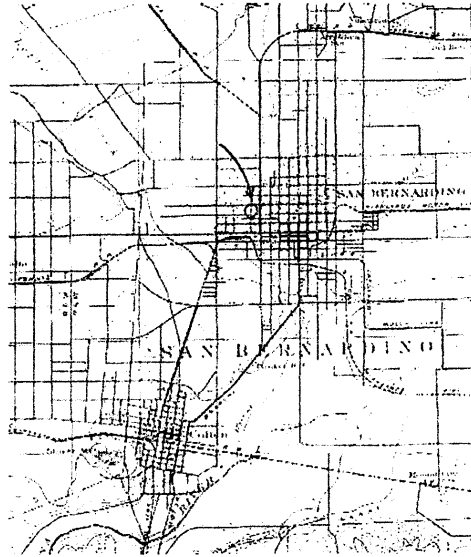


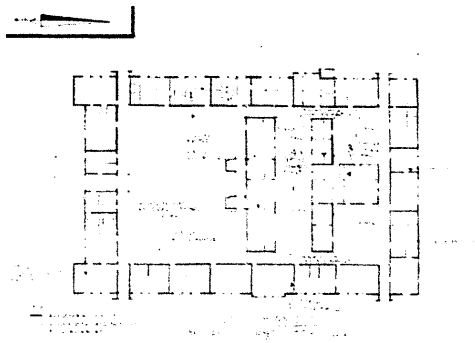
## ARCHITECTURE OF THE RAMONA SCHOOL

The descriptions which follow are based on field visits to the Ramona School by the authors on March 23 and 29, 1999. The architectural features and general condition of the building were carefully examined during these visits.



**Figure 2. Location of Ramona School plotted on a portion of the 1898 USGS San Bernardino 15' Topographic Quadrangle.**

The San Bernardino City Unified School District purchased the 5-acre Ramona School site on June 30, 1925 (fig. 2). It was not long after that David J. Witmer and Loyall F. Watson first inspected the location. No doubt, they approached by 7th Street which was the only fully developed street bordering the school property. The areas to the east and west had been subdivided and incorporated into the City but they remained mostly or entirely undeveloped. The western end of 8th Street terminated at the northeastern property corner. Thus, the property retained a strongly rural quality although a few homes had been built to the north and east.



**Figure 3. Floor plan of existing Ramona School (Degenkolb 1997).**

Like so much of Witmer's work, the Ramona School bears relatively little decoration. Original wooden doors were the ten panel type (fig. 13) but many of these have been replaced with more modern but less attractive flush-faced doors. The most important exterior decoration consists of a polychrome tile panel around the exterior of the central entrance on 7th Street (fig. 5). Like all the entries, this archway is secured by wrought iron grilles containing double gates. The wrought iron fanlight and gates on the central entrance are composed of various C-scroll designs (Geerlings 1957). This grille work is shown in the original plans but the school's name (Ramona), which is displayed in gold metal letters over the grille, was not planned by the architects.

**Figure 13. Typical original ten panel door.**

One final decorative item merits special attention. This comprises a small Mediterranean style belfry which no longer exists. The belfry, which is shown in several places in the original plans, appears in a 1929 photograph of the southern cloister (fig. 11; Hill 1929:12). It extended above the roof on the northeast corner of the southern courtyard. The date of the belfry's removal is unknown but must have occurred prior to 1947 when the Kump study was conducted since the belfry does not show in the aerial photograph of that year (fig. 4).

We concluded that the Ramona School is a significant piece of architecture because of its method of construction, high artistic values, and because of the importance of its principal architect. Each of these factors is discussed separately in the paragraphs which follow.

**Method of Construction:** The method of construction of the Ramona School, which we shall refer to as "stone tile" construction (the term used in the plans to designate the cast concrete bricks), incorporates several structural components into a complete construction



method. The resulting building was safe, inexpensive, and durable--highly desirable characteristics for public schools.

Stone tile construction, as incorporated into the Ramona School, entailed using combination of reinforced concrete and concrete brick masonry. Basically, the stone tile walls, which were themselves reinforced, were sandwiched between reinforced concrete footings below and concrete tie beams or bond beams above. Lintels spanning windows and large opening such as the school's proscenium were also made from reinforced concrete. Because they were cast in reinforced concrete, arched passageways also served as wall buttresses and gables served as tie beams across walls. The use of earthquake joints at critical points preventing the wings of the building from tearing themselves apart under intense seismic strain. Use of steel fenestration in the window frames contributed to the structural integrity of the walls while simultaneously employing a more weather resistant and durable material than traditional wood sashes.

Of course, Witmer & Watson were not the only architects designing reinforced concrete structures early in this century. However, it is our opinion that they were masters of the art of incorporating very strong structural features into buildings that convey the impression of traditional design. For example, the courses of stone combined with the lines left from the concrete form boards convey a strong impression of adobe construction without suffering from any of the weaknesses of adobe. Thus, stone tile construction provided for a true "California" look while meeting the needs of safety and durability required by a school building.

High Artistic Values: Aside from the tile decorated and iron-grilled arched main entry, there is nothing especially notable about the appearance of the exterior of the Ramona School. The tiled gable roofs and adobe-like walls do lend a California feel to the building but this appearance occurs frequently in the architecture of the time. Rather, it is the courtyards, which might be called the exteriors of the interior, which give the school its uniquely special feel:

In fact, they [the courtyards and corridors] are the core features of this building. Further, it is certain characteristics about these elements that make them so important. The expansiveness and landscape features define the character of the south courtyard. While the rustic timber supports and the open construction that allows the roofing tile to be seen from below are important elements of the corridors. These features, which strongly allude to an earlier time in California's history, set a mood fro the entire complex.

As the north courtyard appears to have been altered, this area has less historic significance than the south courtyard. (Degenkolb 1997:10).

We agree with Degenkolb's observations and add that the "monastic" dignity of the southern cloister adds to the educational mood of the place. Yet its open exposure to the elements lends it a casual atmosphere. The presence of the proscenium (stage) flanked by masonry grilles opening onto the courtyard enhances both its appearance and its utility. All things considered, the monastic cloister design of the Ramona School is a

marvelous adaptation of a traditional Mediterranean layout to the needs of southern California elementary school children.

Although Degenkolb was in error in believing that the T-shaped shower and dressing building in the northern courtyard is an addition (it is included in the construction plans), we agree that the presence of the building damages the cloister atmosphere found in the south. For this reason, the northern courtyard is far less aesthetically successful.

*The Work of a Master:* David J. Witmer has received relatively little attention from southern California architectural critics and Loyall F. Watson has received none (in fact, we know of no buildings designed exclusively by Watson who may have restricted himself to the engineering aspects of architectural design). This may be partly due to Witmer's inclination toward simplification of traditional forms and clear preference for the strength and durability of reinforced concrete construction. Poured concrete has never been a normal material for residential superstructure construction and in the 1920's, it did not comprise a usual material for public buildings.

As noted above, Witmer seems to have had a remarkable ability to incorporate concrete into traditional designs. No doubt, it was his flair for durable construction which led the Government to place him on the Pentagon design team and eventually place him in total charge. Aside from the Pentagon, many of Witmer's other buildings such as his family residences at 208 and 210 Witmer Street on Crown Hill, the Tudor residence on Edgemont Street near Los Feliz, and the Ramona School have all survived in fine condition. We think that Witmer's clever and inventive ways of incorporating concrete into styles traditionally executed in other materials qualifies him as a master.

## HISTORY OF THE RAMONA SCHOOL

### Growth of the Latino Community

When the first USGS topographic survey of San Bernardino was completed in 1893-4, the future site of the Ramona School comprised an undeveloped portion of the alluvial fan east of Lytle Creek (fig. 2). The terrain sloped very gently from northwest to southeast. Although some areas of the fan had or were about to be planted in citrus, the vicinity of the future Ramona School was apparently farmed (to judge by a 1947 aerial photo; cf. fig. 5). The alignment of W. 7th Street existed to a point several hundred yards west of the school site but there were no north-south streets west of Mt. Vernon Avenue.

By the latter 1920's, when the Ramona School was built, the City had extended its limits to a point about a half a block to the west of the school site. The 1947 aerial photograph of the school shows low density residential development north and east of the site (fig. 4), but the 1942 U.S.G.S. 7.5' topographic sheet shows that the area west of the school remained undeveloped farmland. Ms. Esther Estrada, a near life-long resident of the community who has lived within two blocks of the school during that time, recalls that during the 20's and 30's most residents were Latinos who either worked for the Santa Fe Railroad or were orange pickers (Estrada 1999:pers.comm.; Alva 1991:pers.comm.).

During the 1940's, many of the local residents went to work for the Kaiser Steel plant in Fontana.

In 1941, the San Bernardino County Guide described the Latino community growing up around the school:

The Mexican settlement, west of Mt. Vernon Avenue, between Fourth and Ninth Streets, contrasts sharply with other sections [of San Bernardino]. It is a quarter of narrow streets, a few of which are unpaved, faced by small houses, some built of adobe. The life of the area centers around the Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe, with its fiesta grounds and social center, and the Home of Neighborly Service {fig. 14}, a settlement house. There are a theater which features Mexican pictures, and native cafes and shops. Here is a transplanted bit of Old Mexico, with only a modicum of American influence ... (S.B. Co. Guide 1941:9).



**Figure 14. The Home of Neighborly Service located at 839 N. Mt. Vernon Avenue.**

It was not until after WWII that the community around the Ramona School became a densely developed residential area. During the late 40's and 50's many low hip-roofed "liberty" style homes filled in the spaces between the pre-war frame California cottages. Although a few newer structures may be found scattered here and there among the older residences, the fundamental architectural character of the neighborhood remains unchanged since the early post-war period.

#### History of the Ramona School

The San Bernardino School District was established in 1851 (District #1) and the first school consisted of a brush structure put up within the fort by the Mormons (Hill n.d.:243). After the fort was done away with, "two adobe single-room schoolhouses were built on a lot secured by the city for school use; it was located on Fourth Street where the school building of 1904 stood" (ibid. 244). The first brick school was built in 1871 and this was followed by the Central School on F Street which was erected in 1884.

In 1890, the city limits were extended and five new school districts were added: Mt. Vernon, Metcalf, Riley, Urbita, and Terrace. This resulted in construction of five new school buildings. The census of 1902 showed a total of 2,147 children being taught by 40 teachers in City schools. During the first decade of this century, the school census remained stable but between 1910 and 1920, it grew by nearly a third. This growth combined with initial development of a Latino residential area west of Mt. Vernon Avenue put pressure on the school district to establish the Ramona School.

The first Ramona School, referred to as the "Ramona Building," was located at the southeastern corner of 7th Street and Mount Vernon Avenue, a property which currently comprises La Plaza Park. The Directory of Public Schools (DPS) for San Bernardino (1914-1923) indicates that the school was established in 1921 and was an elementary school for grades 1-6. Ms. May E. Clark served as Principal and also taught first grade. Four other teachers made up the rest of the faculty (Ellis, Friedemann, Jensen, & Wood). According to Mr. Felix Alva, the building was a wood-framed California bungalow (Alva 1999:pers. comm.). It is not known what happened to the building after it ceased to be used as a school.

In the early 1920's, the 5-acre site that was the future home of the Ramona School belonged to William N. & Nora Van Dyke. In 1924 the Van Dyke parcel had an assessed value of \$750 and improvements valued at \$800 (San Bernardino Assessor's Lot Book 1924-1929, bk. 32B, pg. 97). Mr. Van Dyke is listed in the 1924 San Bernardino City Directory as a "foreman" (presumably for the Santa Fe) living at 1504 7th Street (SBCD 1924). A Mr. Walter Van Dyke, music teacher, also resided at the same address. Since the original address of the Ramona School was 1504 W. 7th Street, it may be that the Van Dyke residence was demolished to make room for the school.

The Van Dykes sold the property to the San Bernardino County School District on June 29, 1925 (San Bernardino County Book of Property Transfers, Bk. 59). By 1927, completion of the school is indicated by the fact that the property had an assessed land value of \$1,000 and an improvements value of \$26,000. By that time, the Van Dykes had moved to 1315 F Street (SBCD 1929).

The Los Angeles firm of Witmer & Watson was retained to design the Ramona School. The original plans are dated 3/18/26 and initialed "LFW" (Loyall F. Watson). While they were designing the school, Witmer & Watson established a local office in Rm. 404 of the Platt Building at 491 W. 5th Street (also listed as 477-479 E St.; now demolished). However, the firm's permanent offices at the time were in the Bank of Italy Building in Los Angeles.

The new Ramona School, which housed kindergarten and grades 1-6, was a much larger facility that could accommodate a broader curriculum including hygiene and physical education, music, art, manual arts, home economics, etc. The first Principal was Mary E. Clark who had been the Principal at the old school. According to the Directory of Schools, she became Vice Principal of Ramona when R.F. Glenn took over in 1927-28. At that time, the school's address was listed as 1504 7th Street (DPS 1928). By the

1930's, the school's address had changed to its present address of 1524 W. 7th Street (SBCD 1931).

From its inception, the Ramona School was intended to serve the Mexican-American community exclusively. In 1929, the San Bernardino Sun published an article entitled "Boundaries for Schools within San Bernardino District Listed; Parents Urged to Study Lines" (9/4/29; p. 5). The article lists each school district and gives its street boundaries, children from within each boundary supposedly attending the school within their district. However, when the Ramona School is listed, the entry simply gives the school's location (Seventh Street, two blocks west of Mt. Vernon Avenue), then comments that "This school serves all Mexican and non-English speaking children west of I Street."

In 1931-32, the Ramona School had 750 students or 250 more than the maximum number of students regarded as desirable at any single school within the school district in 1947 (San Bernardino Sun 9/24/32:13; Kump 1947:24). In 1932-33, attendance at the Ramona School fell to 610 or 140 students less than the during the prior school year:

Decreases in the two schools maintained exclusively for Mexican pupils of the city [Ramona & Meadowbrook] are due to the extensive repatriation program carried on during the summer months. Hundreds of Mexican families were sent back to their native country. (San Bernardino Sun 9/24/32).

In 1947, the school district hired the Ernest J. Kump Company of San Francisco to develop a long-range building program for the San Bernardino School system (Kump 1947). Kump evaluated the situation at the Ramona School:

The problems surrounding the Ramona School are of sufficient import to require a detailed discussion. The current enrollment at Ramona is 845. This figure far exceeds the 500 maximum set for our elementary schools (ibid. 48).

Nonetheless, Kump found that:

"The Ramona Elementary School has ample classroom capacity. It needs additional playground area and will require the addition of a cafeteria-multiuse room. Immediate steps must be taken to acquire title to the city owned property which is now used to supplement the play ground area. The removal of the temporary classroom buildings is also a part of the permanent plan ...

"The cafeteria-multiuse building in addition to serving as cafeteria, assembly and music building will become a community center for this neighborhood." (Ibid. 77).

One of the chief values of the Kump study was that it presented plans and an aerial photograph of the Ramona School (fig. 4). These show a row of three temporary classroom buildings placed adjacent to the western boundary of the school property. They also show the playground north of the school and a city-owned playground area off the northeast corner of the Ramona parcel.

In 1971, the San Bernardino Unified School District announced that it intended to abandon the Ramona Elementary School because it did not meet earthquake standards as provided in California's Field Act (San Bernardino Sun 7/27/71). The final classes appear to have been held in 1971 when the old school housed kindergarten and grades 1-3 with an enrollment of 500 students. The last Principal was Mr. Richard Cotter who was also Principal of the nearby Ramona-Alessandro School (grades 4-6) located at 670 N. Ramona Ave./ 1623 W. 7th Street (DPS 1971). All Ramona School students were transferred to the Ramona-Alessandro School.

About the same time, the school district announced that it intended to close four more schools including Ramona-Alessandro. This raised some interesting political issues. To judge by an article that appeared in the San Bernardino Sun on May 5, 1971, it had been the intention of the school district to introduce busing in order to achieve racial integration of the school system. This would also solve the problem of what to do with the displaced school children--that is, they would be distributed among the newer schools. However, this plan was not consistent with community sentiments and about 200 "Marching Mothers for Quality Education" met with the district's Board of Education. One of the marchers, Esther Estrada, told the Board that the community wanted its own schools.

Insofar as the Ramona School was concerned, it was proposed that the building be jointly purchased by the City and County as a center for Mexican-American cultural programs. Unfortunately, this proposal came at a politically inopportune time due to the fact that the Board of Supervisors had become miffed by the "slashing attacks" with regard to the County budget by Supervisor Nancy E. Smith (San Bernardino Sun 6/27/71). Since Ms. Smith represented the supervisor district closest to the school, the Board openly refused to support the proposal.

But the Ramona School was not destined to lose its place in the west side community. At the time the school was closed, there was an organization called La Confederacion operating out of a storefront across from La Plaza Park. The purpose of the organization was to promote academic achievement among Hispanic children in the community. La Confederacion purchased the Ramona School for \$41,000 and the organization changed its name to "Casa Ramona" (San Bernardino Sun 4/14/97).

Casa Ramona began by offering tutoring and English classes, a child-care center and the County Nutrition for Seniors program. The organization, which was a non-profit corporation, "continued to expand, offering employment training and a class for women to earn their high school diplomas" (ibid.). The school even became the home of a legal services clinic and the County Mental Health Department. "The building was being used day and night" according to Ms. Estrada. Many of the rooms were rented by non-profit organizations of various types.

By the 1980's, some of the non-profits found themselves in trouble for mis-use of funds. About that time, many sources of public funding began to dry up due to Federal cost-cutting measures (Estrada 1999:pers.comm.). In 1981 Ms. Estrada, a former employee of



the Mexican-American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, became Executive Director of Casa Ramona. By that time, the organization was almost \$90,000 in debt. Casa Ramona had also lost some of its goal orientation, partly because the public school system was beginning to provide some of the services, such as English-as-Second Language (ESL), which Casa Ramona had assumed in the past. Under Ms. Estrada's leadership, Casa Ramona devised plans to recover its solvency and re-define its long-term plans for providing services to the community.

These plans included construction of a medical center and related activities. In May of 1982, the San Bernardino Sun reported that Casa Ramona had an operating budget of \$314,630 and that it was providing "a host of services to the surrounding area, including a Nutrition for Seniors program, the Westside Community Family Practice Medical Center, city Human Services Department Drop-In Center, county Mental Health Outreach Clinic, Child Development Center and Project Redirect's Infant-Toddler Care Center" (Torrez 1982).

In the decade of the 90's Casa Ramona has continued to expand. After having been cited for too little space per physician, a large addition was built on the clinic. The rear half of the school parcel, which had served as a playground during the elementary school days, was split and became the site of the area's first senior's housing project. Today, Casa Ramona's plans entail establishing offices for dentists, attorneys, more child care and educational seminars. The Ramona Alessandro Alumni Association would also like to establish a library and museum. Currently, the association comprises some 500 members (former students and teachers) who attended the old Ramona Building and the subject Ramona School between 1924-1953 (Cruz 1999:pers. comm.). The idea is to focus on the medical and social needs of the community. As Ms. Estrada (herself an alumnus of Ramona Elementary) has said, "people feel safe at Casa Ramona."

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## Appendix A:

### Partial List of the Works of Witmer & Watson

Note: Most dates are for plan preparation.

1921 David J. Witmer House, 210 Witmer St., Crown Hill. Two-story poured concrete Spanish Colonial Revival with form board marks strongly showing. Spanish tile gable roof with prominent round vent in gable of bay. Illustrated by Comer (1986:82).

1920 208 Witmer Street. Two-story Mediterranean style with Spanish style hip roof. Poured concrete with form board marks strongly showing. Matching garden walls. Arched entry. Illustrated by Comer (1986:82).

1921? 220 Witmer Street. Single-story shingled frame cottage. Symmetrical with end-gabled wings on either side. Prominent semi-circular arched hood over single French door entry in center of one lateral wing. Two-pot exterior chimney. Illustrated by Comer (1986:82).

1922 Crownwood Apartments. Crown Hill? Two-story Mediterranean style. Illustrated by Comer (1986:84).

1924 Vine Street School, Hollywood. (Southwest Builder & Contractor 3/14/1924:cover).

1925? Residence at 2020 Edgmont St., Los Feliz. "A very unusual poured concrete house with the wide board marks of the forms strongly showing. The finishing touches are Tudor." (Gebhard & Winter 1977:159, #14). We visited this beautifully designed house (March 1999) and found it to be in excellent condition with fine landscaping.

1927 R.B. Emmons residence, Pasadena (Architect & Engineer 4/1927:93)

1926 Ramona School. Features rectilinear masonry grilles, poured concrete arches with form board marks strongly showing (Pacific Coast Architect 6/1929:12).

1927 Lansing D. Beach residence, Pasadena (built 1928). This two-story with stuccoed exterior features a rectilinear masonry grille to the left of the centrally located main entry. Illustrated by Comer (1986:83).

1928 Venice Branch of Los Angeles Public Library. Spanish Colonial Revival featuring rectilinear masonry window grilles on one wing. Illustrated by Comer (1986:84f).

1928 Five-classroom addition to San Marino Grammar School Bldg. Reinforced concrete construction with stucco exterior and tile and composition roof. (Southwest Builder & Contractor 4/16/1928:52).

1928 The Architect's Building. Twelve-story commercial tower which formerly stood across from the L.A. Central Library. Illustrated by Comer (1986:85).

192? Frank Ryan residence, Hancock Park. Large ell-shaped two-story brick Tudor with prominent two-story entry bay. House no longer exists but was located at NW corner of Murfield and Sixth Streets. Illustrated by Comer (1986:83).

192? Apartment Building at Corner of Columbia and Crown Hill Avenues, Crown Hill. Two-story Mediterranean style with low composition hip roofs and gable roofs over two front bays. First-story entries are protected by prominent semi-circular arched hoods. Illustrated by Comer (1986:84).

1930 George V. Baer residence, Montecito. (California Arts & Architecture 4/1930).

1933 46th Street School, San Diego. Received certificate of honor from the San Diego Chapter of the AIA (Koyl 1962).

1939 Theta XI Fraternity House, Westwood. (Los Angeles Times 3/30/1930)

1939 Wyvernwood housing development, Boyle Heights. Olympic Blvd. and Soto Sts. Two-story frame low-income housing development; 1,102 units. "The first low rent public housing project to be built in Los Angeles (Built with private, not public, funds). The 70-acre site was designed with curbed streets and open space courts. The site includes retail businesses which face Olympic & Soto, and a school and municipal playground which adjoin Grande Vista. The Colonial Monterey style buildings are two-story stucco, some with balconies." (Gebhard and Winter 1977:232, #20).

1941 First of 486 residences which would become the City of Lakewood. (Koyl 1962).

1941- Pentagon, Washington D.C. (Witmer only; Marquis Who's Who 1976).  
1943

1952 Medical Dispensary, Claremont Associated Colleges. (Koyl 1962).

1955 Physical Education Building, North Hollywood High School. (Koyl 1962).

1960 Christopher Columbus Junior High School, Canoga Park. (Koyl 1962).



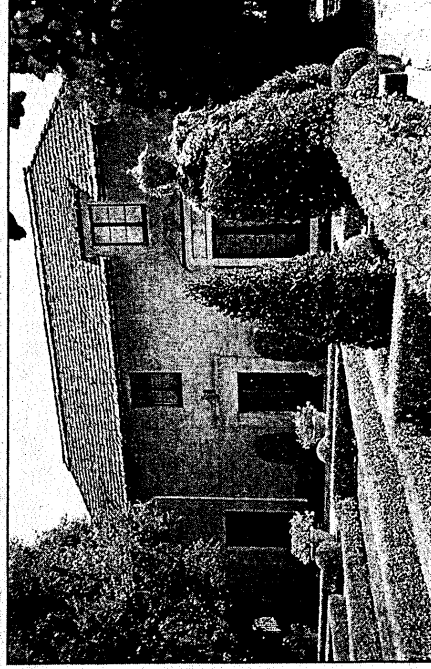
**Left on Laguna Road  
Cross over bridge  
Left on Arroyo Blvd.  
Continue to bear left  
on Arroyo Blvd.  
Pass Busch Place  
Just past Garden Lane**

**86)** The house with the semi-circular frosted glass windows on your left is part of the remains of the Grecian pergola that served as the entrance to Busch Gardens. Financed by Adolphus Busch, the beer brewer from St. Louis, thirty acres of beautifully landscaped gardens, fountains, paths, ponds, grazing sheep, fairy tale figures, and miniature houses extended from his own home high above on Orange Grove Blvd. into the Arroyo. Busch Gardens opened in 1906 and was a tourist attraction for many years until it closed in the late 1930s and the land was subdivided.



**86)** Busch Gardens Grecian Pergola, c. 1906, Frederick L. Roehrig, 1025 South Arroyo Blvd.

**87)** The house here on your right is the Lansing and Katharine Beach residence, designed in the French Norman Revival style. The Lansings met in Europe during WWI. She was an ambulance driver and he was a Lieutenant Colonel. He was from New York and she was from Indiana, and when they returned from the war they were married. The Beach's commissioned the firm of Witmer & Watson to design a home that reminded them of where they met. David Witmer also designed the Pentagon in Washington D.C.



**87)** Beach House, 1927, David Witmer and Loyall Watson, 760 South Arroyo Blvd.

## Foreword

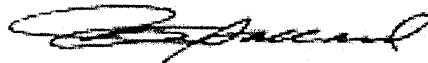
This short, illustrated history of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers provides an overview of the many missions that engineers have performed in support of the Army and the nation since the early days of the American Revolution. A permanent institution since 1802, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has effectively and proudly responded to changing defense requirements and has played an integral part in the development of the nation.

Engineers have served in combat in all our nation's wars. Throughout the 19th century the Corps built coastal fortifications, surveyed roads and canals, eliminated navigational hazards, explored and mapped the western frontier, and constructed buildings and monuments in the nation's capital.

In the 20th century, the Corps became the lead federal flood control agency. Assigned the military construction mission in 1941, the Corps constructed facilities at home and abroad to support the Army and the Air Force. During the Cold War, Army engineers managed construction programs for America's allies, including a massive effort in Saudi Arabia.

Today, building on its rich heritage, the Corps is changing to meet the challenges of tomorrow. Our vision calls for us to be a vital part of the Army; the engineer team of choice, responding to our nation's needs in peace and war; and a values-based organization, respected, responsive, and reliable.

I hope that readers of this history will gain an appreciation of the military, political, economic, and technological factors that shaped the modern Corps of Engineers. We in the Corps, both soldiers and civilians, are proud of our many contributions to the Army and the nation and look forward with confidence to continued service.



JOE N. BALLARD  
Lieutenant General, USA  
Commanding

Office of History  
Headquarters, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
Alexandria, Virginia  
1998

## The History of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

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In the Corps of Engineers. From 1886 to 1891 Beach headed the Jacksonville District, and in 1897-98 he was the Engineer Commissioner on the governing board of the District of Columbia. In the Spanish-American War, he was Chief Engineer, 3d and 5th Army Corps. As Chief Engineer under Generals William Ludlow and Leonard Wood (1899-1901), and six years later as advisor to the Cuban Department of Public Works, he modernized Havana's sanitary system. As Commandant of the Army Engineer School (1901-03), Beach moved it from Willets Point, New York, to Washington Barracks, D.C. After his return from Cuba in 1909, he was Northeast Division Engineer and chairman of a board to raise the battleship *Maine*. Devoted to training young engineer officers in the art of war, General Beach's greatest responsibility came as Chief of Engineers during World War I in mobilizing and training some 300,000 engineer troops for a wide range of military engineering tasks. For this work he was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal. He retired October 31, 1919, and died September 24, 1933, in Washington, D.C.

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**Major General Lansing Hoskins Beach**  
*Chief of Engineers*  
 (February 10, 1920-June 18, 1924)

Born June 18, 1860, in Dubuque, Iowa, Lansing Beach graduated third in the Military Academy class of 1882 and was commissioned in the Corps of Engineers. He developed plans for the reconstruction of the Muskingum

River locks and dams soon after Ohio ceded the state-built improvements to the federal government in 1887. From 1894 to 1901 he worked on public improvements in the District of Columbia, serving as Engineer Commissioner there in 1898-1901. As Detroit District Engineer in 1901-05, he oversaw harbor improvements as far west as Duluth. Beach supervised improvements along the Louisiana Gulf coast in 1908-12 and in Baltimore in 1912-15. He also oversaw the entire Gulf Division in six of those seven years and the Central Division in 1915-20. In the latter capacity and as Chief of Engineers, he oversaw construction of the huge Wilson Locks and Dam on the Tennessee River. Beach also served on the Mississippi River Commission and the Board of Engineers for Rivers and Harbors. After his four-year tour as Chief of Engineers, he retired on June 18, 1924. After retirement, General Beach served as consulting engineer for various business interests in the United States and Mexico. He was



president, American Society of Military Engineers, and a member of the International Water Commission from 1924 to 1930. He died April 2, 1945, in Pasadena, California.

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**Major General Harry Taylor**  
*Chief of Engineers*  
 (June 19, 1924-June 26, 1926)

Born June 26, 1862, in Tilton, New Hampshire, Harry Taylor graduated from the Military Academy in 1884 and was commissioned in the Corps of

Engineers. After serving in engineer offices in Wilmington, North Carolina, and New York City, Taylor served from 1891 to 1900 on fortifications and river and harbor construction work in Oregon and Washington. Later he pursued similar work in New England and New York. Transferred to the Philippines, he supervised all fortification



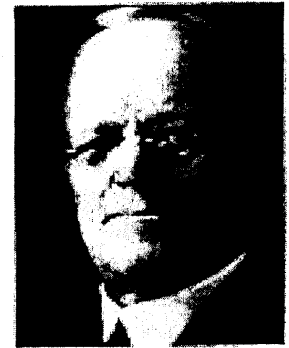
work there in 1904-05. Taylor was district engineer in New London, Connecticut, in 1906-11. He then headed the River and Harbor Division in the Office of the Chief of Engineers for five years. During World War I he served as Chief Engineer, American Expeditionary Forces in France (mid-1917 to mid-1918), and received the Distinguished Service Medal. He then served for six years as Assistant Chief of Engineers, before assuming the top office in the Corps. Wilson Dam was completed while he was Chief. He was a member of the French Legion of Honor. General Taylor retired June 26, 1926. He died January 27, 1930, in Washington, D.C., and was buried in Arlington National Cemetery.

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**Major General Edgar Judwin**  
*Chief of Engineers*  
 (June 27, 1926-August 7, 1929)

Born August 7, 1865, in Hopewale, Pennsylvania, Edgar Judwin graduated first in the Military Academy class of 1890 and was commissioned in the Corps of Engineers. He served with engineer troops in 1891-95 and was lieutenant colonel of the 3d U.S. Volunteer Engineers in the Spanish-American War.

After serving as district engineer at the expanding ports of Los Angeles and Galveston, he was selected by General Goethals as an assistant in the construction of the Panama Canal. Judwin served in 1911-16 in the Office of the Chief of Engineers focusing on bridge and road matters. Upon the United States' entry into World War I in 1917, he recruited the 15th Engineers, a railway construction regiment, and led it to France. He directed American construction and forestry work there for a year and received the Distinguished Service Medal. President Wilson appointed Judwin to investigate conditions in Poland in 1919. In 1922-24 Judwin headed the Corps' Charleston District and



Southeast Division. He then served two years as Assistant Chief of Engineers. As Chief of Engineers he sponsored the plan for Mississippi River flood control that was adopted by Congress in May 1928. Judwin retired as a lieutenant general, August 7, 1929. He died in Gorgas Hospital in the Canal Zone on March 2, 1931, and was buried in Arlington National Cemetery with full military honors.

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**Major General Lytle Brown**  
*Chief of Engineers*  
 (October 1, 1929-October 1, 1933)

Born November 22, 1872, in Nashville, Tennessee, Lytle Brown graduated fourth in the Military Academy class of

Los Angeles,  
*A View From Crown Hill*

This is Book Number 343

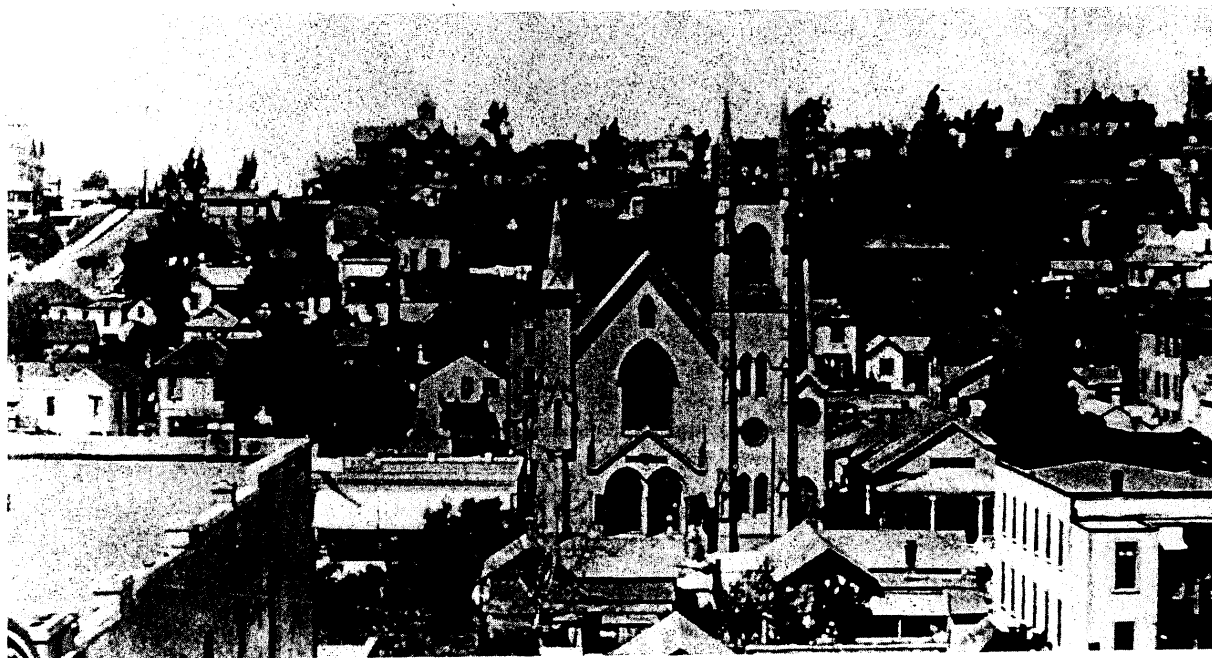
*of 500 Deluxe, Hardbound copies of*  
Los Angeles, A View From Crown Hill  
*numbered and signed by the Author.*

Virginia L. Comer

Witmer is another family name on Crown Hill which has a street commemorating its historical interest. It was after the 1870's when the Silver Lake Reservoir system had been completed that housing began to develop on Crown Hill. In that time period Henry Clayton Witmer and his brother, Joseph Myer Witmer owned approximately 600 acres of what was probably pastureland on the Hill. To insure sale of that land, a cable car was built to facilitate access. Andrew Hallidie, of San Francisco's cable car fame, was the builder of the Witmer cable car, which ran from Second and Spring Streets.

Agnes Witmer, a sister of Henry and Joseph, married Samuel Lewis who was president of the California Bank (now First Interstate Bank). As Mrs. Lewis, Agnes lived in the gracious Victorian across the street from her brothers' two houses on Miramar (See Chapter Five). A nephew of Agnes, Colonel Witmer, was the chief architect of the pentagon who raised his family on Crown Hill. The Colonel's son Peter, an architect living in San Francisco, is a Belmont High graduate and remembers visiting the Lewis home when the neighborhood was still attractive and middleclass residential.

*An 1880 view  
focusing on  
South Broadway  
of Grand Central  
Courtney Gr*



A former long-time resident of Crown Hill recalls the first view of her future home fifty years ago. She was delighted with the purity of air, the long views and the nearly all two-story houses of 19th century vintage. There were not many cars at the time on the Hill; travel was by foot, Pacific Electric's yellow carline or the big red cars for longer distances. One could still see horsedrawn carts selling groceries and making milk deliveries.