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All of these ideas are present in the work of Buff, Straub and Hensman. What differentiates them is that in some way the great victory of August 15, 1945 was a watershed, and the firm's approach made Modernism not only palatable but alluring: an American Modernism *by* World War II veterans *for* World War II veterans. In contrast, despite their best efforts, the prescient émigrés Neutra and Schindler were largely unsuccessful in convincing the American middle-class, while the work of Buff, Straub & Hensman did. During the decades between the mid-1940s and the early 1970s, the direct influence of the Post-and-Beam movement -- the USC and Pasadena schools -- can be seen in thousands of homes and offices before it succumbed to newly expensive energy and, to a lesser extent, seismic and hillside safety: either way, large expanses of glass were outlawed, and abiding by other new regulations drove costs up. Because of new developments in glass and building hardware, it is now popular again, but rarely does it embody both the apparent fragility and the can-do careless courage of postwar post-and-beam construction, a rare moment in American history rendered tectonically.

USC, Arthur Gallion and Buff, Straub, and Hensman

Conrad Buff (1926–1988), Calvin Straub (1920–1998) and Donald Hensman (1924–2002) all served in the Navy during World War II. All three graduated from USC. All eventually won the special prestige as Fellows of the American Institute of Architects. Straub began teaching immediately at the school upon his graduation in 1943, and, due to a sudden death on the faculty, Hensman and Buff (both students of Straub's among others) taught before they graduated in 1952 and taught part-time at the school until 1962.⁷⁰ Straub, who had also attended Pasadena City College and Texas A & M University, worked with Buff and Hensman from the early 1950s until 1962, though he left California in 1960 to teach at Arizona State University. Though Straub was born in Macon, Georgia, and Hensman in Omaha, Nebraska, all three grew up in Los Angeles and Pasadena. Of the three, Buff was unusual in growing up with artists and architects. The Buff family was based in Eagle Rock; Conrad's mother Mary was a book author and Conrad Buff, Sr., was a noted artist who, according to Don Hensman's memoirs, hired family friend Richard Neutra to reconfigure their garage in the late 1920s at their home just beyond the Pasadena boundary in Eagle Rock.⁷¹

According to Pasadena architects Russ Hobbs and Lyman Ennis,⁷² both World War II veterans and graduates of Berkeley and USC, respectively, and intimates of Buff, Straub and Hensman, the G.I. Bill meant an opportunity for higher education where none had existed before. Before the war, Hensman, in particular, had never even considered college as an option, a first in his working-class family. But the veterans were immediate in seizing their opportunities.

Most accounts by these veterans, along with accounts by later USC graduates such as Randell Makinson (USC '56, former director of the Gamble House, author of several books on the Greenes) confirm the free-wheeling, creative, informal, impatient, can-do atmosphere at USC. "They were, we were, young kids. Young!" This was according to client Barbara Wirick, owner of the 1958 Wirick House. Nonetheless, these were also mature men who had fought in the Pacific or in Europe. Typically they were newlyweds and already had children; after winning a war, however, they didn't think twice about working day and night on school or for a firm, moonlighting on other projects, designing and building a house by themselves and some hired hands and/or volunteer friends, and with (sometimes) little knowledge of how systems worked together.⁷³

The tenure of Dean Arthur Gallion at USC is pivotal to the context of Buff, Straub and Hensman, as well as to the USC and Pasadena schools (movements). Like some other academic leaders of American schools of Architecture, including his predecessors at USC, Gallion had spent a year in Paris in 1928 studying at the École des Beaux Arts. Such a baptism meant an

⁷⁰ Clark, op.cit.

⁷¹ There are indeed certain features that appear to be Neutraesque in the overlapping rafters cantilevering over the garage envelope; however, no drawings of this commission are in those archives collated and accessible at UCLA Special Collections Library, Richard Neutra Archives.

⁷² Interview with Russ Hobbs, February 15, 2008, and interview with Lyman Ennis, February 23, 2008; Pasadena Oral History Project. Interview with Donald C. Hensman, FAIA, by Sarah Cooper, Pasadena Historical Society and Friends of the Pasadena Public Library, 2003.

⁷³ Ibid., Russ Hobbs interview.

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immersion in the tenets of a centuries-old tradition that stood for classic laws of composition and hierarchy, elaborate drawings, use of historical styles based on Greco-Roman precedents, strong axes and rational layouts according to program and strong axes, as well as a specific understanding of the role of an architect as learned scholar and gentleman divorced from the builders who actually performed labor. By the 1940s, however, Gallion had also worked in a very different arena, American public housing, at a time when it was most influenced by socialism and progressive post-war hopes for raising living standards for the poor and for eradicating airborne disease; Modernism's tenets of "Licht and Luft," light and air, were meant to eradicate such conditions. From 1934 to 1936, Gallion was a planner with the Public Works Administration (PWA) in Washington, D.C. Prior to his appointment at USC, Gallion served as the director of the Federal Public Housing Authority, responsible for California, Arizona, Nevada and Hawaii.

Gallion moved swiftly to create the College of Architecture, which before had been a department (founded in 1916) under the College of Arts and Sciences, adding to the prestige, independence, and funding opportunities for the new college. As the nomination for Poppy Peak Historic District notes, he also "added the Department of Industrial Design, led by Raymond F. Loewy, whose innovations in streamlining and the use of new materials have come to symbolize the optimism of the period."⁷⁴
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It is of note that Gallion's low-slung, post-and-beam, Japanese-influenced house, designed with Whitney Smith, is near the Poppy Peak District, rubbing shoulders with many houses designed by his students. His tenure as the head of USC (1945 to 1962), closely paralleled the Case Study House program in Los Angeles (1948 to 1962) and the almost immediate global influence of *Arts + Architecture*, an important trumpet in broadcasting the radical new architecture born and bred in Southern California. From all reports, Gallion was revered as dean and teacher because he took a personal interest in his students and because he hired people from a wide variety of backgrounds and views who nonetheless embraced Modernists tenets. These included landscape architects Garrett Eckbo and Emmett Wempole and architects Pierre Koenig, Thornton Ladd, Gregory Ain, primarily known for their residential work; important commercial architects and urban designers including William Pereira, Robert Alexander, Whitney Smith and Wayne Williams; luminaries such as Neutra dropped by for the occasional lecture. However, Gallion also had a strong commitment to architectural history,⁷⁶ and hired teachers who were firm Beaux Arts believers, according to Shulman, recounting the story of Rafael Soriano being "kicked out" because he refused to kowtow to a professor who insisted on the symmetries of Beaux Arts architecture.⁷⁷

Gallion advocated a holistic approach to design which would ground Buff, Straub & Hensman's architectural approach as well as more broadly to the USC and Pasadena schools. For example, in contrast to many contemporary schools, undergraduates, from the late 1940s to at least the early 1960s, were required to take not just a semester of landscape design but botany and plant courses, documenting specimens and species by drawing the leaf, photographing the leaf, noting what soil conditions in which the plant grew, all organized into notebooks to be used long after graduation.⁷⁸ Smith notes that the architects did their own landscape plans until "well into the '70s" and even after collaborated closely with a project's landscape architect.

The Importance of the Sedlacheck-Crane House

The young trio of Buff, Straub & Hensman exhibited exceptional talent immediately, winning student and A.I.A. awards and citations before their graduation, a trend that continued and culminated in over 30 such honors. Gallion certainly recognized their potential. Famed architectural photographer, documentarian of 20th century architecture, Julius Shulman recounts that

⁷⁴ USC School of Architecture web site.

⁷⁵ Loewy's own house in Palm Springs, next door to Neutra's Desert House, aka the Kaufmann House, was designed by Albert Frey, protégé of Le Corbusier; Frey detailed the Villa Savoye from using barn door details from the first Sweets catalog.

⁷⁶ Donaldson, Milford Wayne. 2008. Correspondence, March 17.

⁷⁷ Interview with Julius Shulman, Friday, February 29, 2008.

⁷⁸ Interview with Dennis Smith, January 28, 2008.

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Gallion told him that the “turning point in my life was to be confronted by Cal Straub’s design” for a 1949 house in the San Fernando Valley.⁷⁹ According to architectural writer Shelly Kappe, Straub’s first project was

“ ... an economical, modular, wood-beamed structure with a long in-line pavilion plan, sited on a terraced slope. The space of the entry, living room, kitchen, and study flow together and open up onto a magnificent view of the San Fernando Valley, via large floor-to-ceiling-hinged glass walls. The strong relationship between house and garden offered a foretaste of a design principle that would run throughout his work. Schindler came to an open-house event and commended the young architect on a job well done. With this encouragement from the man he considered to be the most creative architect on the West Coast, and with publication of the Sedlachek residence in the magazines House and Home and Architectural Forum, Straub felt he was on his way.”⁸⁰

The thinking expressed in this house is seen in many BSH houses, and it is a remarkable achievement on many levels, literally. It stepped down the steep hill overlooking the valley in three sections: carport, main living, and garden terrace, a strategy permitting the preservation of trees and reducing cut-and-fill. In contrast to later projects (for example, the Wirick and Gates houses in the Poppy Peak district), here the carport is physically separated from the house, leaving a small strip for plants and trees which could then be available for visual enjoyment on the uphill side of the slope. It is the masterful planning, however, that is exceptional. Many spaces can be used for double duty, such as the study that can be incorporated into the living room or closed off with sliding doors; the change in flooring from refined, thin wood planks in the living/study area to asymmetric slate in the dining room, which in turn flows out to patios and terraces surrounding the house. This change in floor acts as a hinge or bridge linking indoors and outdoors as a natural transition rather than an abrupt even. Though the house is only 1,469 square feet of habitable space,⁸¹ the master bedroom still manages to pull off privacy and an adult life: the orientation of the suite is perpendicular to the rest of the rooms, opening out to a private terrace and landscaping with full height glass wall (similar to the arrangement for the parents’ suite of the Mello House, discussed in the individual nomination.) The amount and variety of storage, a typical character-defining feature of B/S/H houses, is present here.

Straub, Shulman recounts, didn’t yet have his architect’s license and Gallion himself signed the drawings (Straub worked for his dean from 1948 to 1953, but this was his design). And in contrast to many architectural practices, where the principal and “name” of the firm gets the credit, Gallion stepped back; in every article on this house, it is Calvin Straub’s name that is featured as designer. “We all owe a lot to Cal Straub,” recalled Makinson.⁸²

The fluid, informal, *carpe diem* atmosphere at USC—“the wonderful *esprit de corps*,” as Makinson called it—is reflected in the constantly overlapping dates of when exactly Buff, Straub & Hensman were formed, who worked for whom and when. Signatures on drawings, of course, help, but they sometimes do not abide by standard chronological or hierarchical rules. For example, Cal Straub signed the drawings of the Mello House as an independent architect; the house was designed in 1957, when he was in the middle of his tenure with Buff, Straub and Hensman, but a later (and seamless) 1964 addition accommodating two more children was designed by Buff and Hensman. This apparently casual approach to authorship is underscored by Don Hensman himself and many colleagues, clients and draftspeople who worked for them; often Don and Conrad worked on the same drawing simultaneously. Nor was design separate from life and friendship among clients: many original clients became close friends of the firm. “Design has to be conceived in all parts of your life: you have to live design,” Dennis Smith recalls Cal Straub telling a class during a lecture.⁸³

⁷⁹ Shulman, op. cit.

⁸⁰ Kappe, Shelly. 1997. “Calvin Straub (Buff, Straub and Hensman).” Robert Winter, ed. In *Toward a Simpler Way of Life*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, p. 291.

⁸¹ *House and Home*. 1952. April, p. 90.

⁸² Makinson, interview with B. Lamprecht January 29, 2008.

⁸³ Interview with Dennis Sharp, January 28, 2008.

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Significantly, in addition, from its earliest days, BSH was a “design-and-build” firm in that it acted as general contractor, training subcontractors to know what the architects wanted. In addition, many of the early homeowners did much of the work, not just finish work but even carpentry and in some cases framing. Building was sometimes a family affair, as well, with brother-in-law Hugh Gates building a few of the early houses, including one built for himself as a “spec” house at 1611 Pleasant Way. This approach of acting not only as master architect but “master builder,” integrating trust, control of workmanship and craft, as well as cost-savings, is overtly emphasized today by principal/partner Smith and still sets the firm apart from many other architecture firms.

Design Approach

While much of their personal ethos and practice was informal, the trio was not casual about their architectural decisions and design approach. The character-defining features of the early, post-and-beam work of Buff and Hensman, Cal Straub, Buff, Straub and Hensman, and Buff, Smith and Hensman reflect the firm’s philosophy linking apparently contradictory ideals: complex architectural compositions and open, interconnected spatial layouts with low-cost materials that were nonetheless carefully chosen and placed, and with methods that did not require sophisticated connections but that illustrated a close attention to the appearance and longevity of the connections. As Don Hensman once pointed out, Post-and-Beam reflects a type of inexpensive, simply detailed construction and not “just a style.”⁸⁴

Buff, Straub and Hensman’s early work also reflects a firm commitment to the Modernist tenet of space rather than mass, illustrated in the extensive use of glass and comparatively thin structural elements that are also distributed more generously (that is, larger spans between modules) than would be seen today, when various codes are far more restrictive. This approach, and the character-defining features that comprise it, achieved three effects: a feeling of lightness; the sense of being actively connected to the outdoors with few visual interruptions, and a lack of formality, in contrast to more formal architectural styles that are also more spatially more hierarchical and predictable.

This character-defining feature, reminiscent of vernacular and rural Japanese residential construction, a knowledge of which was also influential in USC curricula as well as in the work of the Greene brothers, predates four important developments in California building law, which directly affected the visual appearance of BSH houses:

a. Although the Long Beach earthquake of 1933 made many public buildings safer, the 1994 Northridge earthquake precipitated far more extensive seismic requirements for residential architecture, which in turn has consequences for how buildings look. For example, lateral resistance typically meant more plywood paneling, often located at the corners of buildings, as well as more connecting hardware. Tongue-and-groove roofs, often a character-defining feature of this architecture, now had to be covered with plywood and “nailed off” to specific nail or screw schedules with extensive requirements. Visually, this meant the roof could no longer be a very thin plane. Glass fenestration had to have silicon rubber or some intermediary material between frame and glass, to accommodate different rates and types of movement.

b. Energy requirements, primarily Title 24 introduced in 1978, prescribed the amount and type of glazing and insulation required. In the earlier roofs, negligible R-values (A measure of a material's resistance to the passage of heat) for roofs, for example, again meant that roofs could be quite thin. Today, such roofs, even with thin rigid insulation, are not possible. Insulation must also occur between glass and its frame, adding another solid transition of material

⁸⁴ Personal communication (conversation), Lamprecht/Hensman, fall 1999.

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between outdoors and indoors, thus diminishing the “weightless,” almost diaphanous feeling quality of the house.

c. Hillside ordinances began to be introduced in the ‘90s, intended for environmental protection, to preserve view sheds and corridors, and hillsides themselves. These ordinances restrict lot coverage, the size of a building footprint, and the height of a building, and typically also require neighborhood “buy-off” into the proposal. While it is possible to obtain a variance, the cost of negotiating such a variance can be long and costly, and would have not been possible for many of the modest budgets of early BSH clients.

d. Other fire/hazard ordinances forbade the use of carports in favor of garage, which BSH typically used because they were cheaper, used less materials, and “airier,” according to Smith. In addition, in high fire-risk areas, exposed rafter tails of less than very large size and unboxed eaves are not allowed either, along with carports, because they can help fuel a fire.

The absence of these laws in mid-century directly affects the feeling and character-defining features of this architecture and helps to locate their period of significance more precisely. Thus, this mode of building, typically seen from the very late 1940s through the early 1970s in Post-and-Beam architecture, ties the style and construction method to a specific period of time in the 20th century. By and large, such a repertoire of character-defining features is not possible today, or if possible, obtained with some difficulty and additional cost.

(It is also noteworthy that while mid-20th century Post-and-Beam houses can feel almost frail, particularly at double-height interior corners, the group of houses has weathered many earthquakes with little or no apparent structural damage.)

In addition to the construction techniques of Post-and-Beam architecture, the connection to the outdoors was further enriched by the architects’ approach to the individual sites for these custom houses. The indoors and outdoors were integrated using many strategies, including stories that step down a hill, typically with the garage at the top of the hill, and transitions among levels through the use of such elements as terraces, stone steps, wood staircases, reflecting pools, water elements, and screens of plastic or fiberglass. These elements typically are located so that virtually all principal spaces, and in many cases secondary spaces (the word “room” may suggest discrete volumes that can be closed off), have immediate access to the landscape and vistas of the immediate outdoors. Views were vital to the firm’s approach, according to realtor John Carr, whose father William (one of the original subdividers of Poppy Peak, as noted in the district’s description) often found and sold lots for the firm’s clients; particularly, Conrad Buff would often be very active in reviewing available lots for views and situation. Views of mountains and vistas were also important to early Modernists as taught at USC, according to Pasadena architect Lyman Ennis, WWII veteran, G.I. Bill recipient and USC graduate.⁸⁵

In addition, each building was oriented precisely on the site to exploit the sun’s path of travel and changes in topography. “We were taught to listen to the site first, what were its characteristics, what impact did the views have,” said Randell Makinson, USC grad ’54, recalling his student days and USC training with and under Buff and Hensman.⁸⁶ Lush, informal-looking landscaping was nonetheless carefully planned and sophisticated. Areas were zoned as distinct outdoor rooms that extended from the house to include the larger site. Varying applications of transparent glass; translucent glass and/or plastic, or opaque surfaces all responded to needs for privacy, daylighting and also framed views.

⁸⁵ Interview with World War II veteran, USC graduate (class of ’53), and Pasadena architect Lyman Ennis, February 6, 2008.

⁸⁶ Makinson, op.cit.

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Curves and asymmetric pavings, as seen in the contributions of landscape architect Garrett Eckbo (a fellow USC faculty member who often collaborated on Buff, Straub & Hensman projects) often offset the orthogonality of Post-and-Beam houses. Eckbo was influenced by Modernist artists such as Wassily Kandinsky, who employed curves and straight lines in his work.

Such signature strategies enlivened the design while not adding substantially to the cost of the buildings.

Buff, Straub & Hensman also used color to refer to nature: like Craftsman architecture, greens, browns and earth tones, whether conveyed through paint or stain, were used in abundance. However, the appreciation for Modernist art was illustrated in front doors that were painted a vibrant color such as orange, red or turquoise, commanding an attention rarely seen in Craftsman bungalows, whose front doors were more likely to be subtle in tone. Like vernacular Japanese architecture, light stucco, often with the color integrated into the substrate rather than applied afterward, was contrasted with a dark stain used for wood members, especially prevalent in Calvin Straub's work, though certainly embraced by Buff and Hensman as well.

Like the size of the wood timbers, some of these paint and stain techniques the firm used, and which still can be appreciated in many of the houses Buff, Straub & Hensman designed, can also illustrate their mid-century period of significance. For example, a dark brown, oil-based, semi-transparent finish the firm typically used allowed the wood grain to show. Today, such an effect is harder to achieve because today's legal formulations of similar colors, environmentally more responsible, do not provide both the transparency and the longevity of protection the firm required, resulting in that finishes that are more opaque and do not obtain the appearance of the wood grain.

Between the very late 1940s and late 1960s, while Buff, Straub & Hensman favored wood for their residential structural system (vs. their contemporaries such as Pierre Koenig, Craig Ellwood and Rafael Soriano, who advocated steel) in the tradition of Craftsman residential architecture with which they were so familiar, they employed Modernist sensibilities in how they used it. Simplicity and ease of construction were requisites. Wood ornamentation was kept to a minimum, or the grain itself was considered as ornament. For example, a smaller piece of lumber, e.g., a 1x3, might be centered on a 4x4 structural post to add visual variety. In a similar but opposite fashion, other wood "sandwiches," with the middle piece indented (creating visual texture and chiaroscuro), were used for balcony and stair details and lighting soffits indoors and out.

These ornamental members were *nailed*, not notched or screwed, together, indicating their acceptance of rapid, cheap construction techniques to respond to the needs of a young, new middle class with progressive tastes and a small budget, an approach which eschewed the more laborious, hand-crafted woodwork often associated with Craftsman architecture and the Arts and Crafts movement as advocated by 19th century figures such as architect/designer William Morris and writer John Ruskin. Nonetheless, the firm was resourceful in using one element in different ways to unify a specific project. For example, plywood siding might be used vertically, applied as exterior cladding to the house envelope, and then horizontally, as patio flooring. In another cost-cutting move, the firm employed the consistent use of modules based on simple spans and easily available dimensional lumber, including 32" (the width of two stud bays) and larger spans of 6' and 8' for structural lumber. And while the trio's almost exclusive use of wood was analogous to Craftsman architecture of wood, the simple, strong articulation of exposed wood members—rafters, joists, posts, beams—recalls vernacular Japanese architecture, which in turn had influenced the work of earlier 20th century Modernists both in America and in Europe through various publications, including Frank Lloyd Wright, Richard Neutra, and Bruno Taut.

While Buff, Straub & Hensman are famous for the Post-and-Beam construction technique, they were architects as well, responding to the client needs posed by young families with spatial layouts that, while open plan, also clearly differentiated private and public space and children's' and parents' areas.

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Later Work and the End of Post-and-Beam

By the late 1970s, the era of mid-Century Post-and-Beam ended. New laws prohibited the expanses of glass and required larger or more structural members and connections, all of which undermined the lightweight openness and the “casual cool” of the 1950s and 1960s architecture. But instead of considering these new regulations in a negative light, according to firm principal Dennis Smith, the firm accepted them as a challenge. Buff and Hensman (Straub by this time had long taken up teaching at Arizona State University) saw their work become far more monolithic, with deeper, thicker overhangs, more use of stucco, a greater emphasis on mass, and fewer windows. The Narver House, 1975, is a taut, monolithic, bilateral composition in all wood and glass; Buff’s 1977 house for him and his family, known as “Rapor,” has an exceptionally thick roof and heavy, stucco-clad supporting piers, as does the 1979 King House. These houses feel far more pueblo-like, solid, and permanent. Buff confirmed this: “Part of it was sheer boredom with post-and-beam, but a good deal was due to the energy crunch. We had to learn to use glass only where it was meaningful to the inhabitants. We sought greater mass in our buildings to make them easier to heat and cool. And we wanted a look of strength. We found that in the long run, very thin architecture doesn’t hold up too well. I think my house will, but we’re still learning.”⁸⁷

In fact, much of the Post-and-Beam architecture has held up very well through earthquakes and California summers. The 1958 Wirick House, probably the most fragile looking of any of their work, almost improbable in its robustness, is a testament that “very thin architecture” can indeed bear witness to a special time in Pasadena’s architectural past.

⁸⁷ McMasters, Dan. 1981. *Los Angeles Times*. Conrad Buff interview. Home Section, February 1, p. 14.

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Associated Property Types

PROPERTY TYPE DESCRIPTION: *Single Family Residences in Pasadena, 1935-1968*

The associated property type, single family residences in Pasadena within this Multiple Property Submission, refers to a detached residence, typically one- or two-story, designed for a specific client and specific lot by an architect or building designer in various styles previously identified within the two historic contexts.

Context 1: Residential Architecture of the Recent Past in Pasadena, 1935 – 1968

Ranch style architecture is a significant California invention that encapsulates the ideal for suburban domesticity shared by the tens of thousands who moved to the region during the Post-World War II boom period. In its various subtypes, Ranch architecture conveys popular design currents in addition to popular aspirations and domestic imagery throughout Southern California during the middle portion of the twentieth century. This architectural style can be broken down into two subtypes of the style, California Ranch style, also called “Traditional” Ranch and Contemporary Ranch. Both of these subtypes can be custom built, often but not always by a named architect or builder, either individually or within a tract. Custom designed Ranch style houses are specifically tied to a given client and a lot and is usually the result of greater expenditure.

California Ranch applies traditional or Western detailing to the Ranch house building form. The resulting architectural style appropriated the many wooden features – including wall cladding, roof shingles, and ornamentation – of many vernacular houses in the West. Along with the Minimal Traditional style, the California Ranch became the dominant domestic style in Southern California’s postwar suburbs and examples of its stylistic iterations are found in Pasadena. The California Ranch style uses elements of historical vernacular ranch or hacienda architecture in California. It is found in both custom houses and mass produced tract houses. Single family residences in the California Ranch are typically a one-story building, and other features include:

- Asymmetrical, informal composition often with attached garage
- Eclectic wall cladding including board and batten, stucco, stone, brick often on the same building
- Decorative rusticated features such as dovetails and shutters, barn elements such as cross bracing for garage doors.
- Fenestration consisting of picture windows or diamond shaped window mullions
- Dutch doors, French doors, sliding glass doors
- Gravel or shingle covered, low to moderately pitched gable roof with extended eaves and exposed rafter tails
- Brick or stone chimneys
- Brick watertables with integral planters.
- A variation on the Traditional Ranch, seen in the 1930s and again in the 1960s, may also use Spanish hacienda features, such as: Spanish tile roofs, roughly textured stucco walls, deep window insets suggesting adobe construction
- Swimming pools

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Contemporary Ranch style architecture is sometimes referred to as “Modern Ranch.” Contemporary Ranch homes are Ranch houses often included an entirely different set of signifiers and amenities from California Ranch architecture. While still repeating the single story, single family, gabled, informally composed form and siting of the California Ranch, Contemporary Ranch moves away from many of its traditional and rusticated applied decorative motifs and toward an expression informed by Modernism and its Asiatic Antecedents. Contemporary Ranch homes are often custom architect designed houses. Energy companies promoted the best use and highest technologies of their resources in many Ranch homes of the late 1950s and 1960s. Often, bronze medallions would be located near entryways that served as equal parts certification and promotion touting that a house was consciously designed in regards to its utilities. One of the more common examples of this is the “Medallion Homes: Live Better Electrically” campaign seen in many Contemporary Ranch homes. These homes were touted in ads for the conscientious design of these utilities within the house, and for the best selection of specific appliances such as ranges, dishwashers, and air conditioners. Contemporary Ranch architecture rises to prominence after the mid-1950s, continuing onward in the region through the late 1970s. Contemporary Ranch stylistic elements include:

- Split-level configurations
- Sprawling plan, often with radiating L- or U-shaped wings
- Low, horizontal massing and wide street façade
- Exposed framing elements, either structural or decorative
- Wall materials include stucco, vertical or horizontal wood boards, or board and batten
- Flagstone, often in an irregular course, or slumpstone over the entirety of a façade
- Clerestory windows, picture windows, aluminum sliding windows, full-height vertical sidelights—often with mottled privacy glass
- Windows and doors are treated as consciously conceived void elements
- Sliding patio doors at the front elevation
- Novel detailing such as striping or bronze rose plate hardware around knobs at entry doors, which are often double
- Decorative screens over porches or carports
- Double garages often away from street view
- Elements of Spanish architecture such as adobe-like walls and Spanish tile roofs
- Hanging spherical globe lights
- Decorative wrought iron supports at the entry
- Shaped, double or decorative chimneys of flagstone, concrete, masonry, or stacked course Roman brick
- Novel chimney capping
- Flat or low-pitched hip or side gabled roof
- Overhanging boxed eaves with plain fascia board trim

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- extended roof beams
- Sunken conversation pits and sunken Japanese style bath facilities
- Solariums
- Covered table-top ranges in the backyard.
- Swimming pools
- Underground utilities
- Lush, mature landscaping of the tropical rather than Mediterranean variety.
- Steeply bermed front yards often covered with Ivy
- Decorative planters
- Freestanding landscape elements including lantern light poles and stand alone mailboxes
- Wide entry stairs, often with a staggered layout, made with non-concrete, novel materials

Many Contemporary Ranch Homes from the mid-1950s onward looked to and appropriated Asiatic styles which represented maturity, taste and sophistication. These Asiatic elements include:

- Continuous lintels, either actual or implied, across the upper portion of elevations
- Red or orange persimmon colored entry doors
- Vertical wood latticework,⁸⁸ *Shoji*,⁸⁹ or *Manji-kuzushi*⁹⁰ decorative screenwork.
- Large scale round windows openings
- *Irimoya*⁹¹ or *Engawa*⁹² roofs
- Traditional roof tile (*Gawara*)⁹³

⁸⁸ Latticework was originally placed in front of houses associated with pleasure quarters, was used upon stores and was used upon traditional Japanese residences for purposes of privacy; the thin wood vertical members, between which were narrow openings, permitting individuals within to see out, but not vice-versa.

⁸⁹ Originally interior partitions with a framework grid of flat wood members

⁹⁰ *Manji-kuzushi* is a pattern of abstracted swastika forms often found across the upper levels of Shinto shrines. The design, which reads as an asymmetrical pattern of right angles, is often used as a decorative screen in front of windows

⁹¹ *Irimoya* Roofs: A side gable on low-hip roof commonly seen upon larger temples in Japan. Such roofs overhang widely, and as a result, many of the buildings have extended eaves. See Arthur Drexler, *The Architecture of Japan*, New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1955: 50.

⁹² *Engawa* inspired roofs: Long, low hipped roofs with long eaves; described by Arthur Drexler as, "vast, hat-like roofs are made to hover above the fields by constructions that seem only indifferently concerned with what they support." Drexler, *The Architecture*, 55.

⁹³ *Gawara* tiles are thick, square tiles, are concave, and are placed in linear courses.

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- Extended gables with lattice infill often adorned with notched ridgepoles or exposed beams -
- Exposed rafter tails, either bevel cut or flat ended
- Decorative boulders
- Garden lanterns, based on use in Buddhist temples and tea ceremonies
- Flagstone paths in which individual flagstones are typically set within earth, not mortar

In its elimination of historical references in favor of inventing new forms and attitudes and ways of building predicated on new ideals that spoke to the future, Modernism changed architecture irrevocably. Southern California was one of the earliest areas in America where residential Modernism was introduced and where it became far more integrated into popular culture than elsewhere in the nation, so much so that it is now a well-established style here. Pasadena not only has important examples of such residential architecture, it has some of the earliest examples of such work. Modern houses in Pasadena illustrate the sustained depth and adaptability of the movement as it matured from early works for avante garde “early adopters” to a mid-Century Modernism that won local middle-class appeal. This range can be seen in the variety of individual expressions of residential architecture over the span of 70+ years, many of which are highly competent, high quality designs. While these houses vary widely in appearance (because to some extent each Modernist developed unique design vocabularies throughout their individual practices), nonetheless, houses of the Modern Movement share certain attributes. They are almost always architect-designed, custom houses. Horizontality is an important common feature; on hillside properties, many Modern houses incorporate stepped rectangular volumes that follow the site to retain horizontal qualities, particularly evident in western Pasadena where Modernism was popular. Historical precedents such as bilateral symmetry, traditional interior layouts with individual rooms with doors were eliminated in favor of exterior forms that directly expressed interior layouts based on function and formerly separated uses now merged. Traditional styles of detail and ornament were eschewed in favor of simple, stripped geometrical forms and exteriors, often with no or little window or door trim. Exposed structure was advocated as evidence of “honesty” in materials. Familiar materials, or materials associated with industrial or commercial uses (such as battleship linoleum) were employed in new ways. Using new, experimental materials such as the new waterproof plywood and Masonite was encouraged. However, despite the sometime “machine look” of some of these houses, the key distinguishing traits of the Modern Movement as expressed in Pasadena almost invariably includes a careful siting of the house onto a particular lot and setting, exploiting topography, sun and views. Generous expanses of fenestration, including large windows, French or sliding glass doors, patios and rear and side decks (usually confined to the rear of the house), fostered an intimate connection with a fairly benevolent outdoors while a relatively closed street facade conferred privacy. Character-defining features of Modern single family residences include:

Simple geometric volumes, often interlocking

- Compositional balance achieved without employing formal bilateral symmetry
 - Simple roof outlines: flat roofs, parapets hiding slopes, shed roofs, broad gables, low slopes.
 - Second and third stories often located at rear of house; stepped volumes above or below a house often employed on hillsides
 - Structural elements partially or entirely exposed
 - Smooth stucco / sand finish stucco
 - Generous fenestration in rear of house, usually overlooking or accessible to side and rear patios and decks
 - Minimal fenestration on primary (street) façade, although this feature can vary widely
 - Windows grouped as horizontal bands; window units that often terminate at corners; full-height sliding glass doors, windows grouped (rather than windows as separate punctured openings through the wall plane)
-

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- Ornamentation is non-Classical, non-Western.
- Use of combinations of inexpensive/unconventional/experimental materials such as plywood, redwood, rough stone, board-and-batten, stucco, hollow-core tile, concrete (Schindler, Wright, Gill), glass block, textile masonry blocks (Wright), corrugated plastic (Schindler)
- Lack of standard fenestration trim; restrained or absent trim
- Pedestrian path to street may not be direct or immediately obvious
- Landscape treated as outdoor rooms and spaces extending from and integrated with the house
- Enclosed garages with hinged doors or carports (particularly in post-war construction)

The International Style's restricted palette of character-defining features is associated with the 1932 "International Exhibition of Modern Architecture," that introduced Modernism, especially a specific 'flavor' of European Modernism, to America. International Style houses are typically custom designs by highly trained architects and based on theoretical ideals. Though relatively rare, the late 1920s and early 1930s residential works in the International Style by Richard Neutra, Gregory Ain and Harwell Hamilton Harris in Pasadena and the greater Los Angeles area had an enormous impact on future generations of architects, especially local architects who could experience the radical new work first hand. The International Style is a specific expression of Modernist architecture which has a specific repertoire of physical attributes. Three principal aesthetic characteristics associated with this style include: flat roofs, smooth white stucco (or, more rarely, horizontally oriented tongue-and-groove wood), and bands of horizontally grouped windows. In addition, International Style houses do not blend in with, but rather, are intended to sharply contrast with their settings, (often extensively landscaped or pastoral settings) and to be appreciated as pieces of free-standing sculpture in space. Cladding was to be distinct from the structural skeleton, and interior partitions were not load-bearing. Other elements such as "piloti" hoisted the building into the air with columns that permitting parking for the automobile beneath the house, detaching the building from the ground plane and further distinguishing it from its setting as well as from historical precedent. "Following World War II, certain elements of the style became softened into a more widespread vernacular called the Contemporary style."⁹⁴ Important character-defining features include:

- Orthogonal and crisp massing
- Strong sense of horizontality – no obvious pitch to roof
- White in appearance
- Building clearly distinct from land and/or ground plane
- Asymmetrical placement of volumes (spaces or rooms), windows, entrances
- Interior volumes expressed on the exterior (rather than fitting into a conventional residential "box")
- Groups of banded windows alternating with wide bands of stucco
- Steel casement windows with thin moldings, jambs
- Lack of Western/Classical ornament
- Smoothly rendered stucco

⁹⁴ Virginia and Lee McAlester. 1998. *A Field Guide to American Houses*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. p. 469.

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- Use of same flooring material inside and outside to unify overall environment
- Roof overhangs often absent
- Use of steel, not wood, for framing//structure, often exposed
- Use of experimental, new materials
- Flat single panel (no raised panel) doors
- Pedestrian path to street may not be direct or immediately obvious

Context 2: Mid-Century Modernism in the Residential Work of Buff, Straub & Hensman in Pasadena, 1948-1968

As designed by master architects Buff, Straub & Hensman, the foremost practitioners of what is known as The USC School or The Pasadena School of Post-and-Beam architecture, the firm's residential architecture is an innovative and original expression of the post-war Modern Movement. Their approach is closely associated with Pasadena's built culture, to which the firm has made a unique and sustained contribution, and with the City's specific climate and topography, employing the area's arroyos, glens and hillsides to express unique relationships between house and site refined for each circumstance yet related by a common design typology. Pasadena is also the location of a majority of the examples of their early, mature, and late residential work. Single family houses designed by Buff, Straub & Hensman within this period of significance illustrate this unique regional Modernism in integrating a Modernist philosophy with architectural traditions, vernacular Japanese and Craftsman features, that are associated with wood construction, such as exposed structure, simplicity of expression, and the integration of indoors and outdoors. Examples include sleeping porches and front and side porches or grouped windows (evident in Craftsman houses) and rear and side patios and decks, large windows, or interior flooring that extended into the landscape (Modern houses) and exposed structure (all three styles of houses.) However, the firm synthesized these disparate approaches to create a signature style. Virtually all of the firm's work was devoted to single family, free-standing houses on custom lots. Important character-defining features of the houses designed by Buff, Straub & Hensman include:

- Orientation horizontal rather than vertical
- Simple geometric volumes
- Second and third stories often located at rear of house; stepped volumes above or below a house often employed on hillsides, maintaining strong horizontal quality
- Open plan layouts that also provided clear distinctions between public and private, adult and children's zones
- Simple roof outlines: flat roofs, very low-pitched roofs with broad gables
- Wood used for structure (often stained dark brown) and trim, (dark or contrasting color) interior and exterior
- Exposed structural elements used for both interior and exterior
- Exposed structure such as rafter tails or ridge beams extend beyond building envelope.
- Extensive overhangs located according to sun's orientation, landscaping
- Cladding/siding may include smooth- or sand-finish stucco, T-111 plywood, or vertically oriented 1x6 wood boards

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- Large expanses of single pane glass, or sequences of glass, such as a larger center fixed light window flanked by casement windows
- Slender wood trim on windows; steel casement windows
- Neutral colors for paint used for both interior and exterior trim or cladding mimic earth tones or muted greens and yellows with the exception of trim and primary doors, often painted a bright color such as persimmon, yellow, blue.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE, PROPERTY TYPE: Single Family Residences

In Pasadena, the single family residence was an important vehicle for illustrating a wide range of outstanding architectural responses to the challenges of the 20th century. Pasadena possessed a unique combination of attributes that supported the emergence of Modernist architecture: varied topography offered a large range of opportunities in which to showcase innovative design thinking; the City's heritage of the Arts and Crafts movement and a general standard of architectural excellence; a pool of educated, progressive clientele; the City's close proximity to USC's School of Architecture, at the height of its impact during the post-war period due to its concentration of brilliant and innovative faculty and federal support for educating veterans. Pasadena's innovative houses helped define a critical regional Modernism that distinguishes the City's built culture from that of many other cities. Master architects of international renown as well as highly competent local architects and builders working in Pasadena executed single family residences with an outstanding quality of design that embody the characteristics of the following styles: California Ranch, Contemporary Ranch, Modern, International Style and the residential architecture of Buff, Straub & Hensman. The firm's work illustrates that a more informal Modernism could appeal to the American middle class, a cultural breakthrough that spoke to the wide popularity of a new kind of Modernism. This shift from elitism to acceptance illustrates how the firm devised ways to create affordable, unfussy, elegant architecture that sought an essential relationship with nature oriented around a casual yet sophisticated lifestyle. The firm devised simple details for their designs that were nonetheless handsome and carefully integrated and finished. Finally, Buff, Straub & Hensman's single family residences are also significant not only because they are directly associated with the built culture of Pasadena, but because of the firm's larger influence, demonstrated in local, regional, and national awards, and in its influence through local, national and international publications. The houses in the styles listed above, meeting the following Registration Requirements, fulfill the requirements for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C in the area of architecture, at the local level of significance, with a period of significance 1935 – 1968 (Context 1) or 1948 – 1968 (Context 2).

Registration Requirements

Context 1: Residential Architecture of the Recent Past in Pasadena, 1935 - 1968

Individual Properties

For the property type, a single family residence, to qualify for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C, architecture, at the local level of significance under this Multiple Property Submission, it must exhibit a high quality of design in one of the styles listed above; must have been completed within the period of significance for one of the two contexts described in Section E, and/or be the work of a significant architect or builder, including local architects or builders who produced high quality designs in the styles listed above, and comply with the standards for character-defining features and essential aspects of integrity, below:

Character-Defining Features

In order to qualify for listing, this property type a single family residence must retain its original appearance to a high degree. It would display most of the character-defining features appropriate to its style, outlined above; its period of significance; and architect or builder. A building that has been altered by significant additions; the application of materials inconsistent with the historic period in which it was constructed or inconsistent with the practice of the responsible architect or firm; the removal of

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significant architectural details or changes to fenestration patterns and openings; or major changes to spatial layouts, including those which address the immediate surroundings of the house, is excluded from eligibility for nomination under Criterion C.

Integrity

In order to qualify for listing the property must retain adequate integrity to convey its architectural significance. While not all aspects of integrity (location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association) need to be present, they should all be considered in an effort to evaluate a property comprehensively. With regard to single family houses of the Modern Movement, four aspects of integrity are essential: design, workmanship, materials and setting, the last because Modern architects placed great importance on integrating a building with its setting as described in Context 1. A building which does not retain these four aspects of integrity is excluded from eligibility for nomination under Criterion C.

Criterion Consideration G

For a property less than fifty years old to meet Criterion Consideration G, it must be a pivotal design in the work of a master architect, possess all aspects of integrity, and retain almost all of its character-defining features. Documentation must support the evaluation of the property.

To be Eligible as a District

A group of single family houses in Pasadena designed in styles associated with the Modern Movement would be eligible under Criterion C if there is a concentration of relatively well preserved properties evaluated according to the standards outlined above, situated within a contiguous grouping of similar resources and in the styles listed above. A sizeable majority of the properties must have been constructed within the periods of significance 1935 – 1968.

Contributors to Districts

Examples of this property type may also qualify under Criterion C as a contributor to a district, i.e., a grouping of properties, if they are situated within a contiguous grouping of similar resources. The resource needs to be a good example of one of the styles listed above, display most of its character-defining features, retain integrity including the four essential aspects of integrity, and be constructed within the period of significance 1935 - 1968.

Context 2: Mid-Century Modernism in the Residential Work of Buff, Straub & Hensman in Pasadena, 1948-1968

Individual Properties

A single family residence by Buff, Straub & Hensman that would qualify for listing in the National Register at the local level of significance under Criterion C, architecture, would be an excellent example of the firm's work, associated with the period of significance 1948 - 1968, and comply with the standards for character-defining features and essential aspects of integrity, below:

Standards for Character-Defining Features

In order to qualify for listing, a single family residence by Buff, Straub & Hensman must retain its original appearance to a high degree. A house that has been altered by significant additions; the application of materials inconsistent with the historic period in which it was constructed or inconsistent with the practice of Buff, Straub & Hensman, the removal of significant architectural details, changes to fenestration patterns and openings or changes to character-defining spatial layouts or changes other than regular maintenance that alter original materials and arrangements of exterior pavements and paving, including those which address the immediate surroundings of the house, and the removal or closing in of carports, is excluded from eligibility for nomination under this criterion. Specifically, the following standards apply to potential eligibility:

- Retain architect-defined proportions, modules, and scale of materials
- Retain exposed structure such as beam ends and rafter tails

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- Preserve original spatial relationships integrating indoors and outdoors
- Retain original carport as open shelter. Enlarging carport may be feasible without compromising integrity
- Retain original openings and their frames, including window jambs and door frames. Replacement window/door assemblies should match as closely as possible the original framing
- Roofing materials shall remain in character
- Original, experimental materials that must be replaced should be replaced with a similar material that performs a similar function
- Preserve orientation and feeling of the primary entry approach: retain distinctive paving. Contemporary paving techniques, such as interlocking concrete pavers in driveways and front door paths on street facades that are disharmonious in texture, pattern and scale with existing character-defining features and entry path of the house, shall not be introduced.
- Landscaping, particularly if designed by named landscape architect, shall not be altered in ways that compromise the original setting. For example, replacing an existing landscape including trees with a strongly axial and historicist landscape may compromise integrity.

Integrity

In order to qualify for listing the property must retain adequate integrity to convey its architectural significance. While not all aspects of integrity need to be present, they should all be considered in an effort to evaluate a property comprehensively. Although the property does not need to retain all the seven aspects of integrity, the five essential aspects of integrity for the work of Buff, Straub & Hensman are design, workmanship, materials, location, and setting. Location and setting are important in the work of Buff, Straub & Hensman because the firm typically was involved in choosing a specific site most appropriate for a particular client's needs and budget, and because of the very high importance the firm gave to using a specific site as the wellspring of the design process. A building which does not retain these five essential aspects of integrity is excluded from eligibility for nomination under this criterion.

Criterion Consideration G

For a property that come under Criterion Consideration G as less than fifty years old a property must be a pivotal design or an exemplary design in the work of the master architect, Buff, Straub & Hensman, possess all aspects of integrity, and retain almost all of its character-defining features. The property must either be a quintessential work by the firm or illustrates an unusual feature of Buff, Straub & Hensman's approach, for example, a strong collaboration between client and architect which produced a unique architectural resolution. Documentation must support the evaluation of the property.

Contributors to Districts

Should a single family residence designed by Buff, Straub & Hensman residential properties be considered as a contributor to a historic district, the standards for *Contributors to Districts, Context I*, shall apply.

To be Eligible as a District (Grouping of Property)

While the majority of residences designed by Buff, Straub and Hensman are located in Pasadena, these custom houses typically are found in small non-contiguous groupings and are unlikely to constitute a historic district. Should a grouping of residential properties designed by Buff, Straub & Hensman be considered as a Historic District, the standards for *To Be Eligible as a District, Context I*, shall apply.

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Geographical Data

The corporate limits of the City of Pasadena, Los Angeles County, California.

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Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods

The multiple property listing of private residences constructed between 1935 and 1968 is based upon inventories from 2006 and 2007 reconnaissance surveys by the City of Pasadena as part of a CLG-funded project to research and document resources from the Recent Past.

ICF Jones & Stokes architectural historians were contacted for current photographs and building profiles, and if needed, site visits were made by architectural historians to take new photographs and note alterations to the existing buildings. All potential historic resources were inventoried and evaluated according to their representative property type and registration requirements.

Where possible, building records and permits, tidemark data, site visits, interviews with architects and original owners were conducted and/or consulted. In addition, the *Cultural Resources of the Recent Past: Historic Context Report, City of Pasadena*, written by Historic Resources Group and Pasadena Heritage, was consulted and integrated into the MPS context statement. The National Register Information System was researched to identify those properties already listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and those properties were not re-evaluated or documented on new National Register registration forms. For each recorded property, locations were noted on USGS topographical maps; photographs were taken; computerized inventory forms were completed; context statements were amplified and/or written; narrative architectural and historical descriptions, statements of significance and registration requirements were written. For the work on Buff, Straub, and Hensman, the firm's current principal/president was interviewed. The firm also provided access to drawings and archival materials as necessary. The Getty Research Institute; the Architecture and Environmental Design Library, Arizona State University; the Pasadena Central Library and the Los Angeles Public Library provided additional research materials. This work was conducted on behalf of the City of Pasadena by Barbara Lamprecht and Daniel Paul, architectural historians with ICF Jones & Stokes Associates, between January and August 2008, with assistance by the City of Pasadena Planning Department.

The properties were evaluated and selected under one Multiple Property Submission, *Cultural Resources of the Recent Past, City of Pasadena*, with two associated historic contexts that define the historic background, design, and construction of the properties,

- a. Residential Architecture of the Recent Past in Pasadena, 1935 – 1968
- b. Mid-Century Modernism in the Residential Work of Buff, Straub & Hensman in Pasadena, 1948-1968

The contexts and inventory focused on a group of buildings that were closely related by their function, location, chronological era, and design. The common function was that the buildings were used as single family residences. The common location was that the residences were located in Pasadena. The common chronological era was 1935 to 1968 for design and construction. The common design was based on Modernist tenets as rendered in Southern California, Los Angeles, and Pasadena, resolved by the architects and designers in different ways but recognizably Modern, with particular emphasis on the wood post-and-beam technique associated with the post World War II USC School of Architecture, The Pasadena School, and the City of Pasadena's design traditions. Integrity requirements were based upon knowledge of existing properties, and alterations commonly related to changing family needs or the wishes of new owners. The architectural and physical features of the surviving properties, derived from the research and inventory, were considered in developing the outlines of potential registration requirements.

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