, two-story house with basement. It is situated in the Twichell Tract, in North Central Berkeley. The block on which it stands is bounded by Martin Luther King, Jr. Way on the west, Hearst Avenue on the north, Bonita Avenue on the east, and Berkeley Way on the south.

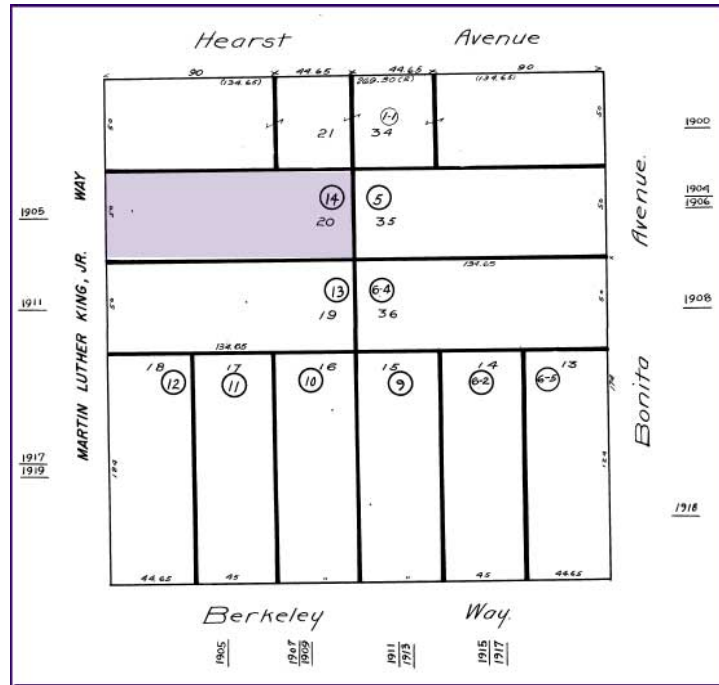


Figure 4. Assessor's Map of Block 2058

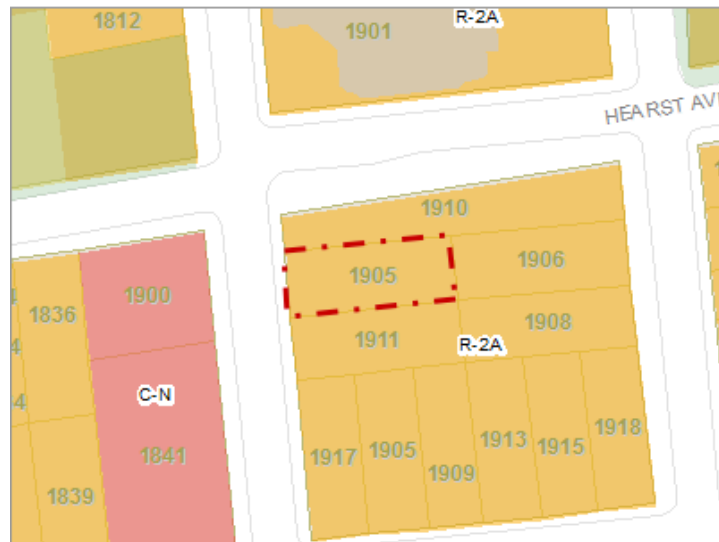


Figure 5. Detail from City of Berkeley zoning map



Figure 6. The immediate neighborhood (Google Earth)

Constructed in 1904 and designed in the Colonial Revival style, the Spear House is set back from the street, behind a picket fence. Two large palm trees stand in the front yard, framing the approach to the house.

Massing, Cladding and Roof

A rectangular box clad in narrow clapboard, the Spear House is crowned by a hip roof with closed eaves. Two rectangular red-brick chimneys with stepped collars project above the roof. One chimney is located on the roof's north side, toward the ridge, and is visible from Hearst Avenue. Most of this chimney is embedded within the structure. The second chimney is located on the exterior of the south façade. A molded wood water table extends along all four façades.

At the front end of the roof, a dormer with a hip roof and closed eaves faces west. It is clad in the same narrow clapboard seen on the house walls. An arched window is set in the center of the dormer's west-facing wall.



Figure 7. Dormer



Figure 8. Roof eaves & cornice ornaments

Roof Eaves & Cornice

The roof eaves around all four façades are ornamented with milled wood corbels. These are not arranged in a uniformly spaced row but are grouped in different arrangements on different façades (detailed discussion on the corbel arrangements follows in the individual façade descriptions).

The narrow cornice is decorated with a band of egg-and-dart molding.



Figure 9. The street façade in 1970 (Donogh files, BAHA archive)

Front (West) Façade

The house is reached via a staircase consisting of 13 wooden steps and a bottom concrete step. Two unused concrete bases flank the bottom step. A single rudimentary wooden handrail rises on the staircase's south side. Photos shot in the 1970s (see Figs. 2 and 9) show the previous elegant staircase, which featured large, turned newel posts topped by globes, and two handrails with turned balusters.

The front façade is symmetrical, dominated by a portico with a circular canopy supported by two round columns with Ionic capitals (one capital partly missing). Standing at the edges of the walls flanking the portico are twin plain pilasters with Ionic capitals.

The portico canopy's entablature is stepped upwards. Directly above the columns, there is a wide cornice with a groove at the bottom and an egg-and-dart molding at the top. Above it and projecting outwards slightly is a row of dentils beneath a slight overhang. Above the canopy, the metal balcony railing predates the 1970s and may have replaced a wooden balustrade (no pre-1970 image is available for comparison).



Figure 10. Portico

Within the portico recess, which—like the exterior walls—is faced with narrow clapboard, the entrance door is semi-glazed and set in a wide, molded wood casing. The door’s glazed portion features crown molding at the top and a molded sill with a curlicued appendage in relief at the bottom.



Figure 11. Front door (left) and one of the window bays flanking the portico



Flanking the portico on the first floor are two large window bays, each set in wide, molded casing with molded sills and surmounted by arch pediments ornamented with dentils and scrollwork. Each bay incorporates three double-hung, one-over-one, wood-sash windows—the side windows narrower than the central one. Above the windows and under the pediment are wide cornices with rectangular frame moldings and dentils.



Figure 12. Pediment & cornice above window bay, west façade

Below the windows, the bays are clad in narrow clapboard, trimmed at the bottom with a molded water table.



Figure 13. Portholes above portico

Above the portico, two oval portholes containing oval casement windows are set in a wide, molded casing. The casing is ornamented with elaborate scrollwork at the top and bottom junctures, as well as halfway up the frames (Fig. 13).

Flanking the portholes are two double-hung, one-over-one, wood-sash windows set in wide, molded casings. Each window features a mini-balcony with wrought-iron scrollwork railing predating the 1970s.

The corbels on the west façade are arranged in trios over windows and portholes. In between, there are gaps, with single corbels at their centers.

Figure 14. Upper window & corbels, west façade





Figure 15. The Spear House in 1971 (photo: Arthur Gough, BAHA archives)

North Façade

When the house was built, the north façade was not visible from the street, since the adjacent lot on the corner of Hearst Avenue (then College Way) had been occupied since 1890 by the Victorian house of commission merchant John Dempster Vervalin. It was only after the Vervalin house was demolished that the

north façade has become visible. This façade is asymmetrical, and the corbels under the roof eaves are regularly spaced, unlike those on the other façades. Seven double-hung, one-over-one, wood-sash windows in wide, molded wood casings are visible on this façade. Three of the windows are located on the second floor, two on the first floor toward the rear, and two are placed at intermediate levels, indicating a stairwell in the interior. At the northeastern corner, a small annex, glazed on the north side, dates from 1911 or earlier, but it is impossible to judge from a distance how much of its fabric is original.



Figure 16. North façade, seen from the Hearst-MLK corner

South Façade

The south façade is asymmetrical, and the corbels under the roof eaves are irregularly spaced. Four groups—of three corbels each—are placed above the four windows on the second floor. Single corbels are placed at either end of this façade. The top of the brick chimney under the eaves is adorned with a corbel head to maintain continuity. Between the two rear second-floor windows, two corbels are more widely spaced than those above the windows.

A painted red-brick chimney hugs the wall, penetrating through the roof eaves to emerge above the roofline with a stepped collar. As elsewhere on this house, the wood-sash windows are set in wide, molded wood casings.



Figure 17. South façade, looking east



Figure 18. Left: corbel head on chimney. Right: corbel profiles on south façade

Of the four wood-sash windows on the second floor, three are double hung, one-over-one, and the fourth—east of the chimney—is a small double casement. On the first floor, located on either side of the chimney, there is a single-paned window. Further east is a hip-roofed, triple-window bay with closed eaves. The bay is clad in narrow clapboard trimmed at the bottom with the molded wood water table that continues around the house.



Figure 19. South façade, front part



Figure 20. South façade, rear part

There are three wood-sash windows within the bay. The wide central window is either fixed or pivoting, and is horizontally divided by a transom in the upper third. The narrower side-windows are double-hung, one-over-one.

To the east of the bay, there is yet another double-hung, one-over-one, wood-sash window. At the basement level, to the right of the chimney, a two-sash sliding window is set in the same type of molded wood casing seen elsewhere.



Figure 21. Window bay, south façade



Figure 22. Basement window



Figure 23. Rear façade

Rear (East) Façade

The east façade has been altered more than the other three, but it retains most of its original features. Here, too, we can observe the irregularly spaced corbels under the eaves. There are three corbels above the door that opens to the upper stair landing and three above the upper window on the right, but only two corbels above the central window, which is smaller.

The door on the second floor is likely to have replaced an earlier window. Its casing, although wide, is plain, lacking the molded details of the casings seen on the windows. The door itself is also plain, with a large glazed panel taking up most of its length.

Both windows on the second floor are double-hung, one-over-one, wood-sash windows with wide, molded wood casings and molded sills. So is the window at the southern end of the first floor.

A jury-rigged wooden staircase ascends to the second floor. It obscures two small windows, one of which lacks a casing. At the northern end is the aforementioned small annex, documented in the 1911 Sanborn map. It has a hip roof, and its southern wall is clad in narrow clapboard. Its eastern wall, however, appears to be clad in plywood, with clerestory windows and a door opening onto a small deck that also serves as the stair's lower landing. From this deck, the stairs continue down to the concrete-paved back yard. From the yard, stairs

descend to a basement door set in the center of the east wall. A small, square basement window is located to the left of the basement door.

Accessory Structure

At the end of the driveway, in the southeastern corner of the parcel, there is a small, gable-roofed garage, shown in the 1929 Sanborn map.



Figure 24. Garage

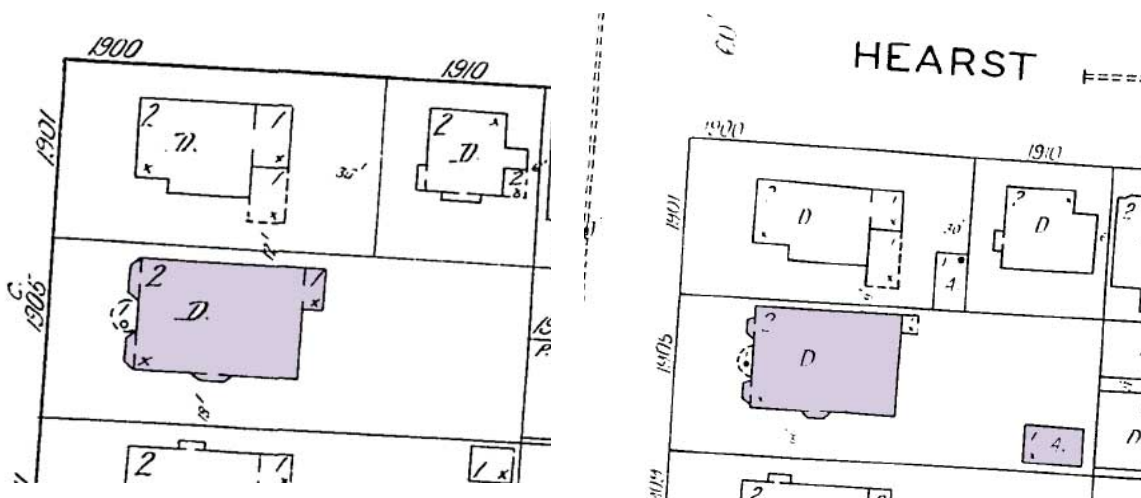


Figure 25. Left: the parcel in the 1911 Sanborn map. Right: in the 1929 map.

Features to Be Preserved

The distinguishing features of the Charles H. Spear House include the following:

- **Street setback** with landscaped front yard, including two heritage palm trees
- **Rectangular massing** with symmetrical front façade
- **Hip roof** with closed eaves, **irregularly spaced corbels** under the eaves, and narrow cornice with **egg-and-dart molding**
- **Centrally placed dormer** with hip roof and arched window
- **Narrow clapboard siding** on all exterior walls
- **Two rectangular red-brick chimneys** with stepped collars, including an exposed chimney on the south façade
- **Central portico with circular canopy** decorated with dentils and egg-and-dart molding and supported by two round columns with Ionic capitals and two pilasters with Ionic capitals
- **Semi-glazed entrance door** set in wide, molded wood casing in portico recess
- **Two oval portholes** above portico, set in wide, molded wood casing ornamented with medallions and elaborate scrollwork
- **Two triple-window bays** on west façade, surmounted by arch pediments ornamented with dentils and scrollwork, and wide cornices with frame moldings and dentils
- **Hip-roofed, triple-window bay** on south façade, with a transom in the central window
- **Wood-sash windows** with wide, molded wood casings and molded sills on all façades
- **Molded wood water table** along all façades

Missing features that could be replicated

- Front staircase with turned newel posts and turned wood balusters
- Turned wood balustrade on portico canopy

15. History

Early Days of the Tract

The Twichell Tract, in which the Spear House is located, was part of Rancho San Antonio, a 44,800-acre Spanish land grant given to Sergeant Luís María Peralta (1759–1851) in 1820 by the last Spanish governor, Don Pablo Vicente de Sol, in recognition of Peralta's forty years of military service to the Spanish king. The rancho included lands that form Oakland, Alameda, Piedmont, Emeryville, Berkeley, and parts of San Leandro and Albany.

In 1842, Luís Peralta divided the rancho among his four sons. Domingo and José Vicente were given the land that now comprises Oakland and Berkeley.

Within less than a decade, squatters overran the Peraltas' properties, stole their cattle, and sold it in San Francisco. Worse, parcels of rancho land were sold without legal title. Domingo and Vicente Peralta fought the appropriations in the courts. In 1856, the U.S. Supreme Court confirmed their title, but by then the brothers had been forced to sell most of their lands to cover legal costs and taxes. The various buyers engaged cartographer Julius Kellersberger¹ to map the Peralta Ranchos for subdivision purposes.

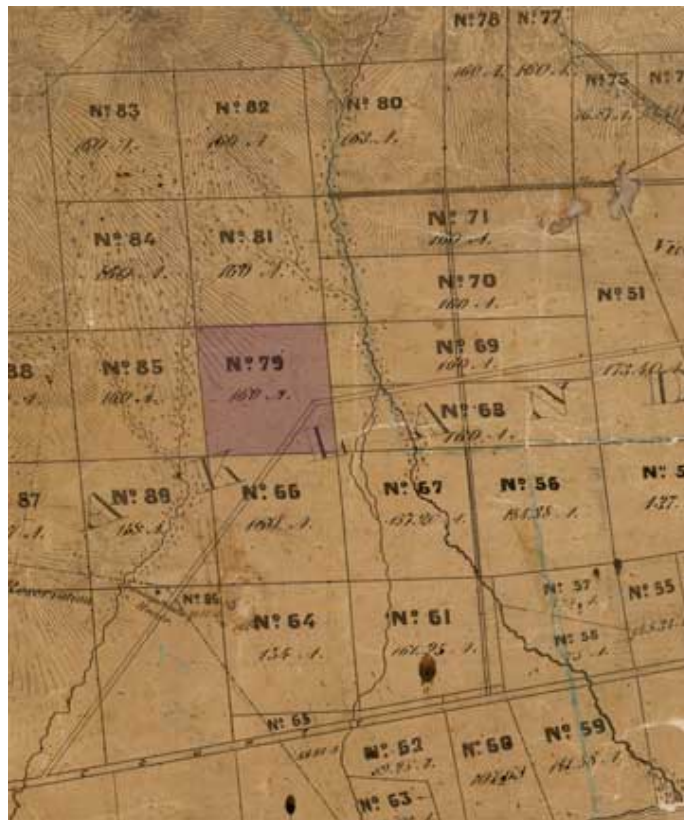


Figure 26. Plot 79 (shaded) in Kellersberger's Map

¹ Map of the Ranchos of Vicente & Domingo Peralta. Containing 16970.68 Acres. Surveyed by Julius Kellersberger. Surveyed 1853. Partitioned 1854. Filed Jan. 21st 1857. Courtesy of Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps, Inc. <http://www.raremaps.com/gallery/enlarge/39956>

Plot 79, which contained the future Twichell Tract, was a 160-acre parcel located just north of Francis K. Shattuck's land. Its boundaries were today's M.L. King, Jr. Way to the west, Cedar Street to the north, Arch Street to the east, and Addison Street to the south. Like so much of the Peraltas' lands, Plot 79 was acquired by the French-born, San Francisco-based financier François Louis Alfred Pioche. Pioche apparently sold it to Joshua Hathaway, who died without paying, as one surmises from Pioche's 1857 lawsuit to recover the 160 acres from the Hathaway estate.²



Figure 27. F.L.A. Pioche

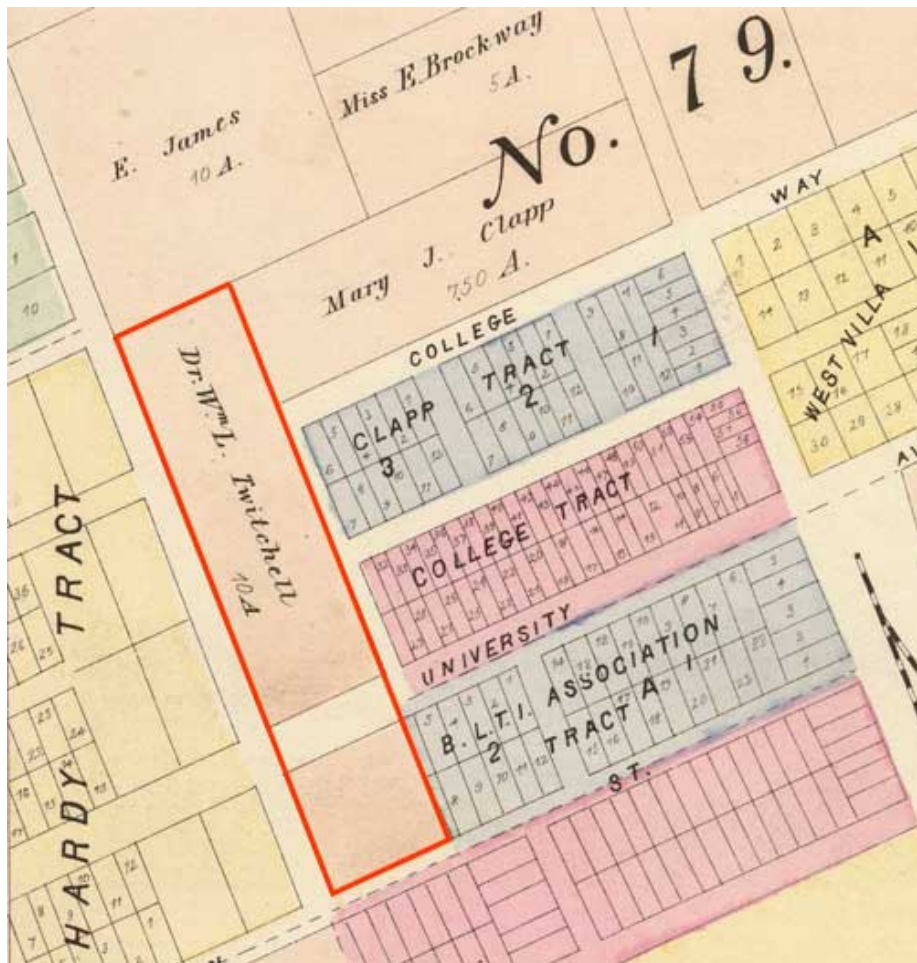


Figure 28. Dr. William L. Twichell's property (outlined in red) in Map No. 16 of Thompson & West's Atlas of Alameda County, 1878 (David Rumsey Historical Map Collection)

² Pioche v. Hathaway. Private Common Law Case Files, 1855–1863. Box 10, Docket Book 1, Case #146. Filed 21 May 1857. Judgment for Pioche, 2 November 1857.

William L. Twichell, M.D.

William Leander Twichell (1825–1886), whose surname is often misspelled as Twitchell, was one of the horde of young men who set out for California after the discovery of gold. His obituary, written by Dr. Benjamin R. Swan and published by the California Medical Society, furnished the following summary of his life:

WILLIAM L. TWICHELL, M. D.,

Was born February 17th, 1825, at Bethel, in the State of Maine.

He commenced the study of medicine in 1846 under the instruction of Dr. John S. Lincoln of Brunswick, Maine. In May, 1850, he graduated at the Medical School in Brunswick. In July of the same year, he came to California and settled in the Mariposa mines where for three years he devoted his time to gold mining and attending to the practice of medicine when he could not well avoid it. He was successful in mining and returned to New York in July, 1853, was married, and in the December of the same year became a member of the class at the Medical College on 13th Street and attended clinical lectures at Bellevue Hospital. In 1854, he settled in Benton Center, Yates County, N. Y., and practised his profession. The winters of Central New York not being to his liking, he returned to California in 1860 and remained in Oakland two years. In 1862, he came to San Francisco, where he successfully practiced his profession.

Ten years ago, he invested in real estate in Alameda, where he resided with his family up to the time of his death.

He died Sunday morning, Dec. 5th, 1886, of heart disease, after a few hours' illness, at one of his farms, 9 miles south of the town of Merced, whither he had gone on a visit of inspection.

Dr. Twichell was widely known throughout the State, and highly esteemed by all who knew him.³

An interesting biographical detail not provided in the obituary is the connection between Dr. Twichell and Berkeley farmer Joseph Lewis Clapp (c. 1828–1886), a Massachusetts native who also made his way to the Mariposa gold fields as a young man. The two were reported to have met in Mariposa in the early 1850s, and to have become great friends.⁴ During the 1860s and early 1870s, Clapp and his wife, Mary Jane, lived in Grass Valley, where they owned and operated the Golden Eagle Hotel. By 1875, Clapp was registered to vote in Oakland, listing his occupation as farmer.

Meanwhile, Dr. Twichell was living in San Francisco. According to the 1870 U.S. Census, his real estate holdings were valued at \$38,000. In the mid-1870s, the Twichells moved to Alameda. By that time, Twichell and the Clapps owned adjoining parcels of land in Berkeley's Plot 79. The Thompson & West map of 1878 (Fig. 28) shows Twichell's land as 10 unimproved acres (possibly farmed by Clapp), extending from today's M.L. King, Jr. Way to Bonita Avenue, and from today's Delaware Street to Addison Street. Mary Jane Clapp owned seven-and-a-

³ Report on Necrology. *Transactions of the Medical Society of the State of California, Session of 1887*. San Francisco: W.B. Bancroft & Co., Printers. 1887.

⁴ "The Strange Fatality That Has Followed the Clapp Estate." *Daily Alta California*, 31 May 1888.

half unimproved acres north of today's Hearst Avenue, between Bonita and Shattuck avenues. Joseph Clapp's land, also seven-and-a-half acres, was already subdivided into lots and named the Clapp Tract. The Clapps lived on the southwest corner of College Way (Hearst Avenue) and Milvia Street.

Like other local landowners (most of them farmers), Clapp wasted no time in surveying and subdividing his land as soon as train service to downtown Berkeley began in August 1876. Twichell followed suit the next year, filing a subdivision map for the southernmost block on his land (Fig. 30). In late 1887, Clapp built Clapp's Hall on the northwest corner of Shattuck Avenue and Berkeley Way. This hall was then the meeting place of choice in Berkeley, serving fraternities; political and social clubs; religious congregations; and schools.

By 1880, Clapp had gone into the real estate business. The Carnall & Eyre map below shows, by means of color-coding, that the entire Clapp Tract, including Mary Jane's portion, was available for sale, while the Twichell Tract was not.

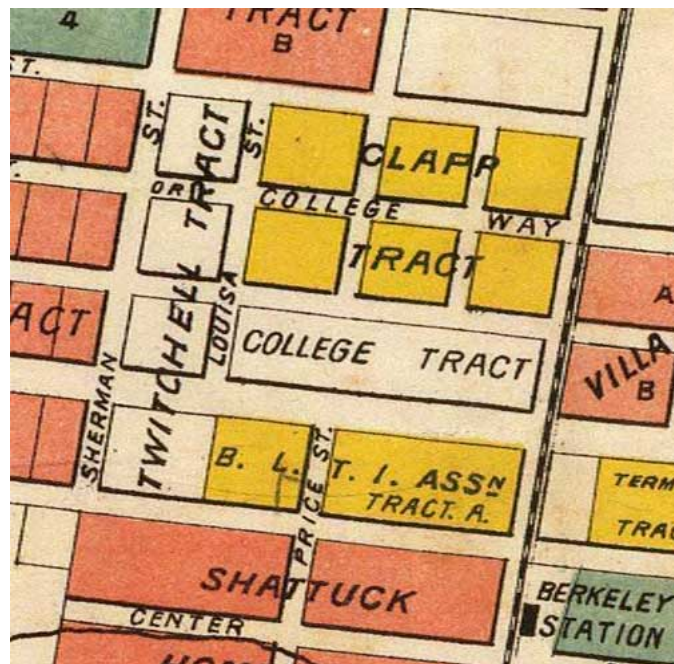


Figure 29. Detail from Carnall & Eyre's real estate map, 1880
(David Rumsey Historical Map Collection)

In fact, with the exception of its southernmost block, the Twichell land remained unmapped as long as Dr. Twichell was alive. In 1886, both Clapps and Dr. Twichell died, months apart, under peculiar circumstances. Following a court fight and a cash settlement to Clapp's cousins, Twichell's widow, Lydia, ended up with not only her husband's properties but also the Clapps' Berkeley land. The northern blocks of the Twichell Tract were subdivided in June 1889 at the request of realtors Scotchler & Gottshall. Mary Jane Clapp's land was mapped as Sea View Park and subdivided in July 1890.

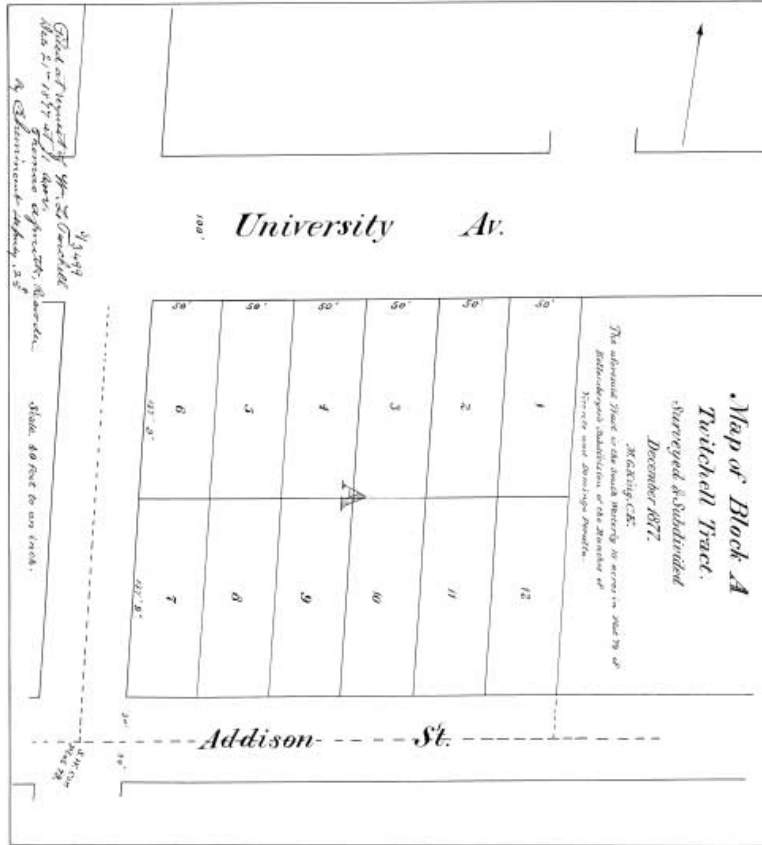


Figure 30. The southernmost block of the Twichell Tract was subdivided in December 1877. (BAHA archives)

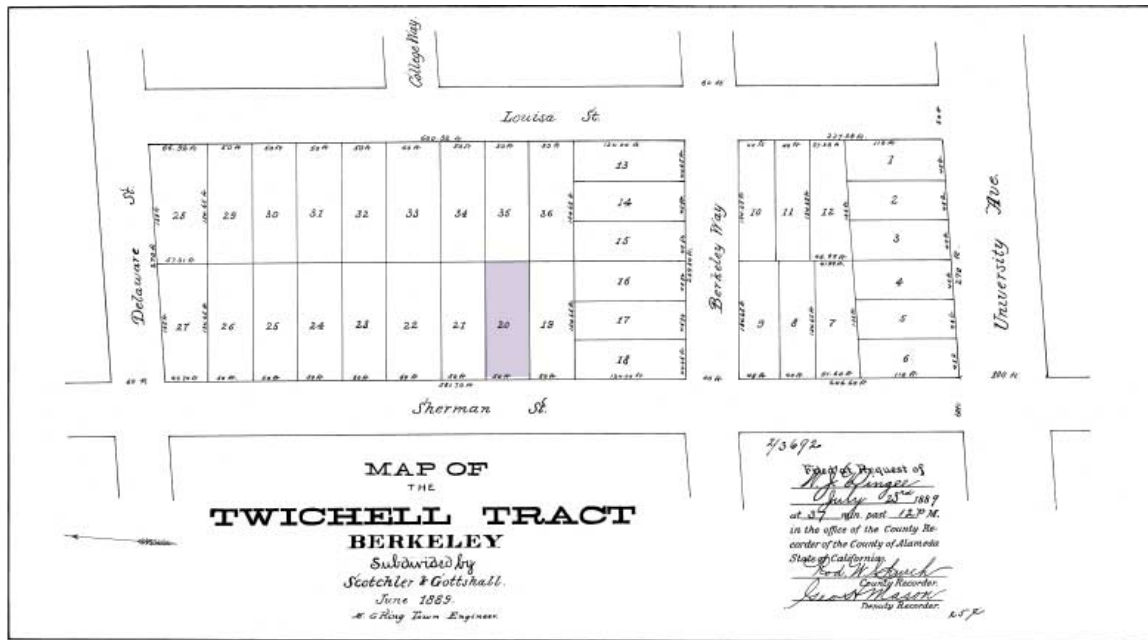


Figure 31. The northern blocks of the Twichell Tract were not subdivided until June 1889. Lot 20, acquired by Charles Spear, is colored. (BAHA archives)

In 1880, the neighborhood was still sparsely populated. The U.S. Census and city directory recorded the following residents among Joseph Clapp's neighbors:

- Ira A. Boynton, carpenter, office W s Shattuck av nr Addison, res S s College Way nr Shattuck av
- Daniel B. Chisholm, mining secretary (S.F.) res S s College Way bet Henry and Milvia
- Thomas Clark, farmer, res N s Berkeley Way bet Henry and Milvia
- Samuel C. Clark, engineer C.P.R.R., res N s Berkeley Way bet Henry and Milvia
- Michael G. Conway, harness maker (S.F.) res S s Berkeley Way bet Sherman and Louisa
- John Edlen, fireman C.P.R.R., res N s Delaware bet Price and Sherman
- E.J. Gravica, cigarmaker (S.F.) res N s Berkeley Way nr Henry
- Frederick Graves, brakeman C.P.R.R., res NE cor Berkeley Way and Henry
- William D. Hammond, machinist C.P.R.R. shops (Oakland), res N s Berkeley Way nr Henry
- William H. Menefee, clerk Supervisors (Oakland) res N s Berkeley Way bet Henry and Milvia
- Aaron P. Oliver, carpenter, res S s College Way bet Milvia and West
- Mrs. A.H. Starkweather, widow, res S s College Way bet Milvia and West
- William Stevens, insurance agent, res N s Berkeley Way nr Shattuck av

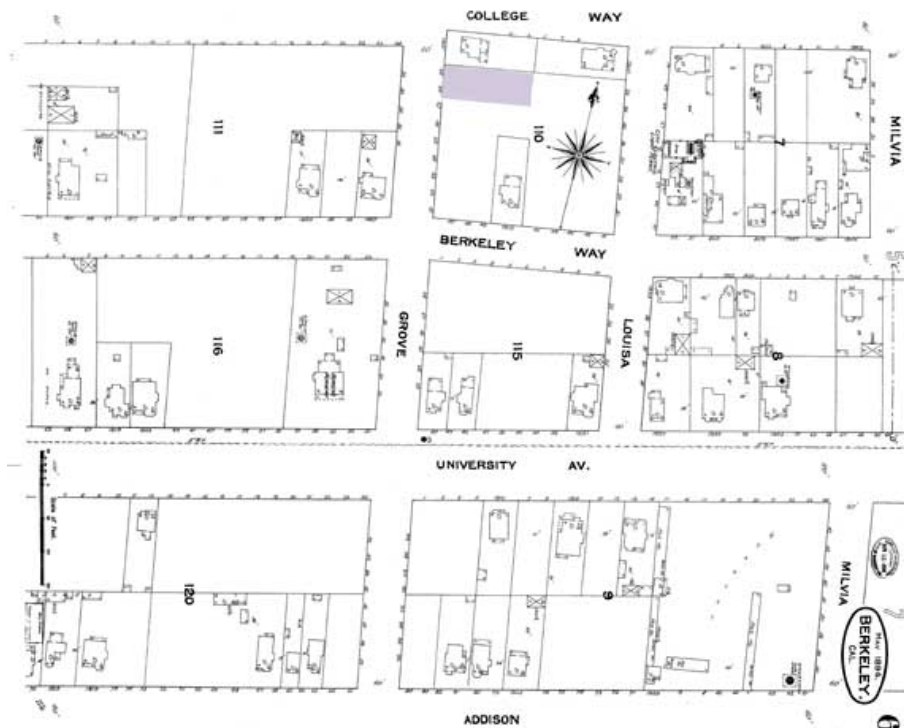


Figure 32. The neighborhood in 1894, as shown on a Sanborn map. The future Spear property is shaded.



OAKLAND CONSOLIDATED STREET RAILWAY car 7 inbound to Oakland from Berkeley enters Grove Street from 47th Street about 1892. Photo by the late R. Forgie.

Figure 33. The blue Lorin streetcar began running along Grove Street in 1891. ("Early Day Trolleys of the East Bay" in The Western Railroader, Vol. 22, No. 4, February 1959)

In 1891, the first two electric streetcar lines, laid by the Oakland Consolidated Street Railroad, began operating in Berkeley.

The Railroad, first established in 1889 as the Oakland-Berkeley Rapid Transit, with one of its primary investors [...] being Francis Kittredge Shattuck, was planned in anticipation of the big real-estate opportunities just waiting to happen across the landscape. As most people had neither the means nor the property to maintain a horse and buggy, the coming of the electric streetcar became the dominant force that enabled a dynamic expansion in the East Bay. The growing workforce could now travel conveniently from the "suburbs"—the new residential tracts where hayfields, orchards, and frog ponds used to abound—to places of work, commerce, or recreation, anywhere in the East Bay or San Francisco.

Running on the two electric streetcar lines [...] were the red car and the blue car. The red car, called the "Shattuck," came up from Oakland, veering at 47th Street to travel along Shattuck Avenue, crossed Ashby Avenue to Dwight Way, where it turned up Ellsworth Street, then turned north to Allston Way (site of Edwards Stadium). The blue car, called the "Lorin," used the same track from Oakland, but continued on 47th Street to travel along Grove Street to Downtown Berkeley at Center Street (in 1898, these streetcar routes were consolidated to become a part of the future Key System).⁵

North-Central Berkeley's development received a further boost in 1902, when the street line was extended from University Avenue to Cedar Street. Still, the

⁵ Lesley Emmington, Anthony Bruce & Dale Smith. "Ashby Station: A Classic American Streetcar Suburb." Historic Buildings in Ashby Station. BAHA Ashby Station Survey, February 2004. http://berkeleyheritage.com/essays/ashby_station.html

Twichell Tract and its immediate surroundings had not developed appreciably between 1894 and 1903.

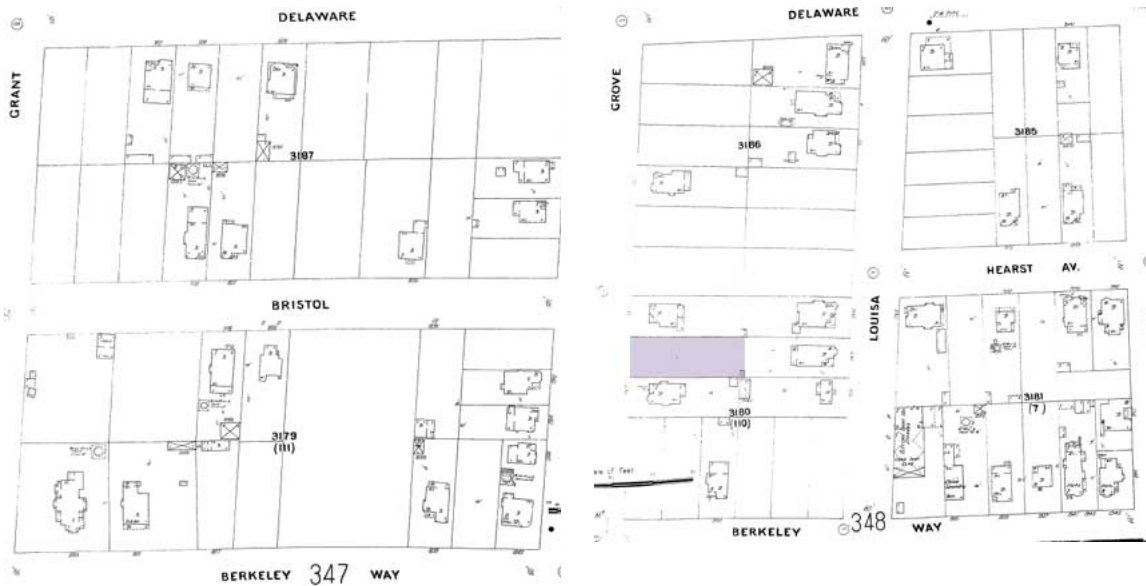


Figure 34. The neighborhood in 1903 The future Spear property is shaded. (Sanborn map)

By 1911, when the Key System's routes map below was published, the Grove Street line had been extended to Berkeley's northern border.



Figure 35. Detail from the Key System's routes map, published in July 1911

The expanded transportation network had an immediate effect on development activities in the neighborhood, as evidenced in the Sanborn maps published in 1911 (Fig. 36). The new suburbanites who built their homes or rented in this neighborhood included a higher proportion of tradesmen and white-collar workers. Charles and Tillie Spear's neighbors, enumerated in the 1910 U.S. Census, included two teachers, several students, a building contractor, a mechanical engineer, an accountant, a bookkeeper, a realtor, two salesmen and

two saleswomen, two carpenters, a grocer, a butcher, a baker, a cigar merchant, and a shoemaker.

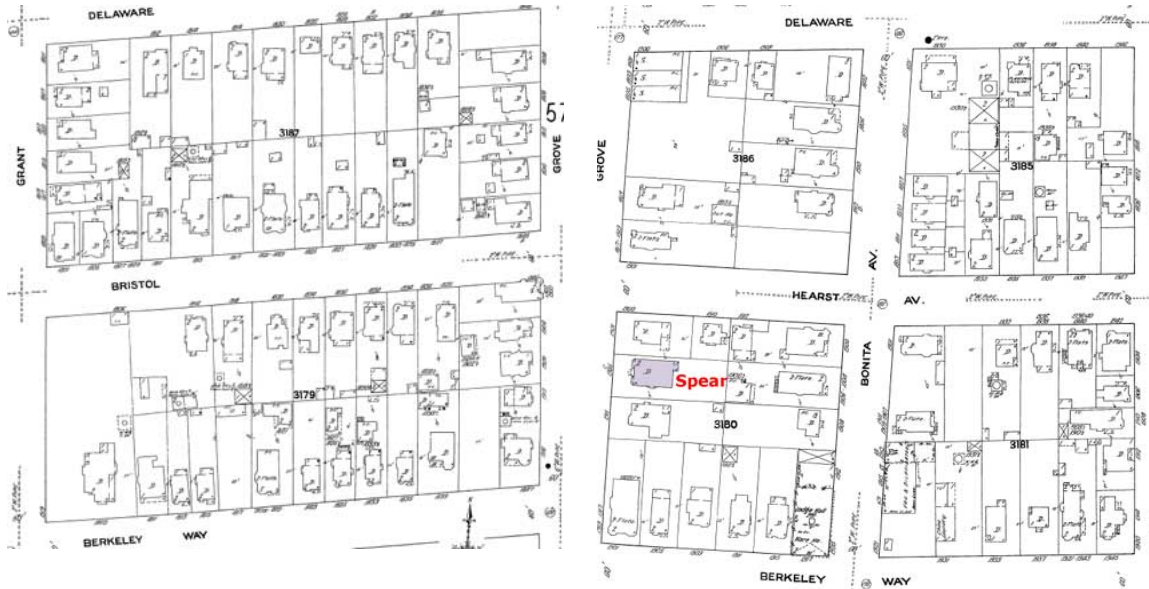


Figure 36. The neighborhood in 1911 The Spear property is shaded. (Sanborn map)

The First Owner

Charles H. Spear

Charles Henry Spear (1862–1928) was born in Sonora, Tuolumne County, on 1 June 1862. His parents, Frederick Augustus Spear and Elizabeth Hatch Burnham, were natives of Boston. One of Spear's earliest biographies, published in 1892, when he was serving as Town Clerk of Berkeley, provides the following details about his life up to that point:

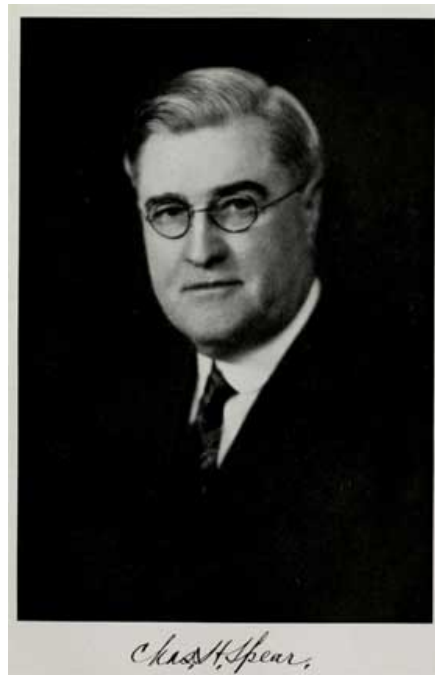


Figure 37. Charles H. Spear, 1924

The father came to California around Cape Horn, arriving in San Francisco in the spring of 1850. Having learned the drug business in Boston and been there engaged in it some years, he brought out a stock of goods in that line with which he started a store in Sacramento. In 1852 he moved to Sonora and continued in the same line with Dr. William A.

Bruner as partner, under the style of Bruner & Spear. In 1855 he went back to Boston, remaining a year or more, and on his return, accompanied by his wife and two children, settled again in Sonora in 1857, where he carried on the drug business until 1864. He then received the appointment of druggist to the State Insane Asylum in Stockton under Dr. G. A. Shurtleff, retaining that position until 1873. He revisited Boston with his wife and youngest child, remaining about three years, when he returned to this coast and settled in Oakland. In 1880 he opened a drug store in this city, but moved to Berkeley in 1882, where he continued in the same line until his death in 1885. He was somewhat prominent in pioneer times in Sonora, being City Clerk, deputy Sheriff and deputy Recorder, and was a member of the San Joaquin Valley Society of California Pioneers. Grandfather Henry Spear, a native of Boston and for many years engaged in the printing business in that city, died at about the age of fifty-six. Grandmother Harriet (Clark) Spear, also a native of Boston, lived to the age of eighty. Grandfather Burnham, a native of Vermont and for many years a merchant in Boston, lived to an advanced age, but his wife (*nee* Hatch) died of apoplexy in middle life. Mrs. Elizabeth H. B. Spear, the mother of the subject of this sketch, born about 1830, is living in Berkeley the mother of five children: Frederick F., deceased in Berkeley, unmarried, at the age of thirty-six; Ella Margaret Brown, by marriage Mrs. George Bartles of Berkeley; Libbie Florence, now Mrs. John Rooney of Oakland; Charles H., the subject of this sketch, and Belle Harriet, living at her home in Berkeley.

Charles H. Spear was educated in the schools of Stockton until 1876, when on the removal of the family to Oakland, he went to work in San Francisco as messenger for the Western Union Telegraph Company, and some two years later as collector for the Wheeler & Wilson Sewing Machine Company with whom he remained nearly three years. In 1881 he worked for L. M. McKenney, & Co., directory publishers, and in 1882 went to Sacramento, where he spent nearly two years as bookkeeper for the H. T. Holmes Lime Co. He was Assistant Postmaster of West Berkeley in 1884, and Postmaster in 1885, conducting also a drug, book and stationery store. In 1885, in partnership with John Rooney, under the style of Rooney & Spear, he also carried on a general store. In 1887 he bought out his partner, and in 1888 sold out all his trading interests. Meanwhile he had been elected Town Clerk, in 1886, entering on the discharge of his official duties in May of that year; and he has been re-elected to that office every year since.

Charles H. Spear was married in Berkeley April 14, 1887, to Miss Matille Rose Guenette, born in West Berkeley in 1869, a daughter of Peter and Eugenie Guenette, both natives of France. The father, a pioneer blacksmith of this section, died several years ago; the mother, born in 1843, is still living. Mr. and Mrs. Charles H. Spear have two children: Florence Dell, born in 1888; Frederick Augustus, born December, 1889. Mr. Spear is a member of Oakland Parlor, No. 50, N. S. G. W. and of Ocean View Lodge, A. O. F.⁶

The Spears were first recorded in the Berkeley city directory in 1884. Charles was listed as Assistant Postmaster with no address, while his father was listed as

⁶ *The Bay of San Francisco: The Metropolis of the Pacific Coast and Its Suburban Cities, Vol. II.* Chicago: The Lewis Publishing Company, 1892.

druggist, living and working on the corner of University Avenue and Fifth Street. Following the death of his father in 1885, Charles established, in partnership with John F. Rooney, a business selling drugs, groceries, and feed out of Rooney's residence on the corner of Ninth Street and University Avenue. Spear's own home was located on the corner of Seventh and Delaware streets. By 1887, Rooney had gone to work for the Giant Powder Works, and Spear continued to run the grocery business out of his former partner's home address, all the while serving as Berkeley's Town Clerk, a position he would keep until May 1893. He was now married to Tillie Guenette and living on Allston Way, between Fifth and Sixth streets.

Spear's first fully documented Berkeley residence was a two-story Italianate house at 2212 Fifth Street. It was built c. 1877 by the short-lived Berkeley Real Estate Union and repeatedly bought and sold by seven successive speculators before the Spears acquired it in 1890. Spear's mother, who owned a few other properties in West Berkeley, lived with the couple, and the house was registered in her name until 1896, when Charles assumed ownership. The house is still standing, next to the former site of John A. Carbone's historic flower nursery.



*Figure 38. Charles & Tillie Spear lived in this house at 2212 Fifth St. from the late 1880s until 1904, when they built their new home at 1905 Grove Street.
(photo: Daniella Thompson, 2007)*

Three children were born to the Spears while they were living in West Berkeley. After having served as Town Clerk for seven years, Charles went into the real estate business. In 1894, he was elected to the office of Alameda County Recorder. In February 1900, Governor of California Henry T. Gage appointed him Port Warden in San Francisco. The appointment reflected Spear's intensive involvement in Republican Party politics.

In addition to being a member of the Berkeley Republican Club's executive committee and a trustee of the West Berkeley Improvement Club, Spear co-

managed the 1900 congressional campaign of Alameda County Assessor Henry P. Dalton, a friend and associate of former Oakland mayor Dr. George C. Pardee. (Dalton was plagued by scandals throughout that year and lost the election. In 1911, he would be convicted of bribery and imprisoned at San Quentin, a few cells away from Abe Ruef, who was serving 14 years in connection with the San Francisco graft cases.)

In 1902, Spear acted as chairman of the state's Republican Campaign Committee, which helped put Pardee in the Governor's mansion. The reward was not long in coming: on 25 March 1903, Spear came into "possession of the honors and emoluments attaching to the office of president, State Board of Harbor Commissioners," as the *San Francisco Call* succinctly put it. Despite its title, the board's power was confined to the port of San Francisco, which was owned and managed by the State of California.

Midway through his four-year term, Spear confronted the supreme challenge of dealing with the devastation wreaked by the 1906 Earthquake and Fire. He passed with flying colors, according to the report of Commander Charles J. Badger of the U.S. Navy, who was in charge of the flagship *Chicago* and of the Sixth Marine District of San Francisco:

The State of California owns and manages all the wharves and water-side property in San Francisco, and cooperation was sought from the State Officials in control. At the first intimation, Mr. C.H. Spear, President of the State Board of Harbor Commissioners, immediately responded and his intimate knowledge of all the details of water-side affairs, his wide acquaintance with the local business community, his energetic endeavors to restore normal business conditions in the shipping district in the shortest possible time and his sound and loyal assistance merit the highest praise. He was worthily assisted by his colleagues in the State Service.⁷

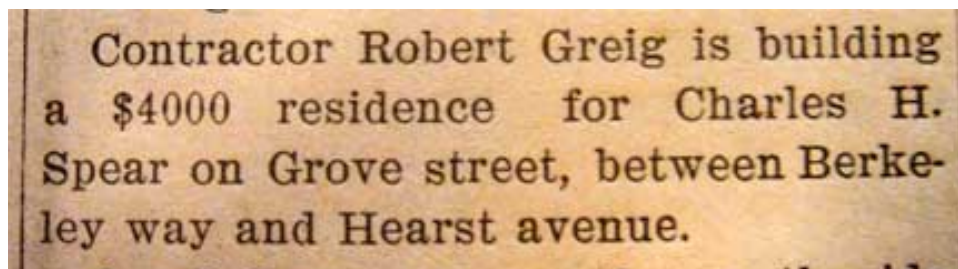


Figure 39. *Berkeley Daily Gazette*, 5 July 1904, page 6

A year after assuming the presidency of the State Board of Harbor Commissioners, Spear engaged Robert Greig, Berkeley's premier builder and a fellow Republican Party operative, to construct for his family—now numbering six persons—an elegant new residence at 1905 Grove Street.

Spear's term as president of the State Board of Harbor Commissioners was not free of controversy. Just three months after the earthquake, the *San Francisco*

⁷ Services Performed by the Flagship *Chicago* During Conflagration in San Francisco, California, and Operations of the Navy in Control of the Sixth District (Water Front) of the City. 31 May 1906. National Archives Military Records Group 45, Box 464. <http://www.sfmuseum.org/quake/navy.html>

Call published an illustrated front-page exposé about the shacks, stands, and commercial signs that had been allowed to proliferate along the Embarcadero (then called East Street), contrary to municipal ordinances. The newspaper decried the “valuable concessions that conflict with the City’s interests,” going on to elaborate, “The taxpayers now realize that the waterfront streets under jurisdiction of the Harbor Board are filled with fruit peddlers, popcorn vendors, buttermilk sellers and firms that ought to be leasing property and erecting temporary structures instead of getting their places rent free or for a mere pittance.” This commercial agglomeration was dubbed Spearville.⁸

The following day, Spear defended his action by saying, “I have done nothing worse than make money for the State since I’ve been in office. [...] The income of the State since the renting of the various dock houses and spaces on the bulkhead has been increased about \$2,000 a month.”⁹

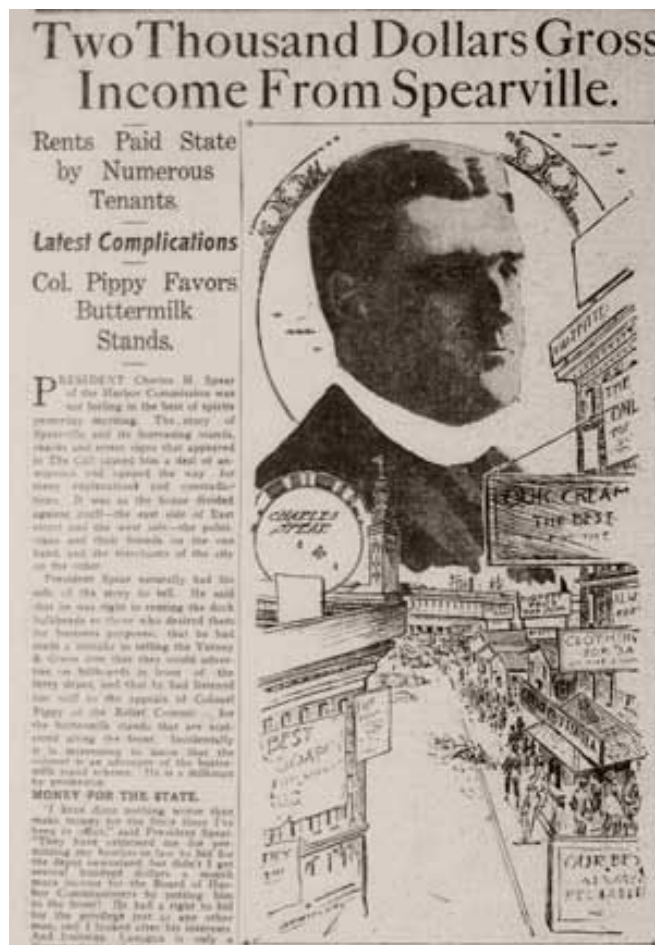


Figure 40. San Francisco Call, 21 July 1906

⁸ “East Street Approaches to Docks Blocked With Shacks and Stands.” *San Francisco Call*, 20 July 1906, page 1.

⁹ “Two Thousand Gross Income From Spearville.” *San Francisco Call*, 21 July 1906, page 1.

Returning to the private sector in 1907, Spear busied himself with real estate investments in Alameda County and Sacramento¹⁰. The new house was a showplace and the center of social activity. In January 1909, the Spears' daughter, Florence, was married here, and the *San Francisco Call* described the wedding decorations:

“The Spear home was attractively decorated for the event. The marriage vows were exchanged under a canopy of pink and white carnations and the music room and the library were hung with garlands. An orchestra concealed by a bower of roses rendered selections during the supper.”¹¹

Also in 1909, Spear was a candidate in Berkeley's first mayoral election under its new city charter. Following a nasty campaign, Spear was soundly trounced by Beverly L. Hodghead, of the Good Government League. This rivalry did not prevent Spear from joining mayor Hodghead in opposing a proposed annexation of Berkeley to Oakland. On 26 August 1910, the *Oakland Tribune* reported: “Charles H. Spear is opposed to consolidation because he does not wish to see the pure, ideal government of Berkeley swallowed up in the Babylonian wickedness of Oakland.” The initiative went down to defeat at the ballot box on 15 September 1910, with Berkeley casting 4,009 to 1,402 votes to reject consolidation. West Berkeley was the only district that voted for annexation.

Spear's political influence did not avail him in August 1910, when the City Council decided to widen Grove Street from 60 feet to 80 feet between Center Street and Berkeley Way. Against his protests and those of others, the street was eventually widened.

Spear fell afoul of the law in 1912, when Chief of Police August Vollmer swore out a warrant against him and a number of other prominent local landowners for allowing the sidewalks in front of their properties to sprout weeds. “Millionaires must dig weeds, as well as less favored folk, or, at least, have the weeds removed from the sidewalk areas surrounding their Berkeley property if they wish to avoid the consequences of arrest and fine,” reported the *San Francisco Call* on 1 August 1912. Among those joining Spear on the list of infamy were capitalist and “Borax” Smith associate Frank C. Havens; bank presidents J.C. McMullen and P.E. Bowles; and Shattuck heir John W. Havens.

In the 1913 mayoral election, Spear ran again, this time losing to Charles D. Heywood. His final attempt, in 1917, resulted in a primary loss to the incumbent, Samuel C. Irving.

¹⁰ James Miller Guinn. *History of the State of California and Biographical Record to Oakland and Environs, Also Containing Biographies of Well-Known Citizens of the Past and Present, Vol. II.* Los Angeles: Historic Record Co., 1907

¹¹ “Mrs. Charles Mills, Who Was Miss Florence Spear.” *San Francisco Call*, 8 January 1909, page 4.



Figure 41. *Oakland Tribune*, 4 Jan. 1923

Charles Spear was a leader in the movement that campaigned for adopting the Council-Manager form of government in Berkeley. On 5 March 1923, Berkeley changed its charter to institute the Council-Manager system.

In May 1923, Spear was reappointed to the presidency of the State Board of Harbor Commissioners, this time by Governor Friend W. Richardson. Spear resigned from that office in August 1925, after having been offered the post of general manager of Los Angeles Harbor, at more than double his previous salary. In the 1920s, Los Angeles emerged as California's largest city, and its twin harbors were eclipsing the port of San Francisco in volume and importance. Richardson regarded Spear's selection by the Los Angeles Harbor Commission as a personal compliment to him.¹²

The Spears moved to Los Angeles in November 1925. They sold their Berkeley house to John and Renata Meaker. In February 1927, Charles Spear was reportedly "in the midst of a great development project for the southern metropolis when he was stricken with a heart attack. A few weeks later, when his condition was pronounced serious, he resigned and returned to Berkeley."¹³

Charles and Tillie Spear took up residence at the Shattuck Hotel, then known as the Whitecotton. "For some months after returning here," reported the *Berkeley Daily Gazette* on 7 March 1928, "he showed improvement, which was most encouraging to relatives and friends, but later his condition grew worse and for the last few months his condition has been grave."

The following day, the *Gazette* published a eulogy that opened with these words: "With the death of Charles H. Spear, Berkeley loses one of its younger pioneer citizens; a man whose virile and pleasing personality endeared him to a host of friends and acquaintances and made him one of the outstanding characters, not only of Berkeley, but of the State."

Charles H. Spear was buried with Masonic rites in Mountain View Cemetery on 9 March 1928. His honorary pallbearers included former governors George Pardee and Friend Richardson, Mayor James Rolph of San Francisco, and other prominent political leaders.

¹² "Spear Elected L.A. Harbor Head." *Oakland Tribune*, 10 August 1925.

¹³ "Charles Spear, Former Harbor Board Head, Dies." *Berkeley Daily Gazette*, 7 March 1928.

The following is a transcription of the article published by the *Oakland Tribune* on the day of Spear's funeral:

CHAS. SPEAR BURIED WITH MASONIC RITE

Two Ex-Governors and S.F. Mayor Act as Honorary Pallbearers for Former State Harbor Board Chief

BERKELEY, MARCH 9. — State, municipal and federal officials, together with fraternal leaders and other friends, paid tribute today to the memory of Charles H. Spear, pioneer Berkeleyan and twice president of the state board of harbor commissioners.

[unprinted text line]
associates in his public career participated in Masonic rites this afternoon at an undertaking chapel at Grove and Derby streets. Officers of Berkeley Lodge of Masons, with which Spear had long been affiliated, conducted the Masonic ritual.



Figure 42. *Oakland Tribune*, 18 July 1925

Honorary pall bearers were Mayor James Rolph of San Francisco, George C. Pardee and Friend W. Richardson, former governors of California who had appointed Spear as president of the harbor board during their administrations; Walter R. Allen, president of the harbor commission at Los Angeles, where Spear was port manager until illness forced his resignation; William A. Sherman, who succeeded Spear as president of the San Francisco board, and Hugh McKeivitt, San Francisco attorney and prominent Masonic leader.

Following the funeral, Spear's body was interred at Mountain View cemetery. Spear was 65 and was born in Sonora. A widow and three children, Mrs. Charles Mills and Fred and Burnham Spear, survive.



Figure 43. Oakland Tribune, 9 March 1928

After her husband's death, Tillie Spear went to live with her widowed daughter, Florence Mills, and divorced son, Burnham C. Spear, at 1720 Spruce Street. She passed away in 1952 and is buried next to her husband and elder son Burnham.

The Builder

Robert Greig

Robert Greig (1861–1931), was born in the village of West Wemyss, Fife, Scotland and immigrated to the United States in his early twenties. His first appearance in the Berkeley city directory was in 1891. He was listed as a carpenter living on the 1600 block of Berkeley Way, between Hamilton Street [now McGee Avenue] and California Street.



Figure 44. Robert Greig & his second wife, Edith, at a Shriners banquet (*Oakland Tribune*, 7 June 1913)

By 1892, Greig was a contractor. That year, he built three Berkeley public school buildings—Columbus, Whittier, and Le Conte—all designed by A.H. Broad.¹⁴ Broad had previously been Greig's employer, as revealed in an article published in the *Berkeley Advocate* in 1892:

Anderson & Greig, contractors and builders, is an enterprising new firm in Berkeley. Mr. Greig was for years foreman for A.H. Broad, and left his position to go into the firm of which he is now the junior partner. The firm is the builder of the Whittier and Le Conte schools.¹⁵

According to S.D. Waterman's *History of the Berkeley Schools*, only Le Conte School was built in partnership with William W. Anderson, but the *San Francisco Morning Call* offered somewhat different information on 25 June 1892:

At the meeting of the Town Trustees Thursday night the contract for one school at Southwest Berkeley was awarded to Dutot & Kidder for \$6568 and the two others to Anderson & Greig at \$6998 each, one not to be built until it is decided by the board whether it shall go to Dwight way or South Berkeley.

Anderson & Greig were said by the *Advocate* to be executing "a very fair share of the building now going on in Berkeley." Among their early projects was the Union High School in Washington Township (now Fremont), completed in 1893.¹⁶ Two years later, they built the Davis-Byrne Building, a two-story, mixed-use structure at 2134–2140 Dwight Way, designated a City of Berkeley landmark.

¹⁴ S.D. Waterman. *History of the Berkeley Schools*. Berkeley: The Professional Press, 1918.

¹⁵ Transcript in BAHA's Greig file. The article's exact date is not provided.

¹⁶ Philip Holmes. "Our Pioneer High School." *Tri-City Voice*, 31 October 2007.

As no professional architect or designer was named in the contract notice, it is likely that Anderson & Greig designed the Davis-Byrne Building themselves.¹⁷



Figure 45. Davis-Byrne Building (photo: Daniella Thompson, 2004)

In July 1897, Anderson & Greig were awarded the contract for constructing the Botany Building on the University of California campus. The architect was Clinton Day. This building was located on the current site of Stephens Hall until it was moved in 1921. It was razed in 1931.

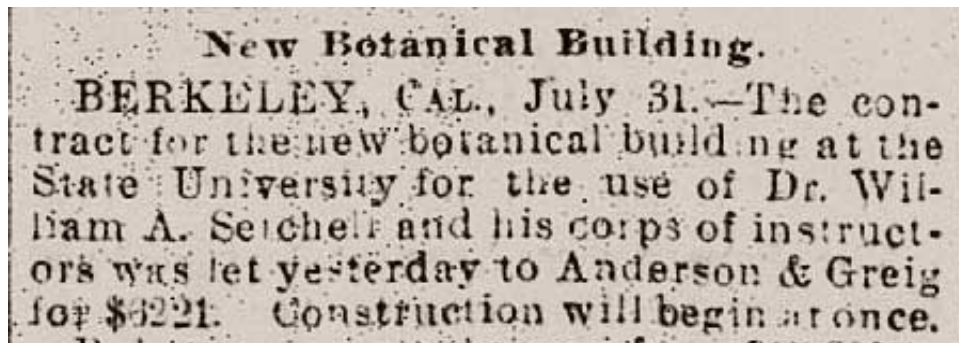


Figure 46. San Francisco Call, 1 August 1897

¹⁷ Michael R. Corbett & Woodruff C. Minor. Historic American Building Survey: Davis-Byrne Building. HABS No. CA-2314. 1991.



Figure 47. The first Botany Building at U.C. Berkeley

In 1898, Anderson & Greig were awarded the contract to construct a palatial Pacific Heights house for lawyer-capitalist William F. Herrin. The architect was Julius E. Krafft.

W. F. Herrin (owner) with Anderson & Greig (contractors), architect, Julius E. Krafft. All work for a 2-story frame building with attic and basement on E line of Scott street, 125 N of Broadway, N 50 by E 112:6.

Figure 48. Contract notice, San Francisco Call, 30 March 1898



Figure 49. Herrin House, 2530 Broadway at Scott Street (San Francisco History Center)

Anderson & Greig continued their partnership until 1899. Thereafter, Greig operated on his own, working out of 2105 Durant Avenue, which had been his home since 1893. His building career flourished, as he was awarded contracts to construct important public buildings. In 1900, Berkeley voters approved \$100,000 in bonds for school buildings, including the first public high school in town. The following year, Gregg constructed Berkeley High School's main building, designed by Louis Stone of Stone & Smith. The building stood on the corner of Allston Way and Grove Street and was replaced in the 1930s by the Art Deco Science Building, now called Building H.



Figure 50. Berkeley High School (Olla Podrida, December 1913)

In 1904, the same year he built the Spear House, Greig constructed Berkeley's first public library on a lot donated by Rosa Shattuck. The building was financed by a gift of \$40,000 from steel magnate and philanthropist Andrew Carnegie, and the architect was John Galen Howard. This building was razed in 1929 to make way for the current Main Library.



Figure 51. Berkeley's Carnegie Library (Berkeley Historical Society)

In 1905, Robert Greig began construction on two landmark buildings that are still standing on Shattuck Avenue: the Barker Block¹⁸ (A.W. Smith, architect), at the corner of Dwight Way, and the Masonic Temple (William H. Wharff, architect), at the corner of Bancroft Way.



Figure 52. The Barker Block in the 1970s (photo: David DeVries)



Figure 53. Berkeley Masonic Temple (Berkeley Public Library)

¹⁸ "Splendid Building." *Oakland Tribune*, 14 July 1905.

Greig's crowning achievement was the construction of Berkeley's City Hall in 1908. The architects were John Bakewell and Arthur Brown, Jr—Cal alumni, former Maybeck protégés, and graduates of the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris.



Figure 54. Berkeley City Hall shortly after its completion in 1909 (BAHA archives)

Robert Greig's Political and Public Activities

Like Charles H. Spear, Robert Greig was prominent in Republican Party politics. In 1902, he was the Republican nominee for the post of Alameda County Recorder. A committee headed by Republican stalwarts such as Judge William H. Waste was formed to promote Greig's candidacy, stating that "Robert Greig is not only a staunch Republican, and a good citizen, but has always been and now is a firm believer in and a supporter of Union labor and Unionism, and has risen from the ranks of the employed to be a recognized employer of Union laborers [...]"¹⁹

Nevertheless, Greig's candidacy was opposed by the Labor Party, provoking Judge H.J.V. Swain to rail about it while addressing the Berkeley Republican Club:

The supposed Labor party made a nomination against the regular Republican nominee for Recorder in this county. In opposing Bob Greig, "the honest carpenter," the Labor party put themselves in a paradoxical situation. If Robert Greig does not represent the rank and file of labor in this county no man ever did.²⁰

¹⁹ "Popular Bob Greig." *Berkeley Daily Gazette*, 20 October 1902.

²⁰ "Berkeley Republicans Hold a Great Meeting." *San Francisco Call*, 28 September 1902.

In 1904, Greig was appointed as a delegate to the Republican Party's Congressional Convention, alongside such notables as Friend W. Richardson and Louis Titus.

In April 1915, the 54-year-old Greig was appointed by the City Council as Berkeley's Building Inspector.²¹ The post entailed taking charge of the City's Building Department and overseeing all building permits and construction activities in town. Each year, Greig announced the number, types, and value of building permits issued during the previous year. In the early 1920s, the figures set successive annual records. On 1 January 1924, he reported:

The year ending yesterday has practically reached the \$8,000,000 mark in building. I don't think there is another city the size of Berkeley that has done more home building. The number of single-family residences, flats, and apartments built during the year will add at least to the population, 7,500 to 8,000, of course less the number who lost their homes during the fire in September.

The estimated cost of building already started in the burned area is about \$250,000. There has been at least an average of three homes built and finished for every day of the year during 1923.²²

Greig did not get the chance to report on Berkeley's building activities in 1924, for in August of that year, he was appointed as the State of California's Housing Director, taking office at the beginning of September. "Greig was today working on a program by which, he says, he hopes to increase the efficiency of the housing commission," reported the *Oakland Tribune* on 29 August 1924.

In his new post, Greig was praised for "cleaning up bad housing conditions throughout the state" by former Berkeley City Attorney Frank Cornish, the framer of the Berkeley housing code that had been used as a model for the State's tenement house law and under which Greig was working in his fight against the slums. "I consider his appointment by the governor was very fortunate, by reason of his nine years successful experience in the building department of Berkeley in enforcing housing laws," said Cornish.²³

Robert Greig died in office on 28 March 1931. The following obituary was published in the May 1931 issue of *The Architect and Engineer*.

Robert Greig

Robert Greig, chief inspector of the State Housing Commission and for many years chief building inspector for the city of Berkeley, died in an Oakland hospital recently from injuries received when he was run down by an automobile near the State Building in San Francisco.

As a contractor Mr. Greig built the Berkeley City Hall, the old Berkeley Library, Barker Block, Masonic Temple and several of the old structures on the University of California Campus.

Mr. Greig was recognized as an authority on building codes and many of his suggestions were incorporated in the present State building regulations.

²¹ "Robert Greig Named Building Inspector." *Oakland Tribune*, 13 April 1915.

²² "Berkeley's Building Is U.S. Record." *Oakland Tribune*, 1 January 1924.

²³ "Housing Head's Work Is Praised." *Oakland Tribune*, 30 June 1925.

Who Was the Architect?

While the *Berkeley Daily Gazette* reported on the construction of the Spear House on 5 July 1904, no mention of the architect was made then or at any other time. Researchers have speculated for years that the likely designer might have been William H. Wharff (1836–1936), a prolific architect who lived nearby, at 2000 Delaware Street. Robert Greig is known to have constructed at least two buildings designed by Wharff: the Wanger Block (1903), at Shattuck Avenue and Kittredge Street, and the Masonic Temple (1905), at Bancroft Way and Shattuck Avenue.

As attractive as this speculative idea is, there is no evidence to support it. Wharff's was Berkeley's most popular architect at the time,²⁴ and his new building projects were frequently mentioned in the newspaper. It is highly unlikely that the architect would have failed to publicize as prominent a commission as the design of the Spear House.

On the other hand, it is entirely reasonable to assume that Greig himself could have been the designer. He had a quarter-century's experience in construction and had worked with the leading architects of his time, from Clinton Day and A.W. Smith to John Galen Howard and Bakewell & Brown. He was familiar not only with the layouts of residential buildings but also with the vocabulary of architectural ornamentation. Although the Spear House's street façade is highly ornamented, its overall massing is a simple rectangle that did not require an architect's intervention.

The Post-Spear Years

The Spears sold their house in 1925, when they moved to Los Angeles. The new owners were John Ruscombe Meaker (1873–1969) and his wife, Renata Russe (1885–1954). Born in England, John Meaker worked as a machinist before coming to Berkeley. Here he operated a restaurant at 2170 Shattuck Avenue and also managed the Blue & Gold Cab Company. By 1940, he had become a manager at Capwell's Department Store.

About 1949, the 10-room Spear House was taken over by the Home Missionary Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, which used it to house some of its field workers and local missionaries. In 1956, the Home Missionary Board transferred the house to the Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, whose campus was located in the Framåt Lodge, 1900 Addison Street. In 1959, the seminary moved its campus to Mill Valley and sold the Spear House to Edward E. and Mary Anne Combs for \$13,000. The couple held on to it for six years before selling it in 1965 to Nina Jong for \$30,000.

In 1967, Nina Jong, operating as The Berkeley Part-Way House, Inc., entered into an agreement with the State of California to provide a housing facility for wards of the California Youth Authority.²⁵ In August 1970, the house was offered for sale with an asking price of \$52,500. The offering circular stated that the

²⁴ Daniella Thompson. "William Wharff: Architect, Civil War Vet, and Freemason." BAHA, 2008. http://berkeleyheritage.com/eastbay_then-now/wharff.html

²⁵ *Community Involvement in a Partway Home Program*, page 137. University of California, 1967.

house was being leased to Berkeley Housing until 9 October 1970 at \$325 a month. Ms. Jong next leased it to the Integral Yoga Institute at \$400 a month, the lease running until February 1973.

Nina Jong sold the house to the current owners in December 1977.

16. Context

The neighborhood north of University Avenue, between Shattuck Avenue and Martin Luther King, Jr. Way (formerly Grove Street), was mostly farmland during the second half of the 19th century. Subdivision into building lots began in a piecemeal fashion after train service from Oakland to downtown Berkeley was inaugurated in 1876.

The earliest of the four tracts in the area between University Avenue and Delaware Street were the Clapp Tract (1876) and the College Tract (subdivided in 1876, map filed in 1877). Block A of the Twichell Tract was subdivided in 1877, the rest of the tract in 1889. Sea View Park was subdivided in 1890.

With the arrival of electric streetcars in 1891, the area's development received a boost, accelerating as the line was extended from University Avenue to Cedar Street in 1902. By 1911, the neighborhood was almost fully built, and primarily residential.

Included in the architectural mix were Victorian houses built in the earlier years of settlement, but the dominant building style was Colonial Revival, fashionable between 1895 and 1905.

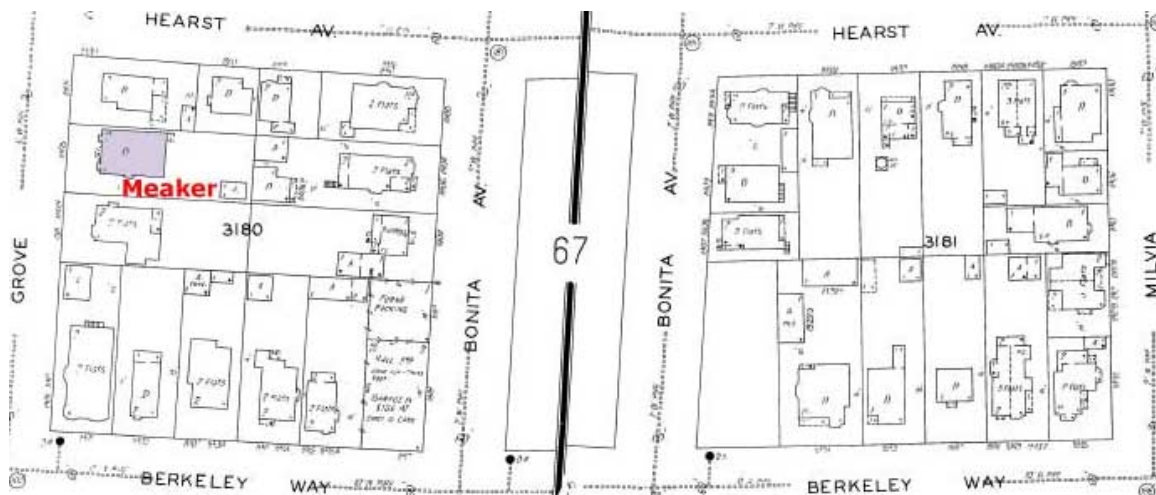


Figure 55. Sanborn map, 1929

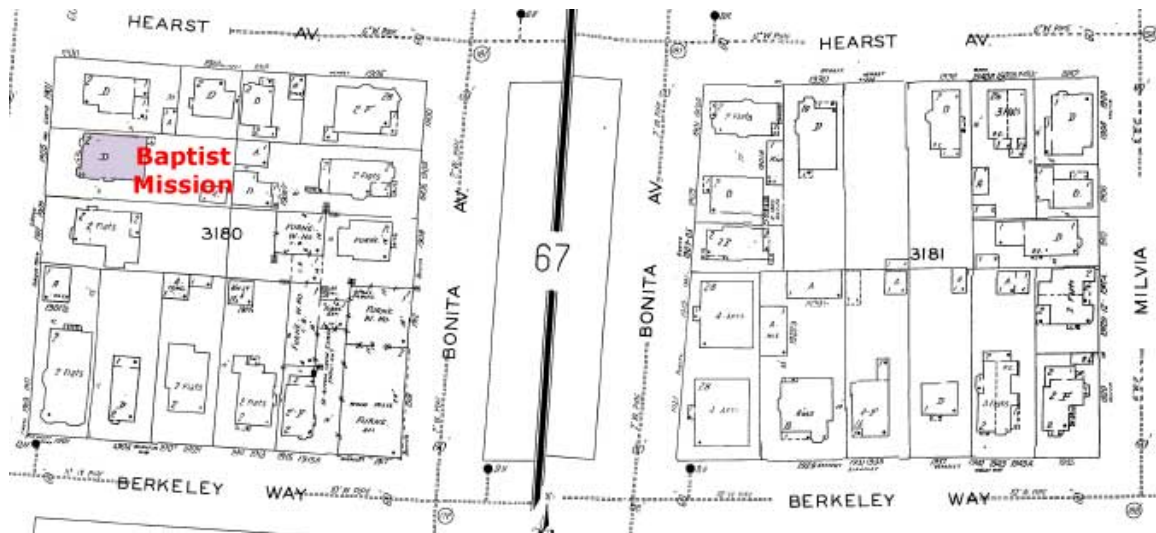


Figure 56. Sanborn map, 1950

No appreciable change occurred in the neighborhood's character until the mid-20th century. From the 1950s until the early '70s, older houses on nearly every block were demolished, giving way to large, boxy apartment blocks. This trend was halted with the passage of the Neighborhood Preservation Ordinance in 1973.



Figure 57. The dilapidated former house of Samuel Heywood, 1929 Grove Street, in 1967. KPFA now occupies the site. (Donogh files, BAHA archives)

During the 1960s, BART construction resulted in the loss of nearly all the houses along the north side of Hearst Avenue between Milvia and Sacramento streets. In response to citizen action, Ohlone Park was created instead of the apartments that BART had intended to construct on top of the train tube.

Today, the west side of M.L. King, Jr., Way between Berkeley Way and Hearst Avenue is entirely commercial, as is the east side of the street between Hearst Avenue and Delaware Street. All four corners on the intersection of M.L. King, Jr., Way and Hearst Avenue have changed dramatically since 1950.



Figure 58. The southwest corner of M.L. King, Jr. Way & Hearst Ave. (Google Street View)



Figure 59. The northeast corner of M.L. King, Jr. Way & Hearst Ave. (Google Street View)

While many historic houses remain in the neighborhood, none is as striking or as visible as the Spear House. Sited in a highly prominent location, it is daily seen by hundreds if not thousands of people and serves as a rare and noteworthy reminder of Grove Street as it used to be a century ago.

17. Significance

Consistent with Section 3.24.110A.1.b., the Charles H. Spear House possesses architectural merit. Built in the Colonial Revival style, it is the most significant example of this style in North Central Berkeley and one of the most notable and elegant Colonial Revival residences in Berkeley. Constructed in 1904, the building is remarkably intact, retaining a very high degree of its historic fabric and detail.

Among the building's significant features are a symmetrical façade; a cornice decorated with corbels and egg-and-dart molding; a central dormer with arched window; a pair of oval portholes set in wide, molded casings and ornamented with medallions and elaborate scrollwork; a central portico with a circular canopy decorated with dentils and egg-and-dart molding, supported by two round columns with Ionic capitals and flanked by two pilasters, also with Ionic capitals; two large window bays set in wide, molded casings and surmounted by arch pediments ornamented with dentils and scrollwork.

Consistent with Section 3.24.110A.1.c., the Charles H. Spear House is worth preserving for the exceptional values it adds to the neighborhood fabric, which suffered numerous losses to mid-century apartment buildings and BART construction between the 1950s and the 1970s.

Consistent with Section 3.24.110A.4., the Charles H. Spear House has historic value. It was built for Charles Henry Spear (1862–1928), a well-known political figure in the State of California. From 1884 until 1927, Spear served in various public positions, including posts as Berkeley City Clerk, Alameda County Recorder, San Francisco Port Warden, President of the State Board of Harbor Commissioners (twice), and General Manager of Los Angeles Harbor.

The Spear House was built and possibly designed by Berkeley's premier contractor, Robert Greig (1861–1931), who constructed some of the city's most prominent buildings, including Berkeley City Hall, the Carnegie Library, Berkeley High School's first building, the Masonic Temple, and the Barker Block.

The Charles H. Spear House retains integrity of location, design, materials, setting, feeling, and association.

Historic Value: City Yes Neighborhood Yes
Architectural Value: Neighborhood Yes

18. Is the property endangered? No

19. Reference Sources:

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20. Recorder:

Daniella Thompson

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