

ARTHUR AND KATHLEEN CONNELL HOUSE
1170 Signal Hill Road
Pebble Beach
Monterey County
California

HABS CA-2980
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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

ARTHUR AND KATHLEEN CONNELL HOUSE

HABS No. CA-2980

Location: 1170 Signal Hill Road, Pebble Beach, Monterey County, California

The house is located at latitude: 36.581618, longitude: -121.965731. This point was obtained in December 2023 using Google Earth (WGS84). There is no restriction on its release to the public.

Significance: Completed in 1958, the Arthur and Kathleen Connell House is an excellent example of the International Style within the Modern Movement in Pebble Beach, California, and it is representative of master architect Richard Neutra's mid-century residential work. The house exemplifies the rational design approach associated with Modern architecture, with thoughtful delineations between public and private areas that do not compromise its open, flowing spatial quality.¹

With its complex but controlled massing, the Connell House embodies Neutra's grand dual concern to design the house to meet the family's needs and also to exploit the meeting of land and water below. In this regard he succeeded admirably, with every room save the private den commanding a stunning view of land and sea from Cypress Point northward.

The property is one of thirteen of Neutra's twenty extant northern California projects retaining integrity.² Within that small number, a fraction of Neutra's canon, the property stands out for its stunning response to program and site. Lying long and low, hugging the earth, open to light and nature, the Connell house exhibits those signature elements associated with Neutra's residential architecture of the 1950s, including cantilevered roof slabs, crisp geometries, projecting beams, ribbon windows, and glass walls, culminating in what his biographer Thomas Hines identifies as the most essential character of his work, "the interpenetration of inner and outer space."³

Description: The single-family residence at 1170 Signal Hill Road was completed in 1958 and later enlarged by construction of a small addition at the southwest corner of the upper level in 1993. It is set into a slope on the west side of Signal Hill Road, a short, winding, street that extends steeply uphill from 17 Mile Drive. The house is set high above the Pacific Ocean, between Cypress Point Golf Course and Spyglass Hill Golf Course, in Pebble Beach. This unincorporated area of the Monterey Peninsula is also known as Del Monte Forest. The 2.13-acre parcel on

¹ The significance statement, physical description, and history of the Connell House have been excerpted from Anthony Kirk and Barbara Lamprecht, *Arthur and Kathleen Connell House, 1170 Signal Hill Road, Pebble Beach/Del Monte Forest, Monterey County, California, National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*, January 15, 2014. The excerpted text with accompanying footnotes has been lightly edited for the purposes of this HABS Documentation of the house.

² Survey of northern Californian properties by Miltiades Mandros, 2003. Barbara Lamprecht Collection.

³ Thomas S. Hines, *Richard Neutra and the Search for Modern Architecture*, 4th ed. (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 2005), 14.

which it is located is graded for a short distance to the west, then sweeps downhill. It is landscaped with a scattering of cypress trees to the north and east, some of which were planted by the original owners, Arthur and Kathleen Connell, for greater privacy. The sandy grounds also support a small eucalyptus tree and several bushes, as well as patches of ice plant.

The house was designed for the Connell family by master architect Richard J. Neutra, who conceived of it as a long, low arrangement of orthogonal volumes and planes with dramatic views of land and sea. The upper level is U-shaped in plan, organized around a central courtyard that is enclosed on the east side by a tall grape-stake fence. The smaller lower level, beneath the base of the U, is rectangular in plan. The house rests partly on a concrete perimeter foundation and partly on a concrete slab foundation. The unornamented stucco-clad walls are painted a range of soft tones of grey, olive, green, and white. Other contrasting materials add texture and visual interest. These materials include narrow tongue-and-groove siding, painted a flat gray, which forms the cladding on most of the south side, including three swing-up overhead garage doors. Masonite panels, also painted a flat gray, are set below two banks of windows. One bank extends along west side of the lower level and wraps the corner to the north side. The other runs along part of the east side of the upper floor, facing the courtyard. The flat slab roof is characterized by wide eave overhangs and broad fascia and is finished with tar-and-gravel. At the northwest corner of both levels, outrigger beams extend several feet beyond the building envelope.

The primary entrance to the house is on the north elevation, at the end of a concrete walk reached by stairs descending from Signal Hill Road. A tall double wood door is flanked on the west by a panel that, like the door, is faced with plywood mahogany veneer. It opens to a half-floor landing illuminated by a band of clerestory windows that wraps around to the west elevation, where angled wooden louvers shield the landing from the afternoon sun. The entry porch is enclosed by a railing and sheltered by a dramatic projection of the roof slab. A secondary entrance, with an exposed-aggregate concrete floor and a flush door, is located at the southwestern corner of the house, facing east, at the end of an asphalt driveway, where the western part of the building envelope projects some five feet past the garage doors.

Fenestration consists chiefly of long bands of windows, comprising both floor-to-ceiling glass walls and various combinations of large wood-frame single-light fixed windows and small aluminum-sash casement and double-hung windows. On the upper floor, a window wall runs along part of the west elevation and wraps around to the north side, flooding the living and dining rooms with light and providing wonderful views of the coastline and the Pacific Ocean. The window wall is composed of six sections on the west side, each featuring a large sheet of plate glass set in aluminum channels and separated by a wood glazing bar from a long horizontal fixed-light window and a small jalousie window below. A shorter glass wall, with large fixed sheets separated by louvered windows, runs along the north side of the courtyard and wraps around the east end of the wing. Two fixed windows on the north side of the lower floor provide natural illumination to the master bedroom. On the west, sliding glass doors open from two of the three bedrooms to a concrete patio.

Above the ground floor, a cantilevered balcony with a metal railing is shaded by the deep roof overhang and wraps around the corner to become a large private deck on the north side. The deck is accessed by a massive sliding glass door that is integral with the second-story window wall. On the south side of the north wing, at the top of the broad staircase leading from the half-floor entry hall, a sliding glass door opens to a glazed-tile terrace extending along the west side of the courtyard, which faces an ornamental garden enclosed by a grapestake fence. The roof slab reaches several feet over the courtyard on the west and north sides and projects more than six feet on the east end of the north wing, resting on a wooden brace set against the fence. A second sliding glass door opens to the terrace from the west side of the courtyard. At the northwest corner of the courtyard, a large brick grill for cooking is integral with the interior fireplace in the living room.

History:

Connell House

Based on archival letters and correspondence, the Connells first became aware of Richard Neutra while living in San Marino, a small Southern California city south of Pasadena, where Arthur Connell, a professional photographer, owned a camera store. While there is no known correspondence in the Connell House file at University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) prior to April 25, 1957, his daughter Alexandra Connell recounts her father's strong sense of aesthetics based on his many activities in photography, the arts, and architecture, leading to his strong admiration for Neutra's work. Though by the 1950s Neutra was internationally famous, the Connells decided to approach him, initially visiting his Silverlake home and practice.

Neutra was immersed in one of the most productive periods of his career, designing twenty-seven built projects between 1957, when the Connells contacted him, and 1958, when the family moved in. The single-family suburban dwellings designed during this period became known as Neutra's "Golden Era" of house design. Often naturally finished wood post-and-beam, these houses are more relaxed than his earlier work, characterized as a series of planes set into their surroundings in contrast to his earlier white interlocking volumes of the 1930s.

The Connells purchased the Pebble Beach lot for \$13,000. Their primary goal was to create a home that was so fitted to its sloping site that it almost disappeared into the land. In part, this objective also reflected a desire to have a minimum impact on the site, as Alexandra Connell noted.⁴ During this time Arthur Connell co-founded Friends of Photography with photographers Brett Weston (Edward Weston's son), Imogen Cunningham, and Ansel Adams, with whom Connell had taken master classes. Connell and Weston were close friends, often photographing and camping together, deepening the Connell family's deep affection for the rugged topography and seascape of Carmel and Monterey. Alexandra Connell recalls family conversations referring to Neutra's initial visit and his pleasure in the site.⁵

⁴ Alexandra Connell, daughter of Arthur and Kathleen Connell, telephone interview by Barbara Lamprecht, January 3, 2014.

⁵ Alexandra Connell was away at school at the time and could not confirm that the visit occurred.

Overlooking the Pacific Ocean and surrounded by two signature golf courses, the Connell House occupies a commanding site in Pebble Beach, Monterey County, lying near the historic 17 Mile Drive and facing the rugged Cypress Point and the ocean.⁶ Within the canon of Neutra's deluxe upscale dwellings, only a handful have enjoyed such sites so privileged in striking natural terrain.⁷ Here, the dwelling's Pebble Beach setting, with its dunes and wind-pruned trees, was a perfect fit for Neutra, whose background in landscape architecture sharpened his appreciation for special sites. The pivotal location is even more distinguished in that the nearby golf courses and 17 Mile Drive have been identified as potential cultural landscapes in the *Pebble Beach Historic Context Statement*.⁸ The Monterey Peninsula Country Club, just three miles to the east, has also been identified as eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources, further heightening the importance of the property's unique setting.

One of the chief tenets of Modernism is the Wrightian "breaking" of the boundary between indoors and out, making the setting, the physical environment of a historic property that illustrates the character of the place, important in considering a Modern property. In all of Neutra's work the role of the site and the setting is paramount. In his *Mysteries and Realities of the Site*, Neutra invariably intended to enhance qualities of human well-being by designing houses that melded with nature and the landscape. In many of his single-family free-standing houses, including the Connell House, he incorporated the experience of nature at a variety of scales—nature near, nature at mid-range, and nature distant—to animate interaction with the outdoors. Here, the 3,300-square-foot house itself is an important part, and only one part, of a larger composition.

Neutra's first gesture was to orient the house to face the spectacular view to the west. A garden courtyard, forming the hollow of the U-shaped upper level, is still bordered by the grape-stake fence. This courtyard acts as the most intimate part of the setting. Conceived in the manner of a Japanese rock garden, a Connell wish that included sand hand-raked by Arthur Connell, the garden also implemented the "nature near" quality Neutra desired.⁹ While the original plan called for a solid wall on the east, enclosing the garden, budgetary constraints forced the Connells to erect wood fencing, necessary to keep the deer out, they wrote Neutra.¹⁰ Mature juniper bushes and large boulders, characteristic of Neutra's settings, are also present. He consistently employed boulders as devices to contrast the smooth

⁶ The 17 Mile Drive opened in 1881.

⁷ These are Kaufmann Desert House, Palm Springs, 1947; Tremaine House, Santa Barbara, 1948; Maslon House, Rancho Mirage, 1963; Rentsch Villa, Wengen, Switzerland, 1964; Rice House, Richmond, Virginia, 1965, designed for Ambassador Walter Rice and his wife Inge; and Bucerius Villa, Lake Maggiore, Switzerland, 1966, designed for German politician and journalist Gerd Bucerius, a founding publisher of *Die Zeit*, Germany's leading newspaper. While four of these properties have been meticulously maintained or restored, the luxuriously appointed Maslon House, exquisitely sited the 17th hole between two fairways on the fabled Tamarisk Country Club golf course, was torn down one week after a permit was issued for its demolition. Neutra's genius in selecting or addressing sites sometimes proved fatal to his buildings.

⁸ Page and Turnbull, *Pebble Beach Historic Context Statement* (San Francisco: Page and Turnbull, August 29, 2013), 15, 50, 52.

⁹ Neutra office notes, September 1, 1958, Box 1660, UCLA.

¹⁰ The original grape-stake fencing was photographed by Arthur Connell; see also Connell's letter to Neutra office, October 31, 1957, Box 1660, UCLA.

machined finishes of the industrialized world with the rough textures found in nature. Boulders are features of residences such as the Tremaine and Kaufmann villas and small speculative dwellings such as the Hailey House, Los Angeles, 1959 as well as present in public buildings such as the former Garden Grove Community Church, Garden Grove, 1962 (now the Arboretum), and the Orange County Courthouse, Santa Ana, 1968. The extant staggered zig-zag entrance is a Neutra feature intended to decelerate a visitor's approach to the house, here exaggerated to six quarter-turns.¹¹

Neutra addressed the larger aspects of intermediate and distant nature tectonically, employing intermediate balconies and terraces, seen on the primary façade and the northwest corner of uninterrupted glass. These expansive gestures to the dunes, natural scrub, and coastline balanced the more diminutive, domestic gesture of the paved terrace on the east elevation that opens to the garden courtyard.¹² All of these transitional spaces were sheltered by broad overhangs and separated by conditioned space only by sliding glass walls alternating with low or full-height jalousie windows and fixed windows. Combined with planes of stucco that overlap and slide past one another, the effect is that of a floating pavilion nestled into the dunes.

One special feature, possibly unique in the Neutra canon, is the extant fireplace/barbeque. This custom brick element also helps to challenge conventional assumptions about indoors-outdoors. It straddles the division between the living room and garden courtyard. While such "Janus-faced" structures are quite common, here the construction added more elements to extinguish conventional boundaries. For example, while its west portion acts as a formal fireplace on the interior, the east portion is an outdoor barbeque and kitchen, including base cabinets and a countertop, originally Formica, topped by a glass wall.¹³ The effect extends kitchen functions into the outdoors.

The use of a soft, canvas-like material on the floor of the north deck was employed to make the outdoor "walking deck" on the north more inviting, yet another demonstration of Neutra's concern for physiology and the sense of touch. Another feature, the section of angled wood louvers on the east side of the roof deck, recalls similar devices elsewhere, including the Kaufmann Desert House and the Los Angeles Hall of Records.

In Neutra's view, houses were intended to be not inorganic machines but almost living beings alert to a client's life. The orientation of the house, spatial adjacencies, and day and artificial lighting all worked in concert to create an environment variously kinetic and serene. Thus, the property also exemplifies the architect's typical deep attention to the client's program, documented in an extensive archival record.¹⁴ This began with a regular Neutra request he called a

¹¹ This is a strategy Neutra gleaned from his visit to Japan in 1930, earlier established with his apprenticeship in 1921 with Gustav Amman.

¹² The original broom-finished concrete terrace has been replaced, although the footprint of the original appears to have been retained.

¹³ While the retention of the Formica countertop cannot be confirmed, the fireplace/barbeque is intact.

¹⁴ Connell House File, Box 1716, Roll 725, UCLA.

“client interrogation” that was fashioned as though he were a physician requiring a medical of a new patient. The Connells’ thirty-page response, including family hobbies and proposed room contents, furnishings, appliances, and storage systems, is the longest and most energetic response thus discovered in the UCLA archives. The correspondence ushered in an intense collaboration throughout design and construction.¹⁵

The Connells emerge as eminently pragmatic, always aware of the efficacy of a particular finish in this demanding seaside climate. Concerns such as tracking in sand, the efficiencies of paths of travel, the interests of the children, how many inches of storage space were allotted for Kathleen Connell’s vase collection, the acoustics of Arthur Connell’s den, and her concern for maintaining an economical path of travel even when ironing clothes, were then integrated into Neutra’s design.¹⁶ Such close attention to function was not only one of Neutra’s metiers but it was also typical of Modernist architects intent on improving a home’s functional qualities in postwar settings. Neutra’s response is manifest in the executed construction.¹⁷

The restricted palette and materials present throughout the property are characteristic of Neutra’s work, intended to demonstrate how inexpensive, standard, robust materials such as white-painted common brick, exterior-grade Masonite, and metal windows could be crafted to elegant, economical, and durable effect. Neutra selected the jalousie windows, heavily advertised and popular with many mid-century architects, because he trusted their efficacy in winds up to hurricane force. Because they didn’t work as promised, in part, perhaps, because the specified product was apparently substituted by another, to the disappointment of both architect and client, he later abandoned their use, just as many of his peers did.¹⁸ The presence of the full-height jalousies at the Connell House is unusual because Neutra rarely employed such tall units.

Neutra’s typical dualistic approach to axial orientation to enhance views is also evident. Here, the broad orthogonal north-south axis runs almost the entire length of the upper floor, accomplished by pulling walls and furnishings well away from the full-height windows on the west to achieve a sense of open, flowing space. Because the northwest corner is glass on both sides, Neutra was able to create a diagonal axis visible from many points in the house in order to open up the view dynamically. The airy quality of this upper floor contrasts with a private den for Mr. Connell at the east end of the north wing; a kitchen wing that can be closed off on the south; and a bedroom wing located on the lower floor. These contrasts in openness and enclosed shelter not only reflect the Connells’ wishes but also demonstrate Neutra’s desire to address primal physiological and psychological needs known today as “prospect and refuge” in environmental psychology.

Construction History

¹⁵ Connell House File, Box 1716, Roll 725, UCLA.

¹⁶ Connell House File, Box 1716, Roll 725, UCLA.

¹⁷ The earliest correspondence present in the Archives is dated April 25, 1967, Box 1660, UCLA.

¹⁸ John Blanton, telephone interview by Barbara Lamprecht, December 26, 2013.

Based on life style and programming needs defined by the Connells, Neutra began designing the house in late April 1957, with a final print set dated July 1957. Scores of pencil drawings in Neutra's hand, as well as continuous commentary and correspondence, testify to Neutra's complete command throughout the project.¹⁹ Lead project architect John Blanton and others in the busy office drew the design development and construction document drawings and served as liaison as required. Neutra also advised the Connells on general landscaping. He was concerned, for example, about the Connells' privacy from Signal Hill Road, especially the view of the "private patio and east windows... Mr. Neutra is very interested in contacting a very good nurseryman in this area to see what can be planted that will grow tall enough to alleviate this condition."²⁰ Landscape contractors Solomon and Hoy got the job, with principal George Hoy praising Neutra's "very distinguished work."²¹ The Connells' own sensitivity to the unique setting led to planting native and compatible plants, shrubs, and trees, intended to harmonize with existing landscape. According to Neutra office site visit notes, the Connells intended to "plant some cypress trees near the entry."²² Connell planted several cypress trees from seed.²³

The building was constructed by the Monterey-based general contractor Harold C. Geyer, with the Neutra office providing commentary, site visits, and suggestions on a frequent and regular basis. The Connells selected subdued tones of grey-greens, sand, and off-white for the house to further nestle the house into the landscape. As was typical with many Neutra houses, especially those away from Southern California, some minor alterations to the plans occurred during construction. These include flipping the casement windows from one side of the regularly spaced posts on the west elevation to the other side of the post (although the rhythm alternating casement and fixed windows was retained) and fire elimination of the exterior light strip on the west elevation in favor of spot lights.²⁴ The Connells also decided against Neutra's specification for a steel "Slidemaster" door in favor of an aluminum Arcadia door because of their concern for corrosion in this oceanside climate, although their framing, spacing, and openings remained as Neutra designed them. Near the end of August 1958, the Connells took

¹⁹ These preliminary sketches include approximately twelve perspective drawings, ten sketches of stepped approaches and topographical studies, and eight floor plans. Connell House File, Box 1716, Roll 725, Richard and Dion Neutra Papers, Collection 1179, Charles E. Young Research Library, Special Collections, University of California, Los Angeles (hereafter Box 1716, Roll 725, UCLA).

²⁰ Richard Neutra via George Blanton to Arthur and Kathleen Connell, June 3, 1957, Box 1716, UCLA.

²¹ George Hoy to Richard Neutra, Connell House File, Box 1660, Richard and Dion Neutra Papers, Collection 1179, Charles E. Young Research Library, Special Collections, University of California, Los Angeles (hereafter Box 1660, UCLA).

²² "Record of Supervision Visits," Visit No. 5, Sept. 1, 1958, Box 1660, UCLA.

²³ Connell House File, Box 1716, Roll 725, UCLA.

²⁴ For budget reasons the Connells also elected to forego exterior light strips at the edge of overhangs, another typical Neutra feature intended to evenly light exterior balconies. Richard Neutra to Arthur and Kathleen Connell, October 29, 1957, and March 12, 1958; Arthur Connell to John Blanton, March 14, 1958, Box 1660, UCLA. Several other Neutra clients made the same decision, such as Herbert Kronish for his lavishly appointed home in Beverly Hills, constructed 1955.

possession of the house, stating enthusiastically that they “would not change one stick.”²⁵ According to daughter Alexandra Connell, the family changed nothing.

The Connell House was featured in a four-page spread in *World and Dwelling*, a book of selected Neutra houses published in Germany in 1962.²⁶ Alexandra Connell states that the family loved living in the house, the “uninterrupted views, and the [visual] exposure to the weather.” The Connells finally sold their home when their daughters grew up and moved away, and they were spending time in Fiji, where for decades they nurtured a school they had established.

Alterations

As originally constructed, the house was a low one- and two-story residence. The lines and massing remain essentially unchanged from construction. In 1978 the kitchen, situated next to the dining room on the upper floor, was remodeled for property owners Clifford and Patricia Mettler. The Mettlers had acquired the property in September 1975 from William and Audrey Mennan, who purchased it from the Connells in April 1973. During the course of the work, the four casement-combination windows on the west side of the kitchen and adjoining utility rooms were possibly replaced. The original plans from Neutra’s office show four windows, each a single-light casement to the south of a single fixed-light window. A hand-written note on the back of a snapshot of construction progress, dated July 7, 1958, in the Connell House file at UCLA, observes that the “complete window frames” had been approved by Arthur Connell, even though “casement windows on wrong side of posts.”²⁷ It may well be, as such, that though the handles to the casements appear to have been replaced, the windows are original. The work does not compromise the integrity of the house.

The residence originally featured a service yard at the southwest corner of the upper level, enclosed on the east and north by the house itself, and on the west by a 19'-long wing wall that extended south from the west side of the building envelope. An early floor-plan sketch from Neutra’s office shows the service yard marked as such and annotated, in parentheses, as “Future Maid’s Room.”²⁸ In 1992 the Carmel architect Edward M. Hicks designed a plan to enclose the yard and create 220-square-foot “studio addition” for William and Audrey Mettler. The addition, constructed the following year, extended the house approximately five feet beyond the garage wall and slightly more than a foot beyond end of the wing wall and retained all existing walls, as well as the old doorway at the east end of the north side of the former service yard, which provided passage between the studio and the rest of the house. An entry door was set in the wall perpendicular to the garage, while nearly the entire southern exposure of the studio was filled by a large single-light fixed window and a small adjoining single-light casement. From the early stages of planning, Neutra had anticipated the construction of a room where the service yard stood. The studio is tucked into the corner of a secondary elevation and the effect on the integrity of the house is minor.

²⁵ Richard Neutra to Arthur and Kathleen Connell, October 29, 1957, and March 12, 1958; Arthur Connell to John Blanton, March 14, 1958, Box 1660, UCLA.

²⁶ Richard Neutra, *World and Dwelling* (Stuttgart: Verlagsanstalt Alexander Koch, GmbH, 1962), 104-107.

²⁷ Notation by John Blanton on the back of snapshot of construction progress, Box 1660, UCLA.

²⁸ Connell House floor plan, Box 1660, UCLA.

Quite likely at the same time as the addition was built, alterations were made to the band of windows on the lower level of the west elevation and to the large fixed lights on the upper level of the same side. As built, the house contained seven sets of louvered windows on the lower floor, each located to the south of a sliding door or fixed light. A 1958 photograph shows a long ribbon of glass composed of two sliding doors, six fixed windows—four of them above Masonite panels and three of them floor to ceiling—and seven jalousies. Presumably in 1993, when the addition was built, all of the louvered windows were removed. Three of the jalousies—one above a Masonite panel and two floor to ceiling—were replaced with narrow double-hung and casement windows, the work retaining the vertical window bar between fixed and operable lights. Four of the louvers were replaced by large fixed windows that took the place of a smaller fixed light and an adjoining jalousie, interrupting the pleasing rhythm of the windows. It was likely at this time that two of the four Masonite panels, at the northern end of the west elevation, were also replaced and the large fixed-glass windows on the upper floor set into aluminum channels. Although the latter work had no meaningful effect on integrity, the replacement of the Masonite panels and jalousie windows compromised Richard Neutra's original concept of the house. These alterations are visible to a viewer only from the private area below, for a short distance to the west of the bedrooms, but the project reduced the integrity of the building. In 2008, as many as three or four cypress trees planted by the Connells were removed.

The Connell house is in its original location, and available evidence suggests that the setting is much the same as it was in the late 1950s, when the building site and surrounding land were largely characterized by sand and scrubby ground cover. The addition—tucked away on a secondary elevation, next to the garage and not readily seen by the public—changed the design of the house, but only minimally, eliminating a small semi-enclosed yard while increasing the size of the upper floor by slightly more than eight percent. The work left all of the original exterior walls intact, as well as the doorway leading into the house. The addition, anticipated by Neutra when the house was in the planning phase, was artfully designed not to obscure any character-defining features, and to be both compatible with the original building and —by virtue of the distinct fenestration and the darker tonality of the stucco—clearly differentiated. The alterations to the original window system on the west side of the lower floor of the house were less successful. This work retained the size, shape and pattern of some of the windows, but the elimination of the jalousies led to the introduction of casements and double-hung windows and increased the size of four of the fixed windows. Nonetheless, the design of the Connell house remains intact in its overall conception and in all but a relatively few details. With the exception of some of the windows, the original materials are present, and the original workmanship is evident. Whether viewed from Signal Hill Road or from the slope below, the house projects the same striking feeling of modernity as when the Connell family took possession of it.

Richard J. Neutra

Born in Vienna, Austria, Richard Joseph Neutra (1892-1970) graduated summa cum laude from the Technical Institute (University), Vienna. He also attended the informal school founded in 1912 by the radical writer and architect Adolf Loos before serving with the Austro-Hungarian Empire forces in World War I. Like his

early friend and colleague Rudolf M. Schindler, Neutra was deeply influenced by the 1910-1911 European publication of Frank Lloyd Wright's *Wasmuth Portfolios*, a watershed manifesto in twentieth-century architectural history. The publication illuminated Wright's radical conception of the "breaking of the [conventional] box" through more open plans and an emphasis on the extended low horizontal line. Both younger architects absorbed and reinterpreted Wright's strategies, whose uninterrupted diagonal sightlines into nature were afforded by long banks of windows and corner windows. Such configurations became common in the work of many of the European Modernists and later in the architecture of the "Second Generation" Modernist architects of Southern California. They were a standard strategy in many Neutra designs, and present at one of the Connell House's most important features, the southwest corner of full-height glass.

Loos, another primary influence, advocated a return to the qualities of humility, anonymity, and what he termed "lastingness," or durability, in building. Rejecting historicism, Loos argued for a sober, forthright architecture that rejected stylish innovations. These views anchored Neutra's belief that great architecture did not have to be a series of novel designs but could evolve detail by detail. In addition, because he established predictable methods, construction costs decreased and allowed the architect to focus on site and user needs as he did at the Connell House.

Despite his broad education, because of the economy and lack of opportunities at the end of World War I, Neutra's first job was assisting the Swiss landscape architect, botanist, and gardener Gustav Ammann. Ammann, now considered an important figure in modern European landscape theory, promoted the role of nature and landscape as a necessary component in any architectural setting. Neutra's early income in Germany relied on small garden and landscape work. In these early designs, he specified plant types, budgets, and maintenance schedules. Beginning in the 1930s, Neutra typically used more general instructions on the height of plant or tree, scale of foliage, and plant placement. Later in his career, Neutra worked with important landscape architects such as Garrett Eckbo and Roberto Burle Marx, in which their designs, incorporating curves and other geometries, offset Neutra's orthogonal forms.

Neutra immigrated to America in 1923. He was hired as a draftsman by the large Chicago firm, Holabird and Roche, where he mastered steel skyscraper framing and later met another hero, architect, and critic Louis Sullivan. Beginning in the fall of 1924, Neutra worked for Wright in his atelier Taliesin in Spring Green, Wisconsin, before moving in early 1925 to Los Angeles, where his fellow Austrian, Schindler, was based. The city became Neutra's permanent home. He worked for Wright before teaming up with Schindler, who, with Neutra, was responsible for introducing European Modernism to the West Coast.

Apart from his European and American influences, Neutra's round-the-world tour in 1930 included Japan. The visit was partially facilitated by the Japanese architects he met at Taliesin. Neutra's stay there was a turning point, as he later wrote in the foreword to a book on Japanese gardens. The well-proportioned use of asymmetry and the consistent use of a standard palette of materials for a wide range of users that he witnessed there confirmed his belief in his own approach.

Additionally, the fundamental integration of gardens, texture, landscape, views, and architecture that he admired in Japan strengthened his conviction that nature or nature's qualities were indispensable in architecture.²⁹ These qualities are abundantly demonstrated at the Connell House.

Neutra's renown in residential architecture rests on his command of proportion and his skillful synthesis of overlapping lines and planes of stucco, steel, and glass that extend into the surrounding landscape. The Lovell Health House, Los Angeles, 1929, established his international fame. Set high in the Hollywood Hills, the house was a superb expression of the International Style and the first entirely steel-frame residence constructed in the United States. When he could find no general contractor willing to take on such a radical project, harnessing his early experience in Chicago, Neutra himself took on the challenging project, proving his expertise in innovative methods in construction. Seven years later in the catalogue to the landmark 1932 "Modern Architecture" exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City, Neutra was hailed as "the leading modern architect of the West Coast."³⁰ Although chiefly associated with Southern California, he began working in the San Francisco Bay Area as early as 1935, building a clapboard house on Twin Peaks. Two years later he designed the boxy redwood-clad Darling house on Woodland Avenue in San Francisco, which adapted the minimalist architectural aesthetic of 1920s and 1930s Europe to regional conditions, placing it within the woody anti-urban Bay Area Tradition.

Neutra went on to design approximately 400 projects, including tract developments, National Park Service visitor centers, churches, colleges, schools, public buildings, defense housing, and villas in Germany, Italy, and Switzerland. Although some have been demolished, especially those on exceptional sites, a number of properties are now designated historic resources in the United States as well as protected internationally, including the early 1960s Bewobau Housing Development in Germany, and the former U.S. Embassy, Karachi, Pakistan, 1960, designed with his partner in large civic ventures, Robert E. Alexander, and declared a historic monument. Although primarily known for his houses, Neutra's achievements range from innovative construction techniques to his radical reconceptualization of American schools with strategies that became permanent hallmarks in educational settings here and abroad. Winner of numerous honorary doctorates and prizes, he earned the American Institute of Architects' Gold Medal posthumously in 1977.

While Neutra's architecture has always been acclaimed for its sleek forms, in the last few years his work and writings have become the focus for renewed interest, demonstrated in international exhibitions, popular articles, and new scholarly research. Much of this new interest is based on his prescient study of the role of human physiology and psychology in architecture, knowledge he incorporated into residential designs. Neutra grounded his architecture on his immersion in readings

²⁹ See Barbara Lamprecht, "Neutra in Japan, 1930, to his European Audiences and Southern California Work," *Southern California Quarterly* 92 (Fall 2010): 215–42; and Richard Neutra, Foreword, *Japanese Gardens for Today*, by David H. Engel, and (Rutland, Vermont: Charles E. Tuttle, 1959), xii, xiii.

³⁰ Alfred H. Barr, Foreword to *Modern Architecture* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1932), quoted in Hines, Richard Neutra, 125.

in emerging nineteenth- and new twentieth-century disciplines, including evolutionary biology, medicine, Gestalt aesthetics, and other sciences. Collectively, his readings and personal acquaintance with many of the authors of the works he read convinced Neutra that an alert contact with nature, or the qualities of nature, were critical to any successful human setting. His knowledge of the body's physical, sensory, and cognitive systems underscored his emphasis on creating environments—the building and its immediate and larger setting— that engaged the senses, Neutra set forth his theory in his 1954 book, *Survival Through Design*.

Additionally, Neutra used his knowledge of Gestalt aesthetics, refined during his winter teaching tenure at the Bauhaus in 1930, to “stretch space.” Devices such as extended balconies, mirrors, and transparent glass, present in the Connell House, facilitated such “stretching,” altering the perception of space to create a feeling of expansiveness. Neutra put these tools to use in the designs of small houses and multi-family designs. Apart from the new scholarly interest noted above, contemporary interest in environmentally responsible building, have generated interest for architects and planners in the sustainability and “green building” aspects of Neutra’s designs.

The Connell House embodies these ideas and ideals. It physically testifies to a family’s commitment to living modestly and gracefully on the land and in hiring an architect eminently suited to accomplish that task. Today, the house is still a prescient work of architecture that demonstrates Neutra’s convictions and establishes a template for contemporary and future architects in how to design with the land.

Modern Architecture in Pebble Beach

Although the history of modern architecture in Pebble Beach and adjoining communities on and about the Monterey Peninsula has yet to be written, a broad outline can be traced with some confidence. In 1933 the distinguished Modern architect William Wurster, dean of the University of California, Berkeley, from 1950 to 1963 and one of the principal figures associated with the Bay Area Tradition, designed a Carmel house for E. C. Converse. The abstract design reinterpreted features of the then popular Colonial Revival style, for which Wurster received an Honor Award from the northern California Chapter of the American Institute of Architects. Far removed from the hard-edge International Style associated with Neutra and its reinterpretation by his countryman Rudolph Schindler, the Converse house nonetheless embodied a new architectural sensibility associated with the Bay Area, a “gentle modernism,” to use the evocative phrase of the architectural historian David Gebhard.³¹

Other expressions of this design outlook arose in Carmel prior to World War II, including the Sand and Sea complex, comprising five houses and a garage with a studio above, at the corner of San Antonio Avenue and 4th Street. This development was the work of Jon Konigshofer, a prominent Carmel designer and

³¹ David Gebhard, “William Wurster and His California Contemporaries: The Idea of Regionalism and Soft Modernism,” in Marc Treib, ed., *An Everyday Modernism: The Houses of William Wurster* (San Francisco: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; and Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 169.

builder who played a large role in bringing West Coast regionalism and the Bay Area Tradition to his adopted hometown and the surrounding area. His design was a handsome example of “everyday modernism,” interpreted as that mediation between the stark rationalism of the International Style and the regional climate, conditions, and concerns that animated the architecture of other figures associated with the Bay Area Tradition who worked in and about the Monterey Peninsula, including Gardner Dailey, Henry Hill, and Clarence Tantau. Within this context, it should be noted that in 1939 Neutra himself produced a handsome redwood-clad house for William and Alice Davey (now significantly altered) on Jacks Peak, outside Monterey, that was thoughtfully integrated into the surrounding landscape of grassland and Monterey pines.

In contrast to Carmel and Monterey, Pebble Beach did not see the introduction of Modernism until some years after World War II, though the lack of a comprehensive local architectural history, together with the difficulty of viewing many of the community’s residences from public thoroughfares, makes a definitive assertion on this point impossible.³² In 1940 Frank Lloyd Wright designed a spacious house for John Nesbitt on 17 Mile Drive, but it was never constructed. Seven or eight years later Jon Konigsberger designed a notable Modern residence for the Robert Buckner family in Pebble Beach, which was one of fifty-three houses featured in the 1949 San Francisco Museum of Art exhibition, “Domestic Architecture of the San Francisco Bay Region.” In 1952 he designed a Modern house for Macdonald and Margaret Booze on Signal Hill Road, just down the street from where Neutra would build. Throughout the mid-century a significant number of other architects associated with Mid-Century Modernism produced handsome homes in Pebble Beach. Within this context, the Connell House is clearly significant as an extremely important example of residential design, exemplifying both the rational approach associated with Modern architecture generally and the character-defining features associated with the International Style specifically.

Richard Neutra’s hundreds of award-winning properties are primarily found in Southern California. As an accomplished and rare example of the work of this master architect in northern California, with a superb setting in which Neutra could fully realize his beliefs about human well-being, the Connell House is unequivocally an important example of the International Style, perfectly illustrating this design aesthetic within the context of the development of Modern architecture in Pebble Beach.

³² The relatively late appearance of Modernist architecture in Pebble Beach can be traced to the building restrictions Del Monte Properties Company introduced into its real estate deeds in the 1920s. The restrictions, as the company took pains to explain to prospective purchasers, were intended to create communities “harmonious within themselves” and to “prevent the erection of undesirable and unharmonious buildings that would depreciate those of their neighbors.” The type of residential design Del Monte Properties believed “best suited” to the area was “founded on the traditions” brought to California “by the first Spanish settlers. It has the general characteristics of the architecture of those countries along the north shores of the Mediterranean from Gibraltar [sic] to the Dardanelles, where the climate and topography are so similar to ours.” Although the restrictions were relaxed as the Depression wore on, as late as 1940 *Fortune* magazine, reported that when submitting architectural plans for approval, “it will be better, no matter what the size of your purse, if you plan a Spanish-Colonial (Monterey) type of house.” Del Monte Properties Company, *Bulletin*, December 1, 1927, Pebble Beach Company Archives, Pebble Beach; “Del Monte,” *Fortune* 21 (January 1940): 106.

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Historians: Erica Schultz, *Forget Me Not History*, 2024.
Sheila McElroy, *Center for Creative Land Recycling*, 2024

Project Information: In 2014, the Connell House was listed in both the National Register of Historic Places and California Register of Historical Resources.³³ As such, the building met the definition of a historical resource under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) for the Signal Hill LLC Combined Development Permit concluded that the demolition of the building would result in a significant and unavoidable impact. The FEIR required the completion of Mitigation Measure (MM) CUL-1a, which entails documenting the

³³ Carol Roland-Nawi, California State Historic Preservation Officer, letter to Craig Spencer, Associate Planner, County of Monterey, RE: Connell Arthur and Kathleen House, Determination of Eligibility, National Register of Historic Places, July 11, 2014.

Connell House to the National Park Service's Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) standards prior to project implementation.³⁴

In September 2023, Forget Me Not History prepared the HABS documentation for the Connell House. The documentation includes this report incorporating the significance statement, physical description, and history of the Connell House from the 2014 National Register of Historic Places Registration Form and copies of select drawings, plans, and photographs of the Connell House prepared by Richard Neutra in 1957. Copies of the HABS documentation for the Connell House have also been submitted to the Pebble Beach Company Lagorio Archives; Monterey Public Library (California Room); Monterey County Historical Society; Richard Neutra archives at the UCLA Charles E. Young Research Library; Syracuse University Library; Columbia University Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library; and the Northwest Information Center at Sonoma State University, Rohnert Park.

³⁴ SWCA Environmental Consultants, "Signal Hill LLC Combined Development Permit, Final Environmental Impact Report," prepared for County of Monterey Housing and Community Development, October 2022, SCH No. 2015021054.

Supplemental Information

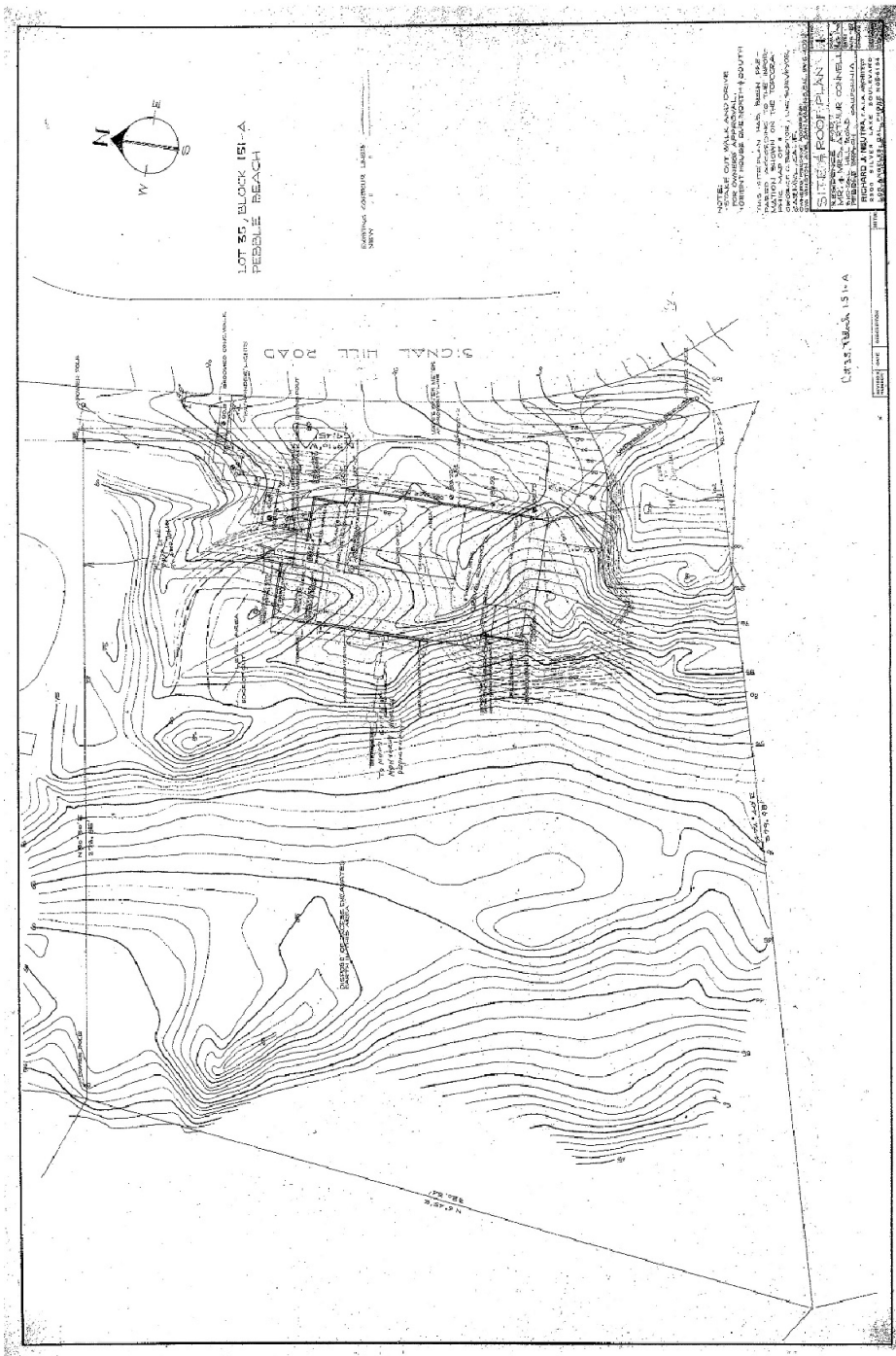


Fig. 1. Site & Roof Plan. Richard J. Neutra, F.A.I.A. Architect, 1957. Reproduced here with the permission of Raymond Richard Neutra, President of the Neutra Institute for Survival Through Design. Original held in the Richard and Dion Neutra Papers, University of California Los Angeles Library, Los Angeles, California. Not for further reproduction.

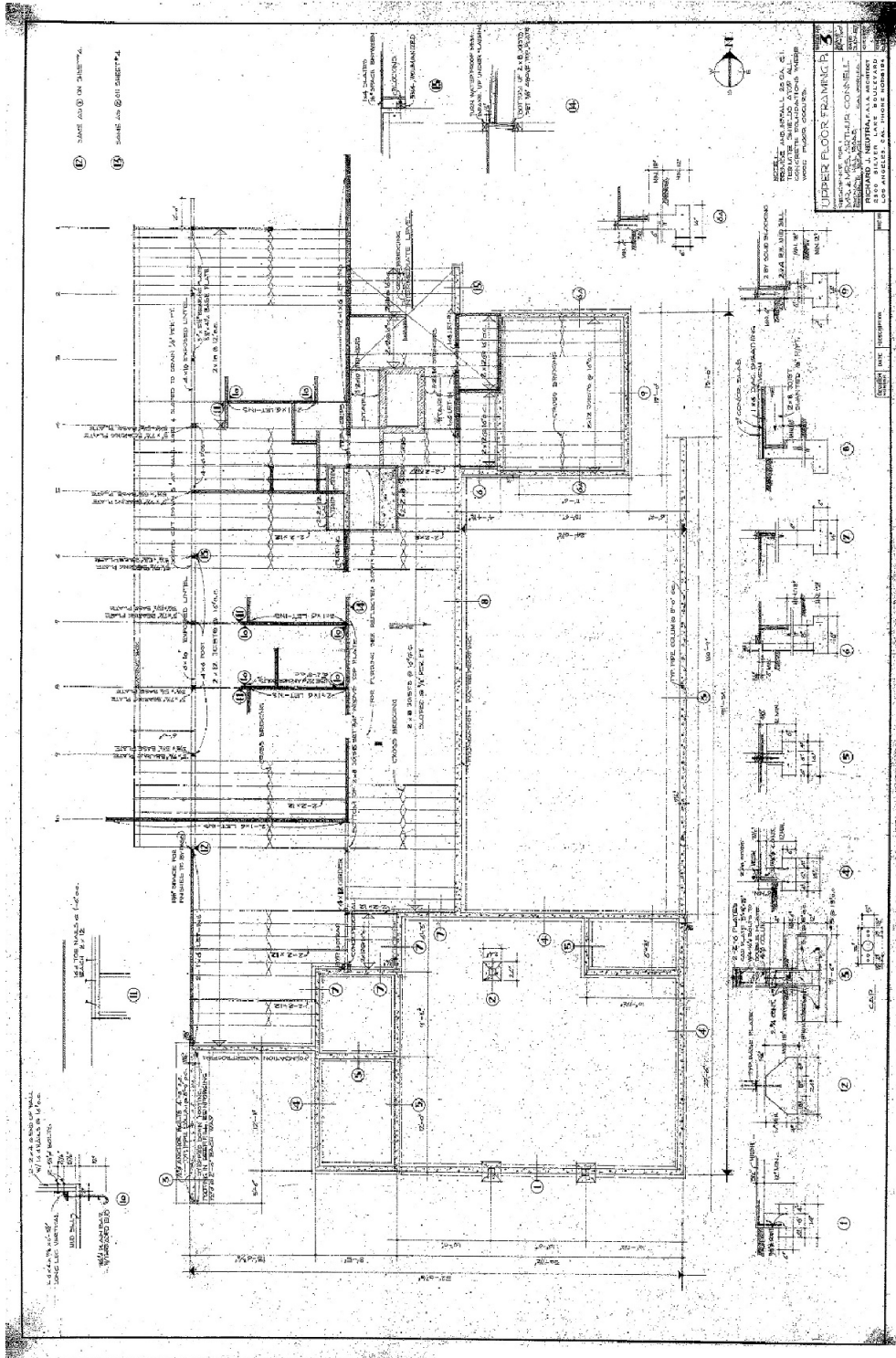


Fig. 2. Upper Framing Plan. Richard J. Neutra, F.A.I.A. Architect, 1957. Reproduced here with the permission of Raymond Richard Neutra, President of the Neutra Institute for Survival Through Design. Original held in the Richard and Dion Neutra Papers, University of California Los Angeles Library, Los Angeles, California. Not for further reproduction.

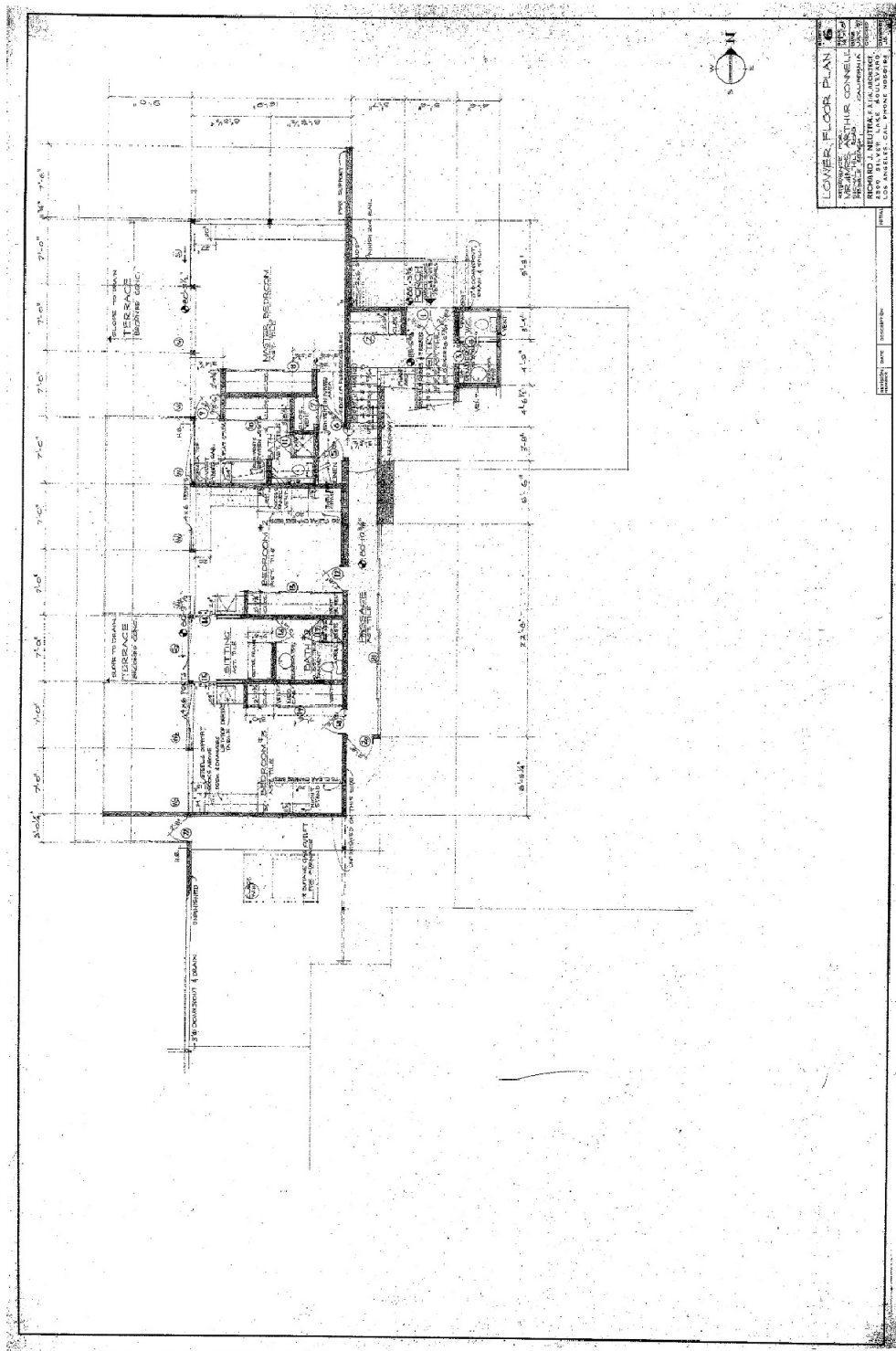


Fig. 3. Lower Floor Plan. By Richard J. Neutra, F.A.I.A. Architect, 1957. Reproduced here with the permission of Raymond Richard Neutra, President of the Neutra Institute for Survival Through Design. Original held in the Richard and Dion Neutra Papers, University of California Los Angeles Library, Los Angeles, California. Not for further reproduction.

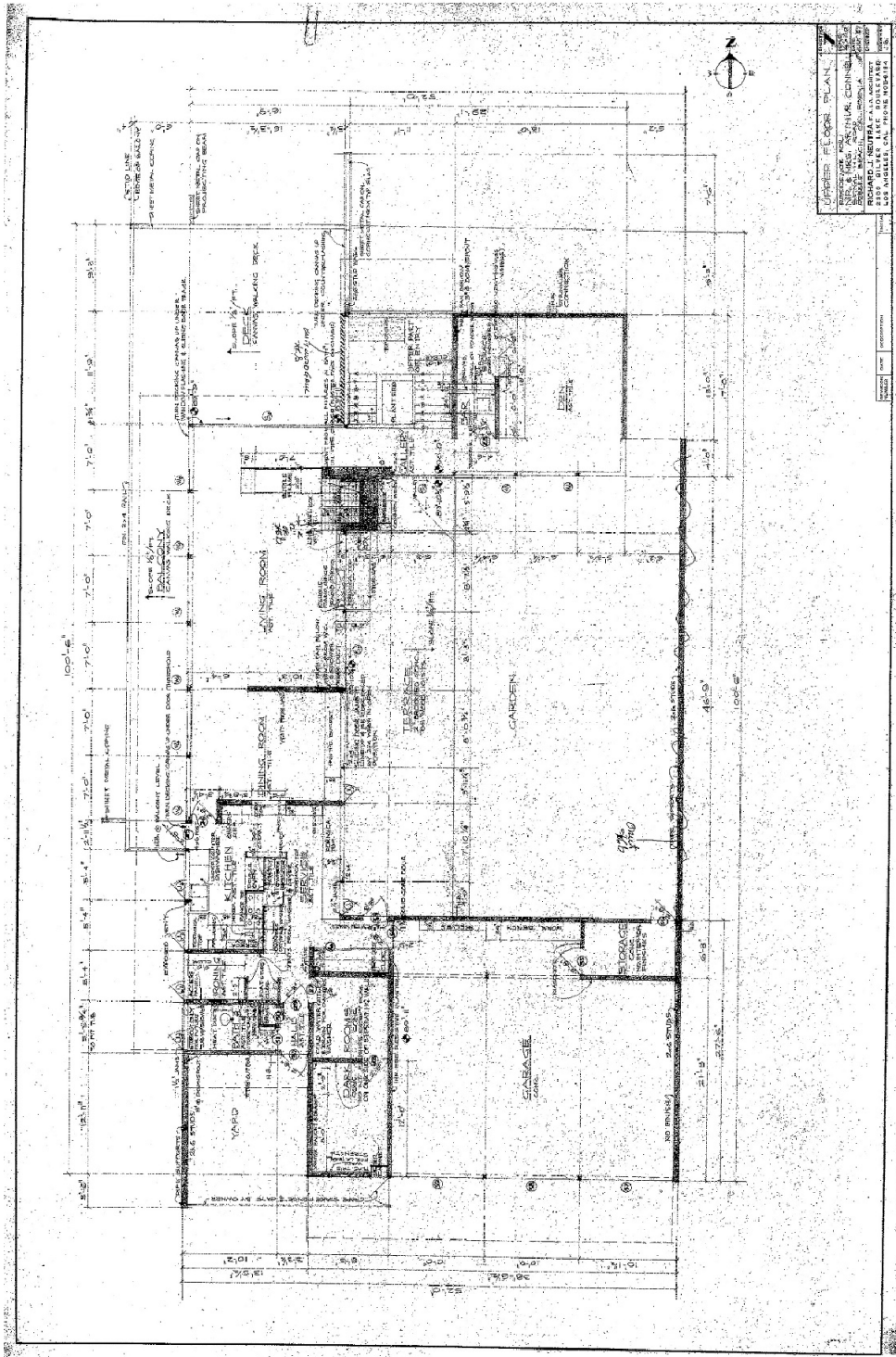


Fig. 4. Upper Floor Plan. By Richard J. Neutra, F.A.I.A. Architect, 1957. Reproduced here with the permission of Raymond Richard Neutra, President of the Neutra Institute for Survival Through Design. Original held in the Richard and Dion Neutra Papers, University of California Los Angeles Library, Los Angeles, California. Not for further reproduction.

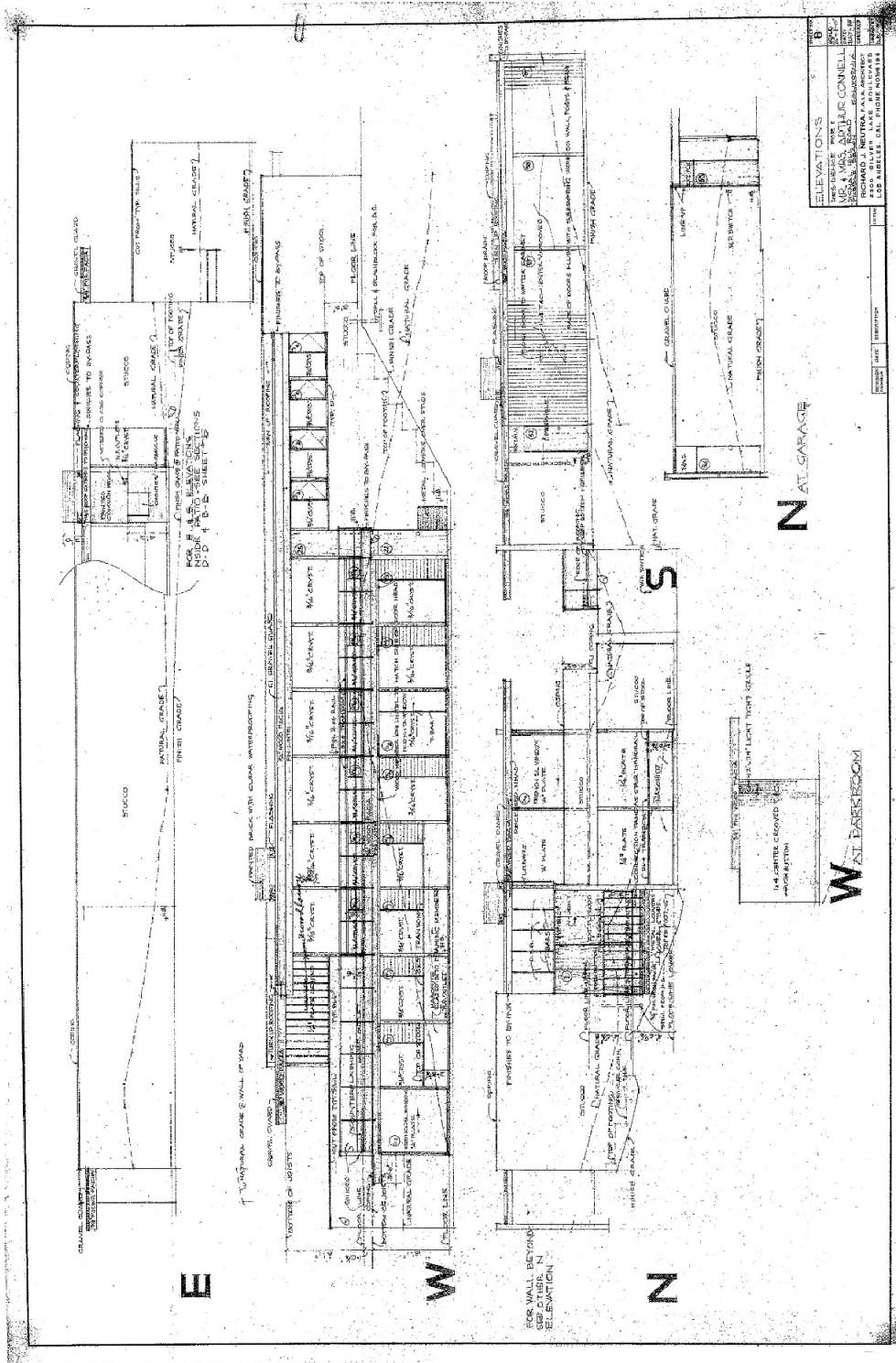


Fig. 5. Elevations. By Richard J. Neutra, F.A.I.A. Architect, 1957. Reproduced here with the permission of Raymond Richard Neutra, President of the Neutra Institute for Survival Through Design. Original held in the Richard and Dion Neutra Papers, University of California Los Angeles Library, Los Angeles, California. Not for further reproduction.



Fig. 6. Site View. Arthur Connell, 1957. Reproduced here with the permission of Raymond Richard Neutra, President of the Neutra Institute for Survival Through Design. Original held in the Richard and Dion Neutra Papers, University of California Los Angeles Library, Los Angeles, California. Not for further reproduction.



Fig. 7. Living Room. Arthur Connell, 1957. Reproduced here with the permission of Raymond Richard Neutra, President of the Neutra Institute for Survival Through Design. Original held in the Richard and Dion Neutra Papers, University of California Los Angeles Library, Los Angeles, California. Not for further reproduction.



Fig. 8. Courtyard. Arthur Connell, 1957. Reproduced here with the permission of Raymond Richard Neutra, President of the Neutra Institute for Survival Through Design. Original held in the Richard and Dion Neutra Papers, University of California Los Angeles Library, Los Angeles, California. Not for further reproduction.



Fig. 9. Front. Arthur Connell, 1957. Reproduced here with the permission of Raymond Richard Neutra, President of the Neutra Institute for Survival Through Design. Original held in the Richard and Dion Neutra Papers, University of California Los Angeles Library, Los Angeles, California. Not for further reproduction.



Fig 10. Main View. Arthur Connell, 1957. Reproduced here with the permission of Raymond Richard Neutra, President of the Neutra Institute for Survival Through Design. Original held in the Richard and Dion Neutra Papers, University of California Los Angeles Library, Los Angeles, California. Not for further reproduction.

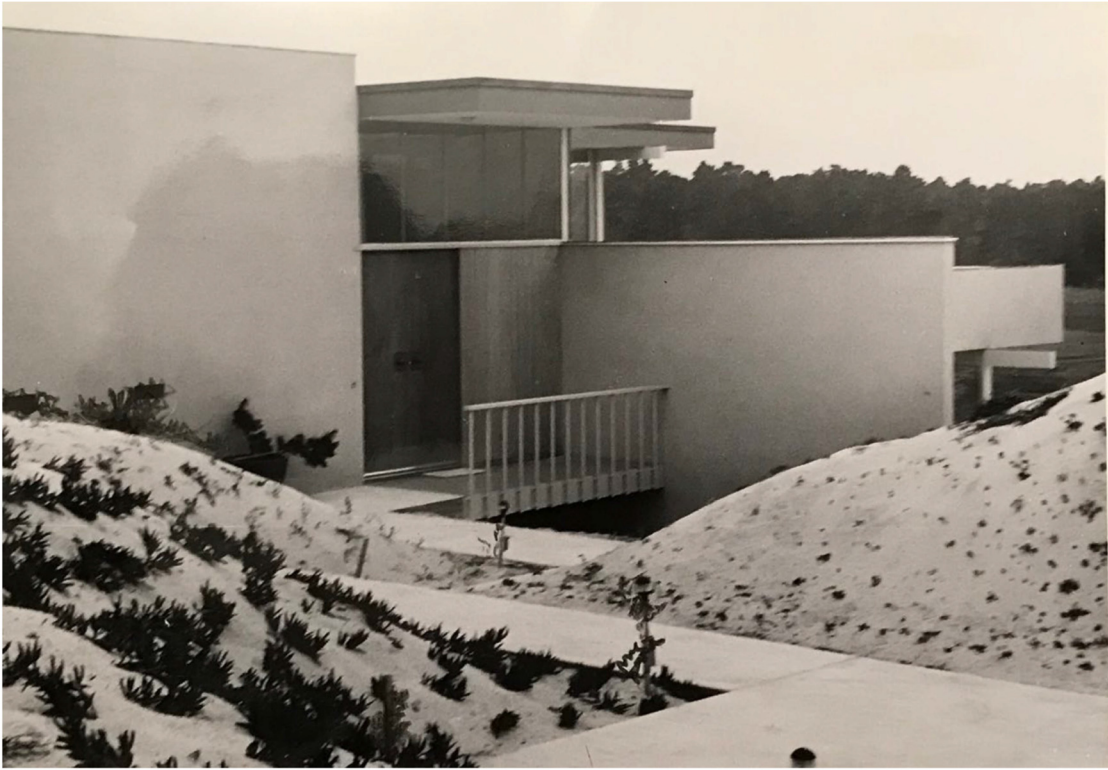


Fig. 11. Front Entrance. Arthur Connell, 1957. Reproduced here with the permission of Raymond Richard Neutra, President of the Neutra Institute for Survival Through Design. Original held in the Richard and Dion Neutra Papers, University of California Los Angeles Library, Los Angeles, California. Not for further reproduction.



Fig. 12. Courtyard. Massy Mehdipour, 2023.



Fig. 13. Courtyard Den. Massy Mehdipour, 2023.



Fig. 14. Courtyard. Massy Mehdipour, 2023.



Fig. 15. Living Room. Massy Mehdipour, 2023.



Fig. 16. Kitchen. Massy Mehdipour, 2023.



Fig. 17. Garage. Massy Mehdipour, 2023.