

THOMAS CHURCH GARDEN
Restricted Access
San Francisco
San Francisco County
California

HALS CA-17
CA-17

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY

THOMAS CHURCH GARDEN

HALS NO. CA-17

- Location:** Restricted Address, San Francisco, San Francisco County, California
- Significance:** The Thomas Church Garden was the personal garden of and represents the work of a master: Thomas Church, landscape architect. Church used this garden as an example in *House Beautiful* magazine and in his books *Your Private World* and *Gardens Are for People*.
- Description:** The Thomas Church Garden is two non-contiguous, private residential gardens in the Russian Hill neighborhood of San Francisco. One garden is approximately 1300 square feet, in front of the house. The other garden is approximately 600 square feet, to the side of the house.
- History:** Thomas Dolliver Church (1902-1978) wrote that he and his wife, Elizabeth Roberts Church (ca. 1904-1997), moved into their ca. 1862 home in 1933. The first entry in the city directory for the Churches at this address was 1935. In 1933, Church installed a formal garden in front of the house, with a repeated diamond pattern of clipped boxwoods, and a dog run along the side. This garden was designed to be looked down on from the house, because it was usually too windy to sit outside. Church planted plane trees along the front perimeter as a screen. In 1938 Church raised the height of the front fence to block the wind and increase privacy, and trained ivy in a diamond pattern on the fence. The Churches added a wing on the house where the dog run had been. In the early 1940s, the Churches purchased the 1922 duplex adjoining their property, and Church added a side garden off their kitchen (to the rear of the duplex). Church filled the protected side garden with pots of colorful plants, sculptures, and a central boxwood parterre.
- In 1954, the Churches replaced the single front stairway with twin stairways inspired by the divided stairway at Fontainebleau. Church redesigned the front garden to be, as he described it, an informal planting with formal intent. A concrete path curved through tree ferns, agapanthus, and other greenery to meet the stairway. Church did all the garden maintenance until he became too ill to do so. He died at his home in 1978. The last entry in the city directory for a member of the Church family at this address was 2001.
- Sources:** Crocker-Langley San Francisco City Directory. San Francisco F: R.L. Polk & Co, 1935.
- “Why Thomas Church remodeled his garden three times.” House Beautiful Apr 1955: Cover, 134+.

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