

A.H. Fleming House: 325 Georgina Avenue

The Fleming House is sited on the northwest corner of 4th Street and Georgina Avenue, in the Wilshire/Montana neighborhood of the Palisades tract. Ocean Avenue sits a long block to the west while San Vicente Boulevard is located to the north. An alley parallel with Georgina Avenue provides access to the rear garage. Similar to other streets in the tract, Georgina Avenue is wide with evenly spaced palm trees planted within the parkway. Sidewalks line both sides of the street. This block of Georgina Avenue is characterized by relatively large, two-story, single-family houses on generously sized lots. The Fleming House sits slightly above the sidewalk on a grassy knoll. Mature trees, including a 100-year old Italian Stone Pine and trimmed boxwoods, enhance the street facing elevations. A gated entrance from 4th Street allows easy access to the kitchen and backyard area.

The majority of the large backyard is currently dominated by the tennis court. Beyond the brick patio adjacent to the house's north elevation, a lawn is bordered by a shade garden on the west side and a rose garden on the east side. A garage and attached single horse stall structure are located at the rear of the property. A brick outdoor eating structure is attached to these outbuildings. The eating structure is open on three sides with a built-in barbeque and picnic table.

The stately two-story residence is a unique combination of Craftsman style and Shingle style, integrating a shallow-pitched roof with wood clapboard and shingle siding. The L-shaped house has a cross gable roof. Two wings run perpendicular to Georgina Avenue and frame the central block that runs parallel to the street. The roof is dominated by broad, overhanging eaves, exposed rafter tails, and horizontal venting in the gable peaks. The house's lower story is clad in horizontal, wood clapboard siding that contrasts with the upper story, which is sheathed in wood shingles. Cross-jointed exposed beams separate the two stories and emphasize the horizontality of the design. Fenestration generally consists of multi-paned wooden casement windows. The brick-faced foundation is visible behind the boxwood hedge and other plantings. It continues above grade around most of the house and includes a window well on 4th Street that illuminates the partial basement and a half door on the rear of the house that allows access to the basement landing.



Portion of Aerial view of Emery H. Rogers home on Georgina, 1922, Huntington Digital Library

The structure's front (south) façade is balanced, but not symmetrical, in its mass and arrangement of windows and doorways. The recessed front porch, which runs the width of the central bay, is approached by an off-centered stair and is contained by two piers with simple,

horizontal porch railings. The centrally located main entrance has an arched doorway flanked by shutters and multi-paned arched casement windows. A pair of French doors east of the front door open from the dining room and a pair of windows illuminates the sunken living room on the west side of the porch. Shutters on the front of the house accompany several bands of casement windows that illuminate the formal living and dining rooms. The upper story of the front façade contains similar window treatments, both with and without shutters. A continuous band of two- over-three windows wrap the study off the master bedroom on the west side of the front façade and provides natural morning light.

The structure's east elevation, facing 4th Street, continues the same horizontality as the front façade: a brick-faced foundation with single window well that lights the partial basement, horizontal wood clapboard siding on first floor, and wood shingles on second floor. The brick chimney services the large second-floor bedroom in the northeast corner of the house. A row of three casement windows illuminate the built-in buffet in the gabled bay. The other first floor casement windows light the large kitchen. The broad roof eaves shade the second story casement windows of bedrooms and bathrooms.

The house's west elevation is not visible from the street but continues the siding pattern seen on other elevations. Casement windows wrap around on both the first and second floors from the living room and study off the master bedroom, respectively. A brick chimney services both the living room on the first floor and the master bedroom on the second floor. A one-story family room addition at the north side of the elevation continues the horizontal siding of the original structure. A brick pathway leads from a wooden gate off the front lawn to the rear of the property.



*Shank Family Photograph
late 1960's- early 1970*

The rear (north) elevation reveals changes that have occurred over time. The east wing allows access to the kitchen through an inset doorway. To the west, a covered porch and pergola transitions to the family room extension on the first floor and a sun porch on the second floor. The family room's exterior mirrors the casement window treatment appearance of the front of the house with three pairs of French doors separated by brick flower boxes. The doors open onto a brick patio that accesses the tennis court, lawn and garden area. The second story sunroom is located in the intersection between the east wing and the central block of the house. It has original, wood, multi-paned windows paired with some slider windows and faces the afternoon sunlight.

The master bedroom looks out over the family room's flat roof to the backyard through a fixed, eight-over-four window flanked by two, four-over-three casement windows topped by hopper window.

The front door entry is situated in the center of three groin vaults. The front hall area is well illuminated by the arched windows on either side of the front door that mimic the arched treatment of the ceiling. From the front hallway, the living room is to the west, the dining room is to the east, and the family room is to the north. The large sunken living room on the west side of the first floor is well lit by the bands of casement windows. The room is focused on a wooden paneled wall that is comprised of a fireplace and mantel with flanking built-in bookcases on either side. The room possesses its original boxed beamed ceiling. A pair of French doors on the north side of the room allows access into the family room addition that consists of a sitting and a game area which is illuminated by the north wall that consists of three pairs of French doors and windows. The formal dining room also possesses its original box beam ceiling. Its original wainscoting and built-in buffet are also present in the room that is has original windows and French doors on three sides. A swinging door from the dining room leads into the kitchen wing.



*Shank Family Photograph
late 1960's- early 1970*

The kitchen wing was originally three rooms: butler's pantry, kitchen and laundry, but the 1994 Northridge Earthquake demolished the cabinetry and dividing walls. The kitchen wing now exists with one large cooking/eating area and a laundry room and half bath. There is also an original back stairway from the kitchen that meets the main stairway on the landing as well as accesses the partial basement.

A wide, half-turn stairway is placed opposite the eastern groin vault in the front hall. An original pendant lamp hangs within the stairway. Three large bedrooms with adjoining baths are accessed from the main hallway at the top pf the stairs. The bedroom at the top of the stairs, as well as, the master bedroom has functioning fireplaces with detailed, wooden mantel treatments. The master bedroom also has a study that is divided from the sleeping area by original pocket doors. The second story sunroom is also situated on the main hallway with a step down and French doors. The narrow back hallway that is located the east side of the house and has two small bedrooms with a connecting bathroom that originally functioned as servants quarters.

Constructed in 1911, the Fleming House appears very much as it did when it was constructed. While there have been three notable additions, both are at the rear (north) elevation and neither are visible from the public right-of-way. A modification of the pergola/back porch and a second story sunroom were added between the south wing and main block of the house. These additions were constructed in 1930 and 1941 according to Santa Monica building permits. The permit from April 19, 1930 lists Mr. Osborne as owner and estimates the cost of the job at \$1500.00. The permit from October 6, 1941 lists Mrs. W. H. Bethea as owner and estimates the cost of the alterations at \$1,500.00. A family room was constructed in 1974, spanning nearly the width of

the north elevation. The family room addition took design cues from the house, incorporating a similar siding and fenestration pattern. The permit for the family room is dated May 31, 1974 and lists Eugene K. Shank as the owner. Alterations to the Fleming House have been carefully conceived to be compatible with the architecture of the original structure. These alterations do not impact the integrity of the home, which continues to appear as it did when it was constructed in 1910.

Minor changes have also occurred on some windows at the rear (north) elevation. Specifically, the doorway to the kitchen appears in early photographs with a large window opening above it that illuminates the back bedroom. This window appears in early photographs but has been replaced with a slider window and a metal screen to protect it from errant tennis balls (date unknown). Similar slider windows have also been used as replacements in the second story sunroom because of breakage.

Statement of Significance

The Fleming House is significant under Criteria 1, 4 and 5 of the Santa Monica Landmarks Designation criteria. Under criterion 1, it exemplifies development of the Palisades tract in the beginning of the twentieth century. Located north of Montana Avenue, the Palisades tract opened for development in 1905. The tract attracted wealthy residents who built large houses, often as a second beach house. Constructed in 1911 for the businessman and philanthropist Arthur Fleming, 325 Georgina Avenue is one of the oldest houses still extant on Georgina Avenue and is one of only a small handful of vacation beach homes from the initial development of the Palisades Tract.

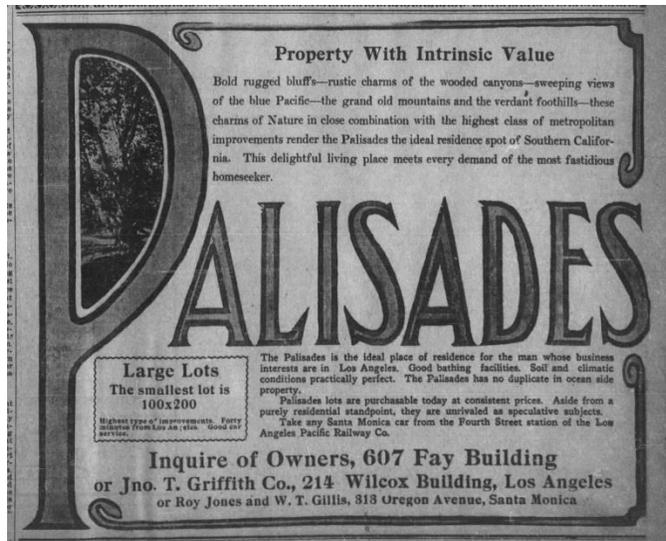
Under criterion 4, the house is a rare hybrid example of a house combining both Shingle and Craftsman styles. While the form and stance of the house takes cues from the Shingle style, the low-pitched roof with widely overhanging eaves and exposed rafter tails is distinctly Craftsman in style. Finally, under criterion 5, the house was designed by noted architect Frederick Roehrig, one of his only known works in Santa Monica.

Statement of Historic Importance

The town of Santa Monica was founded by two entrepreneurs, Colonel Robert S. Baker, who made his fortune in mining and ranching, and Senator John Percival Jones, owner of silver mines in Nevada. They recorded a map of Santa Monica in the Los Angeles County Recorder's Office in 1875. In 1897, Senator Jones and Arcadia Bandini Baker, widow of Colonel Baker, joined together to form the Santa Monica Land and Water Company. The company would go on to develop and subdivide 50,000 acres in West Los Angeles, including Bel Air, Brentwood, Pacific Palisades and Santa Monica. The city annexed additional acreage over time and hence a series of distinct neighborhoods would drive residential development.

Santa Monica became a significant recreational destination in the early twentieth century. Real estate developers like Abbott Kinney created a seaside resort in Ocean Park that included a large bathhouse, followed by the Ocean Park Pier, racetrack, auditorium, and casino. The Santa Monica Pier was constructed in 1909 and reconstructed over time to include a hippodrome,

carousel, and roller coaster. With the completion of multiple electrical railways between downtown Los Angeles and Santa Monica and major roadways to serve the growing number of automobiles, the Santa Monica area continued to grow in popularity.



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The Palisades Tract in the “North of Montana” district was originally subdivided in 1905 by the Palisades Investment Company whose directors included Roy Jones, son of Senator Jones, and realtor Robert (R. C.) Gillis. The tract was bounded by Adelaide Drive on the north, Palisades Avenue on the south, 7th Street on the east, and Ocean Avenue on the west. The lots were large, 100 feet wide by 200 feet deep and backed up to a series of alleys. The Palisades Tract was marketed as being “Cool, Healthful, Exclusive,” and “The equal of the famous Palisades-on-the-Hudson,” with “\$6000 to \$20,000 homes now being erected.” Early

development in the Palisades tract included a mixture of small cottages and larger homes designed as seaside vacation getaways for wealthy Pasadenans and Angelenos. The Palisades Tract was also likened to “A New World Riviera” in the *Los Angeles Times* in February 1911 with special notice given to development on Georgina Avenue: Georgina Avenue is a street that has been built in six months. B. A. Nebecker gave this street its original start by building a handsome home on the ocean front and now the north frontage presents a fairly unbroken stretch of houses and lawns, all attractive in architecture and far exceeding the high restrictions that have been placed upon the cost of residences. On this street are the residences of Mrs. Campion, Mrs. Miller, Walter Raymond, **A.H. Fleming**, J. B. Proctor, Mrs. R. C. Gillis, Maurice Hellman and H. G. Weyse. The original owner of the house, Arthur H. Fleming (1856-1940) was one of those wealthy Pasadenans who vacationed in Santa Monica for the cool air and health benefits.

Born in Ontario, Canada to English parents, Fleming was the oldest of their ten children. He studied law in Canada and moved to the United States in 1879 where he initially settled in Detroit and met his wife Clara Huntington Fowler. Clara’s father, Eldridge Merrick Fowler, was a successful businessman in lumber and mineral rights. Fleming joined his father-in-law in the timber business in the United States and Canada. Because Clara Fleming was in fragile health, the family moved west to Pasadena in 1896. Clara Fleming died in 1904 while the family was visiting San Francisco.

Arthur Fleming never remarried and raised his then 10-year old daughter, Marjorie Fleming, on his own. Arthur Fleming found success in a variety of business, including the Santa Monica Park Company, Minarets and Western Railway Company, Madera Sugar Pine Company, Madera

Lumber Company, Sugar Pine Lumber Company and St. Anthony Mining Company. Over his lifetime, Arthur Fleming and his daughter, Marjorie, bestowed gifts amounting to over \$5,000,000 to California Institute of Technology (and formerly the Throop Polytechnic Institute) through the Clara H. Fleming Memorial Fund in honor of his late wife. He and Marjorie also bought the 32 acres of land that became the institute's campus.

In 1930, Arthur Fleming, who was president of Caltech Board of Trustees at the time, visited Berlin and successfully convinced Albert Einstein to teach at Caltech for the summers on 1931-1933. Caltech honors his legacy with the naming of one of its four houses as the Fleming House.



The city of Pasadena also honored him with the Arthur Noble Civic Award in 1932. Besides philanthropic projects in Pasadena where he had his permanent residence, Fleming was also involved in charitable efforts in Europe. He was recognized in France with his donation of 100,000 francs to build a canopy to house the railway car where the 1918 armistice was signed to end World War I. The French Republic bestowed upon him the rank of Chevalier of the Legion of Honor for his generosity.

Arthur Fleming owned 325 Georgina Avenue for vacationing purposes from 1911 until around 1916, the same year his daughter, Marjorie, left California to study at the Boston Conservatory of Music. Around 1916, Edwin Morrel Hills purchased the home and lived there with his wife Lillieas and their twin daughters Margaret Elizabeth and Martha Muriel. The Hills family was originally from Manhattan, New York. Edwin Hills worked in a variety of business interests, including real estate and was a majority stockholder for the Woodlake Heights Fruit Company.⁴ By 1925, the Hills had moved to 1041 2nd Street in Santa Monica.

After separating from her husband, Edythe Gertrude Biorkman, moved to 325 Georgina Avenue with their four children around 1931. Edythe filed for divorce from her husband, Dr. Claus Gustav Biorkman, citing desertion, later the same year. Their children were active in the competitive tennis community of Santa Monica through the Santa Monica Netters⁵ and it is probable that during this time that the tennis court was added to the backyard. In 1936, Edythe took her life in the home, leaving her mother Blanche Clark, to raise the two youngest children at her home located nearby at 406 Adelaide Drive. After Edythe Biorkman's death, Hedwig Biorkman, Dr. Biorkman's sister, moved in as a caretaker.

In 1954, William J.F. Brennan and his wife Beverly occupied the home. In 1958, the home was owned by Hancock "Bill" Banning III and Julia McCook Banning. In 1967, Eugene Kelly Shank and his wife Jean purchased the home from Julia Banning. Eugene Shank was a successful financial consultant and wealth manager who moved to California from Minnesota as a teenager and to attend Stanford University and, later, USC. He and Jean, a native Californian

from Pasadena, raised four children in the house. The Shank Family Trust is the current owner of the home.

Statement of Architectural Significance

On September 13, 1910, Arthur H. Fleming applied for a building permit to build a two-story dwelling and retained Frederick L. Roehrig to design a summer seaside home in Santa Monica's Palisades Tract. The tract that opened in 1905 offered broad, tree-lined streets with a close proximity to the beach. Fleming's permanent home at 1003 South Orange Grove Avenue, nicknamed "Millionaire's Row," in Pasadena was also built by Roehrig in 1899. Fleming's Pasadena Arts-and-Crafts mansion was considered one of the first Craftsman buildings in the city. The Fleming's Pasadena mansion was designed in the Craftsman Sub-type of Swiss Chalet. The only portion of the Pasadena residence that exists today is the Roehrig-designed garage from 1910 that was moved to the Fenye's Estate in 1949 by the Finnish consul, George Paloheimo, and ultimately became the Finnish Folk Museum.

Fleming's choice of architect, Frederick Roehrig, was educated at Cornell University and furthered his architectural studies in England and France. He worked in a variety of architectural styles, commonly combining elements to attain a residence that both suited the client and was architecturally original, as he did at 325 Georgina Avenue. Roehrig was described as an "eclectic architect" by architectural historian Robert Winter. Roehrig was raised in a family interested in historical linguistics and cultural heritage. His father, also Frederick, held a Ph.D. in linguistics, worked at the Prussian embassy in Constantinople while studying Turkish and Arabic language and culture, held an M.D. and practiced medicine for the Union Army in the Civil War and afterwards in the Dakota Territory. The elder Roehrig taught linguistics at Cornell, University of Southern California, and Stanford. The younger Roehrig was undoubtedly influenced by the cultural exposure afforded to him by his family.

Frederick Roehrig was regarded as "one of the most prominent residential architects in Southern California" and was well-known in Pasadena and Los Angeles with numerous impressive architectural projects credited to him. He practiced from the late 19th century into the 20th century and worked within the architectural styles of Queen Anne, Craftsman, California Mission, Neo-Classical and Art Deco to accommodate his clients. His still-existing architectural creations include the Neff Mansion (1888), also known as the McNally Mansion, that was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1978, the Hotel Green (late 19th c.) added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1982, the Frederick Hastings Rindge House (1902) that was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1986, and the Ramsay-Durfee Estate (1908) that was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1989.

The Neff or McNally Mansion exemplifies Roehrig's eclecticism and the relationships he cultivated with his clients. Built in 1888, the house reflects many Queen Anne elements but is more simplified and horizontal in its shingled design. After McNally visited the Chicago World Fair in 1893, he commissioned Roehrig to design an addition to the house, a 25 x 25-foot octagonal room, fashioned as a Turkish smoking room, with a conical roof, diamond-shaped glass panes, carved wood paneling and Arabian-inspired finials.⁶¹² The McNally addition

reflects Roehrig's exposure to Middle Eastern culture from his father's career. The Hotel Green also reflects this eclecticism of styles with its Moorish, Spanish, and Victorian elements. Roehrig blended "domes, arches, pillars, balconies, and verandas in a building made of structural steel with concrete floors and brick walls."

The Fleming House at 325 Georgina Avenue is the only remaining Roehrig-designed house in Santa Monica. He also designed a Santa Monica beach house for Frederick Hastings Rindge on the southeast corner of Ocean Avenue and what was then called Nevada Street (now Wilshire Blvd.) that was demolished to make way for the Lawrence Welk Plaza at 100 Wilshire Boulevard. The Fleming House reflects the architect's skill and the transmission of a wide personal repertoire of residential architectural styles to the Craftsman design, as well as an understanding of his client, Arthur Fleming, who was a serious businessman and well-mannered widower.

The Craftsman style grew out of the 19th century English Arts and Crafts movement and was adapted to a very regional form of bungalow that was symbiotic with the southern California climate. Standard Craftsman designs emphasize simple, horizontal, and craft-oriented natural materials with common utilization of shingle and clapboard siding, rectangular windows, wood frame surrounds, gabled roofs, exposed roof beams and rafter tails, and deep overhangs.

The Fleming House reflects these aesthetic values in its harmonious proportions and detailing, but it also reflects how "two-story Craftsman houses were often commissioned for wealthy residents and designed specifically with the homeowner's needs and physical site in mind." The layout of the large beach home reflected the needs of the widowed Fleming, his daughter Marjorie, and the necessary servants to run the sizable house with large, formal living and dining areas for entertainment, three large bedrooms with attached baths for the family and guests, and a servant's wing with two bedrooms and a bath.

The Craftsman plan was also infiltrated with Frederick Roehrig's eclecticism in design choices. Interior details in the formal dining and living rooms, such as wooden paneling, bookcases, wainscoting, and box beams reflected the attention to natural materials and rectilinear emphasis of the Craftsman design, but the entry way and front hall were designed to contrast. The two windows that flank the front door are arched to blend well with the series of three plaster groin vaults that create the front hall. Wooden decorative elements are minimized in the front entry hall to only include a plain baseboard molding and a simple surround to the arched windows and front door. The front hall and its windows are in no way rectilinear but reflect a blend of Mission Revival elements that Roehrig employed when designing the McMurrin House, which was built one year later than the Fleming House in 1911. In his design for the Fleming house, Roehrig combines architectural styles seamlessly to create a gracious space.

Fleming's chose H. X. Goetz as the contractor for the Santa Monica beach house. In 1910, the home totaled \$9,000 to construct.⁷ Goetz had already built the impressive North Beach Bath House in 1893 for Senator Jones and the North Beach Bath House Company at a site north of the wharf and the Hotel Arcadia. Goetz later rebuilt in 1912 another more modern bathhouse on the same site for the Santa Monica Beach Company. He had also constructed Lincoln High School and Santa Monica City Hall.

Arthur Fleming chose the highly respected and skilled architect, Frederick Roehrig, and contractor, H. X. Goetz, to create his seaside Craftsman Vacation home in Santa Monica. The architectural design retains its original integrity, and the home has been well maintained over the last 110 years. The dwelling is an important example of Frederick Roehrig's work, as well as a reminder of the past when wealthy Angelenos and Pasadenans chose to recreate at the shore in Santa Monica.

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