

L A N D M A R K S
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C O M M I S S I O N
S T A F F R E P O R T

FOR COMMISSION ACTION
MARCH 6, 2025

2231 McKinley Avenue – Chan-Lee Residence

Landmark application #LMIN2024-0005 for the consideration of City Landmark or Structure of Merit designation status for a residential property constructed in 1903 (APN 057-2018-023-00)

I. Application Basics

- A. Land Use Designations:** Restricted Two-Family Residential (R-2)
- B. CEQA Determination:** Exempt from further environmental review pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15061.(b)(3) for Review Exemptions.
- C. Parties Involved**
- **Application Author:** Mark Hulbert, Historic Architect
Preservation Architecture
446 17th Street, #302
Oakland, CA
 - **Property Owner:** Christopher Heine & Wilhelmina Marxer
2231 McKinley Avenue
Berkeley, CA 94703
- D. Staff Recommendation:** Hold a public hearing and consider final action on this request.

Figure 1 Vicinity Map – highlighting nearby City Landmarks and Structures of Merit

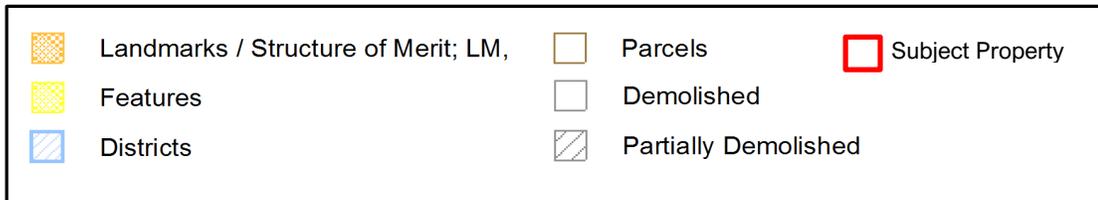
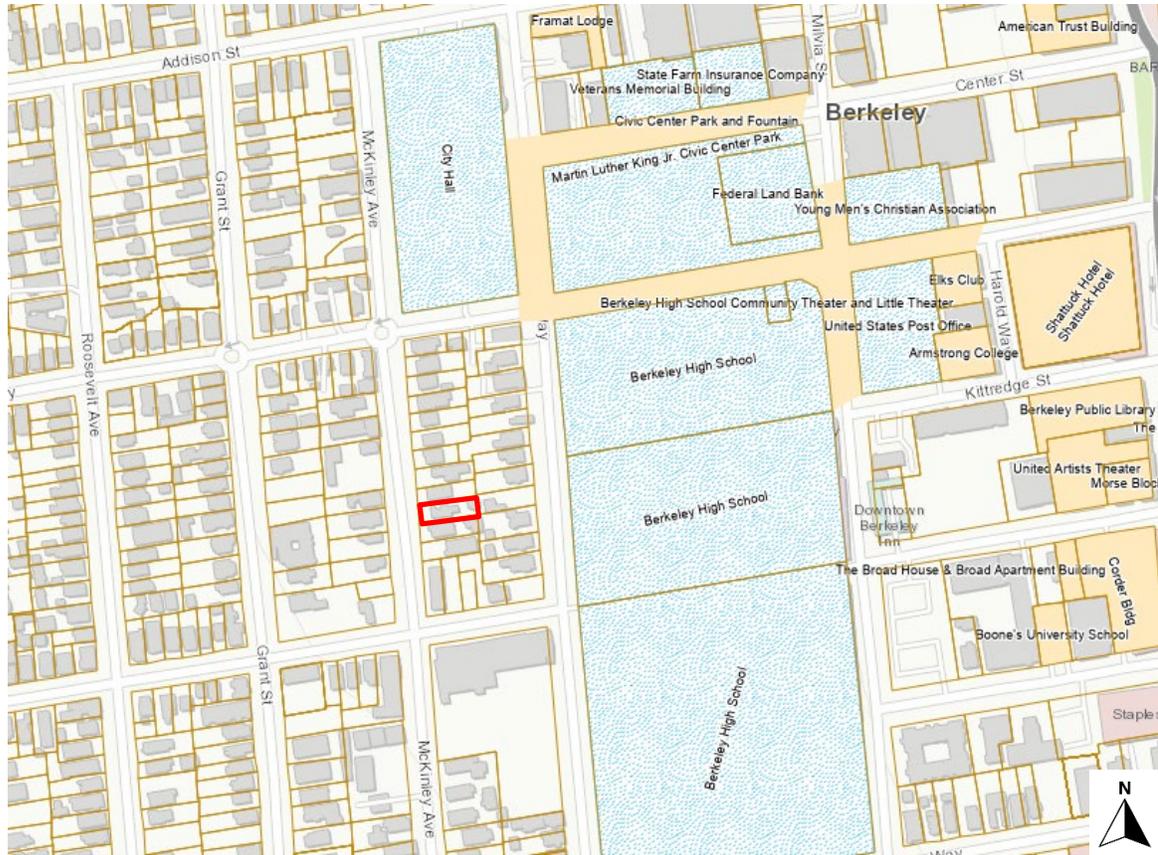


Figure 2 Subject property, current condition – primary (west) elevation (source: Landmark application)



Figure 3 Subject property, current condition – south elevation (source: Landmark application)



Figure 4 Subject property, current condition – east elevation (source: Landmark application)



Figure 5 Subject property, current condition, Cottage (source: Landmark application)



Figure 6 Subject property, c. 1920s (source: Landmark application)



Figure 7. Subject property, Roger Lee, c.1928
(source: Landmark application)



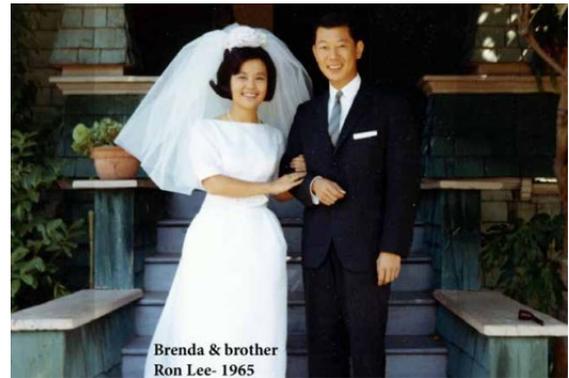
Figure 8 Subject property, Linnie, Roland, and Roger Lee, 1938
(source: Landmark application)



Figure 9 Subject property, The Lee family, 1955
(source: Remembering Jerry Lee Facebook)



Figure 10 Subject property, Brenda and Ron Lee, 1965 (source: Landmark application)



II. Application Chronology

On September 17, 2024, the City received a Landmark application for the subject property. Mark Hulbert submitted this application on behalf of the property owner, and this action initiated the designation review process in accordance with Berkeley Municipal Code (BMC) Section 3.24.120. After reviewing the application materials, staff sent correspondence to the applicant requesting additional information on October 11, 2024. The applicant provided additional application materials on December 26, 2024.

At the regular meeting on November 7, 2024, LPC opened the hearing and allowed for public comment in accordance with the timeframe required under the Landmarks Preservation Ordinance (BMC Section 3.24.130) and continued the hearing to a future LPC meeting date.

On February 24, 2025, staff mailed and posted 10-day advance notices for tonight's meeting, in accordance with BMC Section 3.24.140.

III. Historic Resource Status

The subject property is not listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NR) or the California Register of Historical Resources (CR).

Nearby City Landmarks include Berkeley High School Historic District, City Hall Historic District, and Civic Center Historic District. See Figure 1 above.

IV. Property Description

The following property description of 2231 McKinley Avenue is based on the research presented in the Landmark application for this consideration.

The subject property is an approximately 5,100 square foot, interior lot on the east side of the 2200-block of McKinley Avenue. It is a rectangular parcel that is oriented east-west with street frontage along McKinley Avenue to the west. The lot features two buildings, a main two-story over crawl space residence set back from McKinley Avenue by approximately 30 feet and a rear one-story cottage at the lot's northeast corner. The property is fronted by mature street trees and features a manicured front garden.

The main two-story residence is approximately 2,500 square feet (Figure 2). The wood frame building features a front gable roof and has a painted wood shingle exterior. Constructed in 1903-04, it is an Electric House with Craftsman Shingle details, as expressed on its primary, west elevation, in its splayed turreted bay window at the northwest corner, distinctive keyhole entry, and deep bracketed eaves. It features a half-width entry porch south of the turret, accessed via wood steps.

The primary elevation's second story features a pair of angled windows, recessed into the front gable's prow with rounded side walls. The building's deep eaves continue along the south elevation which features two hipped-roof dormers at the second story and a bay window topped with dentil detailing at the first story (Figure 3). The north elevation includes a shed roof dormer. A secondary entrance is at the north elevation's east corner, set beneath a deep overhang with wood brackets. The main residence's rear elevation is characterized by a rectangular, two-story addition with a shallow hipped roof (Figure 4). The addition continues for two bays on each elevation.

The main residence has a unified wood shingle exterior. Doors and windows are generally wood. Windows are typically double hung, and include several examples of leaded glass. The residence's rear addition has multilite steel casements.

A one-story cottage is at the rear of the property, approximately 20 feet from the main residence. The cottage has a rectangular footprint, hipped roof, and wood shingle exterior (Figure 5). The primary elevation is at the cottage's south elevation. Its main entry, beneath a simple wood awning porch, is accessible by simple wood steps. A dormer window aligns with the main entry. Windows are wood and feature examples of double-hung, casement, and multipane. Exterior shingles include decorative cut details at the base of the cottage that continue for the first third of the exterior before continuing to a simpler shingle pattern.

Construction and Ownership History. The property at 2231 McKinley Avenue was constructed in 1903-04 by Arthur E. Searle (1873-1959). Searle, was listed in directories from the period as a carpenter. Though no original permits were located, it is likely that Searle was the original builder/contractor. Searle resided at the property until 1906 when it was sold to Lewis Manvordir. In turn, Manvordir sold the residence to Thomas F. Dyer in 1908. Dyer does not appear to have resided in the house, and historical newspapers, census records, and directories indicate the property had several residents in the years before it was sold to Harry and Mary Chan in 1922.

Harry and Mary Chan deeded the property to May Chan and her husband On Yum Lee in 1923. It is unclear what the relationship between Harry and May Lee (nee Chan) may have been, but Harry was Californian-born and appears to have been a successful farmer by this time, suggesting purchasing the property may have been easier for Chan than On Yum Lee, who was Chinese born.

The Lees moved to the property from San Francisco with their children in 1923. On Yum worked in the seafood business. They had one more child in 1925, Linnie. May died in 1927 and On Yum died in 1928, leaving behind 8 children: On Lun, Quong, Rowland, Roger, Helen, Grace, Shirley, and Linnie. On Lun, a Sophomore at UC Berkeley by this time, dropped out of school to raise his siblings. All of his brothers went on to graduate from UC Berkeley. The 1930 census records indicate On Lun worked in real estate, and later became a bookkeeper. The residence became a multi-generational home that included siblings, brothers and sisters-in-law, and nieces and nephews. According to the 1930 census, 12 family members were living on the property.

On Lun married Alice Dong in 1931 and raised their own family in the house. On Lun and Alice had four children – Ronald, Gerald (Jerry), Wayne, and Brenda. On Lun died in 1965. Alice remained in the house until 1968. The house remained in the family, but they no longer resided there and house and cottage were rented out. For a short period in the late 1960s to early 1970s, the house was part of a counter-culture commune, along with 2233 McKinley, known as Dragon's Eye. The family sold the

house in 1994 to Nina and Morgan Fitcher. It was purchased by the present owners in 2020.

Alterations. The Lees undertook several changes to the house during their early ownership including the addition of the entry porch and arched portal in c.1923. The south elevation dormers were also possibly added at this time. A separate garage (removed by c. 1980) was also built.

In the following years, it appears that the house had to be adapted to accommodate the growing family. There was a well-documented Anti-Chinese sentiment in Berkeley, including housing discrimination prior to and leading up to the Lees ownership of 2231 McKinley Avenue. The 1930 census records show that the Lees were only one of three Chinese families in the census district and the only family that owned their house (which they had owned for seven years at that point). The Lees multigenerational home was likely the function of both cultural practices and limited available housing options in Berkeley, particularly before the end of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1943 and its more effective repeal by the Fair Housing Act in 1968. By 1929, the house was expanded with the two-story rear addition. During this period the attic space appears to have also been altered for additional living space with the addition of the north elevation dormer, creating the two-story living space present today. By 1950, the rear addition was expanded. The cottage does not appear to have been altered. Later available permits were all related to routine maintenance work.

V. Analysis and Evaluation

The analysis of this report will refer to research and information provided in the Landmark application (Attachment 2). This section analyzes the extent to which the property appears to meet significance criteria set forth in the Landmarks Preservation Ordinance (LPO), Berkeley Municipal Code (BMC) Chapter 3.

Historic Context.¹ The subject property is associated with the history of housing trends in the City and Chinese American mobility into Berkeley's middle class during a period when housing covenants and other restrictions against Asians was prevalent. Constructed in 1903-04, the residence was consistent with single-family development happening in Berkeley at that time and as originally constructed reflected dominant trends in architectural design.

By the 1920s, the neighborhood surrounding 2231 McKinley Avenue was working class, and comprised largely of white families, many of whom were immigrants. Even so, Asian Americans and Asian immigrants were not able to easily participate in the housing market. Though some Chinese and Chinese Americans relocated to Berkeley following the destruction of San Francisco's Chinatown in 1906, it does not appear that the population sustained. Often relegated to Chinatowns, Chinese and Chinese

¹ National Register Bulletin #15, Item V: *How to Evaluate a Property within its Historic Context* (2002); National Register Bulletin #16A, Section III: *How to Complete the National Register Registration – Period of Significance* (1997).

Americans were unable to easily purchase housing outside of established enclaves during this period.

In Berkeley, there are several documented instances of neighborhoods trying to block Asian renters and owners. According to family history, the Chan-Lees faced similar resistance when neighbors began to assemble a petition to block their purchase of 2231 McKinley Avenue. The petition effort was quashed when a white neighbor who had been a missionary in China, vouched for the family. As described above, by 1930 the neighborhood surrounding 2231 McKinley had very few Chinese residents and the Lees were the first Chinese homeowners on their block. Nonetheless, the Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC), graded the neighborhood "hazardous" in 1937 due in part to the "infiltration of orientals," who comprised just two percent of the neighborhood.

The residency of the Lee family at 2231 McKinley Avenue demonstrates the history of housing for Chinese and Chinese American Berkeley residents in the period before the passage of the Fair Housing Act in 1968. Its period of significance spans from the beginning of their ownership in 1923 until they no longer resided in the house in 1968.

Landmarks Preservation Ordinance Significance Criteria. When it designates a property as a Landmark, Historic District, or Structure of Merit, the Commission must find that the property meets one or more of the required criteria codified in LPO, BMC Section 3.24.110. These criteria are relatively specific and appear to align with California Register and National Register criteria. The significance criteria for a Structure of Merit are broader than those for Landmarks status, and include properties that qualify individually as good examples of architectural design, or that qualify as contributors to the context of a larger streetscape or area.

Staff completed a review of information provided in the Landmark application as well as available City records and some supplemental sources and compared the evidence against the criteria for designation consideration. A summary of findings is provided below.

Landmark criterion – *Architectural Merit*. The style of the main residence at 2231 McKinley Avenue, constructed in 1903-04, is the result of popular influences in early 20th century architecture and features elements of Victorian and Craftsman architectural design. Though an early house in its neighborhood, it is not the first, last, only or most significant property of its type in the region. Likely constructed by contractor/builder Arthur E. Searle, neither the main residence nor cottage are prototypes or outstanding examples of periods, styles, architectural movements of construction. Though of quality design and construction, there is no scholarship or evidence to support considering Searle a master builder. Consistent in age and style of surrounding residences, it is not an architectural example of exceptional value as part of the neighborhood fabric. 2231 McKinley Avenue does not appear to meet the LPO Landmark designation criterion for *architectural value*.

Landmark criterion – Cultural Value. BMC Section 3.24.110.A.2 allows for the designation of properties that are associated with the *movement or evolution of culture*. The early development and construction of 2231 McKinley Avenue is typical of single-family housing development occurring during the early 20th century. Though it became the home of a local Chinese American family in an era when housing opportunities were few for Asians and Asian Americans, particularly those of Chinese ancestry, their occupation does not represent a social or cultural movement of the City. The property at 2231 McKinley Avenue does not appear to meet the LPO Landmark designation criterion for *cultural value*.

Landmark criterion – Educational Value. There is no documented history associated with 2231 McKinley Avenue to suggest it is the principal source of important information. The property at 2231 McKinley Avenue does not appear to meet the LPO Landmark designation criterion for *educational value*.

Landmark criterion – Historic Value. The property is associated with challenges Asian and Asian Americans, particularly of Chinese ancestry faced during the period before the end of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1943 and the later passage Fair Housing Act in 1968. Chinese and Chinese Americans faced discrimination in housing, and their presence in neighborhoods was described as “infiltration”. The Chan-Lee family obtained the property in 1923 with support from one neighbor who had done missionary work in China, thereby quelling neighborhood concerns. One of very few Chinese or Chinese American families in the neighborhood, the Chan-Lee family resided on the property for the next 45 years. Their occupation, including alterations made to the house to personalize it and to accommodate their multi-generational household embodies the history of housing challenges for Chinese and Chinese Americans in Berkeley. The Chan-Lee occupation of the property coincides with the trajectory of new opportunities for housing for Asians and Asian Americans following the end of World War II and expresses the neighborhood’s trajectory from an overwhelming white neighborhood in the early 20th Century to a diverse neighborhood by the mid-20th Century. The transformation of the neighborhood is exemplified by the fact of when school integration was introduced to Berkeley in 1963, Washington Elementary, the neighborhood school that the Lees attended, was not included in the plan as it had become naturally integrated as a function of the demographics of the neighborhood by that time. The period of significance begins with the Chan-Lee family purchase of the residence in 1923 and ends in 1968, when the family moved away from the property. For these reasons, 2231 McKinley appears to meet LPO Landmark designation for *historic value*.

The Commission has received sufficient evidence to take favorable action to designate the subject property as a City Landmark. Draft Findings for Approval are provided for the Commission’s consideration in Attachment 1. This draft includes a list of character-defining physical features of this historical resource that should be preserved as required under BMC Section 3.24.100.A for Procedures Required – Controls and Standards.

LPO Structure of Merit criteria. As discussed above, staff believes the subject property could meet the criteria for designation as a City Landmark. However, if the Commission concludes that it does not (in whole or in part), then the Commission may consider the extent to which it meets the criteria for designation as a Structure of Merit, in accordance with BMC Section 3.24.110.B.2.c.

Architectural Design. Though the subject property does not appear to be an outstanding example of early 20th century architectural design or the work of a master builder, it is a good example of this period of architecture. The main residence's Craftsman Shingle details, including its splayed turreted bay window, distinctive keyhole entry, deep bracketed eaves, and many decorative leaded glass windows successfully convey its architectural character. Its architectural character is bolstered by the intact cottage structure, which includes original and distinctive decorative shingle detailing.

As such, 2231 McKinley Avenue would meet both of the following Structure of Merit criteria:

Section 3.24.110.B.2. c – *“The structure is a good example of architectural design.”*

No draft findings for approval as a Structure of Merit are provided with this report, however the Commission can direct staff to prepare such findings if needed to support action under these provisions.

VI. Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Commission consider the extent to which this property meets the criteria for City Landmark or Structure of Merit designation pursuant to BMC Section 3.24.110.A.4, and then take favorable action.

Attachments:

1. **Draft Findings for Approval**
2. **Landmark Application.** 2231 McKinley Avenue, prepared by Mark Hulbert, August 26, 2024
rev. December 26, 2024

Prepared by: JulieAnn Murphy, Architectural Historian, Rincon Consultants, Inc.

Reviewed by: Fatema Crane, Principal Planner; fcrane@cityofberkeley.info (510) 981-7410

ATTACHMENT 1

DRAFT FINDINGS FOR DESIGNATION

MARCH 06, 2025

2231 McKinley Avenue – The Chan-Lee Residence

Landmark application #LMIN2024-005 for the consideration of City Landmark or Structure of Merit designation status for a residential property constructed in 1903-04 (APN: 057-2018-023-00)

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

City Landmark designation of the property at 2231 McKinley Avenue

CEQA FINDINGS

1. The project is found to be exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA, Public Resources Code §21000, et seq.) pursuant to Section 15061.b.3 of the CEQA Guidelines (activities that can be seen with certainty to have no significant effect on the environment).

LANDMARK PRESERVATION ORDINANCE FINDINGS

1. Pursuant to Berkeley Municipal Code (BMC) Section 3.24.110.A.1.(b) of the Landmarks Preservation Ordinance (LPO), the Landmarks Preservation Commission of the City of Berkeley (Commission) finds that the property at 2231 McKinley Avenue meet the historic value criterion for City Landmark designation associated with the challenges Asian Americans, particularly of Chinese ancestry faced during the period before the end of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1943 and the later passage of the Fair Housing Act in 1968. Purchased by the Chan-Lee family in 1923 in a predominately white neighborhood, their occupation, including alterations made to the house to personalize it and to accommodate their multi-generational household embodies the history of housing challenges for Chinese and Chinese Americans in Berkeley. The period of significance begins with the Chan-Lee family purchase of the residence in 1923 and ends in 1968, when the family moved away from the property. Its historic materials like its rear cottage, exterior wood shingle exterior, and turreted bay window convey its historic significance, which is further expressed in changes made to the property to accommodate the Chan-Lee family including the main residence's two-story addition and the distinctive keyhole entry.

FEATURES TO BE PRESERVED

This designation shall apply to the subject property and the following distinguishing features of the shall be preserved, and missing features shall be restored to the extent possible:

Property

- Location at the east side of McKinley Avenue.
- Setting in a neighborhood adjacent to Berkeley's Civic Center, comprised largely of single-family residences.
- Spatial relationship between main residence and rear cottage.

Main Residence

- Primary elevation (west) elevation on McKinley Avenue.
- Front gable roof with prow and angled window.
- Deep bracketed eaves.
- Exterior wood-shingle finish.
- Splayed turreted bay window.
- Half width porch with distinctive keyhole entry.
- Original wood windows.
- Decorative leaded glass windows.
- Hipped-roof dormers at south elevation.
- Bay window with dentil detail at south elevation.
- Shed roof dormer at north elevation.
- Two-story rear addition.
- Steel casement windows at two-story addition.

Cottage

- Location at northwest corner of property, separated from the main residence.
- One-story massing.
- Dormer window above main entry.
- Original wood windows.
- Wood shingle exterior with decorative cut details at base that continue for the first third of the exterior.



August 26, 2024 rev. December 26, 2024

CHAN-LEE RESIDENCE
2231 McKinley Ave., Berkeley
City of Berkeley Landmark Application Report

Introduction

The following report summarizes the history and describes the character of the property and existing main and secondary residences at 2231 McKinley Ave. (APN 57-2018-23) in central Berkeley (figs.1-3). This effort's purposes are to recognize the historic importance of this residence to its owners, neighbors and to the City of Berkeley by applying for City of Berkeley Landmark status.

The primary subject of this application is the main house (2231 McKinley), with general and supporting reference to the detached cottage at the rear (2231-1/2 McKinley). The intent of this documentation is to provide thorough background information identifying the historical significance of this residential property, with a focus on building exteriors.

Towards which, this historical documentation is based on substantive previous work on and attention to historic Berkeley architecture by the author; historical research, including at the Berkeley Architectural Heritage Association and the Berkeley History Center, whose 2023 exhibition *Touching Ground, Putting Down Roots: Chinese in Berkeley*, included 2231 McKinley Ave. and which provided impetus for the current effort as well as the identification of and consultation with the Chan-Lee family historian¹; deed research; historic censuses (heritagequest.com & mychinaroots.com @SFPL.org), Alameda County telephone directories (@SFPL.org & LOC.org) and newspapers (@CDNC.org); as well as site visits to record the subject property, its buildings and setting.

The updated report provides several additions per planning staff comments, specifically the inclusion of several historic photos provided by the family historian to the current property owners and landmark applicants (figs.21-27). These additional images provide glimpses of the house over time while reinforcing the Chan-Lee family's connection to their house and its neighborhood. A pair of Sanborn maps have also been added with which to illustrate the changing status of the subject house within its immediate setting (figs.28-29). The following points additionally respond to planning staff comments:

- The application factually states that, given its 1903 origins, this house is one of the earliest in the neighborhood. No claim is made that it is the earliest. In this vicinity, the earliest surviving residences date to the 1890s, including 2212 and 2228 McKinley, directly across the street and which were evidently once on larger parcels. As stated, this subdivision was mapped in 1902, so most of its parcels were not available for development prior to then. Thus, 1903 is an early date of origin in this neighborhood and it is therefore one of the earliest homes in the neighborhood.
- The application plainly states the circumstances underlying Chinese-American ownership in the ongoing context of racial discrimination. Moreover, this application does not depend on these underlying historical considerations as we bank on the unique quality of the property's historic architecture.
- The Chan-Lees were responsible for the alterations to the front of this house, including its unique and expressive keyhole entry, which is a direct embodiment of their ownership and occupancy.

¹ Aimee Baldwin, who has generously shared family biographies yet has not directly authorized their inclusion in this public record.

Evaluation Summary

Under this landmark application, the residence at 2231 McKinley is given the name Chan-Lee for its longtime owners, whose multi-generational Chinese-American family did not originate the main house yet acquired the property and its residences early on then developed it into the unique, centrally located residential property that survives today.

Architecturally, 2231 McKinley is a uniquely crafted turn-of-the-20th century house, its stylistic period and concomitant label a Shingled Craftsman yet with a degree of exuberance carried over from the late-19th century Victorian period, specifically its turreted bay and prow window; in addition to a wide range of Craftsman style details, from its keyhole entry portal, deeply overhanging bracketed wooden eaves, quality wood sidewall shingling and leaded windows. With such distinctive architectural character plus compatible changes and additions and to which the rearward cottage contributes, 2231 McKinley Ave. individually stands out amidst other contemporaneous homes in its early 20th century central Berkeley setting.

Historically, the subject residential property is associated with the trajectory of Chinese immigration and integration in California in general and Berkeley and the Bay Area in particular.

Though unusual to cite novels as an evaluative reference, the history of the Chan-Lee family has a directly parallel history conveyed in the work of the important Berkeley author Maxine Hong Kingston, whose Chinese-American relations she so engagingly documented in her books and which stories make plain the fortitude and essentiality of early Chinese immigrants to California (and the west) and, despite unremitting racial impediments, make excruciatingly clear how deeply Californian many Chinese-American families were and are.² The history of the Chan-Lee family is a piece of that California history and the Berkeley home they acquired and engendered directly expresses the 20th century segment of Chinese-Californian history.

By the 1920s, when the Chan-Lees acquired the 2231 McKinley property, they were already a multi-generational California family. Even then, there was a lack of acceptance, which reality is demonstrated by the family historian's understanding that the 1920s neighbors did not agree on having Chinese-Americans as neighbors but for one unidentified person who supported them and in-so-doing apparently mollified others. In spite of their hesitance to accept, based on the 1920 census, a majority of those neighbors were also immigrants – English, Irish, Danish/Norwegian, French, Swedish, Austrian and Canadian, as or more recent to CA than the Chan-Lees – yet every one of whose “race” was also uniformly census-listed as “white,” whereas the very few Chinese-American residents in the vicinity were labeled as “CH”.

As such, this house represents the determination of one community of American immigrants, amongst a broad spectrum of immigrants, who had to confront racial bias in order to make lives in the place where their community and families already belonged.

The 2231 McKinley residential property therefore has a history that is not apparent on the surface, that surface being an early 20th-century Craftsman residence, to which the Chan-Lee family substantially contributed, including its keyhole entry portal and porch, which 1920s work also created or expanded the expressive corbelled roofline, the integration of which in-and-of-itself demonstrates

² Maxine Hong Kingston, *The Woman Warrior*, 1975; *China Men*, 1977; from *Maxine Hong Kingston*, The Library of America, New York, NY, 2022.

the family's cultural values and active participation. That many members of the family, before and since, sustained notable lives and livelihoods in the Bay Area and California provides further substantive demonstration of the extent to which they belonged.

Thereby, the underlying history of the Chan-Lee family's California trajectory lies below the surface of this property and deepens its historical meaning relative to the distinctive historic architecture of the property and its residential buildings.

As documented herein, the main residence at 2231 McKinley Ave., along with its contributing site and cottage, are City of Berkeley Landmark-eligible on the basis of:

- The unique and outstanding architectural character as well as being one of the earliest surviving homes in its neighborhood (*LPO criteria A1c*);
- As this residential property provides direct evidence for historical patterns of racial discrimination giving way, as well as to the Chan-Lee family's deep integration in regional and California history (*LPO criterion A2 and A3*);
- And as 2231 McKinley Ave. architecturally expresses and embodies the turn-of-the-20th century while additionally providing evidence of the complex layering of Berkeley's multi-ethnic culture and communities over the course of the 20th century – primarily with the presence of the Chan-Lee family yet, adding further complexity, secondarily with its subsequent part in a late-1960s counter-cultural community, thus embodies and expresses Berkeley's social, cultural and political histories, the property additionally meets *LPO criterion A4*.

Furthermore, the main residence along with its contributing site and cottage are eligible as a City of Berkeley Structure of Merit as:

- The 2231 McKinley Ave. residence is contemporary and compatible with a designated landmark within its neighborhood (*LPO criteria 2a and 2b*);
- The 2231 McKinley Ave. residence is an example of unique and outstanding architectural design (*LPO criterion 2c*);
- The subject residential property has historical significance relative to the City of Berkeley and to its neighborhood (*LPO criterion 2d*).

Summary History

The 2231 McKinley Ave. residence and its detached cottage were first constructed in 1903-04, the site having been acquired in 1903 and its owner first directory-listed in 1904, when the address was 2231 Mary St., which address changed to McKinley in honor of U.S. President William McKinley (b.1843), who was assassinated in 1901. The subsequent change to McKinley first appeared in directory listings in 1905.

Following his 1903 acquisition from J. A. Marshall, whose *Resubdivision of Block 12 of the McGee Tract* map dates to 1902, Arthur E. Searle (1873-1959) constructed the house and cottage, where he lived until 1906 prior to building and moving to a second home for his new family nearby (2338 McGee, 1907). In those years, Searle was directory-listed as a carpenter so, despite the lack of a permit or other records directly indicating its designer and/or builder, Searle was evidently the owner-builder of 2231 Mary/McKinley.

Neither has a deed from Searle to its next owner been found, yet its next owner appears to have been Lewis Manvordir (nd – i.e., no known dates) and who, in March 1908, sold the property to

Thomas F. Dyer (b.1833, Maine) and Lora Dyer Merrill (nd), father and daughter. Several other Berkeley property transactions involving Dyer are in evidence, yet minimal additional info has been located for either except for census listings for Thomas F. Dyer, who resided in Tuolumne County, CA (1860, occupation miner), San Francisco (1900, manufacturer of musical instruments) and San Rafael (1910, retired). Given that Californian trajectory, including mention upon the passing of Dyer's brother that James A. Dyer – with whom Thomas Dyer lived first in S.F. then in San Rafael – was a California pioneer, the same would evidently be true of Thomas. Nonetheless, minimal historical information about Dyer and, even less so, his daughter arises. There is, however, no evidence that either of the Dyers resided in Berkeley so they absently held title to the property until 1922, when they sold to Harry and Mary Chan of Berkeley. At that same time, the Chans garnered a deed of trust for the property, with realtor Addie D. Jungck listed as the trustee, the lender the same Lewis Manvordir who transacted the property back in 1908. Both Jungck and Manvordir were directory-listed in the real estate business in Mill Valley in the 1920s and 30s.

Harry and Mary Chan, the former identified as a farmer and rancher in the 1920 census and 1920-23 directories, respectively (and who in 1923 resided at 1933 Grant St. in Berkeley), deeded the property in 1923 to May Chan (b.1886, Napa) and her husband, On Lum Lee (b.c1862, China) – the latter, by then, a successful seafood merchant. Harry Chan and May Chan were very likely though indefinitely related as both were born and raised in Napa, from where the American side of the Chan family hailed, and where Harry Chan's farming and ranching were presumably located.³

With their large family, the Lees moved from San Francisco to their newly acquired home in Berkeley and where their last daughter was born in 1925. May and On Lee passed away in 1927 and 1928, respectively, leaving their family and home in the hands of their eldest son, On Lun Lee (1903-1965) and, after their marriage in 1931, his wife, Alice Dong Lee (b.1907). Prior to which, in 1930, the Lee household consisted of 12 members that ranged in age from 2 to 26 and included 4 sisters, 4 brothers, 2 spouses plus 2 youngsters. Those 8 descendants of On and May Lee (5 children did not survive to adulthood) were On Lun, Quong, Rowland C., Roger Y., Helen, Grace, Shirley M. and Linnie S.

As family members in part moved on, On Lun and Alice Dong Lee reared and raised 4 of their own children, the first born in 1932, the last in 1940, who were each listed at 2231 McKinley in the 1940 census along with 3 of On Lun's siblings, Rowland, Roger and Linnie. By 1950, On Lun and Alice Dong Lee and their 4 children resided at the McKinley Ave. residence.

Following On Lun's passing in 1965, Alice remained at their residence until 1968, whereafter the property was handed down to the next generation and who did not subsequently reside on the property yet retained ownership until 1994, when the 2231 McKinley Ave. property passed out of the Chan-Lee family, the seller Brenda Lee Wong, the youngest of On Lun and Alice's children.

While no original records are available, there are a range of early permits that outline the chronological history of this house. The first available permit record dates to 1922, when Harry Chan permitted alterations to the house that included changes to the front entry porch and door as well as

³ The familial relation between May Chan and Harry Chan is not specifically known yet is presumably not coincidental. The large Chan and Lee families makes research into those families inconclusive. Nonetheless, it is presently presumed that Harry Chan (b.1889) was a younger brother or cousin of May Chan and who, for whatever reason – as May Chan was U.S. born so could and did transact property – was an intermediary in the sale of the McKinley Ave. property.

the addition of a detached garage. Both of those changes are in evidence in the 1929 Sanborn, the extent of the front entry change by comparison to the 1911 Sanborn (figs.4-5). Thus, the existing front entry porch with its arched portal was added in 1922-23. Permits in 1929 under the name Mrs. On Lee included a bedroom and bath addition, presumably the 2-story rear addition, which appeared in the 1950 Sanborn (and for which there is no other potential record while that work was completed after preparation of the 1929 Sanborn map). Though the 1911 and 1929 Sanborn maps indicated that the house was 1-story and the latter included a small 2-story rear addition, and the 1950 Sanborn again indicated that the house was 1-story (fig.6) – even the 1981 Sanborn identified the residence as 1-story (fig.7) – the 1950 map showed the larger 2-story rear addition in evidence today. That addition is and most certainly was dependent on the second floor access via the main house, so what was an original attic had by 1950 been made into a second habitable floor, very likely much earlier and in order to accommodate the large number of family members.

There are no permit records from the 1930s and 1940s. During the 1950s, alterations were permitted for O. L. Lee both in 1954 and 1958, the earlier the installation of roofing including redwood gutters, the later repairs to the front stairs and porch, roofing and gutters, the garage and the rear cottage. There were again no permits from the 1960s and 1970s, the last under the Lee family for plumbing and/or mechanical work in 1987 and for the identified owner, Victor Lee of El Cerrito.

Based on this information, the front of the original 1-story, Craftsman style house was altered by 1923 when the entry porch and the southwest corner of the house (and possibly the addition of one or both of the southern dormers) were added. A garage was also then built yet removed c1980. By 1929, the 2-story rear addition was built and the house expanded into the attic, creating the 2-story configuration in evidence today – presumably also including the north side dormers. The extant rear cottage does not appear to have changed, though the 1958 permit indicates that there was substantive repair work to its exterior. Altogether, the house and cottage appear today as they did by the late-1950s, though without garage.

Between 1968 and 1994, the residence and cottage were evidently rented, though no specific tenants of that period have been identified. Nonetheless, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, 2231 McKinley Ave. was apparently a part of a counter-cultural commune, referred to as the Dragon's Eye, the "eye" of which was the adjacent property at 2233 McKinley. In that unique period, the Lees – specifically Brenda Lee Wong and Victor Wong – retained ownership so were evidently indirectly a part of that communal cultural experience.⁴

In 1994, Brenda Lee Wong was the seller of 2231 McKinley Ave., the buyers Nina and Morgan Fichter.

In sum, the extant 2231 McKinley Ave. property and residences are an embodiment of a Chinese-American family with pioneer roots in California. From those early pioneers, the Chan-Lee family grew and forged a northern California presence in the S.F. Bay Area and, in the 1920s, in Berkeley. At that time, of some 650 households in the surrounding neighborhoods, the 1920 census recorded one Chinese-American owner. Within that racial hierarchy, the Chan-Lees established a 20th century household highly representative of Berkeley.

⁴ 2231 McKinley Ave. was associated with a communal and countercultural community – i.e., commune – in the late 1960s and early 70s, though to what direct extent is not at this juncture clear. Based on limited records and research on the topic, the adjacent property at 2233 McKinley was more clearly a communal residence.

Despite the anti-Chinese and anti-Asian racism that prevailed throughout the 19th and 20th century United States, the Chans and Lees created successful opportunities in California.⁵ Family history records that Chan Kay Choy facilitated ranching and owned a dry good store in Napa in the mid-to-late 1800s. Chan's son-in-law, Lee Yum, first labored in shellfishing in San Pablo and, later, San Francisco bays, then with his brothers grew their San Francisco seafood business, which survived into the 1940s in Oakland. In the 1910s, prior to moving to Berkeley, Lee Yum and May Chan contracted building construction and May Chan also independently acquired San Francisco real estate.⁶

According to the family history, their move to Berkeley was in part in order to send their sons to UC Berkeley, the Berkeley location facilitating that ambition. As intended, each of their 4 sons attended UCB. Though the eldest, On Lun, withdrew in order to head the household in the wake of their parents' deaths, Rowland and Roger each graduated, Rowland going on to be medical doctor, Roger an architect.

As the present effort is largely focused on architectural history, Roger Yuen Lee (1920-1981), the youngest son of Lee Yum and May Lee, is of additional pertinence as he became a successful architect recognized for his contributions to Modern architectural design. The following is a brief bio for Roger Lee via the Environmental Design Archives of his alma mater, UC Berkeley, where the Lee collection consists of photographs and drawings for more than 175 projects:⁷

“Roger Lee received his BA in Arts and Architecture from the University of California, Berkeley with top design honors in 1941. Between 1941 and 1945 he worked with William Hays and Howard Moise on U.S. Post Offices and served as an Assistant Engineer with the U.S. Engineers office in Honolulu, working on various defense projects. Following the war he briefly worked with a number of firms in the Los Angeles area and then returned to the Bay Area in 1947.

Lee was noted for the grace and clarity of his residential designs and in 1957, the London Architectural Review recognized him as one of forty U.S. architects who have "made personal contributions to American Architecture." In 1964 he moved his practice to Hawaii. During the course of his California practice, he designed nearly 100 residences, and a small number of apartments, housing projects, recreational facilities, and churches.”

As Roger Lee was raised and long resided at the 2231 McKinley residence, where architectural interventions are in evidence – including modern steel windows at the rear and the unique layout at the house's northeast corner – it is definitely tempting to consider that he may have had a hand in the design evolution of the house.

And yet another family member raised at 2231 McKinley Ave. became a SF Bay Area architect of note, Gerald K. “Jerry” Lee (1934-2012).

⁵ In her historical novel *China Men*, in a chapter titled “The Laws,” Maxine Hong Kingston scrupulously records the exclusionary laws, from 1878-1978, against Chinese-Americans (from *Kingston*, Library of America, pp.327-334). Such laws included the Immigration Act of 1924, which limited the number of immigrants allowed entry into the United States through a national origins quota and completely excluded immigrants from Asia (from <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1921-1936/immigration-act>), accessed August 2024.

⁶ “Building Contracts,” *San Francisco Call*, 17 May 1912, p15; “Real Estate Transactions,” *San Francisco Call*, 6 August 1914, p15.

⁷ From *Roger Lee Collection* @ <https://ced.berkeley.edu/collections/lee-roger>.

Summary Descriptions

The 2231 McKinley Ave. residence (figs.8-18) is 2-stories raised above a crawl space delineated by a continuous water table, its frontward second story a finished attic level within the gabled roof and a full 2-stories at the rear, under which is a partial basement. The house has front and rear entries, the front via a pathway from the sidewalk directly to a set of wood steps up to an entry porch and door, the rear at the reentrant northeast corner, again with a short set of steps down to grade where there is a second set of steps to the basement.

At the front, the first story exterior features a 5-sided northwest corner bay window with a turreted and splayed roof. At the southwest corner is an open porch with a keyhole-like entry portal atop the wood front steps. Porch posts are also shingled, their bases splayed as is the low-shingled and wood-capped porch railings at front and side.

At the upper front, a distinctive pair of windows are angled and pointed and recessed into the front gable with rounded side walls, the windows double hung with leaded glass upper lites, the overhanging upper gable pointed in the form of a prow. Those front-gabled roof edges are trimmed with wood shingles.

The entire exterior is gathered and unified under a deep and continuous eave at the roof edge with corbels and a shingled frieze at the front that returns around the south side to the central bay window and terminates behind the front bay window to the north.

At the south side, behind the porch, there are 2 side-by-side pairs of casement windows with leaded lites. A pair of hipped roof dormer windows at the south side roof have deep overhanging eaves, the frontward dormer narrower than the rear and with leaded glass in the upper window.

A boxy shed-roofed dormer at the north side roof aligns with and frames into the 2-story rear addition. The north side dormer and rear addition are of a piece so were evidently added at the same time. Thus, the second story represents both the original 1903 home as well as its larger 1920s version.

At the reentrant northeast corner, the continuous overhanging eave deepens and is supported by slender angled brackets. The central south side bay window at the first story is angled with a trio of windows in its broad south face along with windows in both angled faces, each again double hung windows with leaded upper lites.

Exterior walls are shingled, doors and windows are wood except for steel sash units at the rear addition, of which there are 6 sets – 4 up and 2 down – and another at the north wall adjacent to the rear door. Window and door casings are molded wood. Sloped roofs are distinctively clad in hexagonal asphalt shingles. The flat roofed north side bay and rear add have a continuous crown molding at top of wall/roof edge.

All of the above-described exterior forms, features and materials are historically characteristic of the 2231 McKinley Ave. residence.

In addition, the rearward cottage, (presumably) erected at the time of the main house and with its own wood-shingled architectural character, generally contributes to the historical character of the overall property (figs.19-20). This single-story (over crawl space) hipped-roof cottage stands in the

northeast corner of the property and is entered via a set of steps up to a small, covered porch at its south side, directly above which is a shed-roofed dormer. It has a wood door and a mix of wood windows with molded trims and wood sills. Exterior walls are sided with wood shingles, a number of courses of which are sawtooth-cut. There is a continuous water table at the first floor level, where the shingles splay outward to form a dripline. Roof overhangs have exposed wood framing and the roofing is composition shingle. All exposed wood is painted.

Again, the form and materials described above additionally constitute the cottage's contributing historical characteristics.

Evaluation of Significance

Based on the above historical documentation, the following addresses the subject property's basis for consideration of City of Berkeley Landmark designation (per Section 3.24.110 Landmarks, Historic Districts and Structures of Merit Designation Criteria for Consideration).

A. Landmarks and historic districts. General criteria which the commission shall use when considering structures, sites and areas for landmark or historic district designation are as follows:

1. Architectural merit:

- a. Property that is the first, last, only or most significant architectural property of its type in the region;*
- b. Properties that are prototypes of or outstanding examples of periods, styles, architectural movements or construction, or examples of the more notable works of the best surviving work in a region of an architect, designer or master builder; or*
- c. Architectural examples worth preserving for the exceptional values they add as part of the neighborhood fabric.*

The 1903-04 residences at 2231 and 2231-1/2 McKinley are not the first, last, only or most significant architecturally in Berkeley. Neither are they prototypical nor a best surviving work of a designer-builder, etc. Alternatively, in its immediate context, the main residence is an outstanding surviving example of its turn-of-the-20th century blending of Victorian and Craftsman architectural design.

Its historic architectural value is therefore on the basis of its unique and outstanding architectural character as well as being one of the earliest surviving homes in its neighborhood. Altogether, the 2231 McKinley Ave. property is highly representative of its turn-of-the-20th century period and to which period it stands as an anchor. Consequently, 2231 McKinley Ave. meets *LPO criteria A1c*.

2. *Cultural value: Structures, sites and areas associated with the movement or evolution of religious, cultural, governmental, social and economic developments of the City;*

3. *Educational value: Structures worth preserving for their usefulness as an educational force;*

As detailed herein, the cultural value of 2231 McKinley Ave. is its multi-generational association with a Chinese-American family whose early 20th century acquisition and ownership broke barriers in this Berkeley neighborhood.

Similarly, this residential property provides direct evidence for historical patterns of racial discrimination giving way, as well as to the Chan-Lee family's deep integration in regional and California history.

Therefore, 2231 McKinley Ave. meets *LPO criterion A2 and A3*.

4. Historic value: Preservation and enhancement of structures, sites and areas that embody and express the history of Berkeley/Alameda County/California/United States. History may be social, cultural, economic, political, religious or military;

Located in the most central Berkeley neighborhood with its surviving and unique early 20th century residential buildings, yet where many physical changes have and will continue to alter the built environment, the 2231 McKinley Ave. property architecturally expresses and embodies the turn-of-the-20th century while additionally providing evidence of the complex layering of Berkeley's multi-ethnic culture and communities over the course of the 20th century – primarily with the presence of the Chan-Lee family yet, adding further complexity, secondarily with its subsequent part in a late-1960s counter-cultural community.

As 2231 McKinley Ave. embodies and expresses Berkeley's social, cultural and political histories, the property additionally meets *LPO criterion A4*.

5. Any property which is listed on the National Register described in Section 470A of Title 16 of the United States Code.

2231 McKinley Ave. is not listed on the National Register.

As follows, the subject property readily meets Berkeley's Structure of Merit criteria.

B. Structures of merit. Criteria which the commission shall use when considering a structure for structure of merit designation are as follows:

- 1. General criteria shall be architectural merit and/or cultural, educational, or historic interest or value. If upon assessment of a structure, the commission finds that the structure does not currently meet the criteria as set out for a landmark, but it is worthy of preservation as part of a neighborhood, a block or a street frontage, or as part of a group of buildings which includes landmarks, that structure may be designated a structure of merit.*
- 2. Specific criteria include, but are not limited to one or more of the following:*
 - a. The age of the structure is contemporary with (1) a designated landmark within its neighborhood, block, street frontage, or group of buildings, or (2) an historic period or event of significance to the City, or to the structure's neighborhood, block, street frontage, or group of buildings.*

- b. *The structure is compatible in size, scale, style, materials or design with a designated landmark structure within its neighborhood, block, street frontage, or group of buildings.*

The subject building is contemporary and compatible with a designated landmark within its neighborhood, the 1895 residence at 2418 California St., so meets *LPO criteria 2a and 2b.*

- c. *The structure is a good example of architectural design.*

As summarized above, the 2231 McKinley Ave. residence is an example of unique and outstanding architectural design so readily meets *LPO criterion 2c.*

- d. *The structure has historical significance to the City and/or to the structure's neighborhood, block, street frontage, or group of buildings.*

As demonstrated herein, the subject residential buildings have historical significance relative to the City of Berkeley and to its neighborhood, so further meets *LPO criterion 2d.*

Additionally, 2231 McKinley retains its integrity (integrity being a measure of a property's extant state relative to its origins and identified significance) of location and setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling and association, all of which are substantially intact relative to the original and early property. While the 1903 residence was altered and expanded in the 1920s, those changes are compatible with, appropriate to and, at this juncture, an integral part of the historic residence.

In conclusion, the residential property and buildings at 2231 McKinley Ave. in Berkeley are eligible for designation as a City of Berkeley Landmark (or Structure of Merit), primarily on the basis of its historic architectural character, secondarily for its cultural values, the primary resource consisting of the main residence at 2231 McKinley and to which the rearward cottage and site contribute.

Signed:



Mark Hulbert
Preservation Architect & Historic Resources Consultant

attached: figs.1-29 (pp.11-30)



Fig.1 – 2231 McKinley Ave. (circled) – Location aerial (Google Earth 2024, north is up)



Fig.2 – 2231 McKinley Ave. (highlighted) – Site aerial (Google Earth 2024, north is up)

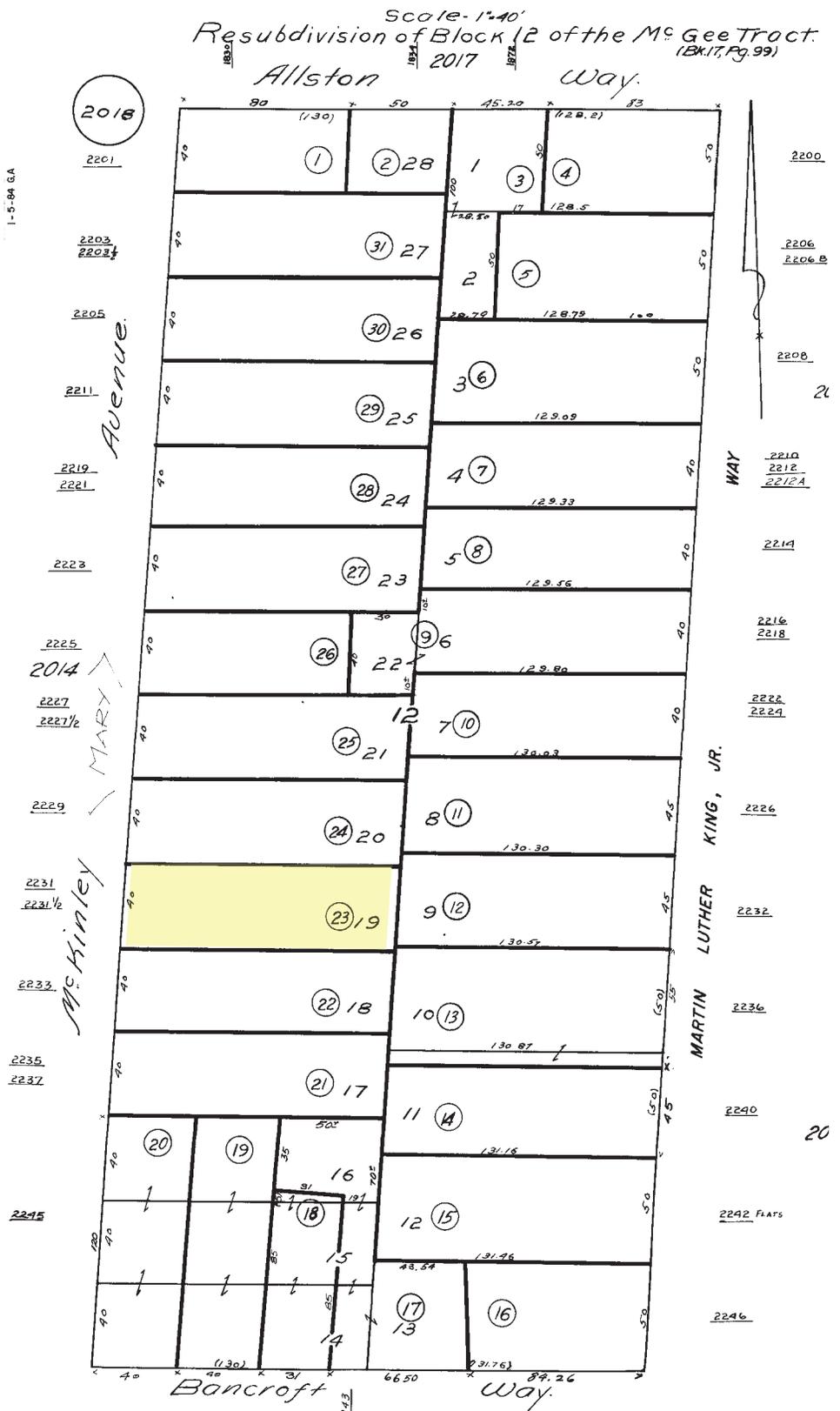


Fig.3 – 2231 McKinley Ave. (lot 19, highlighted) – from Assessor’s parcel map

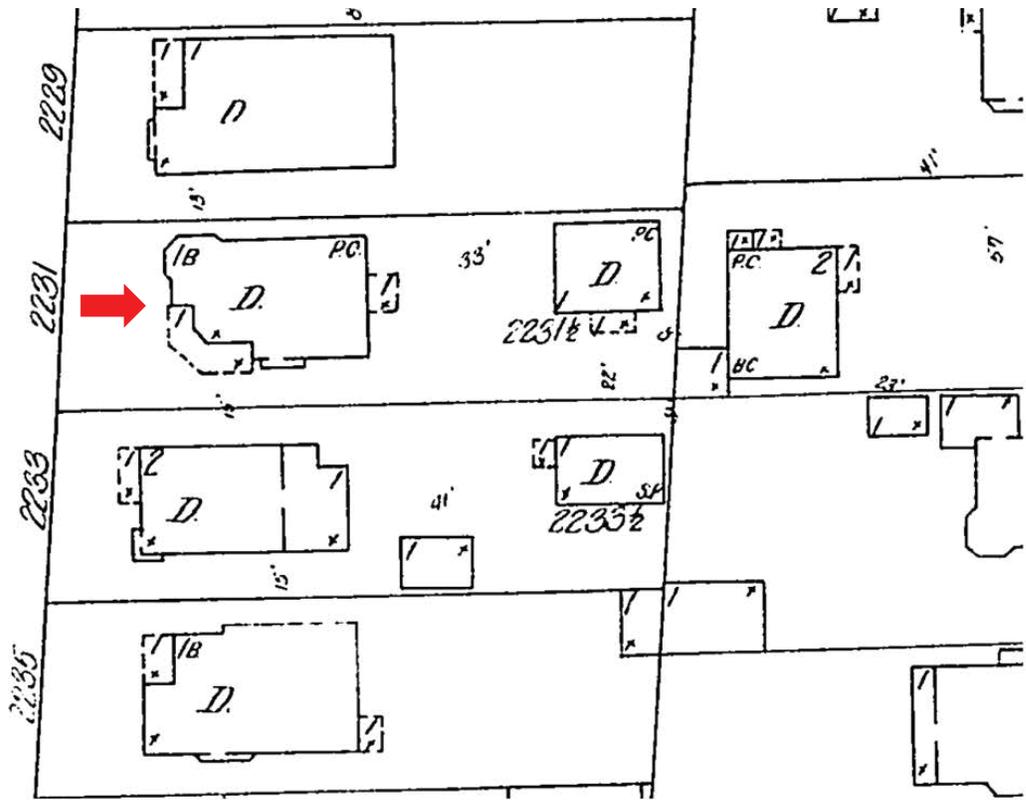


Fig.4 – 2231 McKinley Ave. (arrow) – from 1911 Sanborn map (sfpl.org)

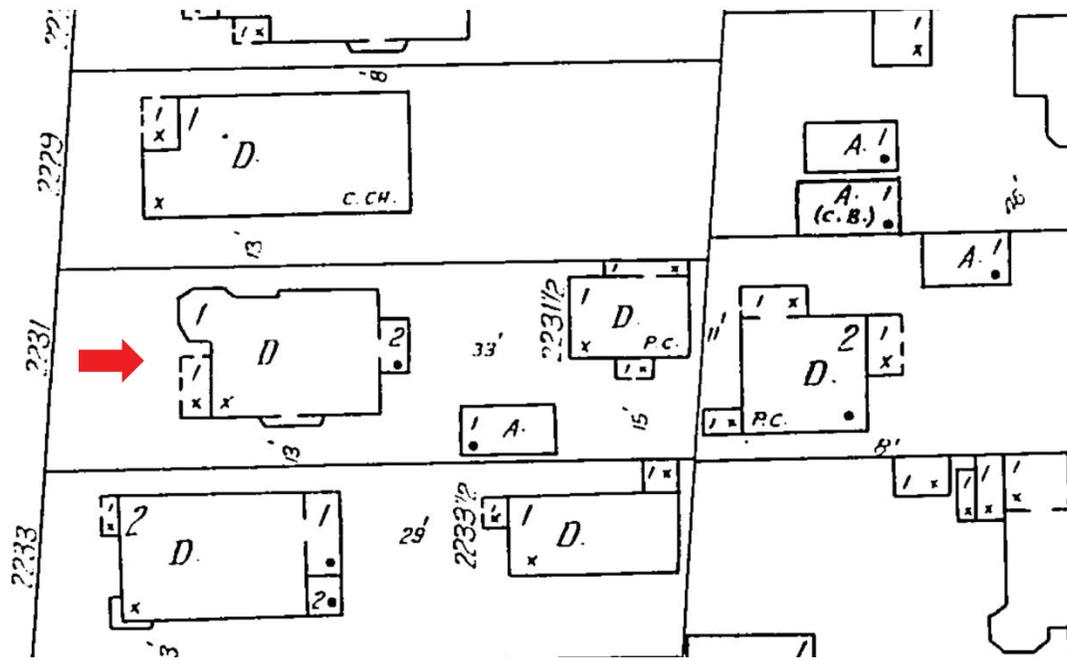


Fig.5 – 2231 McKinley Ave. (arrow) – from 1929 Sanborn map (sfpl.org)

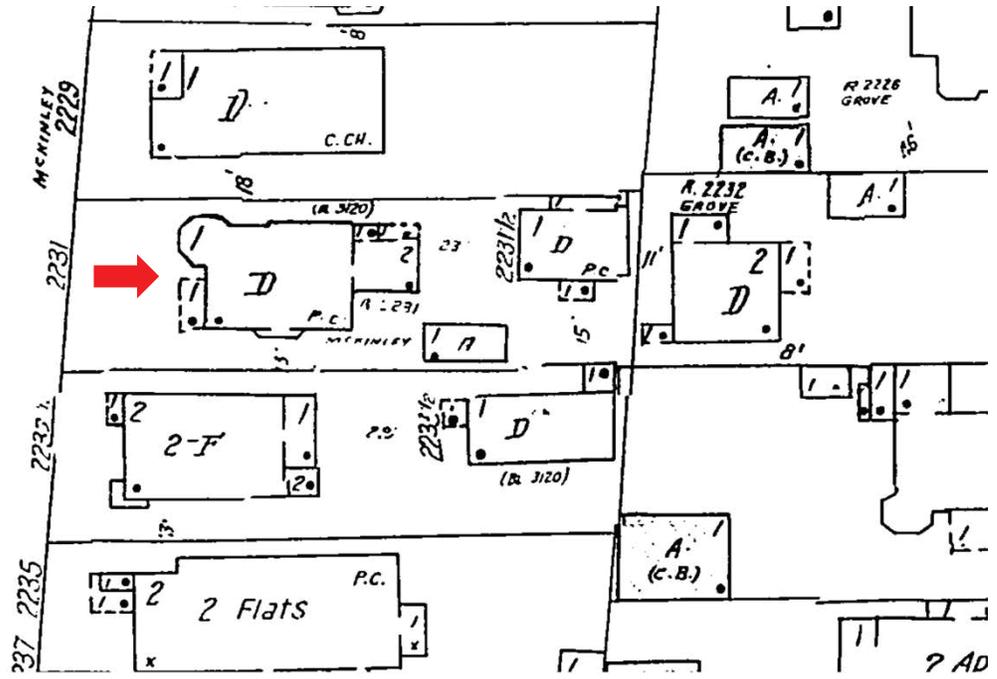


Fig.6 – 2231 McKinley Ave. (arrow) – from 1950 Sanborn map (sfpl.org)

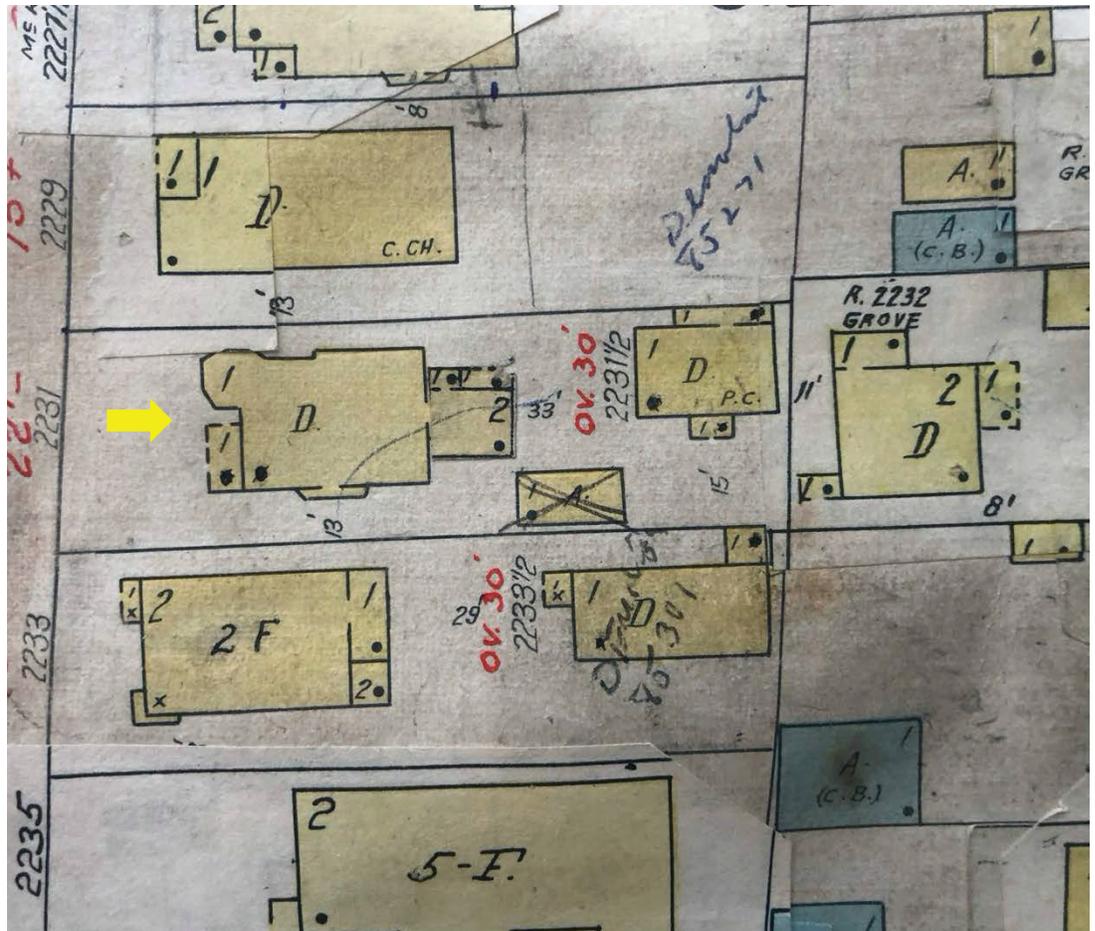


Fig.7 – 2231 McKinley Ave. (arrow) – from 1981 Sanborn map (Berkeley planning)

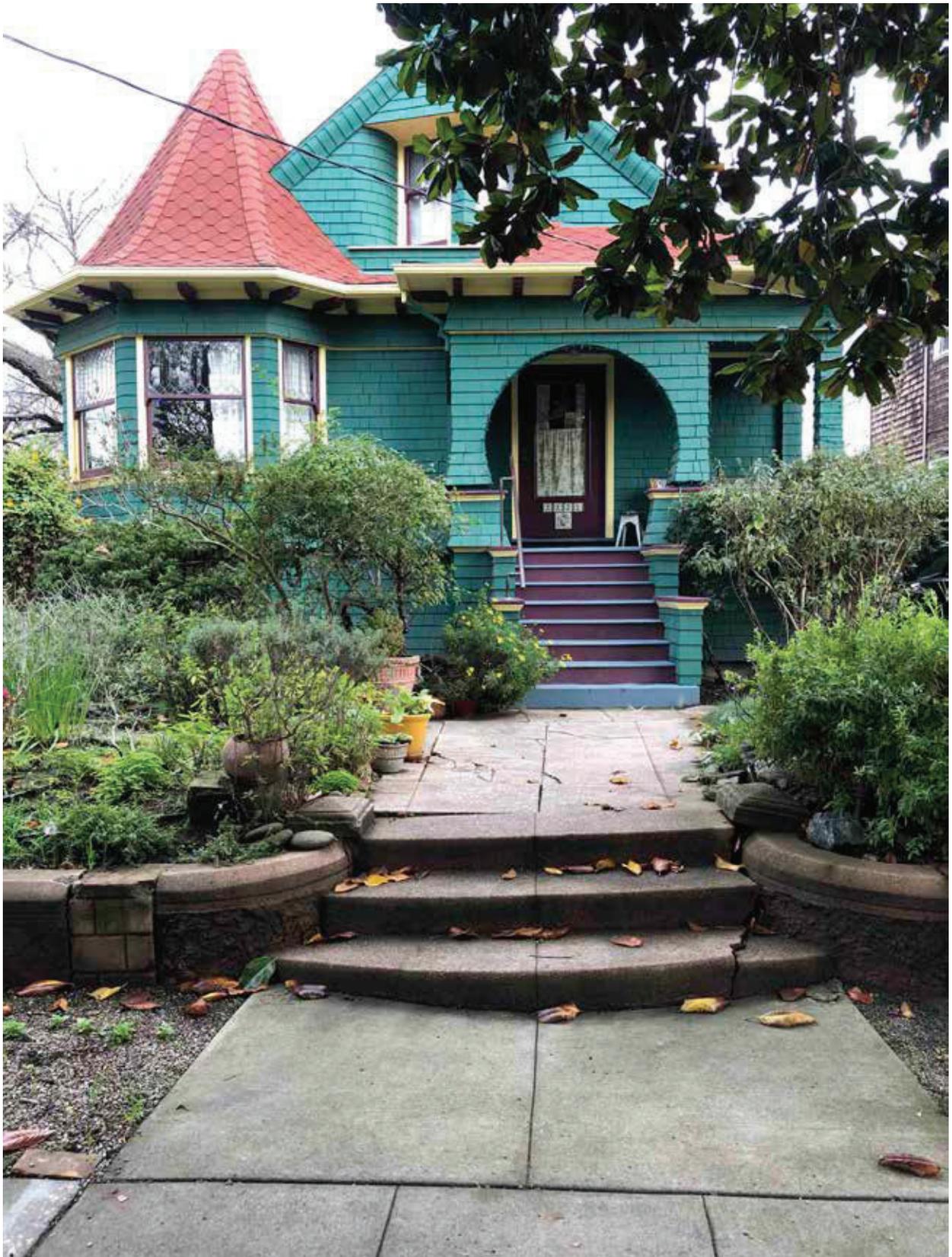


Fig.8 – 2231 McKinley Ave. – Front (west) from street (figs.9-21, MH 2023-24)

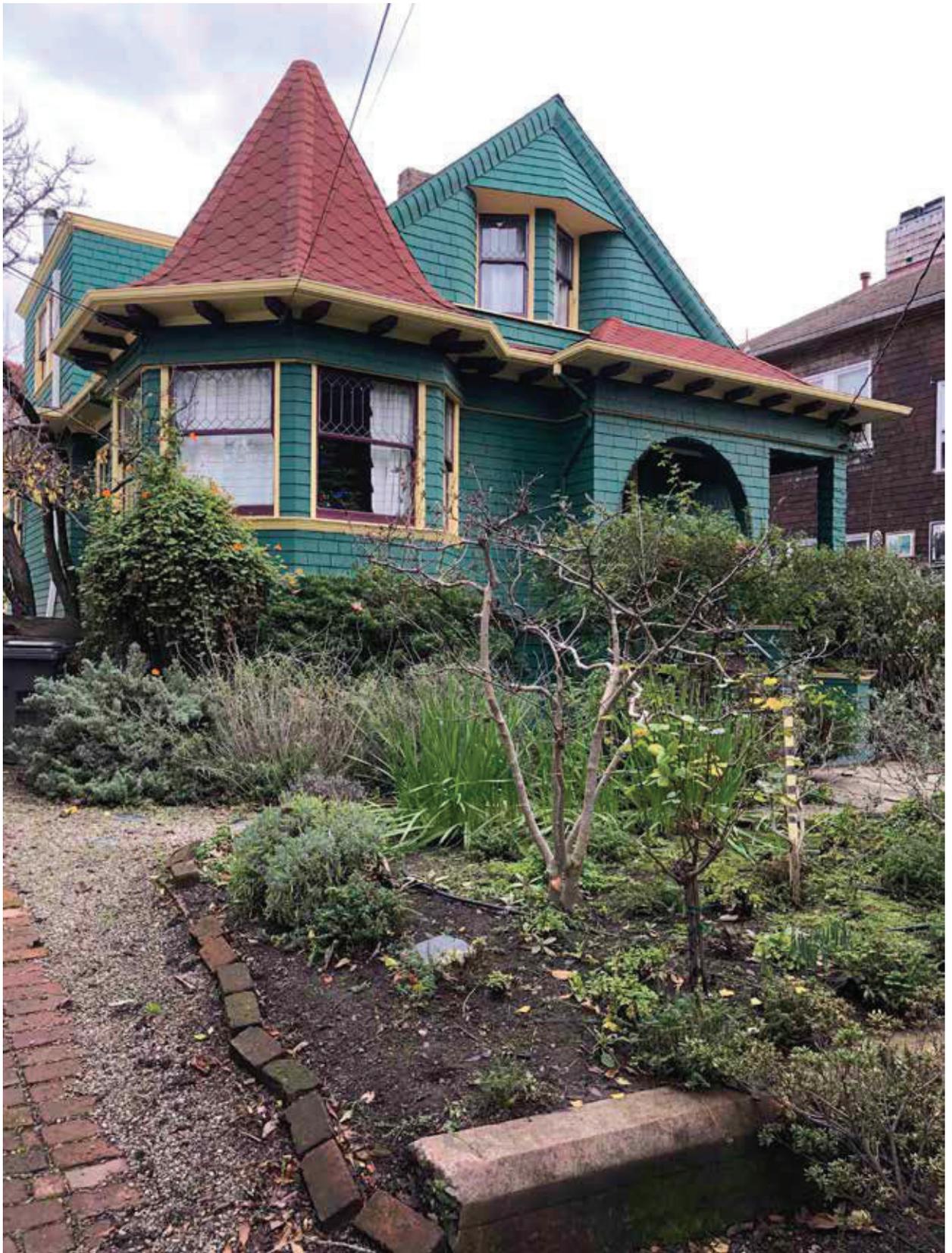


Fig.9 – 2231 McKinley Ave. – North side and front (west)

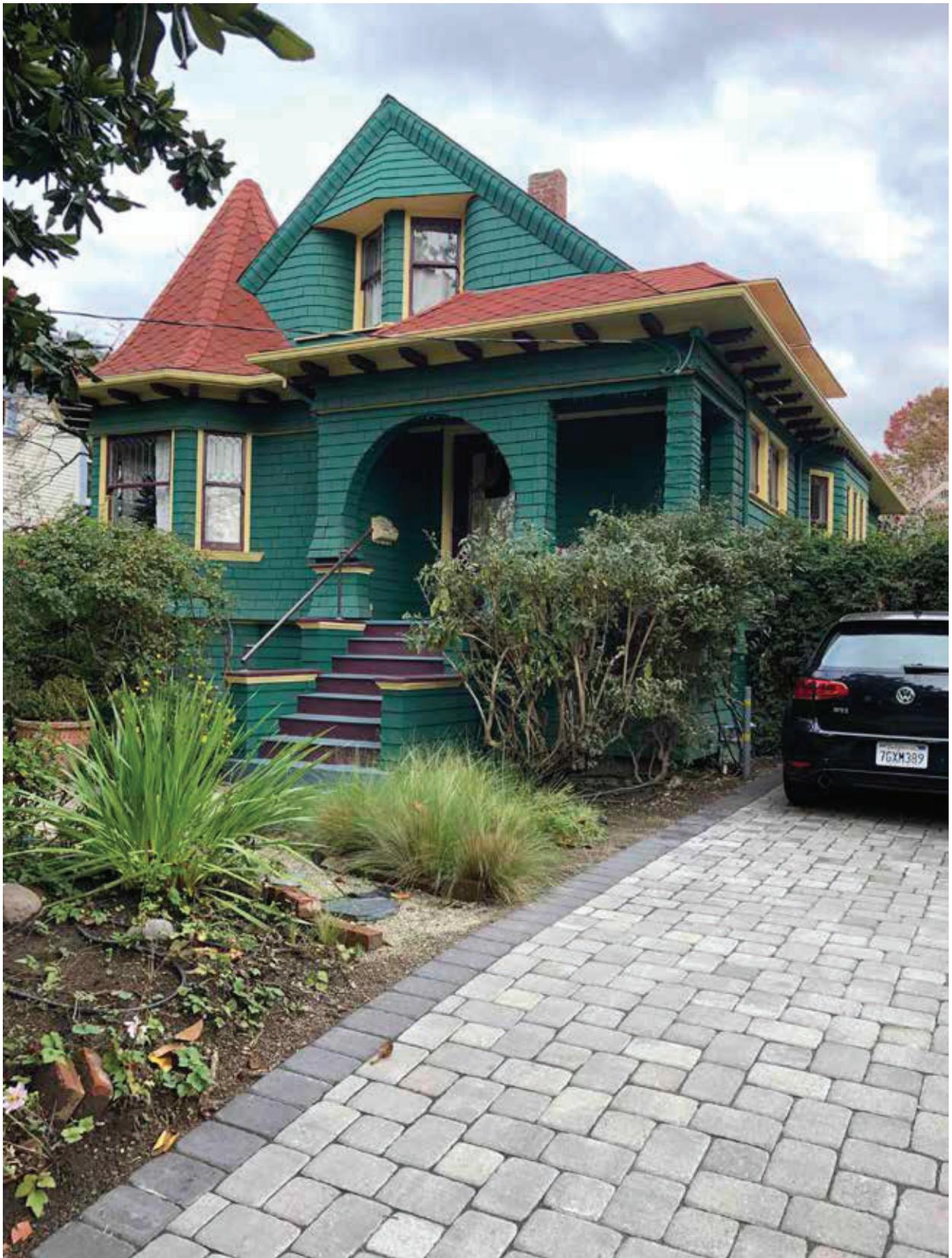


Fig.10 – 2231 McKinley Ave. – South side and front (west)



Fig.11 – 2231 McKinley Ave. – Front porch



Fig.12 – 2231 McKinley Ave. – South side, looking northeast



Fig.13 – 2231 McKinley Ave. – South side, looking west



Fig.14 – 2231 McKinley Ave. – South side, looking north



Fig.15 – 2231 McKinley Ave. – Rear (east)

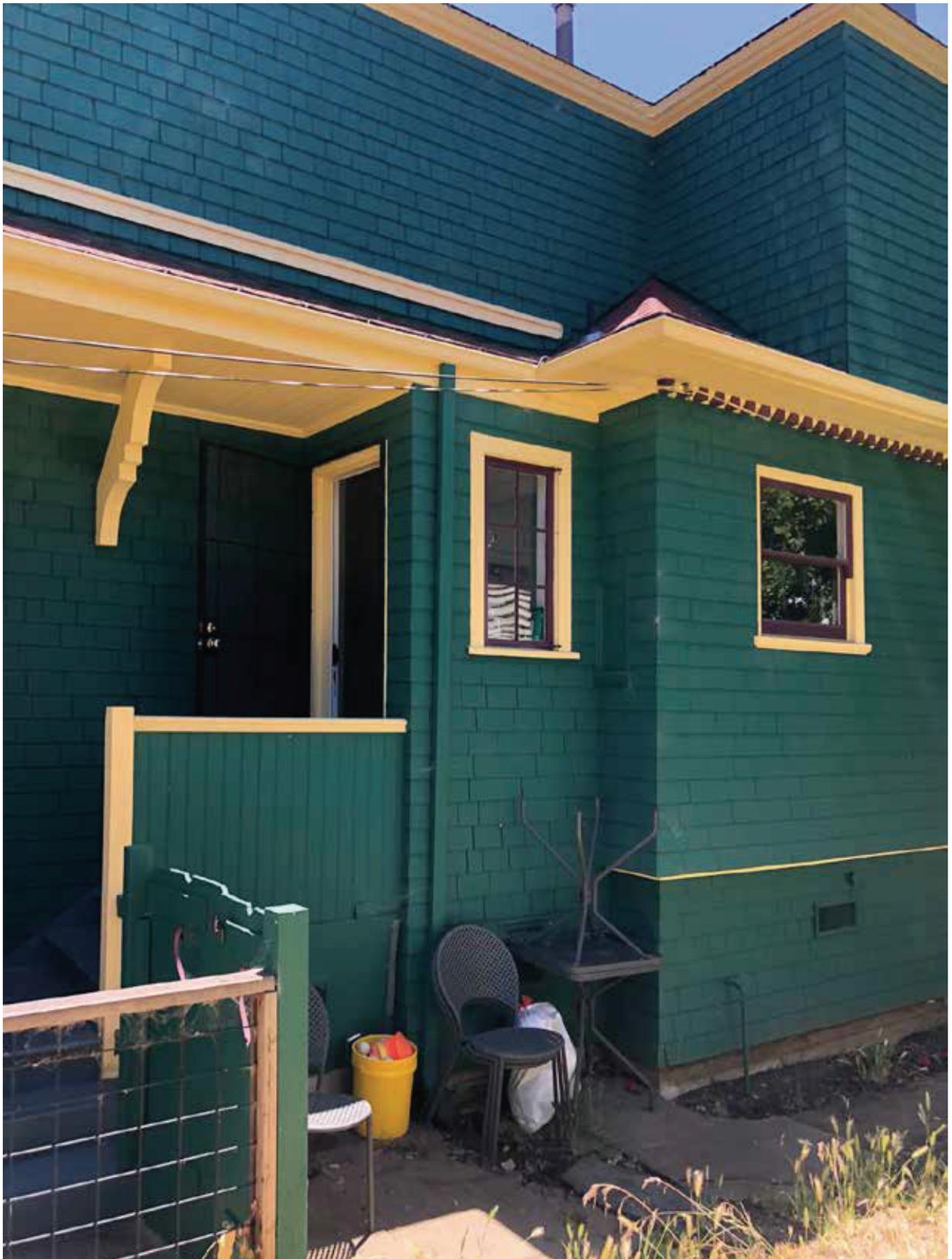


Fig.16 – 2231 McKinley Ave. – North side, west corner



Figs.17-18 – 2231 McKinley Ave. – North side, west corner



Figs.19-20 – 2231-1/2 McKinley Ave. – Cottage and rear yard, looking east



Quong May Chan LEE Yum On ~1905

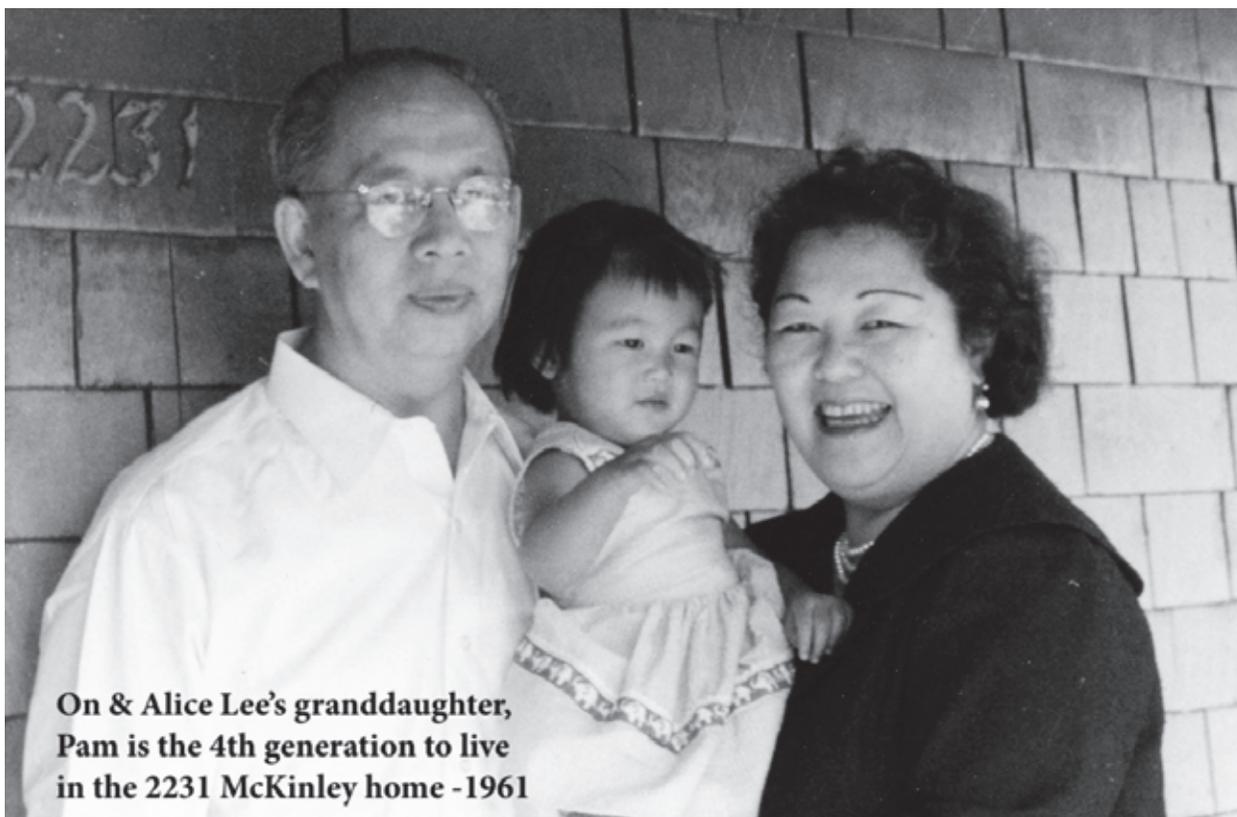
Fig.21 – The Chan-Lees, c1905



Fig.22 – 2231 McKinley Ave. – c1920s



Figs.22-25 – The Lee family at 2231 McKinley Ave., Berkeley



**On & Alice Lee's granddaughter,
Pam is the 4th generation to live
in the 2231 McKinley home -1961**



**Brenda & brother
Ron Lee- 1965**

Figs.26-27 – The Lee family at 2231 McKinley Ave., Berkeley



Fig.28 – 2231 McKinley Ave. (arrow) – from 1911 Sanborn map (loc.org)

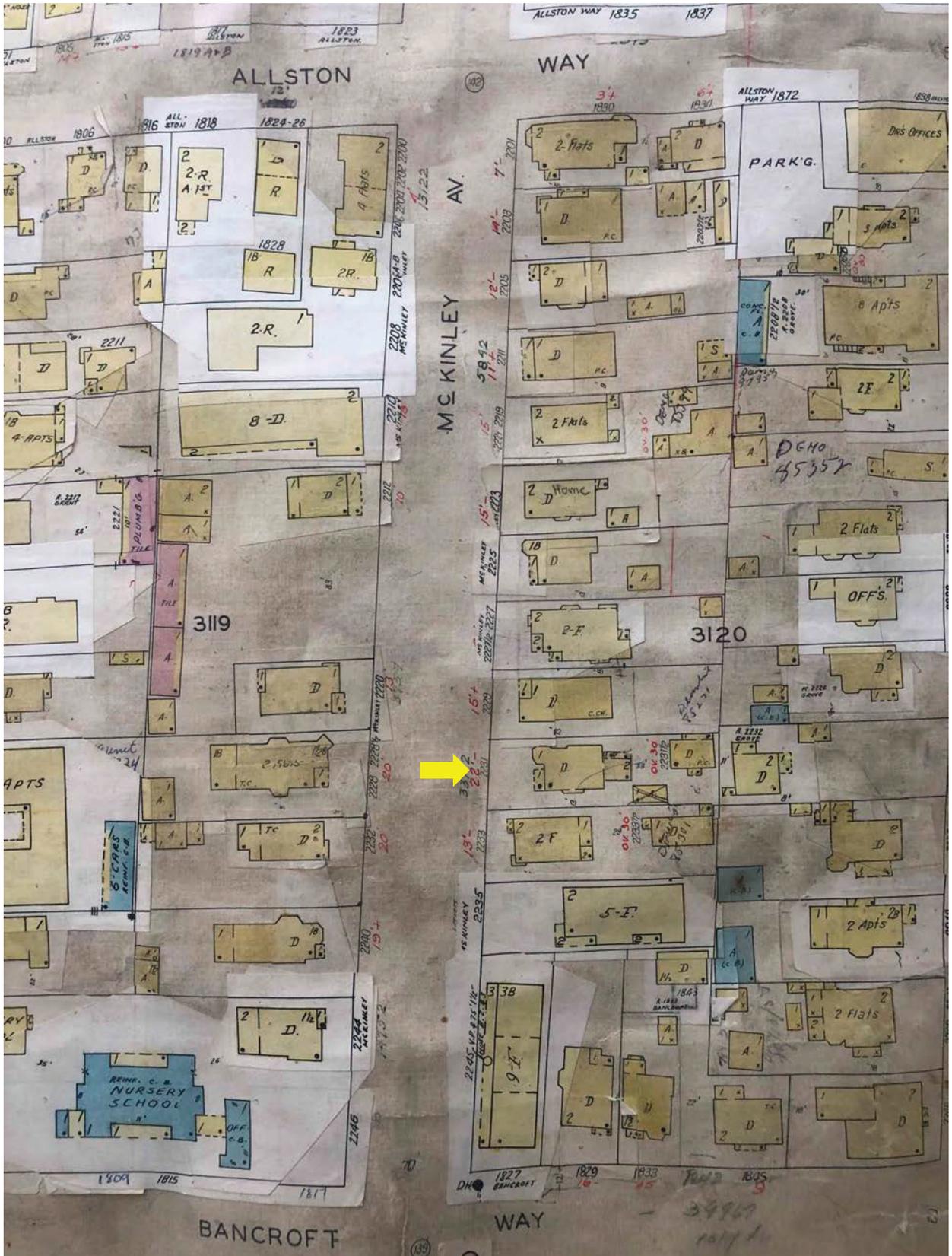


Fig.29 – 2231 McKinley Ave. (arrow) – from 1981 Sanborn map