

# PASADENA STAR-NEWS

Saturday, December 18, 1999 ♦ www.pasadenastarnews.com

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## Merrill House renovation deal secured

### Greene and Greene home rescued from crack dealers, decrepitude

By Janette Williams  
STAFF WRITER

PASADENA — After surviving decades of neglect and a stint as a neighborhood crack house, one of the finest small homes ever built by architects Charles and Henry Greene has been bought by Pasadena Heritage for restoration and sale to a first-time low-income buyer.

The bungalow in the 1200 block of Summit Avenue in Northwest Pasadena was bought this week for \$40,000 — \$95,000 under its appraised price — in an agreement with Washington Mutual.

Without this help from the

**'It's remained remarkably intact. ... everything about it is original.'**

*Diana Britt*

bank, it would not have been economically feasible to renovate and resell the home, Pasadena Heritage officials said.

"They spent six months working on us," joked David Imig, first vice president at Washington Mutual. "I didn't know there were that many public officials in Pasadena, the number of letters I got."

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Staff photo by WALT MANCINI

**THE MERRILL HOUSE** on Summit Avenue, a Greene and Greene bungalow, has been bought with Washington Mutual assistance by Pasadena Heritage for renovation.



Photo by L.J. McALLISTER

**RENEE PIERSON** and Sandra Davis of the Neighborhood Association of Garfield Heights tour the Merrill home, a former crack house. The 90-year-old Northwest Pasadena bungalow will be renovated and sold to an area resident.

## HOME

### Bungalow bought by preservationists

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The 1,800-square-foot bungalow — complete with a later Greene and Greene-built sleeping porch — was built in 1909 for Samuel Merrill, a conservationist and friend of John Muir, who lived there for 40 years.

It now becomes the third Northwest Pasadena house to be rehabbed as part of the homeownership program, a cooperative venture that includes Pasadena Heritage and the city.

"This is a coup. I don't know how we go up from here," said Diana Britt, chairwoman of the program's board of directors. "It meets every possible interest level we have."

The Merrill House is something special, said Ted Bosley, director of the Gamble House — which, along with the newly restored Blacker House in Pasadena, is considered by many experts as the Greene brothers' finest work.

It's an example of the Greenes' efforts to develop a simplified, more moderately priced version of the more elaborate housing for which they are best known, Bosley said.

"This is mainly Henry

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Greene's work," Bosley said, as he toured the house Wednesday, noting that it was built after the Gamble House. "(The brothers) had been in business together for 16 years, and they were pretty far along ... so this has all the tricks in the bag. They were very savvy at this point."

The house was never designed to be fancy, and since it features less costly materials than grander Greene and Greene homes, it's a good prospect for a budget-conscious restoration, he said.

"But it has all the nice features, the built-ins," Bosley said. "It's a minor miracle these things have remained in place."

The home's wood shingles are original, as are some light fixtures, and there are built-in library bookshelves, dining room sideboard, bathroom cabinet and even the original

wooden attic vent and art glass in the bathroom door; it has the Greenes' trademark overhanging eaves, casement windows, clinker brick and arroyo stone piers and retaining walls.

"It's remained remarkably intact," Britt said. "Apart from the unfortunate sliding doors — which we'll dispense with at the earliest opportunity — everything about it is original."

Although the plumbing must be completely replaced and a new furnace installed, restoration will be cheaper and easier because the wood, inside and out, has never been painted and will not have to be stripped, Britt said.

But it will still be the most expensive renovation the program has yet undertaken, she said.

The partnership has committed its full resources to the project, along with additional funding from the city and the National Trust for Historic Preservation, officials said. Pasadena Heritage will also contribute as much as possible from its preservation fund, and will launch a special fund-raising campaign to help fund the project and provide an interest-free construction loan.

"I'd hate to hazard a guess at this point about how much it will cost," said Sue Mossman, executive director of Pasadena Heritage. "But we know we will be putting into the house three, four, five times what we paid for it."