

Oregon Historic Site Record

LOCATION AND PROPERTY NAME			
address:	6428 SE Reed College Pl Portland, Multnomah County (97202)	historic name:	Groo, Julia, House
assoc addresses:		current/other names:	All Electric House
location descr:		block/lot/tax lot:	
		twshp/rng/sect/qtr sect:	1S 1E 13
PROPERTY CHARACTERISTICS			
resource type:	Building	height (stories):	2.0
elig evaluation:	eligible/contributing	total elig resources:	2
prim constr date:	1926	second date:	
		total inelig resources:	0
		NR Status:	Listed in Historic District
		date indiv listed:	
primary orig use:	Single Dwelling	orig use comments:	
second orig use:		prim style comments:	
primary style:	Colonial Revival	sec style comments:	
secondary style:		siding comments:	
primary siding:	Stucco	architect:	James, Charles D
secondary siding:		builder:	Donald M. Drake
plan type:	Rectangular Block		
comments/notes:			
Details: Central entry - symmetric (except for recessed side entry) Garage: Set back Large Trees (approx. 1 foot or larger in diameter): 2 Landscape details: High stucco covered masonry wall that measures roughly even with house. Alterations: Masonry garden wall built between 2011 and 2015.			
GROUPINGS / ASSOCIATIONS			
Survey/Grouping Included In:	Type of Grouping	Date Listed	Date Compiled
Eastmoreland Historic District	Listed Historic District	12/07/2022	2016
Eastmoreland RLS 2016	Survey & Inventory Project		2016
SHPO INFORMATION FOR THIS PROPERTY			
NR date listed:	N/A	106 Project(s):	None
ILS survey date:	10/22/2016	Special Assess Project(s):	None
RLS survey date:	08/15/2016	Federal Tax Project(s):	None
ARCHITECTURAL / PROPERTY DESCRIPTION			
<i>(Includes expanded description of the building/property, setting, significant landscape features, outbuildings and alterations)</i>			
<p>While the "Julia Groo House"/"All Electric House" is best known for its origin in a national competition to promote residential electrical use, the house itself is notable as an example of Colonial Revival domestic architecture. This two-story structure has a hip roof set on stucco walls with imitation quoins at the corners. The roof is covered in asphalt shingles and a brick chimney rises above the southern wall. A sun room extends from the south wall. The concrete perimeter foundation was poured to allow for a full basement. A semi-round portico, supported by Doric columns, marks the entrance and contributes classical detail and symmetry to a dwelling that evokes an English Country House. The windows further reflect classical and Colonial Revival details. A fan light and side lights surround the main door of the house. Comparable to photographs of the structure at its completion in 1925, the symmetrically placed 'six over six paned' windows have shutters. The country house quality of the dwelling is reinforced by its landscape setting. Situated on a large lot (100 x 100 feet) by Eastmoreland standards, the primary elevation is oriented west and looks onto the neighborhood's parkway/boulevard (Reed College Place). A semi-circle sidewalk between the public sidewalk and the front porch suggests the appearance of a carriage path and port-cochere, which reinforces the house's landscaped front setback. As indicated by a 1929 aerial photograph, the original landscape plan included this feature. The appearance of the automobile is further minimized with the placement of the driveway on the north side of the house and detached garage on the northeast property lines. Thus, this property represents the expressed contemporary Eastmoreland value of a garden-like environment and represents a high level of historical integrity in its architectural and landscape form.</p>			
HISTORY			
<i>(Chronological, descriptive history of the property from its construction through at least the historic period - preferably to the present)</i>			
<p>The Julia Groo House located at 6428 SE Reed College Place is located within Portland's Eastmoreland neighborhood. Eastmoreland was originally developed by the Ladd Estate Company on acreage from the Crystal Springs Farm, a stock ranch owned by William Mead Ladd, the company's owner. Ladd's father, William S. Ladd acquired the land in the 1870s, through the purchase of various parcels of Alfred Llewellyn's 640-acre donation land claim. Upon William S. Ladd's death in 1893, the Ladd Estate Company formed with William Mead Ladd as president. One of the Ladd Company's primary purposes was to promote large-scale real estate development, which eventually included Eastmoreland. The Columbia Trust Company originally platted Eastmoreland in 1909, though the area was re-platted the following year to omit 40 acres donated to the "Reed Institute", the future site of Reed College. Soon thereafter, the Ladd Estate Company initiated a plan to transform the farmland into a residential district on a north-south grid with meandering east-west streets as well as formal tree-lined boulevard along SE Reed College Place. In 1911, the first house was built within the newly-platted Eastmoreland development which included improvements such as paved streets, sidewalks, a streetcar viaduct, and sewer connections. Using saplings from the Crystal Springs Farm's 15-acre nursery, the Ladd Estate Company planted ornamental shade trees along the streets, driveways, and boulevards of Eastmoreland and the Reed Institute campus. In 1916, the Ladd Estate Company provided land at the west end of Eastmoreland for Portland's first municipal golf course. In 1923, the company sold additional land to the City of Portland in 1923 for development of the Crystal Springs Rhododendron Garden. Contrary to its usual practice, the Ladd Estate Company retained ownership of the lots and used the services of principal agent Frank N. Clark & Co. for property sales. Clark & Co. and the Ladd Estate Company implemented a robust marketing campaign, seeking to entice potential buyers to Eastmoreland and the company's other Portland-area residential developments. In 1910, Clark published a gold-colored brochure to convince future owners of the benefits of living near Reed College, for which construction of the campus began in 1912. The company offered incentives such as a full portfolio of lots for sale, personalized building plans, and financing services through a "Liberty Loan" or the "Ladd Thrift Way," which touted low interest loans. Despite Ladd and Clark's vigorous advertising campaign, Eastmoreland's sales and development remained sluggish until the early 1920s. Following World War I, Portland experienced tremendous population growth and housing development, particularly east of the Willamette River. Eastmoreland and many other neighborhoods experienced a substantial building boom during the 1920s and early 1930s to meet housing demands. During this period, increasing automobile ownership and reduced reliance on streetcar transit enabled property owners and renters to live further from the city center. In 1926, as a result of increases in student population, the Portland Public School District replaced the four portable buildings that comprised the Duniway Elementary School (formerly Eastmoreland School) on SE Reed College Place. The new permanent school building incorporated Collegiate Gothic detailing similar to the academic buildings of nearby Reed College. Following William M. Ladd's resignation from his position with the Ladd Estate Company in October 1926, the company sold its real estate holdings to Paul C. Murphy and Frederick H. Strong, who began selling large undeveloped areas of Eastmoreland, Westmoreland, Oswego, and Dunthorpe. That same month, 40 Eastmoreland homeowners and residents organized the Eastmoreland Company. The company</p>			

purchased the Eastmoreland subdivision's 428 remaining lots and a nine-acre tract south of Crystal Springs Boulevard from the Ladd Estate Company for over \$1 million. The Eastmoreland Company sought to assure that future development and construction on the remaining lots would remain "in keeping with the general scheme of home building." The Eastmoreland Company appointed Frank B. Upshaw, former assistant manager of the Ladd Estate Company, as its president and manager. The following March, construction began on 21 new homes, with plans to build an additional four. Upshaw observed that, "The community-owned community idea of Eastmoreland Company has proven successful and has bred confidence in prospective homeowners in the district." Eastmoreland's development flourished during the late 1920s and 1930s, when the majority of the neighborhood's residences were constructed. Local builders frequently showcased model homes in Eastmoreland, leading to a large amount of demonstration, experimental, and innovative properties featured in the local media and by real estate and design organizations. From the 1920s through the 1950s, houses were built primarily in European revival styles, including English, French, Dutch, as well as Mediterranean as well as American colonial designs, a trend which defined the neighborhood's architectural character. The neighborhood also featured a sizeable number of model, demonstration, and experimental homes erected to showcase the professional competency of female realtors, promote local craftsman and contractors, convey technological advances, extol the virtues of efficient construction methods, and illustrate architectural design prowess. Property History "The All Electric House" As the name suggests, when built in 1925 the "All Electric House" was a model home designed to demonstrate the possibilities of electricity in a residence. That such a demonstration was necessary in the mid-1920s might surprise many today but this was a time when only 1600 homes in Portland were heated by electricity and only 500 had electric ranges and refrigerators. Other aspects of the story continue to entertain people as well. In at least one account, the house at 6428 SE Reed College Place has been called an "An Electric Fairy Tale." That title refers primarily to the great good fortune of a high school student who entered a national contest in hopes of winning \$200 and ended up taking the grand prize - a \$15,000 house to be constructed on a site of the winner's choosing. Miss Julia Groo of Portland, Oregon wrote a six-hundred-word essay on the "value of good home lighting" and submitted it to a national competition sponsored by the National Electric Light Association. Despite the long odds, given that a million other students across the United States and Canada had submitted entries, Miss Groo received the good news of her win in late December 1924. Soon after, she became a national celebrity according to the Oregonian, receiving hundreds of proposals from prospective suitors. Beyond the matrimonial possibilities, cities around the country invited her to build her new home and businesses with products to sell offered to donate to the completion of her house. Since Miss Julia Groo and her parents expressed a commitment to staying in Portland, the Ladd Realty Company saw an opportunity to highlight the qualities of Eastmoreland. The Company donated a 100x100 foot lot on the neighborhood's parkway - Reed College Place - between Tolman and Claybourne. While this no doubt constituted a generous act, the Company expected to benefit from the increased attention that the model home's construction brought the neighborhood. It might also be pointed out that when the donation was made, the surrounding property was vacant. A 1929 aerial photograph shows the completed Groo House standing alone in the middle of the block on the east side of Reed College Place, facing an empty block on the other side of the parkway. When the house was finished at the beginning of November 1925, the Groo's and their sponsors - the National Electric Light Association - opened it for visits from the public for an entire month. Reports in the Oregonian speculated that over 250,000 people came to see the possibilities of an electric future. During that time, the Ladd Realty Company ran an advertisement in the Oregonian that read: A thousand people every day and about two thousand on Sundays have visited Miss Julia Groo's Prize Home in Eastmoreland. If you are not among those who went last week you will want to see Miss Groo's \$15,000 electrical home this week. To you, we extend an invitation to really visit Eastmoreland. Drive through the winding boulevards, and see some of Portland's finest homes. You will be impressed by the originality of Eastmoreland homes and gardens. . . . As noted above, development flourished in Eastmoreland during the 1920s. While admittedly the significance of Miss Groo's new house to this period of growth in the neighborhood is less important than the opening of the Sellwood and Ross Island Bridges and the general vigor of the economy, "the All Electric House" certainly contributed to the growing reputation of the neighborhood for quality construction. The supervising architect for the project, Charles D. James, argued that the "All Electric House" was "by no means merely a show place, but rather an unusually well-designed house, attention having been given to details that ordinarily are considered unimportant." Arguably, James insured the quality of the house's design. Although the design for the dwelling was the product of a national competition as well, James was selected to serve as supervising architect. He revised plans drawn up in New York to suit Portland conditions and to conform to the needs of the site. As can be seen in the supporting documents, his design alterations produced many aspects of style associated with the house today - particularly the addition of the portico entry and the southern exposure of the sun room. Charles Dearman James (1876 - 1966) contributed to Portland architecture for over a twenty-year period. Born in Leeds, England, James trained as an architect in London where he received RIBA's bronze medal for design at the age of sixteen. He became a fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) and practiced for a number of years in England before leaving for Canada in 1910. Although perhaps his best-known project was the Great Northern Railroad Depot in Vancouver BC, he designed the Great Northern Railroad Depot in Klamath Falls, Oregon as well. Charles James served as the President of the AIA Oregon Chapter during 1923-1924. While working on the "All Electric House," he was the Director of the AIA Oregon Chapter (1925-1927). Owners & Residents Members of the Groo family moved into their new home after the public open house ended in late 1925 and stayed there for approximately forty years. Julia's father, Jay Groo, was an electrical engineer so perhaps it is particularly appropriate that he is the resident that lived in "the All Electrical House" for the longest period of time. There have been only a few owners since then and it appears that in each instance the residents have given attention to maintaining the integrity of the house. Significant changes appear to have been limited. In 1978, renovations to the kitchen added space to the back of the house without altering more visible façades.

RESEARCH INFORMATION

Title Records	✓ Census Records	Property Tax Records	✓ Local Histories
Sanborn Maps	Biographical Sources	SHPO Files	Interviews
Obituaries	✓ Newspapers	State Archives	✓ Historic Photographs
✓ City Directories	✓ Building Permits	State Library	
Local Library:	Multnomah County Library	University Library:	
Historical Society:		Other Respository:	
Bibliography:			