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About the Institute

The Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation, a research division of Carnegie Mellon University, specializes in the history of botany and all aspects of plant science and serves the international scientific community through research and documentation. To this end, the Institute acquires and maintains authoritative collections of books, plant images, manuscripts, portraits and data files, and provides publications and other modes of information service. The Institute meets the reference needs of botanists, biologists, historians, conservationists, librarians, bibliographers and the public at large, especially those concerned with any aspect of the North American flora.

Hunt Institute was dedicated in 1961 as the Rachel McMasters Miller Hunt Botanical Library, an international center for bibliographical research and service in the interests of botany and horticulture, as well as a center for the study of all aspects of the history of the plant sciences. By 1971 the Library's activities had so diversified that the name was changed to Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation. Growth in collections and research projects led to the establishment of four programmatic departments: Archives, Art, Bibliography and the Library.

DONALD D. MCMURRAY
480 CALIFORNIA TERRACE
PASADENA, CALIFORNIA

June 9, 1938.

FILE

Dr. Wilson Popenoe,
C/o United Fruit Co.,
Antigua,
Guatemala,
Central America.

Dear Dr. Popenoe:

Mrs. Curtis Peck, a client of mine in Pasadena, has seen your house in Antigua, and in her proposed home here would like to use the one in Antigua as an inspiration.

We have Louis Adamic's book entitled THE HOUSE IN ANTIGUA, which gave a limited amount of architectural details as shown in the photographs and described in the text.

If it is not asking too much, I was wondering if you would be so kind as to send me the following:

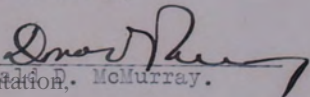
Number and size of the patios.
Average ceiling heights from finish floor to finish ceilings.
Material of floors.
Material of walls.
Height of finish floor level with relation to the street and patio.
Color of exterior walls.
Color of interior walls and woodwork.

The above data may already have been published, and, if so, perhaps you would kindly let me know where I can obtain same.

I made enquiry through mutual friends of Dr. Paul Popenoe regarding the above data, and he suggested that I should write you direct.

Any information that you may give me will be much appreciated, and when you are in Pasadena again, and if you could spare the time, I would certainly like to talk to you further about this most interesting house.

Yours very truly,


Donald D. McMurray.

Tiquisate (Rio Bravo) Guatemala,
17 June 1938

Mr Donald B McMurray,
480 California Terrace
Pasadena, Calif.

Dear Mr. McMurray:

Your letter of the 9th is most welcome. I have for some time been hoping that details, at least, from the old house in Antigua would be used in California; and yours is the first intimation that such is going to be the case. I am going up to Antigua tomorrow to spend the week-end, and will get the measurements you want, and add them on a separate sheet; but today I have more time to give you such details as I can at long range. They will require a little explaining.

First, the patios: The house as it now stands has been dismembered twice, a piece having been sold off the NW corner in the last century, and a piece from the SE corner not many years ago. Consequently the measured drawing I having, showing the floor plan as it exists at present, does not tell the whole story. I am afraid I do not have a copy of the floor plan on hand at present; if I do, I shall mail it to you, and if I do not, I can get one from Honduras, where I keep the tracing. I recently gave one to Professor Annis of the Univ. of So. Calif, who is in Antigua studying architecture of the colonial period. Professor Annis, by the way, will have plenty of details from our house, as well as from others, when he returns to U.S.C. this summer, and you may want to consult him.

The main patio was about 65 feet in diameter. On the E, facing the street, was the sala or reception hall; while to the W, or

rear, was the comedor or dining room. Part of this we now use as a bedroom, after restoration; the remainder is in ruins. The adjoining butler's pantry or dispensa we are also using as a bedroom; so a present-day plan of the house will not show the original arrangement of the rooms. On the S side of the main patio was a large bedroom,- Professor Annis thinks it was probably divided into two, and I suspect he ~~was~~ ^{is} right. I should remark that it is now very difficult to trace the original disposition of the rooms, in some instances; because so many revampings have taken place during the centuries. But I think in general we now have the main features worked out. On the N side of the patio were bedrooms, with perhaps a library where we now have one; but the fireplace shown in Adamic's book is not original; we simply had to add it, to be comfortable. The old Dons were made of sterner stuff.

Passing now from the patio principal we go through the pasadizo which joins it to the kitchen patio, which has always struck me as one of the prettiest features of the house. This is small, and has nothing in it except a few potted plants and a volunteer growth of ferns,- which spring up everywhere in the wet season.

From this patio we again go through a pasadizo to the service patio, where stands the pila or fountain where washing is done. This patio was formerly much larger than it is now; it was reduced in size when the NW corner of the property was sold off in the last century. I will put the measurements of the patios in tomorrow, if I cannot find a measured drawing to send you. To the south side of the service patio is the little jardin de arriates, or

garden of raised flower-beds, one of the loveliest features of the place.

All floors are of local brick; rectangular in form except in the big sala, where we copied the original design, no longer made in Antigua but still to be seen in some of the old buildings. This is a sort of clover leaf interlocking pattern,- perhaps you can see it in the photograph of the sala in Agamie's book,- I haven't a copy by me, hence cannot say. These native brick are very soft and wear down pretty rapidly. All walls are repellado, that is, plastered over the masonry (there is no adobe in the house; all walls of solid masonry, brick and stone laid in mortar, $3/4$ vara thick); the original color of interior and exterior walls is unknown, but we have used white on the exterior, with a pale terracotta or almost a dark cream on the interior walls. Only exception is the rose-pink trimming around the medallion windows in the library and bedrooms,- windows which open onto the patio,- and the walls of the kitchen patio, which are also rose pink. I might mention that pale blue, rose pink, pale terracotta and white are the principal colors used today in Antigua, and I suspect they have been for a long time.

With very minor exceptions, there are only two woods used in the construction of the house: all beams and ceilings are of white cypress (*Cupressus benthami*) a tree which grows here in the high mountains, and which you do not know in the Marsh. The lumber somewhat resembles a fine grade of soft pine. In order to give the right tone to the beams and ceilings (latter are of 1 x 10 boards), we treated them all with carbolineum; toning them down to a warm brown. There is a tendency here to darken all interior finish and furniture with sulfate of iron, and the tone

obtained is almost black,- much darker than wood obtains with age, though the object of the toning is to make the wood look old. Window shutters and frames, all doors, and nearly all the furniture are of Spanish cedar (which you know in the form of cigar box cedar) and practically everything is old. We had to have a few things copied. There were only two doors in the house which were worth keeping, as belonging to the early period; but we bought up old doors and window shutters about town, and put them in. They were not treated in any way except to clean and wax them. In consequence the color is a rather pale brown, which Spanish cedar assumes with age.

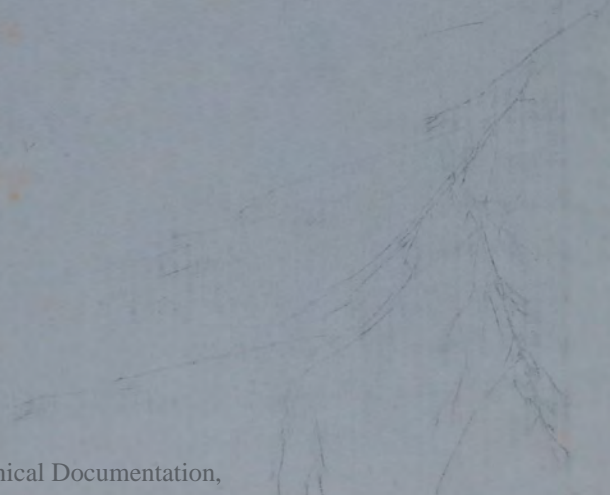
In regard to the height of floor level with relation to street and patio: it is now only some 6 inches above level of patio, that is, the main patio, because the latter has filled up with rubble and trash during the centuries. When we excavated to install the old fountain (which was not originally in the main patio; such were not used in these places,- there would have been a búcaro or small fountain against one of the walls) we found the old patio level which was about 24 inches below that of the finish of the corredor. I feel pretty sure the patio was originally cobbled or paved with brick; now it has trees growing in it, and we preferred to keep them rather than to excavate to the old level, which would have destroyed them.

Referring again to the color of the exterior walls, I am inclined to think I may try some gayer color on the walls which face the street the next time we kasomine the place. I forgot to mention that the cornice, which I believe you can see in one of the photographs, is painted rose pink at present. It is the only color on the outside of the house.

I am not prepared to offer architectural comments, but based on what people such as Professor Amis have told me, I think the following are some of the interesting features of the place, perhaps worth copying: first, the sala or reception hall, with its archway. Amis likes the lines and proportions of this room very much. Next, the medallion windows which open onto the patios, - see the picture of the one in the library, with its wooden grille and shutters. The kitchen patio. And lastly, the little jardin de arriates at the rear of the house. Many people who come to the place say they think the kitchen is by far the most fascinating feature of the house, and with this I agree; but it is probably not a thing which can be copied easily in a modern house.

Let me know if there are other data you need. Best address, to reach me promptly, is care United Fruit Co., Guatemala City.

Sincerely yours,



DONALD D. McMURRAY
480 CALIFORNIA TERRACE
PASADENA, CALIFORNIA

July 18, 1938.

FILE

Dr. Wilson Popenoe,
C/o United Fruit Co.,
Guatemala City.

Dear Dr. Popenoe:

Many thanks for your letter of June 17th. The data in same has been most helpful, and I certainly appreciate the trouble you took in making sketch of the floor plan, as this has been of particular interest to both myself and Mrs. Peck, my client.

I find that we have in the brickyards here a simple brick paving somewhat similar to the diagram you sent me. However, this local brick paving is not nearly as interesting as that you used in Guatemala.

We are now making estimate drawings for this house, and have used 12 ft. for the ceiling height for the principal portion. We are grilling the windows on the street, using tile roof, and are using for inspiration in various details as much as possible your house in Guatemala.

Professor Annis, of the University of California, is a friend of a ~~mutual~~ friend of mine, and as soon as he returns I will certainly get in touch with him.

When we have completed our colored sketches of the elevations, I will send you a photostat of same.

The color scheme on the outside, as now contemplated, consists of pale blue walls with rose pink dado and cornice members. Of course in California, as you know, we will probably build with stud walls, but we are making the stud walls on the principal elevations of double thickness, approximately 3 ft., which will give us a grand chance for deep reveals.

I hope the professor gets back in time, so that we can use the data which I expect he will have.

I am sorry we cannot use details similar to your kitchen layout, but as you know conditions here call

DONALD D. MCMURRAY
480 CALIFORNIA TERRACE
PASADENA, CALIFORNIA

FILE

-2-

for more or less a typical kitchen layout, tile drain-boards, enameled sinks, gas or electrical stove, gas or electrical refrigerator.

Many thanks again for your trouble, and I may later take advantage of your kind offer and ask for additional information. My client, Mrs. Peck, also sends her thanks for your many courtesies.

I trust that when you come to Pasadena again we will be able to show you the house.

Yours sincerely,


Donald D. McMurray.

DONALD D. McMURRAY
480 CALIFORNIA TERRACE
PASADENA, CALIFORNIA

FILE

September 15, 1938

Dr. Wilson Popenoe,
c/o United Fruit Co.,
Guatemala City, Guatemala.

Dear Dr. Popenoe:

I am enclosing photostatic copy of a rendering of street elevation of the Peck house. This is the house for which you recently sent me the data.

Mr. Annis dropped in the other day. We all had a very pleasant chat with him, and were agreeably surprised to find that we had interpreted the details and other information on your house in Antigua surprisingly well. He very kindly furnished us with several bits of missing information.

In general this house is a U shaped plan. Street walls are $2\frac{1}{2}$ ft. thick with a cast stone frame around entrance doorway, and metal grills over windows in lieu of wood. The owners decided in favor of the metal due to the fact that it is possible to get more light through same into the rooms.

We, of course, have had to add sash and screens. As I think I mentioned before, the ceiling height in main part of the house is 12 ft. with finished floor about 2 ft. from grade. Exterior walls are stucco colored with tile roof over it. With the aid of a magnifying glass I have been able to find a number of details in the photographs in Adamic's book.

On the interior, stucco is being used on the walls; beamed ceilings in the principal rooms; cast stone fireplaces in Living Room and Master's Bedroom. We took as an inspiration for these fireplaces various Spanish doorways. Mr. Annis tells me that your fireplace in the Sala was influenced in a similar way.

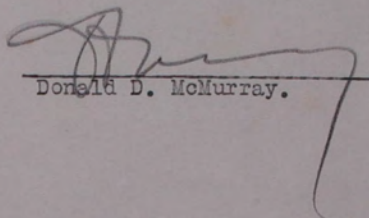
On the enclosed corridor opening on the patio, there is a combination fireplace and grill. This patio is approximately 50 ft. wide and 75 ft. deep. In it I hope will be a fountain, walks etc. This as yet has not been decided upon.

9-15-38

I surely appreciate your courtesy in sending me the information and details covering the Antigie house, and look forward with great pleasure to be able to show you the results of our work when you come to Pasadena again.

Thanks very much.

Sincerely yours,



Donald D. McMurray.

ec
encl



HOUSE FOR
MR AND MRS CURTIS PECK, PASADENA

JOB # 78-252, 1-1928

RONALD D. MCMURRAY A.I.A.
PASADENA CALIF

DONALD D. McMURRAY
480 CALIFORNIA TERRACE
PASADENA, CALIFORNIA

October 28, 1938.

FILE

Dr. Wilson Popenoe,
C/o United Fruit Co.,
Antigua,
Guatemala,
Central America.

Dear Dr. Popenoe:

Thank you very much for your letter of October 6, 1938.

Mrs. Peck is writing you to thank you for the proposed souvenir, and I am sure that any part of the building which you can spare will be very acceptable.

Within a week or two I expect to call Dr. Paul Popenoe, and ask him and Mrs. Popenoe to come down and see the house.

The scale of the house is causing considerable comment here. I really believe that, with the exception of parts of the old missions, and perhaps the Old Mill in Pasadena, there are few buildings of the proportions of this house. I have had considerable experience in designing and building various types of structures, but I have here a problem of scale that I have not encountered before, so am having lots of fun working out various problems as they arise.

Again looking forward to taking you through the completed building, I am,

Yours sincerely,


Donald D. McMurray

DONALD D. McMURRAY
480 CALIFORNIA TERRACE
PASADENA, CALIFORNIA

December 2, 1938.

FILE

Dr. Wilson Popenoe,
C/o United Fruit Co.,
Antigua,
Guatemala, Central America.

Dear Dr. Popenoe:

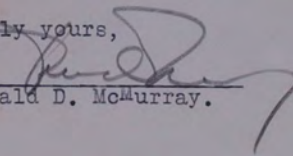
We are coming along famously on the house, and I expect shortly to call your brother and invite him and Mrs. Popenoe down to see the building. The lathing has just been started.

I would like to trouble you again for some information. On the street doors in the photographs there are two ornamental discs or cartouches. Mrs. Peck thinks there are in the form of lions' heads with the mane forming part of the decoration. I was wondering if by chance you had any data covering them, perhaps a photograph which would be clearer than the one shown in Adamic's book.

I think we have caught the spirit of the scale of the building very nicely; now that the areas are covered the openings and other details are beginning to take form. As I have probably said before, the project is causing a great deal of comment here, due I suppose to the fact that we have higher ceilings than usual.

Thanking you again for your trouble and kindness to me regarding this work, and looking forward to showing you the house in person when you come to California, I am,

Sincerely yours,


Donald D. McMurray.

DONALD D. MCMURRAY
480 CALIFORNIA TERRACE
PASADENA, CALIFORNIA

February 8, 1939.

FILE

Dear Dr. Popenoe:

Many thanks for your letter of January 29th regarding the description of the ornamental discs on the front door. You very kindly offered to send a photograph of these discs, and if it is not too much trouble we will appreciate having one. Even though the house may be completed before the discs are made, they can always be put on afterwards.

As I told you in my last letter, I think the house is going to be a great success. We are now installing the interior trim, etc., and very shortly will have the grille work on the outside windows.

I mentioned again to Mrs. Peck about the souvenir, and she is looking forward to receiving same when you are able to send it.

I talked to your sister-in-law, Mrs. Paul Popenoe, as soon as the building was in shape to show them, and she said when your brother could arrange his appointments they would call me and I will then take them through. I believe, however, that they have already seen the house themselves.

I hope you will be in Pasadena soon, so that we can show you the finished product.

Thanking you again for your many courtesies, I am,

Sincerely yours,

Dr. W. Popenoe,
Antigua, Guatemala.