

Points of View

PUBLIC TREASURES

The Gamble House

by Jonathan Moore

Situated along the northern rim of metro Los Angeles at the base of the San Gabriel Mountains lies Pasadena, Calif. With its midwinter Tournament of Roses parade and college grid-iron classic Rose Bowl, Pasadena provides many of us with images of warm and colorful festivities. Home to the Mt. Wilson Observatory, Pasadena Playhouse Theatre, and Cal Tech University, the city has an impressive array of tree-lined residential neighborhoods and a central business district yielding rich architectural treasures.

Several years ago, the late Bob Fowler, FAIA, PE, CBO, who was Pasadena's chief building code official at the time, introduced me to this vibrant and historic community. More recently, I discovered the Gamble House, a prized Pasadena landmark and monument to the Arts & Crafts movement. Located less than a mile from the Rose Bowl, the house is a tribute to the vision and innovation of architect brothers Charles and Henry Greene (Green & Greene Architects). Constructed between 1907 and 1909, it served as the winter residence of David and Mary Gamble of the Proctor and Gamble Company. Because of its unique style, it has become one of Southern California's most popular attractions over the years and was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1978.

Many wealthy migrants from the Midwest found Pasadena's warm and semi-arid climate the perfect oasis from the harsh winters back home. Local Indian tribes referred to the area as "crown of the valley," from which the town derived its name. Among those who built winter homes there were the Wrigleys—of Wrigleys Spearmint gum and Chicago Cubs baseball fame—and St. Louis beer millionaire Adolphus Busch. Many families with lumber, railroad, publishing, and financial fortunes also settled in Pasadena. This made it a mecca between 1900 and 1920 for architects practicing the new crafts, bungalow, and prairie-style designs. By selecting Greene & Greene, the Gambles new home would come to represent the best of the Arts & Crafts style, expanding the structural boundaries of interior and exterior living and influencing the architectural pro-

fession for decades to come.

Viewing its features, one is immediately impressed by the geometric precision of the crafted wood walls, floors, windows, and cross-beam ceilings. Built to encompass the semitropical foliage and towering palm trees gracing Pasadena, Greene & Greene created an open-air structure in harmony with the natural environment. Spacious rooms, brick-tiled terraces, and wide sun porches capitalize on the warm climate and expansive views of Southern California. Everything adorning the home from downspouts and door hinges to air vents, light fixtures, and hand-blown stained glass provide visitors with a feeling of natural light and open space. In a 1997 speech to the AIA Abilene (Texas) chapter, Fowler called the Gamble House "one of the premier residential structures in the U.S. ... Its exquisite form and attention to detail have influenced architects practicing the bungalow and crafts movements to this day."

In 1966, family heirs deeded the Gamble House to the City of Pasadena in a joint academic/administrative arrangement with the University of Southern California (USC). Students enrolled at USC's School of Architecture are frequent visitors to the home. Classes held on-site cover historic preservation as well as structural design methods from the early 20th century. Each year, two upper-class architect students are selected to live in the

house rent-free for a full year under the USC Scholar-in-Residence Fellowship program. Students also assist in administrative operations and physical upkeep of the home. The City of Pasadena maintains the grounds.

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Reference

The Gamble House, 4 Westmoreland Place, Pasadena, CA 91103-3593, is located in the 300 block of North Orange Grove Boulevard, three blocks north of Colorado Boulevard near the intersection of freeways 134 (Ventura Fwy) and 210 (Foothills

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Fwy). Guided tours are open to the public Thursday through Sunday from Noon until 3:00 pm, except for major holidays. Tickets go on sale at 11:30 am. Telephone 626-793-3334 or log on to <http://gamblehouse.usc.edu> for more information. Before the tour, be prepared to wear sneakers, soft-soled shoes, or a fitting substitute offered by the docents to preserve the intricately grained wood floors. A must-see tour for architect professionals and novices alike.

For a closer look at the landmark house, read *Pasadena: Crown of the Valley* by Ann Scheid, Windsor Publications Inc., Northridge, Calif., 1986

Public Treasures is a feature highlighting works of architecture that have sparked the public's imagination and interest in architecture. If you have a personal story of inspiration from ar-



chitecture that is open to the public, send it to Managing Editor Stephanie Stubbs, sstubbs@aia.org. 