

UPPER EAST  
ASSOCIATION  
SANTA BARBARA

Upper East News  
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<https://sbuppereast.org>

### State Street Parkway Designated a City Cultural Historic Landmark

As you may know, on February 28, 2023, the Santa Barbara City Council unanimously designated the State Street Parkway (from Mission St. to Constance Ave.) a City Cultural Historic Landmark. This was a team effort led by the UEA, which is now working with the City to obtain a dedication plaque to be placed at each end of the parkway. We are also continuing to monitor the recent up-keep by the Parks and Recreation Department and are looking forward to the planting and replacement of any damaged or missing Pindo Palms within the parkway sections. Thanks to all who wrote letters and/or came to the hearings to help preserve this important piece of Santa Barbara’s history.



### Elephant in the Front Garden

We all know about the metaphorical "elephant in the room." But what about a literal "elephant in the front garden"? The house of Greg and Jennifer Brown features just such a literal elephant in their front garden at 2324 Anacapa Street. The substantial elephant stands dramatically before an impressive planting of papyrus.



The elephant was cast in bronze by Jennifer, an accomplished sculptor, some years ago and has delighted neighbors, especially children, ever since. Their own son used to enjoy climbing onto the back of the elephant when he was young.

Why an elephant? Greg insists that there is no political symbolism attached to it. It was just a favorite animal.

If you drive down Anacapa Street toward downtown you may never have noticed the Browns’ elephant, despite its size. But if you’re driving *up* Anacapa Street from Mission Street toward Constance Avenue – it’s on your right.

You can’t miss it. Nor should you. Stop and admire!

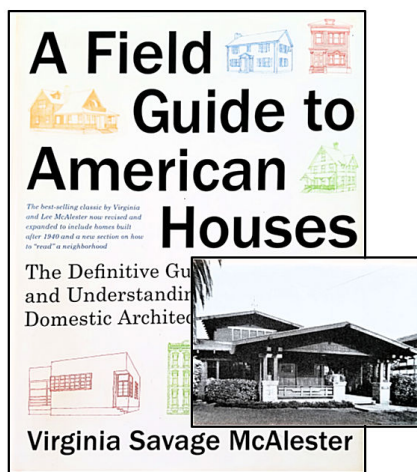
## History Corner

### A High-Style Craftsman Bungalow Two Single Women Stand Out Among the Homeowners By Betsy J. Green



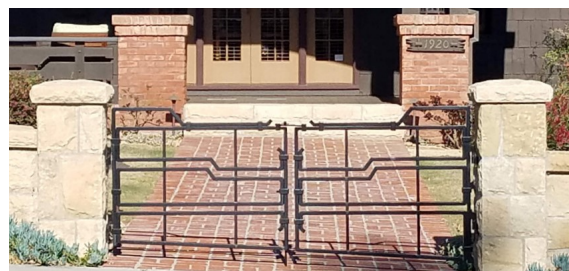
**ADDRESS: 1920 Laguna Street**

With its long, low silhouette, this 1913 home stands out from most other Craftsman bungalows here in Santa Barbara, which have a more vertical orientation and a steeper-pitched roof. True to the bungalow style, this home has wide eaves resting on exposed rafters and rectangular porch posts. It was probably designed by an architect but building permits in Santa Barbara in the 19-teens did not list the names of architects. The estimated construction cost was \$3,500. I was impressed to find a photo of this house in *A Field Guide to American Houses* by Virginia



Savage McAlester. (This book is available in the Santa Barbara Central Library.)

Craftsman homes originated in Southern California and were popular from 1905 to 1930. They are meant to blend in with the landscape and were often painted in earth tones. The Gamble House in Pasadena, designed by Greene & Greene, is the most famous example. An especially interesting detail of the Laguna Street home is the porch railing design, which is repeated in the front yard gate. The home is on the Santa Barbara Structure of Merit list.



### The Home's First Owners

John Blair Oliver and his wife Marion MacDonald built the home. Oliver had grown up on his family's farm on the Mesa. In fact, I have an entry about his family in my book *MESApedia*. The Olivers arrived here in 1868 and bought a 100-acre farm south of today's Cliff Drive and west of La Mesa Park – about where Oliver Road runs today. They had 30 acres of olive trees and also grew hay and corn and raised cows, pigs, and chickens.

The Olivers lived in the Laguna Street home part time. John was a mining engineer who often lived outside Santa Barbara. In 1913, he was working at a gold mine in Needles, California. Earlier, he had worked in Mexico and Montana. Sometimes his wife joined him; sometimes she lived at a hotel here and rented the home. Marion won prizes for her hooked rugs and also raised purebred cats. Their son, Reginald M. Oliver, was also a mining engineer and sometimes lived in the home with his wife.



## Carrillo Recreation Center Connection

The Olivers sold the home in the mid-1920s, and a series of families owned the home until the 1930s, when it passed into the hands of Bertha Geneva Rice, a single woman. She was the director of the Carrillo Recreation Center. Rice was also involved with a number of local organizations such as the Motor Corps during World War I. The local paper wrote, “Whenever it has been necessary to move patients to the emergency hospital . . . to carry food and other supplies for the sick, or any of the other services needed, Miss Bertha Rice and her corps have been on the spot.” Rice was also the director of the Western Out-of-Doors Conservation League, was one of the founders of the children’s parade El Desfile de los Niños, and was president of the St. Cecilia Club for many years.

With her in the home was another single woman named Vesper Wallace Bell, who also worked at the Recreation Center. When Rice died in 1941, Bell inherited/bought the home. She lived there until 1975 – about 40 years. Bell, nicknamed Wally, had been an ambulance driver in France during World War I!



The Library of Congress website describes the work of the women ambulance drivers: “These are the noble women who did work which would tire any man, they managed, repaired and drove any kind of automobile through the streets of Paris day and night during the war. In the inky nights of Paris, they

plowed through the streets at all hours, never stopping. They were highly praised for their courage by all who had to do with them.” In 1975, Bell sold the home to Charles J. Mistretta and moved to Casa Dorinda, an organization which she had helped establish.

Joanne and Ed Northup bought the home in 2007. They like the home’s distinctive Greene & Greene style and also enjoy its walkable location.

Please do not disturb the residents of 1920 Laguna Street. This article originally appeared in the [Santa Barbara Independent](#).

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Help Wanted! If you own an older home that you would like me to write about in my Great House Detective column in the *Independent*, you can get in touch through the contact page of my website: [betsyjgreen.com](http://betsyjgreen.com).

## Membership Renewal

Several of you have not renewed for 2023, but it’s not too late to stay connected with the Upper East Association. Only by being a member will you continue to receive the [Newsletter](#) and other important communications. Only by being a member can you attend the annual meeting, go on guided neighborhood walks, and participate in other events. Renew at our website:

[sbuppereast.org/membership](http://sbuppereast.org/membership)

## Upper East Boundary

The Upper East Association adopted in 2010 the map below which depicts the boundaries of our neighborhood. The Upper East is an area within City Council District 6 and is represented by Councilmember Kristen Sneddon. This map doesn’t necessarily match the city’s definition of the upper east neighborhood because the UEA decided that Roosevelt School was really part of our neighborhood. It should also be noted that both the Santa Barbara Mission and the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History are in our neighborhood.

# Upper East Association Neighborhood

