

Mary Cossitt House
3526 Seventh Avenue
San Diego
San Diego County

HABS No. CA-2163

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CAL,
37-SANDI,
17-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D. C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

MARY COSSITT HOUSE

HABS No. CA-2163

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Location: 3526 Seventh Avenue, San Diego, San Diego County,
California

Present Owner: Mrs Alice Stewart

Present Use: Single family dwelling

Architect: Hebbard and Gill (Irving Gill)

Date: Drawings dated 1906

Original Drawings: There are 12 sheets of original drawings for this house at the Art Galleries, University of California at Santa Barbara. These are titled "Residence for Mrs. Mary Cossitt, Hebbard and Gill, architects, Grant Building San Diego." They are dated between September 13 and August 17, 1906. The draftsmen are Davies, Hall, and Vaughn, and the drawings are executed in ink on linen. The sheets include:

- *1. Foundation plan and foundation details
- *2. First floor plan plus a section between the studio and den showing Gill's use of shortened studs and deafening felt
- *3. Second floor plan
- *4. East elevation and roof details
5. West rear elevation and details
6. North elevation and details
7. South elevation and details
8. Interior elevations of pantry, kitchen and bathroom
9. Interior elevations of den, inglenook and details
10. Interior elevations of hall, staircase and details
11. Interior elevations of studio and details
12. Interior elevations of dining room and details

(The drawings indicated with astericks have been reproduced for this HABS report).

ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. Description of Exterior:

1. Number of stories: The Mary Cossitt House has two full stories and a partial basement.
2. Over-all dimensions: 45'-7" x 77'-7".
3. Layout, shape: The house is basically a rectangle with two porch wings, one extending to the north and one to the south; a small inglenook extends to the east, and a servants' wing extends from the northwest corner.
4. Foundations: The house rests on 8" concrete foundations with 16" footings.
5. Wall construction, finish, color: The original drawings show the house having 6" exterior walls, composed of 2 x 4's, with 3/4" sheathing, covered with 3/4" cement plaster. Several of the interior walls are of thin wall construction, composed of 1 x 4's (the long dimension parallel to the plaster surface), 4" apart with plaster on both sides.
6. Structural system: In the main house block the floors are supported by 2" x 10" joists, the ceiling joists are 2" x 4"s, and the roof rafters are 2" x 6". The ceiling over the music room has latticed rafters and ceiling joists, the rafters and joists are both 2 x 6's, 24" oc. with 1 x 4's nailed diagonally to create a lattice work between the structural members.
7. Porches: The front entry porch is located on the north side of the house. Access to it is by five brick risers on the east and through a 7'-0" arched opening. The west and north sides also have arched openings. Entry into the house is from the south side of the porch, where there is also an outdoor storage room. The floor of the porch is brick. Above the porch is another closed-in porch, now part of the NE bedroom/studio. There is also a second story sleeping porch, now partially enclosed with sliding windows, connected to the SE bedroom. The west bedroom at the head of the stairs has a covered porch over the closed-in back porch off the kitchen.
8. Chimneys: The chimneys in the inglenook is an exterior brick structure covered with plaster, which has been extended about 7' or 8' with metal. Another brick chimney with a cap is located in the main block of the house on the south side of the hip roof.

9. Openings:

- a. Doorways and doors: The front door is rectangular with an arched glass opening. The glass has twenty lights. The south elevation has a door leading to the side yard from the study. This door is a double door with a transom over each leaf having 10 lights. The south elevation also has glass sliding doors from the breakfast room. The west elevation has two doors, one from the dining room. In addition to the front door, the north elevation has a service door with 4 lights and double doors (with 20 lights) from the music room to the front sidewalk. All door frames (except sliding doors with aluminum frame) are typical wood frames, used often in Gill's work.
- b. Windows: The inglenook has casement windows on the north, south, and east sides. Each casement has 6 lights. The music room has a window facing east, which is a plate glass window flanked by casements. The east elevation has 5 clerestory windows, each with 4 lights.

10. Roof:

- a. Shape: The roofs are flat.
- b. Cornice: The roof has a 3 to 3'-6" overhang all around, a plain fascia with a quarter-round molding and exposed 4" x 6" false rafters.

B. Description of Interior:

1. First floor plan: The entry hall is located in the center of the north side of the house. The stairs are west of the front door in a large arched opening. Twelve pivoting windows, each having 6 lights, illuminate the stairs. At the east end of the entry are 4 steps descending to the music room. The music room has double glass doors to the north, an inglenook with fireplace, built-in seats to the east, and composite windows in both the east and south walls. The east wall is also lit by a clerestory. The west wall has a casement window connecting to the study, which is opposite the main entry. The west wall of the study is composed of an arched fireplace and bookshelves, all united by the wooden mantle. Left of the fireplace is a connecting door to the dining room. The south wall is a large arched opening, the center of which has double glass doors and a transom with 4 lights above. The entire opening is filled with approximately 8" x 10" lights. In the dining room the shared wall with the study also has a fireplace and shelves. The south wall has a composite window with a built-in seat. The west wall also has a bay window with a built-in buffet. The north wall

has two doors, the right to the entry hall, the left to the pantry. The pantry has a casement windows in the south wall and a door to the kitchen. The north side of the kitchen has built-ins and a casement window. The east wall has a small casement viewing both the service area with outside door and stairway to the partial basement. The maid's room, now breakfast room, is south of the kitchen.

2. Second floor plan: To the west of the stairhall are a bedroom and bath, directly over the service wing. A door to the east of the stairhall leads to a hallway, with storage in the north wall. The two main bedrooms are to the south of this hallway. The SW bedroom has a fireplace in the east wall, and a pair of casements with 6 horizontal lights above in the south and west. The SE bedroom has a tiled shower to the left of the chimney, a sleeping porch on the south, and 3 small casements in the east. On the north side of the hall is a tiled bath. The NE bedroom/studio has been extended to enclose the porch over the entry porch. Paired casements and 6 horizontal lights provide exposure to both the north and east.
3. Stairway: The stairway rises to the north and then turns west, then south. From the entry hall the stairwell is separated by a large arch, the railing or banister being a continuation of the 5'-0" high board and batten wainscoting. The north wall of the stairwell is lit by 12 pivoting windows, each having 6 lights.
4. Flooring: All floors except service spaces (which have linoleum) have 2-1/2" wood flooring.
5. Wall and ceiling finish: The music room is lath and plaster with a 15" baseboard and a 1" x 12" trim strip serving as a picture molding that also forms the top frame to doors and windows. Felt is used in the walls of the music room as a sound absorber. The entry has vertical board-and-batten wainscoting up to 5 feet. The walls are wood paneled above the wainscoting, and there is plaster ceiling. All other rooms are lath-and-plaster with the exception of baths and the dining room. The dining room has a coved ceiling. The wainscoting forms a shelf at a height of 6'-0". The baths have ceramic tile floors and walls up to the window sills.
6. Doors and doorways: Other than the French doors (between the entry hall and music room) all interior doors are single-paneled wood doors. All frames are simple 1" x 4" boards.
7. Special decorative features. There is a secret panel with a safe behind and to the left of the dining room fireplace.

8. Mechanical equipment: There are six tubes in the chimney over the inglenook fireplace. These tubes pick up fireplace heat and disperse it through a vent in the wall above the nook.

C. Site:

1. General setting: A pool has been added to the grounds south of the house. Although the original fence and gates have been replaced, two cabanas still exist, as well as a lamp post north of the front walk.
2. Historic landscape: The whole house is covered by ficus repen which was planted almost immediately after construction. Many of the plantings are nearly as old as the house.
3. Outbuildings: Besides the cabanas, there is an old laundry, a gardener's shed, and a trunk storage building.

Prepared by: Kim Spurgeon
Supervisor, HABS San Diego Team
Summer 1975

D. Sources of Information:

Bibliography:

AIA Guide To Architecture of San Diego, John Henderson San Diego, Available through the San Diego AIA.

Farris, Helen, "Irving John Gill," article in The Journal of San Diego History, Fall, 1970.

Gebhard, David, and Winter, Robert, A Guide to Architecture in Southern California, Los Angeles County Art Museum, 1965.

Los Angeles County Art Museum, Irving Gill, 1870-1936.

Original drawings from the office of Irving Gill, Collection of the Art Galleries, University of California, Santa Barbara, California.

Conversations with Mrs. Alice O. Stewart, Helen Farris, and John Henderson.

Prepared by: Robert Bruegmann
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Summer 1975

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

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- 3 Gebhard, David, and Winter, Robert, A Guide to Architecture in
Southern California, Los Angeles County Art Museum, 1965
- 4 Los Angeles County Art Museum, Irving Gill, 1870-1936
- 5 Original drawings from the office of Irving Gill, Collection of the
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- 6 Conversations with Mrs. Alice O. Stewart, Helen Farris, and John
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