

Tree Tops Historic Context

University of Oregon
Campus Planning, Design & Construction

May 2016

Resource Identification

Current Building Name: Tree Tops or Chancellor's House
Historic Building Name: Hampton House, Campbell Church House
Building Address: 2237 Spring Street, Eugene, OR, 97403
Ranking: University of Oregon - Primary
City of Eugene - Eligible/Contributing

Architectural description:

Architectural Style Classification: craftsman/bungalow/shingle style
Building Plan (footprint shape): rectangular
Number of Stories: 2.5 plus basement
Foundation Materials: cut stone blocks
Primary Exterior Wall Material(s): wood shingles
Secondary Exterior Wall Material: ashlar sandstone blocks
Roof Configuration/Type: gambrel
Primary Roof Material: composition shingles
Primary Window Type: six over 1, double-hung sash
Primary Window Material: wood
Decorative Features and Materials: Exterior decorative features include large brackets supporting the roof, window awnings, and other overhangs, the large porch wrapping around three sides of the house, large ashlar stone piers supporting the porch railings, and the decorative column and beam caps. Interior decorative features include the main grand staircase with a mezzanine landing, the high ceilings with beams finished with paneling, and the carved relief of The Field of the Cloth of Gold over the fireplace.
Landscape Features: Expansive front yard, large conifers in yard and formal plantings, well manicured lawn, deciduous and conifers covering lot.

Date of Construction: 1907-1910
Architect: Bennes & Hendricks
Builders: Tirrell & Hunter/George Svarverud
Stonework: J. A. Nash
Plumbing and Heating: Percy Long
Landscape Architect: D. C. Mosher/George H. Otten
Moved: No
Alterations: Refer to time lines.

Original Use(s)/Function(s): Hampton family residence
Current Use(s)/Function(s): Owned by the University of Oregon and leased to occupants
Area(s) of Significance: Architecture (Criterion C)
Period of Significance: 1910-1938

Project Contacts

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Table of Contents

Introduction.....	5
Historic Status and Significance.....	6
Bennes & Hendricks: Architect.....	28
Tirrell & Hunter: Builder.....	29
George Svarverud: Builder.....	30
George H. Otten: Landscape Architect.....	31
D. C. Mosher: Landscape “Gardener”.....	32
Alton Hampton.....	33
Maud Densmore.....	35
Campbell Church.....	36
Timeline.....	38
Bibliography.....	44
Notes.....	61
Appendix.....	62

Tree Tops

Introduction

Tree Tops--also known historically as the Hampton House, Campbell Church House, and most recently the Chancellor's House--was built from 1908-1910 for prominent local businessman Alton Hampton.

One of the first grand houses to be built in the southern, hillier area of Fairmount (known as Fairmount Heights), Tree Tops was part of a building and population boom in Eugene. According to the Fairmount History Project, a record-high 266 homes, 56 in Fairmount alone, were built in 1909. Tree Tops is one of several important early estates on the electric streetcar Fairmount Loop. Other important, adjacent estates include the Washburne Estate (c. 1920), the Fellman-Jewett Residence (1921), and the McMorrان House (1925), which continues to house the acting University of Oregon president. Like Alton Hampton, George McMorrان and his partner Carl Washburne were successful Eugene businessmen. Wilson H. Jewett was a Eugene lumberman and the brother of Mrs. Washburne. These estates, built into the same steeply sloping hillside, all have panoramic views of the University and the city below.

Portland architects Bennes and Hendricks designed this Craftsman style house. Tirrell and Hunter, a local contractor, most likely built Tree Tops. Landscape architect and UO Graduate George Otten worked in collaboration with landscape "gardener" D.C. Mosher. The extent of this collaboration is unknown. Otten designed several other grounds for prominent houses in the Fairmount neighborhood, including the McMorrان House.

The Eugene Daily Guard wrote many articles on Tree Tops during its construction. They were particularly interested in its large size (two-and-a-half stories with 17 rooms and 11,820 square feet) and its building materials (which included Tenino stone). They predicted that the house would be "one of the finest homes in the city" (Eugene Daily Guard, Eugene, Oregon, August 18, 1909).

In 1921, prompted by their divorce, Alton Hampton and Maud Densmore sold the house to the inventor and mining baron Campbell Church Sr. He was a very generous donor for the University of Oregon, contributing to the funding of McArthur Court and the Warner Museum of Fine Arts (now the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art), among other buildings. In 1938, Campbell Church Sr. gifted his house, in memory of his first wife, to the State Board of Higher Education as a permanent residence for the acting chancellor. Thirteen chancellors and their families have subsequently inhabited this residence. Their legacies have profoundly influenced the University of Oregon and the larger Oregon University System.

Historic Status and Significance

The evaluation of the house's historic significance was based upon a process developed for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, in which a resource must demonstrate significance based upon one or more of the following criteria:

- A. Association with significant events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of campus or community history.
- B. Association with significant persons.
- C. Distinctive architecturally because it
 - embodies distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction;
 - represents the work of a master;
 - possesses high artistic value; or
 - represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.

Distinctive Architecture (Criterion C)

Treetops is a classic example of a Craftsman house.

Craftsman style houses are known for the following characteristics:

- low-pitched, gabled roof (occasionally hipped) with wide, unenclosed eave overhang;
- roof rafters usually exposed;
- decorative (false) beams or braces commonly added under gables;
- porches, either full- or partial-width, with roof supported by tapered square columns; and
- columns or pedestals frequently extend to ground level (without a break at level of porch floor).

([A Field Guide to American Houses](#), Virginia McAlester, New York: Knopf, 1984)

Treetops has a low-pitched gambrel roof with a large gable dormer; exposed roof rafters; triangular, decorative knee braces under the gables; a grand, elevated and covered, veranda, which wraps around three sides; massive columns, beams, and stone corners, which support the front gable that extends to the edge of the veranda above the entry; rustic-dressed, random-coursed, ashlar sandstone from Tenino, Washington, in the columns and foundation; tapered columns that extend from ground level to the bottom of the raised veranda. Other key Craftsman-style features include both wood clapboard and wood shingle siding; boxed soffits; six-over-one, double-hung windows; a porte-cochere; and a high level of craftsmanship in general. Elements of the Shingle style also exist: the massing with bay windows and deep recesses that create a play of positive and negative spaces; and the prominence of the shingle cladding. In sum, Tree Tops is an excellent example of the defining characteristics of the Craftsman style.

CURR. HIST. STATUS:

RANKING: Primary
NEIGHBORHOOD: FM-3
TYPE: Building

OREGON CULTURAL RESOURCE INVENTORY
CITY OF EUGENE

FINAN. STATUS:

HISTORIC NAME: HAMPTON/CHURCH HOUSE DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1910
COMMON NAME: CHANCELLOR'S HOUSE ORIGINAL USE: One-Family Resid.
ADDRESS: 2237 SPRING BLVD PRESENT USE: One-Family Resid.
EARLY AD: 2632 FAIRMOUNT BLVD DATE: P1932
OWNER: State of Oregon/U of O ARCH./BLDR.:
ADDR: P.O. Box 3237 ARCH./STYLE: Craftsman
 Eugene, OR 97403
T/R/S#: 18 3 4 NW 1/4 SW 1/4 INTEGRITY: Minor Modifications
MAP NO.: 18030423 TAXLOT: 1400 THEME: 2
ADD: Fairmount Heights BLK:6 LOT:1 PROP. GROUP / /
ZONING: Low-Density Resid. Dist.

PLAN SHAPE: Rectangle #STORIES: 2.5 BASEMENT (Y/N/?): Y
FOUNDATION MATERIAL: Stone-cut blocks
ROOF FORM & MATERIALS: Gambrel, composition shingles
WALL CONSTRUCTION: Wood stud STRUCTURAL FRAME: Wood
PRIMARY WINDOW TYPE: 6/1 double hung sash, top sash divided into 6 panes
EXT. SURFACING MATERIALS: Clapboard/wood shingles
DECORATIVE FEATURES: Rock columns supporting wrap-around porch
OTHER: Small cross shape in foundation stones around house, bracketed eaves
CONDITION: Good MOVED: N DATE MOVED:

EXT. ALTERATIONS/ADDITIONS(DATED): Some window modifications

NOTEWORTHY LANDSCAPE FEATURES: Expansive front yard, large conifers in yard and formal plantings, well manicured lawn, deciduous and conifers cover lot
ASSOCIATED STRUCTURES: Swimming pool, tennis court, carriage house
KNOWN ARCHAEOLOGICAL FEATURES: N/A

GEOG. LOC. & IMMED. SETTING House facing west, on knoll, view of city, swi to north, tennis court to east; located in center of survey area.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: This 2.5 craftsman styled S.F. residence is located at the middle of the lot at the corner of The Heights Drive facing east. In good condition and with minor modifications, it is now a S.F. residence. A rectangular plan on a stone cut block foundation, it has a basement. The gambrel roof has a large gable dormer to the west and is covered with composition shingles. The windows are primarily wood D.H. 6/1. Outstanding decorative features include rock columns supporting a wrap around porch and eave brackets. Alterations include some window modifications. Noteworthy landscape features include expansive lot and large conifers. Related structures are swimming pool, tennis court, and carriage house.

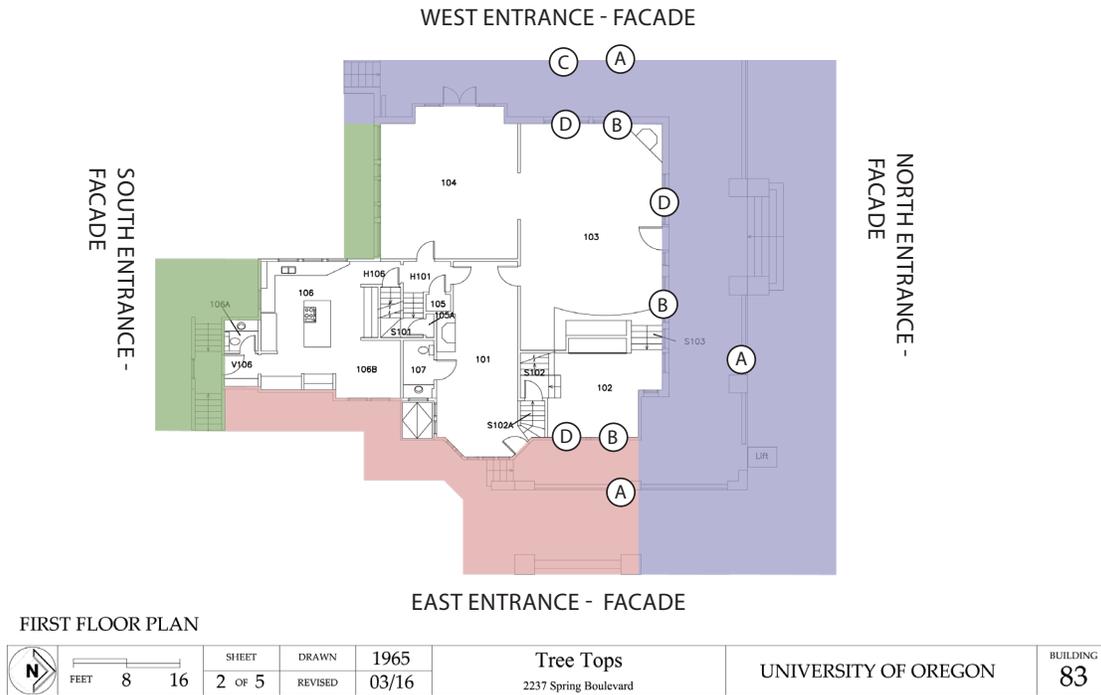
SOURCES: Polk 11-38 146e0121; Korstad 32-38 146e0075; Old permit 146e0125; City permit 146e0127; EDG 146e0122 5/31/09 p8c4, 10/12/1910 p5c1; Weingrod 146e0147 p31; Sundberg 146e0090; 146e0098

ROLL NO.: 19
NEGATIVE NO. 012
SLIDE ROLL#: 000
SLIDE NO: 000001

RECORDED BY: S. Donovan, K. Elseser/HDI
RESEARCHED BY:
DATE RECORDED: 6/17/1985
FIELD INVENTORY NO: 00000
STATE INVENTORY NO: 1394

Surveyed Areas & Rankings

Exterior



Ranking Key:



Exterior Features of Note:

- Ⓐ Ashlar columns support wrap-around veranda
- Ⓑ Most likely the original 6/1 double-hung windows
- Ⓒ Cross-shaped vents in foundation stones
- Ⓓ Excellent craftsmanship includes bracketed eaves

EXTERIOR PRIMARY RANKED SPACES

NORTH FACADE

Level of Historic Significance: High

- primary facade
- dramatic approach through designed landscape
- significant ashlar columns support a wrap-around porch
- quality of the architectural craftsmanship and details
- 6/1 double-hung windows, assumed to be original

Level of Integrity: Excellent

WEST FACADE

Level of Historic Significance: High

- contributes to the character of the Fairmount Neighborhood
- entrance to dining room
- significant ashlar columns support a wrap-around porch
- high quality of architectural craftsmanship and details
- 6/1 double-hung windows, assumed to be original

Level of Integrity: Excellent

EXTERIOR SECONDARY RANKED SPACES

EAST FACADE

Level of Historic Significance: High

- contributes to the character of the Fairmount Neighborhood
- entrance to hall
- porte-cochere with rock columns
- high quality of architectural craftsmanship and details
- apparently original 6/1 double-hung windows

Level of Integrity: Good

EXTERIOR TERTIARY RANKED SPACES

SOUTH FACADE

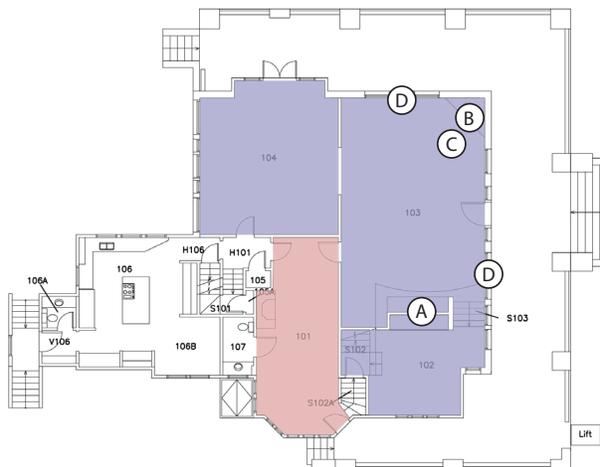
Level of Historic Significance: Low

- minor contribution to the character of Tree Tops
- contributes to the character of the Fairmount Neighborhood

Level of Integrity: Good

Surveyed Areas & Rankings

Interior - First Floor



FIRST FLOOR PLAN

		SHEET	DRAWN	1965	Tree Tops	UNIVERSITY OF OREGON	BUILDING
		2 OF 5	REVISED	03/16			

Ranking Key:



Interior Features of Note:

- (A) Great Room connected to landing and balcony
- (B) Bas relief of "The Field of the Cloth of Gold"
- (C) Brick fireplace and hearth flooring
- (D) Most likely the original 6/1 double-hung windows

FIRST FLOOR PRIMARY RANKED SPACES

GREAT ROOM

Level of Historic Significance: High

- Dramatic, interconnected space with two main focal points: fireplace and landing
- Landing and balcony form a sculptural stair
- Daylight from three sides and expansive vistas of grounds and neighborhood

Level of Integrity: High

FIRST FLOOR SECONDARY RANKED SPACES

ENTRY HALL

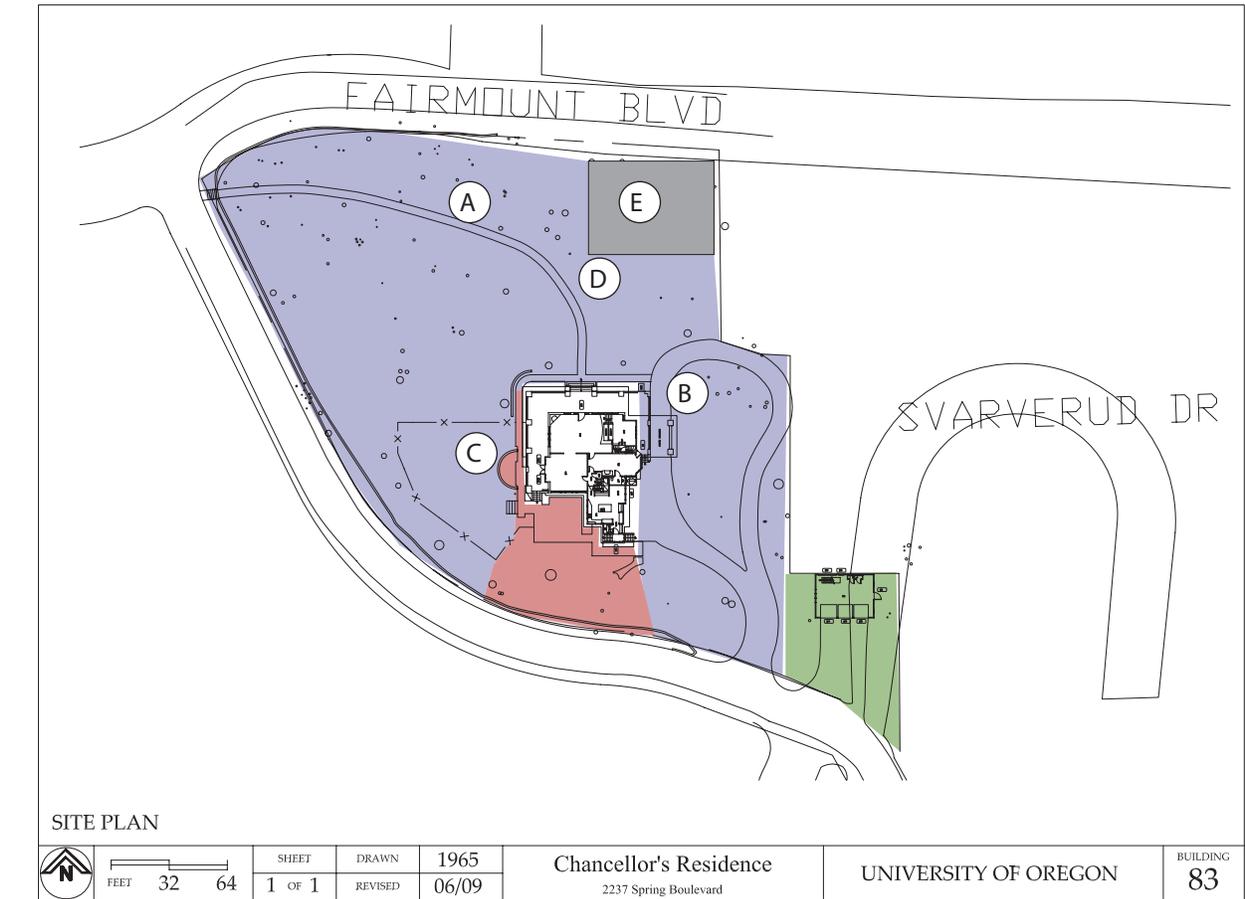
Level of Historic Significance: Medium

- connects porte-cochere to the great room and kitchen
- serves as a side or back entrance for the owners of the house
- quality of the architectural craftsmanship and details

Level of Integrity: High

Surveyed Areas & Rankings

Site / Landscape



Ranking Key:



Exterior Features of Note:

- (A) Walk follows original Otten design
- (B) Circular drive and porte-cochere create an entry sequence as intended from the Otten plan
- (C) Stone walls are not original. Installed in 1988 along with other site improvements.
- (D) Prominent location on top of the hill with views overlooking the city informed the siting of the house.
- (E) The pool is currently fenced off and abandoned. The pool was installed by Campbell Church. Location shown on the plan is diagrammatic.

EXTERIOR PRIMARY RANKED SPACES

SITE / LANDSCAPE

Level of Historic Significance: High

- The overall setting of the house, prominently on a hill, among mature canopy trees in a lush well manicured landscape is a defining characteristic of the site.

Level of Integrity: High

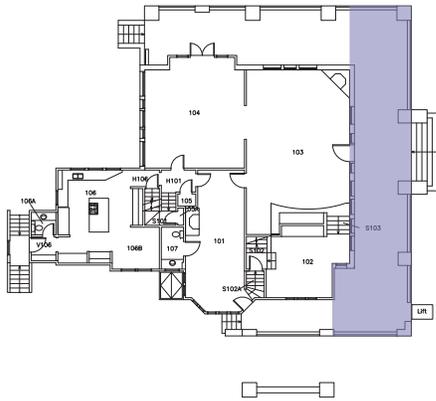
North Facade

Ranking: Primary

Level of Historic Significance:

High

Level of Integrity: Excellent



Original Use: Primary Entrance

Existing Use: Primary Entrance



Historic Materials: Tenino stone-cut block foundation, columns, and facade; painted wood columns, corbels, eave brackets, and shingles; most likely the original 6/1 double-hung sash and sidelight windows.

Alterations:

1921-1938: The wildflower garden on front lawn was established.

1982-1984: A lift was installed for wheelchair accessibility on the NE corner, structural repairs were performed on the roof and porches.

1985 Renovation and Repair:

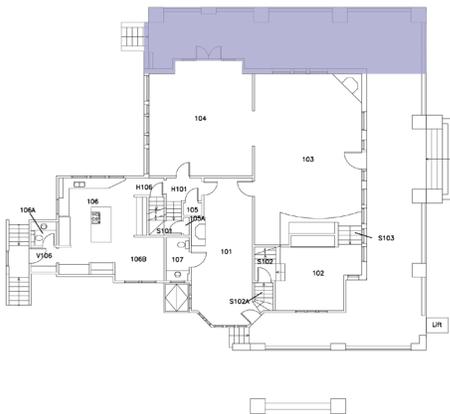
A new screen door was placed at the front entry. Wiring and new fixtures were added to the outdoor walkways. The terne metal roof was repainted.

West Facade



Ranking: Primary
 Level of Historic Significance: High
 Level of Integrity: Excellent

Historic Materials: Tenino stone-cut block foundation, columns, and facade; painted wood columns, corbels, eave brackets, and shingles; most likely the original 6/1 double-hung sash and sidelight windows.



Alterations:
 1985: Terne metal roof and master bedroom balcony were repaired.

Original Use: Secondary Entrance
 Existing Use: Secondary Entrance



Stone-cut blocks with cross-shaped vent

East Facade

Ranking: Secondary
Level of Historic Significance: High
Level of Integrity: Good



Original Use: Secondary Entrance
Existing Use: Secondary Entrance



Historic Materials: Tenino stone-cut block foundation, columns, facade, and porte-cochere; painted wood columns, corbels, eave brackets, and shingles; most likely the original 6/1 double-hung sash windows.

Alterations:
The porte-cochere originally had a gable roof. Three-over-three windows replaced the original five windows above the porte-cochere.

1985 Renovation and Repair:
New light fixtures were added to the porte-cochere. After repairing damage due to rot, the porte-cochere was repainted.

1982-1984: A lift was installed for wheelchair accessibility on NE corner.



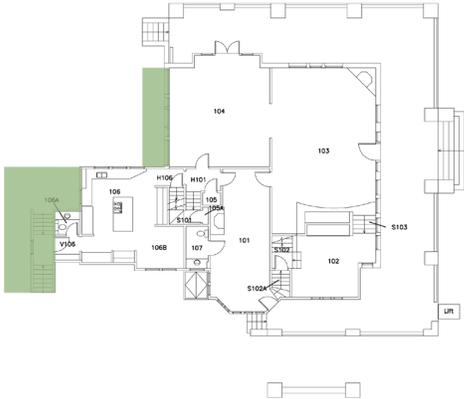
South Facade



Ranking: Tertiary
 Level of Historic Significance: Low
 Level of Integrity: Good

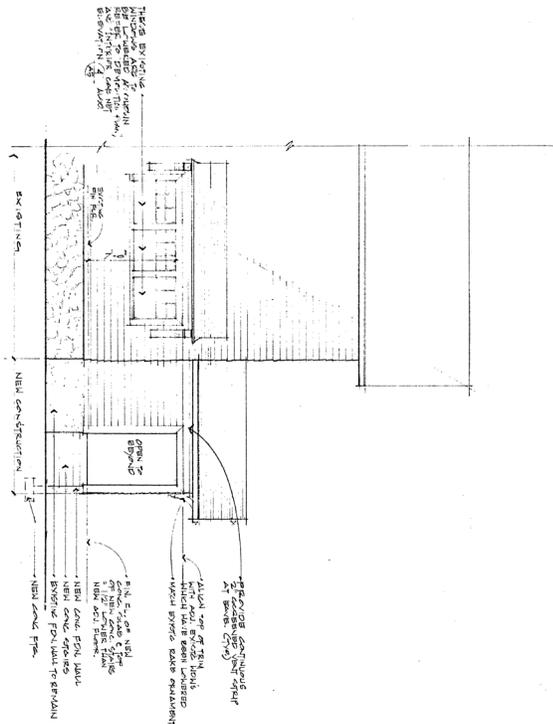
Historic Materials: Wood clapboard siding and terne metal roof.

Alterations:
 1985 Renovation and Repair: A new stair was added to the south entrance. The roof over the stair was extended to replicate the original roof, with the same roof pitch, and matching fascia; the addition of a rake ornament replicates the ornament below the eaves. A concrete floor slab, a 1/2" lower than the adjacent new and existing floor lines, was poured in the entry. Four existing windows adjacent to the entry were lowered. The window beside the stairs in the new addition has been relocated from an original lavatory. A new concrete foundation wall was added.

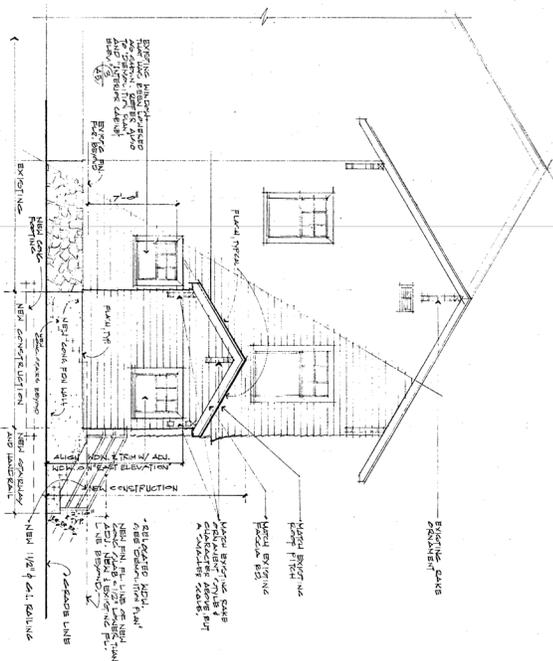


Original Use: Secondary Entrance
 Existing Use: Secondary Entrance

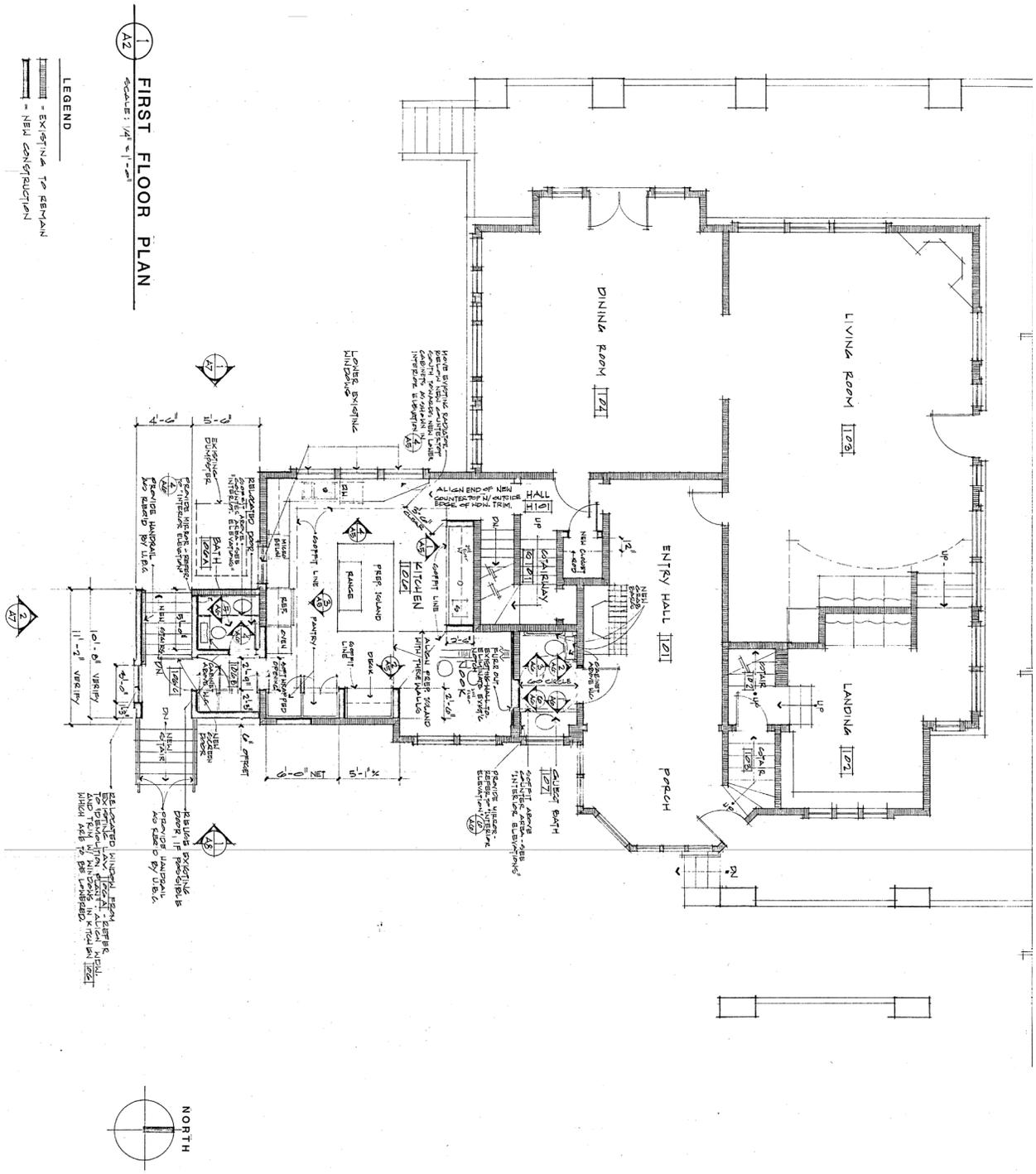
1 WEST ELEVATION
SCALE: 1/4" = 1'-0"



2 SOUTH ELEVATION
SCALE: 1/4" = 1'-0"



South Entrance Addition, Brockmeyer McDonnell Architects, 1986



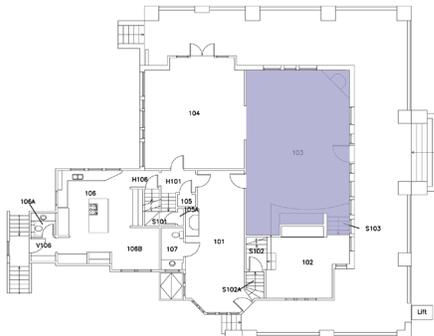
South Entrance Addition, Brockmeyer McDonnell Architects, 1986

First Floor - Interior, Great Room

Ranking: Primary

Level of Historic Significance: High

Level of Integrity: Excellent



Original Use: Great Room

Existing Use: Great Room



Historic Materials: dark stained oak beams; fireplace with bas-relief; wainscoting; casing; trim; built-in seating and cabinets; varnished, white oak flooring; brick fireplace and flooring; most likely the original 6/1 double-hung sash and sidelight windows.

Alterations:

1985 Renovation and Repair: The floors were refinished. The fixed seating was reupholstered. Radiators were covered.



View from landing



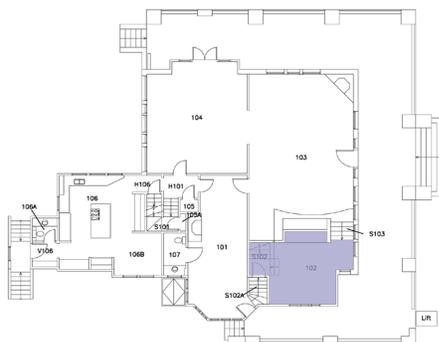
Bas-relief of "The Field of the Cloth of Gold" above fireplace

First Floor - Interior, Landing



Ranking: Primary
 Level of Historic Significance: High
 Level of Integrity: Good

Historic Materials: dark stained wainscoting, casing, trim, built-in seating and cabinets; varnished, white oak flooring; and windows.



Alterations:
 1922: The original pipe organ on the landing was removed and three tall windows were installed.

Original Use: Landing
 Existing Use: Landing

1985 Renovation and Repair: Radiators were removed. Shelving was likely added to landing (according to a final report from the OSSHE offices of administration submitted to the Executive Committee of the Board of Higher Education, there was "cabinetry" work performed on the house).

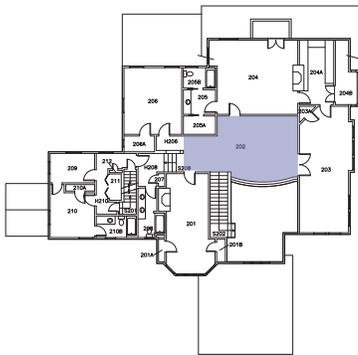
Second Floor - Interior, Balcony



Ranking: Primary

Level of Historic Significance: High

Level of Integrity: Excellent



Original Use: Balcony

Existing Use: Balcony

Historic Materials: dark stained balustrade;
and varnished, white oak flooring.



First Floor - Interior, Dining Room



Ranking: Primary
Level of Historic Significance: High
Level of Integrity: Excellent



Original Use: Dining Room
Existing Use: Dining Room

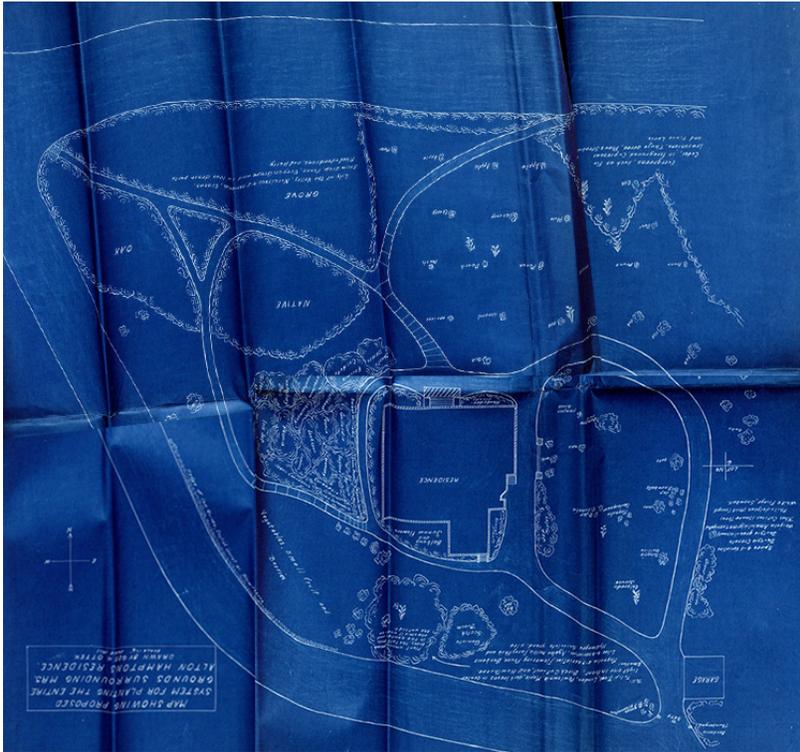
Historic Materials: dark stained wainscoting, casing, trim, built-in seating and cabinets; varnished, white oak flooring; light fixture presumed to be original.

Alterations:
1985 Renovation and Repair: The floors were refinished. Wall repair included the removal of old paper followed by the installation of new paper.



Vents in Dining Room

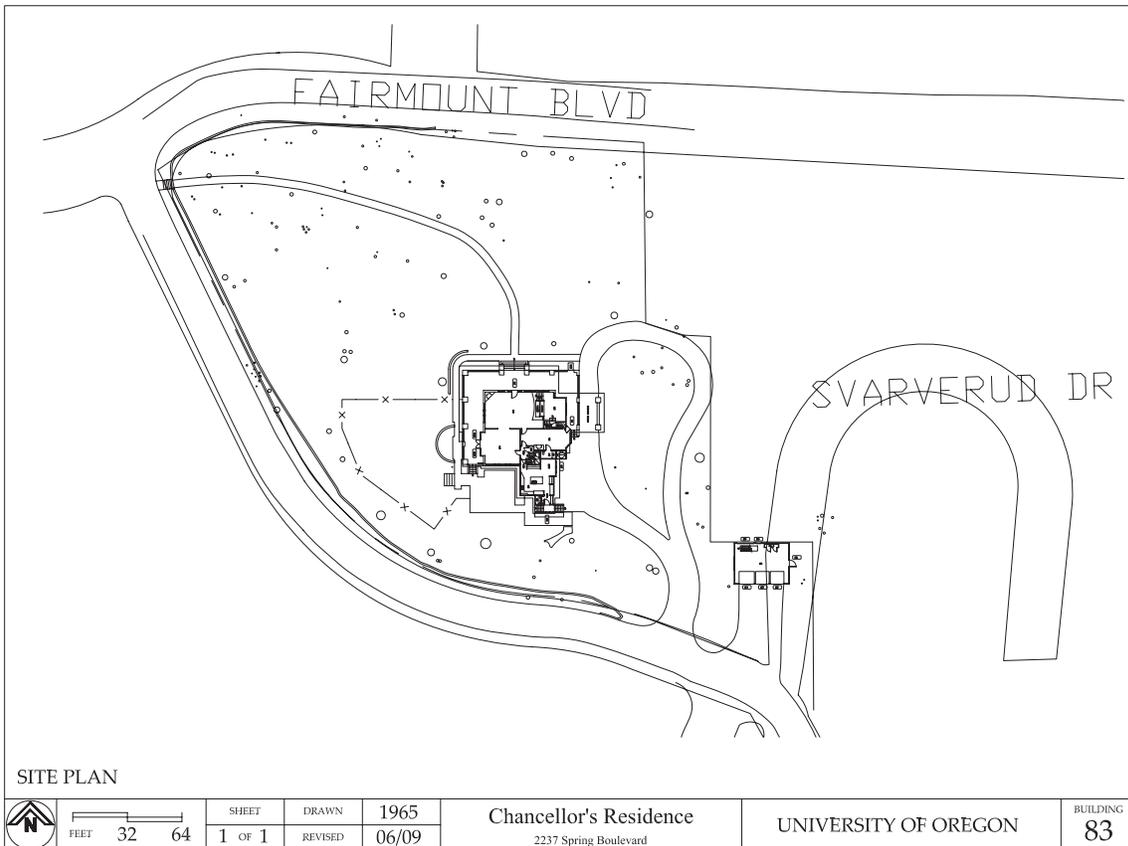
Site / Landscape



Left: Proposed landscape plan developed by George Otten, 1911

Below: Current site plan from 2009.

It is not clear what parts of the Otten plan were fully realized. The path from the north porch to the intersection of Spring/Fairmount Blvd as well as the circular drive to the porte-cochere are consistent with the Otten plan.



Site / Landscape



Left: View of the north porch and stairs.

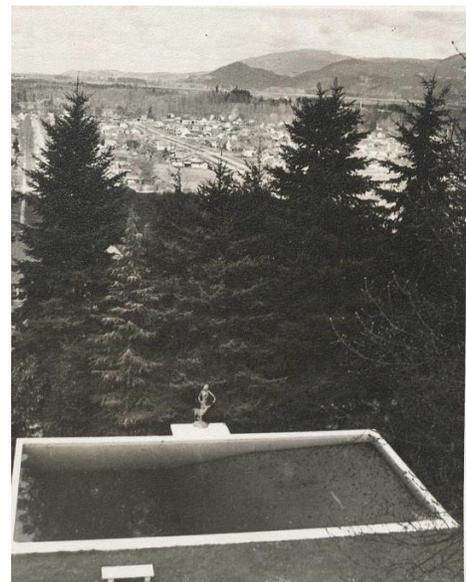
The walk from the north porch to the intersection of Spring and Fairmount Blvd would have been the primary access for pedestrians.

Below Right: View of the City of Eugene overlooking the pool.

The pool is currently fenced off and abandoned.

Below Left: View of west entrance.

The stone walls were constructed in 1988 along with other site walks and improvements.



Site / Landscape



Above: View from the northwest in spring of 2019.



Left: Historical view from the corner of Spring and Fairmount Blvd.

The site is described as a lush and ever-verdant setting for the house. The large canopy Oaks and Firs lend to the Tree Tops name for the house.

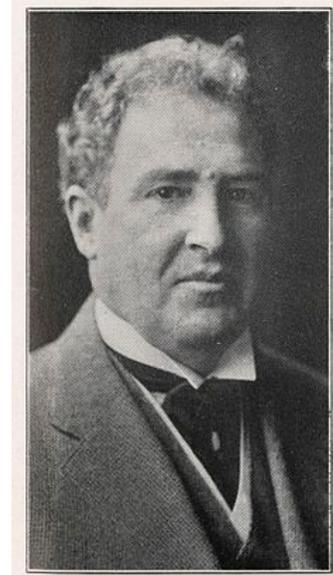
Bennes & Hendricks: Architect

Bennes and Hendricks was a prominent architecture firm based out of Portland, Oregon, at the turn of the Twentieth Century. Though they sometimes had additional partners, Bennes and Hendricks worked for seven years together from 1906 to 1913. Their major buildings include the following National Register of Historic Places and Portland Historic Landmarks: the 20th Century Baroque Cornelius Hotel (1908), the Arts and Crafts style L.B. Menefee House (1908), the Streetcar Era Commercial style Page and Son Apartments (1909), and the Commercial or Chicago style Broadway Hotel (1913). Additionally, they designed the Armory (c. 1910) for the Oregon Agricultural College (now Oregon State College) in Corvallis. This short list showcases the range of styles Bennes and Hendricks adopted in their commissions.

Bennes is also credited with designing over 35 buildings and 12 additions and renovations for Oregon State University. He would also, with his later partner Harry A. Herzog, garner fame for building the Spanish Colonial style Hollywood Theater (1923) in Portland. According to architecture historian Leland M. Roth and archivist Larry Landist, Bennes is best known for both personalizing and spreading the Prairie style.

Born in Bohemia, now Czechoslovakia, John Virginius Bennes (August 23, 1867-November 29, 1943) grew up first in Peru, Indiana, and then attended high school in Chicago. It remains unclear, according to Larry Landist, whether Bennes studied architecture in Prague or Chicago. In 1900, he moved with his wife to Baker City, Oregon, and began his architectural practice. In 1906, Bennes moved to Portland, OR, where he would continue to practice for 36 more years. Bennes served as president for the Oregon Chapter of the American Institute of Architects in 1922 and as president of the Oregon State Board of Architectural Examiners from 1924 to 1933. Due to health problems, Bennes relocated to Los Angeles in 1943. He died later that same year at the age of 76. Less information exists on Bennes' partner Eric W. Hendricks. Hendricks practiced from 1904 to 1913 in Portland, OR. His work and whereabouts are unknown after 1913.

In a short paragraph of Eugene's Morning Register regular local news column, "Caught in the Rounds," Bennes & Hendricks were listed as the architects selected for the new residence of Mrs. Alton Hampton, the residence that became known as Tree Tops ("Caught in the Rounds," The Morning Register, Eugene, Oregon, June 20, 1909). Bennes and Hendricks adopted a Craftsman style for this residence.



J. V. Bennes - Photo Courtesy of Photographic Business and Professional Directory, 1916, Portland, Oregon

Tirrell & Hunter: Builder

Tirrell & Hunter was a distinguished contractor in the city of Eugene during the first half of the 20th century. Throughout the years they built many of the prominent residences and sorority and fraternity houses in the area.

In Eugene's Morning Register's "Caught in the Rounds Column," on May 31, 1907, a contract to build Alton Hampton's new residence at Fairmount Heights was let to Tirrell & Hunter. It was reported here that the design of the house was to be based off of the "most handsome and convenience" Millard F. Griggs house at 124 East 11th Street, also built by Tirrell & Hunter. ("Caught in the Rounds," The Morning Register, Eugene, Oregon, May 31, 1907). They are also credited as the contractors towards the construction of Tree Tops in the City of Eugene's Oregon Cultural Resource Inventory form for the house.



Laurence S. Hunter (left) and Archibald "Archie" Lee Tirrell (right) of Tirrell & Hunter - Photo Courtesy of Lane County Historical Society

Despite these two confirming sources, Tirrell & Hunter's involvement in the construction of Tree Tops is uncertain. According to that same May 31, 1907 "Caught in the Rounds" column in Eugene's Morning Register, work on Tree Tops was slated to be postponed until they finished prior contracted work. It was not until June 1909 that Bennes & Hendricks were identified as the architects and according to the Morning Register's "Caught in the Rounds," Tree Top's foundation was not reported completed until July 1909, two years after the project was slated to begin. ("Caught in the Rounds," The Morning Register, Eugene, Oregon, Jun. 20, 1909; "Caught in the Rounds," Eugene, Oregon, The Morning Register, Jul. 25, 1909).

While their involvement in Tree Tops is unconfirmed, Tirrell & Hunter practiced during the same time that the residence was built and many of the other prominent houses they constructed around Eugene feature the craftsmen style, details of which are present at Tree Tops.

A surviving example of Tirrell and Hunter's work includes the Henry A. Schwering House on East 12th Avenue. Unfortunately many of their works, including the Millard F. Giggs residence at 124 East 11th Avenue which supposedly inspired the design of Tree Tops, no longer exist.

George Svarverud: Builder

According to "TreeTops - Chancellor's Residence" by Molly Bartlett, a different builder by the name of George Svarverud was the head carpenter for the construction of Tree Tops, hired on at \$0.35 and hour.

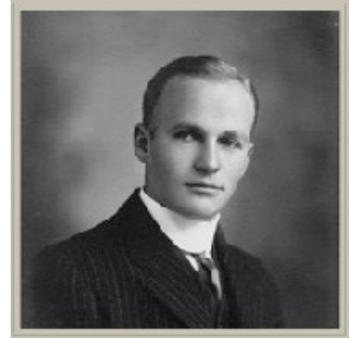
George Svarverud was a son of Martin Svarverud, a prominent figure in the real estate industry in Eugene. It was Martin who started the successful Eugene Real Estate and Investment Company. One of his business partners in this company was Chas M. Densmore, the father of Maude Densmore, Alton Hampton's first wife.

With these intermingling networks of relationships, it is possible then that Martin's son, George Svarverud, could have been hired to work on the construction of Tree Tops. Whether or not he was the head carpenter is questionable however. Tree Tops was built around 1907-1910. At the time of the 1910 census, George Svarverud was only 16 years old and was listed as having no profession. In comparison, Laurence Hunter of Tirrell & Hunter was 32 years old in 1910 and listed as a contractor building houses. George went on to live in other parts of Oregon and Washington between the years of 1910-1930. By 1955, George had returned to Eugene. Despite being listed as a farmer in these census records, according to Eugene's Register-Guard on March 4, 1971, George was known as a carpenter and was apart of the Carpenters' Union Local No. 1273 until his retirement in 1953.

During his retirement, George became a big proponent for the preservation and continued maintenance of Eugene's Pioneer Cemetery located next to the University of Oregon. Many of his family members, including his father, Martin Svaverud, were buried there. Throughout the early 1950s into the 1970s there were disputes over potential development of the cemetery. On March 4, 1971, George Svarverud died at the age of 77 years-old and was later buried in the Eugene Pioneer Cemetery he worked so hard to preserve.

George H. Otten: Landscape Architect

George Otten (b. 1889) completed his bachelor's degree at the University of Oregon in 1911, after which he worked and studied under Ferruccio Vitale between 1911 and 1915. He continued his studies at Columbia University in New York, graduating with his master's degree in 1915, and at the University of Montpelier in France until 1919. During World War I, George Otten served in the U.S. Army. He returned to Portland in 1919 and married Ruth Ann Ralston. He was a landscape architect/engineer for the Highway Department of the State of Oregon between 1935-42 and completed many noteworthy landscape architecture projects throughout his career (Capitol's Who's Who for Oregon, 1936-38).



Otten is closely associated with the original landscaping of some of the more imposing properties in the Fairmount Neighborhood. The earliest example of this was his 1911 bachelor's thesis, which was a design for the grounds at Tree Tops.

Among his most successful residential projects was the design for the extensive gardens of the Washburne Estate in 1920, 4.86 acres of which now comprise the Washburne Park.

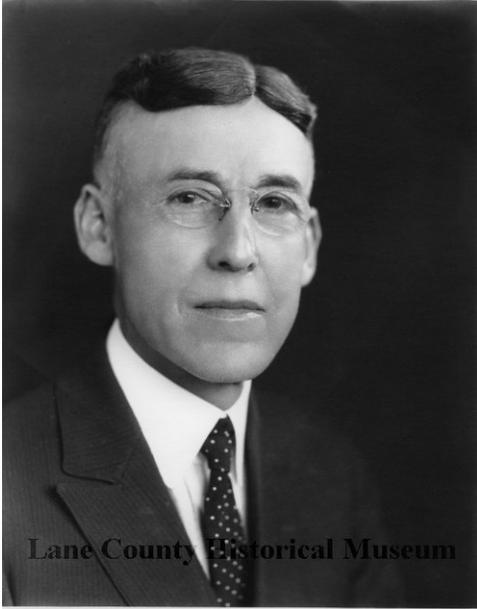
Key Projects:

- Oregon State Capitol grounds including the sunken garden
- Portland Swan Island Airport
- White Shield Home (now the Salvation Army White Shield Center)
- First 9 holes on the Rose City Golf Course (1923)
- Landscaping for the Temple Beth Israel
- Landscape work for properties in Ralph Lloyd Center Area including Lloyd's Golf Course (1930)
- Placement of Timberline Lodge
- Alignment of Columbia River highway
- Alderwood Country Club
- Private residences of Aaron Frank, A.E. Otis, Harry Grelin, and Carl G. Washburne.

The private practice that George H. Otten and his father established in Portland continues to function under the management of his son, George W. Otten, and his granddaughter, Janet Otten.

D.C. Mosher: Landscape Gardener

There is some evidence that D.C. Mosher also contributed to the landscape at Tree Tops. The degree to which Mosher and landscape architect Otten collaborated on Tree Tops is unknown. Further research needs to be conducted on Mosher's life and work and his relationship to Otten.



Alton Hampton - date unknown - photo courtesy of Lane County Historical Society

Alton Hampton

Alton Hampton, the original owner of Treetops, was a prominent merchant and businessman in Eugene in the early 20th century. He was a charter member of Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks Lodge no. 357 in Eugene and very active in various community and civic enterprises. Throughout his life he donated to a variety of causes and served on fair and park boards for many years.

He was born on September 3, 1864 near Goshen, Lane County, Oregon, to John and Mary (More) Hampton on the original Hampton donation land, claimed by his father, John D. Hampton. Originally hailing from Kentucky, John D. Hampton arrived to Oregon across the plains in 1843 and his wife Mary arrived in 1853. Throughout his life, John D.

Hampton was a stock raiser and a farmer and business in agricultural interests. It was an industry his son Alton continued to support throughout his life.

Alton Hampton did not pursue a career in agriculture however. Instead he began learning under McFarland and French, dry goods merchants at the Dalles. After two years, he then went on to learn under F. B. Dunn and later Frank E. Dunn, dry goods dealers in Eugene. He continued to do so for six years. Alton eventually left the Duns and on August 19, 1897, he along with his brothers John, Hugh and Frank started their own dry goods business, Hampton Brothers. The brothers Hugh and Frank later sold their shares in the company to Alton and John.

Alton Hampton's business continued to grow, which Alton Hampton credited to the advertisements in the Morning Register and Daily Guard. By 1907, the Hampton Brothers store was the largest of its kind in Eugene. Their business continued to expand to include mens and ladies wear and by 1909, the two brothers had opened two other branches of their Hampton Bros stores, one in Springfield and one in Cottage Grove. Business was good. Later that same year, 1909, John Hampton retired from the brothers' business and Alton became sole proprietor of all three of their stores. It was around this time that Hampton and his newly wedded wife, Maud Densmore, began to build their fine home, now known as Tree Tops, a top Fairmount Heights.

Business still continued to grow. In February 1911, Alton Hampton moved his Eugene store from Eighth Avenue and Willamette Street to a newly constructed commercial building at Sixth Avenue and Willamette, the aptly named the Hampton Block or the Hampton Building. Measuring at 75 feet by 160 feet in plan and standing at three stories tall with a basement, the newly constructed commercial building was built to be entirely dedicated to Hampton's. It was the leading store of its kind between Portland



“Many wondered at the enterprise of Alton Hampton...in giving the people of the city such a store. Mr. Hampton has a characteristic way of doing things only in the best style, with the latest ideas.”

(“Hampton’s Store Thrown Open to the Public” 1911)

Left: The Hampton Block shortly after completion in 1911 - photo courtesy of Lane County Historical Society

and San Francisco, according to the Centennial History of Oregon in 1912. It also received a lot of press in local news papers when it first opened its doors, in part for its grandeur and its many new features. It had a central telephone exchange system with five telephones located around the store, lights that automatically turned off at a certain time of day, and many other modern features for its time. The building has since been demolished (ca. 1982) and in its place is the Hult Center for the Performing Arts.

While primarily known as a dry-goods merchant, Alton had several other business ventures as well. In 1907 he started and served as director the Merchants Bank, the fourth institution of its kind in Eugene. He was also one of the original directors of the Eugene General Hospital.

Unfortunately, Alton’s success eventually began to turn sour. In September 1920, he sold the grand Hampton Block to Frank L. Chambers, the vice president of the First National Bank at the time, and moved his stock to a smaller location along East 9th Avenue, just east of Willamette Street. Eventually, in December 1921, the creditors of Alton Hampton filed for involuntary bankruptcy. It was also around this same time that Alton Hampton sold his Fairmount Heights residence to Campbell Church.

In addition to his bankruptcy, on May 9, 1922, a decree of divorce was given to Maud Hampton (she returned to her maiden name and became known as Maud Densmore). He later remarried Edith Potter in 1925, but two years later she divorced Alton as well.

Eventually Alton reopened his Hampton store in 1923, selling only ladies clothes at the time. He also bought out his former mentor’s store, Frank E. Dunn, when he retired in 1924. Hampton’s store continued to move around to various locations in Eugene, but Hampton never saw the same success as he did in the 1910s.

Throughout the 1920s and into the 1930s, Hamptons health went up and down. He underwent surgery in 1923 for an illness and recovered, but in 1937, he was reported to be at the state tuberculosis hospital in Salem. Eventually on August 13, 1939, Hampton died at his home in Four Oaks, just west of Eugene, “after a long illness” (“Alton J. Hampton Dies at Four Oaks” 1939).



Maud Densmore - 1940 - photo courtesy of Lane County Historical Society

Maud Densmore

Maud Densmore, one of the original owners of Tree Tops, was born to Chas M. and Lucy Densmore in Stanton, Nebraska in 1876. Maud did not arrive to Eugene until 1895 with her family.

Throughout her life, Maud was involved in music and her local community. She graduated from Creighton Conservatory of Music in Omaha, Nebraska. After moving to Eugene in 1895, in the 1900 census, her occupation was listed as a music teacher.

Maud especially enjoyed playing the pipe organ. She even had one installed in Tree Tops when it was first built. Maude Densmore married Alton Hampton on January 4, 1905. In 1909-1910, they had their grand house built on Fairmount Heights, now known at Tree Tops. A major component to its design was the mezzanine of the grand

staircase in the living room. An Estey pipe organ from the Sherman and Clay Piano House from Portland, Oregon was installed on this mezzanine.

Maud's marriage did not last though. On December 13, 1921, Maude purchased the Dr. D. A. Paine Residence at 1059 Pearl. On May 9, 1922, a decree of divorce was given to Maud Hampton. Maud went on to use her maiden name again, Densmore. She never remarried.

By May, 21, 1922, not long after the divorce, Densmore began running a corset shop out of her home. Later, in 1924, her shop expanded to include dresses. Over the years she expanded her inventory to include other women's apparel, such as coats, hats, and purses. Maud continued run her shop at her home at 1059 Pearl until her death in 1951.

Maude was also active in Mu Phi Elipson, a musical honorary sorority. Out of that group, she helped form the Women's Choral Club in 1935, Eugene's first women's choir. She became its second president and continued to serve as the president until her death in 1951. Twice a year, the Club put on concerts to fundraise for community groups and other efforts, like Girl Scouts, dental week for needy children, and milk for school lunches. Each year, the Club would also award scholarships to Oregon vocal performance students.

Upon her death on December 27, 1951, Maud Densmore was known as a prolific active member of the Eugene community. A scholarship in her name is still being awarded to University of Oregon vocal performance music students every year.

Campbell Church

Campbell Lenoir Church, Sr., and his family occupied Tree Tops after purchasing it from Alton Hampton and Maud Densmore in 1921. Campbell Church, Sr. was born ca. 1877 to Susan Campbell in Ohio. Susan Campbell moved to Eugene in 1905 and became a prominent figure in the University of Oregon.

In 1897, gold was discovered in the Yukon region of Alaska. Campbell Church was one of the 100,000 of prospectors in search of the metal during the Yukon Gold Rush that followed. While he did not find fortune in gold, he later struck riches in the lead mining industry of Missouri. When the mining pits of Missouri were flooded in the early 20th century, Campbell Church, Sr. developed an invention that could pump out the flooded mines via hydraulic siphons. He then went on to build up his fortune through combined mining investments and the use of his pumping invention.

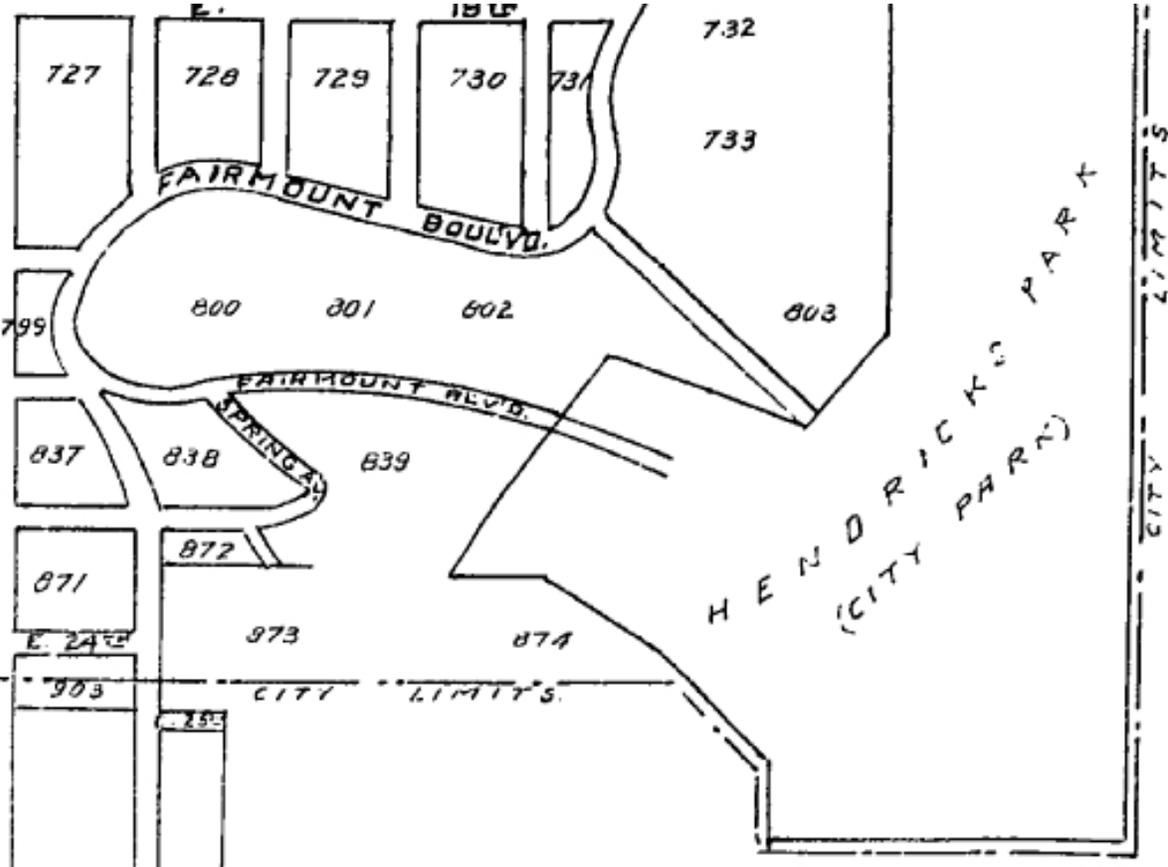
At some point prior to 1921, Campbell Church, Sr. was reported to be living in British Columbia and cruising around that region with his yacht. In September 1921, he purchased Tree Tops from Alton Hampton and moved into the grand Eugene home at Fairmont Heights with his wife Adelaide and his four children.

Between 1921-1923, Campbell Church, Sr. frequently took cruises up to Alaska for big game hunting with his personal yacht, Nooya. In December 1923 he commissioned boatbuilder Ted Gleary of Seattle, Washington, to build him a new yacht, the Westward. The Westward became Church, Sr.'s flagship and primary vessel for his Alaska Coast Hunting and Cruising Company, a private charter boat enterprise he founded in 1924. Based out of Seattle, he charted many hunting and expeditions into the Alaskan wilderness. The design of the Westward was based on a cannery tender ship design, but modified to be lighter and to better serve on Alaskan waters. It first launched from the Lake Union Dry Dock in May 1924 and saw its first trip to Alaska during the summer of 1924. In 1928, Campbell Church, Sr. passed ownership of the company to his son, Campbell Church, Jr. Since 2007, the yacht has been listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

During his time in Eugene, Campbell Church, Sr. was very generous to the University of Oregon. He helped support the funding of McArthur Court and the Warner Museum of Fine Arts. He also helped finance many fraternities and sororities on campus and loaned money to help facilitate the cost of the University of Oregon's tennis courts.

In 1938, shortly after the death of his wife in 1937, Campbell Church, Sr. sold Tree Tops to the State of Oregon for \$1.00, under the condition that it would be used as the residence for the Chancellor of the Oregon University System or for the President of the University of Oregon. At some point after passing ownership of his yacht company and selling Treetops to the state of Oregon, Campbell Church Senior retired to Pasadena, California. He died there on February 12, 1951.

Tree Tops, Sanburn Maps



1912 Sanborn Map - Fairmount Loop

Timeline

Development of Fairmount Loop

1890:

Fairmount was platted, dedicated and recorded with the county on November 4 as a town separate from Eugene.

1903-4:

Fairmount was annexed into Eugene.

1908:

1,000 trees were ordered for planting in Fairmount; mainly Lindens, Horse Chestnuts, Maples, and Walnuts.

1909:

An extension of the street railway line from the university ran through what was to be known as the Fairmount Loop.

1910:

The Hampton Church House (also known as Treetops and the Chancellor's House) was built at 2237 Spring Boulevard. In 1911 George H. Otten (the landscape architect who would later design the gardens for the Washburne Estate and possibly the McMorrان Estate as well) wrote his bachelor's degree thesis, "Drawings and specifications for landscape gardening surrounding Mrs. Alton Hampton's residence, Fairmount Heights, Eugene Or." The Hampton Church property was purchased by the University of Oregon on February 24, 1938, to be used as the official residence of the chancellor.

The Fellman Jewett House was built at 2550 Fairmount Boulevard to the designs of architect J. Hunzicker. The Fellmans occupied the house until 1921. Mary Jewett (a widow) lived here from 1921 to 1938 with her two children: Narcissa (who would later marry Carl Washburne), and Wilson Jewett. This house has since been awarded a secondary ranking by the City of Eugene.

1912:

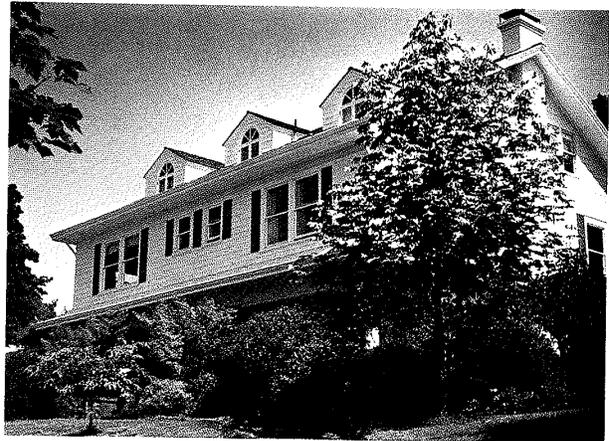
The Sanborn map from 1912 shows the properties inside the Fairmount Boulevard loop without any formal subdivisions. These properties were owned by fruit growers; orchards occupied the land that was later built upon. One apple tree at the east end of the McMorrان House property was the only remnant of the original Gravenstein apple orchard that was on the property. Unfortunately this tree was removed in 2005 due to disease.

1920:

The Washburne house (primary ranking from the City of Eugene) was built at 2425 Fairmount Boulevard (Heirloom Homesteads gives 1916 as the date for the construction of the Washburne house, the 1920 construction date is more widely used and accepted as accurate). This year was part of a particularly lucrative period for the McMorran and Washburne partnership in the dry goods business, only two years after they had bought out their biggest competitor, S.H. Friendly and Company.

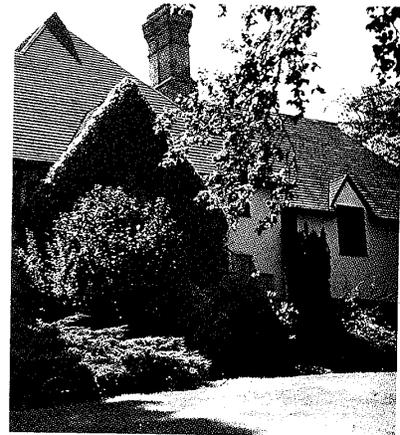
The house was built in the Colonial/Dutch Revival Style, which was very popular in Eugene at the time. The Washburne Estate was extensive and included the land now known as Washburne Park. The grounds and gardens of the estate were designed by George H. Otten and are an excellent example of early 20th century private estate design. The Washburnes were responsible for building the "community" wading pool and swimming area, both of which still exist in the Park grounds, although the wading pool was drained when the City of Eugene ordered that all such pools be fenced in.

5 WILSON H. JEWETT HOUSE 1921
2465 Fairmount Boulevard
Built to adjoin the Washburne house, this grand Colonial Revival style house shared its extensive grounds and garden. Jewett, a Eugene lumberman, was Mrs. Washburne's brother.



4 CARL WASHBURNE HOUSE c. 1920
2425 Fairmount Boulevard
This 17 room Colonial Revival Style house was once a part of a large estate that included the Wilson H. Jewett house and a large private garden which is now the Minnie L. Washburne Memorial Park. Washburne owned a department store with George McMorran.

6 McMORRAN HOUSE c. 1925
2315 McMorran Street
Roscoe Hemenway, architect
Now owned by the University of Oregon as a residence for its president, this imposing house combines several features of the Norman Farmhouse and English Tudor styles in its steep hip roofs, leaded glass, cut-stone entrance and the brick patterns of its front walls and chimneys.



FAIRMOUNT 63

Images and brief descriptions showing the Jewett, Washburne and McMorran Houses from *Style and Vernacular: A Guide to the Architecture of Lane County, Oregon, 1983*.

The estate remained under the ownership of the Washburnes at least until Narcissa Washburne passed away in November 1961, at which time the Minnie L. Washburne Memorial Park was established as a 4.86-acre public park. A 2-foot to 4-foot basalt wall bounds the west side of the park, and two sets of steps lead upwards to the park from Agate Street, one set on the northwest corner and one set in the center of the wall. The original wading pool still exists, although now it has been drained. A number of sources state that the park was donated to the City of Eugene, although a draft for the National Register Application for the South University Neighborhood states that the City of Eugene purchased the park in 1961 for \$10,000. The City of Eugene later expanded the park with the purchase of a portion of the hillside south of E. 21st Avenue.

1921:

Wilson H. Jewett, Mrs. Washburne's brother, constructed a residence on the southern end of their property. At this time the part of the property occupied by the new house was sectioned off from the rest of the Washburne estate, and the address of the Jewett house was given as 2465 Fairmount Boulevard (see Sanborne map - p. 3). Wilson Jewett lived there with his wife and son until Wilson's death in 1975. The Jewett house has since been given a secondary ranking by the City of Eugene.

1925:

The McMorrans house (designed in 1924 by Roscoe Deleur Hemenway, a noted Portland architect) was built at 2315 McMorrans Street. The McMorrans also built the "community" tennis courts on the land south of their house (see Sanborn map - p. 3). A glimpse of these tennis courts can be seen in the 1929 film "Ed's Coed" produced by students at the University of Oregon. On September 17, 1941, the McMorrans House and a small portion of the land (0.912 acres) was purchased from George H. McMorrans by the University of Oregon at a reduced price. The faculty agreed to loan the purchase price at 3% secured by the Faculty Club (Collier House). The house was to be used as the official residence of the president of the University of Oregon.

The Sanborne map of 1925 shows four plots of land on which the McMorrans, Washburne, and Jewett residences are shown, along with the tennis courts on the fourth subdivision to the south of the McMorrans House. Washburne Park is shown across Fairmount Boulevard to the northwest (see photographs of the McMorrans, Washburne, and Jewett houses - p. 12).

Tree Tops: Construction and Alterations

1908-1910:

The Hampton Church House (also known as Treetops and the Chancellor's House) was built at 2237 Spring Boulevard.

1938:

On March 18, 1938, Campbell Church, Sr. sold Tree Tops to the University of Oregon for one dollar, under the condition that the active Chancellor or President reside there. The clearing cost for the acquisition was \$1,000. Furnishings were valued at \$4,770.

1952:

Dining Room Furniture purchased from Maud Densmore Estate by Dr. Byrne, the Chancellor at the time.

1962:

Remodel of kitchen occurs.

1985:

In a final report from the Oregon State of Higher Education offices of administration to the Executive Committee of the Board of Higher Education, the following remodels and repairs occurred:

- Terne metal roof and master bedroom balcony repair
- A new screen door for the front entry
- Refinished floors in the living room, dining room, and upstairs recreation room; carpeting (to two rooms) and area rugs
- Wall repair including the removal of old paper followed by the installation of new paper, plaster repair and refinishing, and paint removal from moulding and trim
- Cabinet work
- Newly upholstered fixed seating in living room

The following work was underway but not quite completed at the time of the report:

- Wiring and, in some cases, new fixtures in the interior and exterior, including outdoor walkways.
- painting on interior and exterior of house and garage, terne metal roof, and carport (delayed due to unanticipated dry rot and need for drier weather)

1986:

Brockmeyer McDonnell Architects of Eugene (who also worked on an exterior restoration of Johnson Hall in 1984 and as associated architects on Willamette Hall in 1985) supervised the following renovations:

- New stairs supported by a new 6" concrete foundation wall on the south of
- Existing wall extended in upstairs Maids Room to provide for new adjacent shelves.
- Handrails are added to the new stair to meet code.

1988:

Site improvements designed by Brian McCarthy, Landscape Architect with Cameron & McCarthy Landscape Architects of Eugene, that included the following:

- Site walks and stone walls on the north and west side of the house
- Lawn renovation of the south and west lawn
- Terrace on south side of the house

Tree Tops: History of Chancellors

1932-1939

William Jasper Kerr, first chancellor, resided in Eugene.

1938-1946

Frederick M. Hunter, with his wife Ema, are the first to live at Tree Tops after its was given to the state.

1946-1950

Paul Packer. Tree Tops furnished with antiques by his wife.

1950-1955

Charles D. Byrne resided with his wife. Oak table returned to Tree Tops under Chancellor Byrne's reign.

1955-1961

John R. Richards, with his wife Peg. 1954 Assessment of Treetops stated the following: valued at \$50,000; to restore it at the time would cost \$51,320; future life of 30 years (until 1984); 11,820 square feet.

1961-1982

Ray Lievallen, wife Barbara, four children.

1982-1988

William E. (Bud) Davis (1982-1988) modernized Tree Tops at the request of his wife Polly. There were structural repairs to porches and chimney, rewiring, an improved bathroom and laundry, general remodeling and redecorating, restroom facilities added to main floor, and a wheelchair lift added to the NE corner of the front facade for handicap accessibility. Mrs. Davis raised the funds for the redecorating and basic furnishing of official areas of Treetops. A plaque in the entry parlor commemorates her work.

1988-1989

W.T. Lemman, wife Genna, did not live in house but used it for ceremonial purposes. They also planted three large, threatened rhododendrons from Hendricks Park.

1989-1994

Thomas A. Bartlett, wife Molly, added oversized upholstered furniture, a walnut piano, a dining room set, large and several small oriental rugs to Tree Tops. Bartlett worked with Tim King and David Gerson of the Physical Plant Department to improve the grounds.

1994-2002

Joseph W. Cox, wife Regina, decorated back stairways, refinished kitchen floor, oversaw the establishment of a new roof (1998). Mrs. Regina managed and replanted the grounds.

2002-2004

Richard Jarvis

2004-2013

George Pemsteiner resided at tree tops but split his time between Eugene and Portland.

2013-2014

Melody Rose did not reside at the house but stayed instead with her family in Portland

2014-2015

Cathryn Dyck

June 30, 2015

Oregon State University System is dissolved.

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Notes

Current Research:

We found Treetops to have high historical significance. Though there have been alterations, the house has maintained its original appearance and integrity. With its excellent craftsmanship and details, it is an exemplar of the Craftsman style. It represents the early work of a significant Oregon architect, J.V. Bennes, as well as the work of notable Eugene builders Tirrell & Hunter. The house is further associated with important historical figures for both the city of Eugene and the University of Oregon, including prominent businessman Alton Hampton and, since 1938, the university chancellors.

Future Research:

Further research still needs to be performed on the landscaping of Treetops; it remains to be determined what parts of George H. Otten's thesis design were actually built and whether they are extant. Criterion A (association with significant events) and Criterion B of the Historic Status and Significance still need to be researched and written about; in particular, what are the designation of Tree Tops by the OUS Ad Hoc Committee on Properties of Historical and/or Architectural Value and the City of Eugene. Tree Tops could also benefit from a more detailed account of its rooms; for example, the prominent light fixtures throughout the house—including the great room, dining room, landing and balcony—might be original. Elevations, plans, and other drawings still need to be found or created.

Appendix

North Facade



View of wood corbels, eave brackets, and shingles



North porch



Columns and balustrade



Eschucheon on front door with Alton Baker's initials



Lock changed on front door

West Facade



View of west porch from grounds



View of west porch



Patio with bench and stone retaining wall



Exposed beams



Rusticated ashlar stone

East Facade



Ashlar masonry on porte-cochere



Light fixtures added in 1985

First and Second Floor - Interior



Fireplace in living room;
most likely original wood
and brick



Cabinetry and shelving in
living room and landing



Light fixture on landing

