

**Edward Bosley has been the Executive Director of Gamble House since 1992. Under his leadership, The Gamble House is the most advanced of Los Angeles County's twenty National Historic Landmarks. Its sophisticated conservation practices and extensive educational outreach have been recognized nationally as an important model in the preservation community.**

**Recently, the Gamble House organized an exhibit related to its architects, Charles and Henry Greene, that traveled from the Huntington Library in California to the Smithsonian and the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. Bosley and curator Anne E. Malleck published an extensive catalog that extended the high scholarship of this exhibit.**

**The Gamble House is affiliated with the University of Southern California's School of Architecture and the City of Pasadena.**

**In this interview, Bosley spoke on the Gamble House's preservation strategies and its relevance to the Mills Act for Baldwin Hills Village (The Village Green). These strategies are also applicable to other Clarence Stein's Garden city communities. Dorothy Fue Wong conducted this interview on September 4, 2009.**

**Wong: Why is the Gamble House important?**

**Edward Bosley:** The Gamble House is an architectural icon of the American Arts and Crafts movement from the early part of the 20th Century. It's the only remaining work of Charles and Henry Greene, the famous Pasadena architects of that era, that still contain all of its architects' designed furniture and decorative arts. It is one of the major features that set this house apart from all others. The Greens worked mostly in Pasadena, but also in other parts of California. During that brief period from 1904 to 1911, they designed a short list of houses that were tremendously significant, not only as progressive architecture but also as total works of art. This included interior design, landscaping, the furnishings and decorative art, light fixtures, rugs, fireplace tools. So many things were designed by the architects, and the Gamble House is the only one of their works that still contains all of those features intact.

The Gamble House was designated a National Historic Landmark in late 1977. It is on the State Register of Historic places, National Register of Historic places, and it's also a local landmark.

**Wong: Please tell us about your background and also about your staff.**

**Edward Bosley:** Yes. I have come to this personally through perhaps a non-traditional route. My undergraduate degree is in Art History from UC Berkeley. I have an MBA from UCLA and the combination of the two feels like a simple background for running a historic site as an administrator. I do not have an academic background in historic preservation, but over the past almost 20 years I have had the opportunity to work side-by-side with professionals in the historic preservation field to develop a Historic Structures Report which is really our most important first step in a preservation plan. I worked also with the Getty Conservation Institute and professionals there. I continue to work with a restoration architect, a historic preservation consultant and an architectural

conservator who formed the nucleus of our preservation team. This culminated in a series of preservation planning and implementation grants from the Getty as well as grants from the Federal Government's "Save America's Treasures Program" and the State government. A number of private foundations including the Ahmanson Foundation and the Parsons Foundations, are involved. They are tremendously supportive of our conservation efforts.

Just a further bit of background – I came to the Gamble House with a Green & Green background. I lived in the Greene's Thornton house at UC Berkeley for four years, and that was my direct contact with the work of Greene & Greene before coming to the Gamble House as an Associate Director in 1990 and then being named Director in 1992. Since that time I have focused on building a preservation endowment and to solicit grant funding to help fund the Historic Structures Report and a \$3.6 million capital campaign for conservation through some of the sources I mentioned. Our major exterior conservation project took place in 2003/04, and interior conservation projects have continued since that time. A Getty grant for a collection conservation assessment plan was applied for and received in 2006 to catalog our collection's needs for conservation treatment.

Our staff includes a full-time curator, a full-time facilities manager. The two work together closely with regards to the conservation of the building itself. Our curator focuses on our collection, the most important piece of which is the house itself, and then of course all of the Greene & Greene decorative arts and the many other objects that are in our collection. These came originally from the Gamble family and then some are contributed gifts over the years since the gift was made of the house and its contents in 1966. We have a full-time maintenance staff. We have a part-time tour coordinator to organize the public and private tours. We have a part-time PR person to help get the word out about what we do. We have a part-time archivist who takes care of our collection of archival documents which are housed at the Huntington Library. We also have a full-time financial manager, and of course we have bookstore staff. We have a wonderful bookstore adjacent to the main structure that is housed in the former garage building, and it provides some financial support from year to year.

**Wong: What advice would you give to the Village Green or Baldwin Hills Village in terms of preservation and the Mills Act?**

**Edward Bosley:** First of all, I would like to start out by saying that I'm familiar with the Village Green. I've been there. I have that privilege of seeing a couple of the units and participating in a Fourth of July picnic there one year. I have a little bit of a sense of that wonderful sense of community. I am certainly familiar with the architecture and the landscape and also how important it is as the fulfillment of a dream for how garden communities can exist in the United States. The Village Green, I think, is tremendously important. It should be preserved not only as a beautiful landscape but as an example, a paradigm, if you will, of a garden community.

The first thing that's important, as we think about preservation at the Gamble House, is to do no harm, and that's like the Physician Creed.. You want to make sure that you don't do anything that is going to be a problem later on. And so the approach that we take is to be careful and to do a lot of planning before we actually lay hands on the structures or on the landscape. That can mean sometimes a large proportion of planning to work—that may feel frustrating and burdensome. But I'm here to say that the six years of planning that went into the exterior conservation plan for the Gamble House and the less than one year of actual work felt like the right proportion of planning to work. As time goes by, then you become more understanding of how important it is to do that planning.

**Wong: The challenge at the Village Green is that the homeowners do not have experience in long-term preservation planning. So what would you recommend?**

**Edward Bosley:** First of all, I'd like to say that when I started here I had no experience either and so at least I was smart enough to know that I didn't know very much, and that I needed a lot of help. But I also think that it's very important to take advantage of that non-professional resource, the residents themselves. Some of whom I know have been there for many, many years and have a wealth of information and perhaps even snapshots or photographs of the way the Village Green was in the years gone by and perhaps even towards the beginning of its time. That is a very, very valuable resource. One of the first things that we have done here at the Gamble was to capture as best we could all of the information that we could find near and far, like that – photographs, any kinds of letters that might have described the way things were at the house when the Gambles moved in, invoices showing work that was done on the house during the history of the structure. And for us now, that's 100 years.

So that's part of the reason the planning process takes time, but it's a really exciting thing for people who are inclined to sleuthing and to find a photograph. Just today I received a photograph, additional image of a snapshot taken in 1967 when some people came to visit the Gamble House, and there are clues in those photographs about how things were right after the House was open to the public, things that we perhaps didn't know before. It can be a lot of fun. It's almost like family genealogy – going back and uncovering documents from the past.

So that's very important to do and the volunteer support that's needed to really do a good job of that can include all of the residents at the Village Green, the ones that are interested in helping out.

Then it's also very important to have professionals who understand how to deal with the large volume of material that comes in. Those oral histories and those kinds of bits of information – how those are gathered and how those are then interpreted is really the work of professionals. These are people who have made a life's work of doing this kind of thing and have an academic background in how to properly approach the cataloging and interpretation of that material.

**Wong: What type of professionals would you include to help with the Cultural Landscape Plan?**

**Edward Bosley:** The professionals that I would want to be sure to talk to in a Cultural Landscape Plan would, of course, include people who have made an academic study of landscape history and to identify professionals in the field who have a particular interest in garden communities. For example, and there're lots of people who have paid attention to the garden community movement since the mid-19th Century in England where it began, as far as I know. So those could be very, very helpful people to work with.

And then, of course, there are the people who deal with plant material itself, and people who understand what kind of plant material was used when the Village Green was first designed. Any historic plant material would be very important to understand-- what that is and to identify what's original and what has intervened in the ensuing years. There needs to be conservation professional too. Someone who understands hardscape-- the sidewalks, the street furniture, and that kind of things. There has to be an approach in the evaluation, the documentation of what's there now, what was there originally, and what's happened in between. It's a lot of work, but it's not impossible and it does take a bit of time and money certainly, but it is essential to understanding how you want to proceed.

**Wong: So you would have a professional who specializes in historic landscape.**

**Edward Bosley:** Well, I wouldn't necessarily say a landscape architect, but a landscape historian. Then you need people who have backgrounds in developing cultural landscape reports. We're talking about a very important resource here, the Village Green. So it should be someone who really has an admirable track record in producing Cultural Landscape Reports. The Frederick Wall Omstead Institute in Brooklyn, Massachusetts comes to mind as a wonderful potential resource place to go to get recommendations of people who might be helpful.

**Wong: Pamela Seager mentioned that when Rancho Los Alamitos was developing its Cultural Landscape Report, she had evaluators reading the report during the process and also at the end to see that everything was done correctly. What are your thoughts about this?**

**Bosley:** First of all, I have the highest respect for Pam Seager and how she approaches her work. So I would say that what her thoughts were on that subject as far as review of the Cultural Landscape Report from one stage to the next would be exactly what I would do. I haven't seen her remarks on that, but I know enough about her to know that she's extremely thoughtful and careful about how she approaches these things.

But I would say, yes certainly you want to have that document vetted by several people and professionals included. When one is writing at oneself, one's very close to it, and it's important to get some distance and to get some perspective from the outside. This includes people who know nothing about Village Green might be enlisted to just read it from a very objective standpoint. So I'd say yes; that sounds like a very smart way to do.

As far as the education of the community itself, that's also very important. We held a number of meetings here at the Gamble House among what I would call "stakeholders in the process" to solicit feedback because we did not go into our Historic Structures Report here with a preconceived notion of what we wanted the outcome to be. I think that's important – to go in open minded and to take ideas on a nonjudgmental basis. That is brain storming and not judging or criticizing any ideas, but gathering as many ideas as possible so that they can be evaluated by the professional team for reasonableness and feasibility. Then come back to the constituency to the homeowners and other stakeholders with a draft plan and then work on that from there. I think it's important for the community to be brought into the process on a regular basis because after all they are the ones who will benefit or suffer from the consequences of the project.

On that subject, I would just like to say that I think it's important for the members of the community to reflect individually on why it is they live at Village Green and what it is that is special to them about the place. If people are not clear on that, then no amount of the input is going to be really valuable. They need to really think about the attributes of the place, what makes it compelling for them to stay, why they purchased there in the first place, and what are the character defining features in their minds that make that a worthwhile place to live in, and what makes it special and different from other condominium complexes.

**Wong: I think your analysis is outstanding. This should be done before the preservation reports are done for the buildings and landscape. Is that correct?**

**Edward Bosley:** I agree. I think that is the very first thing that should be done – to gather information from the residents as to what they see that's special about the place and what they might envision for its future. Do they understand what went into the development and the design of the Village Green in the first place. A historian could help with those important bits of history so that people really know the historical significance of where they are. They can then put that together with their own perhaps more emotional response about what's important for them individually. Some interesting conclusions might come out of that.

**Wong: I would like you to speak about the Mission Statement. After community discussions, then we can begin to formulate a Mission Statement. I know that Gamble House has an excellent and comprehensive Mission Statement. Could you comment about that?**

**Edward Bosley:** Institutionally, it's been a really useful thing for us to have a clear and concise Mission Statement. Just to say it briefly, the mission of the Gamble House is to inspire the public's appreciation and understanding of fine historic architecture through the example of the Gamble House, which is the most complete and best preserved work of the American Arts and Crafts architects Charles and Henry Greene.

So then we have a list of tactical points that will help us achieve that mission and the first is, of course, to preserve the Gamble House, its furnishings and collections to nationally

recognized standards of conservation. Two, to provide an exemplary program of public access that interprets the architecture of the Gamble House. That's basically our public tours, and its collections in a relevant and educational way. Three, to provide educational programs that enhance the public's understanding of the Gamble House within the context of architectural and cultural history. And that refers to our lecture series and our own ongoing architectural study tours that we do. For example, I'm doing a tour of Greene and Greene homes next week in Upstate New York. Fourth is to maintain strong academic and administrative ties with the University of Southern California School of Architecture. That is the academic institution that's involved in the gift agreement from the Gamble Family. And then finally pursuing a mutually supportive relationship with the City of Pasadena in the interest of meeting our mission and adhering to the 1966 Gamble Family Gift Agreement.

In 1966 the Gamble Family gave the Gamble House and its contents to the City of Pasadena in a joint agreement with the University of Southern California. And generally, just very broad brush interpretation of that agreement is that the City of Pasadena holds title to the house. They are in charge of maintaining everything outside of the walls of the building, and the University of Southern California is in charge of preserving and maintaining the house itself and running all the programs. So the City cuts the lawn and trims the trees and keeps the storm drains clear, and the University preserves the building and its contents and interprets those elements. So we work very closely with the City especially when it comes to landscape issues. The Gamble Family does have the responsibility for oversight, and so they are still very much involved in what goes on here. They have three members on our Board of Overseers, the City has two and the University has two voting numbers.

**Wong: My other question relates to your Historic Structure Report. How did the Historic Structure Report help Gamble House operations and also attract funding?**

Bosley: Well, it was helpful in both ways very significantly. When I first heard that there was such a thing as a Historic Structures Report (that was a standard for approaching conservation plan for a historic building), I thought, I'm surprised we don't have one of those already. We need to go out and get one. This was back in the early 1990s and I read a couple other Historic Structures reports that were available for me to read. I began to look around for some professionals that might help us produce such a report and also for the funding to pay those consultants. Fortunately, at that time the Getty Grant Program was offering Planning Grants for architectural conservation in Los Angeles, and we were able to take advantage of their grant funding to produce this Historic Structures Report. We also raised money independently because those were matching grants, a one for one match, and we needed to raise an equal amount to fund the entire Report.

The investment was a wise one as it turned out because the price of admission to grant funding, for implementing any treatments on historic properties is to have such a report. They won't generally consider giving implementation funds to a project if there is no Historic Structures or Cultural Landscape report, preferably both in the case of something as important as Village Green.

**Wong: After you completed the Historic Structure Report, did you use it as a guideline in your financial planning?**

Bosley: Yes, we use it certainly as a tool in approaching any decision that has to do with maintenance or conservation of the house. But we also use it as a tool for financial reasons. We also refer to our mission in that regard too. We don't spend money on things that don't directly address our mission in some way shape or form. And we also don't spend money on things that have not been addressed in some way shape or form by the Historic Structures Report. So it really gives us some focus when we – especially in tough economic times such as we're in now-- to really be thoughtful and methodical about how we spend our finite resources.

**Wong: So actually your Historic Structures Report and your Cultural Landscape Plan are the foundation for both the financial plan and also the foundation for your marketing and funding strategy report.**

Edward Bosley: Well, it certainly is. First of all I need to clarify that where as we have a Historic Structures Report, we do not yet have, here at the Gamble House, a Cultural Landscape Report that's published. We're working on that as a priority now. But our earlier priority was to preserve and conserve the building and its collections to make sure that the building was watertight and that the conservation of our objects in the house were assured before moving on to the next much more ambitious project of the landscape because so little of our landscape is original. So it's a much different proposition for us here than the building and its contents which were actually quite original and quite intact. To answer your question, we use that as a marketing tool, and we have all of this information up on our website – our Mission Statement, our conservation philosophy and statements from each of the team members who were involved in the capital project in 2003/04.

**Wong: If a community is not acquainted with preservation, how should they proceed in preparing a Historic Structures Report, which is required for the Mills Act?**

Edward Bosley: I think the first step because of the condominium structure that Village Green has, the first step is to have someone explain to the community why it's important for them to want this in the first place. I'm sure there are some skeptics there who feel, oh well we don't need any of this historic preservation stuff. We'll just keep cutting the grass and trimming the trees and painting the houses and everything will be fine. That I think – it's certainly one point of view. But it's to miss out on a tremendous legacy that is known frankly international – Village Green is something that students of architecture and landscape are aware of internationally. And I think it's a probably a good bet that some of the residents are now aware of that. They need to appreciate the importance of what they have and they need to appreciate their own good judgment in choosing to live there in the first place. It's not for nothing that they were lured to Village Green. There was something about that place that spoke to them, and to capture that – the essence of that is first and foremost.

I think it's absolutely essential, as you said to have professional involvement as well as volunteer involvement. The volunteers are key, especially for a large community such as you have. But they will be beating their heads against a wall frankly if they don't have professional guidance and professional effort in making sure that the outcome, the final product, whatever it is, is done properly because otherwise it's wasted effort on the part of a lot of people.

**Wong: You not only have the right professional, but you have to have the management and the community involved in the whole process.**

Bosley: That's right. In the ideal, everybody has an opportunity to have input in a Historic Structures Report, and we had two or three community meetings here at the Gamble House when we were working on ours, and we had a kind of a draft document that we submitted to all of our volunteers and asked for comments, and we got some very good comments back from some of our volunteers, especially ones who had been here for many years – since the early 70s or late 60s even – people who had long-term perspective on this structure. It was very valuable. Also we solicited input from the preservation community and the City of Pasadena, of course Cultural Affairs and the Design and Historic Preservation office. We had to get a certificate of appropriateness for the work that we were doing here. So we worked with a lot of agencies and professionals. It's a very rewarding process. It does sometimes take more time than you want it to. But there is an end to it, and there is a greater satisfaction at the end of the project when you know you haven't left a stone unturned.

**Wong: Does the Gamble House have a disaster plan? (The Village Green is about two blocks from a major earthquake fault).**

Bosley: Well, we also have a disaster plan and we're fortunate to be associated with the University of Southern California and to be able to draw on the resources of the University to help us with understanding what a disaster should be for a site like this. The University owns several historic sites, as most people know, and so they have experience in developing those kinds of plans. They teach the relevant staff and volunteers how to respond in case of an emergency. We have earthquakes here too, of course. Today we're looking through a haze of the station fire and are reminded that fires and burning embers and ash can float down into Pasadena as well as they did during the Eden Canyon fire several years ago. So those are things that are very high on our list of things to worry about here.

But as far as a disaster plan for Village Green, I imagine that there are some examples that can be looked to – plans that are already developed for similar garden communities that could be adapted for Village Green. In other words, one doesn't have to reinvent the wheel.

**Wong: Could you comment on your Educational Plan? That's a major challenge for the Stein Garden Cities.**

**Edward Bosley:** We are involved in educational activities every day. We open our doors to the public and we have a Public Interpretation program. Of course, through our public tours – we’re open four days a week – Thursday through Sunday for public tours. And then we also do tours throughout the week for private groups. And that’s one way of educating the public about the importance not only of the Gamble House but historic architecture in general.

I bring that up because it’s important for people to be given a reason to care not only for the residents of Village Green to be given a reason to care about the future of their community, but also outside of Village Green it’s important for the greater Los Angeles area to be given a reason to care what happens to Village Green. And the best way to do that is for people to be able to see it for themselves. So public access should be considered as an important component of a Preservation Plan. If people don’t care about Village Green, the residents can sit and talk to each other about how important it is until “the cows come home” but funding agencies will not be interested in helping unless there’s broader interest and support for a conservation project and for a project that preserves the future of the community.

I’m reminded of a famous or rather not so famous house that was demolished – architectural historians were well aware of this beautiful Cliff May House in the hills of Los Angeles. It was a house that he designed for himself, but the owner, for reasons best known to herself, chose not to let anybody see it. And so when it was torn down the human cry went up among a very small group of people, mostly academics and historians who understood the value of this place, and then it was gone. And that happens frequently. A Richard Neutra house was demolished in Rancho Mirage several years ago, and it was one of those cases where many people didn’t know that it existed.

So one of the best ways to preserve Village Green is to make sure that people have an opportunity to come and see it. An example is the wonderful Fourth of July celebration that I went to; it was by invitation by one the residents of course. But if there are opportunities to provide tours of the site on a regular basis, I would say that’s a very important component of education.

And then there’s the education of the community itself, of the homeowners. Opportunities for community meetings should be provided over several over a period of months-- people can’t come on a Saturday, but they might be able to come on a Tuesday night – that sort of thing. So if you have a series of six or ten sessions offered for people to come and learn about the rich history of Village Green and it’s presented by a professional historian, that might get them not only more aware of what they have but also more excited about preserving it.

**Wong: That’s excellent. One concern with the Mills Act is the oversight of the property. I know that you have oversight at the Gamble House. Do you have any suggestions for an oversight system for the Village Green and other Garden cities?**

**Edward Bosley:** Well, if public access is enhanced, that’s a form of oversight right there – just letting people know that the place exists and inviting some kind of interaction with the public in the neighborhood. That helps to keep people honest, as the expression goes – about pursuing Mills Act or stipulated work by agreement with the National Historic

Landmark program, work that needs to be done to the standards of the Secretary of the Interior's ways of preserving historic properties. Those standards are published and they're very accessible on the Internet, and those are the items that people are going to be interested in when it comes to oversight.

So everybody should become familiar with what can and cannot be done. It's not difficult at all. There are lots of ways to approach a conservation treatment plan that are neither more expensive nor difficult to approach than most traditional restoration or renovation projects. So people need not be afraid. I know there's a natural "knee jerk" reaction against landmark status sometimes when people fear that they're going to be told exactly what they must do. It's really all about working with the government agencies and the oversight agencies to come to a reasonable solution that's affordable and adheres to the standards.

**Wong: At the Gamble House do you write reports on a yearly or quarterly basis? That's another oversight.**

**Edward Bosley:** Yes. In our case we actually have an architectural conservator on retainer – a consultant on retainer who comes on a regular basis to check on the site. We have regular meetings with that person to keep abreast of the conservation issues that we face. As everybody knows, an old house always has something that needs to be done to it, and it's certainly true with the Gamble House. There are always issues and so we have to have a regular maintenance plan, a regular conservation plan-- that idea.

The oversight for that regular work that takes place here is from a number of different sources. The City of Pasadena has a vested interest and so the Design and Historic Preservation office is welcome at any time to come by and make sure that we're living up to our National Historic Landmark status. Of course, the Department of the Interior is welcome to come anytime and they have, especially since we received a Save America's Treasures Grant of \$350,000. They were interested to make sure that we had spent that money in the appropriate way and so they sent a representative out of Washington to review our work. And we were happy to comply with that. Again, it's about people and about collaborations with people who really want to see the best outcome just as you do. But it does mean that there needs to be somebody present and available and knowledgeable to talk about those things. In most cases that person is probably a professional or someone on staff who's very close to the project.

**Wong: My final question is about public benefit. It has been mentioned that funding agencies are very interested in projects that have to do with public benefit. I would like you to comment on that.**

**Edward Bosley:** The public benefit is fairly clear at the Gamble House. We're a 501C3 non-profit organization that exists to interpret this architecture to the public, and we are open for regular public hours. So that all is completely in line with our mission. I realize that if they looked at Village Green, however, these are private residences, and people of course like to be able to count on a high degree of privacy and solitude and quiet and all of that that goes along with a happy home life.

But again, I think it gets back to the idea of why does one choose to live in a place like the Village Green initially. It is a beautiful, in many ways-- open garden community that allows people to interact with each other, and that's part of the beauty of that concept that propagated itself around the country and around the world for that matter. So if there are opportunities, if the residents can identify opportunities, to share that idea perhaps once or twice a year with the larger community or with the preservation community. Architectural historians or landscape historians can be invited to come see the good work that they're doing or to see the place as it is now before and after, if you will – here's what we are thinking of doing and share some of the ideas with the community of people who are interested. That can only be a good thing for potential fundraising and getting the word out about the goods things that are afoot there.

**Wong: Also, some of the universities have sent their students to study this site. I think it's a good idea to have partnerships like the Gamble House. It was suggested that universities would like to have their students do onsite preservation projects for National Historic Landmark properties.**

**Edward Bosley:** Absolutely! I think that has been a tremendous thing for the Gamble House. It's a wonderful two-way street. It's terrific from a fund-raising standpoint for us to be able to say that we work in cooperation with the USC School of Architecture and in particular the Historic Preservation Program there. I occasionally teach class sessions for the Masters program Historic Relations Summer Short Course, and in turn we have the benefit of the students' perspectives on what we might do differently here, what we might do better. That's a good exchange of ideas. That's a very helpful thing. And there are excellent landscape programs in Southern California that might be very interested in having a collaboration with the Village Green along those lines – Cal Poly Pomona comes to mind, certainly USC, other universities. And it doesn't have to be just one. It doesn't need to be exclusive. It can be with as many as you want. Again, those collaborations take volunteer time and/or professional time, but I think the dividends are greatly paid if that's paid attention to.

**Wong: Thank you very much, Ted, for such an outstanding interview.**

**Edward Bosley:** You're very welcome, Dorothy.

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