

Historic Context and Statement of Significance for the Spalding Place Historic District in University Heights, San Diego, California

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Introduction

AECOM was retained by the City of San Diego (City) to prepare a historic context, statement of significance, and boundary description and justification in support of the City’s nomination of the proposed Spalding Place Historic District for review by the Historical Resources Board. The City has conducted the survey and prepared the descriptions of the buildings as part of the nomination process. AECOM historical resources specialists reviewed existing survey documentation, conducted research, identified the historical themes related to the proposed district, and evaluated the district’s significance based on the historic context.

Historic District Description – Overview

The Spalding Place Historic District is located in the University Heights neighborhood in San Diego. The district consists of 10 contributing buildings and 4 noncontributing buildings, all built between 1909 and 1912 (Table 1). The contributing buildings include 1 one-part commercial block building and 9 modest Craftsman bungalows. Although the buildings are not identical, they are stylistically similar, set on uniform lots generally oriented towards Spalding Place. The district is located on Spalding Place, a one-lane street that runs east to west between Georgia Street and Park Boulevard, respectively, surrounded by a mix of residential and commercial buildings that represent successive eras of the neighborhood’s development. Within the district, the buildings have small front yards that are frequently paved for parking, and have small shrubs and lawns that contribute to their landscape and setting. The district retains all seven aspects of integrity and has the ability to convey its significance at the local level.

Table 1. Properties within the Spalding Place Historic District

| Assessor’s Parcel Number | Address | Significance |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|
| 445-042-03-00 | 4655-4663 Park Boulevard | Contributing |
| 445-042-04-00 | 1808 Spalding Place | Contributing |
| 445-042-05-00 | 1810 Spalding Place | Contributing |
| 445-042-06-00 | 1814 Spalding Place | Contributing |
| 445-042-07-00 | 1815 Spalding Place | Contributing |
| 445-042-08-00 | 4651 Park Boulevard | Non-Contributing |
| 445-042-23-00 | 4646 Georgia Street | Contributing |
| 445-042-24-00 | 1837 Spalding Place | Noncontributing |
| 445-042-25-00 | 1831 Spalding Place | Contributing |
| 445-042-26-00 | 1817 Spalding Place | Noncontributing |
| 445-042-27-00 | 1818 Spalding Place | Contributing |
| 445-042-28-00 | 1832 Spalding Place | Contributing |
| 445-042-29-00 | 1838 Spalding Place | Contributing |
| 445-042-37-00 | 4656 Georgia Street | Noncontributing |

Historic Context

To relate the Spalding Place Historic District to special elements of University Heights's historical and architectural development, the following context provides a historical overview of San Diego, a description of early real estate ventures, transit systems, and the attractions that lured visitors to University Heights, and specific information related to the development of Spalding Place. This information illustrates the significance of the district as both a representative and a unique resource, and the historical themes it represents.

Overview of San Diego

The archaeological record indicates that humans were present in mainland Southern California in the early Holocene over 9,000 years ago (Erlandson et al. 2007). Humans appeared much earlier in California's Channel Islands (by around 13,000 years ago), but confirmed Pleistocene components are lacking on the Southern California mainland. At the time of Spanish contact, the present-day area of downtown San Diego and its environs were within the territory of Yuman-speaking groups that later became known as the Diegueño, named after Mission San Diego where many were baptized. Native groups living south of the San Diego River have also been referred to as the Ipai, and those to the north as the Tipai (Luomala 1978). However, the Yuman-speaking groups of the San Diego area are now most commonly referred to as the Kumeyaay. Settlement was seasonal, with one or more clans congregating at stable encampments during the winter and dispersing during the spring and summer to take advantage of ripening foods (Luomala 1978). The Kumeyaay village of Nipawai was located within present-day University Heights (Kroeber 1925).

Spanish explorer Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo led the first Europeans to San Diego in 1542, followed by another Spanish expedition led by Sebastian Vizcaino six years later. Vizcaino bestowed the name San Diego. After Cabrillo's and Vizcaino's explorations in the mid-16th century, Spanish activity was sporadic for the next 150 years or so, until expanded exploration in the region by England and Russia prompted the Spanish to solidify their control through a program of colonization. The strategy for this effort included a dual settlement of the area by both the military and the church. Taking advantage of the navigable bay, the Spanish made San Diego their first settlement in Alta California. Initially, both a mission and a military presidio were located on Presidio Hill overlooking the San Diego River. Father Junipero Serra dedicated Mission San Diego de Alcalá on July 16, 1796. The mission was later relocated farther upstream along the San Diego River to an area more suited for agriculture. A small community also developed at the foot of Presidio Hill in present-day Old Town.

The Mexican war for independence from the Spanish began in 1810. Mexico ultimately succeeded 11 years later, placing California under Mexican rule. The Mexican government secularized the missions and distributed mission lands in large grants awarded primarily to the elite class of *rancheros*. The population of San Diego grew during this period, as more land became available for private ranching and farming. Large portions of land belonged to the pueblo and were communally held, including the mesa above Mission Valley to the east of the Presidio where present-day University Heights is located.

Tensions between the United States and Mexico related to the U.S. annexation of Texas in 1845 led the United States to declare war on Mexico in 1846, starting the Mexican-American War. The Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo in 1848 resolved the war, including the United States gaining ownership of California. California became a state in September 1850.

A significant shift in the development of San Diego was initiated at mid-century, when Lt. Andrew B. Gray, chief surveyor of the United States Boundary Commission, identified a potential location for a new wharf and settlement on the bay. In March 1850, William Heath Davis, a San Francisco merchant, and his partners purchased 160 acres on the bay approximately four miles to the south of Old Town and Gray plotted the streets for "New Town." Davis built a new wharf, warehouse, and house; the U.S. Army built barracks; and other settlers moved to New Town. However, by 1851, an economic depression and a lack of settlers and potable water, as well as animosity from the existing community at Old Town, hindered the development of New Town. In addition, Davis suffered financial losses due to a catastrophic fire in San Francisco, and he retreated from further developing New Town. New Town was largely abandoned.

In 1867, Alonzo E. Horton, a San Francisco furniture dealer and developer, arrived in San Diego and purchased approximately 800 acres adjacent to New Town. Like the previous developers, Horton focused his attention on the waterfront. Unlike the previous attempt, however, this venture was soon successful. The growth of the area was aided by the construction of the new wharf, a hotel, potential railroad connections, and Horton's tireless efforts to promote the area. In 1869, Horton acquired Davis's New Town tract. By 1871, the area of Horton's Addition had replaced Old Town as the center of San Diego (Schaefer and Newland 1994).

The Great Boom of the 1880s

Into the 1880s, the city made progress in the development of modern, necessary public utilities to build an urban center, including a potable water supply, sewerage, street lights, and means of transportation. In 1881, the city had a gasworks and gaslights; in 1882, a telephone exchange; and in 1886, electric lights (Smythe 1908:436). The 1885 arrival of the transcontinental railroad line to Southern California generated tremendous growth in San Diego, marking a period referred to as the Great Boom (1885-1888). During the Great Boom, land speculation was rampant, with a plethora of new subdivisions created for quick profits. The economic growth led to new infrastructure and amenities. San Diego's first horse-drawn streetcar system began operation in 1886, the first electric streetcars in 1887, and the first cable cars in 1890 (Smythe 1908:438, 441). At the peak of the boom, there were at least 17 streetcar and interurban companies operating from downtown San Diego (Holle 2002).

Unfortunately, the Great Boom was short-lived. By the spring of 1888, Southern California's real estate market was crashing and property values plummeted. Thousands of investors went from "paper millionaires" to nearly penniless (City of San Diego 2010). Despite the real estate crash, many of the most important public and private improvements in San Diego were completed in the years immediately following the crash, including completion of Hotel del Coronado; construction of the Spreckels coal bunkers and wharves; the court house; extensive street paving; the extension of the electric railway to University Heights; the completion of a water flume to supply water to the city; and construction of the San Diego, Cuyamaca & Eastern Railway to El Cajon (Smythe 1908). By 1889, economic stagnation truly began, marked by a series of bank failures (MacPhail 1979; Schaefer and Newland 1994). The California National Bank failed in 1891, creating further economic distress (Smythe 1908). Most of the speculative real estate transactions of the Great Boom involved the sale of vacant parcels at inflated property values; thus, many subdivisions, including University Heights, remained undeveloped and rural (City of San Diego 2010). The promise of development faded through the economic depression of the 1890s.

San Diego in the 20th Century

At the turn of the 20th century, San Diego's economy began rebounding. The real estate market grew between 1901 and 1906 by "leaps and bounds, developing its resources, gaining population, attracting capital for investment, and enhancing its natural attractions by the most daring creations of the architect and the engineer" (Smythe 1908). The new real estate boom was due to both an increase in demand for actual homes and renewed speculation. Investment capital flowed in from sources outside of San Diego, particularly from Los Angeles investors (Smythe 1908). Los Angeles experienced a more significant economic boom than San Diego, primarily due to its railroad advantages, but benefited San Diego through this flow of investment: "it is now so clearly apparent that Los Angeles capital freely invests in San Diego real estate... Striking illustrations of the tendency are seen in the investment of great sums of Los Angeles capital in land, power, and townsite enterprises..." (Smythe 1908). Real estate speculators and promoters took action: "Never was more persistent, aggressive, and brilliant work done in the interest of an aspiring city than that performed by some of the larger real estate interests during this new era in San Diego" (Smythe 1908).

Development in San Diego took on all forms related to commercial trades, transportation, infrastructure, and industry. The expansion of streetcar lines during the early 20th century played a crucial role in the development of San Diego. The streetcar allowed for the development of suburbs, which were rapidly appearing on the outskirts of town (Schaefer and Newland 1994). In 1908, William E. Smythe noted that:

The real prosperity of San Diego during the early years of the new century finds its best illustration not in new hotels and business blocks, not in street railway extensions nor in rising prices of real estate, but in the number and beauty of comfortable little homes which have been built throughout the length and breadth of the city. These have multiplied with surprising rapidity, covering the sunny slopes, extending out upon the mesas, and reaping well down toward the water front. They are the prophecy of the San Diego that is to be (Smythe 1908).

Later, automobiles reinforced this trend of suburbanization; commercial areas along automobile corridors, such as El Cajon Boulevard, were designed to accommodate motorists (Historic Resources Group 2011). A substantial number of single-family homes were constructed on previously vacant parcels, increasing the density of residential development in the streetcar suburbs, particularly near the transit hubs of the streetcar lines (City of San Diego 2010). The Craftsman and Prairie styles dominated residential construction in San Diego in the 1900s and 1910s.

Into the 1910s, San Diego continued to prosper and grow exponentially. Major events contributed to this prosperity, including the opening of the Panama Canal in 1914 and San Diego's corresponding Panama-California Exposition of 1915–1916. The Exposition brought international attention to San Diego and, as a result of the Exposition, people flocked to San Diego. The city's population had roughly doubled each decade. The Exposition also created a trend in San Diego's architectural development in the mid-1910s and 1920s with the Spanish Eclectic and Mission Revival styles becoming increasingly popular in all types of commercial, civic, religious, and residential architecture.

During World War I, San Diego's calm harbor and climate drew the U.S. Navy to establish aviation and submarine bases on the bay. The fishing industry and its associated canneries also helped to bolster the city's economy (Engstrand 2005). San Diego sustained its growth through the 1920s; by 1921, there were

more developed than unimproved properties in the neighborhoods surrounding Balboa Park and the Exposition grounds (City of San Diego 2010). With the rise of automobiles, suburbia expanded further from downtown San Diego as the streetcar suburbs were built up. Commercial development along transportation corridors and residential development on available vacant lots and in new subdivisions continued at an intensive pace through the 1920s.

The Great Depression stunted the economy in San Diego, in great contrast to its remarkable growth in the 1910s and 1920s (City of San Diego 2010). During the 1930s, the economic downturn and rampant unemployment reduced the demand for real estate and development activities, particularly in many streetcar suburbs that were almost entirely developed by the mid-1930s (City of San Diego 2010).

World War II indelibly changed San Diego into a metropolitan center and a hub of wartime production to meet the needs of the burgeoning military-industrial complex. The population boomed. Government economic stimulus packages in the 1940s led to a number of infrastructure projects, including homebuilding initiatives (Historic Resources Group 2011). Due to an unprecedented housing shortage, much of the remaining undeveloped land in residential areas was developed with modest single-family residences and residential courts based on the Federal Housing Administration minimum house designs.

During the post-World War II era, San Diego changed considerably with the dominance of the automobile and suburbanization. In the late 1940s, San Diego decommissioned its electric trolley lines, and the central business district declined. By the 1950s, most new development in San Diego catered to the freeways, with new strip malls and parking lots. In addition, the demand for available land led to redevelopment activity, i.e., urban renewal (City of San Diego 2010). Mid-century development and urban renewal marked the beginning of a distinctly modern era for the city that continued through the end of the 20th century.

University Heights

During San Diego's Great Boom in the mid-1880s, several investment companies incorporated to purchase large land tracts in San Diego for subdivision and speculation, including the areas north of downtown San Diego and City Park (now Balboa Park)(Figure 1). Lot sales were initially successful on the mesa overlooking Mission Valley, which had an advantageous location and "the most delightful of all climates – the mesa climate, soft, dry, invigorating, and cool, without being damp." The area prior to development was characterized by "jackrabbits running through brush-covered territory" (Ledeboer 2006).

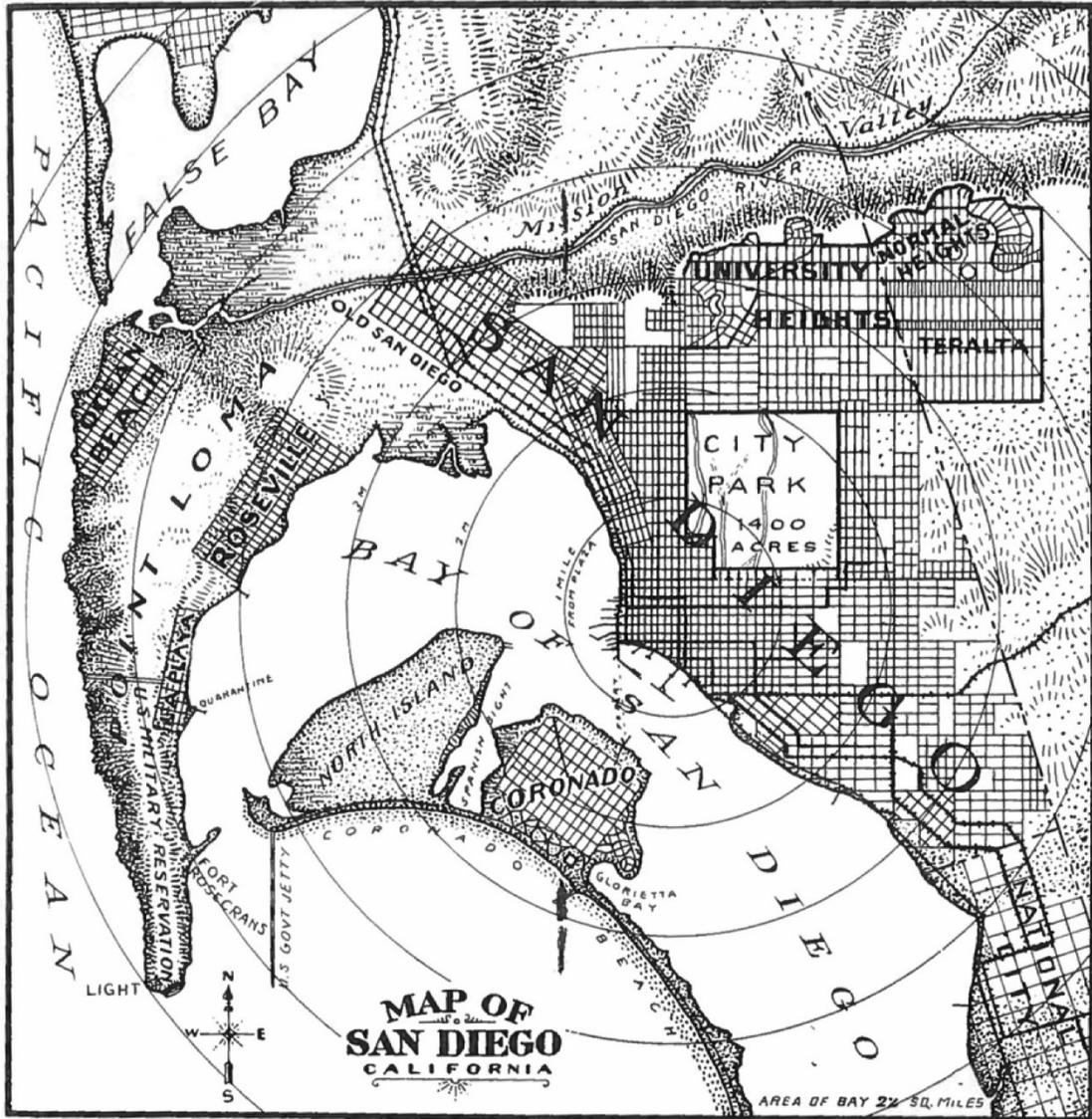


Figure 1. Map showing location of University Heights above City Park (Ralston Realty Co. 1906).

College Hill Land Association

One real estate investment company, the College Hill Land Association, was incorporated on July 17, 1886, with significant investments from its major shareholders led by Daniel Choate. Their initial investment capital of \$865,500 and control of 1,600 acres north of City Park supported the Association’s mission to “buy, sell, improve, mortgage, lease and otherwise generally deal in real estate in the County of San Diego, State of California” (Ledebor 2006). The Association also had a stated intent to support the establishment of a college on the mesa. Championed by Reverend Edwin S. Chase of the Methodist Episcopal Church, the college was to be the San Diego College of Arts, a branch of the Methodist Episcopal University of Southern California (Engstrand 2005). The Association created a subdivision and donated every other lot of its subdivision to the church to raise \$200,000 for construction of the college, and an estimated \$2 million to fund its endowment. A 16-acre parcel for the location of the college was

reserved towards the center of the subdivision (Van Dyke et al. 1888). The Association planned to “erect upon a beautiful eminence of this property” the college building, “in the most impressive style of architecture” (*Golden Era* 1887). Therefore, they named the subdivision “University Heights.”

By December 1887, the Association’s agent, the real estate firm W.H. Holabird & Company, had already begun advertising lots in University Heights (*Golden Era* 1887) (Figure 2). Colonel William Hyman (W.H.) Holabird was a successful real estate agent who had colorfully promoted Coronado and several boomtowns along the California Southern Railroad in the mid-1880s, earning him the nickname the “Father of the Boom” (Van Dyke et al. 1888). According to an article in the magazine *Golden Era*, the first day of sales of University Heights property in December 1887 amounted to \$105,000 and was “one of the greatest real-estate sales of Southern California” (*Golden Era* 1887). W.H. Holabird & Company advertised University Heights in *The San Diego Union* on January 1, 1888, describing its primary advantages, including its altitude, prevailing winds, the promise of “a magnificent college,” and the rapid transit to the heart of the city that “greatly enhances its value” (*San Diego Union* 1888).



Figure 2. W.H. Holabird & Company advertisement on Broadway in downtown San Diego, 1887 (San Diego History Center)

The Association filed Subdivision Map #558 with the San Diego County Recorder for the University Heights subdivision on August 6, 1888 (Figure 3). The subdivision plan consisted of a rectilinear grid of streets, 210 urban blocks, reservations at the bluffs overlooking Mission Valley for parks and recreation, a manmade “Mystic Lake,” and an area reserved for the college. The college campus was located at the intersection of major thoroughfares through the center of University Heights, where University Boulevard (present-day Washington and El Cajon Boulevards), Park Boulevard, and Mission Avenue met. The east-west streets of the subdivision were named after U.S. presidents, including Adams Avenue towards the

northern boundary and Fillmore Avenue (present-day University Avenue) at the southern boundary. The north-south streets were named after U.S. states and, from west to east, in a roughly clockwise geographical order starting in the northeast with Maine and ending in the Midwest with Missouri. Although there was some variation in the subdivision parcels, typical blocks were 600 by 300 feet, and typical lots were 25 by 140 feet. Boulevards were 150 feet wide, streets were 80 feet wide, and alleys, which were predominantly north-south through the center of each block, were 20 feet wide (Ralston Realty Co. 1906).

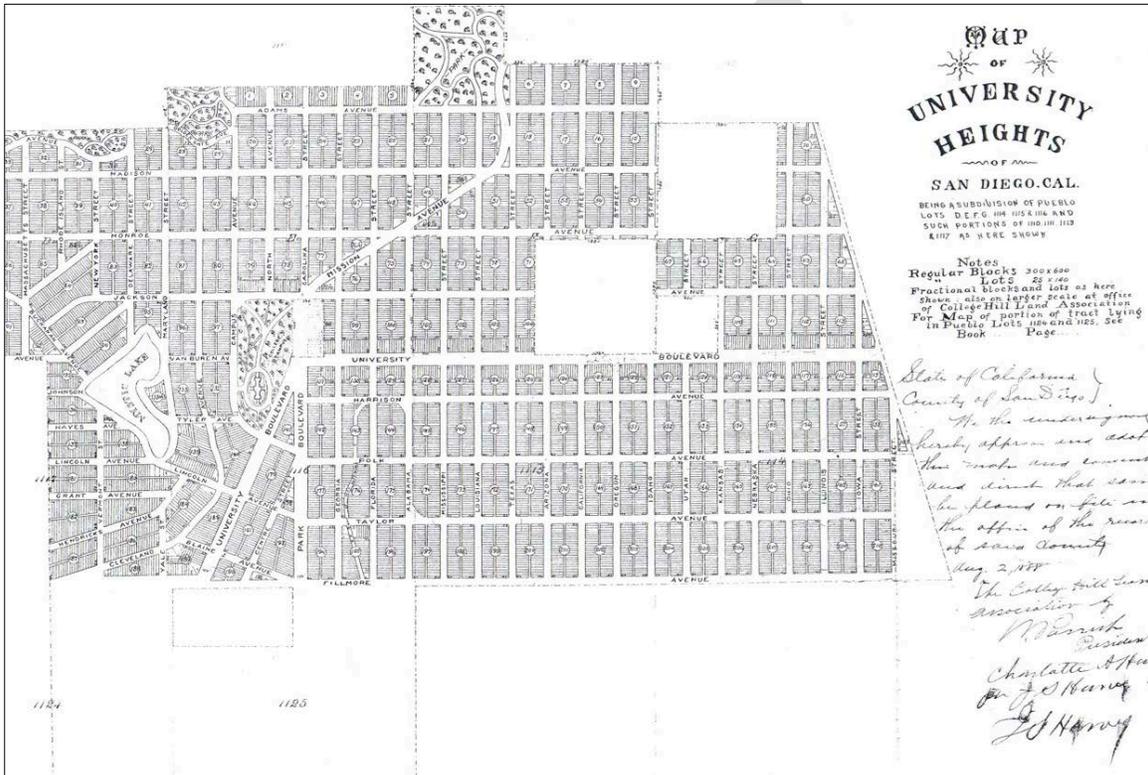


Figure 3. Subdivision Map #558 of University Heights, 1888.

Despite the implosion of the Great Boom in the spring of 1888, Choate spearheaded several improvements for the subdivision, including installing water main pipes down every street and a steam-powered streetcar line to the college (Van Dyke et al. 1888). According to another W.H. Holabird & Company ad in December 1888, “[h]undreds [o]f men are at work grading the boulevards on University Heights,” which was “the choice residence property of the city,” and the Electric Motor Rapid Transit Railroad was completed (*San Diego Sun* 1888). Trees along the boulevards and streets were planned, and new owners began transforming their lots, although the majority of University Heights remained undeveloped.

By November 1888, the firm of Norcross & Howard was the sole real estate agent of the Association, according to its advertisements (*Golden Era* 1888). The firm, led by H.F. Norcross, L.B. Howard, and

Major E.A. Howard, claimed to “have sold more property during the last few months than any other real estate firm in the city” (*Golden Era* 1888). Norcross & Howard touted the view from the bluffs and the convenience of half-hour trips on the Electric Motor Rapid Transit Railroad in its ads for University Heights. Perhaps in an attempt to resuscitate real estate sales, the description of the property’s natural beauty became more flamboyant:

The views of the mountains from University Heights should be emphasized. Every visitor to San Diego should have an opportunity to behold the grand sentinels of the bay from this point. The mountain peaks in the distance seem to yawn in their glory, and mantled with the ether’s haze that enfolds the brown-baked hills, yet reveals the flaming nakedness of their nude glory. Looking east and north, you behold such a series of mountain peaks, such an array of valleys, such a jagged chain of hills, such a contrast of color, that one is bewildered by involuntary admiration (*Golden Era* 1888).

Despite the promises of its promoters, the sales of lots in University Heights suffered as the real estate market in San Diego collapsed in 1889. The plan for the College of Arts failed, and the college site and building were abandoned due to lack of funds. The Association held its shares in University Heights, but speculation in San Diego otherwise ceased.

Although the real estate market failed spectacularly in 1888, some important public and private improvements in University Heights continued to be developed (Smythe 1908). For example, the transit corridors between downtown San Diego and University Heights continued to evolve. The Electric Motor Rapid Transit Railroad completed an electric streetcar route up Fourth Avenue to the college site in University Heights in 1888, but quickly ended service in 1889 because it was not profitable. The San Diego Cable Railway Company redeveloped the same route with cable cars in 1890, and then extended the cable car system to the intersection of Adams Avenue and Park Boulevard in 1891. As part of its marketing scheme, the company developed “The Bluffs,” a five-acre park with a pavilion at the Adams Avenue terminus as an attraction for daytrippers and to promote sales of the lots along the right-of-way owned by the company (Bevil 2012). Due to economic hardship related to the crash, the San Diego Cable Railway Company folded but was reorganized in 1895 as the Citizens’ Traction Company. The company converted the cable cars into electric streetcars, and redesigned The Bluffs into Mission Cliff Park with additional entertainment and attractions (SOHO 2006). Eventually, the San Diego Electric Railway Company acquired the line in 1898, incorporated it into its existing system, and then widened the right-of-way through Hillcrest to Mission Cliff Park. John D. Spreckels, the owner of the company, had the park redesigned as Mission Cliff Gardens, turning the popular attraction into an elegant botanical garden (see the “Streetcar Suburbia” and “University Heights Attractions” sections below for more detailed information).

In addition to the development of transit lines and recreational attractions, educational institutions were developed. The University Heights School, the first elementary school in the neighborhood, opened in 1893. New plans for an institution of higher learning in University Heights also began in 1897. The original campus site was donated to the State of California for a teacher-training college, the Normal School. Local architects William S. Hebbard and Irving Gill designed a grand Classical Revival building for the site, which opened in 1899. Hebbard and Gill also designed east and west wings for the building that were completed in 1904. The Teachers Training Annex, a separate Italian Renaissance Revival-style

building, was added to the campus in 1910. The Normal School finally fulfilled the vision of the Association for a civic institution at the center of the University Heights community, although its eventual designation first as a State Teacher's College in 1921, and then as an exalted State College in 1925 eventually led to its relocation in 1931.

Development in the Early 20th Century

As the economy rebounded, real estate development in San Diego slowly regained momentum. On November 25, 1899, a new investment company, the South-Western Investment Company, led by "Colonel" David Charles (D.C.) Collier, Jr. and George M. Hawley, was incorporated and began focusing on the acquisition of land holdings in University Heights. Collier and Hawley were each involved in several real estate ventures in the early 20th century, but particularly focused on the University Heights, Normal Heights, and City Heights neighborhoods in San Diego.

In February 1902, real estate agent C.A. Scott advertised several lots in 10 blocks in University Heights "at bargain counter prices to insure a quick sale." Agent representatives would meet prospective buyers arriving on the electric streetcar at Mission Cliff Gardens, "every car Thursday and Friday," to tour the properties. Lots were priced between \$40 and \$100 (including lots in Block 24, the same block as Spalding Place) (*San Diego Union* 1902).

Collier's Ralston Realty Company began selling University Heights lots by 1904 (Ralston Realty Co. 1906). Collier and Hawley formed the University Heights Syndicate in 1905, incorporating their interests to the east of Mission Cliff Gardens. With Collier's and Hawley's investments, the South-Western Investment Company controlled nearly all of the College Hill Land Association's stock by March 1907 (Ledeboer 2006). In October 1907, Ralston Realty Company acquired Hawley's interests and oversaw the sales of lots in University Heights. Eventually, the companies' real estate interests in University Heights and Normal Heights were consolidated under the Western Investment Company of San Diego, which was incorporated on November 30, 1907.

The Ralston Realty Company was instrumental in promoting University Heights and encouraging speculation on the sparsely developed subdivision. A promotional pamphlet produced circa 1906 described University Heights' progress and opportunities, and once again extolled its many virtues:

Less than two years ago UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS was practically a waste of sage brush. The Normal School, an uncompleted building, stood 'alone in its glory.' No indications of future developments were apparent to the casual observer. It required men of foresight to see the great possibilities of that section, and it took vigorous action to awaken interest in the Heights, in the public mind, but it was accomplished. The Ralston Realty Company, handling its own property, as well as that of the College Hill Land Association, commenced an extensive advertising campaign, following it up by clearing brush and grading streets, laying water pipe, and exerting every effort and influence to popularize this most delightful section of the city.

The work of the company soon produced results. A tremendous amount of property was sold during the summer months of 1904, and business and values have steadily increased, until at the present time property is worth two or three times more than it was when first put on the market in 1904. In many instances early purchasers have doubled their money

or better within the year, and the improvement work and home building that has produced this increase in value is only just started. As it progresses values will continue to advance, and even greater profits will be realized at no very distant date.

Today there are about 600 homes on UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS. The Normal School is finished, and improvement work provided for by State appropriation is under way on the seventeen-acre campus. The laying of sewer and water mains through the Heights is under way on the seventeen-acre campus. The laying of sewer and water mains through the Heights is giving employment to hundreds of workmen. The San Diego Electric Railway Company is busy double-tracking its line and will shortly be running a ten-minute service to supply the demand for a faster schedule to the Pavilion and Mission Cliff Park. Telephones, gas and electric lighting are being extended through UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS; in fact, all modern comforts and conveniences are being added to the wonderful natural advantages, and UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS, “the ideal home spot” of San Diego, is rapidly becoming the choicest residence section. Home builders naturally consider educational advantages, as well as elevation, climate and beauty of surroundings, as desirable as location, and UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS, with its beautiful Normal School building as the nucleus, consequently attracts people of education and refinement.

No section of the city has shown such remarkable and substantial growth as UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS, nor has any other portion produced such large returns for the investor and speculator. Many of the heaviest buyers on UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS are successful Los Angeles real estate investors, whose experience has enabled them to both see and seize the opportunities offered on UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS, but outsiders are not the only people who have proved the money-making qualities of this section. Many residents of San Diego have been keen to the possibilities, and have availed themselves of low prices to buy, and in many instances have sold again at a profitable advance. The following list is taken at random. We could not print the names of all those who have realized handsomely on their investments, but those given are sufficient to show that money is being made on UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS, and property values must continue to advance, because the demand for this class of property is increasing, the supply is limited, and the area within the city cannot be extended. To the north Mission valley [sic] is the natural limit, and every foot of ground between Mission Cliff and the business center will double in value as homes are built and other improvements go in (Ralston Realty Co. 1906).

As mentioned in the promotional pamphlet, more improvements were rapidly available in University Heights in the 1900s, including water access. Substantial development of University Heights was not possible until a consistent water supply was available on the mesa. In 1907, Spreckels gained control over the Southern California Mountain and Water Supply Company, which then supplied the city (SOHO 2006). In 1907, the College Hill Land Association donated the 160,000-gallon water tank to the city “whereby this district was for the first time connected with the city water system. The tank, located on block 15, was long one of the most prominent and much admired landmarks in the eastern part of the city, visible for many miles around” (*San Diego Evening Tribune* 1907). The tank would supply an estimated

20 blocks east of the Mission Cliff Gardens pavilion, with a main pipeline along Idaho Street to downtown (*San Diego Evening Tribune* 1907). By 1910, a tank “mounted on the little knoll, having a capacity of 490,000 gallons” was installed to serve University Heights.

Also in 1907, the San Diego Electric Railway Company, in conjunction with Ralston Realty Company, completed an extension of the line down Adams Avenue to Normal Heights. With the supply of water assured and the extension of the San Diego Electric Railway route along Adams Avenue, development in University Heights boomed.

Streetcar Suburbia

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the location and density of commercial and residential development were largely determined by proximity to public transportation. Real estate along transit routes was extremely valuable. Early subdivisions closely followed established streetcar routes, and businesses and residences were built within short distances of the streetcar lines (Historic Resources Group 2011). Unlike areas that developed with a primary focus on automobile activity, areas surrounding streetcar lines developed at nodes. Commercial activity was centered at the intersection of streetcar routes, with commercial and residential development expanding outwards from the node. For University Heights, first the arrival of horsecars in 1886, then the electric streetcar in 1888, then the cable car in 1890, and again the electric streetcar in 1895 were especially important to the development of the neighborhood. The 1891 arrival of streetcars at the intersection of Park Boulevard and Adams Avenue (the intersection immediately northwest of Spalding Place) defined the development and layout of northern University Heights.

Horsecars

San Diego’s first mode of public transit was the horsecar, a horse-drawn streetcar on rails, operated by the San Diego Street Car Company from July 1886 to January 1892 (Niedrich 1993). The company was formed by developers Hampton L. Story and Elisha S. Babcock, Jr. The first streetcar started its run on July 3, 1886, with one open air car that seated 22 passengers and was drawn by a team of horses (*San Diego Union* 1961). In its first two years of operation, the San Diego Street Car Company purchased 30 horse cars of varying passenger capacity. Twelve of these cars were convertible cars from the Saint Louis Car Company, which featured removable window sashes and upper body panels for the warm summer months. The company developed five lines through downtown San Diego. The horsecar route from downtown to University Heights ran up Fifth Avenue, turning east and slightly north to University Avenue (Niedrich 1993). The San Diego Street Car Company remained in service until it was purchased by the Spreckels in 1892, creating the basic framework for the San Diego Electric Railway Company.

Electric Streetcars

In November 1887, the Electric Rapid Transit Company launched the first electric streetcar on the West Coast in San Diego (Holle 2002). The system used aboveground electric lines to power the streetcars. The company briefly offered service from downtown to Old Town over the San Diego and Old Town Railway’s tracks. By December 1887, the company established a new route on Fourth Street from G Street to Fir Street that was eventually extended east along University Avenue and University Boulevard (present-day Normal Street) to the proposed site of the College of Arts in University Heights in 1888. Although the Electric Rapid Transit Company also supplied electricity along its line, the streetcar service

portion of its operations ended in June 1889 due to declining profits (Holle 2002). The route was acquired for a unique form of transit – cable cars.

Cable Cars

Starting in June 1890, a cable car line operated between downtown San Diego and University Heights. In 1888, John C. Fisher, David D. Dare, and C.W. Collins organized the San Diego Cable Railway Company (also known as the San Diego Cable Car Company). Dare and Collins were officers at the California National Bank, which was born of San Diego's real estate boom. Construction for the cable car system began in August 1889, despite the economic downturn (Driese 1992). The first cable car ran through town on June 7, 1890, followed by a parade with the City Guard band (Schwartz 1982). The first paying customer was beloved horticulturalist Kate Sessions (MacMullen 1946). The cable car system had one route, which began at Sixth Avenue, turned west at C Street, then continued north on Fourth Avenue along the Electric Rapid Transit Company's original route to the college site in University Heights. The entire line was powered by two large coal-fired steam engines located within a powerhouse near the intersection of Fourth Street (present-day Fourth Avenue) and Spruce Street. The engines turned massive 12-foot-diameter wheels that pulled the cables (Driese 1992). In 1891, the line was extended north on Carolina Street (present-day Park Boulevard) and terminated at Adams Avenue, where the company created The Bluffs park and pavilion (Schwartz 1982). Turntables for the one-ender cars were built at the present-day intersections of Sixth Avenue and L Street, Fourth Avenue and Spruce Street, and Park Boulevard and Adams Avenue.

While the cable car line was popular, it was not profitable. The line was \$4,000 in debt for coal and lost \$1,100 each successive month it ran (Fry 1967; Schwartz 1982). In November 1891, the California National Bank failed due to "Wild Cat loans" and "reckless speculation" (Fry 1967). Dare, the president of the company, left for Europe with funds from the California National Bank and never returned. The bank failed to open the following day, and Collins committed suicide. In March 1892, the San Diego Cable Railway Company was declared insolvent. The last cable car ran on October 15, 1892, following a court order to shut down for lack of funds.

In 1895, George B. Kerper purchased and reorganized the company into the Citizens' Traction Company, and converted the cable cars into electric streetcars (SOHO 2006). The cable winding equipment in the powerhouse at Fourth Street and Spruce Street was replaced with two generators. Overhead electric lines were installed and eight of the old cable cars were outfitted with 25-horsepower electric motors (Fry 1967). New attractions were added at The Bluffs, which was renamed Mission Cliff Park, making it a popular end-of-the-line destination. However, the Citizens' Traction Company did not survive the depression of the 1890s, and fell into receivership by 1898.

The cable car only ran for a brief period of time, but it played a pivotal role in the development of northern University Heights. It was the first means of public transportation that reached the intersection of Park Boulevard and Adams Avenue, and it led to the creation of the immensely popular Mission Cliff Gardens. The cable car route eventually returned to electric streetcars, making the land surrounding the intersection of Park Boulevard and Adams Avenue increasingly valuable to real estate prospectors in the early 1900s.

The San Diego Electric Railway Company

John D. Spreckels, the sugar and shipping magnate, first began investing in San Diego development in 1887. Spreckels' significant wealth and influence shaped multiple aspects of San Diego's development. During the economic downturn of the late 1880s and the depression in the 1890s, Spreckels revived several projects in San Diego that faced bankruptcy and closure, including a real estate development company, the Coronado Beach Company, and its crown jewel, the Hotel del Coronado. The Coronado Beach Company was owned by Story and Babcock, who were also major stakeholders in the San Diego Street Car Company. When Spreckels acquired the Coronado Beach Company's holdings in 1889, he also gained a stake in the San Diego Street Car Company.

Spreckels believed that "transportation determines the flow of population," and promoted electric streetcar lines to spur suburban development (Bevil 2012). As early as 1891, Spreckels began initiating the modernization and expansion of San Diego's interurban lines (Bevil 2012). In 1892, Spreckels bought the remaining shares of the San Diego Street Car Company and formed the San Diego Electric Railway Company (*San Diego Union* 1961). The new company quickly began converting horsecars to electric motor cars and, within four years, horsecars were no longer operating in San Diego.

In 1898, the San Diego Electric Railway Company acquired the defunct Citizen's Traction Company and its holdings, including the electric railways, Mission Cliff Park, and 327 lots in University Heights (SOHO 2006). The San Diego Electric Railway Company abandoned the Fourth Street route but connected the University Heights line to its Fifth Street route, and widened the right-of-way for the line leading up to Adams Avenue. Into the early 1900s, the company continued to improve and expand its lines. As mentioned in Ralston Realty Company's prospectus: "The San Diego Electric Railway Company is busy double-tracking its line and will shortly be running a ten-minute service to supply demand for a faster schedule to the Pavilion and Mission Cliff Park" (Ralston Realty Co. 1906).

In January 1906, the San Diego Electric Railway Company announced the new Adams Avenue line with the stated purpose "to open up a new residence district to be known as Normal Heights" (Covington 2007). Construction started on May 27, 1907, and reached the City limits by mid-July. On August 25, 1907, the first streetcar traversed the Adams Avenue line from east to west towards Mission Cliff Park. A formal celebration was held by the Ralston Realty Company that was attended by many guests such as board members of the College Hill Land Association, City and County officials, and other real estate representatives. The collaboration of Ralston Realty Company and the San Diego Electric Railway Company to open the route extension along Adams Avenue, combined with the streetcar's affordability and convenience, stimulated sales of cheap land and suburban growth in the streetcar suburbs of University Heights, Normal Heights, and eventually Kensington (Bevil 2012).

The San Diego Electric Railway Company continued to grow into the 1910s. In 1913, the San Diego Electric Railway Company constructed a large, brick and reinforced concrete building to store and service the streetcars, or trolley cars, on Adams Avenue opposite the block between Georgia and Florida Streets. Hundreds of streetcars came through University Heights to be serviced in the trolley barn (SOHO 2006). Streetcars continued to operate for the next 36 years in San Diego, until the last trolley was retired into the Adams Avenue trolley barn on the morning of April 24, 1949 (San Diego Metropolitan Transit System 2017).

University Heights Attractions

Promoters established attractions to bring visitors to University Heights. At the time the Spalding Place residences were constructed, the intersection of Park Boulevard and Adams Avenue was also home to attractions including the Mission Cliff Gardens, Bentley Ostrich Farm, and the San Diego Silk Mill (Figure 4).



Figure 4. Aerial view of Mission Cliff Gardens and Bentley Ostrich Farm, view towards northwest, 1918 (San Diego History Center). The photo shows west portion of Spalding Place at Park Boulevard (see arrow). The trolley tracks can be seen making the turn on Park Boulevard and Adams Avenue.

Mission Cliff Gardens

“Sincerely I hope that when I wake up in that ‘Garden not made with hands,’ I will find that God has let me remember (never to forget) beautiful Mission Cliff gardens and its kind and gentle superintendent, John Davidson.” – Margaret Olive Jordan, 1923, who resided on Adams Avenue across from the North Avenue entrance to Mission Cliff Gardens (Jordan 1923)

The first concept for a large recreational park in University Heights was illustrated on the College Hill Land Association’s 1888 subdivision map along Adams Avenue above the intersections of Mississippi Street and Mission Avenue (see Figure 3). In 1890, the San Diego Cable Railway Company fulfilled the concept and built a five-acre park to the west of the originally proposed park site as it planned to extend its line to Adams Avenue. The main feature of the park was a grand pavilion overlooking Mission Valley,

designed by prominent local architect William S. Hebbard, who also designed the company's powerhouse (City of San Diego 2010). The pavilion was used for band concerts and as a site for picnickers. The park was known as "The Bluffs" and had views of the Pacific Ocean and Mission Bay to the west, the valley of farms and ranches to the north, and the crumbling Mission San Diego and snow-clad mountain ranges to the east. Before the company closed its cable car lines due to insolvency in October 1892, the company installed swings, a shooting gallery, and merry-go-round in a last-ditch effort to entice customers (Fry 1967).

The Citizens' Traction Company took over The Bluffs in 1895, and the park was renamed "Mission Cliff Park." Dances, theatrical productions, and special entertainments were held at the pavilion. In the words of a local resident, "the park was *the* place to go on Sunday afternoons" (MacPhail 1983). Children enjoyed trying to grab rings while riding on the merry-go-round; turning the crank on the music box earned the volunteer a free ride (Beck 1957). A beer garden was opened following the acquisition of a liquor license in 1897 (Potter 1997; SOHO 2006). On the eastern edge of the park a small, wooden, octagonal observatory was built. It housed a Camera Obscura, allowing visitors to view distant scenes across Mission Valley. The system worked by using a system of telescopic lenses and mirrors to project a moving color image into the darkened room. Visitors were charged 10 cents for the spectacle.

In 1898, Spreckels acquired the park and envisioned Mission Cliff Park as a peaceful retreat for a quiet afternoon and soon removed the amusement park attractions from the park. He renamed the park "Mission Cliff Gardens" and made entry free to San Diego Electric Railway Company passengers (Figure 5). In 1902, Spreckels hired John Davidson, a Scottish gardener, to take care of the grounds. Davidson emigrated from Edinburgh with his wife Martha after she fell into ill health. At the time of his hire, Davidson was working for the Coronado Beach Company. He would come up two to three days a week to care for the trees and flowers (Jones n.d.). In 1904, Spreckels offered Davidson the job of director of development and head gardener at Mission Cliff Gardens, and Davidson and his family moved into the pavilion (MacPhail 1983).

Mission Cliff Gardens was transformed under the hands of Davidson. He and his workers moved the rocks out of the garden and built the stone wall and entrances along Adams Avenue. The rocks were also used to line the paths and create low lookout walls. Pergolas and arbors were built along the rim of the canyon. Davidson brought in many species of trees and flowers, creating horticultural exhibits throughout the park. Davidson described his gardens: "We have not a special exhibit of any particular flower, but rather a fair showing several species, with thousands of plants which will soon be blossoming with the coming of a few showers" (*San Diego Union* 1919). Spreckels took personal interest in the park and often collaborated with Davidson on plans for the gardens (MacPhail 1983).

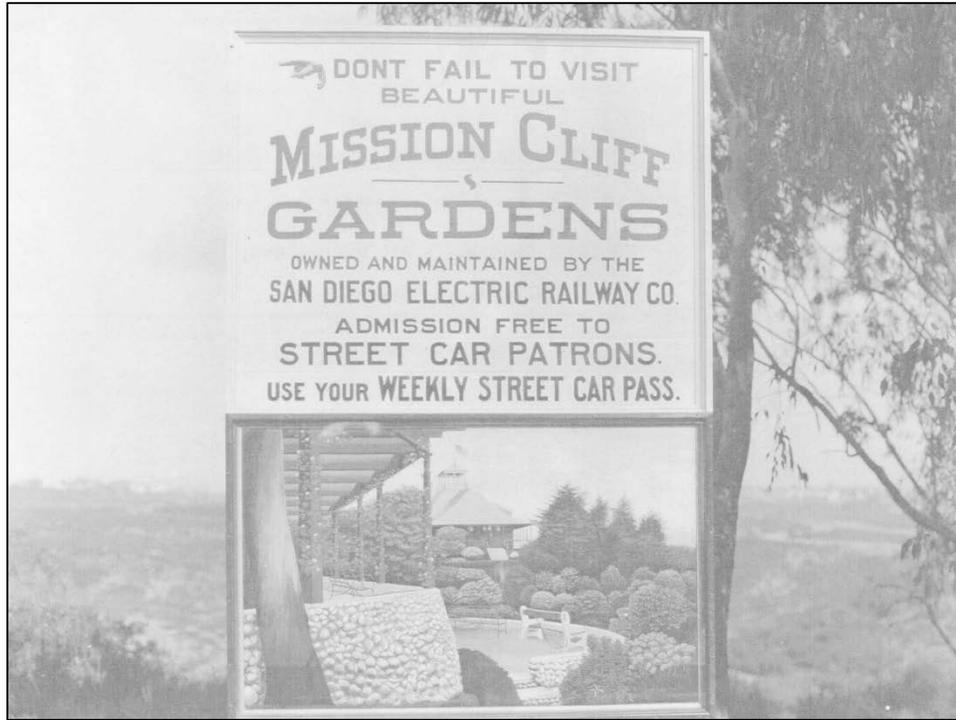


Figure 5. Advertisement for Mission Cliff Gardens at the east gate of Balboa Park, circa 1920s (San Diego History Center)

In 1912, a large wire-mesh aviary was built in Mission Cliff Gardens. Birds of many species were donated. King Gillette, the Safety Razor King, donated many of the more exotic birds. According to the Elizabeth C. MacPhail, daughter of the secretary of the Ralston Realty Company and early resident of University Heights, both youngsters and oldsters “liked especially the parrot that shouted ‘shut up’ when anyone spoke to it” (MacPhail 1983). Mission Cliff Gardens was home to other animals such as deer, pheasants, and guinea fowl. Davidson also stocked the lily pond in front of the pavilion with goldfish.

Especially beloved by visitors was the miniature Japanese garden (Figure 6). The garden was designed by G.T. Marsh, who also worked with Spreckels to create the Japanese tea garden at Coronado (*San Diego Union* 1923; Potter 1977). Most materials used to construct the garden, including the rocks, were imported from Japan. A 170-year-old Japanese vine, *Wisteria multijuga*, was planted on an arbor on the north side of the Japanese garden. MacPhail recalls the miniature garden as “a scene which typified a village of old Japan... Bonsai trees and plants were set out among the hills and valleys. Mirrors gave the effect of ponds and lakes. Miniature Japanese houses dotted the landscape and tiny Japanese figures of men, women and children could be seen around the buildings...”(MacPhail 1983).

Attendance at Mission Cliff Gardens declined after the 1915 Panama-California Exposition. Balboa Park drew crowds away from the gardens, and the increasing popularity of the automobile allowed San Diegans to take Sunday excursions farther out of town. Spreckels began promoting his other business ventures such as his developments along Mission Beach. The San Diego Electric Railway Company was losing money and began charging admission for Mission Cliff Gardens, further pushing crowds towards Balboa Park (Potter 1977). Spreckels died on June 7, 1926, and the gardens were closed to the public in 1929. In 1930, the Mission Cliff Gardens were declared a “Physical Non-Operating Property” (SOHO

2006). The San Diego Electric Railway Company allowed Davidson and his family to continue residing at the pavilion, but to cut down on water costs most of the flowers and small plants were left to die. A small group of elderly men (dubbed the “Pioneer’s Club” by *The San Diego Union*) continued to use the croquet grounds to play cards and dominoes into the late 1930s—an arrangement that dated back to the days of Spreckels (Taunton 1938). In 1935, Davidson died of a sudden heart attack while tending to the gardens. The gardens were left to deteriorate. In 1942, Mission Cliff Gardens were subdivided for residential housing (SOHO 2006). The rock wall along Adams Avenue remains today, as well as the lily pond (which has been filled with grass) and the low, rock viewing walls along the rim of the valley.

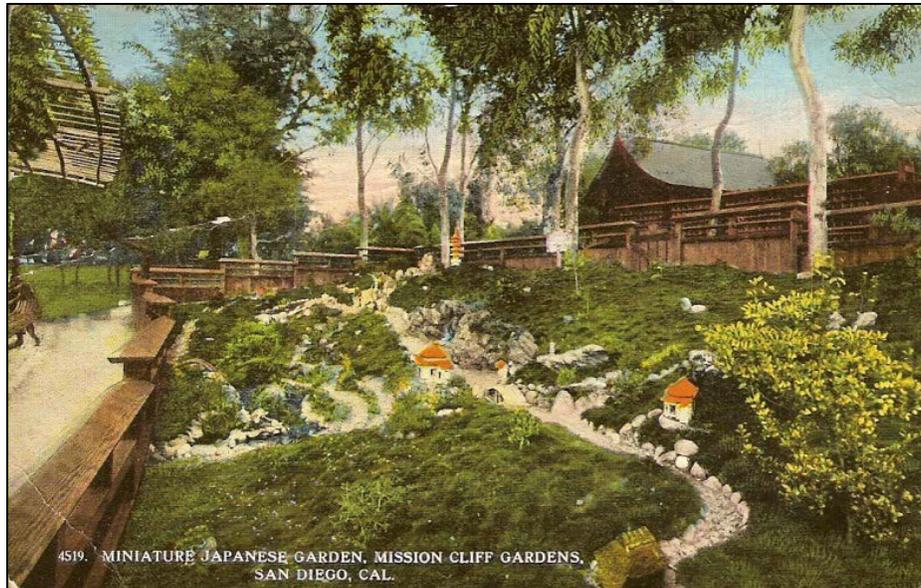


Figure 6. Postcard of the miniature Japanese gardens, date unknown (Vintage Postcards)

Bentley Ostrich Farm

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, ostrich farming became especially popular in Southern California. In addition to being valuable as tourist attractions, ostrich farms profited from selling feathers and eggs. Ostrich feather muffs, hats, boas, and fans were wildly popular in female fashion at the turn of the century and were in high demand. Prior to 1883, ostrich feathers were an expensive luxury item that had to be shipped from Africa. Ostriches were first brought into Southern California in 1883 by English naturalist Charles Sketchley, and arrived in San Diego in January of 1884 (Masters 2012). They were brought from South Africa by E.J. Johnson, manager of the newly formed American Ostrich Company (Crawford 2010). The ostriches were housed in a horse corral on 8th Street and L Street before being relocated to an 80-acre parcel in present-day Bonsall. In 1887, the American Ostrich Company opened an ostrich corral on Coronado Island. Tourists came for a chance to feed the birds and watch them race one another. In the early 1900s, the American Ostrich Company was taken over by W.H. “Harvey” Bentley (Crawford 2010).

In 1904, Spreckels invited Bentley to relocate his Coronado ostrich farm to Mission Cliff Gardens (Figure 7) (SOHO 2006). The farm was immensely successful and became “one of the most valuable [farms] in

the whole country, earning a net profit of 15 cents per annum on the outstanding shares, with increasing revenue each year” (*San Francisco Call* 1907). More than 700 people visited Bentley Ostrich Farm on Thanksgiving Day in 1906.

Bentley leased the land for the ostrich farm, so a small admission fee was charged (MacPhail 1983). Elizabeth MacPhail recalled that the farm was enclosed by “a tall wooden fence with lots of knotholes large enough for children and adults to peer through... without having to pay admission” (MacPhail 1983). Once entering the farm, visitors could watch the ostriches being raced around the yard. Adventurous visitors could ride the birds. Ostrich feathers and eggs were sold in a little store. Blown eggs were decorated for souvenirs. Fresh eggs were said to equal 24 chicken eggs, with the white of one egg being “enough to make two angel food cakes” (MacPhail 1983). Other buildings on the property included a work shop, an incubator room, a small green house, and a building for ostrich plume dying and mounting (Sanborn Map Company 1921).

Ostrich feathers from the Bentley Ostrich Farm were sold across the United States. The farm was advertised as “the original ostrich farm of America” (*Pacific Monthly* 1911). The plumes were sold for \$1 and up. However, the ostrich plume craze was short-lived. With the increasing availability of automobiles, women began to favor more streamline, tight-fitting hats over those decorated with delicate ostrich plumes (SOHO 2006). The ostrich industry reached its peak in 1913 before entering a period of steady decline. In 1915, Bentley sold his interest in the ostrich farm to Henry James Pitts and Charles Mack (MacPhail 1983). Attendance began to dwindle as crowds were drawn away to other attractions, like Balboa Park. Following Spreckels’ death in 1926, the ostrich farm and neighboring Mission Cliff Gardens were too expensive for the San Diego Electric Railway Company to maintain. The ostrich farm was closed in 1929, and many of the ostriches went to live at the San Diego Zoo.

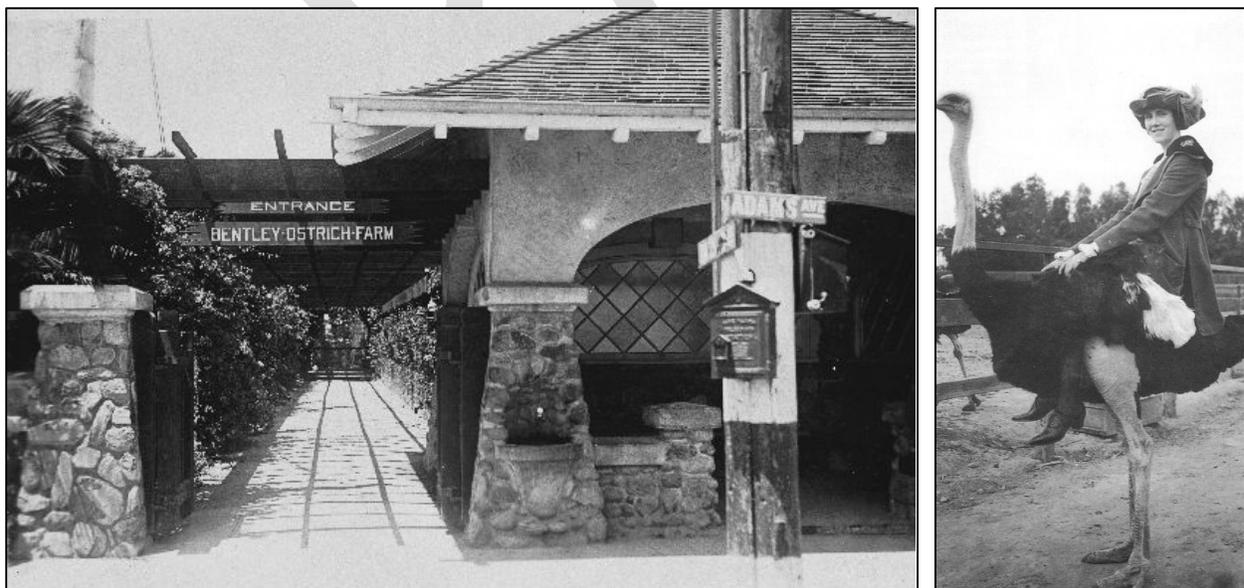


Figure 7. Left: Bentley Ostrich Farm entrance at Adams Avenue and Park Boulevard, circa 1910 (San Diego Historical Society); Right: Katherine Priebe riding an ostrich at Bentley Ostrich Farm, 1920 (O'Connor 2001)

San Diego Silk Mill

Much like the ostrich plume industry, the silk industry also did extremely well in Southern California. In the mid-19th century, the silk industry in Europe was hit by disease, and new locations for the industry were sought (McCracken 1963). Silk production was first advertised in *The San Diego Union* on October 10, 1868, as a promising enterprise, stating that the climate and soil in San Diego was satisfactory for growing mulberry trees and breeding silkworms. By 1870, 100,000 mulberry trees had been planted in the Sweetwater Valley (McCracken 1963). In the 1890s, women in San Diego were forming silk enthusiast clubs and starting “cocooneries” in their backyards (*The San Diego Union* 1891; SOHO 2006).

Beginning in 1908, the Southern California Silk Company operated at 4670 North Avenue, one block west of Spalding Place. The company was run by Edward Strahlman (City of San Diego Directory 1908). It was a short-lived operation that doesn't appear to have lasted into the early 1910s. In 1918, William Hilton moved the San Diego Silk Mill operations from National Avenue to Adams Avenue, just across the street from the Mission Cliff Gardens (City of San Diego Directory 1917, 1918).

William Hilton was born in Cheshire, England, in 1849. He immigrated to the United States in 1881 and eventually settled in California (Black 1913). He entered the silk business in San Diego in 1910 and became the proprietor of the San Diego Silk Mill in 1911. In 1915, he operated a silk exhibit at the Panama-California Exposition in Balboa Park. In 1918, he moved the San Diego Silk Mill to 1737 Adams Avenue, where he and his wife, Amelia, lived in the attached dwelling (Figure 8). Visitors to the silk mill could watch silkworms at work in a viewing cabinet (MacPhail 1983). Schoolchildren were taken to the factory on field trips, and they often left with samples of silk (McCracken 1963). Handkerchiefs (Hilton's specialty), scarves, and neckties could be purchased. William Hilton operated the silk mill on Adams Avenue until his death on November 24, 1929 (California Death Index, 1905–1939). The silk mill was relocated to 4665 Park Boulevard and continued to operate until 1931 (SOHO 2006). The Adams Avenue building is still standing at 1733-1737 Adams Avenue.



Figure 8. Trolley turning south down Park Boulevard, view towards west, circa 1920 (San Diego History Center). The San Diego Silk Mill can be seen peeking up over the sweet shop on the left side of the photo.

Spalding Place

At the turn of the 20th century, the intersection of Adams Avenue and Park Boulevard was the epicenter of activity in University Heights, at the node of an important transit corridor serving the new subdivisions on the mesa. University Heights had developed as a streetcar suburb, reliant first on horsecars in 1886, then the electric streetcar in 1888, then the cable car in 1890, and again the electric streetcar in 1895 for the development of the community. The 1891 arrival of streetcars at the intersection of Park Boulevard and Adams Avenue (the intersection immediately northwest of Spalding Place) defined the development and layout of northern University Heights. The collective efforts of the San Diego Cable Railway Company, Citizens' Traction Company, Spreckels' San Diego Electric Railway Company, and the Ralston Realty Company created the destination with the popular attractions of Mission Cliff Gardens, Bentley Ostrich Farm, and San Diego Silk Mill located nearby on Adams Avenue. Both residential and commercial development concentrated around this hub as University Heights grew. The introduction of a reliable water supply to the mesa and the extension of the streetcar line east along Adams Avenue in 1907 served as the catalysts for a local development boom in University Heights. Residents and developers clearly sought proximity to the intersection, including Frank Carr (F.C.) Spalding, a new arrival in San Diego in 1908 who saw San Diego's booming real estate market as a financial opportunity, and for whom Spalding Place is named.

The Spalding family was established in real estate speculation and development by the time of Southern California's Great Boom in the mid-1880s. F.C. Spalding's father, Professor J.F. Spalding, had moved to Kansas City, Missouri, in 1865 and founded Spalding's Commercial College, which was one of the first schools in Kansas City. The college was very successful, and J.F. also expanded into local real estate, forming the J.F. Spalding Building Company. While J.F. operated the college in Kansas City, his brother W.A. Spalding moved to Los Angeles in 1874 to join the staff of the Los Angeles *Daily Herald*, embarking on a long and illustrious career in journalism and citrus agriculture in California. Their parents and sisters also moved to Los Angeles County in the late 19th century. It was likely W.A.'s influence that led his family in Kansas City to eventually immigrate to Southern California. By 1897, several of the Spaldings formed the Spalding-Powell real estate development company to develop a portion of Azusa in Los Angeles County.

F.C. Spalding was born in Kansas City on November 2, 1869 (Figure 9). He was educated in the ward schools and the central high school, and then attended the University of Michigan. He made a trip to Los Angeles circa 1887, at the height of the Great Boom. Although his parents, uncles, and aunts, and even his grandfather, eventually lived in Los Angeles County and were involved in real estate development in the 1880s, F.C. remained in Kansas City working and teaching at Spalding's Commercial College as a manager and assistant superintendent, and then switched to a career in banking (Creel and Slavens 1902). He married Clara Louise Salisbury in 1895. His first trip back to Los Angeles was in 1904, during which "[h]e was amazed at the wonderful growth of the city, and the beauties also, and hopes some day [sic] to bring his family to California to live" (*Los Angeles Times* 1904). In Kansas City, Spalding became the secretary of the Surety Trust Company, later the Southwestern Trust Company. In 1908, he sold his interest in the company and moved to San Diego, where he became involved in speculative building and real estate sales (Black 1913).



Figure 9. F.C. Spalding, 1902 (Creel and Slavens 1902)

During the prosperous era of the 1910s and 1920s in San Diego, F.C. Spalding became a prominent figure in San Diego, serving at times as the president of the Chamber of Commerce, secretary of San Diego Realty Board, the first secretary of the Panama-California Exposition commission, president of the Fellows Boat Works and the Greenwood Cemetery Association, treasurer of the Young Men's Christian Association and the San Diego Zoological Society, and even the commodore of the San Diego Yacht Club (Black 1913). In banking, Spalding became the vice president and trust officer of the Southern Trust and Commerce Bank (*San Diego Union* 1949). In 1915, Spalding took over controlling interest of the U.S. National Bank with investments from his family in Los Angeles, and served as president of the bank until the late 1920s. He died in San Diego in 1949 (*San Diego Union* 1949).

Following the trend of Los Angeles money being invested in buying and developing real estate in San Diego in the early 1900s, Spalding family money appears to have supported Spalding's real estate business (Smythe 1908). Spalding began to buy and develop city lots by 1908. The full details of Spalding's real estate transactions in San Diego are unknown, but by April 1908, Spalding already owned property in University Heights. On April 12, 1908, the *Los Angeles Times* reported that: "F.C. Spalding will build three cottages at the corner of North avenue [sic] and Monroe Street, which will cost \$6000" (*Los Angeles Times* 1908a). However, by June, Spalding sold property at the northwest intersection of that same corner. On June 7, 1908, the *Los Angeles Herald* and the *Los Angeles Times* reported the sale: "Through the agency of S.H. Kroff, lots 25, 26 and 27, in block 44, University Heights, were sold yesterday by F.C. Spalding to A.W. Miller for a consideration of about \$2650" (*Los Angeles Herald* 1908). The *Los Angeles Times* called it "[a]mong the important sales of the week" (*Los Angeles Times* 1908b). Spalding retained property at that intersection and applied for a permit to construct a cottage worth \$2000 on Monroe Street between Campus and North Avenues in October 1908 (*Los Angeles Times* 1908d).

On July 5, 1908, the *Los Angeles Times* reported: “Among the miscellaneous sales of city real estate during the week were the following: By Ralston Realty Company to F.D. Spaulding, of Kansas City, a block of lots on University Heights, where Mr. Spaulding will erect a number of cottages” (*Los Angeles Times* 1908c) The block and lot numbers of this purchase were not specified, but the purchase does not seem to relate to the Spalding Place development, because City records indicate that Spalding acquired those lots in 1909. The *Los Angeles Times* also reported that Spalding applied for various building permits in December 1908, February 1909, and September 1909 to construct three bungalows, each worth \$1000 or \$2000 (*Los Angeles Times* 1908e, 1909a, 1909b). The locations for these bungalows were not specified, but Spalding became a prolific developer in University Heights. By July 1910, Spalding had “built more than a dozen of these houses, which find ready sale. They cost an average of \$2000” (*Los Angeles Times* 1910a).

Spalding did not limit his real estate developments to University Heights. On June 25, 1911, the *Los Angeles Times* reported that “F.C. Spalding has begun erection of two residences at First and Spruce streets. Each will be two stories, modern, and will cost \$5000. The demand for high-class residence property by new-comers continues brisk” (*Los Angeles Times* 1911a). One of these houses would be his personal permanent residence through the end of his life in 1949.

The development of Spalding Place was a distinctive project, because of Spalding’s creation of an eponymous sidestreet and perpendicular orientation of parcels within a block. According to City records, Spalding acquired 12 lots in Block 24 of the University Heights subdivision, previously owned by the San Diego Electric Railway Company in 1909 (City Records, Lot Book 1908-11) (Figure 10). Perhaps to maximize the commercial and residential potential, Spalding subdivided the lots to create 14 parcels along Spalding Place, although the parcel changes were never formalized as a separate subdivision (Figure 11). The frontage of Lots 9, 10, and 11 was developed with a commercial building (4653-63 Park Boulevard) that had storefronts along a prominent section of Park Boulevard in the commercial center near the intersection of Adams Avenue. The remaining parcels were developed with modest, one-story Craftsman bungalows.

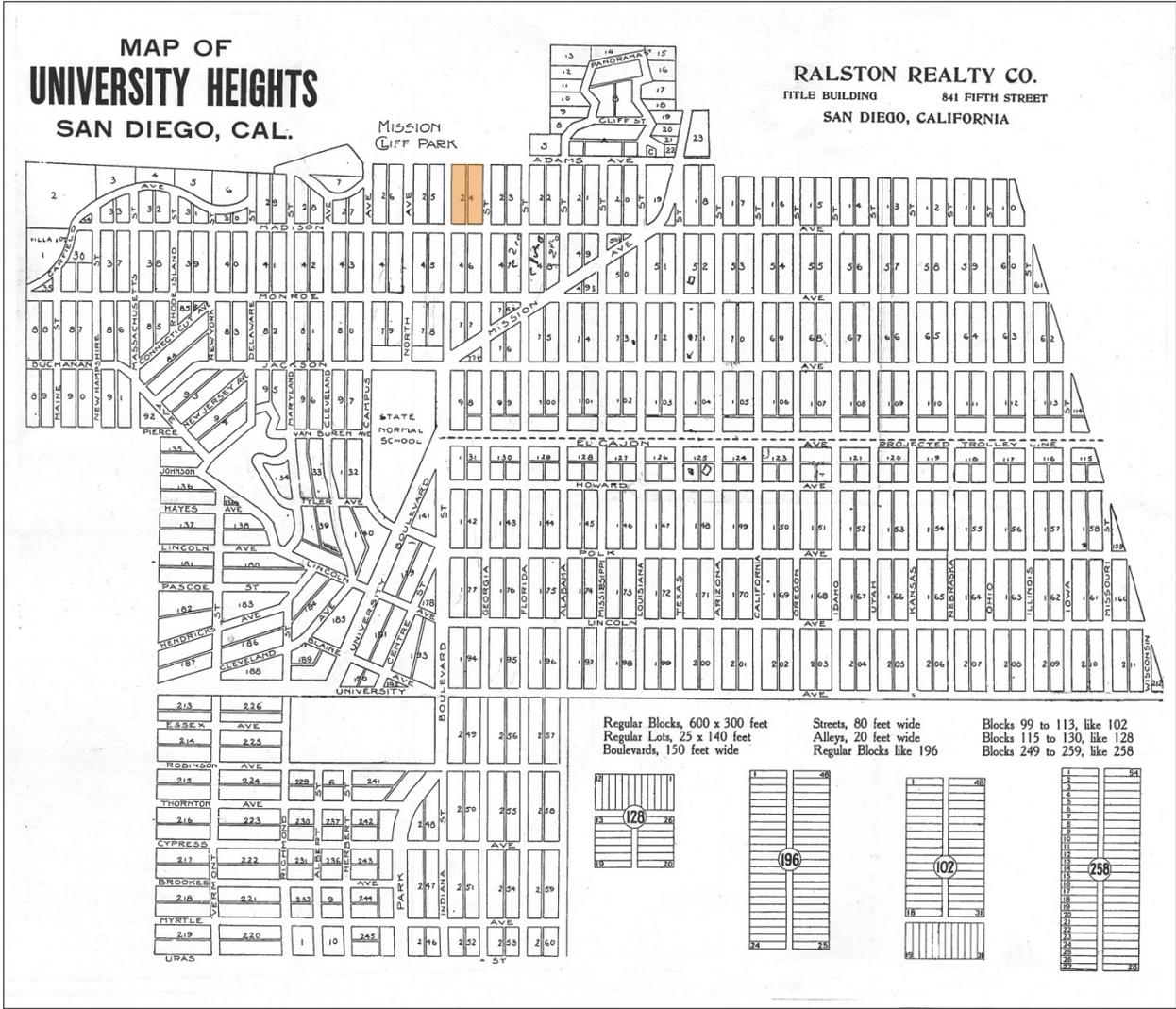


Figure 10. Ralston Realty Company map of University Heights (Block 24 highlighted in orange) (Ralston Realty Co. 1906)

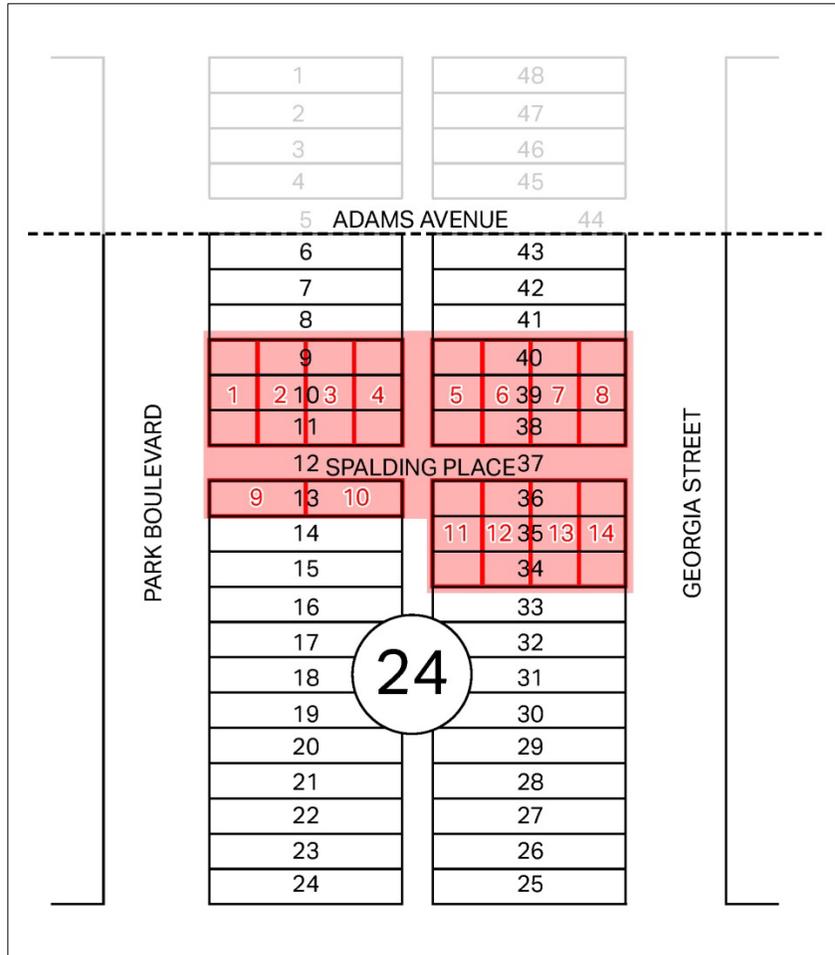


Figure 11. Block 24 lots redesigned into 14 parcels (in red) along Spalding Place (AECOM 2017)

Spalding constructed 14 buildings along Spalding Place between 1909 and 1912. Few records are available that describe construction activities at Spalding Place. In the summer of 1910, the *Los Angeles Times* reported: “F.C. Spalding has begun the erection of three cottages of the five-room type on Park boulevard near Adams place” (*Los Angeles Times* 1910a). On November 29, 1910, F.C. and Clara L. Spalding deeded Lots 12 and 37, the lots that make up the one-lane street of Spalding Place, to the City (Deed Book 1, Page 483-4). The following year, on December 10, 1911, the *Los Angeles Times* reported: “F.C. Spalding will soon begin the erection of seven cottages at Adams avenue and Georgia street, Spalding place [sic]. Each will cost \$2300 (*Los Angeles Times* 1911b). This reporting would account for 10 of the 13 bungalows on Spalding Place. It is unclear in what order the buildings were constructed, but City records and directory listings suggest that they were built from west to east, starting closest to the Park Boulevard and Adams Avenue intersection. From 1910 through 1914, the property addresses on Spalding Place numbered from 2400 to 2432, from west to east. After 1914, the addresses changed to the 1800 block of Spalding Place, following the City’s block numbering conventions.

Spalding sold nine properties on Spalding Place by 1910. Three listings for Spalding Place appeared in the 1910 City Directory: Anthony W. and Tolbert C. Shore (2400 Spalding Place, parcel 1 on Figure 11),

Harry Washburn (2406, parcel 2), and Lorenza and Louise Deler (owned by Edmonton E. Duke (no street number, parcel 4). By August, Spalding had “sold to Thomas O’Brien, late of Indiana, a modern five-room bungalow in Spalding Place for \$2650. The same style of property in the same location was sold by Spalding to Mrs. Kate Harrington, formerly of Fresno, for \$2650” (*Los Angeles Times* 1910b). O’Brien bought the bungalow at 2418 (parcel 5), and Kate Harrington bought the bungalow at 2422 (parcel 6). Also in 1910, Spalding sold properties at 2403, 2410, 2403, 2415, and 2417 (parcels 3, 9, 10, and 14, respectively) (City Records, Lot Book 1908-11). By 1911, the city directory lists occupants of all nine properties. Whether construction of all the properties was completed by 1911 is unclear, due to the indication in the *Los Angeles Times* that Spalding was still seeking construction permits for seven cottages on Spalding Place in December 1911 (*Los Angeles Times* 1911b). Spalding sold the remaining five properties (parcels 7, 8, 11, 12, and 13) in 1911, but apparently reacquired two properties (parcels 11 and 13) in 1912 (City Records, Lot Book 1908-11). It is not clear when Spalding sold the remaining two properties, but they were occupied by 1912 (City Directories).

The first residents of Spalding Place represented a mix of working- and middle-class occupations, including drivers, laborers, salesmen, hairdressers, dressmakers, and teachers. They included married couples, siblings, widows, boarders, and unmarried professionals. The commercial building in Park Boulevard (formerly 2400 Spalding Place) was occupied by a grocer, Tolbert C. Shore, and his family (City Directories). This trend in occupancy lasted throughout the 20th century.

Little information about the specific development of the buildings and street is available. While Spalding financed the development of these properties, the architects or builders associated with design and construction of the bungalows and commercial building are unidentified. In February 1914, a sewer permit was filed with the City to install a lateral sewer for Lots 9-11 along Spalding Place, but may have only served the commercial building along Park Boulevard (City Records, Sewer Permit No. 11111). In July 1922, the City made plans to pave Spalding Place in its entirety, along with a project to pave portions of Georgia Street to the east (City Records, Drawing 1150-L). According to Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, no major changes were made to the configuration of each building’s plan, with the exception of the interior division of 1847 Spalding Place into two dwelling units at some point between 1921 and 1950 (Sanborn Map Company 1921, 1950, 1956). Five single-car garage structures and other small shed structures were built on various parcels by the mid-20th century (Sanborn Map Company 1921, 1950, 1956).

More recent changes to Spalding Place include a major addition on the north side of the house located at 4656 Georgia Street, the replacement of windows on a few of the houses, and landscape changes including new fencing, paving, and plantings. Overall, the houses within the district have changed very little since their original construction in 1909–1912.

Statement of Significance

The Spalding Place Historic District is associated with real estate and residential development in the early 20th century, which is an important aspect of the historical and architectural development of University Heights. The district contributed to the early 1900’s development of the University Heights streetcar suburb. Contextually, the district relates to the real estate speculation and the development of

infrastructure that accelerated University Heights' development by 1909, and it relates to the influence of Craftsman architecture on modest residential development in San Diego.

The historical development of Spalding Place is representative of the development of University Heights as a streetcar suburb in the early 1900s. When Spalding Place was developed between 1909 and 1912, University Heights was primed with access to transit, water supply, affordable lots, and recreational attractions, and undergoing a local boom in development. From University Heights' origin as the College Hill Land Association's subdivision in 1886, it gradually developed through the Great Boom of the 1880s and the economic depression of the 1890s. Into the 1900s, the combined efforts of the Ralston Realty Company and Spreckel's San Diego Electric Railway Company and Southern California Mountain and Water Supply Company spurred tremendous growth of working- and middle-class neighborhoods, including University Heights. F.C. Spalding, an enterprising businessman from Kansas City, came to San Diego in 1908 as the city was booming, and capitalized on the amenities offered by Ralston Realty Company for the affordable development of lots in University Heights. Spalding Place was created near an important transit, commercial, and recreational node at the intersection of Park Boulevard and Adams Avenue, where modest cottages found "ready sale" (*Los Angeles Times* 1910a). Its advantageous location near the transportation and recreational hub of University Heights at the intersection of present-day Adams Avenue and Park Boulevard was an important aspect of its historical development. Spalding's development reflected the widespread growth of the community as a streetcar suburb, with Craftsman-style bungalows in easy distance to the streetcar and commercial center.

The architectural development of Spalding Place reflects compact, working-class Craftsman housing during the height of the style's popularity, supported by typical, contemporary commercial development for small businesses along an important transit route. Like several other streetcar suburbs in San Diego dating to the Great Boom in the late 1880s through the 1920s, University Heights was developed with modest, Craftsman-style single-family homes for working- and middle-class residents. The district mainly consists of modest Craftsman bungalows dating to 1909–12, at the height of the style's popularity. The bungalows reflect the vernacular architecture afforded by residents who purchased real estate properties built and promoted by developers during the early 20th century boom in San Diego. The collection of modest bungalows represents typical dwellings commissioned by F.C. Spalding, a local, speculative real estate developer, in an important era of rapid development in University Heights, exemplifying development designed and constructed by nonarchitects.

Within University Heights, there are only a few existing and potential historic districts in the entire subdivision. The three other districts that have been identified within the community include the Shirley Ann Place Historic District (designated with an expansion area identified), Valle Vista Terrace Historic District, and Park Boulevard Apartment Historic District. These districts all vary in their historical development and architectural composition. Spalding Place is distinctive for the collective significance of its contributors as a commercial and residential development fashioned by F.C. Spalding out of typical subdivision lots to exploit the proximity of the important streetcar and commercial hub, and the particular presence of the Mission Cliff Gardens, Bentley Ostrich Farm, and the San Diego Silk Mill. Spalding Place Historic District is a unique example of the architectural development of University Heights because of its atypical orientation centered on a sidestreet within a block whose lots are typically oriented towards the subdivision's broader streets. The degree of integrity exhibited by the district contributors also makes it one of the best unified examples of modest bungalows in the community.

The Spalding Place Historic District is significant for its associations as an early 20th century development in University Heights and meets Historical Resources Board Criterion A in the areas of historical and architectural development for its local significance. The period of significance begins with the subdivision of lots and construction of the first bungalows on Spalding Place in 1909 and ends in 1912, the year that the last of the properties on Spalding Place was occupied, marking the end of F.C. Spalding's involvement in the construction and development of the district.

Boundary Description and Justification

The Spalding Place Historic District exclusively contains 14 buildings, including one commercial building and 13 historic single-family houses, and the boundary includes the area of Spalding Place that historically contained these buildings. Spalding Place is an east-west, one-lane street, and the 14 properties included in the district were historically designed to be oriented towards the narrow street. Based on archival research, historic maps, and the architectural features of the properties, the boundary encompasses the properties on Spalding Place that were built by developer Frank Carr Spalding between 1909 and 1912 and are representative of early 20th century real estate development and speculation in University Heights.

The Spalding Place Historic District is located in Block 24 of the University Heights Subdivision of San Diego, which is bounded by Adams Avenue to the north, Georgia Street to the east, Madison Street to the south, and Park Boulevard to the west. Beginning at the northeast corner of Parcel 445-042-37 (4656 Georgia Street), the district boundary follows a line along Georgia Street south to the southeastern corner of Parcel 445-042-23 (4646 Georgia Street). From that point, the boundary turns west following a line along the southern edge of the parcel to the southwestern corner of Parcel 445-042-26 (1817 Spalding Place). From thence, the boundary turns north along the western edge of the parcel to a point parallel with the southeast corner of Parcel 445-042-07 (1815 Spalding Place). From this point, the boundary turns west, crossing the unnamed alley to follow a line along the southern edge of Parcel 445-042-07 until it meets the southwest corner of Parcel 445-042-08 (4651 Park Boulevard). The boundary turns north following the parcel line until it meets the northwest corner of Parcel 445-042-03 (4655–4663 Park Boulevard) and then turns east along the border of the parcel until it meets the starting point at the northeast corner of Parcel 445-042-37 at Georgia Street (Figure 1).



Figure 12. District Boundary for the Spalding Place Historic District (City of San Diego 2017)

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