

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.



1. Name of Property

Historic name: Vollers, Amelia, House

Other names/site number: _____

Name of related multiple property listing:
N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

Street & number: 353 N Claremont Street

City or town: San Mateo State: CA County: San Mateo

Not For Publication: Vicinity:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this ___ nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___ national ___ statewide ___ local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

___ A ___ B ___ C ___ D

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Signature of certifying official/Title:	Date
<hr style="border: none; border-top: 1px solid black;"/>	
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	

<p>In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.</p>	
<hr style="border: none; border-top: 1px solid black;"/>	<hr style="border: none; border-top: 1px solid black;"/>
Signature of commenting official:	Date
<hr style="border: none; border-top: 1px solid black;"/>	
Title :	State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	buildings
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	sites
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	structures
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE VICTORIAN: Queen Anne

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: WOOD: Weatherboard siding, ASPHALT shingles

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

Located in a residential neighborhood six blocks west of downtown San Mateo, the Amelia Vollers House is a one-and-one-half story, 1200 square-foot Queen Anne cottage, constructed in 1891. It has a steeply pitched hipped roof with a lower cross gable and a gable end dormer, and a front porch with a shed roof. The house has an irregular ground plan, resulting from insets on the north and south elevations as well as a prominent bay projecting from the lower cross gable. The wood-clad balloon framed house is built primarily from old growth redwood. The primary facade of the house is richly ornamented, with the exterior retaining most of its original decorative woodwork. The house is located on its original site, walking distance from the downtown San Mateo train station. The railroad line, which was key to the development of the neighborhood, runs directly behind the Vollers property and has been in continuous operation since the house was built, conveying commuters between San Francisco and San Mateo. The building retains a high degree of integrity, in location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

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Narrative Description

Setting

The Amelia Vollers House stands where it was originally built, in a residential neighborhood within walking distance of downtown San Mateo and the San Mateo train station. The lot where the house was built was part of a large, residential subdivision known at the time as the Western Addition. The subdivision was created in 1889 to capitalize on newly established regular train service between San Mateo and San Francisco, and proved attractive to buyers from a range of racial and class backgrounds.¹ The neighborhood has retained its residential character over the past century, containing a mix of apartment buildings, single family homes, churches and schools. The neighborhood continues to be home to an unusually diverse mix of residents, just as the Western Addition did at the time the house was built.²

The boundaries of the Vollers House property have remained the same since 1901, and the railroad tracks directly behind the lot are still in operation, with commuter trains continuing to offer San Mateo residents easy access to San Francisco.³ Children visiting the house today like to stand in the backyard and watch the trains go by, just as children in the 1890s may have done. Overall, the historic setting of the property retains a high degree of integrity.

Exterior

The Vollers House is a one-and-one-half story cottage in the Queen Anne style, of the Spindlework decorative subtype. The house has a steeply pitched hipped roof with a front-facing lower cross gable and a gable end dormer. The hipped ridge runs front-to-back, which is a variation that was less common prior to the emergence of the Queen Anne style.⁴ The roof is clad in composition shingle. Near the roof-line, the house still has one of its original ornamented downspout conductor boxes, which is visible from the street.

The cross gable projects beyond the rest of the facade, creating a three-dimensional texture that contributes to the asymmetry of the facade. The bargeboard on each side of the gable is ornamented with woodwork to create a relief of parallel lines, capped by bullseyes at the ends. The apex of the gable has a variant of a sunburst, and a carved sunburst appears below the gable end dormer window, just above the central bay window. Carved rectangular sunbursts, of

¹ Postel, 99.

² *The California Home and Farm* Vol. 1, Number 6 (April 1889) (San Francisco: Home and Farm Publishing Co., 1889), 1.

³ Indenture (Bill of Sale) for the Southwesterly 15 feet of lot 10 in block 23, San Mateo County Recorder's Office, July 1901.

⁴ McAlester, 263.

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a style that can be found in Queen Anne and Eastlake architectural pattern books from the 1880s, also appear on either side of the central bay window.⁵

Below the gable is a prominent cutaway bay window, typical of the Queen Anne style, with ornamented shaped corner brackets that include descending knobs. The bay windows are double-hung, wood frame, with bottom sashes that each have a single large pane of glass, and upper sashes that each have a large central pane bounded by smaller panes. The five other original ground-floor windows are also double-hung, wood frame windows, with decorative lintels and ogee lugs. Four of these five windows are placed in pairs.

The wall surfaces of the front facade are used as primary decorative elements. The design of the house avoids plain flat walls through the use of such devices as bays, overhands, and projects, and by using a variety of different textures of woodwork on different surfaces.

The exterior cladding is a mix of siding styles. The primary cladding is a horizontal board siding that has a flat, rather than canted, surface. The front gable has octagon-shaped "fish scale" shingle cladding, while the walls below the bay windows have vertical board siding of narrow boards. The area around the bay windows consists of a set of wood panels covered with a mix of incised and flat-sawn geometric decorations. The space below the front porch has vertical wood siding with decorative cut-outs. The space around the rest of the foundation, from the ground to the bottom of the first floor, has plain vertical wood siding.

The front facade of the house retains a high degree of integrity, with no alterations made to the design. While repairs have been made from time to time, they have been relatively modest, and the vast majority of the original materials and workmanship are intact, such that the facade retains all of its historic essential physical features. The front windows contain many of their original glass panes, including decorative tinted panes of yellow and rose in the parlor bay windows. The attic has a distinctive 25-pane dormer window. The front gable has a trio of windows that are an interesting reversal of the Palladian windows often found on Queen Anne houses, instead having a rectangular central nine-over-one window flanked by a pair of small quarter-circle windows. The front door is original, and is a glazed door with delicate incised decorative detailing, and a single large pane of glass set into the upper portion. We believe that almost all of the wooden ornamentation on the front facade is original: the bargeboard, the octagon-shaped "fish scale" shingles on the gable, the ornamental panels around the bay window, etc.

The design of the front porch has not been altered. The porch retains most of its original ornamental woodwork, including a rich mix of incised, sawn, and turned decorations. The woodwork includes cut-out motifs, turned elements, railing fretwork, and a spindlework frieze that incorporates wooden beads. A small shed roof over the porch is supported by turned

⁵ William T. Comstock, *Modern Architectural Designs and Details* (New York: William T. Comstock, 1881), 67.

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columns. On the porch stairs, the ornamental woodwork on the newel posts includes chamfered corners with lark's tongue ends.

The Vollers House has an irregular ground plan, resulting not just from the prominent bay projecting at the front of the house below the lower cross gable, but also from insets on both of the side walls, which serve to break the horizontal continuity of the wall plane. This irregular ground plan takes advantage of the design freedom facilitated by balloon framing techniques.

The side facades are much less elaborate than the front facade. They have simple horizontal board siding, and have only a few ornamental elements such as brackets under the eaves of the roof and decorative features around the windows. The original back porch that spanned the rear of the house has been enclosed and covered with a small shed roof. The five windows at the back of the house are aluminum-sash windows that date from a 1959 remodeling. At the back door, a small deck and back stairs also date from a later remodeling.

Interior - floorplan

In most of the house, the layout remains true to the original design. The front door opens onto a small entrance hall. The hall opens into both the parlor and the dining room, which are connected to each other by a large pair of pocket doors. The house has two bedrooms of equal size, one off of the dining room and one off the entrance hall, each with its own shallow closet. The kitchen is located behind the dining room, and is separated from the dining room by a two foot thick section of wall that contains a fireplace and a built-in cupboard that opens into the dining room. There is a tall, steep, narrow flight of stairs leading from the kitchen to the attic. A small closet occupies the space under the attic stairs. The attic is a single large unfinished space.

Modifications have been made to the original floorplan of the kitchen and to the area around it, which now includes a laundry room, a full bathroom, and a half bathroom. We know that in 1959 the kitchen, bath and porch were remodeled. An outline of the house that appears on a 1901 Sanborn map suggests there was originally a back porch in the area that is now enclosed in the house.⁶ We believe that as part of the 1959 remodeling the original back porch was enclosed, with half of the enclosed area having been used to enlarge the kitchen, and the rest used to create space for the laundry room and the half bathroom. The kitchen now has an 8-foot ceiling, as do the laundry room and bathrooms, whereas all the rooms in the unaltered front of the house have their original 10-foot ceilings. We believe that the kitchen would have originally had a 10-foot ceiling as well, and that the ceiling was lowered in 1959.

Interior - details

⁶ Sanborn Map Company, "San Mateo, Cal.," *Sanborn Maps*, July 1901.

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The five front rooms of the house (entrance hall, parlor, dining room, and two bedrooms) retain a great deal of their original features and workmanship. They all have high , and the ceilings of the two public rooms (the parlor and dining room), feature matching leaf and flower rimmed plaster medallions. The doors and windows in these front rooms have their original wood casings, with bullseyes at the corners as is common in Queen Anne houses and can be found in Queen Anne and Eastlake architectural pattern books from the 1880s.

Five of the doors are Eastlake style, with five-panel construction and details including chamfered corners with lark's tongue ends. The two bedroom closet doors have a plainer four-panel construction. All of the doors have their original wooden molding, porcelain door knobs, and distinctive Eastlake-style fittings, including filigreed steel door hinges, ornamented mortice boxes, and brass-plated strike plates and door knob face plates. These cast fittings include relief decorations with combinations of geometric and stylized Eastlake features. There is also a pair of large, 8-foot tall Eastlake-style pocket doors separating the dining room and parlor, each with 7-panel construction and with details including chamfered corners with lark's tongue ends.

Four of the front rooms have their original sash windows and original window casings (eight windows in all). These windows feature Eastlake-style locks and sash pulls, and the parlor bay windows include decorative tinted glass panes of yellow and rose.

The dining room still has its original fireplace, with a simple wooden mantelpiece and surround, a cheek of ceramic tile, and decorative cast-iron fretwork around the fire box. The wooden mantel, although modest by Victorian standards, exhibits a decorative detail typical of the Eastlake style by incorporating chamfered corners with lark's tongue ends.⁷ The tiles in the surround are glazed ceramic, laid out in a decorative earth-toned geometric design. The tiles are a mix of solid color tiles, marbleized tiles, and patterned tiles, with a more elaborate pair of matching embossed stylized sunflower tiles featured in the upper corners of the surround. These tiles match the appearance of tiles that were available in the 1890s from the American Encaustic Tiling Company of Zanesville, Ohio (founded in 1875). The fireplace's hearth is of matching glazed tiles, inset into plain floorboards.

Additional interior details of the five front rooms include the original soft-wood floors, possibly made of fir, picture rails, 12-inch tall baseboards, cast iron coat hooks in the bedroom closets, and a built-in cabinet set into the rear wall of the dining room.

The attic is almost completely unaltered from its original state. The original exposed redwood rafters and horizontal slats are untouched, and the undersides of the wood shingles are clearly visible between the slats. The attic still has its original windows and low knee walls, and the original steep, narrow attic staircase is still in place. There are a few remnants of knob and tube wiring in the attic. We believe this wiring was not original to the house, but it may have been added within the first two or three decades, and at this point the wiring itself may be considered a historic part of the house and worth preserving.

⁷ Junior League of San Francisco, 326.

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Unfortunately, the house no longer has its original light fixtures, with one possible exception: a single kerosene chandelier that was later converted to electricity, which may or may not be original to the house, but which is an appropriate fixture given that the house had neither electricity nor gas service when it was first built.

Non-contributing buildings

In addition to the Amelia Vollers House, the property also contains two non-contributing buildings in the back yard: a small guest house and two-car garage. These buildings were constructed in 2007, and were therefore not present during the property's period of significance.⁸

Exterior alterations

From 1995-1996, a number of repairs and alterations were made to the exterior of the Amelia Vollers House. The records of these changes were found through the Planning Department of the City of San Mateo.⁹

The glass pane in the front door was replaced in 1995-96. We believe that several of the large front window panes have also been replaced over the years.

Repairs were made to the front porch in 1995-1996, including: reconstruction of the railing fretwork detailing at bottom of the stair railings, repairs to the stair railings, repairs to previous modifications of the stair newel posts, and the replacement of the front porch decking and porch stair risers and treads (which had already been replaced at least once before). The 1995-1996 work also included removing the front porch roof and installing a new plywood roof with felt underlayer and fiberglass seal tab composition shingles.

A layer of modern shingles (asphalt or composition) has been added on the roof of the house on top of an earlier layer of wood shingles. The original chimney was removed to the roofline after the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake, and a reconstructed chimney with a brick veneer was built in 1995-1996.

The house has 4-foot tall wood skirtings that run below the front porch and around the circumference of the house from the ground-level foundation up to the bottom of the first floor. These skirtings are probably not original, and we do not know whether or not they match the appearance of whatever the house originally had in place there.

⁸ Building Permits, 353 N. Claremont Street, City of San Mateo.

⁹ Building Permits, 353 N. Claremont Street, City of San Mateo.

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The back side of the house has been altered far more than the front facade, but those alterations are for the most part not visible from the street. We believe the house originally had a back porch that may have been 6 feet by 25 feet, which was enclosed in 1959 and incorporated into the kitchen. A new back porch was then built, which was, in turn, entirely removed and replaced with another new porch in 1995-1996.

The original back door was also removed at some point, and the current back door was installed in 1995-1996. The five windows at the back of the house are aluminum-sash windows that date from the 1959 remodeling.

Research did not reveal the original materials of the building's foundation. The house now has a concrete foundation, and significant earthquake fortification work was done in 1995-1996 and in 2007 to repair and replace parts of the foundation and to install crawl space support posts, bracing, and plywood shear panels.

Records indicate that over the years there have been a variety of different outbuildings and livestock pens behind the house, various fences in different locations, and various different materials used as driveway paving. At this point we have no reason to believe that any of the landscaping on the property bears any relationship to what was originally there.

Interior alterations

While the five front rooms of the house retain many original features, the kitchen does not. The back of the house was remodeled in 1959, and the original kitchen was extended by incorporating some of the space gained by enclosing the back porch.¹⁰ The house now has a laundry room off the kitchen, as well as one and half bathrooms, which are later alterations.

The original kitchen windows were lost in the 1959 remodeling, and the kitchen, bathrooms, and laundry room now have aluminum-sash windows that date from the 1959 remodeling. The original back door was also removed at some point, as were any other original doors in the kitchen and bathroom area. The kitchen and bathrooms were remodeled at least twice more, in 1995-1996 and in 2007, and at this point the kitchen, bathrooms, and laundry room do not have any visible features that were original to the house, apart from the walls.¹¹ One of the original bedroom windows was also lost in the 1959 remodeling, and that window was replaced again with a wooden window installed in 1995-1996.¹² In the kitchen, bathrooms, and laundry room, a ceramic tile floor has been installed on top of the original fir floor.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

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In the attic, a few small soffit vents have been added, as well as some knob and tube wiring, and a single light switch and light fixture. In 2010, as a safety measure, the attic stairs were repaired by adding sturdy new tread boards on top of the sagging original treads, but this is a reversible alteration.

All of the rooms in the house now also have modern wiring, outlets, switches, and light fixtures. Piped water was available in the neighborhood when the lot for the house was first purchased, so the house may have had indoor plumbing at the time it was built.¹³ However, the plumbing has been repeatedly updated over the years and any original plumbing has been lost.

Electricity and gas service did not arrive until after the house was built,^{14,15} so the house may have originally had kerosene lighting. At some point the house was connected to a natural gas main and gas appliances were added. A gas floor furnace was installed in the dining room floor, and the floor furnace was later replaced with a larger furnace located in the crawl space below the house, with ductwork and a half-dozen floor registers to distribute heat to the different rooms of the house. The house also now has a gas stove, water heater, and clothes-dryer.

Integrity

The house retains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, and feeling, and association.

Location

The Vollers House is in its original location in a residential neighborhood of San Mateo, and retains its integrity of location.

Design

With the exception of the 1959 remodeling of the kitchen at the back of the house, there have been minimal alterations to the Vollers House. Both from the street and inside the house, the original Queen Anne Victorian design is clearly communicated. For example, the house has many iconic Queen Anne exterior elements, including a steeply-pitched hipped roof with a lower cross gable that overhangs a bay window in the wall below, spindlework ornamentation, and highly textured wall surfaces achieved through a variation of horizontal board siding, vertical board siding, and octagon-shaped "fish scale" shingles. The interior of the house retains many decorative flourishes characteristic of the Queen Anne, including plaster ceiling medallions with leaf-and-flower motifs; decorative wooden molding, trim, and picture rails; and

¹³ *The California Home and Farm.*

¹⁴ Johnstone and Crane.

¹⁵ Postel, 102.

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ornamented strike plates, door knob face plates, and door hinges on the interior Eastlake style doors. Two new, non-contributing buildings are at the back of the property, and do not interfere with the view of the Vollers House from the street. In its present form, the Vollers House retains a high level of design integrity.

Setting

The neighborhood surrounding the Vollers has retained its primarily residential character in the past century, although some original houses have been replaced with apartment buildings. The boundaries of the lot have remained the same since 1901,¹⁶ and the railroad tracks directly behind the property, which were key to the development of the neighborhood, still remain in operation today, conveying commuters between San Francisco and San Mateo. Children visiting the house today like to stand in the backyard and watch the passenger trains go by, just as children in the 1890s may have enjoyed standing in the yard to watch the passenger trains. Overall, the historic setting of the property retains a high degree of integrity.

Materials

The Vollers House retains many of its original materials, including original ceramic fireplace tiles, porcelain door knobs, brass-plated strike plates and door knob face plates, filigreed steel door hinges, plaster ceiling medallions, wooden molding and trim, built-in cabinetry, wood flooring, old growth redwood framing, square cut nails, and original windows and doors. The materials of the Vollers House retain a good degree of integrity and serve to articulate the Queen Anne Victorian character of the property.

Workmanship

The many details of original workmanship in the Vollers House, such as the turned porch columns, the ornamental bargeboard, and colored glass window panes provide physical evidence of construction methods and styles of Queen Anne Victorian style residential structures of the late nineteenth century in San Mateo. The building has most of its original fabric to communicate the workmanship associated with that style and has a good degree of integrity.

Feeling

The Vollers House conveys a strong sense of late nineteenth century Queen Anne residential construction in San Mateo. The building retains its original massing, and the exterior has few modern intrusions. The Vollers House also conveys a sense of what life might have been like in

¹⁶ Indenture (Bill of Sale) for the Southwesterly 15 feet of lot 10 in block 23.

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the 1890s, with the original residents walking to San Mateo's small downtown to buy supplies, or catch the train to work in San Francisco. It retains a high level of integrity of feeling.

Association

The Vollers House continues to be associated with the Queen Anne style, and remains an excellent example of the style in San Mateo.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1891

Significant Dates

1891 – house construction

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Tannahill, James Sharpe

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Amelia Vollers House is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C at the local level of significance for embodying the distinctive characteristics of the Queen Anne style. A highly ornamented one-and-one-half story Queen Anne house, the Vollers House is one of the surviving works of the builder James Sharpe Tannahill. Tannahill also constructed the National Register listed Kearney mansion in Fresno, California, as well as houses in the towns of Redwood City and Menlo Park on the San Francisco peninsula, not far south of the Vollers House. The Vollers House is one of a very small number of Queen Anne homes remaining in San Mateo, and is an excellent example of the Queen Anne Spindlework style. The period of significance is 1891, the year the house was constructed.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

The Queen Anne style was a dominant domestic building style in the United States from about 1880 to 1900, and California has some of the most fanciful examples.¹⁷ The American Queen Anne style drew inspiration from the work of British architect Richard Norman Shaw, but added more complex designs, including steeper roofs with irregular shapes, asymmetric facades, and devices to avoid a smooth-walled appearance, such as cutaway bay windows and decorative detailing, including spindlework and patterned wood shingles shaped into various designs.¹⁸ It was an eclectic, decoratively exuberant style that “reached its most luxuriant flowering” in California, with its popularity attributed to a design that was easily adaptable to middle and upper class tastes and budgets, and to local building materials and preferences.¹⁹

In California and other western states, Queen Anne homes were typically made of wood. Wood was an inexpensive, widely-available material that could easily be transported by rail, did not require highly specialized construction skills, and was easily worked by hand or machine. In Queen Anne houses, wood was used for the framing, sheathing, window frames and sashes, doors, floors, lath, interior trim, and most of the decorative elements.

Nonetheless, the wide adoption of the style was dependent on advances in technology. The advent of balloon framing enabled the production of buildings with more complex volumes and architectural features such as bay windows. Unlike traditional hewn timber construction,

¹⁷ Kenneth Naversen, *Beautiful America's California Victorians* (Woodburn, OR: Beautiful America Publishing Company, 1998), 22.

¹⁸ McAlester and McAlester, 268, 263; Calloway and Cromley, 274-275.

¹⁹ Elinor Richey, *The Ultimate Victorians of the Continental Side of San Francisco Bay* (Berkeley: Howell-North Books, 1970), 13, 95.

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houses made with balloon framing were constructed of uniform lumber, with inexpensive two-by-four inch boards combined as upright studs and cross members and held together by mass-produced nails.²⁰ Other technological advances enabled the mass production of parts, including wood milling machinery such as band saws and lathes that were used to cut repeating decorative elements and turn porch posts. Improvements in glass production in the 1880s enabled the production of large, single-pane window sashes, and mechanical mass-production technology facilitated decorative detailing such as the stamped decoration on interior door hinge plates.²¹ Greater access to and inexpensive production of house building publications, including trade catalogs, pattern books, and architectural periodicals, also promoted the adoption of the Queen Anne style.²²

Many features of the Vollers House, both interior and exterior, serve to exhibit the advances in technology that made the Queen Anne style possible. Exterior features that are characteristic of the Queen Anne style include an asymmetric facade with irregular massing, a complex roofline comprised of a steeply-pitched hipped roof with a lower cross gable that overhangs a cutaway bay window in the wall below, spindlework ornamentation, and highly textured wall surfaces achieved through a variation of horizontal board siding, vertical board siding, and octagon-shaped "fish scale" shingles. The narrow, paired, double-hung, mostly single-lite windows are also typical of the style. The interior of the house also displays many of the characteristics of the Queen Anne style, including decorative wooden molding and trim, high ceilings and picture rails, large pocket doors between the parlor and dining room, a fireplace with a tiled hearth and surround, decorative brass strike plates and door knob face plates, and filigreed steel door hinges. Many of these ornamental details were made possible by the recent advances in milling and other technology, and by the abundance of wood available at the time.

Despite the popularity of the Queen Anne style, in San Mateo and other cities on the peninsula to the south of San Francisco, Queen Anne homes built in the 19th century have mostly disappeared, lost to later development.²³ The Vollers House is one of only a small number of Queen Anne style houses remaining in San Mateo.

The Vollers House has been recognized for its architectural significance repeatedly by the city of San Mateo over the course of the past 50 years. The house was initially recognized as significant in a 1964 historic building survey.²⁴ Later, the September 1989 City of San Mateo Historic Building Survey Final Report rated the Vollers House as one of "San Mateo's most historically

²⁰ Calloway and Cromley, 272, 272.

²¹ Janet Foster, *The Queen Anne House: America's Victorian Vernacular* (New York: Abrams, 2006), 18, 25.

²² Calloway and Cromley, 272.

²³ Naversen, 41.

²⁴ O'Connell.

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and architecturally significant buildings”²⁵ and singled out the Vollers House as an iconic example of Queen Anne architecture in San Mateo,²⁶:

One house, at 353 North Claremont, shows all of the exuberance associated with California’s version of the Queen Anne. ... The builder of this cottage lavished upon this small area ornamentation akin to the most elaborate large-scale dwelling.

The Vollers House is also described in the July 1989 California Department of Parks and Recreation Historic Resources Inventory as part of the City of San Mateo’s survey of its historic resources:

*This house is an excellent example of the exuberant Victorian style known as “Queen Anne.” San Mateo has few houses such as this one, which display the full range of confusion and visual excitement so often seen in the style.*²⁷

Historical setting and significance

The Amelia Vollers House is located in San Mateo, California in what was formerly called the Western Addition of the city. The Western Addition was originally part of Rancho San Mateo, a 6,538 acre estate purchased in the late 1840s by William Davis Merry Howard, a successful San Francisco businessman, from Cayetano Arenas, secretary to Governor Pio Pico, the last governor of Alta California. Some portion of the land passed to Howard’s son, William H. Howard, who, in 1889, hired surveyor Davenport Bromfield to lay out the Western Addition, a 250-lot subdivision near the downtown San Mateo train station.²⁸

The lots were sold at auction, with the sale aggressively advertised, emphasizing all that San Mateo had to offer.²⁹ A full-page, front-page advertisement in the *California Home and Farm* described the sale as follows:

Dear Sir: On Saturday April 6th 1889 we will offer without reserve to the highest bidder the heretofore reserved portion of the Howard Estate situated in a central part of the beautiful suburban Town of San Mateo, known as the Western Addition. Streets graded. Water piped. Shaded and ornamental trees line the Avenues and Streets. Magnificent country seats and beautiful suburban homes surround the property. Schools, churches, and social advantages are unsurpassed. The offering is without question the most desirable one ever made in the State. San Mateo is now reached by fast train in 35 minutes and the times will soon be reduced to 22 minutes. This property must soon

²⁵ Wickert, “City of San Mateo Historic Building Survey Final Report”, 9, 73.

²⁶ Ibid., 45, 47.

²⁷ Wickert, “Historic Resources Inventory, 353 N. Claremont.”

²⁸ Postel, 15, 97.

²⁹ *The California Home and Farm*.

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*double and quadruple the present selling prices. Send for map, etc. to Briggs Fergusson, 314 California St S.F. P.S. Round trip fare 50c.*³⁰ (Emphasis in original.)

As the advertisement suggests, the existence of a rail line between San Francisco and San Mateo was key to attracting buyers, and indeed, was key to the development of San Mateo, as it made travel between San Francisco and the Peninsula easier and more fashionable.³¹

The railroad had first arrived in San Mateo in 1863, spurring wealthy San Franciscans to purchase or further develop land on the Peninsula for summer or weekend estates. The creation of the Western Addition subdivision near the San Mateo railroad station and regular train service (originally on a single track) between San Mateo and San Francisco made it possible for San Mateo's new middle class residents to commute to work in San Francisco each day. Until then, San Mateo had largely been the preserve of a wealthy elite who controlled large areas of land and the working classes who serviced their estates; the sale of these lots allowed the middle-class to establish a foothold in San Mateo for the first time.³² According to historian Mitchell Postel these new residents

*longed for the beauty, exclusiveness, and privacy of the village of San Mateo. ... They bought their lots and built their wood-frame Gothic Revival, Italianate, Queen Anne and Colonial Revival houses right next door to those of working class carpenters, laundry workers and gardeners of the village, who also moved out into the Western Addition. There were no restrictions of class, race or ethnic background.*³³

On April 10, 1889, the site of the future Amelia Vollers House (lot 10 block 23) was filed in the office of the recorder, San Mateo County.³⁴ The following month, Amelia Vollers purchased the land from William H. Howard for \$10 in gold coin.³⁵ Vollers had emigrated from Russia, and at the time she bought this land she was 49 years old, married to a German immigrant named Hancke Vollers, and mother to two adult children, William and Catherine.³⁶ Her son, husband, and sister-in-law purchased additional lots nearby. Some of these purchases may have been investments, calculated risks that the properties would indeed "double or quadruple" in price, just as the *California Home and Farm* promised.³⁷

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Postel, 98.

³² Ibid., 41, 99.

³³ Ibid., 99.

³⁴ "Map of the subdivisions of blocks in the Western Addition to the Town of San Mateo," 1889.

³⁵ Indenture (Bill of Sale) for lot 10 in block 23, San Mateo County Recorder's Office, May 1889.

³⁶ Megan Neakrase and Clifford Laureno, "Amelia M Vollers" (Find A Grave, 2008 & 2012); *The San Francisco Call*, December 9, 1903, Obituaries, page 15 column 7; *The San Francisco Call*, July 5, 1906, Obituaries, pg. 11 column 6.

³⁷ *The California Home and Farm*.

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In 1890, Amelia Vollers entered into a building contract with James S. Tannahill, and the house was completed in 1891.³⁸ Property tax records for 1891 indicate that the land was valued at \$100, and the house at \$800.³⁹ At the time, \$800 represented approximately twice the average annual wage for American workers.⁴⁰

When it was first built, the Vollers House had no electricity or gas service. The following year, in 1892, the San Mateo Gas Light Company was incorporated, and sometime in the mid-1890s an electric light company was formed. The house may not have had electric lighting until many years later, as electricity in the early years was reportedly unreliable. According to a Western Addition resident, in the 1890s, most families used oil lamps for lighting.⁴¹

In 1894, San Mateo was incorporated as a city,⁴² and began to grow, adding a bank, dry goods store, and other businesses to a relatively small downtown that, until then, had offered the bare essentials, including two butchers, a bakery, a tailor, two shoemakers, a livery, a lumber yard, a doctor, and several hotels and saloons. However, even as it grew, it retained a rustic character, with wooden sidewalks, dirt roads, and hitching posts and water troughs for horses.⁴³

Further development of the city occurred the following decade with the expansion of the Southern Pacific Railway. The Southern Pacific purchased land from neighboring property owners that allowed the railway to lay to lay a second track and offer more frequent train service. Amelia Vollers sold the southwesterly 15 feet of the Vollers House property to the railway on July 29, 1901, for \$75.00.⁴⁴ She died five years later, in 1906,⁴⁵ and the property ultimately passed to another woman, Sophie Severin, who sold the house in 1943 to Frank and Dolpha Lavezzo.⁴⁶

The builder, James Sharpe Tannahill

James Tannahill, the builder of the Amelia Vollers House, was born in Quebec, Canada on November 17, 1848, the son of John and Marian (Caldwell) Tannahill, who had both come to Canada from Scotland. James Tannahill grew up on the family farm in Canada, and apprenticed to learn the trade of a miller. In 1871, James Tannahill moved west, and when he arrived in

³⁸ Recorder's Book, San Mateo County Recorder's Office, Sept 30, 1890, 166.

³⁹ "Tax 17," item 82, volume 2, page 27.

⁴⁰ US Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1957* (Washington DC: US Bureau of the Census, 1960), 92.

⁴¹ Postel, 102; Johnstone and Crane; Postel, 109.

⁴² Roy W. Cloud, *The Story of San Mateo County, California* (Chicago: SJ Clarke Publishing Company, 1928).

⁴³ Postel, 102, 108.

⁴⁴ Indenture (Bill of Sale) for the Southwesterly 15 feet of lot 10 in block 23.

⁴⁵ Neakrase and Laurenno.

⁴⁶ Recorder's Book 1063, San Mateo County Recorder's Office, May 19, 1943, 177.

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California he settled in Redwood City, in San Mateo County. He initially worked as a miller and a carpenter, and later he owned and operated a planing mill and became a builder. According to the *History of the State of California and Biographical Record of the San Joaquin Valley*, "many of the finest residences in [Redwood City] and at Menlo Park were constructed by him."⁴⁷

Tannahill lived in Redwood City until 1891, when he moved to Fresno County. After three-and-a-half years spent farming, he returned to general contracting and building. By 1905 he was described as "one of the leading builders in the San Joaquin valley. Among the more prominent residences that he has erected may be mentioned the Kearney mansion, the home of James Brown and others. He has also erected for himself a nice home at No. 442 Blackstone Avenue."⁴⁸ The Kearney Mansion is listed in the National Register of Historic Places as item number 75000426.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Guinn, 1336.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ William Briam, "M. Theo. Kearney Park & Mansion, National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form," U.S. National Park Service, National Register Information System (NRIS) item number 75000426, March 1975.

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Indenture (Bill of Sale) for lot 10 in block 23. San Mateo County Recorder's Office, May 1889.

http://www.vollershous.org/archives/1889-05-14_Bill_of_sale.pdf

Indenture (Bill of Sale) for the Southwesterly 15 feet of lot 10 in block 23. San Mateo County Recorder's Office, July 1901.

http://www.vollershous.org/archives/1901-07-29_Bill_of_sale.pdf

Documents available at the City of San Mateo Planning Department

Building Permits, 353 N. Claremont Street. City of San Mateo.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Planning Department, City of San Mateo, CA
Recorder's Office, San Mateo County
San Mateo County Historical Association - Archive Room, San Mateo History Museum, Redwood City, CA

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property 0.26 acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 37.573975 Longitude: -122.329545

2. Latitude: Longitude:

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3. Latitude: Longitude:

4. Latitude: Longitude:

Or
UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

1. Zone: Easting: Northing:

2. Zone: Easting: Northing:

3. Zone: Easting: Northing:

4. Zone: Easting : Northing:

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The San Mateo County Assessor's Parcel Number of the property is 032-203-060.

The property is bound by N. Claremont Street on the northeast, by the railroad right-of-way on the southwest, and by the property lines of 353 N. Claremont Street on the northwest and southeast.

In 21st century legal documents the property is described as:

Lot 10 in Block 23, as designated on the map entitled, "Map of the Subdivision of Blocks in the Western Addition to the Town of San Mateo", which map was filed in the office of the Recorder of the County of San Mateo, State of California on April 12, 1889 in Book "D" of Maps at Page 48 and a copy entered in Book 1 of Maps at Page 52. Excepting therefrom the Southwesterly 15 feet as conveyed to Southern Pacific Railroad Co a corp by Deed for Amelia M. Vollers dated July 29, 1901 in Book 85 of Deeds at Page 358, records for San Mateo County, California.

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Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary of the resource conforms to the property's area at the time of the construction of the historic house, less the southwesterly 15 feet of the original property which was later conveyed to the railroad.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Brian Skinner and Patricia McDaniel
organization: _____
street & number: 353 N Claremont Street
city or town: San Mateo state: CA zip code: 94401
e-mail: brian.douglas.skinner@skinnerhome.org
telephone: 1-650-401-8052
date: April 13, 2014

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** Latitude/Longitude Reference Point Map in place of USGS map.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

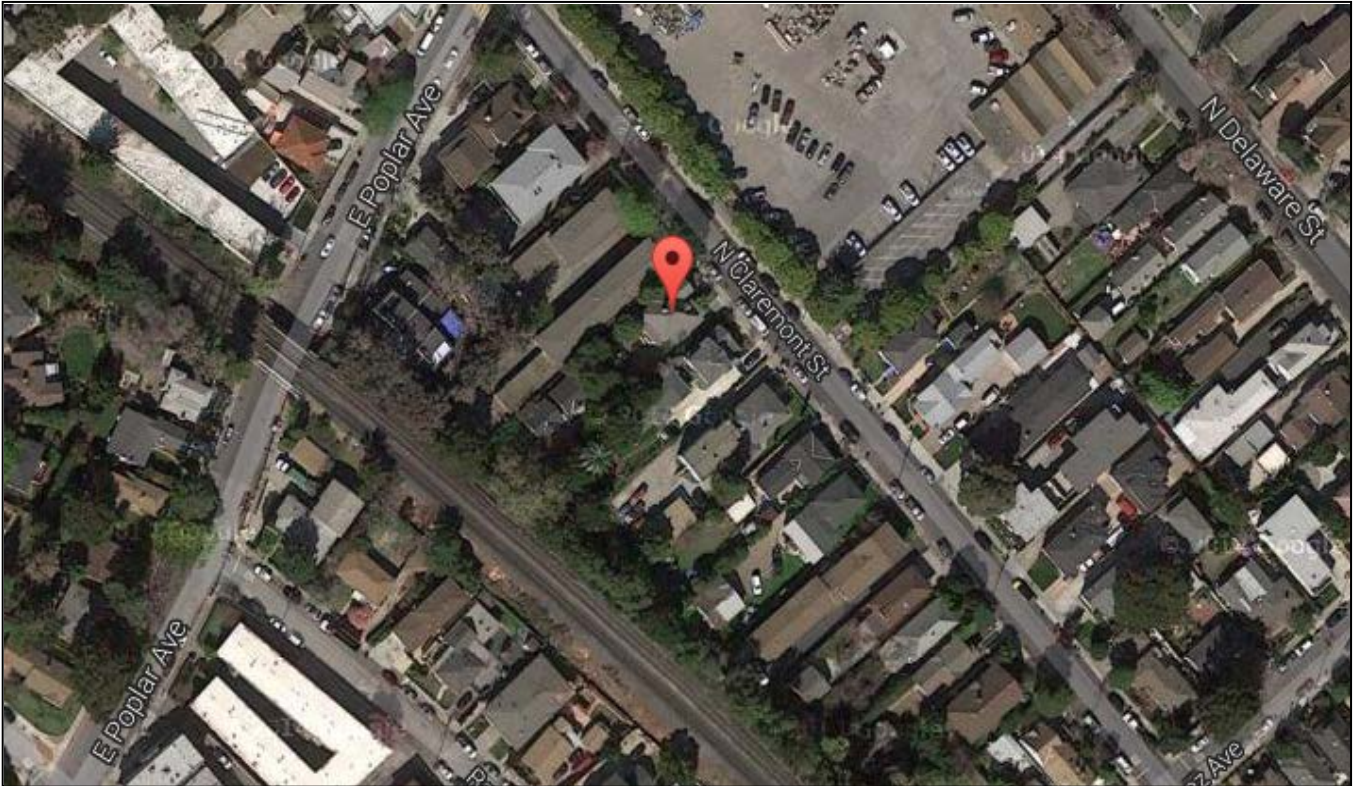
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Latitude/Longitude Reference Point Map

Latitude: 37.573983\

Longitude: -122.329567

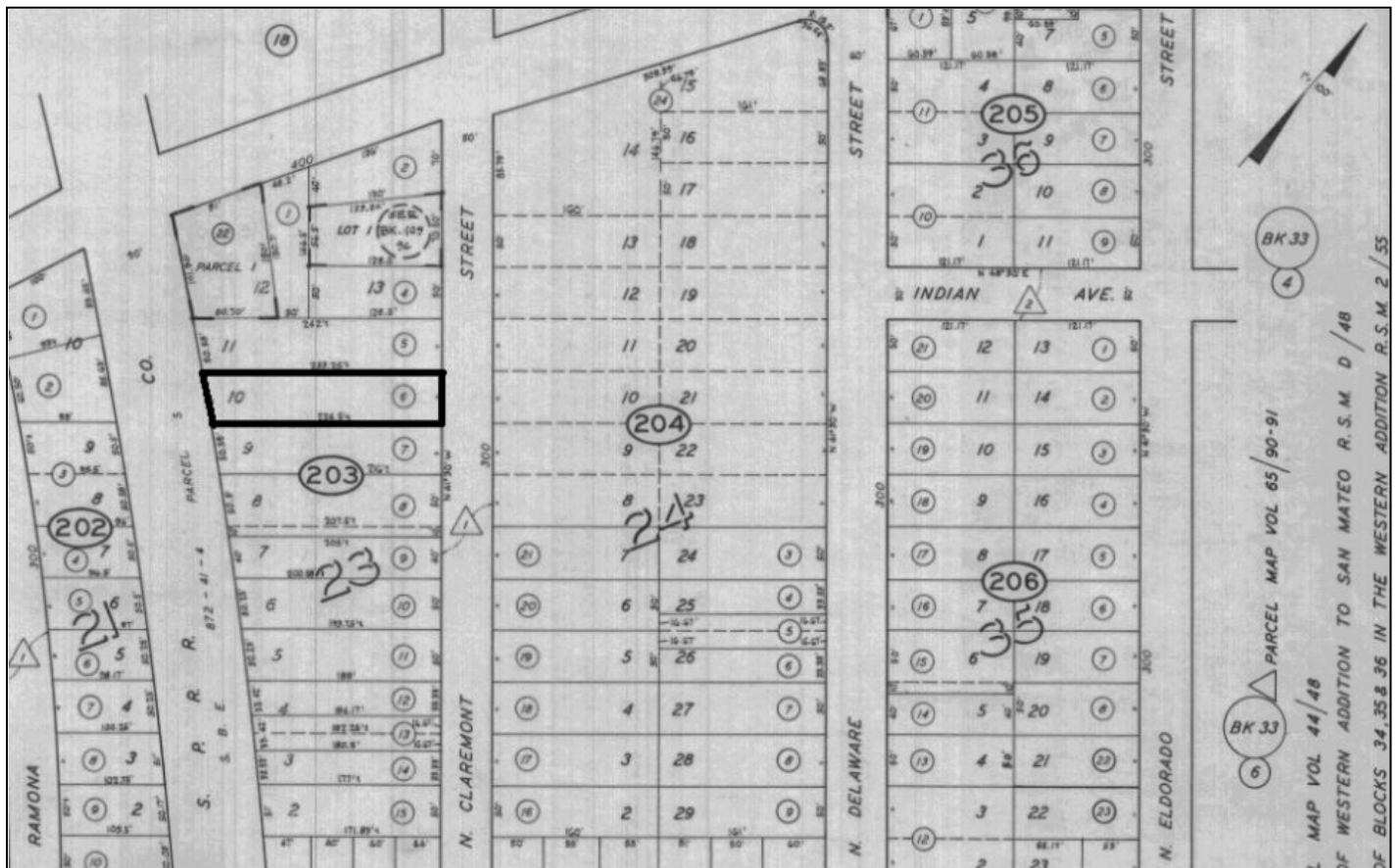


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Sketch Map

Property boundary outlined in bold.
Source: Amador County Assessor's Map Book.



Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

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Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property:	Vollers, Amelia, House
City or Vicinity:	San Mateo
County:	San Mateo County
State:	California
Photographer:	Brian Douglas Skinner
Date Photographed:	April, August, and September 2013
Location of Original Digital Files:	353 N. Claremont St, San Mateo, CA 94401
Number of Photographs:	24

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

Photo #1 (CA_SanMateoCounty_AmeliaVollersHouse_0001)
Northeast facade and southeast elevation, camera facing west.

Photo #2 (CA_SanMateoCounty_AmeliaVollersHouse_0002)
Detail of cross gable and bay windows, camera facing southwest.

Photo #3 (CA_SanMateoCounty_AmeliaVollersHouse_0003)
Detail of front porch, camera facing west.

Photo #4 (CA_SanMateoCounty_AmeliaVollersHouse_0004)
Detail of front door, camera facing southwest.

Photo #5 (CA_SanMateoCounty_AmeliaVollersHouse_0005)
Detail of 25-pane dormer window, camera facing southwest.

Photo #6 (CA_SanMateoCounty_AmeliaVollersHouse_0006)
Detail of 9-over-1 gable window with flanking quarter circle windows, camera facing southwest.

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- Photo #7 (CA_SanMateoCounty_AmeliaVollersHouse_0007)
Northwest elevation, camera facing south.
- Photo #8 (CA_SanMateoCounty_AmeliaVollersHouse_0008)
Detail of downspout conductor box, camera facing south.
- Photo #9 (CA_SanMateoCounty_AmeliaVollersHouse_0009)
Southeast elevation, camera facing west.
- Photo #10 (CA_SanMateoCounty_AmeliaVollersHouse_0010)
Southwest and southeast elevations, camera facing north.
- Photo #11 (CA_SanMateoCounty_AmeliaVollersHouse_0011)
Southwest elevation, camera facing northeast.
- Photo #12 (CA_SanMateoCounty_AmeliaVollersHouse_0012)
Interior, entrance hall, front door, camera facing northeast.
- Photo #13 (CA_SanMateoCounty_AmeliaVollersHouse_0013)
Interior, dining room, pocket doors, camera facing north.
- Photo #14 (CA_SanMateoCounty_AmeliaVollersHouse_0014)
Interior, dining room, fireplace, camera facing southwest.
- Photo #15 (CA_SanMateoCounty_AmeliaVollersHouse_0015)
Interior, dining room, built-in cupboard, camera facing southwest.
- Photo #16 (CA_SanMateoCounty_AmeliaVollersHouse_0016)
Interior, parlor, bay windows, camera facing northeast.
- Photo #17 (CA_SanMateoCounty_AmeliaVollersHouse_0017)
Interior, dining room, 5-panel Eastlake doors, camera facing south.
- Photo #18 (CA_SanMateoCounty_AmeliaVollersHouse_0018)
Interior, bedroom, 4-panel closet door, camera facing northeast.
- Photo #19 (CA_SanMateoCounty_AmeliaVollersHouse_0019)
Interior, parlor, Eastlake door hardware, camera facing south.
- Photo #20 (CA_SanMateoCounty_AmeliaVollersHouse_0020)
Interior, bedroom, ornamental door hinge, camera facing south.

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Photo #21 (CA_SanMateoCounty_AmeliaVollersHouse_0021)
Interior, parlor, pocket door hardware, camera facing south.

Photo #22 (CA_SanMateoCounty_AmeliaVollersHouse_0022)
Interior, assorted hardware we believe was original to the house.

Photo #23 (CA_SanMateoCounty_AmeliaVollersHouse_0023)
Interior, dining room, plaster ceiling medallion and kerosene chandelier, camera facing southwest.

Photo #24 (CA_SanMateoCounty_AmeliaVollersHouse_0024)
Residential setting, camera facing west.