

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

DRAFT

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Palm Springs Aerial Tramway Mountain Station

Other names/site number: Palm Springs Aerial Tramway Alpine Station

Name of related multiple property listing:
The Architecture of E. Stewart Williams

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

Street & number: _____

City or town: Idyllwild State: CA County: Riverside

Not For Publication: Vicinity:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

national statewide local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

A B C D

<p>_____ Signature of certifying official/Title:</p>	<p>_____ Date</p>
<p>_____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p>	

<p>In my opinion, the property <u>meets</u> <u>does not meet</u> the National Register criteria.</p>	
<p>_____ Signature of commenting official:</p>	<p>_____ Date</p>
<p>_____ Title : State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p>	

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4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RECREATION AND CULTURE

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RECREATION AND CULTURE

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: METAL:steel, WOOD, CONCRETE, GLASS

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The Palm Springs Aerial Tramway Mountain Station is located at an elevation of 8,516 feet within the boundaries of Mt. San Jacinto State Park. It is the upper portion of a tram system inaugurated in 1963. The mountain station is based on a Swiss chalet, with angled wings with sloping roofs and large windows to take in views. The building with its wings and outdoor terraces is fitted to the topography. The lower base of the building, including the tower that contains the tram's mechanical equipment and receives the tramway cars, is constructed of reinforced concrete. The portion of the building above the concrete base is made primarily of wood and glass. The building is in excellent condition exhibiting sufficient historic and architectural integrity to convey its significance.

Narrative Description

The Palm Springs Aerial Tramway Mountain Station is based on the concept of a Swiss chalet. Y-shaped in plan, the building is perched on the edge of Mt. San Jacinto with its primary elevations facing north. Capped by a slightly pitched roof, the multi-level building is of reinforced concrete construction with the tramway's mechanical equipment and docking station located at the building's west end. Enormous metal-framed floor-to-ceiling plate glass windows provide spectacular Coachella Valley views from the soaring interior space. Similar fenestration on the south elevation of the building's west wing looks out onto a verdant pine forest traversed

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with hiking trails. Prominent exposed wood beams support the roof and penetrate the glazing on most elevations. At the center point of the Y is a three-sided, full-height metal fireplace—flanked by natural rock veneer—that was more decorative than functional.

A concrete viewing deck wraps around the north and east elevations. The main public areas occupy three floors. The tramway docking station arrives at a middle level where a dramatic interior staircase of wood and metal construction takes visitors to the top level where the cocktail lounge, dining room, fireplaces, and outdoor viewing platform are located. The staircase also descends to an exit leading to mountain hiking paths. An exterior concrete staircase on the building's north side leads to the top level viewing area. The kitchen and cafeteria occupy the south side of the interior space. Wood paneling, prominent wood beams, broad expanses of natural rock veneer, large central fireplaces, artificial pine trees, and huge boulders that line the wood stairs to an upper dining level all emphasize the rustic qualities of the chalet-inspired design.

Other than the wood post-and-beam balcony and exterior staircase leading to winding concrete paths, the building's south-facing side is considerably more utilitarian in its appearance than the north elevation. In particular, the exposed concrete bays and corrugated metal cladding of the "back of house" operations are purposely unadorned.

Extending down from the basement's southwest-facing landing, the poured-in-place concrete walkway provides a curving path of travel to Long Valley's numerous hiking trails and National Register of Historic Places-listed California State Parks ranger station. At the time of its completion, electric heating elements buried inside the "thermal sidewalk" allowed it to be snow free during the snowy seasons. Reconstructed several times over the years, the heating elements are no longer functioning. They may no longer exist inside the current concrete walkway.¹ The approximately 8-foot wide walkway reaches a point approximately 441 feet from the landing.

Building permits were unavailable for the mountain station. Visible inspection and information provided by the Mount San Jacinto Winter Park Authority indicates that there have been modifications to the building over the years.² As relates to integrity, the following list consists primarily of minor upgrades, most necessary for continued operation, that do not significantly affect overall design of the entire building.

The roof was replaced in the 1980s with an added eight inches of insulated foam and ductwork for roof heaters. In the 1960s, some of the open areas under and around the building were enclosed for storage. Steel decking for equipment storage was added to the northwest side of the building. A crane was added to the Mountain Station roof for heavy lifting from the dock. The north side patios on the restaurant level were replaced and expanded. ADA-compliant doors have

¹ Dick Applegate, "Camper Holiday Takes in Disneyland to Desert," *San Diego Union* (January 18, 1970), C-4; 14; and California State Parks, *Long Valley Management Plan, Mount San Jacinto State Park*, [Unpublished Report] (January 2012).

² Mount San Jacinto Winter Park Authority, letter to California Office of Historic Preservation, October 1, 2016, including a list of alterations to the building.

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replaced original doors and an interior elevator was designed and added; the ADA-required elevator does not significantly affect integrity because it is relatively unobtrusive.

These changes have not negatively affected the building's physical integrity because the property's significance is tied to the quality of the main chalet-inspired public areas that dominate the design. Similarly, modifications to the dining room including the kitchen, cafeteria area, cocktail bar, floor coverings, and light fixtures have not materially affected the property's integrity of design, materials, and workmanship because the key character defining elements: floor plan, glazing, fireplaces, viewing platforms, incorporation of natural rock, exposed beams, wood paneling, and prominent wood staircase have not been compromised. The property also retains integrity of association, setting, location, and feeling.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1963

Significant Dates

1963

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Williams, E. Stewart

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Palm Springs Aerial Tramway Mountain Station is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C at the local level of significance in the area of Architecture. The property embodies the distinctive characteristics of mid-century commercial architecture as interpreted by E. Stewart Williams. In addition, the property meets *The Architecture of E. Stewart Williams* Multiple Property Submission registration requirements for commercial buildings in association with the historic context “Architecture as environmental expression in the greater Coachella Valley, 1946-1976.” The period of significance corresponds with the date construction was completed, 1963.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

The Palm Springs Aerial Tramway Mountain Station is significant under Criterion C because it embodies the distinctive characteristics of a commercial building specifically designed for a mountaintop state park by E. Stewart Williams. The building melds modern design elements such as reinforced concrete construction, large expanses of glazing, and an open floor plan with the warmth of natural materials in creating a modern chalet high above the desert floor.

The Palm Springs Aerial Tramway Mountain Station is significant within the oeuvre of E. Stewart Williams and fits within the historic context presented in the Multiple Property Documentation Form, “Architecture as environmental expression in the greater Coachella Valley, 1946-1976.” The property is a key example of the commercial building property type that maintains sufficient integrity to be readily identifiable as the work of E. Stewart Williams, FAIA. As a result, the property meets National Register Criterion C because it embodies the distinctive characteristics of commercial buildings associated with the master architect.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

As indicated in *The Architecture of E. Stewart Williams* Multiple Property Documentation Form.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University of California, Santa Barbara
- Other

Name of repository: Palm Springs Art Museum, Architecture and Design Center

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one acre

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 33.812927 Longitude: -116.638391

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The Palm Springs Aerial Tramway Mountain Station is located within the boundaries of the 21 square mile Mt. San Jacinto State Park, with the official address of 25905 California Highway 243, Idyllwild, CA 92549. The official address of the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway is One Tram Way, Palm Springs, CA 92262. The tramway mountain station itself

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does not have a unique address. The property's boundary includes the outer perimeter of the C-shaped 2-Story building, from its southeast wing to its northeast aerial tramway station. The northeastern boundary includes a 2,040 sq. ft. patio area that projects off the southeast wing's north elevation. The property's southwest boundary extends from the base of the building's northwest wing in a southwesterly direction some 441 ft. along the southeastern perimeter of a winding approximately 8-ft.-wide poured-in-place concrete walk, originally known as a "thermal sidewalk" for its embedded electric heating elements, to a point where it meets an improved dirt trail. The boundary then double backs along the walkway's northwestern perimeter up to its point of origin.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The mountain station is the upper portion of the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway, within the boundaries of Mt. San Jacinto State Park. The property's boundaries include the Mountain Station's original 1963 footprint, north patio, and the thermal sidewalk. However, they do not extend beyond their historic footprints out into the surrounding State parkland.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Peter Moruzzi/Architectural Historian
organization: _____
street & number: 2018 Griffith Park Blvd., #114
city or town: Los Angeles state: CA zip code: 90039
e-mail petermoruzzi@gmail.com
telephone: (213) 706-0151
date: April 2016

Additional information provided by Alexander D. Bevil, State Historian II, Southern Service Center, NTC at Liberty Station, Barracks 26, 2797 Truxtun Road, San Diego, CA 92106
alexander.bevil@parks.ca.gov (619) 221-7041

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

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Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Palm Springs Aerial Tramway Mountain Station
City or Vicinity: Idylwild
County: Riverside
State: CA
Photographer: Peter Moruzzi
Date Photographed: February 2016

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 1 of 12 Approaching Mountain station from tram car, north elevation, camera facing south
- 2 of 12 North elevation, camera facing west
- 3 of 12 North elevation, camera facing east
- 4 of 12 North elevation, camera facing east
- 5 of 12 Exterior fireplace, north elevation, camera facing south
- 6 of 12 West elevation, camera facing east
- 7 of 12 South elevation, camera facing northwest
- 8 of 12 Interior staircase, camera facing southeast
- 9 of 12 Dining room staircase, camera facing southeast
- 10 of 12 Dining room, camera facing west
- 11 of 12 Tram car waiting room, camera facing southeast
- 12 of 12 Tram docking station, camera facing north

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Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

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Location Map

Latitude: 33.812927

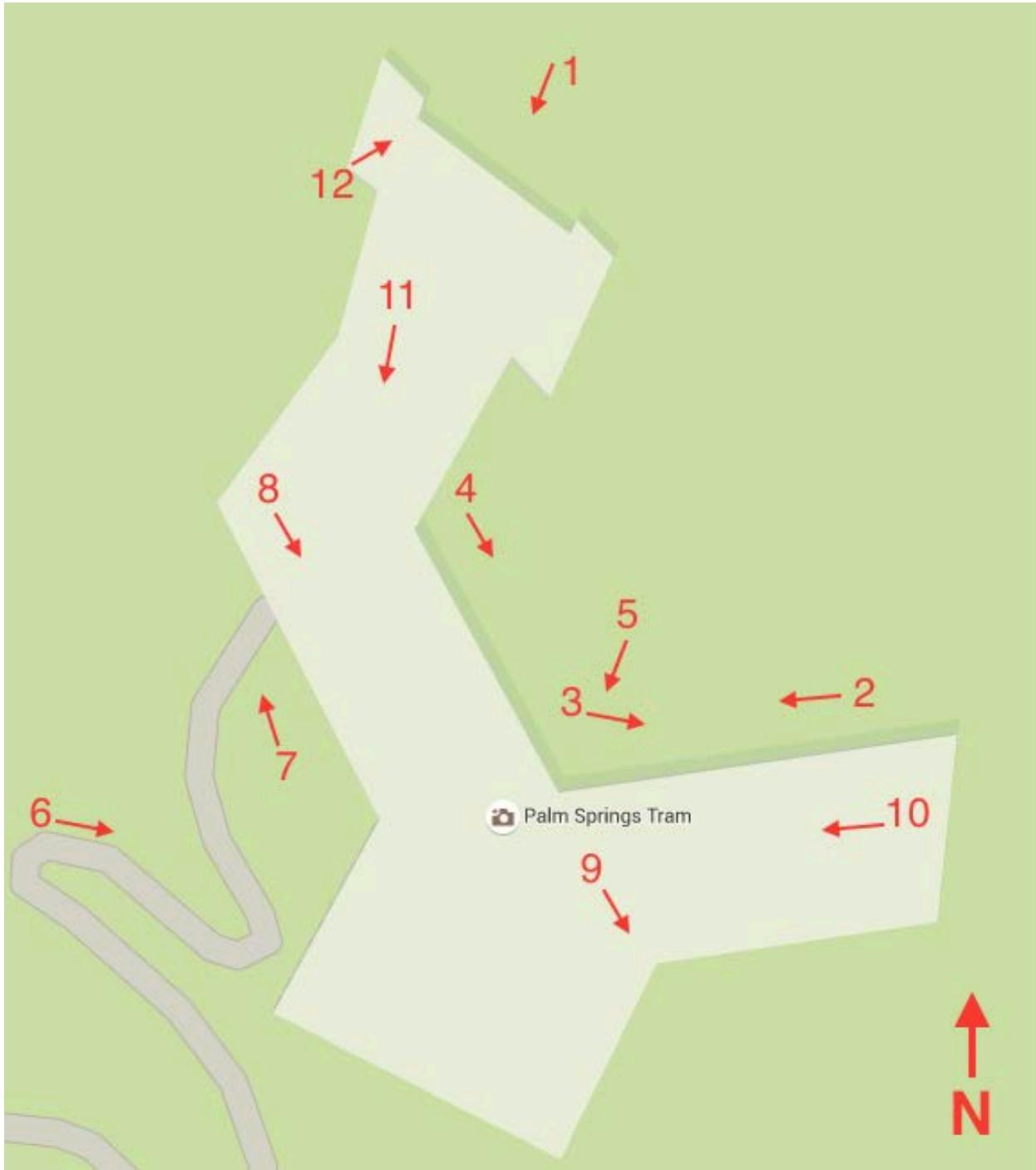
Longitude: -116.638391



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Sketch Map/Photo Key



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Figure 1 North elevation, looking east, 1963

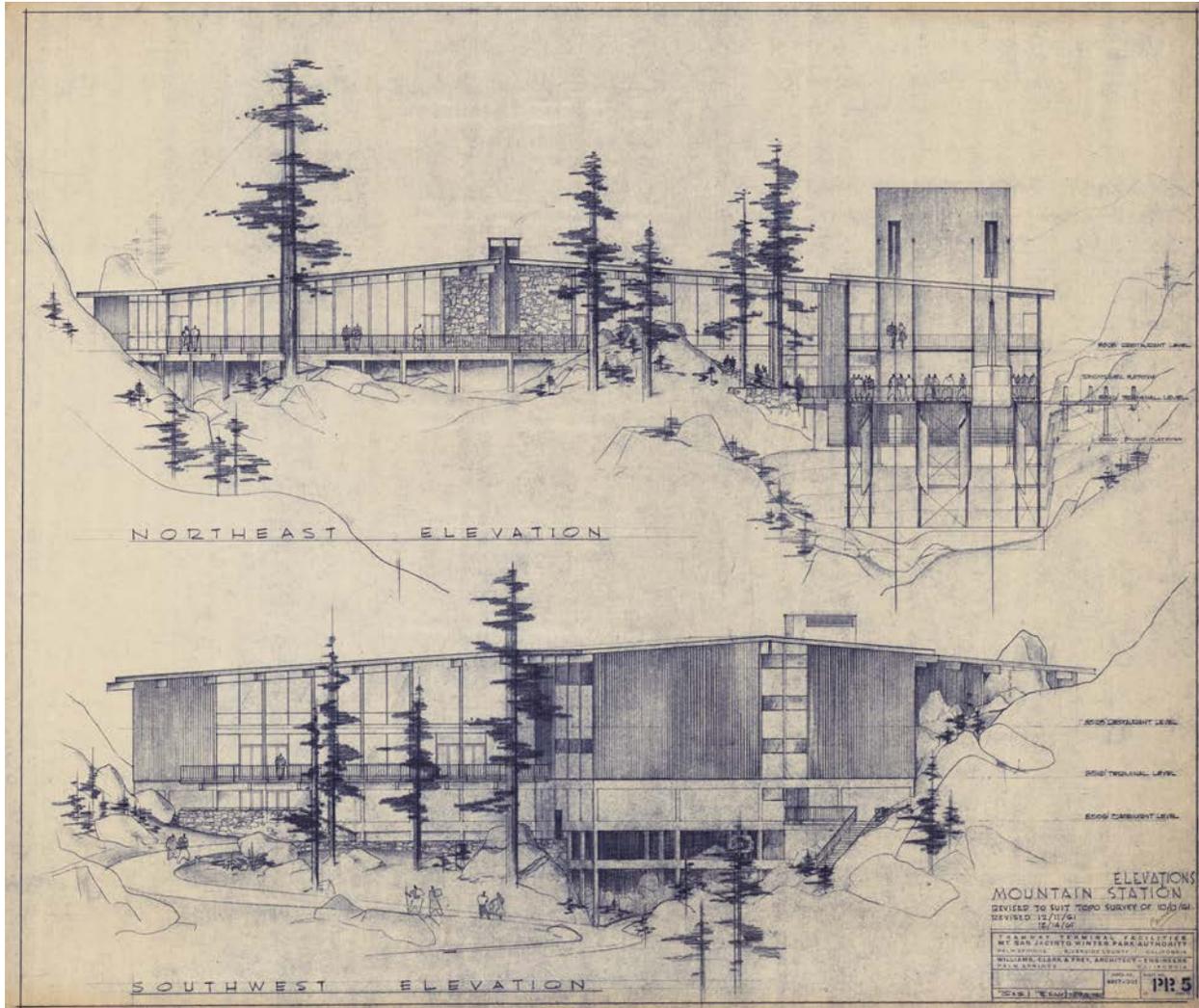


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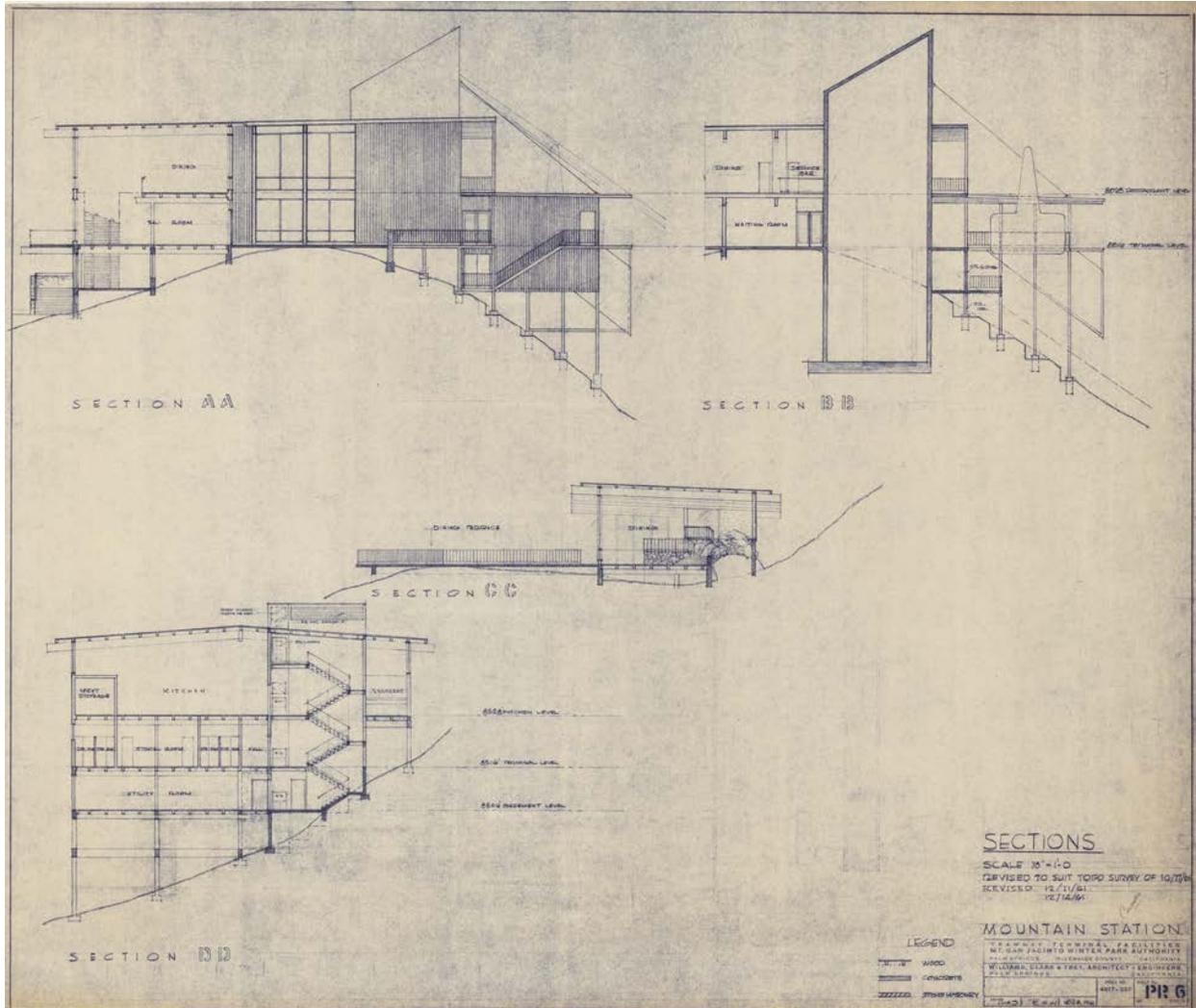
Figure 2 Northeast and southwest elevation drawings, 1961
Courtesy California State Parks



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Figure 3 Section drawings, 1961; Courtesy California State Parks



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Figure 4 Aerial photo, 2016; Google Earth image annotated by California State Parks



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Figure 5 Sketch map showing thermal sidewalk; Courtesy California State Parks

