

**REQUEST FOR  
LANDMARK INITIATION**

Land Use Planning  
Received  
February 14, 2023

**Henry Osgood Noyes House  
aka North Gables  
2531 Ridge Road  
Berkeley, CA 94709**



*Figure 1. Noyes House, 2531 Ridge Road (photo: Daniella Thompson, 2023)*



*Figure 2. Noyes House in 1950 (Donogh files, BAHA archives)*

1. **Street Address:** 2531 Ridge Road  
**County:** Alameda      **City:** Berkeley      **ZIP:** 94709
2. **Assessor's Parcel Number:** 58-2199-6 (Daley's Scenic Park, Block 12, Lot 17)  
**Dimensions:** 50 feet x 140 feet  
**Cross Streets:** Euclid Avenue & Le Roy Avenue
3. **Is property on the State Historic Resource Inventory?** No  
**Is property on the Berkeley Urban Conservation Survey?** No  
*Listed as a landmark on the Community GIS Portal*
4. **Application for Landmark Includes:**
  - a. **Building(s):** Yes      **Garden:**      **Other Feature(s):**
  - b. **Landscape or Open Space:** N/A
  - c. **Historic Site:** No
  - d. **District:** No
  - e. **Other:** Entire Property
5. **Historic Names:** Noyes House; North Gables  
**Commonly Known Name:** North Gables
6. **Date of Construction:** 1892  
**Factual:** Yes  
**Source of Information:** Lot sale record, *SF Call*, 4 June 1892; property tax assessment, 1892; H.O. Noyes directory listing, 1 December 1892
7. **Designer:** Unknown; possibly Henry O. Noyes or a pattern book design
8. **Builder:** Henry Osgood Noyes (1866–1938)
9. **Style:** Wood-frame, two-story-and-attic Queen Anne Victorian
10. **Original Owner:** Henry Osgood Noyes  
**Original Use:** Single-family residence
11. **Present Owner:**  
2531 Ridge LLC  
432 Bridle Court  
San Ramon, CA 94582-5950  
  
**Present Occupant:** Tenants
12. **Present Use:**  
**Residential:** Rental apartments  
**Current Zoning:** R-3H      **Adjacent Property Zoning:** R-3H
13. **Present Condition of Property:**  
**Exterior:** Fair **Interior:** Good **Grounds:** Untended



Berkeley directory as resident at this address<sup>1</sup> (fig. 4).

Frank M. and Rose H. Wilson to H. O. Noyes, lot 17, block 12, Daley's Scenic Park, Berkeley; \$10.

Figure 4. *San Francisco Call*, 4 Jun 1892

Noyes Henry O, contractor and builder, Daley ave bet L Roye and Euclid, res same

Figure 5. *Husted's 1892-93 Berkeley Directory* (published 1 December 1892)



Figure 6. Structures destroyed in the 1923 Berkeley Fire. The Noyes house is marked with the arrow (*East Bay Water Company map*, 5 Oct. 1923)

Unlike the vast majority of structures on the historic Northside, the Noyes House survived the 1923 Fire. Among the surviving structures, it is second in age only to the George Jensen House (1891), a City of Berkeley Landmark at 1675 La Loma Avenue that had lost its original Victorian cladding for a brown-shingle exterior circa 1912. In contrast, the Noyes House retains its original shiplap

<sup>1</sup> Ridge Road was originally called Daley Avenue.

siding, with patterned shingles on the front gable and the turret. As such, it is the only recognizable Queen Anne Victorian remaining on the Northside south of Cedar Street.



Figure 7. 1923 Fire survivors on the Northside. The letter L denotes a designated Landmark. The subject property is marked with the arrow.

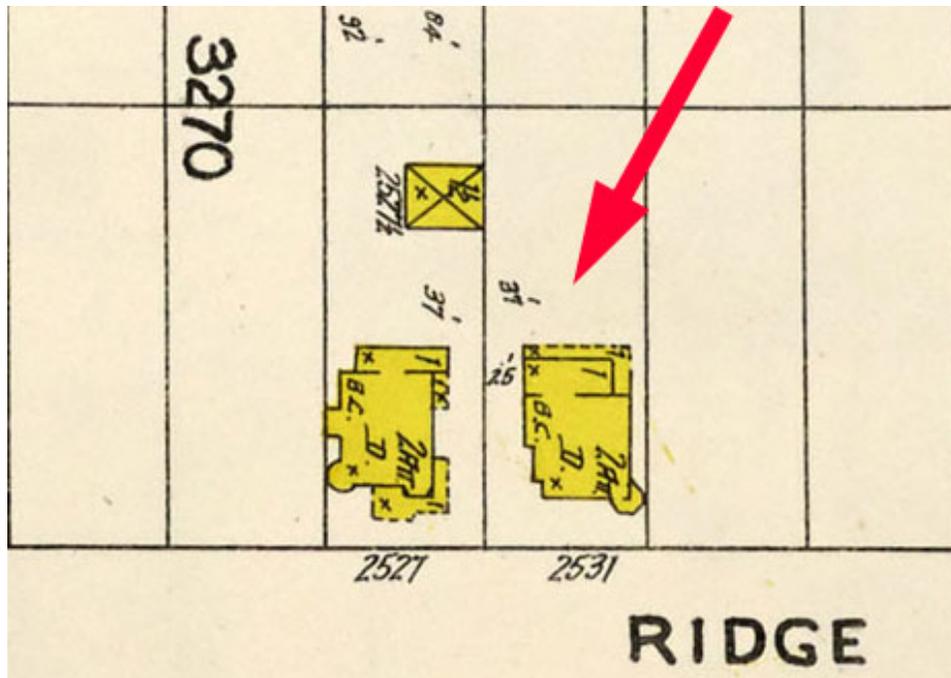


Figure 8. Noyes House in a 1903 Sanborn map

### **Early site of gender equity and equal-opportunity housing.**

The Noyes House is a rare housing example with over a century's history of gender equity, equal-opportunity housing, and women's empowerment.

At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Noyes House—then owned by William Fisher, a Vallejo carpenter and joiner—was occupied for half a dozen years by Mrs. Anna Benson, born 1834 in Pennsylvania, as was Fisher. A widow who had previously lived in San Francisco, she was variously classified in three U.S. Census records as either Black or Mulatto.

Mrs. Benson was the only independent woman of color living on Berkeley's Northside, and perhaps also the only one in town. The 1900 U.S. Census enumerated her as head of household, and her occupation as "landlady." The tenants listed in her household were the prominent socialist attorney, writer, and labor activist Austin Lewis (1865–1944), his wife Ethel, and their three young children.

It is possible that Austin Lewis brought his family to stay at Mrs. Benson's house in an attempt to help her get established as a landlady.



*Figure 9. The Pierce House, 2527 Ridge Road, as the Sigma Pi chapter house, c. 1920. The Noyes House with its new porch is partially visible on the right. The Treehaven Apartments can be glimpsed on the left.*

William Fisher owned the Noyes House from circa 1893–94 until his death in 1916. After Mrs. Benson's departure, classified ads offered a housekeeping suite and single rooms at this address. In June 1919, Fisher's daughters sold the Noyes House to James Manning Pierce (1838–1929), owner of the Cloyne Court Hotel, who had lived next door to the Noyes House from 1894 through 1903. The Pierce residence was another turreted Queen Anne structure. It survived the 1923 Fire but was razed in 1927 to be replaced by the Hotel Slocum, now the Berkeley Students' Cooperative's Stebbins Hall.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Thompson, Daniella. "James Pierce, the Consummate Host of Ridge Road." *Berkeley Daily Planet*, 21 May 2009 and [http://berkeleyheritage.com/eastbay\\_then\\_now/pierce.html](http://berkeleyheritage.com/eastbay_then_now/pierce.html)

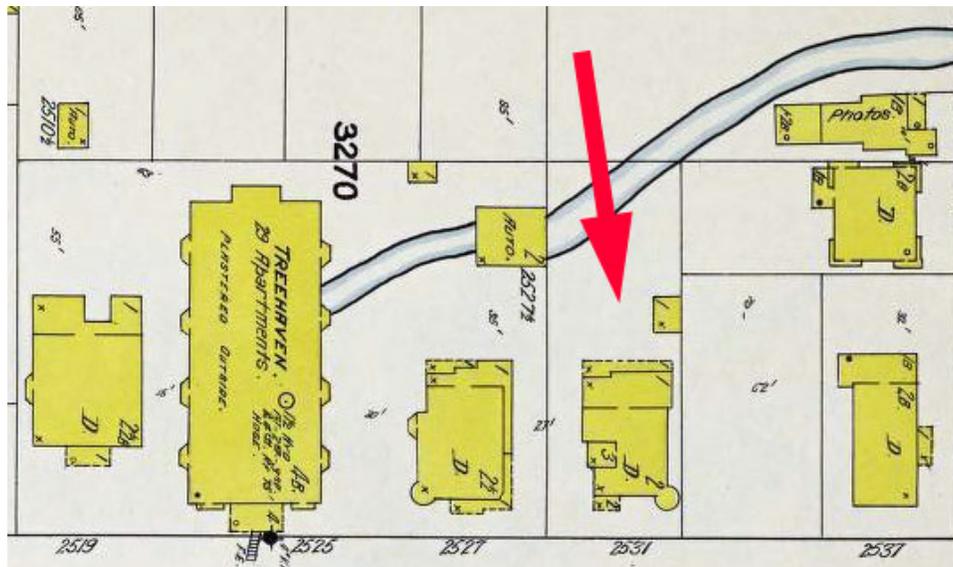


Figure 10. Noyes House in a 1911 Sanborn map

James Pierce and his wife managed the Cloyne Court Hotel from its inception in 1904 and purchased it outright in 1914. It remained in the Pierce family for 42 years before being sold to the University Students' Cooperative Association in 1946. Two doors down from the Noyes House, Pierce built the four-story Treehaven Apartments (George W. Patton, designer and builder, 1909), the earliest modern apartment building on the Northside.

As soon as he purchased the Noyes House, James Pierce began improving the property. In November 1919, he filed a permit application to "build porch on front of house." Further additions along the east side and the rear followed in 1923 and '24. He leased the house to Miss Edna G. White (1884–1957) and her married sister, Eleanor "Nell" White Bent, who established a boarding house for female students, naming it North Gables.

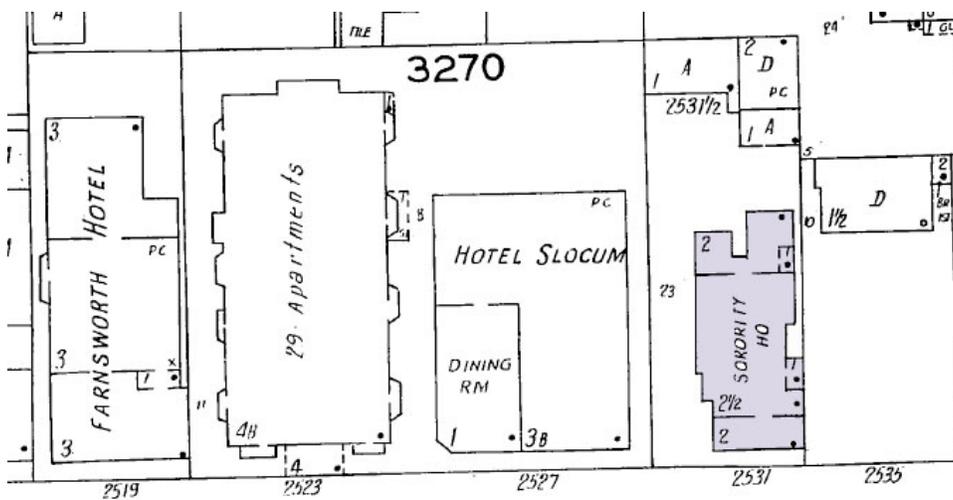


Figure 11. Noyes house (shaded) in a 1929 Sanborn map

## **A pioneer cooperative model that empowered women and promoted their independence.**

“From its inception, North Gables operated as a private cooperative, possibly the first of its kind for women in Berkeley. Room and board for residents were twenty-five dollars a month (thirty dollars in the 1940s), plus five hours work a week—cleaning, cooking, serving, dish washing, gardening, repairs, etc. About one-quarter of the thirty students worked an additional two hours a day and lived rent-free.”<sup>3</sup>

“Miss White and North Gables had made it possible for so many women who were self-supporting or of modest means to live on campus, participate in university activities, and get a fine college education.”<sup>4</sup>

“Without that housing break, a Berkeley education would have been impossible for hundreds of slim-pursed women from 1932 to 1949—most of them the first women in their families to go to college.”<sup>5</sup>

In the mid-1990s, alumnae of North Gables organized as Friends of North Gables and established the Edna G. White Memorial Scholarship for Cal women students of academic ability and financial need.

In 1946, Miss White acquired 2531 Ridge Road from the James M. Pierce estate. The boarding house ceased operation in 1949, after Miss White’s health deteriorated. The building has since passed through many hands and was eventually converted into apartments

The University of California’s 1962 Long-Range Development Plan (LRDP) proposed new university buildings to be constructed on four Northside city blocks facing the campus between Highland Place and Scenic Avenue. Existing structures—public or private—were to be demolished, including the historic Cloyne Court Hotel (1904), North Gate Hall (1906), and the Drawing Building (1913–14), all designed by University Architect John Galen Howard, and the former Beta Theta Pi chapter house (1893), designed by Ernest Coxhead.<sup>6</sup>

Seven buildings facing the Noyes House across Ridge Road were razed by the university. One of these was the Glen Garry Apartments (Walter H. Ratcliff, Jr., architect, 1912), a 16-unit building on the southwest corner of Ridge Road and Le Roy Avenue.

Miraculously, the sweep wasn’t quite as radical as intended, and some historic Northside buildings were spared. Cloyne Court Hotel, North Gate Hall, the Drawing Building, Beta Theta Pi, and many pre-1923 residences were eventually designated as City of Berkeley Landmarks—some of them also listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

The Noyes House at 2531 Ridge Road—for which a landmark application was never written owing to insufficient information—not only survived but continues to house students.

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<sup>3</sup> Fine Ginsburg, Elizabeth and Shapiro Rochlin, Harriet. “North Gables: A Boardinghouse with a Heart.” *Chronicle of the University of California*, Fall 1998.

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/70f8d860>

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> McCarthy, Dennis. “Scholarship Honors Housemother.” *Daily News*, 11 January 1996.

<sup>6</sup> Thompson, Daniella. “North Gables: An Early Exemplar of Equal-opportunity Housing.” *Berkeley Daily Planet*, 30 November 2007 and [http://berkeleyheritage.com/eastbay\\_then-now/north\\_gables.html](http://berkeleyheritage.com/eastbay_then-now/north_gables.html)

Now the Noyes House appears to be threatened with demolition.

Despite various additions over the years, the Henry Osgood Noyes House is still a clearly recognizable Queen Anne Victorian—an absolute rarity on the Northside below Cedar Street.

The house retains sufficient integrity of location, design, materials, setting, feeling, and association to have been easily identified by anyone who knew it a century ago.

**Recorder:** Daniella Thompson

**Date:** 11 February 2023