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## A SURVEY OF SURVIVING BUILDINGS OF THE KROTONA COLONY IN HOLLYWOOD

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Krotona is one of three important early twentieth-century Theosophical colonies in California.<sup>1</sup> From 1912 until its 1926 move to new quarters in Ojai,<sup>2</sup> the Krotona colony<sup>3</sup> flourished in Los Angeles on a piece of Hollywood Hills property situated just west of Beachwood Canyon and north of Franklin Avenue.<sup>4</sup> Its physical plant included two major works by the San Diego architectural firm of Mead & Requa; at least one major work designed by Arthur and Alfred Heineman; minor works by Elmer C. Andrus and Harold Dunn<sup>5</sup>; and a substantial group of houses designed by an amateur woman architect who played a major role in the Theosophical Society, Marie Russak Hotchener. Nearly all of Krotona's major and many of its minor buildings still stand occupied, though all have been to some extent remodeled and most changed dramatically in function. Together they comprise what may well be the largest coherent group of architecturally significant, Theosophical structures in the western hemisphere.

### **Krotona in the Modern Theosophical Movement**

In 1875 in New York City, Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, H. S. Olcott, and a few fellow occultists founded the Theosophical Society to promote a particular synthesis of irrationality, spiritualism, eastern religion, Masonic lore, and scientific speculation all bound up in a purportedly logical discourse of revelation.<sup>6</sup> Through lectures and publications (most notably the major books by Blavatsky herself, *Isis Unveiled* of 1877 and *The Secret Doctrine* of 1888), organized Theosophy in the United States gained a considerable number of converts over the last two decades of the nineteenth century. Among these converts was one Albert P. Warrington.<sup>7</sup>

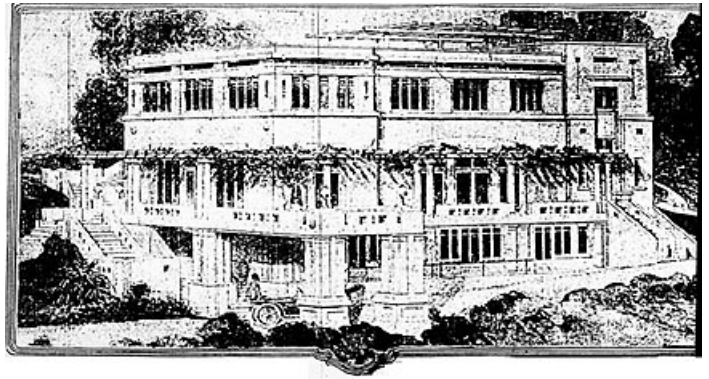
Warrington, born in 1866, abandoned a career with the South Roanoke & Southern Railway in 1892 to pursue a law degree at the University of Virginia. His second

career, as an attorney in Norfolk, was abbreviated by his deepening commitment to work on behalf of the Theosophical Society. He joined the Society in December 1896 and began to study Theosophy in earnest in 1898. Over the next several years he formed personal acquaintances with Olcott, C. W. Leadbeater, and other Society leaders during a troubled period of schism in the Society's organization. In 1906, his faithful work on behalf of its administration headquarter at Adyar, Madras, India, was rewarded by admission to its Esoteric School (or "Section"). Through spiritual techniques such as meditation, members of the Esoteric Section developed their higher faculties, which could then be used to direct spiritual energy to the accomplishment of the Theosophical Society's goals and, more generally, the evolution of humanity toward unity. Through his membership in this inner circle of Theosophists, and with the indispensable support of his spiritual guide, Annie Besant (the Outer Head of the Esoteric Section who, in 1907, became the International President of the Theosophical Society), Warrington was able to advance his dearest project from idea to reality. This project was perhaps inspired by an proposal put before the 1896 convention of the Theosophical Society to found a Theosophical temple in California.<sup>8</sup> In Warrington's formulation, it called for creating a North American community "somewhat on the lines of the sodality of Pythagoras... where people of all classes and ages can be taught how to put into daily practice the ideals which, for the most part, have not... advanced beyond high-sounding precepts, and so to demonstrate to the world the practical value of the higher life to the growth and life of a Great Nation."<sup>9</sup> Augustus F. Knudsen, a prominent member of the Krotona colony, called attention to a more specific and occult purpose of the community as "an answer to the demand for a more definite exposition of the work called for in the Third Object of the Theosophical Society—the investigation of powers latent in man."<sup>10</sup>

Warrington formally proposed such a community, to be called Crotona, to Besant shortly before she appointed

him Head of the Esoteric Section in America, in early 1907. After the death of his wife in 1908, its realization became a major focus of his life. His initial choice of site had been Jamestown, Virginia. From December 1910 to May 1911 he traveled across the United States investigating other possible locations. After visiting Los Angeles in January 1911, and despite Besant's earlier suggestions of sites in Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, or Mexico, Warrington settled on one in southern California as the most suitable. In 1911, as fundraising efforts for what he now called the Krotona Fellowship were stepped up, properties in Pasadena, Alhambra, and the western outskirts of Los Angeles city were seriously considered for purchase. Finally, in December 1911, Warrington authorized negotiations to buy a large part of the Hastings ranch, in the hills below the present-day site of the Hollywood sign. By then it had been decided to move the seat of the Esoteric Section from Chicago into the remodeled ranch houses and the new buildings that would soon rise amidst quiet gardens and citrus groves a few blocks north of the streetcar stop at Franklin and Vista del Mar Avenues. These new buildings rose quickly, beginning in the fall of 1912. By 1919, all of Krotona's principal structures had been completed.

on 2 July.<sup>13</sup> The edifice was projected as a pure white, three-story, flat-roofed structure with large windows. It was reported "now under construction" on 29 September 1912.<sup>14</sup> However, neither it nor any of the other elements of the Heineman's 1912 scheme was ever completed. The site of this intended administration building is occupied by a parking lot across from 2130 Vista del Mar Avenue, Los Angeles, in which no trace of any foundations can be seen.



The first architectural plans for Krotona were made by the firm of Arthur S. Heineman, who practiced with his brother Alfred Heineman.<sup>11</sup> Remarkably ambitious, they called for a group of six large buildings to house a Theosophical University on the northeastern part of the Krotona property; a range of villas on the southeast corner; a complex of administrative buildings on the southwest; and a large temple dedicated to the unity of religions atop a rise to the northwest. In a letter to Besant of 15 June 1912 Warrington reported "blasting for a foundation for our administration building,"<sup>12</sup> and a ceremonial laying of that building's cornerstone was held

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Administration Building

(5235 Primrose Avenue, Los Angeles, California)



Originally a Victorian-style dwelling on the Hastings ranch, this structure was converted in late 1912 by Elmer C. Andrus to administrative uses,<sup>15</sup> presumably upon the abandonment of the Heinemans' scheme. Andrus was one of the numerous architectural designer-builders active in Los Angeles in the years around World War I. Further remodeling of this house followed in 1913 and its exterior was painted white.<sup>16</sup> The Egyptianizing columns of the verandah and the lotus-bud ornaments flanking the front steps possibly date from one of these remodelings. This structure has been reconverted back to a private residence. It appears from the outside to be in excellent repair.

Krotona Inn

(2130 Vista del Mar Avenue, Los Angeles, California)



In the Fall of 1912, space was urgently needed for public lectures and for housing students who were to be attracted to Krotona to attend various education programs planned by Warrington and his collaborators. The Krotona Inn, or Krotona Court, was intended to meet this need. It was the earlier of two buildings in the colony designed by the San Diego-based firm of Mead & Requa.<sup>17</sup> The working drawings (now in the collection of the San Diego Historical Society) bear dates ranging from 29 October 1912 to 13 January 1913 and specify a stuccoed frame structure over a concrete basement. Construction proceeded very rapidly, so that a formal opening ceremony could take place on 2 February 1913.<sup>18</sup> It was reported completed on 6 April 1913<sup>19</sup> and a photograph of it in a state of near completion appeared in the May 1913 issue of the *American Theosophist* magazine.<sup>20</sup> Nearly all of the working drawings bear Richard Requa's initials, and there is reason to believe that the Krotona commission came through him to his firm. Requa had in 1905 attended the National Irrigation Congress in Portland, Oregon, where he may have come into either direct or indirect contact with one of the financiers of Krotona, Augustus F. Knudsen.<sup>21</sup> But the design of the Krotona Inn owes at least as much, and quite probably more, to the taste and artistry of Requa's partner. In fact, the Krotona community eventually remembered Mead as the sole architect and Requa as his contractor.<sup>22</sup>

The Krotona Inn occupies a footprint about 90 feet wide



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## The Surviving Buildings of Krotona in Hollywood

### Krotona Inn

(continued)

by 97 feet deep on a plot that slopes sharply downhill toward the northeast. The plan is very similar to that of Mead & Requa's nearly contemporary Robert Winsor house near San Diego in Bonita, California, though approximately doubled in width and length. The Inn's arched entrance, which is on the west, leads into a patio surrounded by an arbor carried on thick cylindrical piers. Guest-rooms for temporary residents attending Theosophy classes open to the west, north, and south. Communal dining and lecture rooms occupied the eastern side. In the basement below these rooms were the kitchen and vegetarian cafeteria. The latter opened out onto an outdoor dining patio below another pergola of cylindrical piers carrying a framework of eucalyptus logs.<sup>23</sup> On the west side, above the entrance, were Warrington's apartments. On the east side, expressed as a domed edicule on the roof, was the Esoteric Room.



According to the working drawings, the design of the Esoteric Room was established on 1 November 1912 in the apparently overnight revision of a proposal for an open kiosk dated 31 October. Details of this final design were further refined over the following three weeks. The Esoteric Room was approached via the roof, from the south and entered through a door on its west front. This door, of frankly Moorish design, is one of several details in this style found in an otherwise non-historicizing composition. Inside, between two Moorish windows opposite the entrance and raised on a brick dais, stood a built-in altar in the form of a locked cabinet. This cabinet was designed to contain, perhaps, certain sacred books or

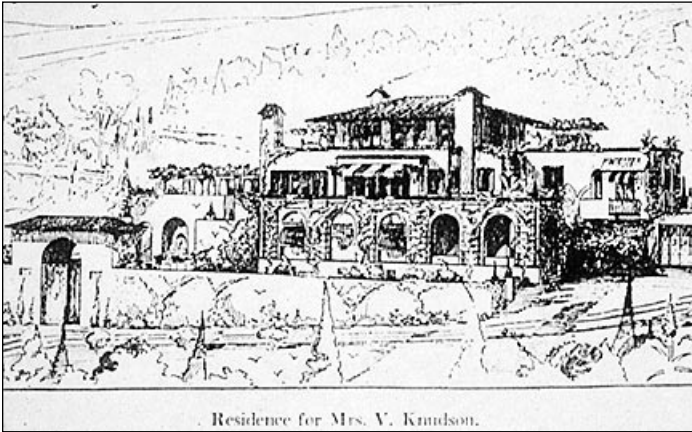
other spiritually charged articles believed to impart their "magnetism" to the Esoteric Room's domed space: thus the potency of the group meditation that took place in this room would have been enhanced.<sup>24</sup> The altar directed all conscious attention strongly toward the east, the direction from which many Theosophists believed a World Teacher had recently emerged in an incarnation of the great soul of Alcyone, named Krishnamurti.

The Krotona Inn is currently used as an apartment building. Its exterior and courtyard are fairly well preserved. According to the occupant of one of the apartments, many interior details survive relatively intact, but it has not been possible to inspect any of these spaces. New construction to the south and east of the Krotona Inn has compromised the best views originally to be had from within this building or from its roof terrace.

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Knudsen Residence

(2117-2121 Vista del Mar Avenue, Los Angeles, California)



Residence for Mrs. V. Knudson.

Mead & Requa's second work at Krotona was their design for the home of Mr. and Mrs. Augustus F. Knudsen, their daughter, and his mother. The last was the client of record: Annie Sullivan Knudsen, the wealthy widow of Hawaiian pioneer Valdemar Knudsen. However, Augustus F. Knudsen was undoubtedly the client contact.<sup>25</sup> A Theosophist, he had contributed substantially to Krotona's founding capital,<sup>26</sup> probably played a decisive role in the selection of the architects of the Krotona Inn, and soon thereafter employed the same architects to design his own home as an impressive frontispiece to the Krotona site.

Dates on the working drawings for this hillside house range from 29 May 1914 to 29 December 1915.<sup>27</sup> The commencement of construction was reported imminent on 13 December 1914.<sup>28</sup> Sited just at the point where Vista del Mar Avenue begins to curve upward into the Hollywood hills, the Knudsen house is arranged on three levels.<sup>29</sup> All of the major rooms open either to broad terraces facing south over the Los Angeles basin or to enclosed garden courts on the north. This arrangement is not only well suited to the local climate but may also have been intended to recall the relationships of rooms to verandas in the old Knudsen homeplace on Kauai. As in that house, a lanai was used for the billiards room.<sup>30</sup> In the Knudsen home at Krotona, the lanai occupied the entire third floor. The second floor contained the three family bedrooms, a fine suite of living rooms suitable for

large-scale entertaining on the south side, and a kitchen suite in the northwest corner. Below, on the first floor, were servants' rooms, two guest bedrooms, and the entrance hall. A cruciform stairway connected this floor to the second, main living level. To the right at the top of this staircase a short hallway led to the master bedroom. Off this room, to the south, the architects arranged a small den which one may suppose Knudsen used for private meditation.<sup>31</sup>

The south elevation of the Knudsen house features a ground-floor arcade and horizontal bands of casement windows above, and so bears comparison with products of Irving Gill's office from the period 1908-1912.<sup>32</sup> Arcades integrated into the mass of a building appeared frequently in Gill's work in those years.<sup>33</sup> Banded fenestration was another contemporary innovation in Gill's practice, being used first perhaps on his Hugo Klauber house of 1908. That house bears indeed a remarkable similarity to the superstructure of the Knudsen residence. As Gill often did, Mead & Requa suggested in their perspective rendering of this structure the use of vines to soften its sharp edges.<sup>34</sup>

The interior of the house adjacent to 2117-2121 Vista del Mar Avenue has been completely remodeled into numerous small apartments. It seems unlikely that much would remain of its original fine detailing and spatial interest. Some minor exterior modifications have been made in the course of remodeling, though the general effect of the original facades and mass of the building continues to obtain. However, good views of the house are now obstructed by the abundance of surrounding vegetation and, on the north side, by fences.

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### Krotona Flight

(adjacent to 2117-2121 Vista del Mar Avenue, Los Angeles)

Designed by Mead & Requa in conjunction with the Knudsen house was a monumental staircase on axis with Vista del Mar Avenue. Called the “Krotona Flight,” it hugs the west facade of the Knudsen residence and provides access to its service entrances. The flight was originally intended to rise northward behind a monumental gateway and to serve as the main entrance to the Krotona property. However, the projected gateway was ultimately abandoned as the architects simplified the stairway’s design into its final form.<sup>35</sup> Simple yet grand, this staircase once symbolized for those who climbed it the ascent into those spiritual realms of which Krotona in Hollywood was a kind of earthly correspondent.

This staircase survives relatively intact, though the basin of its original fountain (minus its bronze dolphin-shaped spout) is now used as a planter. Spectacular views southward are still possible from the landings and top of this staircase.

### Science Building

(2152 Vista del Mar Avenue, Los Angeles, California)



The Science Building is a modest structure erected, with funds provided by Augustus F. Knudsen, toward the middle of 1917 on a site just north of the Krotona Inn.<sup>43</sup> Its size may belie its importance to the Krotona colony, since Theosophists claimed to ground their beliefs as much in natural science as in self-reflection or revelation. Its function was to serve as a laboratory for experiments designed to confirm the plausibility of Theosophical cosmology. According to Dr. Frederick Finch Strong, “The lesser purpose of this research work will be to further scientific discovery by the broader knowledge which occultism affords; the greater purposes—the real *raison d’être* of the new laboratory is to prove to the world by objective means the existence of Universal Life and superphysical matter which Theosophists recognize but of which the majority of mankind is still skeptical.”<sup>44</sup>

As completed, the Science Building was a severe, flat-roofed structure whose mass approximated a double cube and whose plain surfaces were absolutely devoid of ornamentation.<sup>45</sup> This severe geometry very possibly had an occult meaning and also the purpose of harmonizing the Science Building with the underlying geometric order of the universe. Later additions of a pitched roof and a small arched porch at the south end have substantially obscured this geometry and given the building a Mission Revival flavor. With its originally small windows considerably enlarged, this building has been converted to residential use.



The Surviving Buildings of Krotona in Hollywood

Grand Temple of the Rosy Cross

(immediately southeast of 2130 Vista del Mar Avenue)



Although both Mead and Requa maintained friendly contact with the Krotona community for some time,<sup>36</sup> the Krotona organization reverted in early 1914 to Arthur and Alfred Heineman when commissioning a design for a Grand Temple of the Rosy Cross.<sup>37</sup> This building, erected immediately to the southeast of the Krotona Inn, was much more heavily marked with Moorish motifs than the Inn. It was also decidedly less sophisticated a composition. Its function was to provide a larger space for public lectures than was available in the Krotona Inn, including a space for the working of the ritual that came to be known as the Krotona Service.<sup>38</sup> Its major room was therefore a high-ceiling auditorium, seating about 350 people and lit by large horseshoe-arched windows facing north. The building also contained a number of offices in its basement.<sup>39</sup>

The cornerstone of the Temple of the Rosy Cross was laid in an elaborate ceremony on 28 January 1914.<sup>40</sup> It was substantially completed within just over three months, in time for its dedication on 7 May 1914.<sup>41</sup>

The design of this building may have been adapted from the Heinemans' original scheme for the Krotona administration building. The two designs resemble each other in size and massing, though hardly at all in detail. The footprint of the Temple of the Rosy Cross, though not its elevations, is similar to that of the so-called "Roberts Temple" (Spiritualist Temple) on North 5th Street in San Jose, California. The possibility of a direct influence is

supported by the fact of the Roberts Temple being well known to California Theosophists because it was regularly made available to the Theosophical Society for lectures and meetings.<sup>42</sup>

The Temple of the Rosy Cross has been remodeled into numerous small apartments, entailing a complete destruction of the original interior arrangements. Portions of the exterior have been modified, notably on the north side where balconies have been added. The entrance facade on the west has also been changed. Nevertheless, it is still possible to get a good impression of the original mass and stylistic effect of this structure. Views to and from the north have been utterly destroyed by new construction very close to the north facade.

"Private Chapel"

(6206 Temple Hill Drive, Los Angeles, California)



A 1919 fire-insurance map of the Krotona property identifies a "private chapel" at a location now occupied by a private house.<sup>46</sup> The house would appear to have at its nucleus the structure mapped in 1919. It is unclear what Theosophical function a free-standing "private chapel" would have had at Krotona, where the focus was on communal rather than private living and where the main spiritual activities were located in the Esoteric Room of the Krotona Inn or the Temple of the Rosy Cross.

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**The Surviving Buildings of Krotona in Hollywood****Bungalow**

(6209 Scenic Avenue, Los Angeles, California)



One of three bungalows (“numbers 1, 2, and 3”) erected in the summer of 1912,<sup>47</sup> the building at this address is perhaps the one occupied by Carlos Hardy and is the only one to survive. Such bungalows were widely popular at this time throughout California and particularly Los Angeles.<sup>48</sup>

Although substantially remodeled and expanded, this bungalow nevertheless gives a valuable impression of the simplicity with which the domestic life of most Krotonians was carried on. It is still used as a residence.

**Bungalow**

(2130 Gower Street, Los Angeles, California)

Besides work on the Administration Building and the three bungalows on Scenic Avenue, Elmer C. Andrus built (and perhaps designed) a workshop and two hollow-tile bungalows for the Krotona colony in 1912.<sup>49</sup> This modest dwelling is likely to have been one of those bungalows. Its exterior appears to have been modified to an extent that leaves only a suggestion of its original lines.

The second bungalow has not been identified. The workshop, which stood at 2131 Gower Street, is no longer extant.

**Swain Bungalow**

(2176 Argyle Avenue, Los Angeles, California)



This house was built in 1913, possibly by Elmer C. Andrus. Perched above a steeply sloping site, it has something of the look of a Swiss chalet. Although substantially larger and hence probably more comfortable than such Krotonian bungalows as that occupied by Carlos Hardy, the Swain bungalow nonetheless reflects a simple and modest lifestyle. The exterior is now clapboard, and continues to be used for residential purposes.



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**The Surviving Buildings of Krotona in Hollywood****Tuttle Bungalow**

(2172 Argyle Avenue, Los Angeles, California)



Built in 1914, possibly by Elmer C. Andrus, it stands next door to the Swain Bungalow, to which it is closely related stylistically. Its exterior is now shingled, very likely as it was originally. However, much of the fenestration (especially that on the rear facade) is clearly not original. The Tuttle Bungalow continues to be occupied as a dwelling.

**Marie Russak Residence**

(6101 Scenic Avenue, Los Angeles, California)

Designed by Arthur and Alfred Heineman<sup>50</sup> for a site just outside Krotona's easternmost boundary, this substantial dwelling was erected in 1914 by Theosophist and real-estate entrepreneur Henry Hotchener for occupancy by his future wife, Marie Russak. Russak at the time was married to Frank Russak, a banker living in Paris. Being a close associate of Annie Besant and the international lecturer for the Theosophical Society, Marie Russak ranked among the most prominent members of the Krotona Colony.<sup>51</sup>

A twenty-room house was originally proposed as "a forerunner... of important developments in the Beachwood section" on acreage recently sold to Russak by the Albert H. Beach Company.<sup>52</sup> A subsequent advertising campaign in *The Theosophic Messenger* and *The American Theosophist* targeted Theosophists as potential purchasers of lots on the subdivided property known as Beachwood Park.<sup>53</sup> The financial fortunes of Russak and her future husband thus became firmly linked to the spiritual fortunes of Krotona.<sup>54</sup>

As built, Russak's thirteen-room house is a rambling exercise in the Mission Revival style, with a flat roof behind parapets trimmed with red clay tile. The main feature on its south facade is an arched porch; there is little other exterior ornament. This house bears comparison with the villa at 2180 Vista del Mar Avenue and with Hotchener's own residence at 2030 Vine Street, both roughly contemporary with the house at 6101 Scenic Avenue. The Russak Residence still stands in good repair.

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**The Surviving Buildings of Krotona in Hollywood****Villas**

(2136 to 2180 Vista del Mar Avenue, Los Angeles, California)

Later construction and dense vegetation obscure the sites of these five structures built prior to 1919 to house some of the members of the Krotona colony. It is therefore hard to say exactly how many remain, and to what extent those that do remain also retain their original appearance.

The house at 2180 Vista del Mar Avenue is the one most easily seen from the street. It is a two-story Mission Revival house that appears to remain in good repair and much as it was built.

**H. H. Shutts House**

(2136 Primrose Avenue, Los Angeles, California)



Called “Casa Rayda,”<sup>55</sup> this impressive house was built prior to 1919 on a sloping site not far from the Administration Building. It represented an alternative to the rather Spartan lifestyles pursued by the Krotonian bungalow dwellers. Its central feature is a tower consisting of an octagonal superstructure over a cubic base. This tower links a western wing (probably containing the main living area) and an eastern wing. The architectural effect is achieved chiefly through this picturesque massing; there is little reliance on ornament. The plain white walls, arched door and window openings, wrought-iron balcony rails, give a Mediterranean—more specifically, Andalusian—appearance in harmony with the stylistic effects of the Krotona Inn and the Knudsen Residence. Like those structures, the Casa Rayda manages to project simultaneously an effect of spiritually satisfying simplicity and middle-class comfort. The house stands today in excellent repair.

## The Surviving Buildings of Krotona in Hollywood

### Ternary Building

(6205 Temple Hill Drive, Los Angeles, California)



Completed by the late Summer of 1915,<sup>56</sup> the Ternary Building consisted originally of three extensive dwellings arranged close together around a courtyard open towards the south. The three houses were linked by arcades running around the other three sides of this courtyard. A roof terrace atop the north wing was accessible via a tower element containing a meditation room. The architecture is distinctly Moorish, like that of the Temple of the Rosy Cross, and therefore suggests the possibility of attributing this building to Arthur and Alfred Heineman. The extensive use here of Batchelder tiles and other ceramic elements for ornamental effects (especially in the arcades) also supports an attribution to the Heinemans, whose work often prominently incorporates Batchelder products.

The Ternary has been identified as the home of Mrs. Grace Shaw Duff,<sup>57</sup> a prominent Theosophical lecturer originally from New York. Henry Hotchener and Marie Russak occupied the other two dwellings and claimed a financial interest in the property.<sup>58</sup>

South of the Ternary lay the Italian Gardens, centered on a lotus pool.<sup>59</sup> At the southeast corner of these gardens, and on the highest point of the Krotona property stood a kiosk. Moorish in style and topped by a hemispherical dome, it made use of ceramic trim identical to that found on the Ternary. Its obvious function was as a belvedere, though it may have served also as a place of open-air

meditation. A stadium erected in the Italian gardens provided, in 1918, space for spectators attending a dramatization of the Sir Edwin Arnold's, *The Light of Asia*, for which the Ternary provided a backdrop.<sup>60</sup>

After some internal remodeling, the Ternary is now used as an apartment building. Its exterior remains practically intact and many of the original interior details survive. The adjacent gardens have been subdivided into building sites, and the area is now occupied by recent domestic structures. A fragment of the retaining wall of the Italian Gardens survives at 6211 Temple Hill Drive.<sup>61</sup> All traces of the stadium and the kiosk have vanished.



Retaining wall of the Ternary Gardens

### Villa

(6201 Temple Hill Drive, Los Angeles, California)

The date of construction of this residence is unclear. The house presently standing at this address is likely to be at least in part identifiable with one appearing on the same site on a 1919 map of Krotona.<sup>62</sup> Its style may be described as vaguely Italianate.



The Surviving Buildings of Krotona in Hollywood

"Moorcrest"

(6147 Temple Hill Drive, Los Angeles, California)



Probably completed in 1921, "Moorcrest" was the most elaborate and perhaps the first in a series of somewhat vulgar houses designed by Marie Russak Hotchener and built speculatively for rental or sale by her third husband, on lots adjoining the Krotona property.<sup>63</sup> Mrs. Hotchener had formal training in music but not in painting or architectural design, both of which arts she practiced as an amateur.<sup>64</sup> The design of "Moorcrest" reflected her admiration for, or at least careful notice of, the works of Arthur and Alfred Heineman at Krotona. The house's exterior mixes motifs of the Moorish and Mission Revival styles used by the Heinemans in other Krotona colony buildings. Its window shapes have close parallels in the fenestration of their Temple of the Rosy Cross. Like the Ternary Building and numerous Heineman houses in the Los Angeles area, "Moorcrest" makes decorative use of Batchelder tiles. The awkward proportions and detailing of this house however, make it easily distinguishable from better work by the Heinemans. That its interiors were originally rather garish is suggested by the extensive use of art-glass windows, some of which display a red lotus motif.

Mr. and Mrs. Hotchener appear never to have occupied "Moorcrest." Instead, they rented it to photoplayer and motion-picture producer Charlie Chaplin before selling it in 1925 to Mr. and Mrs. Otto H. Langanke (whose daughter Lucille performed in cinema under the name of Mary Astor). Through the Langanke family, Mr. and Mrs. Hotchener came to know Mary Astor's fiance, the

actor John Barrymore.<sup>65</sup> Mr. Hotchener subsequently became Barrymore's business manager, and Mrs. Hotchener his astrologer,<sup>66</sup> thus bridging the gap between the world of Krotona and that of the Hollywood movie crowd.

After the removal of the Krotona Institute of Theosophy to new quarters at Ojai, Mr. and Mrs. Hotchener remained behind. They lived from 1926 to 1945 in a house at 6137 Temple Hill Drive, no doubt one designed by Mrs. Hotchener.<sup>67</sup> Neighboring houses that can also be attributed to her on stylistic grounds include those at 2275 Vasanta Way, 6107 Temple Hill Drive, 6106 Temple Hill Drive, and 2247 Gower Street. Some if not most—or even all—of these houses had probably been sold or leased originally to Theosophists more or less closely connected with Krotona. Ironically, the construction of these (though also many other houses) in the immediate vicinity of Krotona destroyed the seclusion of the colony in Hollywood and so influenced indirectly the decision to move it to Ojai. There, the Krotona community re-installed itself in a group of buildings designed by Robert Stacy-Judd.<sup>68</sup>

The houses at all of the addresses cited remain in good condition with little exterior remodeling noticed. "Moorcrest" has been recently renovated.



(6106 Temple Hill Drive, Los Angeles, California)

## CONCLUSION

While the entire Krotona site possesses great significance for the histories of both the Theosophical Society and the city of Los Angeles, the two buildings designed there by Mead & Requa eclipse all the others in significance for architectural history due to their extraordinary aesthetic quality. The Krotona Inn (1913-1914) and the Knudsen Residence (1914-1915) are as genuinely works of American proto-modernism as almost any of Irving Gill's from the years just preceding World War I. Abstract and austere, they bear favorable comparison with such works by Gill as the Mary A. Banning Residence in Los Angeles, completed in late 1914.<sup>69</sup> Gill's reputation as the preeminent creator of a southern California modernism in building design deserves to be re-evaluated as part of a closer examination of these and contemporary works of Mead & Requa, his erstwhile collaborators. Since the plain surfaces, prismatic volumes, and functional spaces of Mead & Requa's Krotona buildings are obviously imbued with mystical content, they may well provide clues to discovering the spiritual meanings embodied in Gill's mature architecture.

The use of Moorish styling in the Krotona Inn and most of the other prominent buildings of Krotona may be seen as a strategy to produce an architecture expressive of the essence of the southern California locale. At least as early as 1896, Moorish-revival architecture had been proposed as the most suitable for both the "Mediterranean" climate and the evolving lifestyle typical of Los Angeles.<sup>70</sup> Such architecture may have appealed especially to Theosophists since Moorish building in Spain could be understood as a synthesis of eastern and western cultures and hence represent the synthesis of eastern and western belief systems in modern Theosophy.

The several buildings erected at Krotona by Arthur and Alfred Heineman, together with their unexecuted 1912 plan for the development of the site, add substantially to the body of work known to have been produced by their firm. Heretofore the secondary literature has stressed their work as bungalow designers in a Japanese-flavored, Swiss mode stylistically close to one favored by Charles and Henry Greene. Their site-planning work for Krotona shows them to have been as capable of very large-scale, institutional design as of more modest residential work. Such buildings as the Russak Residence, the Temple of the Rosy Cross, and perhaps the Ternary Building show

that their skills in both the Moorish- and Mission-revival styling modes were well developed before World War I.<sup>71</sup> Like most of their contemporaries in the Los Angeles building world, the Heinemans were eclectics able to produce work pleasing to clients with wide range of tastes, preferences, needs, and budgets.

"Moorcrest" and other domestic structures attributable to Marie Russak Hotchener comprise a significant group of structures designed by a woman at a time when very few women in Los Angeles were involved in any capacity in the practice of architecture. Though derivative and naively conceived, they are nonetheless creditable creations because not just architectural images but substantial buildings on difficult hillside sites. Their vulgarity reflects, no doubt, their designer's own middle-class taste but also the vulgarity increasingly evidenced in the commercial and domestic buildings of boomtime Los Angeles in the 1920s.<sup>72</sup> It even more certainly reflects the changing tastes of Los Angeles Theosophists, away from the highly sophisticated abstractionism of Mead & Requa towards the much less sophisticated, iconographic aesthetic of Robert Stacy-Judd, who designed Krotona's new quarters in Ojai.<sup>73</sup> The obvious value that these houses had for their designer and her husband as real-estate investments, raises significant questions about the engagement of the spiritual concerns of Theosophical groups such as the Krotona colony with their mundane financial interests.

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## REFERENCES

- <sup>1</sup> The earliest and best known of these colonies — the Lomaland property of the Universal Brotherhood and Theosophical Society in San Diego — was founded at the end of the last century by Katherine Tingley. Its grandiose main structures have disappeared, though many of its smaller ones still remain in good condition and in use by their current owners, Point Loma Nazarene College. The latest and smallest of the three is at Halcyon, near Pismo Beach, with a unique triangular Temple of the People (built in the 1930s) forming its centerpiece. See Robert V. Hine, *California's Utopian Colonies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), pp. 33-57 and Paul Kagan, *New World Utopias* (New York: Penguin Books, 1975), pp. 48-80. The broader context for the history of Theosophy in California is described in Sandra Sizer Frankiel, *California's Spiritual Frontiers* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).
- <sup>2</sup> Robert B. Stacy-Judd, "The Spanish Farmhouse Type of Architecture for the Krotona Institute of Theosophy." *Architect & Engineer* 83, no. 2 (November 1925), pp. 62-72.
- <sup>3</sup> A documentary account of the early history of the Krotona colony is provided by: Joseph E. Ross, *Krotona of Old Hollywood, 1866-1913, Volume 1* (Montecito, CA: El Montecito Oaks Press, 1989). I am indebted to this source for most of the details on the history of Krotona contained in this article. Carey McWilliams, *Southern California: An Island on the Land* (Santa Barbara, CA: Peregrine Smith, 1973), p. 255, points out that a revealing, fictionalized depiction of life at Krotona is to be found in the novel by Jane Levington Comfort, *From These Beginnings* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1937). In the novel, see esp. pp. 209-219.
- <sup>4</sup> This property was sold prior to Krotona's move into a complex of buildings near Ojai, California, designed by Robert Stacy-Judd.
- <sup>5</sup> Harold Brude Dunn reportedly designed a number of buildings for the Open Gate School operated by the Krotona Institute of Theosophy and located adjacent to the colony's property at the southwest corner of Beachwood Drive and Vienna Drive. It is not clear how many of these buildings were actually built, nor can any of the buildings now standing on this site be securely identified with them. Dunn was also the architect of the Saint Alban's Liberal Catholic Church on Argyle Avenue (1921), an institution with which many members of the Theosophical Society have been affiliated.
- <sup>6</sup> Among the numerous accounts of the modern Theosophical movement and the broader occult revival of which it was a part may be mentioned: James Webb, *The Occult Underground* (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1974); Bruce F. Campbell, *Ancient Wisdom Revived: A History of the Modern Theosophical Movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980); Sylvia Cranston, *HPB: The Extraordinary Life and Influence of Helena Blavatsky, Founder of the Modern Theosophical Movement* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1993); and Joy Mills, *100 Years of Theosophy: A History of the Theosophical Society in America* (Wheaton, IL: Theosophical Publishing House, 1987). Also useful is the analytical account by Robert S. Ellwood, Jr., *Alternative Altars: Unconventional and Eastern Spirituality in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), pp. 104-135.
- <sup>7</sup> The following account of Warrington's life and role in the Krotona colony is drawn mainly from Ross, *Krotona*, especially chs. 1 and 2.
- <sup>8</sup> Henry Ridgely Evans, *Hours with the Ghosts* (Chicago: Laird & Lee, 1897.), pp. 287-290.
- <sup>9</sup> Quoted from Warrington's 1906 prospectus as reproduced in Ross, *Krotona*, pp. 12-13.
- <sup>10</sup> A. F. Knudsen, "Why a Krotona." *The Messenger* 2, no. 8 (January 1915), p. 415.
- <sup>11</sup> "Los Angeles Will Be Theosophical Headquarters of America, Krotona Institute Here May Become Society's World Center." *Los Angeles Examiner* 29 September 1912, pt. 4, p. 1, col. 2; "Krotona Group to Be Unique." *Los Angeles Sunday Times* 29 September 1912, pt. 5, p. 24, col. 1. On the Heineman's partnership, see: Robert Winter, "Arthur S. and Alfred Heineman," *Towards A Simpler Way of Life: The Arts & Crafts Architects of California*, ed. Winter (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), pp. 137-148.
- <sup>12</sup> Ross, *Krotona*, p. 132.
- <sup>13</sup> Ross, *Krotona*, pp. 138-143, quoting extensively from various newspaper and other accounts.
- <sup>14</sup> *Los Angeles Examiner*, 29 September 1912, pt 4, p. 1, col. 2.
- <sup>15</sup> Ross, *Krotona*, p. 173.
- <sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 189-190.
- <sup>17</sup> Frank Mead, a native of New Jersey, received his training in Philadelphia. After working five years for Frank Miles Day, he formed a partnership with Charles Barton Keen. Keen & Mead's practice together from 1896 to 1901 was mainly a residential one. Their houses, which have much in common with contemporary Philadelphia work of such architects as Day and Wilson Eyre, are characterized by functional interior planning and severely plain exteriors. Mead seems to have had the classic artistic temperament of the 1890s, a temperament that found its complement in Keen's practical business skills. Nonetheless, the partnership did not survive beyond 1901. After leaving Philadelphia to undertake



a photographic expedition to North Africa, Mead resettled himself in the San Diego area by about 1903. There, from 1903 to 1907, he worked for — and finally for somewhat less than a year as a partner of — Irving Gill. In 1908 Mead again left the practice of architecture, this time to devote himself full-time to the advocacy of certain Native American interests in their reserved lands. Gill, losing his artist-partner, the same year hired Richard Requa into his firm. By training and trade an electrician who had recently dabbled in San Diego real estate brokerage, Requa served as Gill's superintendent until, in 1913, he formed an independent partnership with Mead upon the latter's return from the wilderness. Their first big project was the Krotona Inn. The most recent summary of the careers of Mead and Requa is: Lucinda Eddy, "Frank Mead and Richard Requa," *Toward a Simpler Way of Life*, pp. 229-240.

<sup>18</sup> "First Krotona Structure Is Being Finished." *Los Angeles Examiner* 2 February 1913, pt. 4, p. 2, col. 1.

<sup>19</sup> "Total of \$500,000 Will Be Cost of Theosophical U." *Los Angeles Examiner* 6 April 1913, pt. 4, p. 1, col. 2.

<sup>20</sup> "Krotona." *American Theosophist* 14, no. 8 (May 1913), p. 116.

<sup>21</sup> *Official Proceedings of the Thirteenth National Irrigation Congress* (Portland, OR: Bushong & Co., 1905), p. 33. In his entry in *Who's Who in the Pacific Southwest* (Los Angeles: Times-Mirror Printing & Binding House, 1913), Knudsen reported having attended this conference, but his name does not appear on the official printed list of delegates.

<sup>22</sup> Ross, *Krotona*, p. 189.

<sup>23</sup> An extension was added to the original pergola in early 1917: "Krotona News," *The Messenger* 5, no. 2 (July 1917), p. 426. This extension is no longer extant, and the original pergola has been somewhat remodeled.

<sup>24</sup> *Los Angeles Examiner* 6 April 1913, pt. 4, p. 1, col. 2: "It is in this room that the meetings of the lodge are held and is also used by persons for deep meditations."

<sup>25</sup> Born into a family with extensive agricultural holdings on the Hawaiian island of Kauai, Knudsen had been drawn to the occult at a young age as a result of contacts with native kahunas and a certain mystical experiences for which knowledge imparted by those Polynesian sages seemed to provide the best explanation. After studying civil engineering at M.I.T. from 1888 to 1892 without obtaining a degree, he returned to Hawaii to help manage his family's ranch. In early 1897 he made contact with H. S. Olcott in India and subsequently joined the Theosophical Society. Over the first decade of the twentieth century Knudsen continued his involvement in agriculture and held a variety of positions in Hawaiian local government before moving to Los Angeles in 1910 to publish the *Little Farms Magazine*. As a rich Theosophist with experience in agriculture, Knudsen was no doubt one of Warrington's first contacts there in the course of promoting his Krotona colony. Information on Knudsen has been derived mainly from: data graciously supplied by Betsy Toulon (Koloa, HI) and Frances O'Donnell (Archives and Special Collections, Massachusetts Institute of Technology); *Who's Who in the Pacific Southwest*; and H. S. Olcott, *Old Diary Leaves*, 6th series (Adyar, Madras: Theosophical Publishing House, 1955), pp. 131-134.

<sup>26</sup> Ross, *Krotona*, pp. 104, 166.

<sup>27</sup> In the collection of the San Diego Historical Society.

<sup>28</sup> "To Begin Fine Homes this Week." *Los Angeles Sunday Times* 13 December 1914, pt. 5, p. 1, col. 5.

<sup>29</sup> W. Garden Mitchell, "Some Picturesque Homes of California," *Architect & Engineer* 52, no.3 (March 1918), pp. 39-49, passim, incl. plan, p. 43.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. plan of the Knudsen house at Waiawa on the endpapers of: Eric A. Knudsen and Gurre P. Noble, *Kanuka of Kauai* (Honolulu: Tongg Publishing Co., 1944)

<sup>31</sup> "Sequestered, protected, pleasant, not used for other purposes so far as possible" — this den would certainly have met the requirements set forth for a meditation room by the early twentieth-century Theosophist architect Claude Bragdon; cf. Bragdon, *The New Image* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1928), p. 77.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. illustrations in: Bruce Kamerling, *Irving Gill, Architect* (San Diego, CA: San Diego Historical Society, 1993), pp. 56-85 passim.

<sup>33</sup> Well known examples include Gill's Christian Science Church in San Diego of 1909 and his Bishop's Day School in La Jolla, California, of 1911.

<sup>34</sup> Perspective rendering reproduced in the *Los Angeles Times* 21 March 1915, pt. 6, p. 4.

<sup>35</sup> Working drawings are in the collection of the San Diego Historical Society. The final design for the Krotona Flight can be dated from these drawings to 19 December 1914.

<sup>36</sup> Ross, *Krotona*, p. 191.

<sup>37</sup> Documentation of the Heinemans' authorship is provided by: "Frame Church," *Southwest Contractor and Manufacturer* 12, no. 14 (7 February 1914), p. 17; "Building Contracts Recorded," *Southwest Contractor and Manufacturer* 12, no. 17 (28 February 1914), p. 39; and "Building Permits," *Southwest Contractor and Manufacturer* 12, no. 18 (7 March 1914), p. 32. This last source gives A. R. Henry as the Temple's builder and Henry Hotchener as the owner of record. It is possible that Krotona's leadership permitted Hotchener to choose the designer because he had taken on the responsibility for the financing, as perhaps Knudsen had been allowed a preponderant role in choosing Mead & Requa to design the Krotona Inn because of his notable role in financing that construction. It is, of course, equally possible that Warrington went back to the Heineman's because of contractual obligations or simply out of a general sense of obligation to continue to do business with the architects who had been originally engaged to plan the Krotona plant.

<sup>38</sup> *Krotona* (Hollywood: Krotona Institute of Theosophy, 1919), pp. 15, 20. See also Ross, *Krotona*, pp. 148-149, 247-250.

<sup>39</sup> "Annual Report of the General Secretary," p. 309.

<sup>40</sup> Henry Hotchner (sic) and H. Van Vliet, "Corner-Stone Laying, The Grand Temple of the Rosy Cross," *The Messenger* 1, no. 10 (March 1914), pp. 195-197.

<sup>41</sup> "The Grand Temple," p. 278.

<sup>42</sup> Ross, *Krotona*, p. 65.

<sup>43</sup> "Krotona News," p. 436.

<sup>44</sup> Frederick Finch Strong, "The Scientific Research Laboratory," *The Messenger* 6, no. 2 (July 1918), p.46. Strong provided glimpses of the occult chemical and other research carried out in the Science Building in later articles, e.g., "Etheric Force," *The Messenger* 6, no. 3 (August 1918), pp. 77-78, "Notes from the Research Laboratory," *The Messenger* 6, no. 5 (October 1918), p. 141, and "Notes from Krotona Laboratory," *The Messenger* 6, no. 9 (February 1919).

<sup>45</sup> *Krotona* (1919), p. 18.

<sup>46</sup> Sanborn Map Co., *Insurance Maps of Los Angeles, California* (New York: Sanborn Map Co., 1919), vol. 10, map 1095. Oddly, this structure does not appear on the map printed in a 1919 Krotona publicity brochure, reproduced on the endpapers of Ross, *Krotona*. This discrepancy may point to a date very soon after the end of World War I.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 165.

<sup>48</sup> See Winter, *The California Bungalow* (Los Angeles: Hennessey & Ingalls, 1980).

<sup>49</sup> "Krotona Buildings." *Builder and Contractor* 20, no. 1922 (24 October 1912), p. 7. According to this article, "a number of large institutional buildings are also planned for the same location and are to be erected by Mr. Andrus."

<sup>50</sup> "Residence," *Southwestern Contractor and Manufacturer* 13, no. 1 (9 May 1914), p. 13; "Residence," *Southwestern Contractor and Manufacturer* 13, no. 3 (23 May 1914), p. 16.

<sup>51</sup> No accurate biography of this important figure in Theosophical history is available. Information found in official Theosophical Society sources and newspaper accounts is hard to verify, and in many cases proves incorrect; cf., e.g., *The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography* (New York: James T. White & Co., 1900), pp. 165-166. Her first given name has been printed variously as Mary, Maria, and Marie. Her second given name was Ellene. Her maiden surname was Barnard. She was born in 1867, probably in Chico, California, the daughter of Allyn Mather Barnard. She studied music at Mills College in Oakland, California, where she was listed as a member of the senior class in 1884 (kindly verified by Janice Braun, Special Collections Curator, Olin Library, Mills College). She subsequently taught music in San Francisco before embarking on a career as a vocalist under the stage-name "Marie Barna." In Boston she sang with John P. Sousa's band and with the Boston Symphony. She appears in Boston city directories for 1893 and 1894 under the name Maria Barnard Smith, presumably reflecting a first and brief marriage. For several years she sang professionally with the Damrosch-Ellis Opera Company and in several European cities, though apparently without capturing any starring role in a major production. By around 1898 she had become interested in theosophy. In 1899 she married Frank Russak, a freethinking Jew and an amateur opera producer in New York. At the same time she renounced her singing career, such as it had been, and began teaching theosophy. Her second husband having moved (apparently without his wife) to Paris in 1901, Marie Russak devoted more and more of her attention to theosophy and the Theosophical Society, spending the better parts of several years at the Society's headquarters in India (1906-10) and subsequently traveling widely in Europe and America on its behalf as a lecturer. She was reportedly in India when Frank Russak died at sea of a heart condition on 29 November 1914 ("French Banker Dies on Liner," *New York Times* (7 December 1914), p. 11, col. 6; "Frank Russak's Funeral," *New York Times* (12 December 1915), p. 15, col. 4). In 1916, she took Henry Hotchener (sometimes spelled Hotchner) as her presumably third husband. Most of the rest of her life was devoted to lecturing and writing on Theosophical subjects. Known in Theosophical life as "Helios," Marie Ellene Barnard Smith Russak Hotchener died in 1945.

- <sup>52</sup> "Krotona University Reported Planned." *Los Angeles Examiner* (22 March 1914), pt. 4, p. 3, col. 3.
- <sup>53</sup> Ross, *Krotona*, plate facing p. 164 and p. 242
- <sup>54</sup> Krotona's Trustees did not long remain unaware of this connection; cf. "Proceedings of the Board of Trustees," *The Messenger* 6, no. 12 (May 1917), pp. 365-371.
- <sup>55</sup> *Krotona* (1919), p. 15. "Rayda" is, of course, "Adyar" spelled backwards.
- <sup>56</sup> Cf. Marie Russak, "A Letter from the Vice-President," *The Messenger* 3, no. 5 (October 1915), p. 146.
- <sup>57</sup> Ross, *Krotona*, pl. preceding p. 165.
- <sup>58</sup> "Proceedings of the Board of Trustees," p. 369.
- <sup>59</sup> *Krotona* (1919), pp. 23-25.
- <sup>60</sup> "A Festival Drama," *The Messenger* 5, no. 10 (April 1918), pp. 789-790; W. A. S. C., "'The Light of Asia,' as a Channel," *The Messenger* 6, no. 3 (August 1918), p. 79.
- <sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.
- <sup>62</sup> Reproduced on the endpapers of Ross, *Krotona*.
- <sup>63</sup> John Kobler, *Damned in Paradise: The Life of John Barrymore* (New York: Atheneum, 1977), p. 207.
- <sup>64</sup> "Miss Barna's Singing," *New York Times* (8 January 1899), p. 20, col. 7.
- <sup>65</sup> Information on the occupancy and ownership of "Moorcrest" is derived mainly from Los Angeles city directories and the following sources: Fanchon Royer, *Eyes of the World on Hollywood* (Hollywood, CA: Hollywood Business Women's Club, 1922), p. 22; Charles Chaplin, *My Autobiography* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1964), pp. 351-352; Mary Astor, *My Story: An Autobiography* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1959), p. 82; and Kobler, *Damned in Paradise*, p. 207.
- <sup>66</sup> Kobler, *Damned in Paradise*, p. 209.
- <sup>67</sup> See the Los Angeles city directories for the years concerned.
- <sup>68</sup> Stacy-Judd, "Spanish Farmhouse Type," p. 63; McWilliams, *Southern California*, p. 255.
- <sup>69</sup> "Mrs. Banning Builds First Cubist House. *Los Angeles Sunday Times* (1 November 1914), pt. 6, p. 1, col. 1 and p. 4, col. 3. (Contrary to this headline, the Banning residence was not Gill's first "Cubist" house nor the first such house built by Gill in the Los Angeles area.)
- <sup>70</sup> Cf. Arthur Burnett Benton, "Architecture for the Southwest," *Land of Sunshine* 4, no. 3 (February 1896), pp. 129-130. This article illustrates, on p. 126, the Alhambra's Court of the Lions, quite possibly the immediate model for the Ternary Building at Krotona.
- <sup>71</sup> They could also design convincingly in Frank Lloyd Wright's Prairie house manner; see the illustration accompanying the article, "Plans Are Attractive," *Los Angeles Times* (26 September 1909), pt. 5, p. 1, col. 6
- <sup>72</sup> Cf. the Islamic-styled structures of the San Fernando valley suburb of Girard; "Town of Girard Has Busy Year," *Los Angeles Times* (19 October 1924), pt. 5, p. 6, col. 1.
- <sup>73</sup> Cf. David Gebhard, *Robert Stacy-Judd: Maya Architecture and the Creation of a New Style* (Santa Barbara, CA: Capra Press, 1993).