

RESIDENCE FOR C.D. STIMSON, ESQ.
SEATTLE, WASHINGTON. ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲

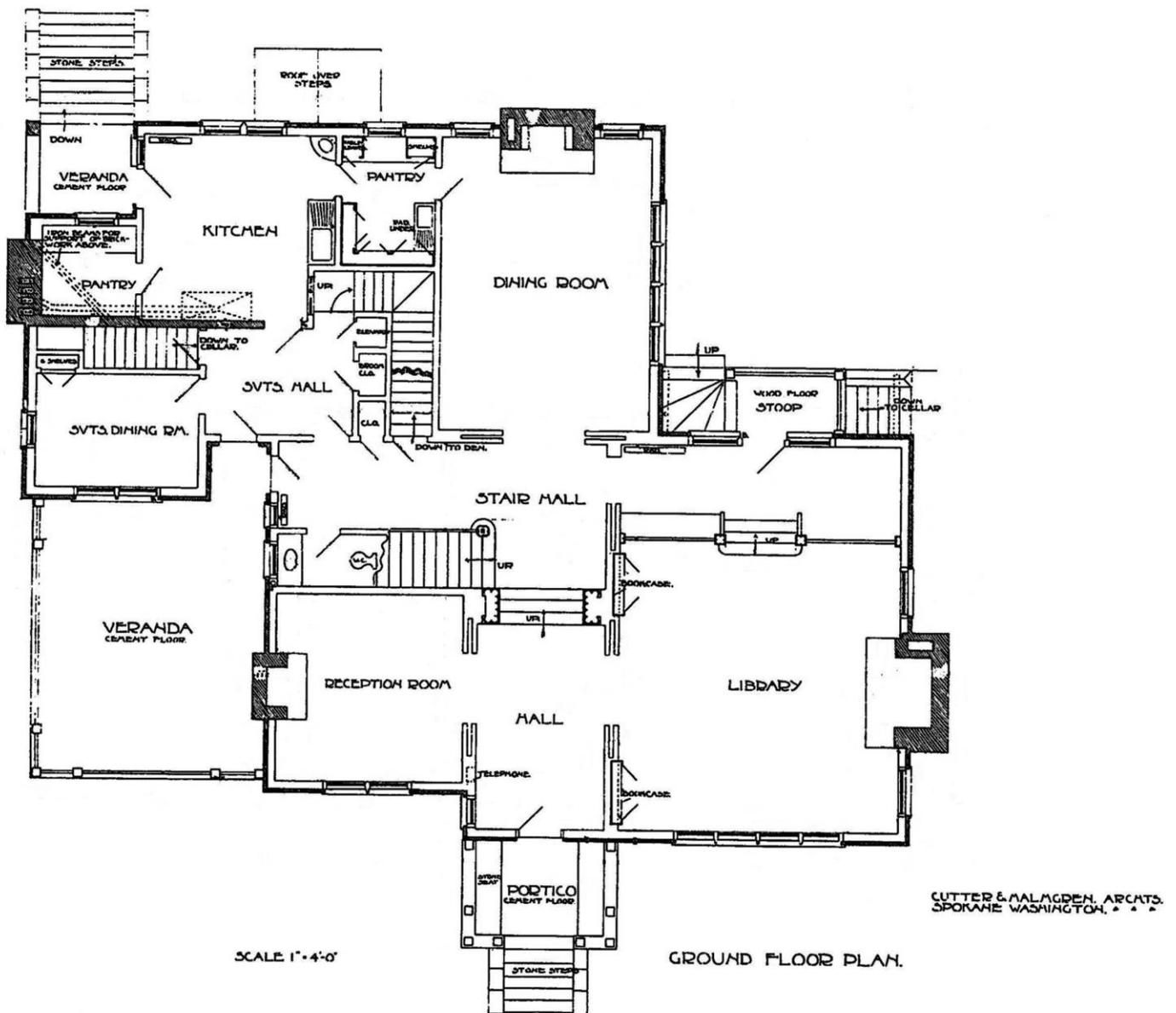


Stimson-Green Mansion

Built by C.D. and Harriet Stimson and completed in 1901, the Stimson-Green Mansion is one of Seattle's most impressive examples of "eclectic architecture." Located at 1204 Minor Avenue on First Hill, the mansion's exterior half-timber work and its many wooden gables and pointed arches are stylistically medieval English Tudor while the interior rooms combine elements from various historical styles, including Moorish, Romanesque, Gothic, Neoclassical, and Renaissance. Spokane Architect Kirtland Cutter was already well known for his attention to detail and free use of historical styles when the Stimsons hired him in 1898 to design their new home. Cutter was responsible for designing both the exterior and the interior of the mansion as well as the furniture and fixtures, providing a one-stop shop that enabled him to control all aspects of the design. The Stimsons spent \$30,000 to build the house and another \$15,000 to furnish and outfit the interior.

For more than a decade, the Stimsons lived in the home with their son, Tom, and their daughter, Dorothy. After the Stimsons moved to a larger home in The Highlands in 1914, Seattle businessman Joshua Green and his wife Laura purchased the house in 1915. For the next 60 years, the Green Family resided at "1204," as it was known to them, and raised their three children and entertained family, friends and business associates, making very few changes to the building's elaborate interior. In early January 1975, Mrs. Green died at the age of 101. Some three weeks later, her husband of more than 70 years died at the age of 105.

Subsequently, Historic Seattle purchased the property from the estate and obtained local landmark and National Register status before selling it with protective covenants. In 1986, Priscilla "Patsy" Bullitt Collins, the Stimsons' granddaughter, purchased her mother's childhood home and restored it as a venue for special events with the desire of giving others the opportunity to enjoy it as her family had originally done. In 2001, she donated the Stimson-Green Mansion to the Washington Trust for Historic Preservation, which makes its headquarters there and continues to preserve it and to operate it as a premier special events venue. Kaspars Special Events & Catering is the Exclusive Caterer for special events held at the Stimson-Green Mansion.



ECLECTIC ARCHITECTURE & THE STIMSON-GREEN MANSION

Kirtland Cutter's fluent use of architectural styles was distinctive but not uncommon in this country near the turn of the twentieth century. Eclectic architecture gained favor in East Coast cities in the 1870s and 1880s for a number of reasons. Prevailing tastes favored the rich detail of the Victorian period, including an often fantastic use of color, texture and form. At the same time, a number of popular books about style and decorating illustrated design elements from all periods of Western history. World's fairs promoted "national architecture" — fantastic or exceptional versions of typical national styles. With eclectic architecture, the intent was to allow a person to walk through architectural history simply by going from room to room. If you could not visit the castles and great homes of Europe, you could visit the home of a wealthy family such as the Stimsons. Each room in the Stimson-Green Mansion reflects a different architectural style, especially on the building's first floor, its most public story.

HALL

If the front entry hall directly reflected the building's exterior, the visitor might expect exposed rough-hewn rafters and rustic lanterns common to English Revival styles like the Tudor. However, this is not the case. Accessed by a pointed arch oak door, the street-facing entry leads to a central hallway that extends from the front to the back of the house and into an elaborate dining room. This direct view from the front door is dramatic and is one of the house's most obvious theatrical contrivances.

Designed with the intent to impress, the front hall ceiling is decorated with highly finished exposed beams and a richly painted burlap surface. The red and gold painted details include stylized lions and curving tendrils reminiscent of English heraldry. A round arch supported by clusters of small columns or columnettes frames the view toward the dining room. This arched element is a distinctive characteristic of the Romanesque style more typically seen in masonry structures, such as those found in Pioneer Square.

RECEPTION ROOM

The doorway on the left side of the entry hall leads to Mrs. Harriet Stimson's tea and reception room. Harriet Stimson would receive visits from her local friends on Thursdays, a time coordinated with other women in the neighborhood. The style of the room is often called French Empire or simply "Empire." This style was popularized in the early 19th century during Napoleon's rule of France at a time of renewed interest in Greek and Roman art and architecture. Classical elements like those seen in the curved plaster ceiling were common to this style, including the swan, a symbol of Napoleon's Empress Josephine. Details are delicate, and wood surfaces are generally painted white. The refined onyx fireplace and mahogany mantle embellished with ormolu or gilt bronze decorations provide a striking contrast to the fireplace in the library lying on the opposite side of the front entry hall.

LIBRARY

The library is saturated with Gothic details and is larger than the tea room. In Victorian fashion, the many intricate elements of the library are dark and wooden, and the fireplace is a strong and imposing centerpiece with carved wooden lions holding shields and metal dragon andirons. The bookcases resemble windows in a Gothic church due to the architect's use of pointed arches and intricate detailing. This detail is repeated in the railing that lines the raised dais at the eastern end of the room. The Stimson children used this space to recite poems or put on theatricals with neighborhood children. An upright piano stood on stage as accompaniment, no doubt played by Mrs. Stimson, an accomplished musician. Now used for special events, this room is currently empty, however historic photographs show a fairly minimal amount of furniture, allowing a multipurpose use of the space.

The portraits on the west wall at the front of the house are of Mr. and Mrs. Stimson in their later years. On the rear east wall, the larger portraits depict the parents of Joshua Green, William and Bentonia Green. On the south wall above the piano, the portrait of Dorothy Bullitt in her later years is the one that formerly hung in the lobby of King Broadcasting, the company she founded in the 1940s.

DINING ROOM

Designed in the English Renaissance style, the dining room's warm sycamore paneling and elegantly carved mantle are offset by its indigo glass tile fireplace surround and a narrative frieze running just below the ceiling around the entire room. The frieze illustrates a Renaissance-era king and his court feasting and quietly reveling. The scene is painted on corduroy so as to resemble a tapestry. Imported from Italy, the glass fireplace tiles are flecked with gold, which not only provide beauty but strength. The Jacobean style dining room table and buffet belonged to the Green family. When the Greens' estate sold the mansion to Historic Seattle, these were some of the larger pieces of furniture that were left with the house.

TURKISH ROOM

One of the most extravagant rooms in the Stimson-Green Mansion was inspired by Eastern traditions. In the basement, conveniently located near the wine cellar and the billiard room, is a Moorish-style smoking room created for men interested in card playing, conversation, and brandy drinking. The ochre colored bottle glass windows and the brass filigree Mosque lanterns enhance the dark and exotic feel of this room. The fireplace is brick, with a Moorish arch (wide but pointed) above the mantle. The theme is even carried over to the fir paneled doors, which feature an onion dome motif in the upper half. The varying ceiling heights of the adjoining billiard room reflect its location under the Library with its raised dais. The billiard table also belonged to the Green family.

SECOND FLOOR BEDROOMS

Reached by a wide flight of stairs that open onto a gracious landing complete with window seat, the second floor features five spacious, light-filled bedrooms, each with an adjoining bathroom fitted with original fixtures that represent the most modern conveniences of the early 1900s. The portraits in the main hall are of Dorothy Stimson Bullitt and her three children: Stimson, Patsy and Harriet. A pocket door closes off the Stimson family bedrooms located at the front of the house. The two bedrooms directly off the hall originally served as guest rooms and are now occupied as offices. Originally configured as two smaller bedrooms, the fifth bedroom is located off the servants' hall at the back of the house, which also provides access to the original servants' quarters on the third floor and the kitchen on the first floor.